

FORUM AGAINST OPPRESSION OF WOMEN (BOMBAY)

Dear Friend, *Dr. Thelma Narayan,*

An initial letter was sent to you in June '85 to inform you about and solicit your views on the proposed national conference entitled 'Perspectives for the Autonomous Women's Movement in India' to be held in December 23rd to 26th at the Seth Issardas Vardmal Dharamshala, Khar Road Station, West, Bombay-52. We received a very good response from women in different parts of the country who are keen to attend the conference. A preparatory meeting was held in Hyderabad on the 14th and 15th Sept. by the Stree Shakti Sanghatana. We were able to discuss at length and arrive at the following conclusions regarding the contents and planning.

On the basis of our experiences we arrived at the following subjects for discussions during the conference.

Monday 23rd December:

Workshop No. 1, Title: Participation of women's organisations in mass and other organisations.

Some of the questions which could be discussed - what are the relationships of women's organisations and mass organisations such as trade unions, democratic rights groups, theatre groups, etc. How do we see the leadership of women in mass organisations? Can we draw lessons from historical experiences like Telangana, the nationalist struggle, etc. How do we understand women's political participation? What is our strategy for expansion, increasing our own strength, multiplying in numbers setting up more small groups, or forming mass organisations, and related to this, the question of numbers versus consciousness.

Workshop No. 2, Title: Relationship between consciousness raising and support to individual women.

No matter what the objective of the group, women's groups get involved in supporting individual women who appeal for help. Most groups are continuously faced with the tussle between case work and consciousness raising. Frustrations build up because we feel we are losing sight of our original intentions of general consciousness raising and doing what can become just 'social work'. At the same time, it is impossible for us to avoid supporting individual women in the course of our work? How can we then strike a balance between the two? Reformism and feminism?

नारी अत्याचार विरोधी मंच, बम्बई.

प्रिय बहन,

हमने जून, ८५ में आपको एक पत्र भेज कर बताया था कि भारतमें स्वायत्त नारी आंदोलनकी दिशा" विषय पर होनवाले राष्ट्रीय संमेलनके बारे में आप अपने विचार बताएँ। यह संमेलन दिसंबर २३ से २६ तक सेठ इस्तरदास वारंदमला धर्मशाला, खार रोड स्टेशन [पश्चिम] बम्बई ४०० ०५२ में होनेवाला है। हमे इस पर बहुत अच्छा प्रतिक्रिया मिली। संमेलनकी पूर्व तैयारीके लिए हैदराबाद के स्त्री शक्ति संगठनाने १४ और १५ सितंबरके एक मिमिटींगका आयोजन किया था। लंबी चर्चाके बाद निम्नलिखित निर्णय लिये गये।

संमेलनमें चर्चा के विषय :-

सोमवार २३ दिसंबर को प्रथम वर्कशोप :

शीर्षक : आमसंगठनोंमें नारी संगठनों का हिस्सा नारी संगठन और आमसंगठन जैसे की ट्रेडयूनि-यन, लोकशाही हक्क संगठन, नाट्यमंच इत्यादिके बीच कैसा रिश्ता है ? आमसंगठनोंमें महिलाओंकी अगुआई कितनी है ? क्या हम तेलंग ना और राष्ट्र मुक्ति आंदोलनके ऐतिहासिक अनुभवों से कुछ सीख सकते हैं ? औरतों के राजकीय सहभाग के बारेमें हमारे क्या विचार हैं ? हम कैसे हमारी शक्ति प्रसार और संख्या बढ़ाएँ ? क्या हमे ज्यादा सभ्यसंख्या ही चाहिये या उनकी जागृती भी बढ़नी चाहिये ?

वर्कशोप :- २ : शीर्षक : जागृति बढ़ाने और महिलाओंको सहारा देने की प्रवृत्तियों के संबंध।

ज्यादातर नारी संगठन और गृह, उनकी कोई भी विचार धारा हो, मदद की आंकाशी महिलाको जरूर साथ-सहारा देते हैं। ज्यादातर गूटों में इससे दिखा पैदा हुई है - क्या हम केस का काम करेया नारी जागृतिका काम। क्या हम केवल समाजसेवा कर रहे हैं या स्त्रीहक्क संघर्ष बढ़ा रहे हैं ? नारीवादी कार्य और सुधार वादी कार्य में लक्ष्यभेद क्या हम कैसे लगाएँ ?

मंगलवार, २४ दिसंबर : वर्कशोप - ३

शीर्षक : संपर्कके लिए संकलन नारी गूटोंके सबसे महत्वके कार्यमेंसे एक है अपने विचारों को सबके पास ले जाना। इसके लिए हम विविध माध्यमोंका इस्तेमाल करते हैं जैसे कि पत्र, नाटक गीत इत्यादिका उपयोग नारीमुक्तिके संदेशको पहुंचानेके लिए काम आस है। या तो नारी संगठनों ने छुद्र समांतर माध्यमके द्वारा या तो आम माध्यममें काम करते हमदर्दों के जरिये यह किया है। दोनों के फायदे और बर्दादाएँ जरिये यह किया है। दोनों के फायदे और बर्दादाएँ क्या है ? दूसरा, नारीसंगठनों के बीचमें बहुत ही कम संपर्क रहा है। इसे हम कैसे बदलें ? कैसे हम जनतांत्रिक तौरसे, साथ मिलकर, संकलन करें ?

वर्कशोप :- ४ शीर्षक : भीजीविकास की राजनिती.

संगठन में काम के एक व्यक्तिकी हैसियतसे हमारा भी विकास हुआ है। हम जागृत हुए हैं,



Tuesday 24th December:

Workshop No. 3, Title: Communication Work.

One of the main tasks of women's groups have been to communicate their views and work through the use of different forms of media like the press, skits, and songs. They have either created their own alternative channels of communication or made use of mainstream media by building contacts with sympathetic persons. What are the pros and cons of using both types of channels? Secondly, the communication between women's groups is sparse and infrequent. Can an internal newsletter facilitate better networking? How can it be set up in a democratic and collective manner?

Workshop No. 4, Title: Politics of personal growth.

Through participation in groups we have grown as persons, become conscious, got strength, confidence and the courage to act. While we are aware of this process, we usually discuss it personally and have an exchange of support and rapport at an individual level. There is much that we can learn and draw out from this process of personal/political growth if it is made visible and articulated. Can we pool our experiences and link our private and public struggles?

Wednesday 25th December:

Workshop No. 5, Title: Structure, methods and intra group dynamics of women's groups.

Women's groups are attempting to work in different ways, using nonhierarchical and collective methods. Group structure and methods of functioning are often linked with composition and beliefs. These alternative forms have at times created problems between members of groups, disillusionment, and splits. Without personalising such conflicts, can we understand how to deal with them? How can we take into account efficiency, responsibility, hierarchy and collective functioning?

Workshop No. 6, Title: Relationship with the State.

It becomes necessary to interact with the police, courts and government. Often we are in conflict with them and sometimes we also take their help and/or try to influence them. E.g. the

हमारी शक्ति बढ़ी है, हमने आत्मविश्वास बढ़ा है, सक्रीय कार्य करने की हमारी हिम्मत बढ़ी है। हमारे नीजी और राजकीय विकासके अनुभवों की चर्चा करके हम एक दूसरे से काफी कुछ सीख सकते हैं। क्या हम हमारे अनुभवों का आदानप्रदान कर, हमारे भीतरी और बाहरी संघर्षोंको जोड़ सकते हैं ?

बुधवार, २५ दिसंबर : वर्कशोप - ५

शीर्षक : नारी गूटों के सवालात ढाँचे, कार्यपध्दति और आंतरिक संबंध-व्यवहार

नारी संगठन अलग तौरे तरीके के साथ काम करते हैं। उष-नीष। नेता और सभ्य के ढाँचे के खिलाफ साथ मिलकर काम करने की पध्दतिको अर्थात्पत देते हैं। इस पध्दतिने सभ्योंके बीच नयी समस्याएँ खड़ी की है। निराश्रम तोडफोड दरार- क्या इन सबको समाप्तकी जरूरत नहीं ? हम किस प्रकारके कार्यक्षमता, जिम्मेदारी को स्तरीत ढाँचा और सामुहिक कार्यपध्दतिके संदर्भ में देख सकते हैं ?

वर्कशोप- ६ शीर्षक : राष्ट्रिय रीशता

नारीसंगठनोंको बार बार पोलिस, कोर्टकचहरी और सरकारसे काम लेना पडता है। कभी हमारा उनके खिलाफ संघर्ष भी होता है तो कभी हम उनसे काम निकलवानेकी कोशिशें भी करते हैं। उदाहरणतया - सरकार ने कल्याणकारी योजनाएँ बनाई है। उसके बारेमें हमारा क्या नजरिया है ? हम किस प्रकारसे सरकारी नीतियाँ जैती कि रोजगार ने आरक्षित सीट्स, बस्तीनियंत्रणकी नीति, महिला होस्टेल और नारो निकेतन को देखते हैं। दूसरा, यदि सरकार नारीसंगठनोंको अपने में सभ्य लेना चाहे तो हम हमारा स्वतंत्र अस्तित्व कैसे रखेंगे ?

गुरुवार, २६ दिसंबर : विविध विषयों पर वर्कशोप : नीजी क्षापदे, तंदुरस्ती, पर्यावरण,

सोप्रदायिकतावाद, काम रोजगार इत्यादि क्या इनमेंसे कई सवालोंने पर हम राष्ट्रीय झुंझका अभियान आयोजन कर सकते हैं ?

पेपर्स : नारीसंगठन, नीह कि कोई एक व्यक्तिको कोन्फरंसेक लिस सीक्षित नोट्स, जिसमें सदा लोको बताकर चर्चा बढानेमें उपयोगी मुषों को रखने होंगे। सहेली [दिल्ली] वर्कशोप नंबर २ नारी अत्याचार विरोधी मंच, बम्बई वर्कशोप नंबर ५ स्त्री शक्ति संगठन। वर्कशोप नंबर ४, नारीकेंद्र [बंबई] वर्कशोप नंबर ३, चिन्मारी अहमदाबाद] वर्कशोप नंबर १ पर नोट्स तैयार करेंगे। हम सभी नारीसंगठनको नोट्स तैयार करनेका आभंत्रण देते हैं। जो संगठन " सवालोंको रखना" चाहते हैं वे दिसंबर, १ तक हमें उसकी कोपी भेज दे और अपने साथ उसकी ३०० कोपी भेज दे और अपने साथ उसकी ३०० कोपी वितरणके लिस ले कर आस।

योगदान :- संमेलन हम सबकी संमेलन हम सबकी सामुहिक जिम्मेदारी है। इसीलिस हैद्राबाद में अकीत्रत गूटों ने संमेलनके लिस रु. ३०० से रु. ५०० देनेका वादा दिया है। नारी अत्याचार विरोधी मंचने अभी तक इस संमेलनके लिस रु. २५००/- खर्च कर डाले हैं। हम आपसे विनंती करते हैं।



the government has proposed a series of welfare measures; what is our response to them? How do we, if at all, intend to influence government policy regarding job reservations, population, hostels and shelters? Secondly, how real is the danger of co-optation and how can we deal with it.

Thursday 26th December:

Workshop on specific issues like personal law, health and environment, communalism, work, and any other suggested by the participants. Can we plan national campaigns around some issues?

Papers:

Women's groups and not individuals should prepare notes which will pose problems and raise questions i.e. act as catalysts for discussion within the workshops. Some of the topics were picked up by the groups at Hyderabad like Saheli chose no.2, FOAW no. 5, Stree Shakti Sanghatana no. 4, Women's Centre no. 3, and Chingari no. 1. All groups are invited to prepare such notes. Please let us know in advance your preferred topic. The group which decides to work on 'posing the problem' notes should send in their work by December 1st. They should also bring 300 copies for distribution..

Funds:

As part of the collective responsibility for organising the conference, the groups present in Hyderabad have pledged money from Rs. 300 to 500. The Forum has already raised, through donations and loans some Rs. 2500 which has been utilised so far for reserving the hall, postage, cyclostyling etc. We suggest that each group raise at least Rs. 100 which they must forward to us by mid November.

Invitations:

It was decided to limit ourselves to inviting groups with a primary commitment to activism. Only women are to participate. Please let us know how many members of your group can come. The registration fee is Rs. 10/- per member. We are unable to provide travel or food expenses.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

With regards,  
FAOW

कि आप कमसे कम रु. १००/- [सौ] इस संमेलनके लिये जरूर इकट्ठे करें।

आमंत्रण : सक्रीय तोरसे कार्यरत संगठनों को ही इस संमेलनमें बुलाया गया है। इस संमेलनमें केवल महिलाएँ हिस्सा ले सकती हैं। कृपया हमें बताओ कि आपके संगठनसे कितने सभ्य इस संमेलनमें आसँगे। संमेलनकी रजिस्ट्री फी है [३] १०/- [दस] हम खानेका खर्च नहीं दे पासँगे। धर्मशालाके आसपास सस्ते दाम पर विविध प्रकारका खाना मिलता है।

प्रत्युत्तरकी आशामें,

अभिवादनके साथ,

नाररी अत्याचार विरोधी मंच, बंबई  
द्वारा नाररीकेंद्र,  
३०७ - पश्चिम स्पाटीमेंट,  
पञ्चम नगर, वाकोला,  
सांताक्रूझ [पूर्व], बंबई ४०० ०५५.

भूलना मत :

- १] संमेलनके स्थल पर ही रहने के प्रबंध किया गया है।
- २] सोने ओढ़नेका सामान लाना भूलना मत।
- ३] आसपास आई हुई रेस्टोरां, होटल खानेके स्थलोंकी लिस्ट आपको दी जास्गी।
- ४] वापस यात्राकी टिकीट आपको ही लेनी होगी।
- ५] आपमें से जो जल्दी आना चाहें वे २२ तारीखको होल पर रह सकते हैं। २१ के सुबह के बाद आपको नाररीकेंद्र पर या नीजितौरसे रहना होगा।
- ६] बच्चों के लिये कमरेकी व्यवस्था हमने की है। खिलौने होंगे।
- ७] बुकस्टोल, साहित्यके लिये टेबल्स मिलेंगे।

दिनचर्चा :-

सुबह : १० से १२ वर्कशेप्स

दोपहर : १२ से १ भोजनकी छुट्टी.

१ से ३ वर्कशेप्स

३ से ३-३० चाय की छुट्टी

३-३० से ५-३० सभा.

शाम : ५-५० के बाद सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रम.

सूचना : हिंदी और अंग्रेजीमें भाषांतरकी जिम्मेवारी कोन्फरंसकी रहेगी। अन्य भाषांतरकी जिम्मेवारी कोन्फरंसकी रहेगी। अन्य भाषाओंमें भाषांतर अनौपचारिक ढंगसे हमें करना होगा। सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रम : प्रदर्शन, ध्वज-नाटक, नाटक, नृत्य, गीत इत्यादि जरूर लाना। पूरी शाम - रात सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रमके लिये रखी गई है।



Schedule of the day:

Morning	: 10.00 to 12.00	Workshops
Afternoon	: 12.00 to 1.00	Lunch
	1.00 to 3.00	Workshops (continuation)
	3.00 to 3.30	Tea
	3.30 to 5.30	Plenary session
Evening	: 5.30 to onwards	Cultural items

PS: (i) Each participant will be able to attend only one workshop a day. Do decide in advance.

(ii) Translations from and to Hindi and English will be arranged. Participants will have to make arrangements for other languages.

Administrative details:

1. Accommodation will be provided at the site of the conference.
2. Please bring your own beddings.
3. A map showing locations of different restaurants will be distributed.
4. Return tickets should be booked by the participants themselves.
5. For those who might want to come early on the 22nd of December, a room is booked for their accommodation at the same place. Those who want to stay behind can shift to the Women's Centre.
6. There is a separate room for children.
7. Tables will be provided for distribution of literature etc.

Cultural Items:

All groups are welcome to bring their posters, audio visuals, skits, and songs for the evening cultural session.

Guide to the conference hall:

From Bombay Central Station: Catch a local train (slow) going towards Andheri or Borivli and disembark at Khar Road Station. Ask for the West side of the station and the Seth Issardas Hall.

From Bombay V.T. Station: Catch a local Harbour Line train for Andheri, get off at Khar Road Station. Ask for the West side and the Seth Issardas Hall. If your incoming train halts at Borivli or Dadar you can get off there too, and follow the above instructions.

If in trouble call the Hall after 22nd Dec., 8.00 a.m. Phone:531087

or Arati : 4225067, Nirmala : 213431,  
Nandita: 356213, Jessica : 6422924.

Address:

Forum Against Oppression of Women,  
C/o. Women's Centre,  
Yasmeen Apartments, Yeshwant Nagar,  
Vakola, Santa Cruz, (East,  
BOMBAY - 400 055.

संमेलनके होल पर आनेका मार्गदर्शन :-

बाम्बे सेंट्रलसे : अंधेरी या बोरीवली जानेवाली स्लो धीमी स्थानिक [लोकल] ट्रेन पकडकर  
खाररोड उतर जाइये। पश्चिमकी ओर "सेठ इस्सरदार होल" आया है।

बाम्बे व्हीली से : स्थानिक [लोकल] स्लो, अंधेरीकी और जाती ट्रेनमें चढकर खाररोड स्टेशन  
उतर जाइये। यदि आपकी ट्रेन बोरीवली, अंधेरी या दादर खंडी रहती है। तो वही उतरकर  
खाररोड आ सकते है। बोरीवली और दादर से आपको पश्चिम रेल्वेकी धीमी स्लो स्थानिक  
ट्रेन लेनी होगी। अंधेरी से आपको पश्चिम या हार्बर लाइनकी धीमी-स्लो, स्थानिक ट्रेन  
[लोकर] ट्रेन लेनी होगी।

\* यदि कुछ गडबड हुई तो होल पर हथे फोन कीजिए। फोन - ५३१०८७ या तो  
नारी अत्याचार विरोधी मंच के कार्याकर्ताको फोन कीजिए।

आरती : ४ २ २ ५ ० ६ ७

निर्मला - २ १ ३ ४ ३ १

नीदिता : ३ ५ ६ २ १ ३

जोसका : ६ ४ २ २ ९ २ ४



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## Emerging Trends in Women's Movements in India

November 27 - 30, 1985

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EMERGING TRENDS IN WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

WOMEN AND RELIGION

or

CAN THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT BECOME AN ANTI-COMMUNALIST FORCE? *Gabriele Dietrich*

1. Introduction

During the International Women's Decade, the question of women and religion did not come to the fore front much. The main emphasis was on women's deteriorating economic situation, declining work opportunities, victimisation due to technological modernisation, self-help through self-employment schemes and on sexual and other violence against women, like rape, wife beating, dowry deaths and the like. Attention was also paid to women's health situation, family planning schemes, the effects of certain contraceptives like IUD's, depo-pravera and NET-EN etc.

This does not come as a surprise since patriarchy in the feminist debate has been understood as exploitation of a woman's labour, sexuality and fertility. It is therefore only logical that primary attention should go to the economic aspects and to the actual physical subjugation of women. The only aspect where religion has come into the picture is the demand for a secular family code which has been raised on and off and short of this battles are today fought for Muslim women's rights to maintenance, for the right of Christian women to get a divorce, against extremes of discrimination in inheritance rights like eg. the Travancore Christian Succession Act.

The demand for a secular Civil Code extending to matters of marriage and succession is in no way new. Baba Sahib Ambedkar had made this point strongly and it has been argued that diversity in family laws violates, the principle of Fundamental Rights that there should be no discrimination between citizens. The Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India which was published in 1975 by the Central Government takes a very clear stand on this matter:

"The absence of a uniform Civil Code in the last quarter of the 20th century, 27 years after independence, is an incongruity that cannot be justified with all the emphasis that is placed on secularism, science and modernisation. The continuance of various personal laws which accept discrimination between men and women violate the fundamental rights, and the Preamble to the Constitution which promises to secure to all citizens 'equality of status', and is against the spirit of national integration and secularism.

Our recommendations regarding amendments of existing laws are only \_\_\_\_\_ indicators of the direction in which uniformity has to be achieved. We, therefore recommend expeditious implementation of this constitutional directive by the adoption of a Uniform Civil Code." 1

However, even ten years after this recommendation, we are no inch nearer to its implementation and only very recently, the Prime Minister made a categorical statement that a secular personal law is not on any immediate agenda.<sup>2</sup>

The reason for this is not far to see: Over the last decade, communalism has been on the increase and despite the carnage against Sikhs in Delhi, Kanpur and many other cities, after Indira Gandhi's assassination, none of the opposition parties found it opportune to raise the issue of communalism during the election campaign. It is therefore significant that one of the most courageous voices to speak out against communalism after the anti-Sikh riots was the feminist magazine Manushi.<sup>3</sup> Special investigations were also held by various women's groups into the situation of women during the anti-reservation agitation in Ahmedabad and into the way women were affected by communal clashes in Bhiwandi.<sup>4</sup> These kind of inquiries are in themselves very important but they finally do not really raise the question of religion because they work on the assumption that religion is not really at the root of communal conflict.

This assumption is correct, as deeper studies of communalism have borne out. Bipan Chandra has drawn attention to the fact that communalist forces are usually not led by people who are in any way deeply religious and that on the other hand people with a dimension of religious reform of any depth would normally be anti-communalist.<sup>5</sup> Looking back at the history of the freedom struggle Chandra observes that "religion was neither the cause nor the end of communalism - it was only its vehicle."<sup>6</sup> At the same time he gives many examples how communalists opposed religious social reformers and vice versa.

It is therefore important to raise the question: What is the relationship of the women's movement to genuine religious reform? I do believe that this is a crucial question which has been ignored for far too long. I would like to define genuine religious reform as such a reform which enables individuals and groups to participate in secular political processes struggling for equality of all citizens and against economic, political and cultural exploitation, without being forced to abandon the faith dimension of their religious identity. Besides, genuine religious reform crystallizes the humanist content in a religion in such a way, that non-believers or people of other faiths can relate to this humanist content in their own right. This latter dimension is an indispensable part of creating a rich secular culture.

This is a question which has not been raised in depth by the women's movement, probably for three reasons: First, the question of genuine religious reform is normally left out of the general debate on secularism. Religion



is normally simply declared to be an obscurantist hang-over which needs to be discarded. This year's Independence Day Issue of the government sponsored journal *Yojana* under the title "Why live with Nonsense?" is a striking example of this tendency.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, women as primary victims of orthodox religion have good reasons to be resentful of religion in general. It is therefore not surprising that in the wake of the Delhi riots the *Saheli* newsletter presented a very simplified reductionist view on Religion and Women which ends with the appeal: "It is we who have to stop believing in gods and start believing in ourselves, our inalienable rights to a decent life on this earth. Our rituals have to be taken over by actions which lead to this. Our God has to be replaced by our love for humanity and our hatred for injustices!"<sup>8</sup> A demonstration in Delhi on March 8 (International Working Women's Day) sponsored by different women's organisations expressed their views on religion in a similar vein and was only questioned by a thoughtful article by Ruth Vanita in *Manushi*.<sup>9</sup>

Thirdly, since women due to their position in society have rarely been in the fore front of ideological production and especially not of religious ideological production. Women have rarely been theologians. A few have been famous mystics or poetesses. It is therefore not surprising if the domain of religious reform has normally remained controlled by enlightened male intellectuals who at times could have been creative enough to rethink women's position in their respective religions. The question is to which extent women actively need to interfere with religious ideological production.

## 2. Women and Religious Reform in the Freedom Struggle

It is difficult to comment on the question of women and religious reform in the freedom struggle at any depth, largely because of the fact that most writings which deal with the Hindu renaissance are in no way interested in the women's question. Women's studies on this period are on the way, but most of them have not yet been published. What I am saying here is therefore extremely tentative and very much derived from secondary sources.

Following Bipan Chandra's analysis it can be said that communalism developed under conditions of "economic backwardness, interests of the semi-feudal, jagirdari classes and strata, the precarious economic condition of the middle classes, social cleavages within Indian society, its heterogeneous and multi-faceted cultural character and the ideological-political weaknesses of the nationalist forces."<sup>10</sup> These conditions were aggravated by the colonial economy and polity and by the desperate struggle for jobs among the middle classes. The latter factor helped communalism to acquire a real mass base. The communalist ferment was ideologically asserting religious orthodoxy and thus glossing over class differences, caste discrimination and oppression of women.



On the other hand, there was a certain ferment of religious reform, expressed eg. in the Arya Samaj, which was prepared to incorporate a certain amount of social justice and women's concerns but would go back on its stand when getting involved in communal politics. As far as social reform on problems of caste or women was concerned, the communalist ferment again and again took to violently reactionary options. This is true for Hindu and Muslim communalism alike.

The same is true of the extremist part of the freedom movement which in contrast to communalism proper was clearly anti-colonial but on the base of a religious revivalism which, developing a mythical concept of the motherland, was prepared to defend caste, joint family and communal village society as precious expressions of ancient Indian heritage based on love and collectivity as opposed to Western individualism and competition.<sup>11</sup> Apart from their obscurantist image of the "Mother" which was based on Durga or Kali and implied an idea of motherhood which would not have any openings towards alternative women's roles, in social reality, their inclination towards violent struggle would also not facilitate women's participation.

On the other hand, the reformism of the moderates which implied a stand against "social evils" like caste, child marriage and sati and would advocate education for women, did not achieve much mass appeal. It was Gandhi's specific brand of religious revivalism combined with social reforms and a concrete method of action which captured the imagination of the masses and provided a base for broad women's mobilisation and participation in the political struggle.

In a recent article "Gandhi on Women" Madhu Kishwar has analysed Gandhi's views on women in great detail.<sup>12</sup> Though she does not raise the question of religious reform, anti-communalism and a feminist perspective in a direct way, it becomes abundantly clear from her analysis that this connection exists. Gandhi's view on tradition was: "It is good to swim in the waters of tradition, but to sink in them is suicide."<sup>13</sup> Though Gandhi originally believed in a fairly conventional sexual division of labour, ascribing women sovereignty in the house and leaving the domain of political struggle to men, the actual need to involve women in mass satyagraha and the bold participation of women in large numbers forced him to change his views on women and housework or women as property holders<sup>14</sup> and his appeal to personal courage and sense of suffering set free an enormous potential. The interesting aspect is that Gandhi appealed to women as independent individuals. Due to his belief in brahmacharya he ascribed to women the right to say no to sexual controls even of their husbands. Though he saw women primarily as wives and mothers he inculcated in women the right to resist. Madhu Kishwar emphasises Gandhi's main contribution to the cause of women as "his absolute and unequivocal insistence on their personal dignity and autonomy

in the family and society."<sup>15</sup> While he used the traditional symbols of Sita and Draupadi for women to emulate he gave these symbols a vigorous new life, a world apart from the commonly accepted lifeless stereotypes of sub-servience. He constantly deviated from religious stereotypes in a very significant way. While his emphasis on brahmacharya and his appeal not to make women sex objects did facilitate women's freedom of movement he did not fall into the trap of picturing women in the traditional Hindu way as seductresses luring the tapasvi away from his sacred pursuits. His exhortations went chiefly against men's aggressive attitude towards women. I agree with the way how Madhu Kishwar differentiates Gandhi's contribution from the 19th century reformers; "The most crucial difference is that he does not see women as objects of reform, as helpless creatures deserving charitable concern. Instead, he sees them as active, self-conscious agents of social change. His concern is not limited to bringing about change in selected areas of social life, such as education and marriage as a way of regenerating Indian society, as was that of most 19th century social reformers. He is primarily concerned with bringing about radical social reconstruction."<sup>16</sup>

While Gandhi's appeal to religious sentiment is often seen as somewhat obscurantist if not bordering on communalism, it is important to recognise the vast difference between his use of religious idiom and that of the communalists and of the extremists in the national movement. His objective was not religious self-assertion but social reform integrated with the political goal of swaraj.

Traditionally it is religion which mediates the link between personal life and wider political concern. Religion spells out a way of life as well as a world view. In the communalist approach, the religious affiliation distorts economic and political issues. The result is socially and politically reactionary. In the enlightened approach of the moderates or in the secularism inspired by more westernised leaders like Nehru, there was a nationalist appeal to overcome caste, communalism and oppression of women. But this appeal, since it was devoid of religious reform, could not have the same effect in terms of transformation of personal life and social relations in the freedom movement. Even in the communist movement, which achieved a considerable mobilisation of working women, it was difficult to raise specific women's issues like eg. violence against women.<sup>17</sup> Short of an autonomous women's movement, the Gandhians approach led a long way to a real transformation of women's lives and the mediation between the personal and the political by religious idiom.

While appreciating this Gandhian contribution to women's mobilisation and actual transformation of women's lives, one has to face the difficulty that women finally did remain in a domesticated role within the movement. As Madhu Kishwar puts it, most women ended up as devotees. This has largely



to do with a profoundly moralistic approach to power which conceived of power in any physical sense as evil. Superior power had to be soul-power as opposed to body power and women the exemplary sufferers, were seen as the supreme vessels of soul force.<sup>18</sup> Gandhi lacked a thorough analysis of power structures not only in terms of class but also in terms of patriarchy. He did not encourage any organised constituency of women within the Congress and as a result even high profile women leaders remained marginal to important decision making processes.

While Gandhi was forced to adjust his ideas about women as property holders, the importance of household labour in a woman's life and on women's political potential over the years under the pressure of actual women's mobilisation, he was not forced by any organisational initiative to rethink on the question of power nor was he forced to develop his religious imagery to go beyond individual appeals to courage and sense of suffering.

While the Gandhian movement united aspects of religious reform and women's mobilisation in a forceful way, thus undermining the social rigidity of communalism and rivalism, another important impulse working in a similar way had been present in the national movement since the end of the 19th century in the form of the Dalit movement.<sup>19</sup> While Gandhi's religious imagery had remained high caste, the Dalit movement consciously mobilised an imagery from below.

Jyotirao Phule (1827-1890) belonged to the first generation of Indian reformers ruthlessly critical of the errors of the old society. While the next generation was more concerned with emphasising the "Hindu tradition", Phule in his radical reform movement ruthlessly attacked Brahmin domination, untouchability and oppression of women. While the orthodox like Tilak opposed women's education because it would lead to women running away from home and refusing to marry, the liberals thought of "modernising" Indian society by offering women education. Phule went much further by establishing the link between women's oppression, untouchability and caste. He founded the Satya-shodak Samaj to give the cultural transformation an organisational base.

While his movement stood for radically equalitarian values, rationalism and truth seeking, it also had a component of religious reform. Gail Oqvist points out: "In dismissing totally the dominant religious tradition of India, Phule accepted the assumption that something had to be put in place: even a revolutionary culture required a moral-religious centre".<sup>20</sup> He formed the concept of Sarvajanic Satya Dharma (Public Religion of Truth) and saw the world as good and holy as opposed to the Vedantic concept of seeing it as an illusion. God was seen as loving parent (ma-bap) and all humans are valued equally as God's children. Phule laid great stress on an equalitarian man-woman relationship and on an inclusive language, eg. stating



that "each and every woman and man are equal" instead of stating that "all men are equal".<sup>21</sup> Phule also reinterpreted sacred religious literature, eg. reading the nine avatars of Vishnu as stages of the Aryan conquest and using king Bali as a counter symbol to the elite's use of Ram, Ganapati or Kali. While Phule's emphasis was very different from that of Gandhi because of his strong anti-Brahmin conviction, their method of mobilisation has similarities since it relates an emphasis of social transformation with religious and cultural reform.

The anti-Brahmin movement in Tamil Nadu had a somewhat different approach since it left out Dalits and based itself on middle class and middle caste values. While Periyar wrote a lot on the situation of women, large scale women's mobilisation could not be achieved and the values of "Tamil womanhood" projected by the movement remain highly ambiguous. The movement also lacked a deeper aspect of religious reform since it remained exclusively rationalistic in its original approach but later compromised with religion without transforming it.<sup>22</sup>

Trying to summarise we can say that during the freedom struggle a considerable amount of social transformation was mediated by religious reform and that women's mobilisation benefited from this religious reform. However, since women were not involved in the ideological production of these reform movements but only participated at the level of mass mobilisation, they most of the time remained objects of patriarchal benevolence and could not evolve an imagery which would have helped them to express their full aspirations towards transformation of patriarchal institutions.

### 3. Rethinking Women's Position in Religions - A Methodological Reflection

While the mainstream of the women's movement avoids to enter into the subject beyond a general critique of religion as an oppressive force, there is also a fringe of the movement which uses religious symbols like eg. the women's publishing house Kali for Women. While I have not heard of similar efforts among Muslim women, I have met individual Muslim women in the women's movement who wish to remain believers and who try to reconcile their faith with their religious commitment. Among Christians, attempts to develop a feminist theology are on the way.

The problem which arises is twofold. On the one hand, one has to grapple with the problem of use and reinterpretation of religious symbols in general. On the other hand, one has to deal with the problem of the use of scriptural sources in a way which takes socio-economic historical conditions into account. Since use of scriptures is the most obvious and widespread method, I would like to deal with it first.

The question of use of scriptures naturally arises more in the explicitly scriptural religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam which have been called "religions of the book". In Hinduism, the vast heritage of Sruti and Smrti makes religious traditions much more complicated. Yet, certain scriptural sources like the Vedas, Upanishads, the Bhagavatgita or Manu-Smrti are frequently referred to and also the great epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana are often looked at as being rather authoritative.

There is a certain tendency of religious apologetics which tries to maintain that "originally" all religions were rather favourable for women and only "implementation" is lagging behind. We are reassured by quotations of Manu: "Where women are honoured, the gods rejoice" or the prophet Mohamed: "Paradise is at the feet of mothers". In such quotations, the praise for women remains entirely abstract and the patriarchal family relations which from the prison of the home in which the woman is made the queen, remain entirely unanalysed and untouched.

I would like to give a few examples from an All-India Colloquium on Ethical and Spiritual values as the Basis of National Integration held from December 30, 1966 - January 2, 1967.<sup>22</sup> Even though these materials are nearly nineteen years old, I think they are still quite valid today because our so-called spiritual values usually undergo very slow changes, especially if they remain unchallenged from the side of the women's movement. In the conference, women were dealt with in Section X: Women, marriage and the home. This is no coincidence since all our religions are sufficiently patriarchal to see woman's place primarily in marriage and in the home. This aspect needs to be analysed in greater depth.

It must be said that the Hindu tradition is slightly more broad based in this respect than Islam and upto a point christianity, since it takes education and women's role in public into account. Thus, one may arrive at summaries as the following:

"In the Vedic Age women enjoyed full freedom for learning and even for choosing their own companions in marriage. A change came with the onset of Brahminism. The position of women gradually declined with the rigidity of the caste system and lowering of the age of marriage. Buddhism and Jainism also affected women adversely.

During the Golden Age of Hindu civilisation in the early fifth and sixth centuries A.D. women enjoyed equal rights and were even allowed to exercise public rights. However, further seclusion of the Indian women started with the unsettled conditions inside and invasions from outside in the eighth century A.D. The decline in the status of women became complete with the Moghul era, as purdah came to stay." etc.<sup>24</sup>



The view here is clearly an idealising one because in the Vedic Age and in the golden age of Hindu civilisation all is supposed to have been well. Other authors, like eg. A.S. Altekar in his book *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation*<sup>25</sup> take a more unilinear view descending from the age of the Rigveda (from 2500 to 1500 B.C.) via the age of the later Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanishads (1500 B.C. to 500 B.C. the age of the Sutras, Epics and early Smritis (500 B.C. to 500 A.D.) to the age of late Smritis, Commentators and Digest writers (500 A.D. to 1800 A.D.). Here we see women's history evolving from a virtually golden age to the present kali yug.

Altekar's view at least has the advantage to link the deterioration of women's position to their situation in a specific mode of production, their role in the production process and in the overall cultural system like caste and religious laws. He clearly points out that where women have an important role in the production process and access to education and public life, their position is immeasurably better than in a society where women remain secluded, confined to housework, deprived of education and restricted by rules of purity and pollution.

Such a comparatively clear view becomes entirely obliterated by a romantic conservatism which combines an idealised picture of religion with an entirely biologicistic view of a woman's role. Eg. in the above mentioned colloquium we find views like the following:

"The woman is the seed bed of the nation; the home is the nursery and the country gathers the harvest. That the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world is not a mere truism, it is a proverb of pregnant significance. The child imbibes its tendencies and attitudes from the mother and inherits her ideals . . . .

Our ancients gave an honoured place to the woman in the domestic set-up. Her welfare was the concern of the father, the husband and the son. She was never abandoned without care and support . . . She enjoyed a partnership of equality with her husband; she was the saha dharmacharee. No religious rite would be performed without her participating in it. It is obvious that women enjoyed a complementary equality with men subject to reservations arising from their natural physical limitations."<sup>26</sup>

It is interesting to note that this kind of conservative romanticism, continued with a biologicistic view of women's roles, claiming an ancient legitimacy for women's high status is not confined to an explicitly religious position, it can be found in secular cultural revivalism as well. One of the most baffling examples of this kind is C. Balasubramaniam's book; *The Status of Women in Tamil Nadu during the Sangam Age*<sup>27</sup> in which he manages to produce a bold combination between the Golden Age theory in which women enjoyed education and freedom of movement and the "queen of the house"



syndrome in which a woman is eulogised for her chastity (karpu), patience and submissiveness. He reproduces a large number of quotations from various scholars<sup>28</sup> which all maintain that women were "equal" and had an extremely high status in the Sangam age but he never unravels the contradiction in these quotations. Eg. the wife of Bhudappandiyan is praised as an erudite scholar but she is also mentioned as the one who prefers suttee to widowhood. Some authors do admit that women were kept in an inferior position but that their moral strength lay in not minding about that and in cheerfully performing their indispensable household duties. Women are virtually worshipped for their acceptance of the status quo. Balasubramaniam, commenting on the infrequency of suttee in Tamil Nadu takes recourse to a quote from Manimekalai 42-47<sup>29</sup> where it is said that top class chastity would consist of dropping dead from grief at a husband's death while second rank goes to women committing suttee and third rank to those widows who lead a life of suffering. While of course Manimekalai is a rather late source of Buddhist inspiration, the striking fact is, that all this patriarchal and oppressive eulogisation of women appears in a book which claims to establish the equality of women during sangam age.

Similar tendencies can be observed in other religions as well. Eg. it is often stated that women have a very high position in the Koran. However, if one looks into the matter, the presupposition on which such a statement is made is clearly the existence and strong affirmation of the patriarchal family.<sup>30</sup> Compared to the much more violently patriarchal environment of Arabian nomads, the reforms of the Prophet were very protective of women and tried to give her security in the house as well as the right to remarry after widowhood and divorce. It is also true that due to the present day violently patriarchal culture in many Muslim countries, women may gain from quoting the Koran since it is more progressive than many of the customary laws which are actually imposed by the religious hierarchy. However, in Islam much more than in Hinduism, the confinement of woman to the house and to her so-called "biological" role as wife and mother is a constraint which it is difficult to break through.

In Christianity, a similar conflict can be observed. Actual preaching, social ethics and pastoral theology have entirely focussed on the role of woman as housewife and mother. Quotes from St. Paul and pastoral letters are in abundant use, pronouncing man as the head of woman, exhorting woman to be chaste, obedient, inconspicuous and silent in public. The tendency here is again to keep woman stuck in her role as housewife, to eulogise her for her compliant submission, to honour her as a child bearer and child rearer.

However, feminist theology has discovered that this is not the whole story at all. While there is a trend among some feminist theologians to dump the Old Testament or biblical theology as a whole, because of their "phallogocentric"

character - most clearly eg. in the writings of Mary Daly there is also another tendency to recapture women's history not only as a history of suffering but as a history which has become obliterated by the fact that it is usually the victors who write the records. Recapturing our forgotten contributions and interim victories is part of recording the history of our sufferings. One of the strongest contribution in this direction is eg. the book of Elizabeth Schuessler Fiorenza: *In Memory of Her*<sup>31</sup> in which the author establishes the leading role of women in the Jesus community and analyses the systematic role back against the emerging organised forces of women. She shows how the patriarchal stronghold of a male dominated hierarchy comes into being. Far from projecting a golden age, Schuessler Fiorenza attempts a materialist rewriting of early church history, documenting how the women who had come to the fore front were slowly driven back by the culture of patriarchy of the judaic and greek environment.

While it is not possible to go into the contents of liberation theology in this paper, I would like to derive a few methodological principles from my own experiences of working in this field which may help to unclow our minds on the question of how to deal with religious tradition:

1. It is necessary to analyse religious sources as far as possible with methods of materialist history writing, i.e. connecting any statement on women with their actual position within the mode of production of the time in which the statement is made. It has also to be taken into account that most religious sources and most history books have been written by men and that this has its ideological implications of its own.
2. Research on the position of women in religions cannot focus primarily on religious laws and ethical norms which ascribe women a certain fixed position. Religious laws and ethical statements of this kind tend to focus on marriage and family and the whole aspect of women's education, public life, contribution to economic and cultural production and of women as a self-reliant human being tends to be narrowed down to her contribution as wife and mother. On the other hand, most religious sources also know of women who have lived lives in their own rights, be they unmarried, married or widowed and our attention has to focus on such women's roles which allow us to develop a wider perspective. Often it is also necessary to draw on broader anthropological statements which are of general humanitarian value and to weigh them against oppressive role ascriptions. Eg. the biblical statement that all human beings, women and men, are created in the image of God overrides other statements of subordination.<sup>32</sup>
3. It is also important to understand the distortions and blatant contradictions in most conservative writings. On the one hand a golden age of freedom and equality is projected while on the other hand women are pinned down to a sub-ordinated life as housewives and mothers. For putting up with the



contradiction, women are put on a pedestal. This kind of distortion comes indeed out of a material contradiction which manifests itself differently in different modes of production. The need for production of life (i.e. child bearing and child rearing and maintenance work) which is seen as women's task in the family is in tension with the need to use woman's labour for the production of use and exchange values which requires women's work outside the house. The underlying problem here is one of sexual division of labour on the one hand and maintenance of patriarchy (control of a woman's labour, sexuality and fertility) on the other. Religion has been one of the strongest forces to uphold the institution of the patriarchal family. Religious family laws mainly serve this supreme purpose. Likewise, patriarchal family has strengthened institutionalised religion. To break through this alliance is a major task which the women's movement has not even tried to tackle.

These three guidelines which I have tried to evolve here, are up to a point also applicable to the use of religious symbols. It may not always be possible to fully trace the historic origins of a religious symbol but certainly it can be analysed how a religious symbol functions in a particular social environment or how it is appropriated by different classes. Eg. Sita who was the symbol of the self-sacrificing wife in the eyes of orthodoxy, acquired the qualities of a self-willed courageous woman in the Gandhian interpretation and may be used as an outright symbol of protest if seen through feminist eyes. Bina Agarwal, in a recent Sunday Edition of Indian Express wrote a very moving poem under the title "Sita speak", in which Sita is encouraged to tell her side of the story.<sup>33</sup>

As it is important to go into religious texts about women which go beyond the sanctified institution of marriage and family life, it is also important to go into the mythological heritage of religions in order to trace certain cultural assumptions about women which may be quite widespread in the public mind. Eg. there is a widespread assumption in Tamil Culture that women are in fact bearers of supreme power and that this power needs to be controlled because it will turn destructive without control. Thus, the power of women is supposed to be vested in their karpu (chastity) in order to ensure male control over women.<sup>34</sup> If one takes the trouble to go through the temple myths of Tamil Nadu, one discovers an ancient layer of goddess religion in which the goddess is a virgin or a powerful independent entity in her own rights.<sup>35</sup> The stala puranas contain many versions which record the process of subjugation of the goddess which usually ends up in sacred marriage. This process happens not only to the goddess but also to semi-historical figures like the Amazon queen Alli. Research into such historical backgrounds can unearth a protest potential as yet untapped.



Invariably, freeing women from the shackles of subordination involves making choices. In the same way as we constantly have to make choices between different roles offered in the family and in society at large, we also have to make choices between traditions and symbols offered: To combine an ideal of freedom and equality with women's exclusive destination to be ideal wives and mothers is possible only in a hypocritical mind which tries to bamboozle us by means of cultural chauvinism. Real life and liveable values involve a more painful process of acceptance and rejection of contents which have to be tested in their potential to free or to oppress women.

#### 4. The Quest for Secularism and Cultural Identity

While I am writing all this, I am painfully aware that the idea to delve deeply into religious texts, myths and symbols must sound rather exotic to most women in the women's movement. Certainly, there are countless much more pressing issues to be taken care of. However, there is no doubt that the struggle for a secular Personal Law which has priority for the women's movement is part of the wider struggle for a secular state and national culture. This connection has been forcefully drawn by some of the feminist writers,<sup>36</sup> however, without going into a full analysis of what goes into the building of a secular culture. The whole argument tends to focus on the legal aspect only by promoting the demand for a secular civil code and publicising it widely.

However worthy of support this demand certainly is, its implementation gets stuck precisely because of the subtle or not so subtle pressure of majority communalism which went into a cataclysm during the Sikh riots of November 1984 and which then found expression in the advertisement campaign of the ruling party during the electioneering which systematically conjured up violence and fragmentation of the nation. Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanita made a very perceptive analysis of this election campaign from the angle of what women have to expect from the ruling party and though they did not go into the issue of communalism in a very direct way, it became very clear in this article to which extent the communalist tendency is linked up with the patriarchal family syndrome and with the phenomenon of dynastic rule.<sup>37</sup> This is the kind of climate in which a secular family code cannot be implemented because the communalist vibrations created in order to catch the "Hindu vote" precisely make it necessary to assure the "minorities" that their "rights" will not be touched. In reality of course this means assuring Muslim and Christian males that their superiority in the family will not be touched.

Taking the issue up from a legal angle is good and necessary to the extent that women's rights are being claimed. However, this remains a sectoral demand. To go into the wider question of religious reform as one of the

means to build a secular national culture means taking up a general question (i.e. of secularism and a national culture) from a feminist perspective and thus going beyond a sectoral approach. However, this has to be done in a very dialectical way. The strong attack on religion by rationalists and by parts of the women's movement is quite misleading since it pictures religion as an arch-enemy of humankind,<sup>38</sup> thus creating a bogey which can be beaten easily while the dimensions of class patriarchy and political self-interest remain entirely invisible. This is a self-defeating strategy. Ruth Vanita rightly pointed out that the victims of the anti-Sikh riots did not experience themselves as victims of religious fanaticism but were aware of a concerted campaign by politicians and police.<sup>39</sup> She also cautioned against imposing a Hindu majority kind of version of secularism "which is what the government is doing anyway."

Madhu Kishwar has made a very moving contribution to the building of a secular national culture recently by publishing her visit in Longowal village and an interview with Sant Longowal in which the spiritual quality of the man and the place come across together with a very clear humanist content. It becomes clear in her writing that it was irreligious communal forces which were fanning fanaticism and murder while the humanist essence of Sikhism was made accessible to the nation in the religious reform which the Sant stood for. It also becomes clear that this enlightened religious tolerance is much less male-chauvinistic than the saber-rattling militance of the communalist fanatics. I would like to quote this as an example of making accessible the humanist content in a religion to non-believers and people of other faiths.

It is important to acknowledge that in communalism, in religious reform and in the women's movement a common question is raised but provided with different answers: the question of cultural identity. Communalism tackles the question by creating a false consciousness with the suggestion that people of the same religion automatically have the same socio-economic interest, irrespective of class or patriarchy and that the way to implement this interest is to politically organise on the ground of religion. Defence of a religious personal law is crucial to this approach.

The women's movement tends to build on the assumption that there is a certain commodity of interest between all women and that the barriers of class, caste and community have to be overcome. While overcoming class barriers entails clear political choices in favour of poor and exploited women, overcoming of caste and communal barriers is often attempted in a somewhat voluntaristic way by simply declaring that they are artificial and thus somehow unreal.



Genuine religious reform deals with the matter in a more dialectical way by acknowledging the social reality of caste and communal cleavages and identifying and contesting their religious sanctions. An active effort is made to overcome the meaning system which gives legitimacy to such cleavages. A leader like Dr. M.M. Thomas declares wherever he goes that Christians cannot be communalists because they have to stand up for the new humanity in Christ and are thus responsible for safeguarding the humanness of every human being. He enables Christians to participate in secular political processes without abandoning their faith dimension and he also makes the humanist essence of his faith accessible to non-believers and people of other faiths and thus contributes to a richer secular national culture.<sup>40</sup> His contention is that rationalism and religious faith in certain ways need each other in order to correct their mutual self-righteousness.

Since M.M. Thomas makes radical statements in religious language, he often suffers the fate of not being heeded by religious congregations (because of his political convictions) and by the secular political movement (because of his faith dimension). However, one does need to ponder the point that rationalism cannot always take its own rationality for granted (eg. the statement that religion is the greatest divider of mankind is not a rational statement) while a humanist faith can be quite rational within the parameters of the aim to build a human society.

An approach similar to that of M.M. Thomas is followed by Swamy Agnivesh who was on the road in saffron robes instantly in protest against the Sikh riots. He, like M.M. Thomas, openly theologises on his option for the poor and on his political choices. At the same time he makes it clear that political processes have to be free from the control of religious institutions. His saffron attire and religious language may alienate some people who are strict rationalists or those who feel that Vedantha can only be seen as reactionary. On the other hand he reaches people with an emotional attachment to this particular religious tradition and offers them an identification with the poor, with human rights issues and anti-communialist religious tolerance which would otherwise remain beyond their horizon.

Among Muslim Asghar Ali Engineer has been untiringly recapturing the humanist traditions within Islam.<sup>41</sup> He has paid a heavy price for his efforts even physically, being exposed to the violence of the reactionary forces in a very direct way. His re-interpretation of jihad for liberation as opposed to jihad for aggression opens up a social justice dimension suppressed by the conservatives. Faith to him means upholding the perspective of hope. God's sovereignty is not seen in competition to human initiative but on the contrary, as a source of setting it free. While this kind of religious humanism is rare and comes under pressure from institutionalised religion, it is nevertheless an important ferment of cultural transformation. Since such enlightened individuals are open to the women's question, they may occasionally incorporate it.

M.M. Thomas in fact has developed a growing awareness of it over the years. However, a feminist dimension of liberation theology has not yet evolved to a substantial extent.

There is an additional reason why the women's movement needs to go into the cultural question more deeply: The effort to give women a new sense of identity beyond family, caste and religion needs to grapple with the problem of cultural identity and continuity. It is comparatively easy to point out what has been oppressive and destructive of women in our cultural heritage. But the question what are the protest values and the humanist values of our cultural traditions also needs to be answered if shallowness is to be avoided. To work out the materialist and rationalist heritage is only one approach to this question which leaves the reservoir of humanism within religion entirely untouched. The need to touch upon this reservoir also arises while facing the task to bring up children in a meaningful way. Most activists confront the problem of having to relate to much more conservative and even very religious families in a constructive way. Their children have to bridge the gap between a non-descript culture in their own homes and something very different in the houses of their friends and relatives. What does one finally believe in?

Often women in the movement are frightened to touch upon religion because they are frightened of communalist reactions and cleavages. This is a very real problem. However, making each others religious symbols accessible in a secular spirit is a different matter which can become quite constructive.

##### 5. Alliance of Anti-Communalist Forces

Since Secularism is not a sectoral demand, the women's movement cannot fight this struggle alone. It has to ally with other forces which are fighting for the same objective. However, the forces trying to build secularism in the present situation are by no means homogenous.

In Kerala, the CPI-M has been able to champion the cause of a secular civil code to a certain extent. The fact that the party has a broad base in this state and that people's science movement has worked to build a scientific consciousness, accounts for a more favourable situation as compared to many other states. However, often enough electoral considerations do weaken the left parties in taking a clear anti-communalist stand as was obvious during the national election campaign of 1984.

Enlightened intellectuals in different religious communities also play an important role in creating an anti-communalist climate. It is important that the rationalist forces and the forces of religious reform which try to creatively work out a progressive faith dimension, do not become mutually antagonistic.



Dalit and tribal movements which drastically attack caste and contest the domination of the mainstream Hindu culture have an important contribution to make towards a pluralistic secular culture. At the same time they may not always find it easy to come to terms with existing forces of religious reform of mainstream Hinduism. Eg. the reinterpretation of the terms *arya* and *dasyu* which Swamy Agnivesh has to offer<sup>42</sup> may not be acceptable to a Dalit perspective, while his involvement with bonded labourers or his participation in *Ektamorchas* after the anti-Sikh riots are very important contributions towards the building of a secular humanist culture.

The women's movement may face its own difficulties to relate to all these forces because it may disagree with the party analysis of class and patriarchy, it may find the enlightened intellectuals to be paternalistic in dealing with women, it may find the champions of tribal and dalit culture to be romantics about women in palaeolithic times but not always helpful in day to day interaction. Finally, as women in the women's movement, we may realise that we find it difficult to agree on issues of culture and religion. There are no easy answers but indications are that the perspectives on secularism, religious reform and a pluralistic humanist culture are deepening within the women's movement. If the challenge is taken, women will be able to make the most crucial contribution towards building a truly humanist secular state.

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#### NOTES

1. Towards Equality: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWT) (1975, 4.236 7, p. 142).
2. Eg. Indian Express, Madurai Edition, Nov. 17, p.11. The Prime Minister assured the Muslim community that their personal law will not be touched.
3. See Manushi No.25, 1984 and No.26, 1985.
4. Vibhuti Patel, Sujata Gothaskar: "The Story of the Bombay Riots: In the words of Muslim Women" Manushi No.29, July/August 1985, p.41-43. Ammu Joseph, Jyoti Punwari, Charu Shahare, Kalpana Sharma: "Impact of Ahmedabad Disturbances on Women" in: E.P.W., Oct. 12, 1985, Vol. XX No.41.
5. Bipan Chandra: Communalism in Modern India (Vani Educational Books, Vikas Publishing House 1984) pp. 86f. p. 131. Bipan Chandra insists on Ganchi being a clearly anti-communalist religious reformer despite his use of Hindu imagery, eg. p. 156. See also p.167 "It has often been noted that the purely religious or theological content of communalism has tended to be rather meagre. The communalist seldom relied on Theology and, in fact, actively avoided theological issues", op. cit. 167.
6. Ibid. p. 160
7. Yojana Vol.29, No.14 & 15 August 15, Special (Govt. of India Press, New Delhi 1985)
8. Saheli Newsletter Vol.2, No.1, March 1985 p. 6ff.

9. Manushi No.27, March/April, 1985, p. 20.
10. Bipan Chandra op. cit. 292.
11. See eg. Sankar Gose; Political Ideas and Movements in India (Allied Publishers 1975) Chapter II Extremism and Militant Nationalism, especially his characterisation of Aurotindo's social outlook during his period of religious nationalism p.52.
12. E.P.W. Vol.XX No.40 Oct. 5, 1985 pp. 1691-1702 and Vol. XX no. 71, October 12, 1985, 1753-1758.
13. Quoted op. cit. p. 1691 (from Navajivan June 28, 1925).
14. See detailed examples in my own article : "Personal is Political; Women and Political Process in India" in: Teaching Politics Vol.X Annual No.1985 pp. 45-70.
15. E.P.W. Vol. XX No.40, p. 1692.
16. E.P.W. Vol.XX No.41 p. 1757
17. On this aspect see my article mentioned in note 13.
18. For a comprehensive critique of the body-soul dichotomy in Gandhi and its political implication see M.M. Thomas: Towards a redefinition of Gandhism (1953) in: Ideological Quest within Christian Commitment 1939 - 1954 (CLS, Madras 1983) pp. 236-252.
19. For the following see Gail Omvedt: Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society. The non-Brahman Movement in Western India. 1873 to 1930 (Scientific Socialist Education Trust 1976), especially chapter 6.
20. Ibid. p. 108
21. Ibid. p. 111
22. On women's position in the Dravidian Movement see my article mentioned above (note 13).
23. The Record of proceedings was published July 1967 by Bharatia Vidya Bhavan. The Committee of the Colloquium comprised the President of India, Dr. Sarvepally Radhakrishnana, the Vice-President Dr. Zakir Hussain and many leading lights of Indian political and cultural life.
24. Joachim Alva op. cit. p. 419.
25. Motilal Banasidass 1st Edition 1938, reprinted 1962 and 1973.
26. Anonymous Author, Colloquium report (note 22) p. 421 f.
27. University of Madras 1976
28. Ibid. p. 23f.
29. Ibid. p. 19
30. See eg. Malik Ram Baveja: Woman in Islam The Institute of Indo-Middle East Cultural Studies Agapura, Hyderabad, in year.
31. In memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins (SON Press 1983)



32. On this question of having to make choices between contradictory statements according to the criteria of broader humanitarian values see my paper "Perspectives of a Feminist Theology: Towards a Full Humanhood of Women and Men" in: *Woman's Image Making and Shaping* ed. by Peter Fernando & Frances Yasas (Ishvani Kendra, Pune 1985, pp. 123 - 148)
  33. Nov. 17, 1985 Express Magazine p. 5
  34. See eg. the anthropological study of Susan S. Madley (ed.) *The Power of Tamil Women* (Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs Syracuse U University 1980). This study remains very much at the surface of present day cultural expressions and takes many statements at face value in a naive way. See. C.S. Lakshmi's Critique "Up the Drumstic Tree" in *ETW* Vol.XVII No.45, Nov. 6, 1982.
  35. A rich resource of temple myths has been assembled by David Dean Shulman; *Tamil Temple Myths. Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Saiva Tradition* (Princeton University Press 1980).
  36. See Vimal Balasubramanian: "Women, Personal Laws and the Struggle for Secularism" in: *ETW* Vol. XX No.30, July 27, 1985 pp. 1260-61.
  37. "The 1984 Elections: United We Fall - Into the Trap of Manipulators", *Manushi* No.26, (Vol.5, No.2) January/February 1985 pp. 2 - 9.
  38. Eg. P.M. Bhargava in *Yojana* Vol. 29, Nos. 14 & 15 "Religion is the greatest divider of men".
  39. See her article mentioned above (note 8)
  40. See eg. his recent booklet: *Church and Human Community* (ISPCK, Delhi, 1985).
  41. See eg. his article "Some aspects of Liberation Theology in Islam" in: *Negations* (Trivandrum) Nos. 6 - 8, April 1983 to October/December, 1983.
  42. He gives a working class connotation to Aryans and translates dasyn as "robbers".
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WOMEN AND THE MEDIA

There are two aspects to this discussion of women and media -- one referring to the study, analysis and monitoring of images of women that the different media project, report on and perpetuate, and the other dealing with the role that women could play in harnessing the media in furthering the cause of equality and justice for women.

A number of studies are available on the portrayal of women in literature, advertisements, television and films, newspapers and periodicals. In general the images are sexist, either emphasising images of women as 'objects', or underplaying women's contributions, their problems and views. Sophistication of communication hardware has escalated - but what is communicated especially concerning women, has scarcely changed since kings and queens kept foot messengers in their employ. ... Women are most newsworthy when doing something "unlady like" . . . . Sisterhood of Man by Kathleen Newland. Examples of both kinds are available in plenty -- for instance, advertisements using copy and visuals based on scantily clad or provocative female pictures even for items like hardware and typewriters or grooming aids for men, cars, men's shirts etc. Advertisements like the one inserted by a bank, urging parents to "Save for a son's education and daughter's marriage" reinforce the sexist conditioning that runs counter to the constitutional guarantees forbidding discrimination on the basis of sex. Hoardings for films accentuate the erotic to the point of vulgarity, and television commercials project a 'superwoman' image (always pretty, always smiling, never a hair out of place even in the middle of chores, glamorously clad even in the kitchen, a beauty queen coping with an infant without getting a fold of her sari crumpled) that is far removed from reality, and from the archetypal everyday woman.

A recent report on the content analysis of textbooks prescribed for over 13 lakh students in Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, U.P. and Delhi observed that "men ventured out to seek fame and fortune, women stayed home to wash dishes and clothes... as against 47 biographies of men, there were only 7 of women; and of 465 occupations held by the characters in the books, women were excluded from 344 . . . ." "Sexism in textbooks", Sunday observer, November 10, 1985.

Stories for children never depict father-child relationships, and illustrations likewise reinforce the stereotype.



Although a few films have sought to project women's search for selfhood, saleability and 'success' are firmly anchored to female characters cast in the mould of victims or vamps. And whatever the theme, the camera work will invariably highlight the erotic possibilities (even a slum woman will be shown in a bathing scene, for instance, in the name of 'realism').

News reportage on women is likewise often restricted to its titillation aspect, and editors of magazines have been known to prefer 'candid comments from an actress about her relationships with men' rather than an assessment of her abilities as an actress -- "because that is what sells".

Even though 60% of rural women are involved in agriculture, radio programmes for farmers depict only males and are beamed at the male; women's programmes almost never discuss new technology, banking facilities, new laws, advances in medicine, politics etc. When the infamous 'Women's programme' on television featured an agony column ("I love him very much - should I marry him?") and a model exhorting women to do their aerobic exercises for the day, female viewers slogging through a Sunday morning routine of cooking and other chores understandably protested vociferously and put paid to the programme.

Newspaper coverage of the recent Nairobi conference where 10,000 women from all over the world congregated to assess a decade's progress typifies the marginalisation of women's issues that is found in all the media. "Where a socially conservative bent is compatible with the interests of those who control the media, the media treatment of women is narrow" - Kathleen Newland, in "Sisterhood of Man".

In general in stereotypes have been : fat women, scatterbrained women, spendthrifts ,forever.late,talkative etc. There have been some changes, to be sure -- television serials, for instance, portray a variety of women characters -- but in general, it is the men who are in charge of communication media and therefore decide how much and what kind of coverage women's issues and activities get. The press and publishing houses are controlled by men. And increased participation by women in the media is one of the main ways to combat sexism and to ensure that women's roles do not stop with being peripheral, both in reality and in reportage or representation in the media.

What does this increased participation mean, and call for?

What can we do?

1. For one thing, those of us with access to the media must maximise its use to translate constitutional and legal provisions into everyday realities.
2. Women in parliament and in the assemblies must become more active, more vocal.
3. Women writers and journalists must <sup>use</sup> their skills to probe women's issues, priorities and perspectives.
4. Like the new venture, Kali for women, there must be more publishing outlets for women's expression and articulation.
5. Those of us who are copywriters can mould and change stereotypes and build up fresh portraits that put women on a footing of equality and treat them as persons rather than the female sex.
6. As audiences we could use our reactions to offensive images to influence public reception - to plays, films, stories etc. At the moment most of us do not bother to voice our reactions and through default let stereotypes perpetuate themselves.
7. Those of us who are professionally qualified - as lawyers, doctors and so on - can make our expertise available to popularise new developments by communicating information in a way that lay women can understand. To give just one example, the pros cons of different kinds of contraceptives, the latest findings about controversial drugs like Depo Provera etc. are not highlighted by the media even though they should be of great relevance to a large section of the population. Those of us who have access to information should come forward to communicate it to others, using whatever media available - either through writing or through talks for women's groups, for broadcasts, and on TV.

When we talk of communication media, we often restrict ourselves to print and visuals, whereas the oral tradition -- communication through word of mouth -- is still a very potent medium in our ethos. The more we move away from the traditional extended family norms and towards a nuclear family lifestyle, the more it becomes important to explore or keep alive various communication lines, particularly for the women. And in a society where literacy rates for females are only 25% against the national average of over 40%, communications through media other than prints become important. Women's groups, whether in the villages or in the urban set-up, can play a role as alternative media for communication.



8. Often 'women's groups' are read as 'anti-man' - which is not the right interpretation. Although men become the antagonists when they are the perpetrators of unfair treatment (harassment for dowry, for instance), the quest for selfhood for women is not necessarily at the cost of the male. What we demand is the right to fulfilment alongside men as partners in a common endeavour, without being treated as subordinate; if this aspect is highlighted more, it might attract more sympathy for the women's cause and draw more women into the movement.

At present even among women there is a misconception that feminism means promoting women at the expense of men. The media can be used to dispel this misconception and thereby to build ideals of a just partnership between the sexes.

9. There are three areas in which women can harness the media towards goals of equality -- these are boycott, protest and feedback. Boycott can be a very effective weapon in discouraging humiliating stereotypes -- we can boycott products that are promoted with sexist sales campaigns, boycott films that portray women in a damaging light, and boycott shops or institutions whose policies have sexist undertones. Such denigrating portrayals as well as the movement for boycott can both be publicised through the media - print, visual as well as oral.

Boycott as a consumer issue campaign has been known to have been used very effectively by Japanese housewives (for instance, in their fight with television manufacturers). It can likewise be used to fight sexist images too in the media.

Even when we are conscious of media distortions of women's images, most of us do not register our protest, either because of inertia, or because we are too busy and don't have the time to pen a letter to the manufacturer or the ad agency or the newspaper, or often because we feel that it would make no difference. It makes no difference precisely because not enough among us take the trouble to lend the weight of numbers to a protest. If only more women took the trouble to make their views known - through the letters columns in papers, or through participation in discussions, or through letters commenting on programmes on radio or television - we could use the media to reshape the images of women that will project them in a different light. Collective protests can

be very potent but perhaps because of the image of women's groups as anti-male militants, not enough mass-level momentum is being mustered by women's groups. This vicious cricle needs to be broken. Women in general do not make the effort to register feedback also, for the same reasons. Writing to media heads to express opinion about items carried, either as articles or plays, discussion, entertainment etc, could have an impact on the continuation of those images that are appreciated and elimination of those that cause offence. We must make more of an effort to register support for media images that are positive and condemn those that are derogatory. In this way we would be using the media to change the images that the media carry and perpetuate, of women.

10. The stress on 'Good motherhood' is universal and pervasive. Good fatherhood, on the other hand, finds no mention, in fiction, mythology, social comment, advertisements, or whatever. Why do women not insist on adequate emphasis being placed on the role of the father too, and the need for good fatherhood models in media portraits?

This has particular relevance in the society in flux that we are now in, where women have come out to participate in domains hitherto tackled only by men, but at the same time continue to be held responsible for the duties that were traditionally female. This double burden degrades women just as much as lack of opportunities, but this is lost sight of in the heady success of having won access to a wider world of activities. Women have, in effect, become the losers in one sense, in this development. It is time that we gave thought to media projections of the obligations of fatherhood too, and those of men alongside women in the changed milieu of today.

11. The media can be used to restore a measure of balance to the ethic of self-denial that has been traditionally advocated - only for the female. By protesting against portrayals that glorify self-negation and by using the media to popularise images that weigh self respect against abnegation, we could change some of the stereotypes.

On the one hand, the media reflect reality - in women's lives, as in other areas. And on the another, reality can also be shaped by the ideals that the media hold up as prototypes. In this sense, women's efforts to react and register approval or condemnation of media images can have a snow-balling effect in helping us strive towards goals of equality.



Each country and community has its own search for answers to problems of gender inequality, but understanding the universal experience of women is an important part of this process of evolving specific strategies. The media must be used to publicise and describe the diverse experiences of women in different regions and at different times of history, whether it is through fiction ( the black American women writers, for instance) or historical accounts or survey reports and research projects.

12. Apart from harnessing the existing media, we should be thinking in terms of alternative communication media to overcome the isolation that is typical of nuclear lifestyles. The pressures on the time and resources of a working woman deplete her in terms of interpersonal interactions. The media is now only for newsmakers, not for the average women. We must therefore make ourselves more visible and more audible so that we can move towards a society in which women, who form half the population, could contribute their share in building a better life -- for both men and women.

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In search of answers, ed. Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanitha , Zed.

Tyranny of the household, ed. Devaki Jain, Nirmala Benerjee, Shakti books.

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Sakuntala Narasimhan

P R O B L E M S O F W O M E N I N S L U M S  
P R E S E N T E D B Y  
"W O M E N S V O I C E"

A T  
THE SEMINAR ORGANIZED BY E.C.C. ON "THE EMERGING TRENDS  
IN WOMENS MOVEMENTS:

A brief background about the Slum situation.

Bangalore, considered to be the 5th largest city in India, is fast developing into a burgeoning metropolis. An inevitable result of such urbanization processes are the proliferation of squatter settlements which dot the city's skyline living in these settlements, under absolutely dehumanizing conditions are lakhs of slum dwellers who are forced to migrate to cities because of the exploitative and subjugating socio-economic and political forces that operate in our rural . The polarization of wealth, and ownership of land in the hands of few drive these people to seek their livelihood in the unprotected informal sectors where they find jobs as domestic workers, construction workers, vegetable vendors etc. Their meagre earnings push them out of a competitive urban market and they can barely afford to have a shabby hut with tattered roofs as their dwelling places. Left with no option they begin to make their home wherever possible - often, the places they occupy are unwanted lands, marshy wastelands, vacant areas next to railway tracks etc, all places that might have remained vacant had they not been made livable by these poor people. Many slum areas face the double burden of neither having any basic amenities essential for a livable existence, nor the security of being identified and recognized by the concerned authorities, and therefore they get categorized as illegal occupants having to face the threat of evictions and demolitions at the whims and fancies of the ruling government. Therefore, in a country suffocated by discrepancies and class distinctions, and where less than 20% of the total population own more than 75% of the land, 45% own 2% of the land and the rest are landless, it is inevitable that millions of people live in the darkness of hunger, squalour, dreaded disease, malnourishment, illiteracy, and injustice. And while the proverbial iceberg of urban poverty looms large in our cities, the women living in slums, are doubly crushed and oppressed by a society that pushes them to the base of that iceberg.



Hence in the case of the slum women of Bangalore there was a strongly felt need to organize themselves against the injustice shown to them, and this culminated in a movement "Women's Voice is a movement of women belonging to the poorer sections and the unorganised sector of labour, based in Bangalore. It came into being with a understanding that the real development and power of women meant, amongs other things, the right to determine ones own choices in life and thereby wield an influence on the social processes that affect their lives.

Women, have, in India as a whole been brought up in an inferior way. The family would through a feast at the birth of a son, and go into mourning at the birth of a girl, and from them on she would be looked upon as a burden - also a domesticated animal to carry the work load. She has no freedom to enjoy her childhood, a school life and companionship, for a girl of 10 years has to sweep, wash, cook, fetch water, mother her younger brothers and sisters, and marry her off when she comes of age. She has learned to subdue herself to the male members of the family.

In India, as in other countries of the world there is a great discrepancy between the real life situation in which women find themselves, and the idealized concept of women and their rights. All over the world, women are denied equal access with men to opportunities for personal growth, and social development in education, employment, marriage etc. Thus they are burdened with inequalities which in turn are responsible for their low status. In the Indian context the suffering of the women is more extensive because of the traditional value system, the segregated character of society, and the intensive nature of poverty. But, it is not poverty alone that is responsible for their lack of interest in the struggles for justice and rights, but the lack of attitudes and values that are required to motivate them to assert their rights -rights such as an adequate means of livelihood for men and women equally, equal pay for equal work for men and women, protection of health and strength, just and human conditions of work etc., which the constitution assures all women in its directive principles

So India has a body of social legislation that are aimed at safeguarding the rights of women. Her, constitutional statements concerning sexual equality and social justice, makes India's system

of civil and political rights sound as modern and just as any democratic country, but as we all know, these are a series of 'paper-laws' with too little or too late attempts at implementation.

The law of a nation is meant to give protection to individuals and safeguard their rights, but today, in the context of changing life patterns and situations a new understanding of the law and the rights it ensures to all women, and a movement capable of providing this necessary understanding was deeply felt by the slum women, and "Women's Voice" was envisaged as such a movement.

The problem of slum women are manifold - there are those that are related to her role and status as perceived by her community, and **there** are others which arise because of the Government policies related to slums which at the implementation stage are absolutely anti-poor policies.

To illustrate, if we take into consideration the policy/approach of the government in evicting slum dwellers, we could say that it has an adverse effect on women, in that, first of all, it disrupts the entire functioning of the family and calls in for a lot of coping capacity to deal with the situation. Very often it is found that demolitions take place during the day time when only women are present at home, with the expectation on the part of authorities that there will be comparatively lesser resistance offered. As a result, women are forced to directly bear the attack by the authorities who allow them no time to salvage their belongings.

Eviction also affects women who are self-employed or are employed around their place of stay. In case of being shifted, they are forced to give up their work which further aggravates the already deprived conditions of the family where, often the women equally share the economic burden. Loss of job in itself creates tension and anxiety in women who have to start from scratch again. Very often it happens that to shift to a new place or to resettlement colonies do not provide enough opportunities for employment in that area. The choice that they have before them is to either look out for a job further away from their place of stay, or remain with out a job. Obviously, any job further away from the area results in extra physical strain in addition to the demands made by the job itself and increased travel expenses, and in case they decide not to take up any job, they are forced to manage within the meagre salaries earned by their husbands.



Eviction as such creates an additional economic burden, as huts have to be re-built. This burden is equally shared by women. For this purpose money is either borrowed or vessels are pawned, thus further aggravating the poverty condition in which they live.

Another illustration of the problems created due to a lack of civic amenities, is that it causes additional strain on the part of women. As per the analysis given earlier, quite a significant proportion of the population in slums have no civic amenities. Due to this situation, women are pressurised to obtain water from nearby buildings, where they bear the humiliation of rejection from the people staying in buildings. By repeated requests or plea, they are able to fetch very little water, just sufficient for cooking and cleaning vessels. In certain cases they are left with no choice but to pay money for water which again limits the quantity of water available for use which in turn affects the health and hygiene of the family. Along with water, many slum areas are also devoid of latrines and electricity, which create other problems, particularly for women.

Hence, the impact of lack of civic amenities are much worse in that it increases the work load of the women at the same time imposing too many limitations on her due to the drain of economic resources which ultimately has implications in relations to the economic condition of the family. Therefore, the women in slums are forced to deal with their stresses and strain in addition to the one that already exist due to the poverty situation.

Problems related to the role and status of women as perceived by the community.

In this area, we will be mainly looking at the way the community looks at women in slums, what is the role expected out of her and what is the impact of this role expectation on the status offered to women in slums-

Firstly, the role expected of women in slums is not only that of running the household, but also contributing to the income of the family. The economic condition of a large number of families compel women to take up work and supplement the family income which demands an additional strength and time on the part of women. Hence the day of a working woman starts around 4 or 5 A.M. in the morning when she finishes her household duties of cooking, filling water and

cleaning and then leaves for work. The type of work that they take up involves the use of physical energy, in occupations like selling fruits or vegetables, washing clothes or cleaning gutters or any such job, which does not demand any specific skill or education. Hence, when they reach home in the evening, they are absolutely drained of any energy whatsoever. Back at home, mechanically they get back to their household duties and in the night collapse out of exhaustion. The role that she plays is more like a human machine which operates amidst all tension and frustration in trying to keep the family going.

This pattern of life obviously limits her participation in the growth and development of her children or other family members. Being able to contribute to the growth of children demands a certain amount of time which she has no reserves left. As a result, she neither finds the time, nor sees need to find out how her children are performing at school, what are their problems or do they at all regularly go to school. Very often she is unable to cater to the emotional needs of her children in terms of showing her warmth, or affection or recognition, either because she is not knowledgeable about its importance or because she herself has been so deprived and is thus conditioned not to see the need for it. On the contrary the situation we often find is that of a natural displacement of anger and frustration of the environment on the children, which affects the already inadequate relationship. The atmosphere in the family is not facilitative in case where she has to deal with the drinking or gambling habits of her husband. Her reaction of feelings towards the problem is that of justified anger when on the one hand she desperately tries to patch up the family's economic need and on the other hand, the little that is there is being siphoned off to such habits. This situation further leads to continuous fights in the family, and offers no appropriate growth model for the children.

As regards her role as far as decision-making is concerned, she, in majority of the cases, is not allowed to take part in any major decisions. Culturally, she is viewed as a person who is to obey the orders of the male members, or she is considered to be the implementing arm of her husband's decisions. This is found not only in the cases where only the husband is the bread winner, but in cases where she is the sole bread winner in the family.



Thus, the role of the woman is expected more at the level of managing the mechanical functioning of the house and supplementing the income if needed rather than at the level of participation in the overall growth of her family.

Furthermore, due to the nature of the responsibility she has, she is unable to find any time for participating in community activities. This becomes absolutely impossible for working women but as for other women who is not working, they may find some time during the day to get involved in community activities. In cases where she is not working and is interested in community activities, she has to obtain sanction from her husbands and in quite a number of the cases this is denied to her due to three reasons: either (i) because the husband finds that by getting involved in community activities, she is getting involved in the political dynamics prevailing in the area which he objects to; (ii) he feels that it is more so the responsibility of the leaders than the residents to take up community issues; or (iii) because he does not see the importance of her role or the contribution that she can make in solving community problems. He does not see that besides being responsible at the home front, she can also participate in community affairs, and that she has the capacity to do so. This attitude primarily has its origin in the cultural practice and the norms laid down, that limit the woman to her family and not beyond that. There is no scope for the development of the potentialities in adopting a very mature approach to problem-solving, in organising the community and taking effective action on the problems by virtue of being the most hurt by these problems, developing greater understanding about the various socio-economic and political structures which operate in the society and their implications on the problems she faces.

As regards the minority group, of women who participate in community activities, it is found that very often they are not offered equal status or responsibility in the various committees that exists. Their participation is seen at the secondary level in the entire process. Thus, it is seen that the family and the community offers her a secondary status as compared to men, but expects her to equally share the economic burden in the family as well as solely bear the brunt of the household responsibilities. This curbs her growth, and she remains a silent observer in the entire process of exploitation and injustice that operates around her.

In the sphere of health, these women live in an environment where their dwelling places are cesspools of rampant dreaded disease, chronic illness, ill health, high rate of malnourishment among children and women, and infant mortality especially in children below 5 years remain rampant. Yet the medicare available to them in Government hospitals must stand condemned. Pregnant women are often treated worse than cattle in maternity hospitals. Government servants (several of them) at the delivery points of health are so corrupt and demoralised that care to the poor is not provided until and unless they give bribe. Improper use of various Family Planning methods have proven to be disastrous and there is no proper follow up designed at the implementation level. And now they are being used as guinea pigs by the administration which wants to introduce injectible contraceptives, which have already been banned in developed countries.

One of the greatest sufferings of our women, is the health problem in our country. According to the F.A.O. 3 out of 10 women never have enough to eat. Her constant concern is finding enough food for the family, and when food is available, its preparation has to be done with primitive tools. She is unable to store and preserve food which then gets wasted. Her decisions strongly influence the diet, but she does not have access to information on nutrition and food values. Without adequate training she sets the standards of sanitation and hygiene and she is burdened by lack of access to adequate water, fuel, and the rise in prices. All these conditions bring about illness and disease. When the family is ill, it is left to the woman to cure them. If she goes to a doctor he prescribes drugs that she cannot afford with the coin in the cover of the sari. There are 35000 branded drugs on sale in India but a Government Committee believes that health needs could be met by only 116 drugs. In India 60 firms with foreign shares accounted for 70% of the country's total drug sales in 1 year. The remaining 116 large and 2,500 small companies shared. The drugs that would help the poor are not produced because they bring no profit, while the country continues to be flooded by costly and wasteful drugs meant for the minor illness of the rich and they are costly because of the elegant packing and cosmetic establishment. The drugs that are banned by foreign countries are given to our poor people. It is only the urban rich who can reach the hospital, doctor, ward and medicine regularly. Illness affects men and women, yet it is the



woman who has to take care of the husband, and children and forget herself. What a frustration when she cannot buy the medicine prescribed, give nourishing food, be ill-treated in hospitals, unable to give bribes, miss daily work and wages, and finally in desperation she the child of her womb die, and girls die more frequently than boys. So health is a problem of poverty and a burden on the woman.

Illiteracy is wide spread amongst the slum communities, and once again, the women are the bottom rung of the ladder of education.

So many tears would be less if there was more education. It is said that the father spends money to educate the sons, and saves money for the daughter's marriage. If women are to be developed and make a contribution to the society, education is a must, otherwise they continue to be marginalised. 1971 census shows that whilst 39.5% men are educated only 18.7% women are educated. Out of 50 million urban women only 42% are educated and of 214 million rural women only 13% are educated. If a girl is sent to school she is withdrawn after 2 or 3 years to look after the cow, the home, and young ones. At the early time she is married. She has had no scope to develop her potentials and this suits a male dominated world., for if she were educated she would not have to be dependent on husband and in-laws. So as it stands she has not the time or energy to reflect on her condition. The reason for her status or any consciousness of the girls in society around, yet she is blamed for not being able to think, speak and act. It is the very in-equality that are at the root for causing suppression of her greatness and ability. Slum women, who given the opportunity are bold, courageous and articulate.

Women's Voice gave them such an opportunity. It provided a platform from which women of the poorer sections could unite and fight for their rights. As many of them were employed in the un-organized sector of labour such as domestic work, construction work etc., they began to question the exploitative wage structures. They felt that the cause for many of their problems is the unequal distribution of land, ownership of land and the unavailability of affordable housing.

After a series of meetings and group discussions pertaining to their problems, the slum women organised various marches, dharnas and other forms of struggles to pressurise the Government to give them the right to ownership of land and provide affordable housing facilities, provide basic amenities to all slums, cut down price rise and ensure a fair ration distribution system, to properly implement legislations and programmes pertaining to health, education, pensions, social welfare programmes etc. They fought for the enactment of a separate welfare bill for the unorganised sector of labour and to extend maternity benefits, creche facilities, E.S.I. benefits etc. to women in this sector of labour. They also fought for the better treatment of women, with dignity and respect at police stations. They demanded that legal aid facilities be extended to them. And in order to ensure that policy makers and the Government treat slum women as 'subjects' determining their own history and not mere objects to be manipulated as 'puppets', they demanded that they be taken as representatives on all boards and committees pertaining to the welfare of women from weaker sections.

'Women's Voice' also took up cases of dowry i.e. Anathalakshmi's case from Tumkur where the girl was given support by the organisation in helping her register a case with the police, follow it up, and help her fight the case in the High Court.

In the sphere of fighting for their housing rights the women in one particular slum area called the Lakshmiपुर slum, successfully came together, called for a general body meeting and for the first time in the slum's history, they vociferously resisted and decried the exploitative leadership of the localmen, local goonism, interference from political gangs etc., that had become the lifestyle of the community. Instead, they participated in designing their own houses as per their families requirements, putting up a viable proposal to the corporation authorities having it sanctioned and are now on the threshold of implementing a re-housing programme of the entire community. They are now fighting and demanding that patta be given in the name of the women, and not the men. This is an example of how women in a community, by understanding their problems and status, were able to play a concrete role to tear apart the shackles that tied them to their hearth, and instead, alter the face of the communities housing needs.



In yet another situation, in Sampangramnagar slum, Manichamma, a local hindu woman was being harrassed by certain muslim men in the area who are demandng that she shift her house from next to the mosque. The muslim women in the area, forgetting all religious barriers, fought the local men and succeeded in settling the issue amicably.

In the case of Someshwara slum, women in the entire community were being harassed because of the location of an arrack shop in the vicinity of the slum. They got together, made representations through the local municipal commissioner, and ultimately, through their struggles had the shop removed.

Other examples and case studies that I would like to refer to which would highlight the struggles taken up by 'Women's Voice' are the cases of:-

Eg. Shamala - suicide case - Sampangramnagar.

Eg. Padma at Mysore Road - her son's death - fighting local goondas and seeking justice.

Eg. In the sphere of health -(procession to Gosha Hospital.) Forced Sterilization incident at Millers Tank.

Eg. CSI - Compound - land issue and eviction - getting of a High Court stay order.

Eg. Free education for girls, and distribution of free text books and uniforms was one of the demands of 'Women's Voice' which the present government has now implemented in part. Some problems are solved, some partly, some completely and yet others remain unresolved - The struggles continue unabated, the women hold their heads up high and fight for what is rightly due to them for justice.

So, from all that we have seen, the development of women is an integral process, Her low status and suffering is due to the socio-economic, religious and political systems in our society. While both women and men in the poorer sections of society have to fight together for justice, woman has to liberate herself, and she can do so if she is able to reveal her power and force, if she is given the freedom to articulate herself, and if she is respected by man for what she is as an equal partner, united with the strength of other women too, she can bring about a change in her life.

I would like to end quoting a poem I once read-

Mother, woman  
walk and raise your fist  
Affirm your decision to be free.  
You are salt; you are sap;  
You are strength; you are work  
Thus, you are life.  
In the fields,  
In the factories,  
In the home.  
You have the truth of your strength  
From your life - giving bosom.  
Don't walk three yards behind  
your comrade.  
And the revolution,  
walk in front of them.  
It's your place by right  
Mother, woman  
The revolution is you.

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STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN'S STRUGGLES

- by Nirmala  
Women's Centre Bombay

We are living in the world of democracy. It gives slogans of 'Equality and Justice'. But the reality tells us a different story. That is the story of 'Discrimination'. We can see and experience inequality every where. There is inequality amongst capitalist and working class - which is known as 'capitalism' - also land owners and landless labourers, upper caste and lower caste - known as 'casteism', white and black which is 'Raceism' and between sexes - man and woman - which we call 'sexism'. This unequal status gives rise to various movements - working class movements, dalit movements, Black movements and women's movements. To understand and develop any movement we have to consider two important aspects of the movement. One is the theory and the other is the practice. Theory is a scientific analysis of a particular mode of inequality and oppression and defines the ultimate aim of the movement. It helps in guiding our practical strategies. practice is active manifestation of the theory and activity towards the ultimate aim of it. It helps further modifications and development of the theory of the movement.

Here we are concerned about women's movements. Movements which are broadly guided by the ideology of fighting the sexual division of labour and 'patriarchy' and which acts against specific issues of women's oppression, in an uncompromising fashion. Movements which move in the direction of liberation can be called 'Women's movements' or 'Women's Liberation Movement'.

All of us know what is sexual division of labour! We experience it every moment of our lives. It is the division of labour according to your sex. Man is supposed to do certain kind of work and woman has to do a certain kind of work. This division of labour has no scientific basis or explanation. On the other hand scientific research had proved that there is no difference between man and woman either in intelligence or in working capacities. Only a biological difference does not make women subordinate to men. But it is the social value system which is responsible for sexual division of labour. We found this division at personal as well as social levels. In the family, women are to bear and rear children, to cook, to nurse etc. and man is the bread winner of the family. He is supposed to work outside the house and remain the head of the family. In society this reflects the male superiority over the female. All social institutions, political, religious institutions are male dominated. First of all, woman is not to earn and run the house. But in a new capitalist society, it is a requirement of the family that woman should go and work for money. What profession can the woman follow? The same work she did at home, teaching, nursing, etc. Women's movements have to fight this at both levels.

The term patriarchy refers to the system of male domination in the society. It means the power of male head of the family and refers to the power of the man both over women and children and all other dependents in the family. It links the power of men in the society as a whole.

Patriarchy is a system and sexual division of labour is its expression. It gives subordinate role to women in society. It makes woman an instrument to produce children and mainly male children. Because of male dominance, it tends towards female infanticide, i.e. to kill female children. 'phutpiti' tradition shows it in earlier times, and amniocentesis in modern technical age.

Patriarchy changes its expression according to economic structure of the society. In the feudal system it was different - it was expressed in very brutal form - as 'gati' tradition - no value to a woman after her husband's death. It was the tradition of upper class people. It becomes a culture and women from all classes were made to accept the role of sati-savithri. Husband becomes the God and so on. Here, it is not the subject of our discussion.

This exploitation and oppression is faced by all women, inspite of their class, caste and race. That is the special feature of sexist operation. Working class women, dalit women, black women are facing double and triple oppression. To get equal status as human beings, women have to fight class, caste, race and patriarchial oppression.

Now we have to see how we are going to fight all this. When we look at the women's movements, we divide them into the following categories;

(i) There are some movements which were for women but not initiated by women. Reformist movements like abolition of 'gati' though it had never challenged patriarchy as such had helped to stop very cruel exploitation. This movement merely attacked the brutal manner in which women were recognised to mere appendages of man. It gave rise to the movement of anti-child marriage, widow remarriage and women's education. The movements aim was just the emancipation of women's status in the society and not to change the patriarchial structure as such. Of course all these movements enable women to come up and to have a look at the world.

(ii) Participation of women in general struggles. Women have participated in all types of movements. From National movements to working class movement, dalit movement, landless labourers movement etc.

During the national movement Mahatma Gandhi had given the call to all women to participate in 'national movement for freedom'. We can see that thousands of women came out of the house and very bravely and militantly did their jobs.



But here the role of a woman was not seen as a co-fighter, but a very subordinate one to man. The whole Gandhian philosophy talks about the purity of women, motherhood, chastity, sacrifice and inner strength is glorified. She does not seem to recognise her patriarchial oppression, but was pushed under the carpet.

Most of the time in general struggles of women have been used as a reserve force. They are just there to back their men in the struggle. We can see this picture in various movements like, anti-repression, anti-caste, in communal riots, trade union struggles, landless labourers struggles, pavement dwellers and so on.

Women are called out to show the strength in number or because they are very militant but in decision making process they are excluded. When women do participate they are very militant and are in the forefront of the struggle. Eg. Yebaga, Yelengana Chipto movement etc. Whenever they are participating in the movement they very much belong to that oppressive group. But the tradition of looking at these general struggle is that they are struggles of men - of a particular class, caste or race. As if women from that some class, caste, race are not existing individually but do exist as the shadow of their menfolk. This general struggle must be recognised as struggles of both men and women.

We aim to change the status of women, we must <sup>try</sup> to change their role in these movements. Women must participate at each and every level - consciously with the power to make decisions and even to change the nature and form of these struggles.

We must try to organise women, make them conscious about the struggles in which they are participating as their own struggle because of their class, caste and race. At the same time we must make conscious efforts to point out patriarchial oppression in society as well as in their own family. Actually their subordinate role in the struggle is also an expression of the patriarchial system. For this type of real and equal participation of women in any struggle we have to form women's groups within that particular organisation.

For example Shramita Stree Mukti Sanghatna is a women's group within Shramita Sanghatna - a mass organisation of landless labourers and Adhivasis in Dhulia District. The group had played a great role in raising the consciousness of women as well as men about the patriarchial oppression.

To increase women's participation in common struggles, the burden of house work has to be reduced. It will be possible only if the men are made conscious about their responsibility in sharing the house work. For that, the mass organisation women's groups should work as pressure groups. And women have to give conscious, continuous fight with their own men, very collectively.

It is important for us to realise and to make others realise that these struggles are common to men and women. Women are co-fighters and not just followers.

(iii) Movements of women on General issues.

In some of the movements on general issues, women may be the only participants eg. movement against price rise, anti war, for water, for slum improvement etc. Women as consumers and care takers of the home experience price rise more directly and can be mobilised against it without ever challenging the male dominated family or social structure. It may confirm the gender division of labour - men fighting for wage rise and women for anti price rise.

No doubt that these movements often play a progressive role. Women taking part in them experience their own collective strength and it can bring towards their own ways of organising for eg. anti-price rise movement in 1973/74 was a major factor preceding the rise of new women's movement of 1979. Similarly, the women's peace movement is not only a movement of mothers of warriors but its methods and impact are feminist moves.

Participating and generating this type of movements will definitely help women's movement towards the aim of achieving equal status as human beings in many ways.

- a. Women will come out of the four walls
- b. They experience collective strength
- c. With proper scientific analysis of the situation, it will help to raise the consciousness about male domination in the family structure and in social life.
- d. It gives women self confidence to go further to fight their own oppression as women.

(iv) Feminist or women's liberation movement.

We have seen so far how women have taken part in all sorts of movements, from every rightist to the leftist movements. In Western countries at the time of the World Wars, women came out of the house to support their nations. But afterwards, men tried to put them back to their position in the house. Here in India we women have played a great role in freedom movements in India and we got equality on paper.

Even progressive and left organisations are male dominated. They were fighting against class hierarchy but not sex hierarchy. Ideologically they may agree to women's liberation but in practice it is not important to them. They were having women's front which are dominated by respective parties. Over and above, immediate economic problems, other specific problems of women like dowry, wife beating, rape, sexual discrimination at work were not taken up by them.



The women who were part of the leftist and socialist movements found it very disgusting. They realised that whatever you fight, be militant, make sacrifices, everything is fruitless for your own liberation. As a result of the reformist movement, the brutal expression of patriarchy was ended. Women got educated because of the need of the modern age to start working. Education has opened up a vast horizon for them. They learned science, technology etc. but patriarchy holds them tight on their subordinate and secondary position in the society. So there was no other way than to fight for their special oppression - that is against patriarchy. Now they do not want to remain in the struggles just as mothers, sisters or wives of the activists, but they themselves are activists, fighting against all sorts of hierarchy and oppression.

Around 1975 in the years of Women, declared by the UNO, we see the emergence of the feminist movement in India. This woman's movement mainly concerns the women's oppression in sex biased, male dominated society. It deals with it on two levels - one is giving individual support to the woman in distress and secondly on the social level - to raise the social conscience of men through marches, campaigns, public meetings, public protests and through media, about women's issues. This movement is taking all types of women's oppressions eg. Rape, wife beating, health, family planning, science and women, women's image and role in media, law and women, struggles of working women etc. from individual to collective struggles

What are the strategies of the movement?

If we examine the stands taken by the movements we can understand the strategies of it.

(1) Rape ; Anit rape movement in 1980 was wide spread in and around India. Rape was the issue that was not to be spoken of. Gang rapes by Gundas, Police, in Communal riots, and during the wars was not new at all, but they were seen in a different light.

- a. Bad people drunkards, psychic people are rapists.
- b. Women are the cause. Fashions, modernity etc. gives rise to the situations in which men rape women and many other reasons are given.

But all those were myths of rape and the movement had taken a different stand on it. Rape is a cruel expression of male dominance over women. During the wars and riots one community used to rape the women of another community. Women of both communities became victims of male enmity against each other. They are treated as valuable belongings of the other party which can be destroyed by raping them.

Rape is the outcome of male chauvinism - that he has power over women - and women are mere objects to satisfy men's needs. Men can get them, by owning them, buying them or by force. And at the same time rape means the end of a woman's dignity.

Even the rape laws were not very much in favour of women. So the movement has taken up this issue, asked for changes in the law and has started helping individuals who were the victims.

(ii) Wife Beating; It is a world wide phenomenon. Husbands beat their wives, because they got the power over her through the patriarchial system. Wife beating was treated as a personal issue. But the movement has given a new dimension to it. It is not just a personal problem, but a political one. Men are beating women because of the power relationship between them. So many organisations have started Centres which are giving help to women who are beaten up or maltreated or harassed.

The outlook towards this problem is also very different from traditional one. Traditionally, it was seen that the women have to adjust more, wife beating is not a good thing but that big issue and after all, family interest is greater than her. But feminists look at it differently. When a husband beats his wife, the wrong doer is h. He has no right to beat his wife and she should not stand for it. They give her full moral support as well as material support. They help women to become independent and to be confident and self respecting. There are many difficulties in getting economic independence.

For that, movements demand reservation in jobs for women in distress, shelter homes for women, more hostels for women (working and single) as well as for women with children. The family in which the woman has no respect, she should not stick to it, it is better even if it breaks. Women are not the cause of family breaking up but they are victims of it. With this new strategy, some new centres are working - Women's Centre in Bombay, Sakhi Kendra in Kanpur, Seeli in Delhi and so many in different places.

(iii) Health; Women's health is always a neglected facet. Women are many times over worked, malnourished and neglected. Poverty is no doubt a reason for bad health problems, but even the men are more important than women. Image of women as delicate looking also tends towards neglecting good food habits and good health. Even during pregnancy she is neglected. Movements are bringing out health issues as very important issues concerning women. And women have a right to good health as a human being and member of society.



(iv) Family Planning; Family planning methods are developing in a way that one may feel that it is the problem of women only. Controlling fertility means controlling women's fertility only. It suits the old philosophy of Big kshetra.

Women, especially women from third world countries are used as guinea pigs. No body is concerned about the side effects of the experiments. They were forced to go through with it. No question even arises whether a woman wants to control her fertility or not. If the state wants a woman to be more fertile, there will be a ban on family planning and vice versa.

Women's movements protest against this. As women we want to have control to have control over our own bodies. So movements think about health, sex education of women and always alert them about new family planning methods. They are making public interest cases on the use of hazardous family planning methods.

(v) New science and technology.

Women's movement is never and will never be anti-science or technology but it is definitely against the mis use of it. It has been used against women. A recent example of it is amniocentesis - or sex determination test-which make a female child enable to born. After birth we are feeling lots of problems but denying our right to birth is cruelty. It is the expression of Patriarchy through new techniques. Women's movement will fight against with its all power and strength.

(vi) Women's movements deals with the cultural image of women. All medias give an image of either sati savithri devi or do slave woman, and on the other level a mere sex object. Both of this are anti women. We want to fight out and create an image of a woman as a human being - female human being of Manushi.

It is important for women's liberation movement to find out the subtle and crude forms of patriarchal oppression. To start a movement to reduce and end it. To abolish all hierachial relations from society the movement has to co-ordinate and work with all other organisations who are fighting against any particular oppression. But this support to the movement will not be a subordinate one, and not one way also.

Yet women's liberation movement is in its early stages. They have to develop their theories, collect the strength and fight out with the oppressive situations. But whatever difficulties are coming in the way, the movements are going on increasing.

A genuine women's movement puts the welfare of women first and then connects this with overall social goals rather than seeing women's issues as subordinate to other goals. It moves in directions of giving equal status within the movement itself as well as in the broader society.



## REPORT

The meeting was inaugurated by Mrs. Margaret Alva, Minister for Youth Sports and women welfare . She emphasised the need to achieve full human participation of women in all walks of life. One of the ways to achieve this is to change from women's welfare to development of women in their full human potential .

The Presentations were started <sup>from Bombay</sup> by Nirmala, reviewing the history of experiences of FAW. The forum originally started as an anti rape movement by educated women with a somewhat radical , political background. The need for autonomy was emphasised in order to avoid wasting enless energy to constantly prove that women are equal . The forum decided to work mainly as an educational movement trying to influence public opinions. The organisational structure was discussed which was as democratic as possible but still creates certain inequalities due to differences in experience, skills and persistence. Forum remains a middle class organisation not attempting to build mass organisations but getting at times massive support on issues like keeping ladies compartments of local trains free from men. Formation of cultural groups also became very important. Work is now going on to get single women, and women with children hostel accommodation. While the propoganda work is carried out by the Forum, concrete follow up is done by the Women's Centre.

Discussions were focussed on the question of autonomy which was defined as non-political party formations. It was emphasized that women's organisations with such affiliations are in no way less important. Autonomy would simply mean self guidance, but co-operation with other organisations on broader issues remains important. It was also pointed out that over exposure of certain cases can create problems for the persons involved. Criteria should be to strengthen the victimized woman and avoid sensationalism.

Rural women's organisations were presented by Jaya Kumari of SERD Arkonam. She narrated the history of rape cases and explained how their movement works, on the one hand through a voluntary organisation <sup>independent</sup> with self employment schemes, health and educational programmes while <sup>independent</sup> Women Sangams are formed in villages and co-operation is also attempted with the local landless labourers union. Aims of the movement are to break male authority over women, overcome capitalism and create an egalitarian society. Cultural work in songs and skitts are also very important.

Madhu Kishwar of Manushi presented the situation of tribal women in Singbhum District of Bihar where 80 to 90% of the work in the village is done by women and all the same, women can have no property rights in land. Unmarried women and widows have the right of maintenance by the

use of land but are harrassed even for that. Control of men over land is held by prohibiting women to plough. Supreme Court case for acquiring land rights for women is pending since several years. Madhu emphasized the importance of ownership to land rights to all women and the need to address ourselves as women to the problem of land reform. Discussions focussed on the question of how property rights relate to other problems of social control over women like physical violence, psychological and social aspects.

On the second day, morning sessions focussed on women in the media and religion. Shakuntala Narasimhan, a journalist from Bombay went into sexist images in the media and tried to encourage women to make maximum use of existing media and creating alternative outlets for information as well. Details on laws, contraceptives and any other issues concerning women needs wider publicity in a popular and accessible form. She also pointed out that despite growth in technological hardware there is great need to create new channels of informal oral communication which is breaking down due to modern life styles.

She also attacked existing stereo types and focussed the need to counter act this self-facing image of women and to create new identifications for women and men as well. For instance, there is a need to work out images of good father hood which do not as yet exist. She identified protest, boycott and feed back as important forms to inter act with media. She also suggested to form cells of women, monitoring women's image in the media.

adult  
Gabriel Dietrich, women's activist and educationist from Madurai transformed the question of women in religion into the question **whether the women's movement can become an anti-communist force.** There are various sides to the problem. On the one hand, a secular personal/would have to be worked out, containing elements of all existing personal laws. Can the women's movement contribute to such a proposal which would become a law which people can opt for? On the other hand, the question of cultural renewal, and genuine religious reform arises. Women have to interfere with ideological production in religion and re-interpret traditional images. As a movement, women have to ally with other forces working for secularism like dalits, left parties, religious reformers, enlightened intellectuals and in the struggle for secularism make such forces aware of the women's question. Discussions focussed on how support for women who are victimised by personal laws can be kept free of communalist overtones.

In the afternoon, Women's Voice Bangalore and a number of other organisations like BUILD Bombay presented the problems of Slum women.



The evolution of Slum ~~women~~ was brought out in its history. Insecurity of Pattah, lack of basic amenities and double oppression of women as working women and sustainers of families were analysed. Women also are guinea pigs to the medical system and suffer forced family planning. Mass organisation evolved on ownership of land, basic amenities, rations, and enactment of welfare laws for the unorganised sector. Dignified treatment in police stations and representation of women on social welfare boards. The difficulties to organise slum women on a permanent base were identified. Struggles on children's rights to schooling and food also became important. Anjali Sen from Calcutta gave examples of confronting, constructive and creative movements. The most crucial issue in the slums at present is struggle for permanent settlement and Pattah, basic amenities and against eviction. In the face of the Supreme Court Judgement on evictions, wide spread battles are in the offing in all major cities.

Premila Dandavate who works with the Janatha Party is with Independent Women's organisations dealt with Women's Movement and Ideologies. She narrated the history of her own involvement with Women's Struggles since the emergency and evolution of Mahila Dakshita Samithi. She characterised different types of organisations like, a) Non-party but political, b) a-political welfare organisations, c) front organisations of party, d) self employment oriented social re-construction like SEWA and e) trade unions and rural women's organisation (eg. among fisherwomen and agricultural coolies). She emphasized the need to co-operate on the issue base and overcome the mistrust between 'political' and 'non-political' women. She also emphasized the need to give women a human position in society and to co-operate with political forces in order to create a political will to implement laws and social reform. She also dealt <sup>w</sup> on rural literacy and the need to associate with men at certain levels.

The discussions tried to come closer to the question of a specific ideology of the women's movement but did not evolve beyond general statements of equality without being able to point out equality with whom since 'men' as a generalised category seems to be generally vague. It was felt by some that time is not mature for conceptualisations while on the other hand existing conceptualisations on analysis of the women's question <sup>which</sup> while some groups work with, somehow did not surface.

In the first session of the third day Janakidevi a delit women organisor from Bihar share<sup>d</sup>her experiences and revolutionary songs . The organisation Lok samithi had emerged from JP movement and works at block level. Training in agriculture and tailoring is given , land struggles are raised and adult education takes place. Another woman, Rampyari from the same area jointed in and shared an example of a woman who had got married to two husbands in order to break through the traditional patterns. The paper which both had brought along was particularly critical of women being gambled away and a negative image of women in religion. It demanded land rights for women as well as job reservations and a generally egalitarian society .

Madhu Kiswar shared her perspectives on women issues. She first of all addressed herself to the question why her preoccupation was with women finding ~~away~~ of really walking together and not with "How do we relat to men". She pointed out that women often react <sup>in</sup> more hostile way to this approach than men. The point is to stick to the inside <sup>side</sup> that change only occurs when the oppresed group collectively resists . Appeal to men for support is a very secondary matter. Women have to first of all live down the internalised male view of their own problems. The problem is that women usually interact <sup>through</sup> men and have to learn to relate to each other not mediated through men. Also, women have to learn to be self reliant and develop their own skills.

Secondly the movement has to over come the "Ladies compartment " approach to women's issues. All issues are women issues and need to be approach <sup>ed</sup> from a women's prespectives . This was exemplified with drought and water problem which affects women more than men and also in very specific ways since it is women who fetch the water, cook, look after the sick etc. The question is not to get a women's compartment in any train but to ask where is the train going, is the destination worth the effort and would we perhaps need a woman as an engine driver.

Thirdly, there is need for more information, especially about the lives of ordinary women which are normally no news. The differences of class, caste, region, community , uneven development etc need to be sharply perceived in their complexity.

Fourthly the question how women's struggles link with other struggles is often a question of ideologies which do not



necessarily help to perceive reality . Attaching the labels of ~~issues~~ to persons often amounts to giving <sup>them</sup> character certificates. The test needs to be what does one stand for and what is one actually doing?.

Fifthly the question of equality has to be raised in an <sup>over</sup>riding way. If women demand equality, the question is with whom ? since the majority of women are poor rural women, our primary concern has to be with them. This raises the over all question of equality in society and of inequality among women themselves .

Sixthly, what is our perspective on social change ? Is it primarily a matter of raising consciousness or is it a matter of creating alternative <sup>life options</sup> ~~we have~~ to analyse the compulsions of a situation and create different conditions in order to keep alternative options open.

The discussion focussed again on the question how women's organisations can be formed within broader mass organisations and on the question how women handle power when they get organised (People's participation, internal democracy).

Nirala from Bombay presented her paper on strategies of women's struggles. She argued along very similar lines like Madhu, emphasising that women are present in anti-class anti-race anti-cast and anti-communalism struggles. If women want to relate to each other, the divisions in society which divide women as well, have to go . All the other movement have challenged patriarchy only in a superficial <sup>way</sup> if at all. Women were mainly supporters in the freedom struggle, through their participation was very important. It is not a matter of linkage with wider struggles but of thinking of these struggles as our own. <sup>General</sup> General movements like anti-price rise movement have been instrumental in bringing women out. Only since about 1975 Women's issues like rape and violence against women could be tackled.

One major strategy is to attack the concept of women as property of man or of the family and to provide alternative life options. This includes the demand for shelters for women with children, since hostels so far refuse to put up children.

ASEM and Bhubaneshwari, lawyers from Madras gave information on free legal aid and property rights in joint families according to the Hindu succession Act.

Banu Mustak, journalist from Hassan shared her involvements with a number of rape cases and other women's issues without being able to form a woman's core group/<sup>thus</sup> being forced to deal with these issues single handedly.

The meeting broke up into discussions on ideologies, strategies, reinterpretations of religion and health issues.



It is also important to provide training in alternative employments like plumbing, painting etc., to achieve economic independence. Health issues including birth control need to be taken up from a women's angle, that is safe guarding a woman's control over her own body. While making use of existing government programmes it is essential to do this on our own terms and not to lose sight of the patriarchal and class character of the state.

Science and technology have to be examined in how they affect women. The work on laws concerning women has to include the overall perspective of how laws in this country are made and implemented.

In the discussion it was also pointed out that the ministry for social welfare should form cells for women in distress and that representatives from Women's organisations should be related to this cell. Such cells already exist in Delhi, Bombay and Karnataka.

Flower from Vigil India added to Nirmala's paper by sharing her own experiences in organising women of all religious communities against child marriage, wife beating and communalism.

In the discussion, the question was raised whether we only talk of participation of women in existing paradigms of development or whether women have to think of new paradigms eg. in science and technology. Also, the implications of various technologies have to be thought through eg. the option for nuclear energy implies the option for the bomb. What is our stand on that? We also should address ourselves to problems of the increasing militarisation internally and externally. If we talk of linkages does it mean linkages with establishment (right or left) or with new movements. How do we develop the vision of the kind of society we wish to have?

Patricia from Trivandrum then shared on the problems of women in the fishing community who despite their relative economic strength suffer most from the family burden and who despite their great militancy and support to the struggle have not yet found ways to be fully represented in the Union and to<sup>be</sup> involved in the decision making processes.

Conference No. 295

Conference  
on  
EMERGING TRENDS IN WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

Wednesday 27th - Saturday 30th November 1985

Ecumenical Christian Centre  
Whitefield, Bangalore - 560 066



DETAILED DAILY PROGRAMME

Wednesday 27th November

- 8.00 - 8.30 a.m. : Breakfast
- 9.30 - 10.00 a.m. : Tea
- 10.00 - 11.30 a.m. : Inaugural address  
Smt. Margaret Alva  
Union Minister of State for Youth  
Affairs, Sports and Women's Welfare
- 11.30 - 1.00 p.m. : Introduction & Orientation  
Women's Movements- Dalits  
A Case Study
- 1.00 - 1.30 p.m. : Lunch
- 3.00 - 4.30 p.m. : Women's Movements-- Rural  
A Case Study
- 4.30 - 5.00 p.m. : Tea
- 5.00 - 6.30 p.m. : Women's Movements-- Tribal  
A Case Study
- 7.30 - 8.00 p.m. : Dinner
- 8.15 - 9.15 p.m. : Discussion

Thursday 28th November

- 8.00 - 8.30 a.m. : Breakfast
- 8.30 - 10.00 a.m. : Women's Movements - Urban  
A Case Study
- 10.00 - 10.30 a.m. : Tea
- 10.30 - 12.00 noon : Women's Movements-- Slum  
A Case Study
- 12.00 - 1.00 p.m. : Women in Media
- 1.00 - 1.30 p.m. : Lunch



**stree lekha**

A Woman's Book Place



## A New Time Beginning:

For too long we have been people without a face, without a voice, without a history. We women are now slowly breaking the centuries of silence to tell our own stories; stories about our lives, our experiences, as also of our discernment of the social reality - of development models used, of technological choices made, of militarism, of the nuclear option.... We are speaking and writing not only of our sorrow, our tears, but, also of our struggles, our triumphs, our visions.

It is this 'feminist sensibility' which has found expression in poetry, oral history, fiction, theoretical research: a sensibility that has been both a reflection of the changing perceptions of women about our reality and an attempt to search for, and to create, alternatives.

*Let me cleave words  
sharp little words  
like the firewood  
that I split with my axe*

## The need for new spaces, new rhythms:

However, though women's writings have increased, it is not as yet, easily accessible or widely known. There is an urgent need to develop an alternative to the established system which has made

the world of women's literature, almost invisible. It is these invisible feminist outpourings that Streelekha hopes to make more visible, by developing a network for the women's world of words, creating new spaces, new rhythms.

Based in Bangalore, we look towards strengthening our links with other women's groups and social movements in India and to developing our contacts with women's movements in the socialist countries, the west, and more especially with women in the third world.

## Streelekha, the Third World:

The word has played an essential part as has story and song in the daily lives of women in the third world, yet, the dearth of the written word has contributed to our vulnerability, our powerlessness. Though feminist writings exist, much of it never reaches the market place. Streelekha hopes to bring you more writings of women and the women's movements in India and in the third world.

There will be a particular emphasis on research studies and investigative reports in our regional languages, while we will also try to provide you with the other creative forms of feminist self-expression - slides, posters, films and other material which do not find distributive outlets within the commercial mainstream.

Streelekha will also find a place for non-sexist children's literature which will be relevant to our children in India and in other countries in the third world.

## Streelekha - A Woman's Place:

As the women's movements in the third world are not isolated from the other social movements for change, Streelekha whose primary focus will be on feminist works, will also include publications on peace, development, ecology, and on movements of workers, daliths, peasants... Streelekha especially invites these movements in India to place for display and sale, their studies and publications in the bookshop.

Streelekha, is above all, a meeting place for women: it hopes to provide the space for sharing our experiences, for generating discussions, for creating the energy needed to envision new possibilities for change.

It could become one face of the women's movement in India; one more of the many voices of women that refuses that we become 'pilgrims of the darkness', for 'it is now time to turn our faces to the sun'.

*With you  
all  
we must be more*



Streelekha is a project of the Society for Informal Education And Development Studies, a registered organization in Karnataka. Streelekha is in contact with several women's groups in India and grew out of the experiences of some of the women in the woman's movement.



*When the words that we need  
will come of themselves  
we have a new song.*

For more details you may contact us at:  
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# CORONATION OF PRIME MINISTER.

Eighth Lok Sabha Election secured 75% seats to Congress (I) by gathering 30% of total votes. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was crowned as Prime Minister. Political Scenario of India is mostly decided by one or the other wave, but strangely enough we discern an election wave only after it has passed us by. It happened in 1973, in 1977, in 1980. In 1984 the situation was no different. This time electorate was badly screwed in thought process of insecurity, set in by forced circumstances. The two strong sentiments encashed during these elections were, a strong reaffirmation of security together with stability, hope of change and sense of release and renewal. In addition Congress (I) also made psychological purchases through new culture of political advertisement media. When the opium of Garibi Hatao, ceased to dumb the Indian electorate then 'Give unity a hand' was acknowledged as worthy successor of 'Garibi Hatao' by, "The Government that [does not] work". Accordingly the Congress (I) high command set itself to prepare the political field, to harvest the calculated yield in the voting season. At that time political and economic crisis of Green Revolution were cropping in Punjab. The Government smelled in these crisis the potential of people-struggles and thereby saw a fertile ground in Punjab for political experimentation. Therefore, for effecting a sloganeering 'change-over' and at the same time to nip those impending people-struggles, in the bud, the political climate of the country specifically of Punjab was conditioned with astute craftsmanship. Atmosphere was charged to aggravate the feelings of disintegration, insecurity, terror & communal divisiveness. This mental coercion of the Indian electorate was brought by, not solving outstanding political issues in Punjab by permitting Sikh Extremism and Hindu Communalism to feed on each other, leading to the army raid Blue Star in the Golden Temple, antagonizing thereby large sections of the Sikh community the ruling party at the centre, had sown the seeds of communal division between Hindus and Sikhs. It was clear, situation deliberately developed with a well laid out political designs and purposes. Similarly threats to the secular formation of our nation was engineered as the result of Mrs. Gandhi's cynical disregard for the rights & sensibilities of the minorities in general and particularly those of Sikhs.

Reliable sources inform that in the process of this transition the ruling government planned to carry out a mass homicide in order to flare up the communal flames. It was a lethal plan which was to be carried out in Delhi & other parts of Country. In order to evoke Hindu chauvinism against Sikhs and thereby the ruling party planned to align with the Hindu majority. This was to be carried out under the secret code captioned as MOON SHINE OPERATION. One does not have to strain one's nerves to believe that the ruling party can go to extent of founding their empires on the dead bodies of their own country men. With these heinous plans Mrs. Gandhi mounted the tiger of devastation but unfortunately Mrs. Gandhi was devoured by this tiger before reaching her destination. The home bred foe of communal vandalism boomeranged. Mrs. Gandhi was assassinated. Then the massacre of the millions drenched Delhi and other cities with blood, burnt bodies & damaged properties. Although Mrs. Gandhi had to resign her breath without witnessing this

climax but the planned operation was carried out by her successors under the guise of constructive revenge. Evidently the recent riots which took a great deal of life & property were not result of popular grief as alleged but it was nameless Moon Shine Operation now carried out discriminately on sikhs. When practically whole 'capital was burning, the rulers, politicians, most of the Police and Army were busy in catching role in the massive public relation drive, around the body of the deceased Indira Gandhi at the total neglect of thousands that were being killed and maimed robbed and raped. There is considerable evidence that the neglect was planned. The facts are all out in their stark and horrifying details. The culprits and their catalysts, have been identified, only there is no indication of any action to punish the guilty.

We should not be mistaken that it was not the assassination of Indira Gandhi but counter product of mysterious Moon Shine which greatly aggravated the problem and fanned the fire of suspicion and hatred and finally prepared the political harvest perfectly conducive to yield the harvest. The body of Indira Gandhi was unusually kept for three days to exploit the sentiments but naming it Darshan for the public. Having all set, the elections were announced when the public was still under emotional frenzy. The Congress (I) gathered three-fourth majority with Rajiv Gandhi as its head. Congress (I) received 30% votes only of the total Indian Electorate. What a massive mandate ?

Rajiv Gandhi was coronated as Prime Minister. This crown is a booty of a politician, legacy from a mother and a death wish of the poor public. Thus Eighth Lok Sabha Elections have been single handedly won by a dead woman.

EDITOR



In first issue we described in general how women oppression is closely knit in the network of present society and how various social moral and legal institutions oppress woman. In second issue we elucidated the role played by the Religion as Oppressor of woman. Then in fourth issue we explained as how the biological differences are mischievously high lighted to prove woman a weaker sex. Now through the issue in hand Let us have a look on the family-relationship as they are and ought to be especially focusing on the role and place of women in the fabric of a family.

(Editor).

## FAMILY RELATIONSHIP

"4th June, 1973,

----- and now I fell in to state of neglect, which I cannot look back upon without compassion. I fell at once into a solitary condition—apart from all friendly notice—apart from the society, of all other boys of my own age,—apart from all companionship but my own spiritless thoughts, which seems to cast its gloom upon this paper as I write ... .."

(A page from the diary of a working class youth apparently surrounded by a crowd of relations and blood relations in his family. And who with a mixed feeling of surprise & agony was witnessing the attempt of the reactionary forces to murder in him a rebellion against the status-quo shadowing the generations. He was sacked out of his job )

This is a secret agony which may or may not find expression in the diaries of all of us but is an unwritten fact, true about most of us. In such in-ordinary and trying circumstances one stands bisected in his personality and pursuit. In a bid to voice against the settled notions, endeavouring to swim against the stream, one has to fight at two fronts. One against the exponents of the status quo another with his own people pulling legs due to clash of changing values. Today every face with vacant looks and strained nerves is graphic of such grief. Each one of us is dying for affection. But how to go about getting it? Where is the wrong? what is lacking? When and how this immortal quest for affection and love will end ?

What should be done ?

YES! Love is the elixir of family life for its creativity, happiness and peace

WRONG—is with the system and surroundings in which we live.

LACKING— is the ideal conception of 'family-relationship'.

Therefore diagnosis and prognosis of the present family relationship which is logical consequences of the present set-up vis-a-vis ideal concept of family relationship and corresponding social set-up is the task which needs to be done. In this pursuit of diagnosis we cannot advance without first understanding the concept of 'Family', its historical development, present marriage institution and its basis, thereby crystalizing the ideal concept of family relationship.

#### *WHAT IS :-*

(A) FAMILY ? A nucleus of society based on marriage and consanguinity i. e. relations between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers & sisters etc. Life of family is characterised both by the material and spiritual processes. Former includes biological and economic consumer relations and later includes legal moral and psychological relations.

(B) RELATIONSHIP? Denotes that there should be sound understanding of Sentiments, Faith, Sincerity, Mutual Respect, Affection and Love.

(C) MARRIAGE ? Marriage which in the present time, is not more than a union of two individuals of opposite sexes directed towards material and sexual conveniences and meant for perpetuating the posterity.

### PRESENT MARRIAGE INSTITUTION

Marriage according to the bourgeois conception is contract, a legal transaction & most important one of all because it disposes of two human beings' body and mind for life. Formally it is true that the contract at that time was entered into voluntarily without the assent of the persons concerned nothing could be done - But everyone knew only too well how this assent was obtained and who were the real contracting parties in the marriage.

#### *ARRANGED MARRIAGES*

Then Arranged marriages in our country is not a thing of the past but still remains the highest in currency. Marriage bureaus devoted to such matters still flourish, matrimonial notices occupy much space in news papers. There is a whole bourgeois class of solid substance which is keeping the arranged-marriages alive. The meeting of boy and girl is arranged on some other's marriage ceremony or in a relative's house (known to both the sides) or even on the tea-table of girl's own house. The fate of the 'marriage-to-be' is almost pre-decided on the measures of family's social and economic status, their caste, religion, punctuated by the professional-achievement of the marrying partners. Then formal consent of the marrying persons is awaited, which cannot be contrary as the Bargain is already struck. After this dramatic aspect of Exhibitionism, the Boy nods yes-virtually to the 'contours' of the 'aspirant'-And Lo! casting vote is made in favour of this 'eternal' Union. Blessed be these 'faithfuls' Let their best sense prevail upon them in their nuptial-journey.



India

In patriarchal regime of today in most cases even this drama is not done. Man and Woman before their wedding are hardly consulted but informed about the matter of their own marriage. And they are offered to the possible 'Suitors' selected in advance. In such circumstances the girl remains absolutely passive.

There could be no question of founding a life long enterprise (Marriage) viewed in its social aspect on sentimental or erotic fancy. In this discrete arrangement the nuptial appetites are not usually so wanton, they are viewed more soberly & bluntly. That is in these type of marriages objective 'Connections' and 'Substances' count much more than subjective 'Charms and Beauty'. So to say men do not marry for themselves whatever they may say; they marry more for their posterity, their family. Regarding the fate of man and woman in such marriages their personal desires and gratifications are subordinated to the interest of the society.

### *A TRADITIONAL DESTINY ?*

Marriage has always been a very different thing for man and woman. The two sexes are necessary to each other, but this necessity has never brought about a condition of reciprocity between them. In other words there is no symmetry in the situation of the two sexes. As for males, they look to marriage for an enlargement, confirmation of their existence. It is change they assure voluntarily for them. It is one mode of living not a pre-ordained lot. They have a perfect right to prefer 'Celebacy'. 'Solitude' marry late or not at all; but the girl's freedom of choice has always been much restricted, Celebacy apart from rare cases in which it bears a sacred character reduces her to rank of a parasite and pariah. For girls marriage is the only means of integration in the community and if they remain unmarried they are socially viewed 'So Much Wastage'. Marriage is her only means of support and sole justification of her existence. It is enjoined upon her in order to provide society with children and secondly to satisfy male's sexual needs and to take care of his household 'is also women's function. This is why mothers have always eagerly sought to arrange marriages for their daughters. So we can see, Girl is married i. e. 'Given in Marriage' by her parents. Boys get married i. e. 'They Take Wife'. PARENTS ON THEIR PART CAN BE SAID LESS TO GIVE THEIR DAUGHTER IN MARRIAGE RATHER THAN TO GET RID OF HER. Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to the woman by the Society.

### *(B) ACID TEST OF FREEDOM. ?*

Albeit exceptionally, apparently choice of girl is asked; parents keep at her "you have already cost us enough in meeting different ones. None suits you. Make up your mind. The next time it will be your sister's turn." The unhappy candidate knows that her chances become less and less as she approaches nearer and nearer to being an Old maid; claimant to her hand are few. She has scarcely more freedom of choice than the

girls of slave society given in exchange for a flock of sheep. Similarly in some higher circles, girls with some more latitude engaged in occupation or studies has no different basis for marriage and statistical studies show money plays decisive role in little less than cent per cent marriages.

So from above it is evident that girl's choice is usually quite limited in arranged marriages and **IT COULD NOT BE REALLY FREE UNLESS SHE FELT FREE ALSO—NOT TO MARRY.** It should be followed as acid test to determine the freedom of choice for the girls. Her decision is ordinarily marked by calculations, disgust, resignation rather than by enthusiasm. If a man is reasonably eligible in the matters such as health and position, she accepts him - love or no love,

***PERSONAL HAPPINESS NO CONSIDERATION  
SERVE MUST THE SOCIETY ?***

Marriages then are not generally founded upon love. As Freud put it, „the husband is so to speak never more than a ‘substitute’ for the beloved man—not that man himself.” And this dissociation is no way accidental. It is implied in the very nature of marriage-institution, the aim of which is to make economic and sexual union of man woman, serve the interests of the present society, not assure their personal happiness.

***MODERN MARRIAGE—AN ERRATIC BARGAIN ?***

Despite its modernization present marriages are no better than the marriages in the past. In modern marriage woman get some share in the world as her own in exchange of her ‘duties’. But the man being the economic head of the ‘joint enterprise’ (marriage) represents it in the view of the society. And the woman takes ‘his name’, she belongs to ‘his religion’, ‘his circle’ she joins ‘his family’, She is relegated to ‘his half’, She breaks more or less decisively with her past, becoming attached to her husband's universe; she gives him ‘her person’ ‘virginity’ and rigorous fidelity being required of her.

***LACK OF INDIVIDUALITY LEADS TO LACK OF LOVE***

Marriage intends to deny the woman a humane-liberty and thus creating a void of serious concern. Without liberty there can exist neither love nor-Individuality Therefore Individualism is alien to the woman-in marriage. She must renounce loving a specific individual in order to assure herself the life-long protection of some man. We hear some pious mothers inform their daughters that love is a coarse-sentiment reserved for men and unknown to women of propriety. In naive (simple) form this is the doctrine enunciated by ‘Hegal’ when he maintains that women's relation as mother and wife are



basically 'General' and not 'Individual'. For her, it is not a question of 'this husband' but of 'a husband' in general, 'of children' in general. Her relations are not based on her individual feeling but on universal feeling i. e. woman is not concerned to establish individual relations with a chosen mate but to carry on the feminine functions in their generality. She is to have sex pleasure only in a specified form and not individualized. Sasthi Brata in his memoirs seems to smoulder under the same anguish when he writes : "But dreams are delicate things, they need to be handled with care. I had roared high in my flights of fancy leaving you behind on solid earth. You were carrying a child within you and I was the father of that child. No more, You needed me only for your infant, not for yourself. It was not you, who had changed but I, who thought you had. Your sense of duty was like the earth's passive, yielding impersonal. A different husband, some other mother-in-law and you would have faulted the same, done the same. Your lack of need, the specific demanding need of one human-being for another, infuriated me. I soon come to see that I was redundant in your life. You had to have 'a man' not necessarily me. The functions of a wife and husband were strictly defined, You fulfilled yours and couldn't understand why I asked for more?"

## HOLLOWNESS OF PRESENT MARRIAGE INSTITUTION

### *TO CATCH A HUSBAND IS AN ART-TO HOLD HIM IS A JOB*

Tale of such family begins with dreams. Which are soon frustrated in the face of crude realities. There is hardly any male who in the depths of his heart does not harbour dreams of having some Fairy Queen by his side on the nuptial throne. And a man with a beautiful wife fills himself within air of exuberance that he is the sole proprietor of that wealth of beauty which is centre of attraction for all. Wife the other-half is also affected with her own whims and fancies. She tries to make herself seductive in the hope that her sensual ordour will feather her husband & endear her to him. But it is not very late when the wife discovers that her erotic attraction is the weakest of her weapons, it disappears with familiarity and alas there are other desirable women all about. Wife then is caught in the struggle of 'Managing' her husband especially his meeting with the young woman who may not tear her from the husband. Wife glances all activities of her husband with eyes wide open and keeps vigils lest another mistress getting enough power over him or to make him divorce her or at least to take first place in his life. And it is a universal malformation of the marriage institution effecting men & women equally. Although this manifestation in itself can't be termed as a disease yet it must be diagnosed as symptomatic of some under-lying pathology. Also it cannot be rejected as merely a fear psychosis. The awareness of men and women that their marriage has no real base, is understandable basis or their anxiety. ON THE VERY

THRESHOLD OF MARRIED LIFE THE WIFE IS SHOCKED TO REALIZE THAT 'TO' CATCH A HUSBAND IS AN ART BUT TO HOLD HIM IS A JOB-AND ONE WHICH REQUIRES GREAT COMPETENCE.

### *HUSBANDRY-CONTRADICTIONS ?*

When the distemper of sexual passion gets eroded what remains is 'primer' only, in shape of family feuds. With each passing day these feuds swell into open hurling of abuses, blaming each other for their misfortune. Even moral decency is no limit to them. Actually it is the contradiction of their married life which besets them.

CONTRADICTION LIES IN THE DUPLICITY OF HUSBAND THAT DOOMS WIFE TO MISFORTUNE OF WHICH HE COMPLAINS LATER THAT HE IS HIMSELF VICTIM. JUST AS HE WANTS HER TO BE AT ONCE WARM AND COOL IN BED, HE REQUIRES HER TO BE WHOLLY HIS AND YET NO BURDON. HE WISHES HER TO ESTABLISH HER IN FIXED PLACE ON EARTH AND TO LEAVE HIM FREE, TO ASSUME THE MONOTONOUS DAILY ROUTIEN AND NOT TO BORE HIM, TO BE ALWAYS AT HAND AND NEVER IMPORTUNATE, HE WANTS TO HAVE HER ALL TO HIMSELF AND NOT TO BELONG TO HER. TO LIVE AS ONE OF COUPLE AND TO REMAIN ALONE.

Thus are human beings forced together, the one becomes the slave of the other and is forced in the fulfilment of matrimonial duty, to submit to the most 'intimate' embraces and caresses of the other which torment possibly more than blows and abuses. This puts the wife more or less same as prostitute with little difference that former receives her wages in kind and later in cash. SO MARRIFGE INSTITUTION CAN BE SAFELY LABLLED AS PROSTITUTION LEGALIZED WHERETWO PROSTITUTES (HUSBAND AND WIFE) UNITE TO FORM ONE VIRTUE. (the present marriage)

### *PUBLIC AND FAMILY LIFE-DILECTICAL NEXUS ?*

And other factor which creates a yawning gap in the 'sacred' bond of marriage is the participation of man in public life. People are beginning to understand that the prosperity and adversity of persons and families depend far more upon the condition of public and general organization than upon the personal qualities and actions of the individual, in as much as the utmost exertions of the individual, are absolutely powerless to overcome evils which are caused by circumstances, and by which his own position is determined. on the other hand the struggle for existance demands far greater efforts than formerly, and if a man is to fulfil, all the claims made upon him by public and private life, he must perforce encroach upon the time devoted to his wife. But the public pursuits of the husband are criticized by the rustic wife as only designed to avoid

home and to remain in the company of friends. Due to her deficient education the wife always scolds and nags her husbands as spending money ruining health, unnecessarily inviting trouble for himself and also saddling her with their consequences. And if the husband has to associate with other women in his public undertakings then his agonies know no bound, the home becomes the centre of the hell. The husband is not unfrequently placed before the alternative of giving up his public activity and accommodating himself to his wife, which does not increase his happiness. He has to sacrifice his matrimonial peace and domestic comfort. If he decide in favour of the public duties which as he knows, are so closely connected with the welfare of himself and his family.

A man is generally of the opinion that his wife cannot comprehend his affairs, and need not concern herself with them. He gives himself no trouble to enlighten her. "You can't understand that" is the stereotyped reply when the wife complains, and wonders that he, as she imagines, should neglect her so unaccountably. And should the wife discover that her husband has only made use of subterfuges in order to get away from her, fresh fuel is added to the family disputes. This want of comprehension on the part of women is only aggravated by the folly of most men. If he is able to bring home to his wife about the indispensibility of his public activities for their individual development and family welfare, then he has crossed a dangerous rock safely-but this rarely occurs.

### *WOMAN'S APATHY TO POLITICAL AND SOCIAL EDUCATION ?*

Wife's social and political education lacks badly first because of difference of education between males and females in younger years and consequently education of female in lines to fit in future family life. Second her role and place after marriage limited to four walls and home drudgery. All this shut her off from the outer world and this great vacuum caused by lack of education did not even let her feel about this short-coming or to see relationship between these two. And then men trying to educate her socially and politically without changing the conditions of her home drudgery are making their cry in wilderness. They do not understand that without the direct participation in public life her political and social education is impossible. They fail to recognise THAT THE POLITICAL EDUCATION CANNOT BE PROVIDED BY SHUTTING OUT THE MASSES FROM THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS BUT ONLY BY ADMITTING THEM TO THE EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS.

### *AN ARTIFICIAL STAKE ?*

These differences of education and opinion, which are easily overlooked the beginning of marriage. while passion still holds its sway, becomes accentuated in maturer years, and make themselves all the more painfully felt, at a period in which sexual feeling has cooled down, then it must necessarily be replaced by mental conformity.



Both husband and wife feel lonely in each other company. A vacuum is thus created. A breach is marked on their family life. Both of them feel suffocating in disguising anticipating darkness of future. Presence of one is acidic to other partner. Quarrels and disputes know no end. We see the ruin of the marriage before us. Then each partner keen to solder the drifting ends, long for a child in order to discover a media to nourish their married life to act as an adhesive to join husband and wife. It is in the environment of quarrels, disputes and indifference that the child opens his eyes and it is under these circumstances the parents feel compelled to 'pro-create' children.

### *CARVING PATH FOR THE CHILDREN OR THE CHILDREN FOR THE PATH ?*

Even when the child seems a treasure amidst a happy life, (Child) cannot represent the limits of his parents' horizon. But when the parents play a false and wrong stake on the future of child the parents while looking at their child enter into fantasies and in their imagination see the helpless infant lying in the cradle, a potential I. A. S. Officer, or an eminent Surgeon, or a high official in uniform, and like wise according to their unfulfilled dreams. On the part of the parents it is a vain attempt, of trespassing into the future by proxy only. And this tendency of the parents is doomed to end in their dependency on the child. Not only their child's ingratitude, but also his failure to believe their hopes. The frustrated couple unable to recognize the fundamental cause of their eroding family life, seek their self-realization tyrannically through their offspring. Thus **THE PARENTS IN-ADVERTENTLY ENTER INTO THE FALLACY OF PREPARING THE PATH FOR THEIR CHILDREN INSTEAD OF PREPARING THEM FOR THE PATH.** Then slowly and slowly the couple realize that their 'discovery' had failed, both of them were still apart one eighty degrees, with a child standing in between them witnessing a wave of indifference breathing in an atmosphere devoid of love and affection. Such children strained from very childhood with family feuds also get the shadow of economic hardships and corresponding realities.

### *AND WE LIVE IN THE BEST OF WORLDS ?*

In a worker's family both husband and wife go to work. The children are left alone or in the care of elder children, who need looking after and education themselves. In hot haste the parents swallow the meals, supposing they have time to come home. Tired and exhausted they return home at night. In stead of a pleasant and comfortable house they find a small unhealthy dwelling without light or air, and often without the most necessary arrangements for cleanliness. The wife must set to work at once, in the utmost haste, to get things into something-like orders. The noisy and crying children are put to bed as soon as possible, the mother sits sewing & mending till late in the

night. The necessary mental recreation and refreshment are all together wanting. The man is ignorant, the woman still more so. They soon come to the end of the little which they have to say to each other, the man goes to the public house in search of the entertainment which his home cannot provide. He drinks, and however little he may spend it is too much for his means. Some times he falls a prey to the vice of gaming, which claims so many victims among the upper classes; and loses three and ten times as much by cards as by drink. Meanwhile the wife remains at home in idleness; she must work like a beast of burden there is no rest or recreation for her; the man makes use of the freedom which the chance of birth has given him. The discord is complete. If wife also happens to possess consciousness as that of her husband, if she too seeks a well earned recreation when she comes at home weary at night, the neglected household doubles her wretchedness. Truly we live in the best of worlds ?

All these things tend more and more to destroy the married life of the proletarian. Even good times have a destructive influence, for they force him to work over hours on Sundays and holidays, and thus rob him of the time which he might devote to his family. In thousands of cases he has at least an hour's walk to his work; it is frequently a simple impossibility for him to come home during the dinner hour, he starts early in the morning, while the children are still asleep, and returns late at night, after they have been put to bed. Many workmen, especially masons in large towns, remain away the whole week, on account of the distance, only coming home on Sunday; and family life is supposed to flourish under circumstances such as these. Moreover the employment of women and children is continually on the increase, especially in the textile industries, whose thousand steam-looms and spindle frames are worked by the cheapest hands in the market. The innocent childhood which is to grow in a care free atmosphere is put within the walls of factories or other working places. These children flourish not in the cradles but before the scorching furnace, speedy wheels and chilling cold. They are doomed to adult responsibility at tender age. These children of 8-10 years go to earn and to aid bit by bit to the strained economy of the family. Devoid of tender care from very childhood all highly spoken words like Love, Tenderness, Affection, Creativity, Understanding, Equality are snubbed under the stress of economic compulsions, child not attending to the earning is not as dear to the parents. Tender childhood is compelled to drudgery of becoming hotel boys, cleaners, factory workers manufacturing match boxes, packing bricks, crackers, cleaning floors, washing utensils with sleepy eyes. Girls are not exception who are often at work in household and factories. Such children attain maturity to restore new family as their parents, the cycle goes on. Truly we live in the best of worlds. ?

### *WHO IS THE GUILTY ?*

System is sleeping - least concerned with their care education as they only

need to be nourished to enable them replace old workers to generate the surplus labour for the Bourgeoisie. Such families comprise sixty percent of today's India. To talk of "ideals" is an exercise in futility in such families till they are enabled to emerge from these sub-human conditions to which they are doomed. Under these conditions they are even unable to understand that their drudgery lies in the system. Their hardships coupled with their frustrated aspiration for better life add to their family feuds and every member thinks that he is suffering for family otherwise -----, Actually they donot know what otherwise would have been. Perhaps nothing. Because change of place or relinquishing family will not solve the problem which is ingrained in this system. Conditions everywhere are same, under the sky.

### *ALARMING MISFITS ?*

In well to do families children get their economic and educational needs fulfilled as a matter of right. Creative young brains donot find expression at home and as they grow more and more, gets alienated from the family which is unable to feed their intellectual hunger. The parents for whom life has not been so graceful to meet their aspirations forces the attention to see realization of thier unfulfilled aspirations through children, who have got their own aspirations and this contradiction of feelings proves disasterous for the young. A creative young boy, highest scorer in scietific studies is doomed to be a shopkeeper only due to the reason that his father needs a man with him in the shop. A scientific genius is turned a shopkeeper. A tender soul having inclination towards music or art is snubbed because his father does not see a lucrative carrier as a musician or as an artist and his father wants him to be a Doctor or an Engineer. A career is thrustud upon the boy against his wishes only because Engineer, Doctor or a Civil Officer is estimated to have better Market Value. So in all cases with neglegible exceptions parents force their unfulfilled desires on their children to be fulfilled by them. This unfulfillment becomes the Legacy for these young children. Net result is the alarming misfits of the young generation which fails to fit itself in the desired place due to the antagonistic inclinations, further giving rise to psychological complications.

### *WOMAN IS NEVER BORN-SHE IS MADE TO BE SO ?*

With all this cruel calamity posed by the society on the children if the child happens to be girl then she is victim of double oppression. One in general alongwith all the children, as mentioned above and secondly the oppression arising out of her own section (Feminine) in a manner which proves beyond doubt that the women is never born but she is made to be so. As the girl matures, her mother's authority weighs more heavily upon her. The mother, as we shall see, is secretly hostile to her daughter's liberation. The boy's efforts to become a man is respected. He is granted much liberty.



The girl required to stay at home her coming and going are watched, she is not encouraged to take charge of her own amusements and pleasures. She is to be escorted by any one, may be child much younger than her, while moving in and out of the home. Custom makes the independence difficult for woman. If they roam the streets they are stared at devilishly and accosted with filthy remarks. To be feminine is taken to appear weak futile and docile. The young girl is supposed not only to deck her self out to make herself ready for conjugal life and to repress her spontaneity and replace it with studied grace and charm taught by her elders. Any self assertion will diminish her femininity and attractiveness.

### *MANUFACTURING A BRIDE - TO - BE ?*

A good deal of house work is within the capability of very young child. Where the boy is commonly excused his sister is allowed rather asked to sweep dust, peel potatoes, wash the baby keep an eye on the cooking. In particular the eldest sister is often concerned in this way with motherly task whether for convenience or out of necessity for manufacturing a Bride-to-be. Mother thus rids her self of many of her functions; the girl is in this manner made to fit precociously (early maturity) into the universe of serious affairs. Her sense of importance will help her in assuming her femininity. But she is deprived of happy freedom, the carefree aspect of childhood. Having become precociously (early maturity) a woman she learns all too soon the limitations this state imposes upon a human being. She reaches adolescence as an adult which gives her history, a special character. A child over burdened with work may well become permanently a slave, doomed to a joyless existence. Cheerful and lustering face turns to listless and with meditative expression on it. Thus an old head emerges on the young tender shoulders.

### ABJECT STATE OF NEGLECT ?

Children in such climate feel that the parents dislike him/her and that they have sullenly, sternly, steadily over looked him. MOST CHILDREN ARE NOT ACTIVELY ILL-USED, THEY ARE NOT BEATEN OR STARVED BUT THE WRONG THAT IS DONE TO THEM HAD NO INTERVALS OF RELENTING AND IS DONE IN SYSTEMATIC PASSIONLESS MANNER. DAY AFTER DAY, WEEK AFTER WEEK. MONTH AFTER MONTH, THEY ARE COLDLY NEGLECTED. THEY ARE SLIGHTED TAUGHT NOTHING AND FORCED TO A WORK NOT FIT FOR THEM.

No words can express the secret agony of these tiny souls whose growing hopes were crushed in their bosom. And there should be no surprise if our Page-Boy (whose diary has been quoted at the onset is the product of such circumstances.

## STOP MARIAGES AS A CAREER ?

So it is for the welfare of both the sexes that the situation must be altered by prohibiting marriage as career for woman. Woman dependency is interiorized she is a slave even when she behaves with apparent freedom, while man is essentially independent and his bonds come from without. If he seems to be the victim it is because his burdens are most evident. Women is supported by him like a parasite - but a parasite is not a conquering-master.

### PECULIARITY OF PROBLEM ?

Peculiarity of this problem is that as biologically males and females are never victims of one another but both victims of social set-up. So man and woman together undergo the oppression of the Institution—they did not creat.

It is alleged that indeed men are victim, these are women who have bonded men. But infact to men whose bonds come from without, women dependency is interiorized. Feminine mentality is so enslaved that she behaves as a slave even when she is left independent and dependent woman is supported by man like parasites - an unwelcome ligature, a person -non - grata. If it is asserted that men oppress women the husband (man) is indignant, he feels that it is masculine code, it is the society developed by the males, and in their interest, that has established woman's plight in a form that is at present a source of torment for both sexes, then what a man can do ? Similarly disillusioned by circumstances are women trying to achieve individual salvation by by solitary efforts. They are attempting to justify their existence in the midst of their immanence that is to realize transcendence (superiority) in immanence (inferiority) it is this ultimate effort often pathetic, sometime ridiculous, of imprisoned women- a vain attempt to transform her prison into heaven of glory, her servitude into sovereign liberty.

Thus liberation must be collective of men and women. Who accept the above reality, hate their plight, for them at least-where is the wisdom to continue flowing in the same social stream ? Not at all. It is for the common welfare of both sexes to come forward for this cause for changing this whole rotten social set-up responsible for making Hell of our lives.

AND FOR THIS First of all economic evolution of women in production process in order to provide conducive conditions for developing her independent personalities is the first step. Then to stop marriages as a career. Men should come forward to support cause of women liberation and all those women in-surgents involved in the battle of struggle and supporting all those who are yearning for liberation, This can be achieved being part and parcel of struggle of victims of this social set-up which are not only women but other down trodden classes also; So that the humanity at large may liberat & a personhood for women maybe restored. (To be Concluded in lvol No.3-85)

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### FOR FURTHER READING :-

1. 'SECOND SEX' By SIMON DE BEAIVOIRE
  2. 'WOMEN IN PAST PRESENT AND FUTURE' By AUGUST BABEL
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## READER'S CONVERSE.

NISCHINT K. NAGI Biology department  
C. N. U. Amritsar,

"Not only we but any sensible person who has feeling for problems of women, can be impressed by Shackles and women. It makes us conversant of the problems, not only this, it also makes us aware of the solutions to solve the problems because each woman is part of it directly or indirectly.

By being continuous reader of this it will help us in future life. Moreover current problems create much impact on minds of readers and leaves the impression for much longer time. I think if we all will spread this message to others then and only then true service for progress and upliftment of this 'Weaker' section of society (as it is considered) can be done."

Ed. Your letter is a complement to our task, 'shackles and women.' The warmth of your approbations makes us to feel that we are not a meager, 'team' but a huge caravan. A great impetus - indeed! But still greater a complement at the altar of this cause will be contribution of your thoughts and actions. Your practical endeavours towards forming sub-units of shackles and women in the places where ever you are. To grapple effectively with the problems of women section, to provide the women around you, a forum to seize and solve their problems substantively.

Only a living touch with current problems and questions around us can make us conversant with the politics. Politics, which is propagated as a dirty game to be played by few rotten hands but effects whole of public. So every conscious citizen need to know and participate in people's politics and thus pave a way for change of this rotten set-up.

2. HARCHARBAN V. P. O. Bhuchho, Bhatinda, (English version of the letter in Punjabi): "Out of the books which you suggested, I have read, 'Bhartiya Jailon Mai Panch Saal' (Hindi) by Mary Taylor, 'Origin of Family, Private Property and State' by Fredrick Engles. But I have not been able to get "Indian Women in Britain-Finding A voice by Amrita Wilson"

Ed. Study of Books of widest possible range is an indispensable effort. This is the sine-quo-non for intellectual development, not only of women but for every mind going to be illuminated and for their ultimate amelioration. We hope our every reader would do well in following the suit.

3. NAVSHARAN 11 - A Sector 19 Madhya Marg Chandigarh,

"I am sending you M.O. of Rs.50/-. Kindly note the change in my address."

Ed. We will say, it is a complement well timed and admirable, providing thrust for shackles and women to roll further and further. But it is still not the best compliment which you are in a capacity to provide. Waiting for your Best Compliments.

### NEW YEAR GIFT.

To choose one's way in life quite freely,

To live just as one's soul demands.

Indeed, this is a noble feeling.

But one with little dividends.

And if you love.

Then with abandon.



## FOR AND ON BEHALF OF DELHI-VICTIMS

A fact finding team jointly organized by the People's union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) and People Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) in the course of investigations from Nov. 1 to Nov. 10 has come to the conclusion that the attack on members of the Sikh Community in Delhi and its suburbs during the period far from being a spontaneous expression of madness and of popular "grief-and-anger" at Mrs Gandhi's assassination as made out to be by the authorities were the out come of a well-organized plan marked by acts of both deliberate commissions and omissions by important politicians of the Congress (I) at the top and by authorities in the administration. Although there was indeed popular shock grief and anger the violence that followed was the handiwork of a determined group which was inspired by different sentiments altogether.

### EXTRACTS OF THE HISTORICAL WRIT FILED IN THE SUPREME COURT

We are reproducing some extracts of a writ filed in Supreme Court by Madhu Kishwar, Lecturer Delhi University Ruth Veenita Editor 'Manushi' and Rakesh Bhardwaz.

1. This writ has been filed under the provisions of the constitution of India enabling any citizen to start proceedings in the court against any infraction of the Constitution happening around him irrespective of the fact whether such person is or is not a directly aggrieved one.
2. The quit has been filed against the following parties as Respondents :
  1. Union of India.
  2. Home Minister and Home Secretary who are responsible for the protection of life & Property

of every Citizen of India.

The above respondent may also be deemed to include the following:-

1. Lieutenant Governor of Delhi who is the Administering head.
  2. Commissioner Delhi Police under whose supervision the Delhi Police has demonstrated an utter dereliction in performance of his duties.
  3. The President and Secretaries of Congress Party whose party deprived the other residents from their right to live peaceably & honourably.
  4. The office bearers of Delhi State Congress Parties. Who themselves participated and also abetted others to commit the crimes.
  5. The Congress members Parliament elected from Delhi State, Congress Metropolitan members who propagated hatredness against the other citizens of India and abetted others under their influence to commit the crime.
- The details of offences alleged to have been committed by the parties has been annexed separately with the writ.

- (A) They caused greivous injuries, committed murders en-mass of those citizens of India who belonged to Sikh religion, raped the women and prohibited them to travel freely in their own city and even their own localities. They committed arson and looting on their houses, destroyed their shops from which they earned their livelihood, destroyed their taxies & other machines with the help of which they fed their children. Burnt their religious places and thus prohibited them from carrying out their religious affairs
- (B) The following articles have been contravened
- i. Article 21- relating to Fundamental Rights according to which the protection of life and property of every citizen of India in the responsibility of the state. And that no person can be

deprived of his life except according to the procedure established by the law.

ii. Article 19 (1) which provides to every citizen a right

[a] To move freely through the territory of India

[b] To reside and settle in any part of the Territory of India and make his private property.

[c] To practice any profession or to carry on any occupation trade or business for his living.

[iii] Article 14 which imposes an obligation on the state that its shall not deny to any person equality before the law and the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India

[iv] Article 15 [1] which fixes the responsibility of the state to prevent discrimination against any citizen on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.

[v] Article 25 [1] which provides to every citizen freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion

(C) The parties mentioned by us or alleged to be guilty of cotravention these five Articles of the Constitution. The detail report of allegations incriminating the parties Specifically, is annexed along with the details of the crimes committed by them.

(D) We demand :

i. That a thorough and impartial enquiry be made in to these crimes

ii. Immediate suspension of all the office bearers

iii. To impose all the legal prohibitions on these accused as provided under the law for other accused under trial.

iv. The properties of the alleged institutions be declared as confiscated till the decision by the court.

v. Regular pension be granted to the heirs of deceased persons. And these heirs should not be treated as the victims of natural calamity receiving financial assistance. It was not a natural calamity but a culpable failure of the state and the other parties. Therefore the aggrieved persons are entitled for full compensation.

vi. The whole losses may be recovered from the accused persons and institutions in the shape of fine.

vii. Accused should be awarded exemplary punishments which should act as deterrent for the people in future.

(E) We appeal to the Supreme Court to discharge its obligation as the highest court of Judicature of the land and punish the accused in a way to create a precedent for all the citizens of India which would rate commission of such offences at a price costlier than life.

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### FOR THE YOUNG

Wherever possible, therefore young people who find themselves out of harmony with their surroundings, should endeavour in the choice of a profession select some carrier which will give them a chance of congenial companionship even if it should entail a considerable loss of income

When the environment is stupid or prejudiced or cruel. It is a sign of merit to be out of harmony with it. And to some degree these characteristics exist in almost every environment.

Young people are ill advised if they yield to the pleasures of the old in any vital matter.

---

## Break The Chains

### 'HALF-OF-US'-A POSTER EXHIBITION ON WOMEN'S PROBLEMS.

To focus the attention of the Public on half of population- A poster exhibition on women's problems was arranged by Forum For Women's Progress at Nellore. The slogan for occasion was 'PEOPLE ARE NOT FREE AS LONG AS WOMEN ARE NOT FREE.'

Pamphlets Said- "Oh women ! Your body is not yours- It is for us to decide.

In the name of marriage we probe the curves and anatomy of it.

Burn it off if the dowry you bring, is not ample.

Impose family planning if we feel that two children are all which you must have.

Sell it off to satisfy the lust of man.

Expose it half naked on the cinema screen

Rape it to teach a lesson to your man.

Utilize it in advertisement to sell our goods,

Exploit it for cheap labour.

Allot to it unskilled work ... .."

Some questions were also posed as to what is reason of their slavery? Pamphlets asked women to demand their rights. Organisation is concerned to make women realize their inferior status and fight for their rightful place to involve them in protracted struggle against male-chauvinism, exploitation and oppression.

Sixty poster were put to depict various problems, on discrimination with female child, female infanticide, dowry, prostitution, condonation of Dev-Dasi's, selling of girls to rich Arab sheikhs, rapes in police stations (alongwith list of rape victims), women torn by dual role at office and home, comparison table of slaves and women etc.

Another section traced historical background & evolution in matriarchal, Patriarchal,

feudal and capitalistic societies and origin of sexual division of labour. Then a section on militant women who participated in struggles-Sammakka and Saralamma against King in 13th century, reformation movement, revolutionary women in Telangana peasant uprising (1946-51) Tebhage movement in Bengal, Grigan movement for land in Srikakulam and Naxalbari, Chipko-Andolan against deforestation by contractors, struggle of Manipuri women, Dhulla movement against liquor etc

They also gave relevant economic, social and political reasons to counter the opinion that women are worst enemies of women. Quotations from religious scriptures were quoted and many people reacted badly and refused to believe that these were written in their scriptures.

This is very healthy and worth appreciating attempt to focus women problem so beautifully creatively as well as in correct perspective. As we know any women-cause howsoever well high lighted, if it is not on the correct lines i. e. linking this problem with social set-up form which emerge male chauvinism, oppression and exploitation. Women liberation cannot be materialized. These women movements must form part of broader struggles of working and oppressed people. Awareness on these lines is first necessary step to break chains.

We call our readers to work on above lines & harness their skill in what ever creative way they can be preparing paintings, posters, banners, slogans badges, Insignas etc in English Punjabi, or Hindi, so that we can also high light the problem, on 8th March, 1985 -International working women's day. For details and consultation if needed correspondence is welcomed. (Hoping a rich response. Ed.)



## CHIMNEY OFFATAL FUMES BHOPAL

On 22nd Dec. 84 sleeping population of Bhopal was served with death warrants by Union Carbide, an American Multinational Pesticide firm, raised in collaboration with Indian partner Kesho Mohendra manufacturing SAVIN insecticide from poisonous gas methyl isocyanate. Incidence is posed as on accident due to leakage of Gas by 'Increased Pressure' in tanks. Few questions hammer every sensitive mind. What security measures were granted by company? Was the mishappening for the first time? Should such lethal chemicals be allowed amidst this k population. What was the role of Labour department and Government Officials. Does the parent company Union Carbide Corporation of America is any the less guilty? Which under a pact entered in 1973 was to provide machinery & Technical know how. at the cost of 20 Crores.

### HOW SECURE THE SECURITY MEASURES ?

In November 24, 1978 there was a major blaze in the factory when the Nephthal Unit caught fire. A small quantity of Phosgene leaked on December 26, 1981 killing a plant Operator Mohamad Asharaf. A fortnight later the leakage reoccured and affected twenty four people who battled for their lives for months to-gather.

On October 5, 1982 an explosion in the pipe was caused, the Methyle oozing out. The gas reached the surrounding areas enveloping the residents. Then the nature helped the mankind, the wind due to its opposite direction blew the gas away from Bhopal. Still in this wake many persons had to be hospitalized. But an employes Arun Mathur never returned from the hospital Govt. though not unaware of these accidents fell in a predicament. In 1975 the then municipal administrator M.N. Buch issued notice

to the company to shift outside the municipal limits of Bhopal. But M. N. Buch was transferred while Carbide stayed. The General Manager of the company C. S. Ram then donated Rs. 25000/-to the Bhopal Municipal Corporation for constructing a park and the Municipal notice was forgotten then. And Mr. J. Mukind works Manger of Union Carbide before his arrest claimed, "Our safety measures are best in the country",

### GOVERNMENTAL CONNIVANCE.

On December 21, 1982 B. J. P. legislators asked the then labour Minister Tara Singh Viyogi in the State assembly about the accidents in the factory and steps taken by the State Governments. Excerpts of Viyogi reply:-

"Safety arrangements have been made in the factory. The company has been asked under the Factories. Act to take necessary steps. No compensation has been paid to the person who fractured his hand in an accident in the factory .. Under the factory Act, our deputy inspector has to visit the plant and inspect the safety measures. Checks are carried out from time to time and suggestion given This factory was established in 1969 and it is not a small stone that I can lift and shift it to some other place. The whole of India depends on the factory. There is no great danger to Bhopal from the plant. There is no question of shifting it.

"There are big showers in the plant to cool the tank. There are glass panels which can be broken by any body in case a leakage occurs. If any of the glasses break the showers will start functioning. Qualified doctors and nurses are also available in the factory. Scientists have investigated the effects of the gas which emanate from the factory and there is no health hazard due to it. I have myself visited the place thrice.

## FLASH LIGHTS

"Out of the total population of 8 Lacs in Bhopal 2 Lacs were allegedly have been effected and more than twenty five hundred have died. Effected were writhing in pain and exhaustion on the roads. Few doctors were seen at the hospital early in the morning. Even those present were at their wits end. Medical aid was out of question. Only those who had body resistance survived"

"There was about thirty tons of M. I. C. gas (Methylisocyanate Gas) in liquid form in the tank when the accident occurred. About ten to fifteen tons leaked in an hour. If the whole of it had leaked out it, would have wiped out every body within a 25 Kilometre radius."

"The plant at Bhopal manufactured a variety of Pesticids, one of them based on phosgene, is used in horticulture and is exclusively for expert."

"Phosgene is a poisonous gas, used by Hitler in second world war and was banned in 1925 under Geneva Treaty." "Scientists are of the view that the gas leaked is phosgene and not M.I.C. as corroborated by scientific facts. M.I.C. evaporates at thirty-eight degree-centigrade. And the temprature of Bhopal on that night was 14 centigrade & also the effect of phosgene leakage is writ large on the vegetation turned pale around the Carbide Complex. A criminal case against eight top official of Union Carbide has been registered under section 120(B), 278, 284, 304(A), 426, 429, I. P. C. Arrested persons were lodged at Rest House Shyamla Hills."

"When enquired about liability of Union Carbide Corporation of America, Government replied, "it is doubtful, they are simply technical men, do not have criminal liability."

"The teams of doctors, Medical Students and Nurses went on strike when some Congress (I) responsible members interfered in their work & gave false claims for relief. But these striking workers, realizing suffering of people resumed relief work again but demanded an apology for wrong interference."

"When deputation of Hundred women went to complaint Arjan Singh Chief Minister about Bureaucratic efficiency and lack of rescue measure, Chife Minsiter was out to receive Mr Rajiv Gandhi at Air Port.

"Has Pakistan Bombed the city with the chemical war fare, every body asked. There are instances of men deserting their whole family in their attempt to save their life."

"The Supreme Court had laid down the law that the state cannot escape its responsibility for any damage to its citizens arising from the negligence of its instrumentations and had to fully compensate the victims." Can there be worst industrial disaster,? Why the Union of India has avoided the confession about its liability to the citizen. ?

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## A CHOICE :

*Themistocles, being asked weather he would rather marry his daughter to an indigent man of merit or to a worthless man of estate, replied that he would prefer a man without an estate than to an estate without a man.*

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# SHACKLES & WOMEN

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END WITH DIVDASISM



## Where Singing Is A Crime

In last months at Punjab SCENERIO Dhadhi Jatha (Singing Group) popularly known as Jatha of 'Nabhe Walian Bibian' (Women of Nabha) is singing "Vars, (Militant Songs) on present situation of Punjab for which Jatha has been arrested many times.

To sing religious and militant songs in group alongwith one person playing on Dhudh Sarangi (instrument like sitar played with stick) is old tradition of sikh religion. Such songs narrate the opperession, wars fought and tales of bravery of the fighters. In olden age these songs were sung to up the spirit of the fighters, After that to role was mainly depicting militant events of history how sikh fighter faced bravely resistance of oppressors and state. Now in changed situation when once again sikh minority is fighting for its rights against state, 'Vars' are becoming popular.

Most popular Jatha (Group of Nabhe-walian Bibian) comprises a middle aged Bibi Surjit Kaur and Young woman Bibi Jawahar Kaur who sung, alongwith Sardar Balwant Singh Premi who plays instrument. They are singing 'Vars' related to History as well as the present situation, how Govt. is doing injustice and resistance given by the sikhs. Their malodious voice, fearless expression and vigour attracts the people in large numbers. Cassettes of the programme are being recorded. Jatha has covered vast areas under their programmes.

Govt. alarmed of this expcure and popularity of Jatha, put the Jatha behind bars but had to leave them as they could not prove anything. The arrest has not demorlized them but strengthened their will. Jatha Said that it is their duty to keep morale of 'Sikh community up in turbulent times for which they will not fear even jail. This raises the issue that when the Govt. declares that all our black laws are only for extremists and antisocial elements and we do not hinder

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political movement and peacefull propaganda then due to what have they rounded up this Jatha ? Now in amended law they have included in one clause that it is crime to sing song, recite jokes, to keep cassettes in custody of such material labeled as inflammatory propaganda. Term is very vague. Tales of state repression arousing anger in sikhs are also inflammatory for Govt.

Sikh history if not distorted gives no basis for communalism in stead a major part of the history depicts fighting against oppression and exploitation. 'It was war against state and opperessors' interms of Guru Gobind Singh 'between Zalim and Mazloom (exploiter and exploited)'. So singing such Vars may rise fighting spirit against oppression of state but not against oppressed people of other communities. Alongwith many other conditions this tradition has also played role due to which inspite of Govt. efforts in punjab there has been no communal riots. In 'Vars' related to present situation, though present mood of War, which is mainly antistate, is depicted but still some communal elements like 'sikhs are nation' and few other are there.

We appreciate, courage shown by these women not yeilding to state. This also shows women who become conscious for some cause have so much fury that Jails, threats cannot obstruct their way. But we will like to suggest to our warrior women with fighting spirit that to win such battles only courage is not sufficient, courage associated with correct demarcation of enemies friends and allies is of utmost importance. So all such tendencies which isolate sikh minority in their struggle, narrow their circle of friends and allies need to be combated. Not sparing the main enemy to the least, they should take support of various allies to turn this battle into broad battle between Zalim and Mazloom.

Editor

# Indian Women-In Changing Socio Economic Structure

## A SEMINAR REPORT

D. A. V. College for Women Amritsar made a pioneer attempt in holding first regional seminar on Indian Women in changing socio-Economic structure which was sponsored by Regional Centre Indian Council of Social Sciences and Research Chandigarh. Various Social and Research organisation and other individuals endeavouring towards uplifting of women were invited. Total nine papers were presented, we will take one by one.

**Women Are Natural Allies In Struggle Cagaint Any Form Of Operession And Exploitation—An Intorductory note.**

In her introductory note Dr. Anand Gauba stated the object of the seminar to make all out efforts to search for the reasons of the declined status of women in the third world in general and in India in particular. Informing about the previous efforts Dr. Gauba told that this effort was first made during the later half of the 19th century by the feminists and Social Reform movements geared up in 1920 's by the chiefs of the struggle for freedom in India. According to Dr. Gauba, right direction to this cause was provided by the Govt. of India in 1971 when a Committee was formed to report on the status of women. Dr. Vina Mazumdar was one of its pioneer members. This committee submitted the report in 1975 before U. N. took up the cause of women. But despite all efforts made over the century the women 's status has declined. On the issue of inequity towards women, United Nations Organisation sponsered world conference and declared 1975 as the Internatinal women 's Year and period from 1975 to 1985 was declared as the Interdational Women

Decade. At that time the issue of women's status was viewed essentially a social and cultural issue unconnected with the international development strategy or problem.

It was at the Mexico conference that the concern was shown over 'adverse impact of development' particularly on third world women. This new consciousness demanded for a 'New International Economic order' and ending of International imbalance in economic power relation. The Declaration of Mexico identified women as "natural allies in the struggle against any form of oppression and exploitation such as practised under colonialism and new colonialism thereby constituting an enormous revolutionary potential for Economic and Social change in the world to day".

In this conference the Delegates from the Developing Countries viewed this problem as a part of the system of exploitation in every country as well as within the International Economic and Political Order while delegates of Developed Countries did not see it much more than a characteristic feature of male dominated society.

The view of the developing countries was upheld in the Mid-Decade Review Conference of the U. N. at Copenhagon in 1980 as such. The strategies and measures needed to promote the status of women were accepted as the indispensable components of the struggle for the establishment of a New International Economic Order. It was realised that women's problems have always been ignored while adopting strategies for development. In developing countries the developmental programmes have produced rather negative results.<sup>1</sup>

The Committee on status of women in India felt the absence of desired datas and that the datas what so ever available are unreliable because the computation of such datas ignored the vast majority of rural women. In the absence of which, those datas become superfluous and misleading. Therefore it is high time that we should review the problem in the light of rationally representating datas and sort out ways and means to raise the status of women. It is a matter of great concern that the living standard of women is declining.

In the end Dr. Gauba gave a call to pledge that no stone would be left unturned to define and work for a society in which women participation is recognised in full sense in economic, social and political life and to devise strategies whereby such society could develop." In view of Dr. Gauba this alone will fulfil the ideal of New International Economic order. No economic order is complete without the participation of women in fuller sense and on the terms of equility.

#### **Wage Discrimination Between Man and Women.**

Dr. Raj Mohini through her paper presented statistical data highlighting the wage discrimination between men and women. From these datas another fact came to lime light that apart from the existing disparities in wages of men and women, the rates of wages are much below the minimum wages as enacted by the Govt. Although usually it is presumed that Labour in the Punjab state is highly paid. But their so called 'high wages' are meant for certain specific jobs and for specific occasions e. g. for sowing of paddy harvesting of wheat etc. The women are generally engaged in the job of cotton picking which fetches a meagre wages. But the paper is silent about the fact

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that for how many days in a year the women has to remain without job. According to Dr. Raj Mohini the availability of surplus male labour and secondly the physical strength of the men are two factors which can be mainly attributed to the wage disprity between men and women.

#### **Inchiug Towards Equality**

Ms Pushpinder Chandla read a paper 'Inching Towards Equality' narrating the discrimination in law relating to women. She began with quoting some disparaging quips about women written by Manu and Shakespear and said that they (Manu and Shakespear) themselves did not know how much harm they have done to the women-hood. Ms. Chandla said that God never wanted inequility when he created the world, but it is the 'Man' who used it for his own ends. Then she described the era of constitutional rights while referring the women movements in France and Britain. Ms. Chandla also pointed out the Articles in the Constitution of India which are soarly discriminatory to the Woman. But Ms. Chandla tried to defend this infirmity of the constitution saying that this discrimination manifests due to its misinterpretation or in not carrying out the spirit of the constitution. According to her there is gap between theory and practice. She said In fact the women is far from Equility. Despite varions laws, there are social values which are responsible for denying quility to the women in comparison with the men. In the end Ms. Chandla concluded that the main responsibility for such inequility lies on the shoulders of Man.

Ms. Chandla in her analysis did not probe the conditions of woman in social and historical context. And to its utter fallacy Ms. Chandla had held the Man solely responsible for this disparity. Social set up containing both Men and women has not even slightly been mentioned to have some



thing to do with such discrimination.

In fact question is not merely of gap between theory and practice but there is basis for discrimination in theory i. e. in very fundamentals of constitution which she has failed to analyse. Nothing has been said about the absence of right to work as being fundamental, the improper distribution of means of production which is presently under control of a micro minority, and law defends such discrimination as fundamental right to private property. And it is this wrong aspect of the constitution which preserve the essence of discrimination in the well decorated golden letters of Equality. Thus Law is the product of this set up based on class-society. And this Equality clause of the constitution plays prime role in defending this system with its all evils and this various rights loses their importance. Until and unless one is not guaranteed the basic necessities the democracy cannot develop. Because the right to work is not fundamental therefore the Government cannot be compelled to provide work. And majority of women are dumbing itself in the unproductive task of home drudgery which is checking their development.

Attributing creation of present world to the God. And then considering the God just and virtuous the whole responsibility has been placed on the Man. This is unscientific and metaphysical approach to a highly material question like the one in hand where as the God is only a whimsical and developed due to lack of understanding and out of fear of the natural in force early days Later on when the society was divided into classes then God was formulated as a full fledged institution which guided the formation of social laws and the society according to the development at that time.

With the development of society when  
SAW

the thought of classless society and universal fraternity are occupying the human mind at this stage use of God is highly orthodox and unscientific and such thinking serves the interest of the exploiting class.

The theory of Karma and ideology of subordination are the products of Religion which through its teaching instill more and more subordination and inferiority in the women and the [exploited classes] and provide basis for a tendency of compromise. Sphere of law is also not intact from the vicious effect of the institution of Religion. Law of the land takes its direction from the perverse religious principles. This is the reason that the elements of discrimination are festering in the present law. Muslim women despite being the citizens of 'Free' (not to Presume even) India are debarred from the right of equality in so many ways and under Muslim law a Man is allowed to keep four wives, Such laws also effect the Hindu Counterparts. A Hindu wife is helpless when shrewed husband marries second time by converting his religion to be Muslim. It is high time that a universal civil code should replace all codes based on the various religions.

So not only reforms in law or question of implementation of law should be under question but also the discriminatory basis on which law is based.

#### **Indian Women in Changing Socio Economic Status-In Context to Middle Class Women**

Lakshmi Kant Chawla presented her views on the topic Indian Women-incontext of changing socioeconomical conditions. To her distinction she was the sole participant who expressed herself in Hindi. Also Ms. Chawla articulately put his viewpoint that the problems of the women differs according to their strata of the society. And therefore while dealing the topic in hand Ms. Chawla

addressed herself particularly to the Middle class section of Indian women. She was cautious in vain lest the problems of middle class women are taken as the problems of Indian women in general as usual. Ms. Chawla with her eloquent expression gave the graphic description of various existing social problems such as sex discrimination, dowry, treating the women more as an sex object or misutilizing her as an object for commercial advertizement or for catching customers also the problems being faced by the women in their employment. But such lengthy narration of widely known and daily recurring problems was at the best an amusement for the gathered elite rather than an endeavour to wrestle with all aspects of serious topic in order to reach some conclusion. Unfortunately the over emphasis of Ms. Chawla on the dramatic description of problems led her astray. In her concluding portion where some concrete and detailed solution was anticipated. Ms. Chawla suggested that it is only the women who would solve these problems. But sign of interrogation remained as such about the way to solve these problems.

#### **Role Conflict in Indian Women**

Vidhu Mohan and Bharti Kapur both from Punjab University Chandigarh department of Psychology Presented their seminar paper captioned as Role conflict in Indian working women. Their seminar paper consisting of fourteen pages was divided under ten headings. Half the paper was devoted in tracing the status of women in from Ancient Indian Culture upto present 20th century. According to them in ancient period the status of the women was very much sacrosanct they have derived this historical conclusion from the facts that certain rivers were ascribed female nomenclature and that the great saint, Swami Paramhansa Ram Krishan worshipped Ma

Sharda. They further quoted Arthshastra that wife is the other half of the man, the best of his friends, the root of three aims of life and all that will help him (man) to the other world". They quoted Hindu Shastras telling that a woman should be lovingly cherished, well fed and cared for and provided with jewellery and luxuries to the limit of husband's means she would never be upgraded too seriously for the gods will not accept the sacrifice of the man who beats his wife. The factors relied upon by Vidhu and Bharti are wholly unreliable to warrant such conclusions, The basis of their such conclusion leads one to doubt about their concept of good status of man or woman. To infer the better status of women because one swami Ram Krishan Param Hans revered her Ma Sharda is a poor it not naive premise Such conclusion when based by them on some verse from Hindu Shastra adoring women can be easily contraverted by quoting many more from Hindu Shastras which treat women and reduce her to the status of a chaisi .... Even the quotes given by the authors does not go in favour of these conclusions.

For defining role and status authors have quoted Ralflinton (1966) as :-

"status as distinct from the individual who may occupy it is a collection of rights and duties, role represent the dynamic aspect of a status. The individual is socially assigned to a status and occupies it with relation to other statuses. When he puts rights and duties which constitute the status into effect he is performing a role".

Authors analyzed that in changing Indian Society daughters are given education and encouraged for job but from her as daughter-in-law expectations are same. If she gives more time at office, or home is neglected or succeeds more than husband, conflict starts leaving two alternatives with

her; either to leave the job to cater husband's ego or to leave married life. This gives rise to role conflict in family due to her changed role are bringing upheaval in society and demand readjustment of roles of husband and wife in family. New conception of relationship is not clear to modern husband and wife but they do not know exactly how authority between them should be carried out.

Women also wants to be successful at both fronts i. e. good profession and caring wife and good mother. Authors pointed out that at work place working women is sexually exploited but its relation with role conflict has not been explained.

Authors have ascribed major part of paper in preparing plot. Not that space given to analysing role conflict was too little but is touched the problem only at surface and authors have failed to bring out any analysis. Being Psychologists they have not done justification with the so good topic related to a burning problem creating majority psychological problems in society today.

Status and role as put by authors present no comprehensive, definition and are inarticulate, To us :

"status is person's legal, social or professional position in relation to others"  
And

"Role is person's task or duty in an undertaking" As status is in relation to others so Individual in different relation to have different status, accordingly 'person's role in different undertaking will be different.

When there is conflict between person's status and role it gives rise to role conflict. It manifests:

- (a) In ideas of person concerned.
- (b) In ideas of person related to/him/her in family
- (c) In ideas of persons around in society.

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taking example of an Indian women to explain:-

(a) In her own mind she is still not able to free herself from Ideological factor of male dominated Ideology. She has assumed new role in society but still believes that home tasks are to be performed by her and does not struggle for corresponding change at home, such wife will not allow her husband dusting, sweeping, cleaning utensils etc because she feels herself degraded in presence of others If her husband does his work. She is not able to reconcile that if home work does not lower her dignity how it can lower dignity of her husband. (here we are leaving for time being the problem that husband are not assuming this role), This is her conflict at home.

Second at office she very much feels the bad remarks and sexy looks of male fellow beings and condemns attitude of males for taking female as sex objects but she herself goes office in fashionable low cut dresses and other upto date fashions even though some of her dresses may hinder her activity or is uncomfortable in crowded bus or train She has not reconceived that in office her role is different and demands her thinking to be moulded on new lines i. e. diverting her time from useless fashioning and to development of her intellectual capacity.

one more example she feels need of only one children but if her first child ought to be female one goes for second to have male child. Family pressure also counts but in her own psyche this difference still exist and she is unable to see changed role of her daughter in life of parents.

(b) **At Family Level** :- This is manifested that they want her to fulfil needs of ache family members and yet to go to service and devote time for her studies. They do not realise that individual has limitation of time and energy and with her changed role others



also need to change their role at home taking responsibilities at home equally. This is due to old values in which male do not see it (home work) as part of their duty but if little is done, it is done as obligation to wife. Due to fettering of husband by old values, he desist himself from sharing all type of work taking plea that society does not like it, but actually this is deeprooted part of his thinking and also an excuse to escape. After all the hectic activity at office by both of them he wishes to be served by hot tea in evening, of friend accompany him which should entrain them and that wife should keep house hold upto mark and their role conflict at family level manifests in all its nakedness. Problems arises due to reason that her identity as person is not recognised and her needs are subordinated to needs of family assuming her primarily as wife and mother. This gives rise to role conflict.

**At Society Level :** In old culture and ideology women role was seen only as mother or as sexual object. Now when she goes out for different tasks her image of being sexual object fixed in mind of males due to old values, conflicts with her new role and result is her sexual harrasment. Even educated persons like Doctors, Professors, Scientists are not free from this type of thinking pattern e. g. in Ph. D courses head of Deptt. using his authority will select most beautiful girl to guide for thesis even though he has to go out of way in doing so and then will do his level best to exploit her. Similarly boss will select her personal Steno on basis of Physical beauty. Due to space problem we are unable to deal the problem of role conflict in its entirety.

It would have been much better if the authors would have given multi dimensional picture of problem with concrete examples, its root cause and how they see its solution in context to new social set up.

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### Factors Influencing Changing Position of Women.

Ms. Sathnam Kaur D.A.V. College for Women Amritsar studied the factors influencing the changing position of women in the 20th Century especially the movement of women out of home into remunerative work.

She correctly emphasized that women always had a role in the economic productivity of the nation. Before coming of the machines they worked in their homes to produce food and clothing, but mass production made it easier to purchase the family needs then to rely on home production. Today for the first time in history work for most women means something done outside the family separated from the home.

She attributed education of women and industrial revolution as factors that provided the impetus to women as piration for equality of opportunity. The changes in society like change from rural culture to an urban society, small scale production to Mechanisation, home dependent economy to economy which is not fully dependent on home and also the number of increase years for activity due to increase in physical health and longevity of women has affected her participation. She also mentioned that with the mechanisation and automation the uses to which women labour could be put is almost the same as that of men and physical strength is no longer a serious consideration. In her conclusion she over assessed that in India women are held in high esteem as evident from rapidly opening doors of higher education for her, but data speak against it. After 38 years of independence 80% women are illiterate out of remaining 20% who get opportunity for going to school only seven percent reach above Matric and only 1.2% are able to obtain higher education.

Similarly she has also concluded that with her participation in job outside home

there is revolution in position of women. According to her it is becoming quite natural for them (husbands) to share household tasks. Women are definitely seeking equality in marriages. The average working women in India is coming closure to men in the social status, economic opportunities open to her, and the intellectual freedom enjoyed by her today then at any time in history. She takes a slight note of the double standard but again stresses that now its existence is neither taken for granted nor powerfully asserted by men.

It is a stonishing to believe this conclusion. It seems as if Satnam Kaur is living in some other society but facts and hard realities of the life are on the contrary. At every step women is faced with the double burden of home and outside work, mental and psychological burden of double standards and limited opportunity of for her development. She has to pass through great mental conflict in order to keep her identity in tact amongst the double standard of old values and formal acceptance of her new role but in the transition period it cannot be otherwise and she has to face this challenge to make the wheel of the history to move in forward direction.

#### WOMEN'S WORK—AN ECONOMIC REVIEW

Ms. S. Nanda in her paper, women's work- An economic review, pointed out that most women are relegated to unpaid labour, category of home work which is essential for subsistence of family. More poor family, more is burden on women. She has to go for adding earning of family too. The old division of labour has shifted. She notes that the developing process we find women taking over men's work in addition to their own but men rarely taking over women's work. Men maintain a rigid refusal to. Women's health and

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future generation too are effected as 40% of babies born to over worked and under-nourished mothers die within four years of birth. At end she concluded that changing socio economic status of developing India is adversely affecting women's capacity to work and more crucial their survival rate.

The news put with in paper are at best a case study but much less an analysis. she has touched only tip of ice berg of such a vital problem. This dual burden is destiny of women passing through transition. Correct it is burdening women but better than four walls of home in which she was put in feudal age. The question to grapple is why system is not bothering to give her candition in confirmity with her changing role? What are causes at its basis and what type of value and social structure is needed which will provide condition for her changed role?

#### INDIAN MOTHERS—OHANGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Mr. Somesh Chadda in hir paper Indian mothers challenges and responsibilities, tried to analyse that Indian Youth has less risk bearing capacity as compared to developed countries and to develop this aspect mothers can play role. He also noted that as mothers are also affected by same ideology of not taking risk so are unable to transmit new ideas to women and thus [a vicious circle.

We failed to understand what relevance this paper had with present discussion. It would have been more relevant in some other seminar related to youth but has hardly to do any thing with topic under discussion.

Dr. Ms Anand Gauba in her paper remunerating work participation of women in Amritsar gave case study from 1901 to 1981. She has not mentioned how this can study relate to previous raised in her introductory note.

ough this Act, any radical change has been provided by the Govt. which the matrimonial law was not previously blessed with. The concept of conciliation is not entirely new to the country. The code of Civil Procedure (Amendment) Act 1976, contains special provisions on enjoining a duty upon the court to make efforts to assist the parties to the suit in arriving at a settlement in certain categories of suits or proceedings such as litigation relating to matters concerning the family, guardianship and custody adoption of children maintenance and succession etc. These amendments were made vide order 32-A Civil Procedure (Amendment) Act. 1976.

That the provisions of Family Courts Act 1985 are in existence since 1976 under the title C.P.C. (Amendment) Act 1976.

Similar provisions are also found in section 23 subsection (2) and (3) of the Hindu marriage Act 1955.

S23 Decree in proceedings.

(1).....

(2) Before proceeding to grant any relief this Act, it shall be the duty of the court in the first instance, in every case where it is possible so to do consistently with the nature and circumstances of the case to make every endeavour to bring about a reconciliation between the parties.

.....

(3) For the purpose of aiding the court in bringing about such reconciliation the court may if the parties so desire or if the court thinks it just and proper so to do, adjourn the proceedings for a reasonable period not exceeding fifteen days and refer the matter to any nominated by the court if the parties fail to name any person with directions to report to the court as to whether reconciliation can be and has been effected and the court shall in disposing of the proceeding have due regard to the report.

.....

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“Obviously there is left no shred of doubt that except establishing a separate court to be termed as Family Court there is on thing in this act which was previously not present.”

Again these conciliation part which the Family courts Act has emphasized unduly is irrational arbitrary and is made dependent upon the fabric of the judge acting as Family Court. Where as the previous provision providing for rsconciliation as we have seen above were time-bound beyond which even the court could not drag the proceedings to the harrassment of the parties. But the present Act has given unfettered powers to the judge for effecting reconciliation. Refer Family Courts Act.

See 1:—“In every suit or procedure endeavour shall be made by the family court in the first instance where it is possible to do so consistent with the nature and circumstances of the case to assist and persuade the parties in arriving at a settlement in respect of the subject of matter of the suit or proceeding and for this purpose i. e. may, subject to any rules made by the High Court, follow such procedure it may deem fit.”

This section of the family courts is substantially the replica of S-23 Hindu Marriage Act with the time limit of Fifteen days deleted. Therefore the family courts upon coming into operation will debar the parties from this safeguards of time limit against unduly prolonging and stressing the reconciliation.

**JUDGE IS LAW AND NOT LAW THE JUDGE**

A Curoosity look into the Act reflects that most of the provision are vague in the sense that much has been left the discretion of the judge. Discretion is very dangerous in



instrument of injustice if it is in the wrong hands or when handled not with care. When we say 'wrong hands' it means the judges not sensitized with social justice, with a machinist and walled in consciousness. It is to be remembered that most judges if we go by the judgements in matrimonial cases hold highly conservative views on the concept of Family Marriage or Equality of the sex. Even after thirty six years of independence the fundamental rights of equality before law, prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sex, equality of opportunities in matters of public employment freedom of speech and expression etc. to all the citizens of India does not seem to include the Woman. Recent judgement of Delhi High Courts compels the conclusion that the concept of Equality may be a fiat of the constitution but not the vision of the judge.

"Introduction of constitution law in the home is most in appropriate. It is like introducing a bull in a China shop. It will prove to be a ruthless destroyer of the marriage institution and all that it stands for. In the privacy of the home and the married life neither Article 21 (right to personal liberty) nor Art. 14 (equality before law) have any place. In a sensitive sphere which is at once most intimate and delicate, the introduction of sole principles of constitutional law will have the effect of weakening the marriage bond. The introduction of constitutional law into the ordinary domestic relationship of husband and wife will strike at the very root if that relationship and will be a fruitful source of dissension and quarrelling (Harvinder Kaur Vs. Harmander Chaudhry) AIR 1984 Delhi-66.

Unequal justice even if the highest court holds otherwise (what to say of Delhi High court) will fail in the face of the Social Justice because now the people are aware the SAW

masses are awakening. No judicial pronouncement can about it, and no pseudo reform politics can defeat it. Still the guided anisles of discretion in some misguide hands would be disastrous.

It is true that in most of the provisions of the Act pervades the element of conciliation and settlement of the parties by the court. This inclination of the Act will entail the stepping down of the judge from the pedestal and may lead the judges to develop some personal bias. Where the Law is considered to be blind, there the judge will be baring its blindfold aspect of the law and will learn more about the case before him earlier than they did in post and then the judge may work beyond the public view, off the record with no obligation to provide written reasoned opinions.

Thus the Family Courts will simply be reduced to conciliation office with a managerial judge. The law surrenders itself to the Family Court (which is other name of the presiding Judge) in the form i. e. The Family Court shall....., 'The Family Court may....', 'Family Court is entitled.....' etc. Add the Law Oriented Judge is transformed into Judge Oriented Law.

#### A SOP TO THE WOMAN

Section 4 of the Act relating to the appointment of judges to Family Courts at the end say that 'Preference is to be given to women. If a woman who believed that a woman's place is with her husband under the conditions, because the institution of marriage must be "protected and preserved", is appointed as a judge, how will her biological gender help the interests of women except insofar as it may be fool them into thinking that she may be more sympathetic to them ?

Also, the next section immediately after this one says: "No person shall be appointed

as.....a judge of family court after. He has attained the age of 62 years." The gender of the pronoun in this sentence suggests how seriously we need to take the so called preference to be given to women.

#### IMPROVED PROVISIONS OF THE ACT.

Section 5 provides for the Association of Institution and Organisations of persons engaged in social welfare with the functioning of the Family Courts-

The Institution, organisation or person is required to be recognised by State Government in Consultation with the High Court but it is not known what is the criteria for recognition. Since the Rules have not yet been framed under the Act, one has to wait and see what criteria for recognition will be laid down in the rules. Different Institution and Organisations engaged in social welfare have diverse social values and this can lead to some amount of confusion.

Section 7 is the most important section of the Act. It provides that all suit and proceedings between the parties to marriage for a decree of nullity, restitution of conjugal rights, judicial separation or divorce, suit or proceedings between parties with respect of the property of the parties or either of them suit or proceedings for an order and injunction in circumstances arising out of the marriage relationship, suit for guardianship, custody or access will be decided by Family Courts.

This section confers certain important powers on the court. It has the merit of combining in one Court the power of resolving disputes between parties to marriage relating to any of the matters mentioned above. One of the most important matters on which the Court can now adjudicate are disputes relating to property or parties and or either of them. Suits for injunctions in circumstances arising out of marital relationship

ions, can also be filed. Unfortunately, this section does not go far enough. It would have been better if the section clarified the rights of women to the property of the husband acquired during the marriage. One of the most important drawbacks of family legislation, as it exists today, is that it does not confer upon the wife, the right or a share in the property of the husband. A very valuable opportunity of conferring such a right has been lost. The only advantage of this new section is, that will not be necessary for a wife to file a separate suit other than a suit for matrimonial relief to claim proprietary right either of her own or to the property of her husband. Such claims can be made in the suit for divorce, judicial separation or restitution of conjugal rights itself. The section will enable judges hearing family matters to make an appropriate order safeguarding the property of the women. Another important change that could have been made was to confer the power on the Courts, to enforce payment of lumpsum alimony and the power to transfer assets to the wife at the time of passing a decree of divorce in lieu of periodic payments of alimony. It is a matter of common experience that orders of maintenance whether interim or final, are difficult to enforce. For a husband to avoid payment of alimony is the easiest thing in the world. The Act would have empowered the Court, to attach the property or salary of the husband before judgement and to direct that maintenance should be deducted directly from the salary of the husband and paid over to the wife. Payment of maintenance or alimony could be made a charge on the assets of the husband. Any alienation of the assets of the husband after the petition for maintenance of alimony is filed by the wife, should not be permitted, except with the leave of the Court and any such alienation made without

permission should be declared void. In such suits, alongwith the Written Statements, the husband must disclose his income and such disclosure must be supported by tax returns or employer's certificate stating his salary or net income. Jurisdiction to entertain suits must be conferred on courts where at the time of filing of the petition resides. This is necessary because often the husbands turns the woman out of the house and she has to come back and reside in her village or city. If such city happens to be different from the place where the marriage was performed or where the parties last resided together. she cannot be expected to the later place simply to file the suits. The power to grant injunctions is very welcome and we hope that it will be utilized fully by the courts and that injunctions restraining husband from indulging in domestic violence will be liberally granted. The power to grant injunctions must also be used for preventing the husband from entering the place of residence in case of domestic violence. preventing the disposal of property by the husband to defeat the claims of wife.

The Maintenance pendent lite (providing for expenses to the wife by the husband during the course of the litigation) such provisions which are very helpful to the wife with the meagre resources are totally missing in the Act.

#### ADVOCATES THE SPEED BREAKERS

On the road to the justice the Advocates are the speed breakers which only obstruct the flow of justice from the court to the community. That, but for the presence of the Advocates, the Courts are running on the ball-bearings. Such must have been the sense prevailing on the legislators when they enacted S-13 which says:

"S-13 Notwithstanding any thing. Contained in this law no party to a suit or proceeding

before a family Court shall be entitled as of right to be represented by legal practitioner .....

If the lawyers are only technicality mongers and multipliers of litigations then why not such a specie of predators as Advocates should be fought to its extinction. Then why not experiment in Civil and Criminal fields? What is viable in family Court Act is viable else where also? What a diagnosis and prognosis? This is a sadistic remedy. It is like saying that because increasing litigation is hindering the speed of the courts so stop the litigation forgetting why courts exist. It is unscrupulous precaution. We have historical experience of Industrial Disputes Act 1948 which in its section 36 contain the like provision. Still Lawyers are frequently representing both the sides under what ever cover they are. And this provisions in I. D. Act has proliferated another culture of political parties who with meagre knowledge of Reading and writing under-take the serious cases of poor and ignorant workers and play not only with their serious claim but also exploit this force for wretched political ends.

There is no gain saying that there is an escalating avalanche of all types of litigation traditional and non-traditional and a phenomenal crisis of delayed justice attaining disastrous dimensions. Committees, commissions conferences and circulars have all made marginal difference from their recommendations, The most bruited court issue confront the nation relate to the frightful back log of cases Civil Criminal and other at every level. But the goal is not to burke or banish the litigation, but improving the delivery system of social justice is the end and not closing the door to the court.

The making of law is a complex specialized job which calls for a sense of objectives and drafting skill. But the law making func-



tion belongs to Parliament Currently the M. P. 's are not obliged to possess academic qualification.

After all in the modern world no job is done by the unskilled and legislation need not be an exception. A country wedded to rule of law works its way to progress through radical legislation. When courts give jolts by their judgements often times the fault lies in the imperfect legislation. The present family court Act is one instance legislative illiteracy and imperfection. which debases the participation of Advocats.

Where as the family courts have been invested with the powers to decide the most vital issue relating to properties of the party and whereas the most complex civil procedure code is made applicable to the functioning of the family courts, at the same time the Act debars the parties to have the assistance of a lawyer in the court. What a travesty of justice. It is disarming both the parties of any outside help to replenish their inherent weakness and hope for an equal fight. Women in the present case due to its social status in the male dominated society will be more vulnerable to injustice. In our society most men are more exposed to and therefore more practised in dealing with the male dominated world of public affairs than are women. Men are also more used to speaking and arguing in public. Therefore being deprived of a lawyer is likely to prove more harmful for women than for men.

On one hand the Highcourt of land is widening the horizon of Public, Interest litigation culture by its valued judgements. Such imperfect legislations work as the antidotes to these judicial efforts. After all even progressive minds throwing away their judicial robes can only say "Give us the tools and we will finish the job." But the legal tools have to be made in the legislatures. But the state of affairs is not so helpless as

the legislature has viewed. Legal luminary like justice Krishana Iyer was not merely idealistic when he said "I regard the lawyer in his professional consciousness and operation as an artist of justice amidst an environment of in justice as an engineer of law in a lawless milieu of power."

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Thus speaks section 4 of the Act when it states that "In selecting the person to be appointed as a Judge the Govt. is required to be ensure that the person is COMMITTED TO THE NEED TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE".....

It seems that the legislatures looks at the present Marriage and Family Institution with sanctimonious reverence and deem it to be too sacred to be touched. It seem to ascribe these institutions as the product of the wisdom of the ages and supposed it beyond changes and interference. Hence the law to preserve them. Law and institutions must go hand in hand with new concepts and changing values. With change of circumstances these institutions also must advance and keep pace with the times. Each generation has right to choose for itself the forms of Institutions Marriage and Family etc, it believes the most promotive of its happiness.

Let us have a glance into the Family marriage institutions to which a judge would be committed to preserve.

In almost every society the women face a special kind of oppression because of the structure of patriarchy, (Father dominated) which have resulted in the separation of life into Public and Private spheres. The former

permission should be declared void. In such suits, alongwith the Written Statements, the husband must disclose his income and such disclosure must be supported by tax returns or employer's certificate stating his salary or net income. Jurisdiction to entertain suits must be conferred on courts where at the time of filing of the petition resides. This is necessary because often the husbands turns the woman out of the house and she has to come back and reside in her village or city. If such city happens to be different from the place where the marriage was performed or where the parties last resided together, she cannot be expected to the later place simply to file the suits. The power to grant injunctions is very welcome and we hope that it will be utilized fully by the courts and that injunctions restraining husband from indulging in domestic violence will be liberally granted. The power to grant injunctions must also be used for preventing the husband from entering the place of residence in case of domestic violence, preventing the disposal of property by the husband to defeat the claims of wife.

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In almost every society the women face a special kind of oppression because of the structure of patriarchy, (Father dominated) which have resulted in the separation of life into Public and Private spheres. The former



being active sphere of the Male and the later being almost the exclusive arena for the Females. The exclusions of women from political decision making and participating in different lines, the exclusion of women from economic market place and denial of economic independence and the perpetuation of belief through cultural oppression that woman represents the moral fibre of society. This processing has resulted in double standards of morality. Basically this double standard arose because of the Institution of the Family with its emphasis on virginity and Fidelity for the woman (alone) as the pre-requisite for the inheritance of property through male-line. The need to control biological reproduction arises from a Patriarchal Family structure. And the political and economic basis of Patriarchy is the Present Institution of Family. And the legal system is designed to uphold this Institution. Family Courts Act 1984 cannot be exception. Therefore the present Family Courts Acts is another instrument to preserve the Status-Quo. The law helps to preserve the patriarchal family by strengthening the relationship within the Family making it difficult for any severance specially for woman. It also ensures that sexual inequality within institution as maintained through unequal property rights. And lastly it perpetrates the double standards of sexual morality by giving legal recognition to this twin images of woman goodwife and mother on one hand and the Loose-women on the other.

Such Laws will die out like 'Dinosaur' if it dismisses the demands of the 21st century and hibernates in the frozen layers of Before Christ era. We may strike a warning that the matrimonial jurisprudence must part company with vintage legal scriptures of State values and should be integrated with the dynamic social values necessary for India.

individuals to allow them to unfold their full potential.

Practical the provisions of this section 4 of the Act are capable of working injustice against woman. It is not quite clear what is meant by saying that the persons to be appointed as judges must be "Committed to the need to protect and preserve the institution of marriage and to promote the welfare of the children and qualified by reason of experience and expertise to promote the settlement of disputes by conciliations and counselling.

The experience of woman in the existing courts has been that the so called need to protect and preserve the institution of the marriage is often enforced by the courts at the expense of the wife, very often judges are reluctant to grant decrees of divorce on the assumption that the institution of marriages need to be preserved at any cost. And it is generally the wife who is the bearer of such cost, who is the victim of such enforced preservation of institution of marriage due to her economic dependence on the husband. More-over the children being an important criteria to be taken in to consideration in settling the disputes by living together and preserving the institution of marriage. It is rarely appreciated that though the welfare of children is paramount the equally important need of protecting the woman against the mental physical cruelties cannot be sacrificed at the altar of the institution of marriage.

We fear that more suitable judge (according to Act.) will perpetuate more injustice with speed and severity in the name of preserving the marriage and settling disputes. This section further takes us to probe the basic question 'What is the best interest of the Woman? Whether to continue with a Bad Marriage or Whether to bring it to a painless and swift end?' The judge who is

(See Page 23)

# Organised Gang Of Criminals Indian Police

This is tale of Gujrat where Anti-reservation movement is going on. Leaving aside issue of reservation, a lot more has happened which cannot be brushed aside.

Advocates of Ant-ireservation movement gave a call for Gujrat Bandh on 18th April. State Govt. made it prestige issue to curb the implementation of Bandh taking plea of Sporadic Violnt Incedents. Police raided Gontipur, Kharia and Astodia on 17th April.

At Gontipur Central Reserve Police, under guidance of two Senior Officers, Additional Police Commissioner Bhargava and R. K. Vashishat, paraded in streets with their private parts exposed and howling to bring girls. All this created a terror and women startad running haphazardly shutting their doors. But Police entered in houses under garb of rounding up antisocial elements and started shameful acts of gang rapes and molestation.

Gontipur is mainly worker's colony. Virgin neeta daughter of textile worker was gang raped after breaking the door which she succeeded to shut but she could not succeed in saving her. Women who resisted beaten with gun butts on their breasts and private parts. Even lunatic girl Meena was not spared. Two widows requested, "we have no men in house please leave us" But Police Personnel replied, "what then we are there come....." and started molesting them. Cupboardes and doors were smashed in search of firearms. Police entered in kitchens. Some urinated in grains and broke the luggage.

Next day people went to Gujrat High Court against this rampage and court appointed Commission taking serious note of the

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events. One report of the Comission of Gujrat High Courts say, "the statement of Justice Mullah that police is an organised gang of Goondas is once again proved with what police did in Ahmsdabad. Court also banned entry of Bhargava and Vashishat certain areas but Govt. has taken no action so far.

Gujrat Samachar and some other papers gave details, covering the events exposing in-human acts of the police. There was pubjc out-range on the events and many women 's groups came out on the war path. Question was raised in Parliament by Opposition regarding 17th April to 20th April events and why action against two Officers, even court orders was not taken? Ruling party instead of feeling sorry on such acts rebuffed that how judiciary can interfere in tasks of executive (Police) and condemned attitude of Gujrat High Court laveling it as bad norms for democracy.

Press has been pillorised for instigating police by printing records of its brutalities and covering the court proceedings. Police set fire to Gujrat Samachar and then obstructed fire brigade to do their job. They were totally fearless knowing that, because Chief Minister Mr. Solanky is having strained relations with Gujrat Samachar, so no one will ask them. Having state patronage for all this Hoolinism they least bothered about public outrage but in turn did lathi charge on peaceful dharna by two hundred women under leadership of Ahamdabad Women's Action Group and broke their limbs.

lia Pathic chai person of this group had submitted memorandum to Governer Mr. B. K. Nehru and Prime Minister asking for

for public apologise for crime against women says, "our dharna on 22nd had nothing what so ever to do with the anti-reservation stir. We were protesting against beating up of women by policemen who were supposed to be protecting them from anti-social elements. We had made them very clear alongwith the fact that dharna was to be truly Gandhian and totally peaceful even then police struck and struck unprovoked."

As a matter of punishment Bhargava has been shifted to Police Training School thought to be punishment post but having patronage of big wigs, he is in high spirits he and his wife have expressed views which are worth examining.

Madhu Bhargava, wife of Additional Police Commissioner Mr. A. K. Bhargava incharge of Gomatipur oppression, declared "leave alone a man in uniform even if an ordinary Person had done such a thing he would have been locked up in mental asylum within hours. It is totally untrue. Thank God my sons are too young to pay much intention to newspapers yet, but the number of alarmed calls I have received from relatives and friends....."

Yes, Mrs. Madhu Bhargava your vision can only see effect of newspapers on your children but what about these children who have witnessed these shameful acts? What about those women who have suffered? You cannot feel this even as women because being defender of your husband who is part of state machinery responsible for this rampage you have lost that vision to see atrocities of state and suffering of poor folk at Gomtipur and Khaira. Should we believe you who concluded that all this is untrue sitting in your air cooled house or those hundred who witnessed events, suffered on their bodies, were raped and molested? Your version are true and faithful for your class but these cannot be-fool those who

suffered.

A. K. Bhargava Additional Police Commissioner Ahmedabad has come out more openly saying, "why do such incidence take place only in Gujrat? Why donot take place in North India? Because thee the women know their limits aud donot try to confront the police. Here because men are unable to confront the police, place the women and children in front. As far as police are concerned if there is any trouble men and women have to be treated a like in controlling situation." He also said that if it is known previously that women will participate then the female can be arranged but it cannot be predicted and if suddenly the females participation is known they had to face male police.

In his statement he has revealed more clearly as representative of state machinery that state is to repress the people when they rise in struggle against it, Not-withstanding his arguments that in North such events donot happen we want to ask were those women. Who were raped and molested in their homes. canes to confront police? they think it entirely well when police does ael hooligoonism but unwell when women come out in protest. We don't think that his statment of confront. atiot by the women participant in struggle by male police in any condition be justified lawfully.

In fact there is nothing new. Only cruel face of state has been exposed before the people of Ahmadabad. Each day with their struggles people are coming to know who are their enemies, knowing more and more anti-people character of police, Military all state machinery. Yesterday people of Assam, Bhopal, Punjab witnessed, today Gujrat and tomorrow some other states. On seemingly different issues struggles of peoples are breaking but these have a common element that they are against oppression and



and are out come of this social system based on exploitation and oppression. Illiterate people are learning about their oppressors from such struggle and it is for elite and intelligent to work out these connections and provide leadership to the toiling masses.

## Believe it or not

In Padanga people of Burning it is believed that long neck is sign of beauty so to achieve that from young age brass rings are worn neck becomes elongated then another ring is added and number of rings goes on increasing till girl reached age of puberty. At specific age ceremony is held when rings are opened one by one. At that time she is unable to hold her neck independently so amongst friends and relatives some one supports the neck till all rings are removed and she is able to bear weight of head on neck without support. Then she is left with elongated and urging neck to compete in the field of Beauty.

But if at this age it is held that girl has broken the norms of society and she is guilty of disregarding the moral code set by the society then to punish her all the rings are opened at once and it is ordered that no one will support her neck. Poor girl, unable to support her neck straight, dies of choking.

## An Information

Reader's may please note that the concluding portion of article family relationship could not be published as promised due to some unavoidable circumstances. New same may be expected in Vol 2, No. 5. We regret the delay.

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appointed man or woman irrespective is primarily required to be sensitive to the oppression of women within the present framework of marriage and respond to the need of the changing society by recognizing that the institution of marriage is not a sacrament and need not necessarily be preserved at the cost of injustice to the women. But this task is equal only to a social scientist with a fearless democratic and socialistic perspective and not for merely a 'judge'. But such a judge may not be particularly pleasing if at all he has been able to manage his entry as a judge of Family Court despite the vigil of the tedious sentinel Section four of the Act.

The law itself though of social importance is only one element in the total human task. The task is to meet and master tholts frustration that diminish man in his fulfillment within this human society our concern is with the human conditions and the imperative need to improve it, through such resources as we can develop. The burning issue of our times is how our resources can be developed and improvement of the human task and improvement of the human condition. It is a tragedy of our times that injustice masquerades as justice and. 'Anatole France' was logical when he quipped "So long as society is founded upon injustice the function of law will be to defend and sustain injustice. And the more unjust they are the more respectable they will seem." It is never too much to stress that the dialectics of legal system tends to represent that to relieve the Weaker and the Disabled. The rule of Family Courts Act can hardly be an exception.

*Break The Chains*

## END WITH-DEVDAASI-ISM

In the border district of Maharashtra and Karnatka an estimated 4000 to 5000 girls are dedicated annually to the Goddess Yellamma at the Saundatti temple, the famed citadel of the devdassi system, system of organised prostitution, during the lunar Month of Magh on full moon day. Devdasis the religious prostitution are maids of god and men. According to a religious belief young girls from low castes are dedicated to yellamma a Goddess. There girls are married to goddess after which they cannot marry but can be utilized sexually by any male being devdasis.

With the efforts of Mahatma Phule Samta Pratishtan of Pune headed by Baba Adhar and his militant co workers, Professor Subhash Joshi of Nipani and Professor Vishal Banne of Gandhinglaj organised first ever conference in 1975, International women's year to expose ignominious system and to explode the myth surrounding the dedication of girls to Yellamma. Then another conference was held at Nipani in 1980 attended by 1000 devdasis.

Gaurabai Salvade-a devdasi was most vociferous. She challenged the devi's in justice in choosing girls from the harijan commuunity alone "Why don't the Marathas, Brahimns and Lingayats dedicate their daughters? She asked. She appealed to the devedasis present to have faith in yellamma but not to dedicate their daughters to her.

Revabai Kamble, a devdasi believed like many others, met her profession had religious sanction. Today she is the President of the Pune Devedassi Sangathan founded in 1982. They are able to rouse health consciousness among city prostitutes. Rehabilitation of devdasi and helping them to adopt some other method of livelihood, hostels for their children, education for children is being tried. also they are touring area to stop parents to dedicate young

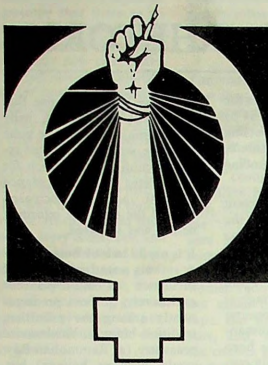
girls.

During 1983 and 1984, Indian Health Organisation conducted an intensive camp at Saundatti and it was first Medical organisation which raised demand to ban the devdasi system. It is not out of way to mention that act to end this system was passed in 1934 and system is illegal but still going on widely by connections between city agents, old devadasis, priests and police and in illiterate and poverty stricken areas it is not difficult to persue, superstitions parents, and relatives to bestow their daughters to Yellamma.

### Devidasis' Demand

1. The government of Maharashtra and Karnatka should see that the Devadasi act of 1934 is strictly implemented in order to eradicate the system.
2. Both these Governments should establish rehabilitation boards to solve the problem of devadasis.
3. Devadasis should be given employment by the Govt.
4. Legal action should be taken against the agents from big cities, who take advantage of poverty stricken superstitions people and trap them into organised prostitution.
5. A census of devadasis should be carried out as a basis for further action.
6. Old devadasis should be given pensions by state even if they have a toss.
7. The maiden name of the mother should be regareded as valid for all purposes like admission to schools etc.
8. Children of devadasis should be provided all facilities given to children of backward castes.
9. Children of devadasis should have a right to their father's property.
10. The state should set up boards meant exclusively for children of devadasis.





# SANGHARSH

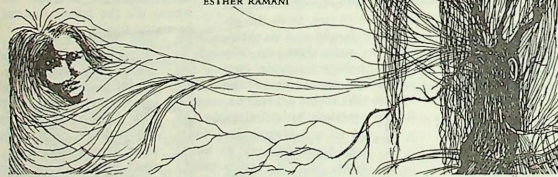
For Private Circulation Only

## For All Women On March 8, International Women's Day

Take time to listen  
to the voice of our strength  
to the quiet brag of our hearts  
We can, We can, We can  
Then let our strength fuse  
with that of our million sisters  
and surge to the moment of change  
moving always towards  
another time  
another place  
of our own making

Let our newly blossoming anger  
assault unrelenting the injustice  
that women and every oppressed class  
live daily

ESTHER RAMANI



It is time now to raise our subdued voices and join the millions to 'speak the unspoken'; to lift the weight of the crushing circumstances that confined us to function within the narrowest limits; limits that we all are forced to share just because we are women; limits that divide us because of our race, religion, caste, community and class; limits that stifled our creativity through our education and ethos.

As the murmur of our awakening fills our fibre, we shall refuse to let ourselves be trampled upon. Let our surging power challenge the bartering of our bodies, the subjugation of our feelings and thought to mere trivia. Let no one but ourselves define our roles, our intellect, our selves.

March 8, 1857 represented one of the first organised assertions of our collective will. On this day the women textile workers in the United States marched into the streets for the reduction of working hours and more human conditions of work. In 1910 the Russian woman revolutionary Clara Zetkin proposed that March 8, be declared as International Women's Day. From then on our legacy has

been one of resistance, of innumerable struggles our sisters have waged all over the world which has split open the myth that our grievances are 'private and personal' and revealed its political character; that ours is a struggle against all forms of oppression which is rooted in our society; that as women we are marginalised from the main stream of political and social life.

We celebrate March 8 as a moment of breaking away from the culture of silence and we grow and spread by fusing our energies with the movements of women and the oppressed all over the world and so

Let our newly garnered strength  
build a world of just laws  
in which every person woman and man  
can work and live in human dignity.

VIMOCCHANA

Forum For Women's Rights

## Women and Social Reproduction

As socialist feminists we see women, just as we see the working class, not simply as an oppressed and exploited mass but as a revolutionary force which can change the whole of society. That is why this topic is so important because it tries to locate the role of women as people who produce and reproduce society, and therefore as people capable of revolutionising that society. It thus deals with women as workers, and therefore predominantly, although not exclusively, with working class women.

All working class women work, whether they are wage-labourers or not; in fact, if they are wage-labourers, they are consistently working a double shift, day after day. If they are considered purely as wage-workers, then there is no reason why they should be considered differently from any other section of the working class, even though they have peculiar problems of their own. But the fact that they are house-workers as well affects even their status within wage-work, confines them to badly-paid work, marginal jobs which are supposed to be 'women's work' and so on. So it is

necessary to begin by examining the role of women as house-workers in order to understand their role in the reproduction of society as a whole.

The work which women do within the home—cooking, washing and cleaning, caring for children, etc., is work which has to be done in any society to keep it running. If they stop doing this work and no one else takes it up, all factories, transport, construction and so on will come to a standstill, disease and hunger will increase day by day, and very soon people will start dying. No production means no profit, and a deep crisis will result. So this is *socially necessary labour*, work which is necessary

housework. However badly you get paid, at least you get something back from society for your wage-work, and you have the advantage of working with others (unless you are engaged in domestic industry). But in the second two features, housework has the advantage; within the limits of your income you can, for example, choose what you are going to cook, whereas in a factory you have no control whatsoever over the product; and in spite of poor living conditions, overwork and dominating family members, you can, to some extent, organise your housework in your own way, bring up your children as you please, whereas in wage-labour you are constantly supervised and directed by others.

### PERSPECTIVE FOR WORKERS CONTROL?

for society; it is *productive activity*. In fact, from the standpoint of social reproduction it is perhaps the most important productive activity, because it produces the people who produce everything else. This is why it is rather absurd to look at women simply as consumers, because they, more than anyone else, are producers. They are most concerned about inflation not because they eat up most of the rice, wheat and sugar and drink the kerosene, but because for them these are means of production, the materials with which they work.

But although the work itself is absolutely necessary, the way in which it is organised is not. There are some features about it which are advantages over wage-work, and some features which are disadvantageous. If we compare housework with wage-work we get something like this:

Housework	Wage-work
1. No pay	Some pay
2. Isolated	Collective
3. Some control over product of work	No control over product of work
4. Some control over method of work	No control over method of work



like to avoid, such as too much work, bad working conditions and the division of labour, both mental/manual and sexual.

From this standpoint we can begin to evaluate the kind of demands and perspectives which women have raised concerning housework. Three main types can be considered here.

(1) The first is not a demand about housework: as such,

In the first two features, wage-work has the advantage over

continued on page 5

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# ON SUBVERTING A RHETORIC:

## I AM A WOMAN.....

I am a mother,  
I am a sister,  
I am a faithful spouse,  
I am a woman,

A woman, who, from the beginning  
with bare feet,  
has run all over the steaming hot lands  
of the deserts,  
I am from the small villages of the north,  
A woman, who from the beginning,  
has worked to the limits of her capacity  
in the rice paddies and tea plantations,  
I am from the far away ruins in the east,  
A woman, who from the beginning,  
with bare feet,  
along with her skinny cow in the  
threshing field, from dawn to dusk,  
has felt the weight of pain,

I am a woman,  
from the nomad tribes who wander  
in the plains and the mountains,  
A woman who gives birth to her baby  
in the mountains,  
and loves her goat in the expanse of  
the plains,  
and sits in mourning.

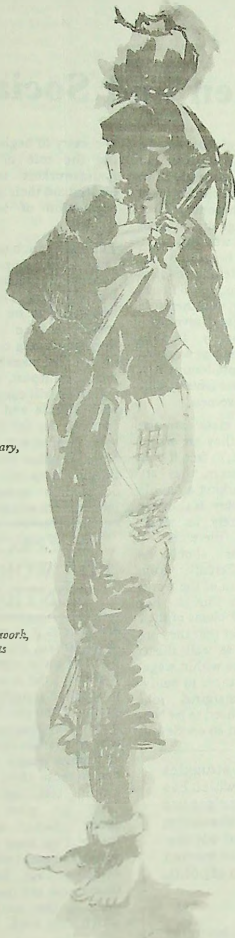
I am a woman,  
A worker whose hands turn  
the great machines of the factory,  
which, each day,  
tear to bits my strength,  
in the threads of the wheels,  
in front of my eyes,  
A woman from whose life's blood,  
The carcass of the bloodsucker gets fatter,  
and from the loss of my blood,  
the profit of the capitalist increases,  
A woman for whom in your shameful vocabulary,  
There is no word  
corresponding to my significance,  
Your vocabulary speaks only of woman,  
whose hands are clean,  
whose body is supple,  
whose skin is soft,  
and whose hair is perfumed.

I am a woman,  
with hands full of wounds,  
from the cutting blades of pain.  
A woman whose body has been broken  
under your unlimited, shameless, back-breaking work,  
A woman whose skin is the mirror of the deserts  
and whose hair smells of factory smoke.

I am a vibrated woman,  
A woman, who, from the beginning,  
shoulder to shoulder with her  
comrades and brothers,  
has crossed the plains,  
A woman who has created  
the strong arms of the worker,  
and the powerful hands of the peasant,  
I myself am a worker,  
I myself am a peasant,  
with all my body  
an exhibit of pain  
with all my body  
the embodiment of hate.  
How shameless of you to contend  
that my hunger is an illusion,  
and my nakedness is  
a dream.

I am a woman,  
A woman, for whom  
in your shameful vocabulary,  
There is no word  
Corresponding to my significance  
A woman in whose chest  
there is a heart  
full of the scorching  
wounds of wrath,  
A woman in whose eyes  
the red  
reflection of the bullets  
of liberty are dancing  
A woman whose hands have  
been trained  
through work, to pick up  
the gun.

Marche Ahmadi (Osmani) was born in 1945 in Osmani (Iran). From early childhood, through working in her father's field, she became aware of the gross injustices, within Iranian society. This made her determined to actively participate in the struggle against a system which was the root cause of the exploitation of her people. She played a leading role in the student movement of the 1970s. She soon joined the ranks of the Organization of the Iranian People's Fedai Guerrillas. In May, 1973, after courageously fighting the enemy in a street battle, she was shot by the Shah's mercenaries, who even after her death were afraid to approach her lifeless body.



The last three years have marked a major development in the history of Indian women. The nation-wide interest in the Mathura case and the subsequent effort to get an antiquated rape law amended were no doubt important in themselves, but were also, I believe, the enabling factors for the actual development which is of a different order and represents a significant advance for women.

For women, sexual assault (of which rape is just one form) has been a fear we constantly live with. A fear that determines and restricts the scope of our lives. But just as, or perhaps more oppressive and destructive, has been the silence in which this intimidating experience has always been shrouded. If we were attacked in the street, on a bus, in the classroom, or in the home, we bore the guilt, the shame, the blot on our honour (it was always our guilt, our shame we had been told, even though we were the ones attacked) and took pains to ensure that the event never became public. The significant advance that has taken place over the past three years is that such assault has shifted, especially at the social or public level, from the region of the unspeakable or the taboo into the realm of speech. I say at the social or public level, because even today at a personal level unless a woman has a great deal of support from her immediate environment and especially from other women, it is very difficult to speak openly about such experiences. The dangers are psychological, but more importantly physical, material. On the other hand, it is possible today, in a way that was only barely so even 10 years ago, to talk and write about rape, to make films about it, and even, as in the Maya Tyagi case, to initiate a political campaign where rape is the central issue. There can be little doubt that this is a major move forward, and that the media have indeed played an important role in relation to it.

What is, however, cause for alarm is the exact form this publicity has taken. Atrocities on women are obviously the concern of any responsible media. But there can be little doubt that the publicity rape for instance has received, is also because it combines the three ingredients: sex, violence and power, guaranteed to arouse the sado-masochistic sexuality that is typical of our time. Nothing like rape to up the sales! Within such a sexual structure, pleasure has its source in inflicting (and the converse, suffering) pain. Consequently, nearly every time rape is spoken about or imaged, be it in a journal, a film or a political campaign, however moral or reformist the overt concern, the event is always presented at its goriest and most sensational. This means that the report focuses and elaborates on the woman's sexuality, her body, her age, her occupation, her class; then goes on to report in horrendous detail, often accompanied by photographs, the

crime itself, before it salves the guilty average reader is by this time inevitably feeling over his perverse engrossment, with a moral edict denouncing the rape.

And however loud or fervent the explicit moral anguish, the real message, embodied in the style of the report, is unambiguous. That the basis of this "moral" indignation is again nearly always male outrage at the violation of his property; affront because his woman-wife, sister, mother, has been attacked and never really outrage at the violence itself, is a related question. But of that, more later. The point I'm trying to make now is that if we probe deeper into the popular imaging of atrocities on women, we find that the rhetorical act involved is structured in such a way that it nearly al-

meet the haunting sense that the moral indignation, willy nilly, remains part of the same perverse structure. Recent research confirms this hunch, for it indicates that the incidence of sati actually increased around the time the reformist action was initiated.

It is useful to look back. History reveals a startling fact. The incidence of sati was not exclusively, or even predominantly among the primitive, tradition-bound Vaishnavite peasantry, (as Rammohan Roy would have us believe) but among the urban elite of the Calcutta region. In fact, during the early part of the nineteenth century sati was most prevalent in areas exposed to western influence such as the Bengal Presidency. In a society thus disrupted, where new, non-traditional opportunities for upward social mobility and economic advancement became available to those who came within the sphere of British influence, sati actually became a means of upgrading a family's social status and demonstrating its ritual purity. It is not unimportant that the Dharma Sabha was able to organise what might be regarded a proto-nationalist movement in defence of the morbid practice. The issue is no doubt an involved one, but what I'd like to point out here are the connections between three nodal features in this cultural world. First at the moral level, where we get the idea of the "virtuous" wife, the women on whose life the family honour or status finally depends; second, the religious, communal or nationalist sentiment which can quickly cohere on the issue; and third, the psycho-sexual basis which established sati as the "choice entertainment" it had obviously become by the 1820's; and (if we are to judge by the contemporary revival of interest, both at a sensationalist and a communal level) has remained even today. Such issues, are always complexly powered. The sources of their energy far more deeply and mysteriously rooted than we imagine; the hold tenacious.

Take the currently popular film Insaaf Ka Tarazu for instance. Overtly it is a film designed to reveal the bias of the

ways addresses and reinforces, at this psychosexual level, the very norms that give rise to and support such attacks. And further, by evoking, by way of structure, a morality based on the assumption that woman is property, and that a sexual attack on her is dishonour, not so much to her, as to the patriarchal family and its extensions in caste, class and race. What the rhetoric actually does is reaffirm the socio-cultural system that such a sexual relation is correlate with.

A parallel can easily be found in the nineteenth century concern with the abolition of sati. Here we have an atrocity on women that was taken up with a fervency that was to make it imaginatively, if not actually, the touchstone for a whole reform movement. And yet, as we search back to the original reports, (well reflected in their modern day version of spectacular colour spreads, showing the women, the massive crowds, but most of all, the fires) we find the focus remains on the number of times

the basis of this "moral" indignation is again nearly always male outrage at the violation of his property; affront because his woman - wife, sister, mother, has been attacked and never really outrage at the violence itself.

the widow had to be pushed back into the pyre, the force with which she was held down, how piercing her cries were, how "consuming" the fire was and so on. It is obvious that the excitement aroused by the event is no moral indignation, though the overt intention in these reports is to decry sati on liberal humanitarian grounds. In fact just as in the case of rape today, here too we

existing law on rape, more especially the fact that women can never expect justice under its tenets. The plot is probably familiar to most readers; but a summary will be useful. A woman, working as a model, and living with her school-going younger sister in a well appointed city flat is attacked and violently raped by a man whose attentions she spurns.

Compiled and Edited by Vimochana Editorial Collective  
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Graphics : Shirley



The court acquits the rapist on the grounds that there is no proof that she did not consent. Broken, she leaves her fiancé whose family now rejects her, and the job she can no longer do as her image is tarnished. With her sister she moves out of the city to find work elsewhere, this time as a typist. But the story is repeated; the sister is raped by the same man. Enraged, the heroine takes justice into her own hands and shoots the rapist. At the second trial, the whole story comes out, and the judge, disturbed and chastened by what he hears, gives her a token punishment, then, in a heroic concluding gesture resigns, thus severing all personal connections with this faulty law.

At the explicit level this would appear a pro-women movie. One that all women must see, even the advertisement declares. But the same bill tells us not to miss the exciting beginning where the real theme statement of the film is made in an abstractly posed, but spectacularly filmed attack on a woman, that resounds with the noise of shattering glass. At the gates (don't tell me the site was not deliberately chosen) of the "posh" theatre where the film has been running for four months, is a huge hoarding of Rajesh Khanna, a rapist hero of Red Rose, who, we are told, wears "Fabiana Suitsings". We have here in cameo the actual dynamic of the film: an explicit moral or humanistic statement coupled with a concrete filmic rhetoric that not only undermines and emasculates the former, but

firmly re-establishes the status quo. In other words, the covert rhetoric of the film determines its message.

The movie opens with shot after shot where Zeenat Aman, who plays the heroine (the star sex symbol of the Hindi screen is aptly cast in the role) is shown in revealing "westernized" costumes. The image of the alien here, is not negligible, or incidental. Neither is the "she-asked-for-it" exposure of her body. The film maker could argue that his effort here is to establish that a woman's job or her dress does not make her fair game for rape. But the repeated exposure, and, more specifically, the camera angles, leave us in no doubt about the function of these frames. Next is a sequence in the very modern flat where she lives with her sister, without protection, either in the form of husband or father, of the patriarchal family. The new woman, one might say. But what do we see here of the struggle, the fight, the demoralization of a woman living alone in a city like Bombay? This woman's living alone is just a ball.

But we must not dwell too long on such minor details. She prances around the luxuriously appointed flat, in stages of undress, cooking a meal for her fiancé in between a great deal of necking and cuddling. As one might expect, the predominantly male cinema audience now is really aroused and the film responds by providing the predictable "dream sequence". Shots of feet interlacing,

of a bed festooned with marigolds, of a bride being kissed, of her in underclothes again, of her going down his legs, ad nauseam. Whatever else she

titillatory story sequences. We pause briefly to note with the police photographer the scratch marks on her face. We see her declare to her fiancé

## HOW THE MEDIA USE RAPE

might aspire to be in this film, she is established first and in controversially as sex object.

The first round (as things go, these days, fairly innocent, I suppose) is over. Now for the second. The setting: the same flat. This time she emerges from a naughtily decorated bathroom where we watched her shower, clad only in revealing red negligee, and is brutally raped by the man waiting for her. The episode is presented in great detail: the sado-masochistic scenario complete with silk gag, black underwear, ankles and wrists lashed together. Each black thong, each knot, each brutal move is caressingly watched by the excited camera. Later we will have this scene replayed in flash back, twice. (The modified replay, remember, only serves to evoke the original scene even more vividly than an actual presentation).

The crucial event over, we move on to the police report, the lawyers office, the court, and so on in quick succession. The pace here is in striking contrast to that of the earlier

"Mera sub kuch kho gaya....." Only so much in the realm of this film, for the woman's experience, her feelings, the world, as it appears to her..... In court the rapist is in the dock wearing an elegant outfit. His lawyer exudes an easy, even sleepy confidence. I'd like to dwell at some length on the way the rapist's (male) lawyer and the victim's (woman) lawyer are contrasted, for here, once again the film's value system is revealed. Here the battle is pitched between what I've called the covert and totally uncontested, indeed, given this structure, uncontested logic and its attendant rhetoric, and the overt verbalised statement. The male lawyer, representative of course of the rapist, is middle aged, unfashionably dressed, unkempt, even ugly if a man can be that, but clever. Its not so much that he argues brilliantly, as that he is in total control and that he times things, even his shouting, well. His assurance therefore is complete, unshakable. He can even doze. And this is the message that gets across. He (and

his kind) are made to win. It matters little how. What of the woman lawyer? White saree. Deep red lipstick. Composed, but tight, even brittle. Very stylish. Immaculate hair do. Immaculately manicured fingers. Several shots of long shapely nails painted red. The theme sound as she moves into action, is the click of high heels. She argues too. She speaks the truth (what use is it?) she argues with indignation, but her passion is real, not calculated and it seems like hysteria-unnecessary, uncontrolled. Worst of all, the more worked up she gets, the more sexy, the more desirable and toylke, she becomes..... She's for the taking too, it would seem.

Now for the second rape. This, men who have seen the film tell me, is what gives the film its "hit" rating. Evidently they are right, for the film made Raj Babbar (who acts the rapist) a super star. This time the kid sister looking for a job is trapped in this opulent man's ridiculously furnished office suite. She is slowly made to strip. She protests, screams, tries to break out. No effect. No one can hear. She tries to defend herself. Again its no use. He's on the winning side from the word go. Its a cool game for him. With ease he catches the objects she flings at him, and smiling, sets them aside. He insists she take her clothes off. The camera stays fastened on her. Moves up and down her body. Stops at each button, each hook. She is made to walk, up then down, then up again. Only occasio-

nally, and that too very briefly during all this are we shown the attacker's face. Who is interested in it any way? In fact, for the audience he is an intruder, they are so completely involved with the woman. Her indignity is their thrill. The rape a fitting climax. At the trial that follows his murder Zeenat, now moulded into respectability, wears an ash grey saree and a demure blouse. Such is the function the chastening authority of the phallus. And the end of the movie? As all happy endings a fictive sequence: extravagant, unreal, of only formal value, quickly forgotten. What remains is a clear message identical to the one the world is perpetually proclaiming.

How can this effect be subverted? How could the movie maker, even if we allow his good intentions, have changed the court scene or the second rape, to question, even convert the sado-masochistic rhetoric that dominates? How could he have projected a world that reflects women's real experience? The point am trying to make is that given the over-all structure, the basic psycho-social system that is not only left unquestioned and uncriticized, but reinforced and the essentially male point of view that is filmically expounded, it is impossible to avoid such an effect. No sur face change, no more intensification of moral purpose, will transform the sexy, hysterical, to that the woman lawyer is in the film, into a serious powerful voice, any more than the

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## WOMEN ARE CONSCIOUS

Rural women in India who constitute 81 per cent of the female population and 36 per cent of the total rural labour are viewed primarily as homemakers and are denied their productive roles. Furthermore, while men increasingly have opportunities to develop their skills and awareness, the treatment of women as members of the families/households and not as individuals in their own right perpetuates women's backwardness alienating them to the outside world. A study on the impact of the Green Revolution on women carried out by us in three villages of Etawah District in Western Uttar Pradesh reveals that peasant women are highly conscious of their economic roles and their sex-specific and caste and class specific social position. Our research report (this paper is abstracted from the report) suggests that the rural development realities are seen critically by these women. Rural women in this region seem highly conscious of the fact that development and welfare programmes launched by the Government are usurped by the rural rich and the government officials at the local level.


Our training as social scientists and the ideology of planning encourages an image of agricultural women in which the technological and scientific solutions of the problems of development are constantly

generated by an expert group of planners and policy-makers but are not accepted by the 'backward' peasant women. It is assumed that the reasons for non-acceptability of development programmes are to be found in the ignorance and conservatism of the rural women. This is not the case. Here we attempt to dispel the myths about women's 'backwardness'. While we supplied some useful background information about the causes of women's subordination in the structural and historical processes, the village women themselves interpreted their own situation. Many of them accused planners, development administrators and academics of premeditated insulation and deliberate neglect of peasant women and their men.

We interviewed women from 58 households from a cross-section of village society. The majority of them belong to the scheduled caste and minority communities. Agrarian technology and production on commercial lines in these areas has not only led to pauperization of small peasantry but also polarisation between women and men. Marginality and discriminatory low wages are prevalent among rural women throughout the northern region of the Green Revolution in India. Most of the manual and non-technological work is done by

women, while men operate the new agricultural machines and control the inputs as well as the produce. Women's in-

**SISTERHOOD**



Why am I invisible, Irrelevant, Isolated, Privatized?

Have I a choice Can I change? Support me So I may be Whole. With you, my sisters I must be More

ASTRA

volvement in production is viewed as secondary to their reproductive, 'homemaker' role and this is the basis of their marginality and subordinate character in production as well as neglect in the development process. Significantly, in addition to the pressures of poverty, the struggle against patriarchy is reflected in these peasant women's answers, irrespective of their socio-economic background.

To have a better understanding of the women's consciousness regarding their exploitative conditions, we decided to include some case profiles in our study. These women represent not only undoubted poverty and hardships in a stratified, patriarchal system but skills and strength to fight back against the economic and social inferiority thrust on them. The life histories of three of these women are presented here.

### Prema Devi

Thirty five year old Prema Devi was married to Munshi when she was seven and he was ten years of age. She belongs to one of the two families who work as Bhangi (scavengers) in the village. Munshi owns about 1.5 acres of land and six pigs which are reared for sale. Premadevi, who has two young sons, participates in all the agricultural activities on her own fields, except ploughing. She goes scavenging to the caste Hindu houses each morning and, depending on availability of work, does wage labour. However, she said that even wage labour is

not easily accessible to a Bhangi woman because of pollution restrictions.

Prema Devi seemed a conscious woman having the capacity to reflect and articulate. She denounced the attitude of caste Hindus towards her and her caste women and men. The caste Hindus pass taunting remarks on the latter's mode of dress, hairstyles, behaviour and "caste Hindu-type" names. These manifestations of modernity are considered the prerogative of caste Hindus. According to Prema Devi, the present generation of young, literate and semi-literate women and men are more ruthless in observing untouchability. "Although now we are allowed into the courtyards of most houses, the younger women throw food at us as though we are dogs." The village functionaries refuse to touch Bhangi women, men and their children. The village medical practitioner, reportedly, would examine the Bhangi patients only in the morning prior to his ritual bath and puja (prayer).

Prema Devi's husband has a reputation of being lazy, non-productive and a gambler. He is dependent on her. The sole responsibility of providing for her family rests on Prema Devi. Prema Devi is an assertive woman making major decisions in the family regarding consumption and expenditure. However, while her husband is largely unhelpful where contributing to the family income is concerned, yet, when Prema Devi undertakes wage labour during

transplanting and harvesting periods he does most of the house work including cooking washing and cleaning of the house. This breakdown of the sexual division of labour was noticed among Chamar families and among poor Muslim and non-caste Hindus of the other two villages. Economic necessity drives the able bodied women and men to work in the fields and the household chores and children are attended to by older men and women.

Socio-economic conditions put the bhangi in the role of scavengers and the arresting social system offers no avenue of release from this role. Prema Devi said that the placement of her caste in the lowest social rung, poverty and thereby dependency on the class of caste Hindus restricts her mobility and results in a loss of bargaining power. About 15 years ago she as well as other Bhangi women and men organised to strike work till such time that their wages were enhanced. The daily wage of one roti for scavenging has not been raised for the last 50 years. The Bhangi went without their 'roti' for a couple of days, but hunger drove them back at the same wage rate to the caste Hindus who threatened to withdraw even that one 'roti' if the Bhangi people did not 'behave' themselves.

However, Prema Devi's self-confidence, self-respect and refusal to be cowed down by the high-handed treatment of caste Hindus especially the

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## WOMEN ARE CONSCIOUS

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Thakur group is remarkable. She related an incident of how once her husband Munshi was forced to gamble by a Thakur to whom he lost Rs. 150. When the Thakur demanded immediate payment, Prema Devi pleaded with him to forego his claim of the money. When the Thakur refused to negotiate, she offered Rs. 25 as earnest money promising to pay the rest later. However, when the Thakur threatened to pour kerosene oil over Munshi and set him on fire, Prema Devi walked to the police station at a distance of seven kilometers and lodged a complaint against the Thakur who, thereon, was arrested. Her confidence is evident from another incident when under the UNICEF sponsored Applied Nutrition Programme, grain and oil were being given to women and children. The Thakur in-charge of the distribution refused to give Bhangi women and children their rightful share saying that they came under a different territorial jurisdiction. At this, the two Bhangi families, with Prema Devi as their spokeswoman, threatened to stop work and not cast their votes for any of the village candidates during the Panchayat elections. This threat hit home and they were given their share of grain and oil.

Prema Devi has a resolute spirit and enormous courage. She perceives all women as being oppressed mainly on account of their class and sex position. However, while the rich women do not have to fight for minute economic problems, the poor women are doubly oppressed both economically and socially. Prema Devi sees her own liberation only by way of a general improvement of caste and class conditions in rural India. Poverty she feels is becoming increasingly unbearable now.

### Sarbari

Sarbari, a Muslim woman aged 40 and a mother of six children, is not only one of the most articulate women we encountered on our field trip but is also the most urbane and assertive in her mode of speech.

Married to Sulaiman, both the husband and wife sell cloth in this village and the neighbouring villages. They have been in this trade for the last 22 years. They have a small house in the neighbouring township where their oldest son lives and works as an apprentice with a tailor. In the village, Sarbari has a mud house, a major portion of it having collapsed in the recent floods and torrential rains.

An adept sales woman, Sarbari is very fluent and vocal. Her contact with the outside world including cities like Etawah and Kanpur where she goes occasionally to procure wholesale textile material, has gone a long way in developing in her, self-confidence and ability to provide for herself and her family. She recalls her struggle for life; "I matured into a woman at a very early age, without ever having gone through the innocence of childhood." After marriage, apart from having to go from house to house peddling her ware, Sarbari has to bear and rear children, look after her husband, manage her domestic work and tend to the cattle. She not only appears weak in health but decidedly exhausted and run down. At present, she is pregnant and denounces God and society in general for casting this curse of child birth on woman-kind without providing adequate means for bringing up children. She strongly supports family planning programmes.

Sarbari is a down-to-earth realist. She has no illusions about her profession and does not attempt to either find justifications for the fact that she has been driven out of the house by sheer economic pressures, or glorify the nature of her job. She related several incidents when she was subjected to cruel harassment by the Thakur men of the village. These men get material from her, taking advantage of the fact that on account of their dominant socio-economic position in the village, she cannot refuse them her goods. She complains that the Thakur men not only withhold

payment but abuse and curse her in obscene language when she asks to be paid. On a couple of occasions Sarbari has also been beaten up by some Thakur men for having the 'audacity' to 'demand' payment for the material she sells. She resentfully recalls an instance when a Thakur openly made sexual advances towards her and when she resisted, he set afloat rumours denouncing her as a woman of high ques-

with her and she retaliated by severely beating up the Muslim. As a result, a case was filed against Sarbari and her daughter and Rs. 4000 was spent in fighting the case. She expresses her anger against the Muslims of the village who she feels have done nothing to help her and, on the contrary have criticised her for her defiance and aggressiveness. However, her fight against orthodoxy and traditionalism

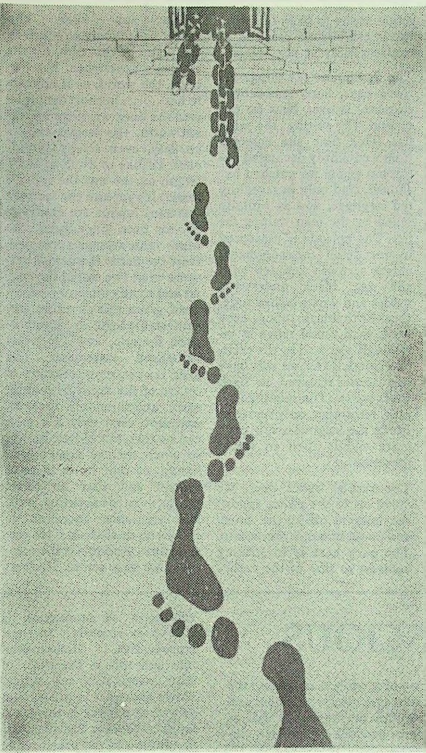
the house by doing wage labour. This year she has taken some land on share cropping. Shamsad is the first woman in the region of this study to emerge as an independent sharecropper.

Sarbari stated explicitly that while she and her husband work at the same job, when at home he never even lifts a finger to help her. When the children were small, not once did he offer to help by minding them while she worked. He is a master at home and expects to be waited on. She is now totally exhausted with having to combine the burden of household work, child-care and peddling cloth. "Women have no relief from the drudge and burden of back-breaking work," she remarked. Realising the hard life a woman with no economic and social security can have, Sarbari is encouraging her daughter to stand firmly on her own feet. She whole-heartedly agreed and supported Chamei's (another Bhangi woman in the village) contention:

"Dependency of a woman on a man is what arrests the development of women. In a sense, the high-caste women are worse off than lower-caste women since their mobility is controlled entirely by their men and they are beaten much more. Their only redeeming factor is that economically they are better off"

### Shakuntala

Shakuntala aged 33 years is of the Chamara caste. Her parental home is in the district of Ghazipur in eastern Uttar Pradesh. Her husband Vrindavan owns about an acre of land in the village and takes in addition 1.5 acres of land from a Thakur landowner on sharecropping. Shakuntala is a mother of five children and is expecting a sixth one. The earnings of this family are far from sufficient to sustain it in a proper manner. Most of the older children do wage labour in the heavy agricultural periods and it is very likely that even Shakuntala works for wages although when asked she evaded the question. However, she confessed to being active



tionable character. Sarbari has developed a mental defense now against these rumours and has learnt to ignore them.

There was an incident when she was accused of thieving by a landowning rich Muslim man and was belaboured. Seeing her mother being beaten, Sarbari's daughter joined

has enhanced her determination to 'take on' all adverse situations. Her twenty year old daughter, Shamsad, who was deserted by her husband receives tremendous support and encouragement from Sarbari. Shamsad has been staying with her parents for the last five years and has been contributing towards running

in agricultural activity on her own fields.

Like other non-caste Hindu, working class women, Shakuntala is very articulate and conscious of her role. The one over-riding factor in her conversation with us was an acute awareness of her own caste status and its social implications in the context of wider socio-economic relations. "Are we not human-beings?" she kept asking repeatedly. Shakuntala's astonishing articulation could partly be attributed to the fact that she comes from a politically active region of Ghazipur. She is also rather widely travelled compared to her counterparts in the village; she has been to Banaras, Kanpur, Allahabad and Etawah. However, her remarkably clear perception and analysis of the manner in which forces of oppression operate in the rural society arise out of her own life experience and struggle.

Shakuntala lamented the fact that in their impulse for upward mobility in the social scale, the Chamars have dislodged themselves from particular skills and specialisation in leatherwork, often hereditary, at other times acquired through the process of learning from fellow women or men. She says:

"Earlier the Brahmin Thakur used to give us water from a distance and we had to drink using our palms for cups. We thought that if we gave up our traditional occupation of leatherwork we would be given food in metal plates and water in a *lota* (brass container used for drinking water and other liquids); but things still remain the same and we have lost our work and income."

With regard to women's social position, Shakuntala says that women slog to a back-breaking routine both in the house and outside. Perpetual child bearing, chronic sickness, lack of medical facilities, drought and starvation had drained and other women mentally and physically.

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# MILITARISM AND SEXISM

The purpose of this essay is to explore the interrelationships between sexism and militarism, to comment upon the way the common values basic to these interrelated belief systems socialise, indeed "educate" human beings to the acceptance and pursuit of warfare; and to make some observations regarding the implications of sexism and militarism for education for peace.

The term education as it is used here is generally conceived to comprehend all of the instruction the society provides to the young which condition and form world views, personalities, aspirations, values and belief systems. As implied in the title, much of this instruction conditions the

young to an acceptance of the inevitability of war and instills a value system which justifies war as a legitimate means for dealing with international conflict. There is a growing body of evidence which points to an important relationship between that value system and militarism and sexism. These two interrelated belief systems, while outmoded by both technology and contemporary knowledge regarding human behaviour and human capacities are still crucially influential factors in human relations and social structures.

Militarism and sexism complement, reinforce and help to perpetuate each other. They also constitute major obstacles to overcoming war, largely as they affect the education and

formation of generation after generation of women and men who accept these belief systems and their institutional consequences as part of the fixed order of things dictated by an immutable "human nature". Indeed, insistence on the concept of the immutability of human nature and the desirability of a fixed order so poignantly articulated by the current resurgence of ultra conservative and authoritarian movements, is the very core of these belief systems. It is also the major paradigm from which traditional socialisation processes and institutional education are derived. These processes still, in spite of the rate and scope of the changes in the world about us, are de-

signed to prepare people for specific unchanging roles in a society expected to remain structurally the same, generation after generation. Among these specific roles are those determined by sex, and among the expectations of fixed sex roles is the likelihood of young men serving in war, war being viewed, as are sex roles, as the inevitable consequence of "human nature". Thus, militarism has been a significant aspect of the socialisation and education of boys and largely determines what comprises socially desirable masculine attributes. These attributes tend to be qualities deemed necessary for military service, such as bravery, aggressiveness, endurance, discipline and the repression

of the "softer" human sentiments. Boys are urged to strive towards public achievement, these intrinsic parts of their masculine identity. They are also reassured, perhaps as an inducement to be willing, if necessary, to make "the ultimate sacrifice," that this identity is superior to that of the "other", the feminine identity.

The school-age child is taught every day from kindergarten through secondary school that to be orderly and obedient demonstrates your goodness and worthiness of love. Even though before entering school, children are taught that there is a significant social difference between men and women and that society has widely different behavioural expectations from each sex. Boys are

to be physically active, assertive, adventurous and oriented toward public achievement. Girls are to be passive, compliant, timid, and oriented toward caring for the personal needs of others. The role of the school in reinforcing these expectations will be explored in the section on the effects of militarism and sexism on institutional education.

If the children's day involves athletics, either practice of an actual competition, they are urged to "lay low" or "waste" their opponents. The powerful lesson of sports in general is that the highest human value and virtue is winning and winning always means the opponent must lose proving less value and virtue in the loser or

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## WOMEN AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

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but for an escape from housework, the demand of employment. The positive aspect of employment for women is that it enables them to break out of the isolation of the home and gain some financial independence from the family—the two advantages of wage-work. The negative aspect is that it increases their workload and decreases their leisure time—both of which are consequences of ignoring the socially necessary character of housework and therefore not raising any demands directly related to it. But over and above these disadvantages is a more serious one: by itself, this demand is totally unrealistic. Nowhere in the world, let alone in India, is there likely to be a return to conditions of labour shortage or absence of labour organisations, which historically were the conditions in which large-scale employment of women took place. In the advanced capitalist countries, where more and more women are joining the wage-labour force, they are not so much being employed in industry or agriculture, where employment as a whole is declining, but in the ser-

vice sector. Here, however, most services, as well as a significant amount of manufacturing, e.g., food processing—are provided in the home—by women (although even here the tendency to shift from employment in agriculture and industry to services is beginning to be seen). In other words, women as house-workers are competing with themselves as wage-workers. In a profit-oriented system, it is obvious that so long as women go on doing this work without payment, no one is going to pay them to do it.

So the demand for paid employment, cannot meet with success so long as women continue to keep themselves out of paid work by working for nothing.

(2) One movement which has tried to meet this difficulty is the 'wages for housework' movement. Unlike the simple demand for employment, this movement does not accept the prevailing social definition of housework as useless, but recognises its social usefulness by demanding payment for it. But it accepts the other disadvantage of it, its isolated character, and by doing this, makes the demand one which is extremely difficult to fight for. The most that a movement like this can achieve is something like a family allowance for women. This is certainly a step forward,

and gives women a small degree of financial independence, but even if the movement is successful, there is still the problem that once it is over women go back to isolation in their homes.

(3) Alternatively, women have demanded that the state take over various functions which are now performed in the family by women. This converts these into paid jobs and also socialises them. But at the same time the advantages of housework are lost: any control which was earlier present is taken away. The state, representing the capitalist class as a whole, is asked to take over functions which were formerly under our control.

All these solutions then, have serious drawbacks: is it possible to develop something better? Not something perfect, of course, but a solution which is superior to those which have so far been put forward?

At present, all we can do is suggest what a solution could mean: actually working it out will be something that has to be done in practice.

Firstly, it would mean women organising collectively to do the work which they now do in isolation—organising creches where children can be looked after collectively, canteens where the preparation of food can be centralised, and so on. There may be problems at first, because women are not



used to working together in this way, but it should not be difficult to overcome these. What is most important is that women should do all this themselves so that they can develop their initiatives and make use of and extend the skills, knowledge and experience which they already possess.

Secondly, doing it this way would mean retaining control over the whole process; in fact, even extending it, since a group of women working collectively would be less subject to pressures, for example, from family members, than one woman in isolation. They would be able to decide what exactly they want to produce, what kind of up-bringing they would like their children to have, what kind of diet would be best, and so on—without leaving these important decisions to others as they would have to if the state took them over.

Thirdly, it would also leave the women in control of the way in which they organised themselves; it would be possible to eliminate the division between those who make decisions and those who carry them out, those who work with their brains, and those who work with their hands, those who are more skilled and those who are less skilled—the kinds of divisions which exist in every capitalist enterprise. It may even be possible to question popular notions of what is 'women's work' and 'men's work' and thus to begin breaking down the most stubborn division—the sexual

division of labour.

Finally, it would also mean a struggle to get payment, probably from the state for this work—some compensation from society for work which is done for society. This may be the most difficult part, because it is not likely, that small local groups of women will be able to achieve it alone. It would be necessary to link up and form a wider organisation of women, as well as gain the support of other sections of the working class, especially the trade unions. This would involve convincing them that this is not simply a sectional demand but a demand in the interests of the working class as a whole. Surely, if a movement of this sort were started, it would give an enormous boost to the working class movement as a whole. The self-confidence and experience of organisation and struggle gained by women within it would undoubtedly help increase their participation in work-place struggles. More than that, it would introduce a new element into these struggles. Because the struggle for control over the production and reproduction of human life, human individuals, must, by its own logic, extend to a struggle for control and planning of every aspect of social production and reproduction. For example, ensuring the health of those individuals will involve control over the production and distribution of food, clothing, housing, sanitation, medical services—and even ultimately, control over some part of what goes on in their work places. Ensuring their psychological well-being involves much more. The circle steadily extends outwards. Thus women, instead of struggling at the tail-end of the labour movement, would be right at the forefront of it.

Upon now, the very centrality of women to the process of social reproduction has been their downfall: it has been used to marginalise them within the labour force and exclude them from any meaningful role in organisations and struggles. Can we reverse this situation and convert their role in social production into a source of revolutionary strength?

ROHINI BANAI  
—Forum Against Oppression of Women  
Bombay



Revolution means change from the top to the bottom and that includes the way we deal with each other as human beings—

ALEY KUTTY  
Mathrubumi

## AGITATING FOR THEIR RIGHTS

The fisher women of Goa and Kerala are at the forefront of the fisher people's agitation against the invasion by the trawlers and mechanised craft. Over four hundred trawlers have been licenced in Goa. In violation of the law forbidding trawlers to operate within the five fathoms limit, they have been encroaching systematically on the preserves of the traditional fishermen. As a consequence, Goa's 80,000 strong fishing community is facing virtual extinction. For the last three years the community has been agitating for the enforcement of the five fathoms limit. The agitation has considerably intensified in the last three months.

All through the agitation the fisherwomen have been fighting along side the menfolk. In the last year the fisher women of Trivandrum participated in a chain hunger strike. They also participated in processions and marches. In Kerala, the Government has been able to solve their problems to some extent. In Goa, the fisher

women blockaded the road of the Chief Minister's residence. More than two hundred fisher women were arrested and taken to jail.

One of the women complained bitterly of the conditions in the jail. She said that "... a hundred and fifty of them were kept in a very small crowded cell." They had to sleep on the bare floor and were treated on par with criminals and murderers. They were served with inedible food and watery tea out of old tin cans. They were further intimidated by the police and warned that they would be kept in jail for an indefinite period of time unless they withdrew from the agitation.

But all this has not dampened the spirit of the brave fisher women; one of them said "It is a life and death battle for us. After the trawlers have invaded our territory we do not get any fish at all. There were times, in the old days before the trawlers came, when I could make Rs. 25 to Rs. 30 a day during the

season from selling fish. Now I can barely make three or four rupees. Our earnings are now less than Rs. 1000 a year, as against Rs. 7000 to Rs. 8000 before."

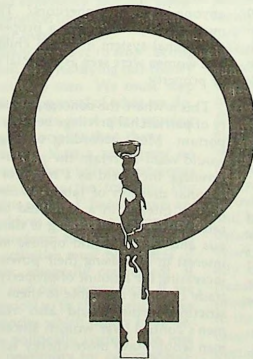
Another woman in the crowd intervened and said

bitterly that many of them had to stop sending their children to school because they could not afford to do so any longer. She herself had sold or pledged many of her gold ornaments. "We manage to keep the home fires burning only by borrowing heavily at 18%

per month from the local land lords. "What is going to happen to us?"

"Your agitation does not seem to be getting you anywhere. What if the Government does not yield to your demands? Are you not afraid of violence?" I asked them "... we are even prepared to die rather than give up our fight. We have no choice in the matter. What do you expect us to do? ... It is already three years now since the agitation has started. We are now prepared for drastic methods and desperate solutions if the Government will not do anything about the trawlers we will catch hold of the trawlers and burn them."

The fisher women of Goa are extremely militant. They are determined to carry on the fight to the finish. They are not deceived by the offers of trawlers for all of them. "How can we afford trawlers? How many people will get employment? Each trawler can employ only five people, where the rampon employs one hundred and fifty people. They will give trawlers to some of the rich fishermen and to the leaders and what will the rest of us do?"



WOMEN  
IN  
STRUGGLE



In the past three years, a tendency has emerged called socialist feminism. Many feminists have argued that it is the most progressive position in feminism today.<sup>1</sup>

Socialist feminism is not a precise term. Those who consider themselves socialist feminists include female socialists, women who consider imperialism to be the primary contradiction, socialists who see feminism as a way of organizing women into the class struggle, and women who see patriarchy<sup>2</sup> and class as equal and (to varying degrees) independent sources of women's oppression. The minimum area of agreement seems to be that Marxism has something to teach us about the sources and maintenance of women's oppression and about ways to overcome it. On a theoretical level, this assumption has led to attempts to integrate feminism into Marxism or to reconceptualize one in terms of the other.<sup>1</sup>

Feminists have received strong criticism from both male and female Leftists for "dividing the working class," making bourgeois "personal" issues central to political struggle, and so on.

Perhaps the turn to Marxism is to some extent an attempt on the part of feminists to show that they too can do "real" political work and "real" theory. It may be a way of showing that it is "correct" to organize women because they do produce surplus value (through housework), or at least reproduce labor-power which is the precondition for extracting surplus value. Alternatively, since women constitute an expanding segment of the working class, they can now be seen as significant in the organization of a socialist movement (as workers). Or, socialist-feminism allows women to argue that feminism, because it focuses on process, is a valuable tool for building revolutionary organizations or revolutionizing the working class.

All these positions implicitly assume that women's lives in and of themselves have little or no revolutionary potential, that women's experience only becomes meaningful when it is related to the class struggle, and that patriarchy is not a relatively autonomous historical force which also determines the character of social relations and human history. In short, socialist feminism suggests that feminists have raised interesting questions and developed forms of organization which must now be integrated into ongoing class struggle.

These issues are considered subordinate to class struggle and have not been taken seriously as a fundamental challenge to the way Marxists understand politics and political change. The real question is whether we accept Marxism as the correct (if flawed) paradigm for comprehending women's oppression or instead call for the development of a new mode of analysis. What, if anything, can Marxism as it stands now teach us about women's oppression, and what is the utility of the Marxist method for feminist analysis?

#### Problems of Orthodox Marxism

A careful examination of Engels' writing can point up the weaknesses of orthodox Marxist theory<sup>3</sup> in regard to the analysis of women's oppression. I will not restate Engels' argument in *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*<sup>4</sup> but rather I will list seven basic problems with his argument and discuss how these problems are related to the general nature of a Marxist approach. Furthermore, I will show that Engels' own theory can be fully comprehended only by integrating an analysis of

patriarchy with his work. By relying solely on a history of changes in the mode of production, Engels ignores the specific history of women.

First, Engels takes a sexual division of labor for granted.<sup>5</sup> He assumes that labor has always been divided on the basis of sex and that women have always done household labor. He provides no explanation for why this is the case, and moreover, does not do justice to the fantastic variety of the content of work done by women and men; as recent anthropological work shows, childcare seems to be the only type of work women do almost universally.<sup>6</sup> A more concrete analysis of the sexual division of labor in different societies would have highlighted one crucial fact: whatever women do is considered less valuable than whatever men do.<sup>7</sup> The orthodox Marxist approach has not explained this fact. Nor does Engels explore the consequences for men, women, and children of the primary responsibility for childcare falling on women.

Second, Engels argues that wealth was owned by the gens<sup>8</sup> and that the gens was matriarchal. But then, how can he argue that cattle became private property of men because they were "heads" of these families?<sup>9</sup> According to more recent anthropological work, agriculture and herding developed about the same time, so that the development of private property in cattle could not in itself be such a radical transformation that it would lead to the overthrow of mother-right (if it ever existed).



This is merely one concrete instance of the larger difficulty of assuming the existence of a matriarchal society and the primacy of changes in property relations. Engels needs a matriarchy so it can be overthrown by men—not as men but rather as owners of private property, or the instruments of labor? That is, the course of history depends on changes in the mode of production and the consequent property relations, not on (or as well on) sexual-power relations or the mode of production. For Engels, the family becomes part of the superstructure rather than a part of the base. He recognizes the centrality of the "mode of reproduction," but fails to carry out the exploration of sexual politics required to understand it.

Third, also along these lines, if cattle and slaves were such clear signs of wealth, how did the presumably male heads of households claim them? Why did they not belong to women? "Custom"<sup>10</sup> cannot explain why these sources of power could so easily be appropriated by men.

I am led to two possible conclusions: either there never was a matriarchy (in which case one cannot explain the oppression of women solely on the basis of changes in production-property relations), or the overthrow of matriarchy was a political as well as economic revolution in which men as men subdued or destroyed the privileged (or perhaps equal) position of women for a number of historically

possible reasons (such as men discovering their role in reproduction and/or asserting control over reproduction).

Fourth, why should inheritance be such a crucial issue?<sup>11</sup> Engels is reading the present into the past. In gens society, is there any danger to children themselves (would they be outcast, or not be taken care of), or is illegitimacy and/or individual inheritance even a meaningful concept in a matriarchal society? Men must already have been feeling excluded from the gens and/or from reproduction, since, as Engels states, in pre-monomogamous marriage systems, only the mother of the child could be known with certainty.<sup>12</sup>

Thus men might attempt to use children as a means of claiming power and overcoming exclusion, promising protection in return. (As feminists have pointed out, this is one of the oldest protection rackets around—women and children are guaranteed protection by the aggressors—men.) Furthermore, in most cultures, only sons can inherit property, not daughters; thus inheritance can be seen as another way of keeping power and property within male control.<sup>13</sup> Alternatively, inheritance could point to the possibility that women and their products (children) were already regarded as property. Indeed, Levi-Strauss suggests that women were the first form of property and were traded out of their clan to cement relationships between men in differing clans.

At least initially, such a system must have been instituted and maintained by force.

Fifth, Engels suggests that men wanted their own children to inherit and that this was a reason for overthrowing the then traditional matrilineal order of inheritance. But what is wrong with a sister's children (or anyone else) as inheritors? There must already have been a property/patriarchal system in which children and women were seen as a special sort of property.

This is where the concept and reality of patriarchal privilege become important. Men, according to Engels, would want to retain the power and privilege they held as a result of the original division of labor. Women's natural interest in a restricted birthrate (because childbearing is dangerous and tiring) would oppose men's interest in increasing their power by increasing the amount of property for trade or labor available to them. Restricting births would also reduce men's control over women since women would have more energy for activities other than child-birth and child rearing. In addition, as long as women have children at home, service to children spills over into service to the man (why cook, sew, clean, for example, only for children). Why would anyone want to give up these personal services? So men have an interest in controlling reproduction. At

# Do Fem

By JANE FLAX

this point, the sexual division of labor becomes an instrument of oppression.

Sixth, Engels argues that the overthrow of mother right could take place through a simple decree.<sup>12</sup> Wouldn't women be disturbed by being transferred out of their gens upon marriage, thus losing a crucial source of their power? How and by whom could a "simple decree" be issued that descent would in the future be patrilineal? Why would women obey it? Certainly legal doctrines had little meaning in this era and would have had to be backed by other forms of power. Again, the very structure of early social systems seems to point to force being used by men against women, originally for control over scarce resources (children) and later to maintain the privileges the initial system created.

Finally, why did shifts in inheritance of property bring total supremacy to the male? Doesn't this view transfer the present centrality of private property back to "primitive" times? Moreover, there is no reason to think that property owned by families would necessitate or lead to male-dominated families. The existence of male domination and private property cannot be explained unless we postulate a whole structure of society in which power derives from and is exercised by males as well as by a property-based ruling class. All men are kings in their castles, no matter what or who they are in the King's castle.

In short, the dynamic which Engels sees centered in property and inheritance must also be grounded in a struggle for power, in the dialectic of sex. Changes in the mode of production are not a sufficient explanation for the overthrow of mother-right. On another level even though it is doubtful that a matriarchy ever existed, Engels nonetheless needed to postulate one so that he could paradoxically avoid following out the implications of his statement about the modes of production and reproduction. Women (communal property) are overthrown by men (private property). Engels only examines property relations, not relations between men and women, and hence does not carry out a thorough analysis of the mode of reproduction. In fact, the mode of production and the mode of reproduction are not necessarily in harmony, and contradictions can be overcome by force, by the maintenance of patriarchy, and by realignments of the family, and realignments within the family.

Marx acknowledges this when he discusses "the natural division of labor in the family."<sup>13</sup> Marx means "natural" in a very specific sense, i.e., "uncivilized." "Natural" is the opposite of "social." So the "natural" division of labor in the family must be based on the capacity of women to bear children, and since they bear them, it is "convenient" (Engels) for them to also raise children. Marx explicitly acknowledges that the distribution of labor and its products is unequal within the family and that it is unequal because the man has control over the woman and children and can do with their labor and reproductive power what he wills.

Property is the power of controlling others' labor.<sup>14</sup> Marx does not explain how/why men got this power. Furthermore, he says that the slavery latent in the family is the "nucleus" of later forms of property, which are



# Feminists Need Marxism?

graphics by Sylvia Wallace

just higher forms of essentially the same relation. Although the question of how men got this initial power is still unresolved, its existence permits men to gain other, more extensive and elaborate forms of property and power. Thus we can argue that "patriarchal privilege" is both a foundation for ("primitive accumulation") and basis of men's economic power. Once the initial act of expropriation (women and children as property) is carried out, men can use their differential power bases to subordinate other men through gift-giving, wife-trading, etc. To destroy men's privileged position in the family means to take control over our own labor power and thus it is analogous to removing the privilege of appropriation of surplus value from the capitalist.

In fact, Marx himself seems to be making a similar analogy in his next paragraph when he says: *the division of labor offers us the first example for the fact that man's [woman's] own act [childbearing, labor for the man] becomes an alien power opposed to him [her]—as long as man [woman] remains in natural society, that is, as long as a split exists between the particular and the common interest, and as long as the activity is not voluntarily, but naturally divided. For as soon as labor is distributed, each person has a particular, exclusive area of activity which is imposed on him [her] and from which he [she] cannot escape.*<sup>15</sup>

Translated into feminist terms, Marx's argument means that patriarchy is a form of individual expropriation which constricts the possibility of developing a communal form of society. The man's private possession of women and children leads to the antisocial form of private and privatistic families. Nonetheless, the man has an interest in maintaining this form of property; he benefits directly from this inequality. Furthermore, women will remain enslaved as long as they are subject to a "natural" as opposed to "social" division of labor.

Marx does not point out, however, that the division of labor has different consequences for men and women.

Men go outside the home; the family is the base from which they can move out. Women remain embedded in the family, and the split which results from the sexual division of labor (particular/common, private/public), reinforces the powerlessness and exploitation of the woman.<sup>16</sup> While historically neither men nor women can escape their exclusive areas of activity, men's sphere has expanded and increased in importance while women's area of activity (the family) has decreased in importance. Men, having committed the first act of expropriation and having accumulated their first property, are free to expand their holdings and power. Women remain slaves.

In addition, Marx has an ambiguous view of the family. He states that "the third circumstance entering into historical development from the very beginning is the fact that men who daily remake their own lives begin to make other men, begin to propagate; they create the relation between husband and wife, parents and children, the family."<sup>17</sup> Since the two forms of activity to which Marx refers—the production of material life (food, clothing, shelter), and the creation of new persons which arise once the old persons are satisfied—are constitutive of human history, we might assume that the mode of reproduction is just as important as the mode of production itself. Indeed, in the paragraph following, Marx calls the production of persons and the mode of cooperation which accompanies it a "productive force."<sup>18</sup> Marx implies that the family could be treated as the "mode of cooperation" with which the production of persons is allied. At the same time, however, Marx says that the family becomes a "subordinate" relationship as society becomes more complex. This would imply that although historically the family was one of three aspects of historical development, it no longer retains any independence and can only be understood as a subset of some more central, autonomous aspect. However, Marx does not tell us here what the family becomes subordinate to or how this occurs—a typical failing of Marxist disc-

ussions of the family.

Finally, any mention of women as women, or of how their historical development might have proceeded differently from men's is glaringly absent from Marx's discussion. Indeed, this absence points to the dangers inherent in any analysis of women's oppression which relies solely on a history of the changes in the mode of production. Without an analysis of patriarchy, women as historically specific beings disappear.

This is where socialist feminist theory must begin. We must trace the history of the mode of reproduction and its changing forms of social cooperation. We must work out the relation between the mode of reproduction and the mode of production, with special attention to the different experiences of women and men within this history (the dialectics of sex as well as dialectics of class).

In order to carry out such an analysis, we must overcome the simplistic determinism we have inherited. (Marxists have their equivalent of the Holy Grail—the search for the contradiction from which everything else follows.) An analysis of the mode of reproduction requires considering psychological and sexual-political dimensions which remain almost untouched in Marxist literature.

## Patriarchal Ideology and Feminist Theory

Georg Lukacs shows us the interaction between self-interest and theoretical clarity:

*The hegemony of the bourgeoisie really does embrace the whole of society in its own interests (and in this it has had some success). To achieve this it was forced both to develop a coherent theory of economics, politics, and society (which in itself presupposes and amounts to a 'Weltanschauung'), and also to make conscious and sustain its faith in its own mission to control and organize society.*<sup>19</sup>

His words apply to men's protection of their interests as well as to the bourgeoisie. Any ruling group protects its hegemony by making universally valid rules out of currently existing relationships. In addition, however, the ruling group must develop a clear enough grasp of reality to be able to control and manipulate it. A ruling group thus claims objectivity, but only elucidates those aspects of relations which are in its interest to know. For example, bourgeois economists could develop laws of the market but could not develop the Marxist labor theory of value or the concept of surplus value. The self-interest of any ruling group must necessarily lead it to ignore the deeper contradictory aspects of reality which underlie the immediately given, and which provide possibilities for revolt and liberation.

Lukacs contrasts the bourgeoisie's need for mystification to the proletariat's need for an analysis of the real social relations underlying the production and exchange of things.<sup>20</sup> He adds a warning that is as relevant to feminists as it is to socialists: *When the vulgar Marxists detach themselves from this central point of view, i.e., from the point where a*

*proletarian class consciousness arises, they thereby place themselves on the level of consciousness of the bourgeoisie. And that the bourgeoisie fighting on its own ground will prove superior to the proletariat both economically and ideologically can come as a surprise only to a vulgar Marxist.*<sup>21</sup>

Feminists must understand that in order to maintain their hegemony, men will attempt to deny or obscure the experiences and insights of wo-

men never really explored reproduction as a crucial moment of history—both in its internal relations and in its relation to the other moments of history. An overly deterministic methodology which focuses exclusively on production in the narrowest sense, will, of necessity, ignore women and the dialectic of sex because women's labor often takes place "outside" the market. Moreover, determinism leads one to focus on things rather than on relations, and patriarchy is above all

Marxism can help us understand one aspect of social relations: that between the exploiters and the exploited in the realm of production. (It was to understand these relations that Marx developed categories such as surplus value, commodity fetishism, and class.) Furthermore, Marx (and Hegel) developed a method—dialectics—one of the most flexible and richest modes of social analysis. But there are other, equally important aspects of social relations, among them, relations centering around reproduction. Despite his insistence that all history is rooted in concrete human beings, Marx had little to say about these other relations. The categories adequate for comprehending the realm of reproduction have yet to be developed; though reproduction and production are separate but inter-related spheres, it is a mistake to impose categories developed for the comprehension of one directly onto the other.

In developing these new categories, we need to look beyond Marxist theory. Psychoanalysis, structuralism, and phenomenology have provided many valuable possibilities for comprehending the reproduction of social persons, but they often lack a historical dimension. Freud enables us to begin to understand how sex/gender comes to constitute a central element of our very being as persons. Under patriarchy we do not become a person but a male or female person. In many ways our gender is who we are and this identification goes far deeper than sex roles understood in the sense of socialization or intentional (and easily changed) choices of roles and behavior. The theory of the unconscious, the role of sexuality, and the Oedipus complex which traces out on an unconscious level the consequences of the domination of the father—all provide a starting point for the analysis of the social relations of reproduction. Structuralism and phenomenology are excellent tools for examining ongoing social relations without falling into the simple determinism characteristic of orthodox Marxism.

We can conceptualize production and reproduction as two spheres of human life and history, constituted by the social relations within them and by the relations of persons to their own biology and to the natural world. These two spheres have historically been related to each other through the family. For this reason, the organization of the family reveals information about both spheres, and shows us the attempts people are making to bring these spheres into some sort of harmony. The study of the family can also reveal the contradictions between the demands of production and reproduction. The more disjunctive the nature of production and reproduction become (conceptualized by Marx as the difference between use and exchange value, and by Freud as the conflict between the pleasure and reality principles), the more

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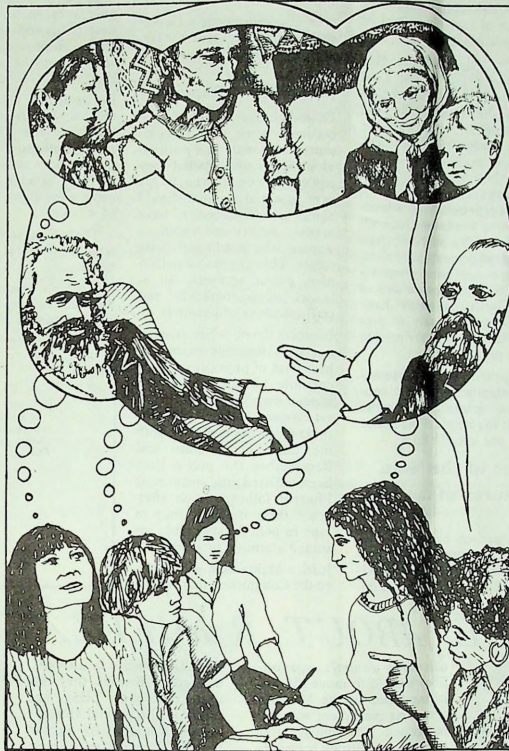
*\*\*Patriarchy means here a system of power relations whereby men dominate women.*

*\*\*\*The term "orthodox," here means a simplistic, or mechanistic use of Marx.*

*As used by Engels, "gens" refers to a circle of blood relations in the female line.*

*††"Weltanschauung" refers to a world view.*

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men who challenge their privilege and power. Men will deny that they have any special self-interest because in order to maintain hegemony, they must insist that they are speaking for and acting in the interest of society as a whole. If we deny the lessons of our own experience and/or try to fit that experience into categories established by men, we will lose both the meaning of that experience and our struggle for liberation (men cannot be beaten on their own ground).

This means we have to stop "acting like women," by justifying our theory and practice to men. We must stop seeking their approval of what we do. In particular, we must stop proving we are more socialist than they.

Men do not have a monopoly on truth. Indeed, their self-interest keeps them from seeing the totality. The "personal is political" because our experience drives us both to understand and to transform the present (indeed the two activities must be aspects of each other, integrally connected). If we deny our own experience, if we decide a priori to fit those experiences into categories which others have decided are politically correct, we lose the very possibility for comprehending and overcoming our oppression.

In summary, it is the orthodox Marxists who have been insufficiently dialectical, and who have never adopted the standpoint of women. They did not adequately deal with the "woman question," in part because

a social relation.

One cannot ignore the fact that most socialist theorists are men. It is not in their interest to acknowledge the existence of patriarchy. Engels' work is a clear example of the distortions and omissions typical of orthodox Marxists. After the opening chapter of the *Origins*, the book becomes an analysis of the changing nature of production. Reproduction and the family disappear, "hidden from history" indeed.

Historically, socialists have put off women's demands until "after the revolution," or have defined women's demands as particularistic, divisive of the working class, not central to socialist revolution or society. Again, we must ask: who defines what is central and what is not? On what grounds? Working class demands are defined by Marx as both particular and universal: this is precisely what defines it as the revolutionary class. Working class demands as traditionally defined by Marxists speak to transforming the social relations of production. We women must speak to the question of reproduction, because in that realm, as well as in production, our labor is being expropriated.

Marxism can only help us understand women's oppression if it is radically reconceptualized. Specifically, we must develop a theory of social relations, and analyze history as the development of social relations.



Historically, women have always been treated as property: of their fathers, or their husbands, in legal statutes. Consequently, all laws are drawn up within this framework. For instance, the penalty for rape is in retribution for defiling another man's property rather than as a form of protection to women in full recognition of women's rights over their own bodies. It is in this light that we must view the proposed Bill on Rape.

Much has been written on the Mathura rape case and about it. Mathura has sparked off a public debate on the question of rape, more significantly bringing into focus the inadequacy of the rape law.

Mathura's was not a lone search for justice. Women's organisations recognising the need for an urgent change in the law, worked collectively to demand an amendment to the existing law.

Following nation-wide campaigns, protest marches and demonstrations, a Law Commission was instituted by the Government to study the prevailing law on rape and to propose amendments. If such a step promised some respite, these hopes were soon belied. Infact, the new Bill currently pending in Parliament is a matter of serious debate to all concerned about justice. It is the bounden responsibility of every conscientious citizen to pressurize the Government into accepting the recommendations of the Law Commission, failing which, the institution of a Commission to study

the law on rape becomes a mere exercise in futility.

A study of some of the salient features of the Bill and the recommendations of the Law Commission is necessary to understand its implications on victims of such abuse and on women's movements.

In its introduction 'Rape: Proposed changes in the Law' published by the Lawyers Collective, the book describes the Bill as meant to 'protect the police rather than women'. There is every reason to believe this, since the police have a shocking record of atrocities perpetrated on women and other weaker sections. On such, fearing public outrage at abuse of power by the police, the law cannot be too progressive. The recommendations of the Law Commission have been cast aside only to preserve and 'keep up the morale of the police.'

The proposed Bill assumes great significance in the context of growing repression; rape at the hands of the police being one specific form.

### Some of the Main Features of the Bill

A comparison between the recommendations of the Law Commission and the provisions of the Bill reveals the de-

# BILL ON RAPE

## PROTECTION FOR WHOM?

gree of commitment a Government that claims to be the largest democracy, makes to its people.

### (a) Custodial Rape:

Custodial rape is said to have occurred when rape is committed by a male in a position of authority or custodial control over a woman, who, by his very power and status should abuse his officialdom to have sexual intercourse with a woman who would otherwise refuse. This applies to policemen, public servants, jail or hostel superintendents and staff members of hospitals.

In recent times, police misconduct including rape (as the highest form of physical violence committed on the person of a woman especially of the poorest classes), has received wide coverage in the media. In both the cases of Mathura and Rameezabec the police have been indicted: the incident at Bhagpat followed soon after. Since then, the frequency of rape in police stations has assumed alarming proportions.

Justice Mukthadhar, who headed the Commission that enquir-

ed into the rape of Rameezabec reiterated the 'pitiable condition of suspect women' especially of the poor at the hands of the police in police stations. He even suggested that the Government should act promptly to provide safeguards to such women. But despite his appeal, the Bill includes no provision to protect women from the harassment of the police.

Recognizing the insecurity women experienced at the hands of the police in the police stations, the Law Commission in a sensitive gesture outlined several measures to protect the dignity and honour of women.

1. That a woman should be interrogated only at her dwelling place.
2. That no woman should be arrested before sunrise and after sunset. If in case she is

arrested before sunrise and after sunset, then a written report, following permission from a superior, must be made. In situations of emergency, prior permission can be dispensed with but a written report has to be submitted to the officer immediately after the arrest has been made.

3. That once a woman has been arrested she should not be detained in a police station, but should be kept in a women's detention centre or a women's or children's institution.

4. That during interrogation by a police officer a woman should be allowed to have a male relative or friend or female social worker with her.

5. That in instances where police refuse to record a complaint in cases when a cognisable offence is reported, it should be considered an offence.

It is distressing that the Government has not incorporated any of these preventive measures which certainly would have contributed in affording

women some protection. Instead, it has responded to the situation by stipulating a minimum punishment of ten years for all custodial rape. The minimum punishment in other cases is seven years.

The statute of minimum punishment was opposed by the Law Commission because it went against the concept of reformist penology which is a universal concept. The idea that minimum punishment would act as a deterrent is false: in no way will such long sentences guarantee a drop in the incidence of the crime, when the roots are social, economic and political.

Further, a longer sentence in the case of custodial rape almost implies that rape committed by a landlord, for instance, is a lesser crime. And yet we know that in most cases of land disputes, wage increases or caste conflict, it is the class of landlords that use rape as a weapon to suppress popular revolt, e.g., Belchi, Naraipur.

A redeeming feature in this section of the Bill, however, is the decree that in the cases of custodial rape 'where sexual intercourse has been proved and where the question is whether it was without the consent of the woman, and she states in her evidence before the Court that she did not consent, the Court shall presume that she did not.'

### (b) Past Sexual History:

The Bill indifferently overlooks the sensitivity inherent

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## MORE ABOUT RAMEEZA

A News item in the Indian Express (Bangalore edition) dated October 2, 1981 says:

Mr. Justice Vittal Rao of the Karnataka High Court has admitted a petition filed by the Indian Federation of Women Lawyers, the Stree Shakti Sanghatana and the Vimochana (all Women's organisations) challenging the acquittal of Mr. T. Surendar Singh, police sub-inspector, Hyderabad, and other policemen by the Sessions Judge, Raichur, in what has become known as Rameezabi rape case. It was alleged for the prosecution that the accused had committed rape on Rameezabi and committed murder of her husband Ahmed Hussain, in custody in the Nallakunta police station of Hyderabad in March, 1978.

The sessions judge acquitted all the accused. The petitioners contended that the decision of the sessions judge was wrong and illegal and prayed that the same might be set aside and the accused persons sentenced according to law. The State Government had also filed an appeal separately challenging the acquittal order of the accused."

This small item which did not reach other editions is extremely significant for the women's movement. It breaks a lot of ground and constitutes a triumph for women's organisations although it is merely an admission. It may be recalled

that when women's organisations wanted to move the Supreme Court in the Mathura case their movement was not recognised. The admission of this revision petition is important because it indicated that for the first time rape which was seen as a private wrong now assumes the importance of a public issue. The Supreme Court judgement on the Mathura case provided a rallying point for women's groups all over India. This judgement which reversed the Bombay High court judgement and acquitted the accused policemen brought into focus very sharply the actual status of women in this country. A large number of women are jolted into awakening to reality by the bias of the judgement and the obviously male attitude and assumptions underlying it. The main focus of the women's movement was an amendment to the law concerning rape. This was chiefly because these organisations saw rape as an extreme form of violence against women, an inhuman crime. The main issues raised in this context were that—the previous 'history' of the victims of rape was immaterial; the long interval that elapsed between the actual incident and the trial was against the interests of justice; the onus of proof should lie with the accused rather than the victim considering the peculiar nature of the crime.

Women realised that they could not expect more than a

travesty of justice in the existing set-up. Besides, they realized that rape being one aspect of the general violence against women—every woman is a potential victim of rape. Sita's "ordel of fire" and the myth that virtue protects a woman were rejected outright. After all, if virtue can protect a human being why did Gandhiji fall a victim to an assassin's bullet? Or has virtue a gender and is there a distinction between male virtue and female virtue? Why is it that when a man falls a victim to a vicious attack he is glorified as a martyr while a woman who is attacked is despised and held in contempt?

One of the main demands raised by the Women's organisations was that they should have the locus standi to move a court in a rape trial. This is because rape is basically a violation of a human right. What happens in an act of rape is not the dishonour of her husband, father or brother, not a loss of chastity but the violation of the dignity of the human body. The general trend now in courts of law seems to be towards a liberalisation of the interpretation of standing. With an increasing number of incidents of violation of civil rights being brought before the courts it is no longer possible to restrict standing as in the past to one who has a direct interest or whose private right in private law is affected. The focus has now shifted to the objectives of the

statute itself. Even the right of a member of a class who is likely to be affected by the act to move the court in such matters is recognised. The news item 'S.C. on Locus Standi' (Indian Express, 20th October) points out that the judge agreed with the counsel that any of the 600 million citizens can move the court if the court is satisfied that he is moving it in genuine public interest. Now cases of rape are cases of public interest deeply affecting the status of one half of the population.

The few cases of rape which managed to reach the courts are cases where the incident produces a public outcry forcing a trial. Why the question of standing assumes importance is that the victim of rape or any atrocity is invariably poverty-stricken, illiterate and oppressed. To expect this victim to move a court or to appeal is unrealistic.

What is needed is that any public minded citizen with real public interest or "belonging to an organisation with special interest in the matter" should be able to move in the matter. The position taken by the women's groups in this matter regarding the maintainability of the revision petition refers to the chapter on fundamental duties. This requires that not only should a citizen perform his/her duties but it is his/her duty to prevent infraction or breach of these duties by other citizen or by the state. Since one of the duties of the citizen is to denounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women, it be-

comes our duty to prevent deeds such as rape.

The involvement of women's organisations in this issue and the admission of the revision petition marks the beginning of an important trend. The reason a revision petition had to be filed rather than an appeal was that only one—the state or Rameeza—is entitled to appeal under the Code of Criminal Procedure. The fact that women's organisations have moved in this matter before the state merely proves that women are no longer prepared to wait for justice but are determined to fight for it. That even the state was forced to appeal, however slowly, in the matter as a result of the pressures brought to bear by the women's organisations underlines the importance of a concerted action.

When the hearings actually begin women all over India will follow the progress of this case as it will provide a clear indicator of the quality of life and liberty that they can expect in this society. What is needed is that all of us should realise that every incident of rape affects everyone personally and politically. Of hundreds of rapes only few see the light of day. Each case of rape allowed to go in favour of the accused through default or public apathy is a gradual erosion of our rights as citizens. We must begin to see this now. Otherwise it may be too late.

VASANTHA KANNABIRAN  
Stree Shakti Sanghatana



in this particular recommendation. The Law Commission was against the use of past sexual history of the woman as evidence to testify rape. In both cases of Mathura and Rameezabee it has shown how the history of their sexual lives was used against them. Mathura was unmarried and not a virgin. Rameezabee was a prostitute it was alleged, and 'so she must have asked for it.'

The judgement of the Court is often influenced by the prevailing conventions and attitudes born out of social conditioning, however distant they might appear to the issue at hand. It is maintained that a woman of 'loose character' is not to be taken seriously, falsely assuming of course, that she must have consented to the act. Often, if the victim is a prostitute, the logic runs 'it could not have made much difference to her' or 'she asked for it'. Ironically, the accused is relieved of suspicion by default while the guilt is sought to be surreptitiously transferred on to the women.

Despite strong pleas from women's organisations and the recommendations by the Law Commission that the private life of the victim should be of consequence in establishing rape except in her relations with the accused itself, the

Government has deliberately refused to recognise a women's right to privacy.

**(c) Medical Report:**

The medical report is of primary importance in confirming that sexual intercourse had taken place. Fully aware of its significance the Law Commission argued that for the medical report to be of any use it should include the medical history of 'both the victim and the accused.' Further, it suggested that a medical report should be complete with details of the accused such as age, injuries on the body, etc. The duration of the examination, the conclusions arrived at by the doctor supported by reasons, should be promptly sent to the Magistrate. There is always a possibility that any delay in submission might allow for discrepancies to creep into the report as was evident in the case of Rameezabee.

The Government however, has not accepted any of these recommendations.

**(d) Trial in Camera:**

Of immediate concern to the women's movements is the controversial provision in the Bill that makes it compulsory for the trial proceedings to be held in camera. Under this provision, the publication of the name or any matter which will

make known the identity of the person against whom the offence is alleged or found to be committed' will become a punishable offence. By this it is assumed that the victim will be exempted from any undue adverse publicity. Clearly, such a ruling has a twin objective of protecting the name and reputation of the accused with the external appearance of being instituted out of due concern for the 'protection of the fair name of the woman' involved. But there have been several instances of rape where police personnel have been indicted, in others, either landlords or individuals supported by powerful political groups.

Naturally, such a law will put the lid on any attempt to expose the atrocities indulged in by the accused. It is known for a fact that it was largely due to the supportive role of the press and the wide publicity in the media that provoked universal outrage at the callous attitude of the police in the cases of Mathura and Rameezabee. It also brought into sharp focus the inconsistencies in the existing Rape Law and the need for long overdue amendments to safeguard the interests of women. In fact, the institution of the Law Commission is a direct outcome of the struggle taken up by various women's organisations all over

the country.

The Government has taken a controversial stand on the rape issue. On the one hand, it appears so keen to protect the reputation of the victim by making it compulsory for the trial to be held in camera. On the other hand, its total indifference to the various recommendations proposed by the Law Commission that could have prevented or minimised the occurrence of custodial rape, can perhaps best be summed up in a statement made by the Union Home Minister: 'Rape has been committed in the past, and would continue to be committed.'

From experience we know that it is only organised resistance that delivers some justice. In the circumstances, can we afford to place a controversial law in the hands of an inconsistent Government that shams sympathy over the ever-increasing atrocities on women, and yet fails to make amendments that could ensure physical protection to all women?

DONNA  
VIMOCHANA

and defeated  
we shall always win.

MIROSLAV HOLUB

**On Subverting  
a Rhetoric**

continued from  
page 8  
raped sister can become a figure women identify with, because in some way or other we share her experience.

In fact this anti-woman world-view which is unquestioned and which provides the film its ground, emerges in another, elaborately developed aspect of the theme. The heroine, the film reiterates, may be a model, she may wear sexy foreign clothes, but at heart (rapes apart!) she is really a virtuous Indian girl. She is totally 'faithful', will marry, keep her husband happy, raise a family. She will coyly defer to his wishes (even as she protests and deflects with true feminine wile, his opposition to her job). She will dress in a saree, drape her ghungat over her head and touch feet when she meets his family. When she is raped, she will feel her life is over. There is nothing left for her. She refuses to marry a good man and bring him disrepute. In fact, her fantasy presents her alone, widowed, dressed in white, contemplating suicide. Like the truly virtuous woman, her anger and remorse is turned destructively on herself.

Where will this take us? What can we do about it? One answer of course, is what the

Rape Bill, placed before the Lok Sabha early last year suggested: protect the woman's honour; go back to the age-old place of not speaking about these atrocities at all. In brief, ban publicity. That, there can be little doubt, is the most retrogressive response possible. The real answer, however, is far more difficult, its form more that of a still hazily defined direction rather than a solution or a destination. Its humanism a knowledge that is in the making, not already made. One can only subvert powerful and many splendoured a rhetoric when we women (and men, of course but women primarily) speak and write in the process of searching our mutual experience. But as this point of view emerges in opposition to the current socially formulated one, what will necessarily also have to be questioned is a whole world-view: a sexuality based on pain, a group identity based on our oppression and notions of virtue designed only to safeguard property. The process is difficult and inevitably hazardous, but unless we are conscious of the basic pervasions that rest in the easy humanism we proclaim, the results of contemporary action will be dubious.

SUSIE THARU

STREE SHAKTI SANGATHANA



**A NAMELESS GRAVE**

Glass bangles tinkling on trembling hands,  
But alas devoid of golden bands,  
Timid, she lay on the bridal bed  
Awaiting the man she had just wed.

He entered the chamber, locked the door  
Flung his coat upon the floor.  
His greedy eyes looked her over  
Her beauty the only wealth to offer.

Where was the gold she was to bring?  
There was nothing except the wedding ring.  
This flowered creature—was she his wife?  
No—never—not on his life.

With bloodshot eyes—lips smirking  
He fell on her—a rabid beast mauling.  
Groaning and mangled, bleeding she lay  
Till finally her life gave way.

In the darkness of night  
A mound took shape,  
A young girl was buried  
In a nameless grave.

Leela Khan  
Vimochana



The mountain moving day is coming  
I say so, yet others doubt  
only awhile the mountain sleeps  
In the past  
All mountains moved in fire  
yet you may not believe it.  
Oh man, this alone believe,  
All sleeping women now will awake and move.

AKEKO YOSANO



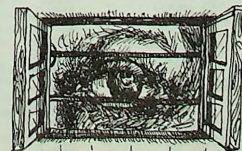
So you've kept shackled and chained  
My anger burns, burns, burns!

There is no fire as blue  
Fueled as it is by my pain:

To cool the flame  
I can laugh though  
At the powers that be  
Who prove themselves unworthy  
of their humanity.

They keep you in shackles and chains,  
But your word they cannot  
And it shall be!

A Philippine woman





# MILITARISM AND SEXISM

Contd. from page 4

the "other". If you may some day be called upon to kill "others", you need to believe in their lack of value and virtue. Small wonder that boys grow up believing that true masculine identity resides in soldiering, fighting and winning, and that some people (especially women who cannot even engage in, much less triumph in the most physically challenging sports) are less valuable than others.

The media "bombard" our young people with entertainment based on violence and depict aggressive behaviour as the route to adventure and achievement. They advertise as "toys", miniature, sometimes very sophisticated, instruments of violence. The plots of stories, films and television programs frequently revolve around a contest or competition between opposing inter-

ests, most often between the forces of good (a case in point is "the Force" popularised by the film "Star Wars"). Thus children are taught the lessons that to serve one's country requires overcoming its enemies, and that success depends upon the capacity to compete, the ability to win, and the willingness to kill.

Few children receive instruction about or are exposed to strong images of alternatives to the norms and values so powerfully depicted by the media, and so systematically inculcated by the implicit lessons of socialisation and the explicit lessons of schooling. For the most part, neither the efforts of parents to instill a sense of the equal social value of men and women and to nurture an understanding of the constructive complementarity of the differences between the sexes, nor the instruction of peace educators has had so sufficient or significant effect as to offer equally influential socialisation and education for peace. One thing seems clear; both parents and peace educa-

tors must develop greater understanding of militarism and sexism and their impact on our children.

## Defining Militarism and Sexism

The suffix "ism" is used here to connote both a belief system and the behaviours and institutions it validates. Such systems, institutions and behaviours usually derive from a particular world view and set of values.

Militarism is a belief system, emerging from a world view, founded on the basic assumption that human beings are by nature violent, aggressive and competitive, and from the corollary assumption that the social order must be maintained by force. Authority, according to this world view, derives from the capacity to muster and apply force to maintain social control and to determine human behaviour. Social worth can be achieved by a willingness to be an instrument of existing authority in the application of force to

maintain order and security and/or in risking harm from the force of a rival authority such as enemies, rebels or criminals. The highest civic virtue is to "serve one's country", most especially "to make the ultimate sacrifice". Soldiers are undoubtedly what first comes to mind when we think of heroes.

The values most prized by militarism are loyalty, bravery, endurance, obedience and the capacity to "carry out orders." In the case of authority, what is most valued is the ability to command and inspire the foregoing values in others, assuring the clarity and continuity of relations between those who command those values and those who manifest them. Following from these values, the military paradigm appears to be the most effective for social organisation as the prototype not only for protecting the society and providing its security, but for social order in general and for institutions dedicated to socialisation, the schools being the most notable.

It is very important to note that these values are not necessarily perceived as negative even by those who advocate the elimination of militarism from our social structures. It should be observed that the military, and, indeed, traditional sex roles, originated in what were perceived as common community needs for the perpetuation and good of the groups concerned. What we question here is the degree to which these instruments for the achievement of more fundamental values, in this case, the values of survival and security, have assumed the social function of fundamental rather than instrumental values. Thus the maintenance of military institutions and the perpetuation of sex roles in and for their own sake become ends rather than means. It is this distortion which represents so great a threat to peace and human dignity. The distortion also constitutes a basic concept which those seeking to overcome the effects of militarism and sexism must understand. While it is

evident that all institutions and behaviours in a society characterised by these values and organised on the principles of hierarchical command, it must also be kept in mind that both the institution and the form of organisation were derived for a purpose, universally perceived, to be in the common good.

Sexism is a belief system rooted in a world view which assigns varying levels of worth to different groups of human beings. The worth assigned is based upon innate characteristics and usually both determined and is determined by the social functions performed by the group. Belief systems based upon the inequality of human beings frequently perpetuate themselves in this way. They fit well into "fixed order" thinking. "It will always be that way because it has always been that way." As with racism, the assigned social worth under sexism also serves as a rationale for the assignment of less valued functions to those accorded the lower social worth. It deems that men, mainly by virtue of the tradition male sex roles, are more valuable than women. In a form of circular reasoning typical of such belief systems, the assertions made that men do more socially valuable work and, therefore, it is assigned to them because they are more socially valuable.

Women are held to be inferior to men, and have no legitimate claim to authority. Fulfilment of their social roles fixed by this "natural inferiority" requires submission to the exercise of authority. Traditional sex role separation has also kept most societies from including women in the military. And except in dire straits where there was no other recourse, they have been at least officially excluded from combat, for which they are deemed physically unfit, even in those societies where they are conscripted into the military.

The socialisation of men is distinctly different from that of men and the more sexist the society, the more distinct is that difference. It has also been asserted that the more militarist a society is, the more sexist it tends to be. For example, Gloria Steinem recently made this case in a series of articles asserting Hitler had crushed the German feminist movement as he militarised Germany.

It is evident that the two systems integrate well because of their common characteristics. As militarist organisation holds clearly different behavioral expectations from "command" than it does from the "troops", so too, sexist societies impose contrasting behavioral patterns on men and women. These patterns are designated as "masculine" and "feminine". Aggressive behaviour is masculine. Submissive behaviour is feminine. Stoicism is "manly". Emotionalism is "womanly". Strength is innately male; weakness, female;

# DO FEMINISTS NEED MARXISM?

Contd. from page 7

possible it is for the family to retain an aspect of autonomy and uniqueness. The categories we employ must do justice to these disjunctions, not submerge them.

## Conclusion

As feminists, we must not assume that there are Marxist answers to feminist questions. Our history is not the same as men's—neither on an individual nor on a collective level. Until we understand the mode of reproduction more thoroughly, we cannot begin to bridge the often discussed gap between Marx and Freud. To comprehend reproduction, we must continue to explicate our experience with the help of psychoanalysis, structuralism, and phenomenology. This is not to deny the interrelation of the world of production and reproduction, or to ignore the fact that we are shaped by both—indeed we need to retain consciousness of this inter-relatedness while carrying on our explorations. We must come to understand how and why men obtained and kept power over women and how this power

relation varied historically. We must explore the consequences this relation has for the ways we are constituted as persons. We must learn how power relations interact with and affect relations of production. Finally, we must discover the most effective sources for change.

Marxism alone cannot answer our questions. But if we retain and expand our original insights into our experience as women, we will be operating within the spirit which originally motivated Marx—that history is rooted in human needs and social relations. By confronting Marxism with feminism we require an overcoming, a retaining of the old within the new. What we will create will be neither Marxism nor psychoanalysis, but a much more adequate form of social theory. The concepts used by Marx, Freud, and others are only guidelines along the way, to be retained in a new form within a more integrated and inclusive theory. For now, we have only glimpses of the necessity and possibility of such a theory, through the frustration we encounter in trying to answer feminist questions.

## FOOT NOTES

1 Juliet Mitchell, *Woman's Estate* (New York: Random House, 1971). Margaret Benson, "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation," *Monthly Review*, XXI: 4 (1969). Eli Zaretsky, "Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life," *Socialist Revolution*, III: 1-3 (1973), and the articles on women's labor in *Radical America*, VII: 4-5 (1973) all insist that in the last instance contradictions within the sphere of production are the crucial determinant of women's status. The radical feminists emphasize patriarchy as either equal to class or as the first form of class oppression which still underlies all forms of oppression. See Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (New York: Bantam, 1971), and Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), as well as Barbara Burnis, "The Fourth World Manifesto," *Notes From the Third Year*.

2 Frederick Engels, *The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, ed. Eleanor Burke Leacock (New York: International Publishers, 1972). All citations from Engels refer to this edition.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 119.

4 See, for example, Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Family," *Man, Culture, and Society*, ed. Harry Shapiro (London: Oxford University Press, nd) for the varieties of work done by women in primitive cultures.

5 See Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" *Women, Culture, and Society*, eds. Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp. 67-73.

6 Karen Sachs, *Women, Culture, and Society*, eds. Rosaldo and Lamphere, pp. 211-212.

7 Engels, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 119.

9 *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 106.

11 Suzie O'Jah, "Impolite Questions about Frederick Engels," *A Feminist Journal* 1:1 (March, 1970), p. 4.

12 Engels, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

13 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "The German Ideology," in Lloyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (eds.) *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), p. 424.

14 *Ibid.* (My comments in brackets.)

15 *Ibid.* (For an elaboration of this point see Rosaldo and Lamphere, *Women, Culture, and Society*, eds. Rosaldo and Lamphere, pp. 23-42.)

17 Marx and Engels, *op. cit.*, p. 424.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 421.

19 Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness* (Boston: MIT Press, 1971), pp. 65-66.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 68.

21 *Ibid.*

## The Socialist and the Suffragist

Said the Socialist to the Suffragist:

"My cause is greater than yours!  
You only work for a Special Class,  
We for the gain of the General Mass,  
Which Every good insures!"

Said the Suffragist to the Socialist:

"You underrate my Cause!  
While women remain a Subject Class,  
You never can move the General Mass,  
With your Economic Laws!"

Said the Socialist to the Suffragist:

"You misinterpret facts!  
There is no room for doubt or schism  
In Economic Determinism -  
It governs all our acts!"

Said the Suffragist to the Socialist:

"You men will always find  
That this old world will never move  
More swiftly in its ancient groove  
While women stay behind!"

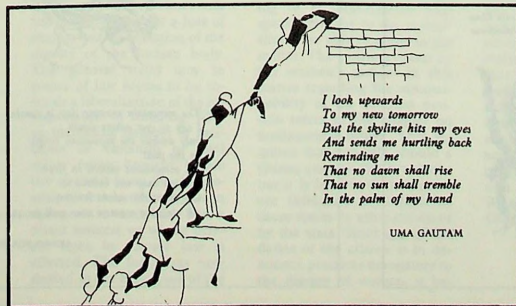
"A lifted world lifts women up,"

The Socialist explained.  
"You cannot lift the world at all  
While half of it is kept so small,"  
The Suffragist maintained.

The world awoke, and tartly spoke:

"Your work is all the same:  
Work together or work apart,  
Work, each of you, with all your heart  
Just get into the game!"

by Charlotte Perkins Gilman



I look upwards  
To my new tomorrow  
But the skyline hits my eyes  
And sends me hurtling back  
Reminding me  
That no dawn shall rise  
That no sun shall tremble  
In the palm of my hand

UMA GAUTAM

Source: ISIS on Feminism and Socialism



# Militarism And Sexism

Contd. from page 10

so it goes. There is no need to rehearse at length these differences in behavioral expectations so thoroughly explored in feminist literature. The point to be made here is that the systems so complement each other that they may very likely be completely interdependent, and to attempt to address the causes of and alternatives to one without considering the other offers little promise of finding the means to transcend either of them.

## COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF MILITARISM AND SEXISM

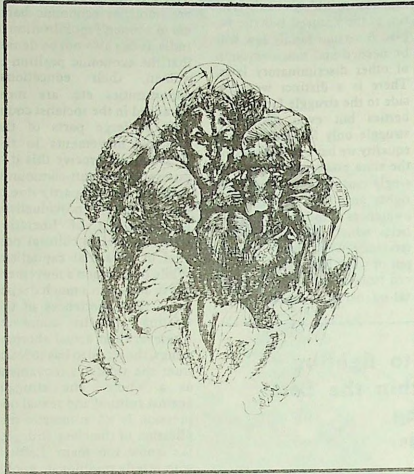
The most admirable virtues of the unknown soldier to whose heroism so many nations have dedicated elaborate monuments, anonymous service and sacrifice for the sake of others, are as well the virtues of the archetypal wife and mother. What the soldier has done for the nation or the warrior for the tribe through centuries of do what was expected of him, woman has done for the family. She has been since time immemorial trained to sublimate her own needs to the service of others. Soldiers and mothers have 'days' dedicated in their honor. These are days on which society offers thanks for all their sacrifices; for war and domesticity are in the natural order of things, as are the fixed roles of soldiers and mothers in that order.

The military chain of command, while more complex, is conceptually close to the patriarchal family, both being essentially hierarchical organisations. Small wonder the famous generals often become "fathers" to their countries and are frequently called upon to lead their nations from "childish" civil disorder. The nation like the troops, like wives and children, submit more readily to the dominance of a military patriarchy, i.e., "the masculine," than to a weaker civil state, i.e., "the feminine". Acceptance of conditions of dominance and submission as the price tag of "security", are characteristics of both patriarchy and of military dictatorship.

Obedience to authority is the corner stone of an effective military machine and the fundamental principle of the patriarchal family. To question authority is to threaten the natural order. Militarism and sexism require that service and sacrifice be performed without reflection. Freedom and equality, to the contrary, require the full development of the reflective and analytic capacities of all citizens. The core of fulfilling human relations mutually and the essential basis of democratic society, rational and reflective decision making are fundamental values in conflict with the prevalent belief systems of militarism and sexism.

The institutions most damaged by the value distortions of militarism and sexism are

education and, indeed, the military and the family themselves for their positive values and purposes are virtually destroyed by the negative attitudes towards them which inevitably result from authoritarianism.



## THE EFFECTS OF MILITARISM AND SEXISM ON INSTITUTIONAL EDUCATION

The process and institutions of education also suffer distortion and damage as a result of the values confusion which nurtures militarism and sexism. These belief systems effect education and, in fact, continue to prevail largely as a result of educational practices. The effects of militarism and sexism on education can be seen in its organisation, the curricular content and in extra-curricular activities. Indeed, both the anti-militarist and anti-sexist movements have had much to say on diagnosis but very little on prescription and alternatives to the institutions held in place by these belief systems.

As far as the content of education is concerned, history is probably the most profoundly effected and the most responsible for the perpetuation of the belief systems. History in all cultures has almost completely excluded women except for those few who have performed men's roles such as great empresses or heroines like Joan of Arc or Florence Nightingale who made their fame through their roles in warfare.

History texts written mainly by men, from sources recorded by men, often military men give us voluminous information on conflict, battles, wars and other masculine exploits but provide us virtually no account of roles and contributions of women. Nor has history focussed on the softer values. Even the artists and philosophers memorialised by historians are mainly men, manifesting for the most part masculine concerns. And, of

course, history is always cited to prove both the inevitability of war and the limitation on the capacities and contributions of women. History has not shown interest in women and few women have shown interest in history.

The sciences might be cited as the next subject most influenced by militarism and sexism. Hard sciences such as

those needed for military research and development are given academic priority and are for the most part deemed masculine subjects. It could be said that women have access to education in the "life" sciences or "soft subjects" such as biology and "home economics" while men are able to pursue the "death" sciences of physics, chemistry, and mathematics which have served as the basis for weapons development.

In some schools, especially those where there are military programs, "military science" is considered a significant academic subject. The term is basically a euphemism for practical aspects of planning and executing lethal combat.

So it is quite logical that women will "naturally" have a greater interest in peace and men in war, simply on the basis of the content of their education. Although there has been some attempt at changing this situation through the introduction of additional courses in peace education and women's studies, it cannot be expected that curricular influence on education for war will be overcome until there is a drastic revision in both content and organisation through all levels of institutionalised education.

Educational organisation, especially at the elementary and secondary levels and at the university level with respect to teacher training is stamped also from a mould with strong sexist and militarist contours. Educational organisation tends to be hierarchical and to manifest traditional sex role distinctions. The organisation of schooling reinforces competition and differences among people. Educational practice by and large tends to use authority as the right to command and pro-

vides little opportunity for those not in command to exercise or develop responsibility.

The chain of command in education, while in many instances not nationally hierarchical, within individual institutions and local systems certainly tends to be so, with policy making at the top most and those at the actual level of instructional practice having the least influence on decision making about educational content or approaches. Students, parents and the community exercise little or no influence over these matters.

The upper levels of the hierarchy tend to be mainly masculine territory, whereas at the classroom level, particularly in the elementary schools, teachers are for the most part women.

Instruction in subject matter also tends to reinforce sex role differences with the sciences, history, mathematics and mechanical subjects being mainly taught by men and female teachers instructing in the softer subjects and vocational training such as typing and preparation for roles designated for women.

Most schools place great emphasis on the maintenance of order and discipline and expect it to be a priority, sometimes a higher priority than the quality of instruction, with all teachers. Competition is encouraged not only on the sports field but in the classroom through class ranking, curve grading and similar practices. Differences among students are reinforced by tracking according to "ability" and by employment expectations, and possibilities for higher education as well as by sex.

Perhaps the most militaristic aspect of school organisation is that it tends to instruct in a form of leadership which reinforces authoritarianism. It is interesting to note how frequently the same statement is spoken almost verbatim by three or four-year-old siblings, playmates or classmates who are about six or seven years old, "You are not the boss of me." The statement is usually a response to some authoritarian behaviour on the part of the older child, very often associated with a school setting, indicating the very young age at which children become aware of hierarchical authoritarianism.

Competition and authoritarianism are effectively taught in extra-curricular activities. As previously noted, emphasis on aggressive competition is the mode of instruction and training in athletics and sports. In this area as well, hierarchically imposed discipline is seen as essential to perfecting athletic ability and to achieving success in athletic competition.

Sports and military training groups also provide major social events and elements of excitement and entertainment that simply are not provided by any other form of education within the present educational institutions and practices.

Sex role distinctions are also reinforced by extra-curricular activities, some by the organisation of certain students clubs based on sex role differences

but most especially in their effects on sports and military programs. The female role is not to contribute directly to the achievement of the purpose of the activity but to offer inspiration and support to those who have the capacity to achieve, men. Women's roles in school sports is a kind of rehearsal for their roles in warfare, non-combatant, innocent victims of the enemy and symbols of the positive values to be defended by armed force and virtuous inspirations to righteous warriors.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PEACE EDUCATION

The current crisis in values deplored by both conservatives and radicals has helped to produce the much needed challenge to militarism and sexism as they affect all areas of life. While one side considers the cause of the crisis to be the erosion of the traditional world views and values, the other sees the roots in the reassertion of these views and values as a response to the unprecedented global problems we currently face. The latter urge the antithesis of these views and values as a response to the crisis, including such notions as unilateral disarmament and eradication of all social differences between women and men. The former clamor for more numerous and more powerful weapons and extol the virtues of "macho man" and "the total woman". What are the implications for Peace Education?

Education for peace seems to be synonymous with that form of global education directed at social transformation. It implies education for fundamental change in the belief systems which sustain the present order. It demands reformulation and re-prioritization of values and the creation of new institutions capable of actualising the fundamental human values long overshadowed by pre-occupation with those instrumental values which common wisdom has legitimised

as "human nature". It requires developing forms of bravery and heroism of equal or greater dimension than those which characterise "extreme valor under fire."

It may well demand a renege exercise of traditional "feminine" and "soldierly" virtue in commitment to a long and arduous struggle to achieve a more humanly fulfilling social order. Perhaps the greatest acts of courage necessary to produce a transformational form of peace education are those to be taken by persons now exercising authority who may need to admit ignorance and be prepared to share responsibility. It will require sufficient fortitude from all of us to acknowledge this degree to which we all are militarists and sexists, just as we all are the bearers of both masculine and feminine traits and characteristics. Facing our own complexities and weaknesses may take very great bravery indeed.

The most urgent task for peace education is teaching the skills and capacities necessary to create and pursue alternatives to the present order.

Those, therefore, who would educate to transcend militarism and sexism must also educate for the development of alternatives to violent revolution. We need equally powerful mechanisms for change which do not depend on destructive force, replicating the militarist model.

Militarism and sexism cannot be broken if we do not educate towards an understanding of the ethical relationships between means and ends. If the same instruments are used to achieve freedom and equality as are used to maintain authoritarianism and oppression, can we really nurture a commitment to a new belief system? Values clarification and systems analysis are, therefore, pedagogically essential to education for building alternative social structures.

BETTY BEARDON  
Peace Education Commission  
International Peace Research Association

Woman For A Nuclear Free World.





# WHOSE FREEDOM AND FOR WHAT?

Women's Movement in India: an International Perspective

Every year we observe a growing participation in International Working Women's Day celebrations. After having tried for two successive years we will have a public meeting in Madurai for the first time; this year, the meeting in the city is organised by Penurimai Iyakkam while in rural Tamil Nadu and especially in Kanyakumari District, thousands of women have been rallied to the cause of women's liberation since several years. Compare this with the situation of ten years ago, when the standard answer to my question: "What about women's movements in India?" was: "We don't need any such thing, after all we have a female Prime Minister and we even have goddesses since the ancient times!" The change is drastic, no doubt.

Yet, the cultural climate is still overwhelmingly anti-women, "Madam, what's wrong in beating one's wife?" my male students ask when we discuss the women's question in the class and "Women only want to be prostitutes" they claim, conveniently forgetting that on every prostitute (usually of poor background) there are hundreds of men (usually economically better placed than she is), a situation in which economic, sexual and cultural oppression tally admirably. Besides, the employment opportunities for women are on the decrease and there are less women alive per thousand of men every decade. But my students say: "Women have more opportunities than men, they only want to dominate."

Do we deceive ourselves if we assume that the women's movement is picking up? While trying to organise in Madurai we have met with enormous diffidence and indifference in women themselves. If they are housewives, they are virtually imprisoned in the house. If they are working women, the sheer struggle for survival and the double burden of long working hours, household chores, childbearing and rearing, sucks the marrow out of their bones. On whom, then can we rely?

Under which conditions is it possible to build a women's movement in India? How does the women's struggle relate to the transformation of an economic system which leaves 48% of our people below the poverty line and caters to the needs of the upper 5% in the social ladder? How does our situation compare with the international situation? Perhaps it is easier to understand ourselves if we place ourselves in an international historical perspective.

## Our place in History

The first wave of the women's movement in the West stretched from the second half of the 18th century until the twenties

of this century, and was stopped by fascism and stalinism simultaneously during the thirties. The seventies were the decade of the second strong wave of the women's movement in the western capitalist countries. The wave started during the sixties in the United States, swept Western Europe, and by the end of the seventies, Samizdat literature from the USSR gave witness of the new thrust of a feminist movement in the Soviet Union. In the countries of the third world, we can observe women's participation in the various anti-colonial struggles during the thirties and forties but since these struggles did not voice the women's question in its own right and therefore left many women's problems unsolved. We can perceive a growing women's movement since the middle of the seventies.

In India, the policies of the "moderates" in the Indian National Congress had tried social reforms for women and later Gandhi made it a point to rally women to the national cause, though the sheer sight of Kasturiba Gandhi makes it doubtful how liberating this attempt was in actual fact. The anti-Brahmin Movements in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu had a strong point in linking up women's liberation with anti-caste struggles. The Marxists tried with varying success to integrate women into the class struggle. The present dismal situation of women in our country shows that all these attempts have

## Three approaches to the Women's question.

somehow not worked. But does the continuous need for a women's movement mean that the movement has to be 'autonomous'? What do we learn from the relative successes and failures of the different approaches to the women's question? The present article does not attempt to answer these questions but merely to sharpen them.

## Three Approaches

I am certainly over simplifying if I am characterising three basic types of approaches to the women's movement as "liberal equalitarian", "existentialist" and "socialist"—these three basic categories being applicable to the women's movement all over the world. Yet, the simplification may help to see some broad lines. The liberal approach linked with "democracy" in the capitalist sense, demands equal rights for women and men but fails to analyse class differences which divide women as well as society in general. It

also fails to analyse problems of sexuality. The women's mobilisation during the Indian Freedom struggle falls into this category. The "Existentialist" approach, while also demanding liberal equality, goes further by analysing the existential problems resulting from a division of labour based on sex and making valiant efforts to overcome the same already here and now. A special variety of the existentialist approach is "radical feminism" where women try to organise autonomously and some what paradoxically, to abolish a division of labour on a sexual base by refusing cooperation with men altogether. Lesbian-

Equal wage for equal work comes into this category and a rape law in which not the victim is the accused but the rapist. A secular family law will be needed and much revision of other discriminatory laws. There is a distinct women's side to the struggle for civil liberties but even while we struggle only for such liberal equality we have to be aware of the state power which increasingly curtails any democratic rights and have to build an awareness of the economic policies which account for this tendency. What throws women out of work is the same Western technology which is capital-intensive, labour-saving

remained unanalysed.

There is no doubt that there are immense economic barriers to women's mobilisation in India. It can also not be denied that the economic position of women, their educational opportunities etc. are most advanced in the socialist countries. If large parts of the women's movements in the West fail to perceive this it is purely due to anti-communist propaganda and partly due to an extremely individualistic understanding of liberation which is itself a cultural product of industrial capitalism. While our women's movement has to absorb in a much deeper sense the experiences of the existing socialist countries, whatever their actual shortcomings, the left also has to learn from the women's movement as a whole. The struggle against cultural and sexual oppression is no automatic implication of the class struggle. We know too many Leftists with utterly traditional, apolitical housewives at home and it is too simple to blame the wives for it. Remember the poem in Pen Viduthalai, where the woman struggling with household and children being asked where her husband is, replies: "He is out for a meeting to talk on women's liberation". There is more to fighting paternalism within the Left than just quoting Marx and Engels.

## Whose Freedom and for What?

The women's movement in the West is largely middle class oriented and partly this accounts for its limitations. During the Independence Struggle the same applied to India and this explains why the vast masses of Indian Women have

never been exposed to a deterioration of their situation.

Yet, present developments give reasons for hope. While the new Women's Movement in India since the middle of the seventies has a vocal middle class section, experiences seem to indicate that working class women (be they employed, unemployed or under-employed) are the only reliable element if it comes to the problem of organisation and struggle. This is also what Gail Omvedt has documented for Maharashtra and experiences in Tamil Nadu indicate a similar development. Here, women get organised on issues like water, health facilities, ration cards, housing, wages, transport facilities etc. But at the same time they take up obscenity in the media, rape, police harassment of women and drinking habits resulting in wife beating. It is the working class women who really come forward in fasts, demonstrations, gheraos and they challenge the middle class women who are less committed. It is therefore less likely that the Indian Women's Movement can drift off into individualistic feminist utopias. The women's movement can also play a role in challenging the present dangerous trends towards a revivalist Hindu Nationalism since it has an awareness of the traditional cultural forces which have kept women in bondage. Whether the women's movement will succeed to become a force of transformation beyond capitalist liberal equality, depends not only on the political awareness of women but also on whether the Left is prepared to have a fresh look at the women's question.

GABRIELLE DIETRICH  
MADURAI

## There is more to fighting paternalism within the Left than just quoting Marx and Engels.

ism has become an important part of this approach in the West.

Radical Feminism has gone to the extreme of envisaging the abolition of female child bearing hoping to relegate it to lab-technicians. There is a blissful unawareness of the problems of industrialism, technocracy and capitalist exploitation in this approach. Yet, it has highlighted problems of sexual oppression like rape in a deep way and has contributed much to make women self aware and to give them control over their bodies. The existentialist approach also tries to be culturally creative, though it fails to analyse the underlying economic problems in a deep way. The socialist approach, as derived from classical Marxism and developed in various ways during this century, tries to place women's liberation in the wider transformation of the mode of production, economically as well as culturally. Yet, problems of sexuality, sexual division of labour in the family and sexual violence tend to be neglected. This approach has been criticised as "class reductionist" and the attempt to let the state take over the responsibilities of the family has not been very successful in actually existing socialism. At the same time it is evident that the economic equality of women has developed furthest in the socialist countries even though women remain politically under represented and the existing remnants of cultural and sexual oppression remain a taboo.

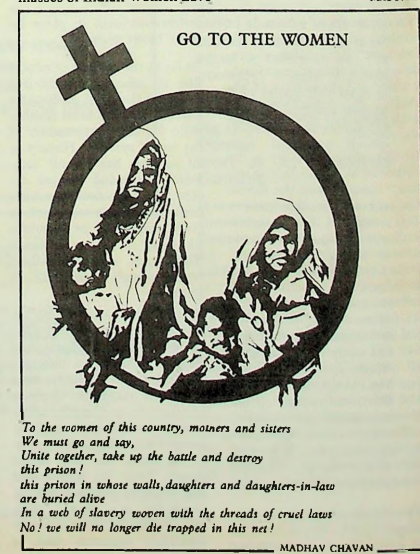
## How does it all apply?

There is still a lot to be done to make women equal to men even in the formal liberal capitalist sense of democracy for whatever it may be worth.

and catering to the needs of the elite. This we have to understand when we ask for "equal job opportunities".

The existentialist approach to the women's question is rooted in western capitalism and "autonomous radical feminism" hardly stands a chance in a country where most women cannot survive on their own economically as well as culturally, as things are. Yet, we have to learn from the failures as well as from the contributions of this approach. We often fall into the same traps like the existentialist feminists if we try to tackle women's issues in isolation. This is for instance to say we cannot tack down just by making anti-dowry vows. While we fail to understand how in capitalism human beings are made commodities and how the cash-nexus replaces human relations. Dowry in our depraved capitalist system is different from dowry under semi-feudal conditions. We have to analyse such differences if we want to act efficiently. Rape as another example, is not a crime which individual men commit against individual women, it is a political crime. Rape keeps all women under terror, and thus keeps patriarchy stable. Rape is the usual outfall of caste clashes and thus has to be analysed in its caste dimension and implicit underlying class dimension.

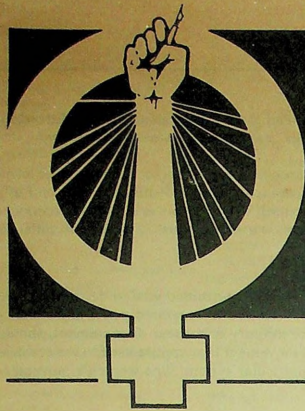
Rape is an outfall of every war, it points to the connection of the women's question with the question of peace and disarmament. Rape of women has also to be understood in the larger context of the rape of the earth, ecological exploitation which deprives present and future generations of their livelihood. The Chipko Movement in U.P. in which women took a lead in saving the Himalayan forests, intuitively made this connection, but it



To the women of this country, mothers and sisters  
We must go and say,  
Unite together, take up the battle and destroy  
this prison!  
This prison in whose walls, daughters and daughters-in-law  
are buried alive  
In a web of slavery women with the threads of cruel laws  
No! we will no longer die trapped in this net!

MADHAV CHAVAN





# SANGHARSH

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## Towards International Feminism

The internationalisation of feminism is one of the most controversial, intellectual and political developments of our time. Women around the world have begun to address the age old deep-seated phenomenon of female subordination and the strategies to overcome it.

In 1975, the United Nations inaugurated the International Women's Decade at the Mexico City conference. Many governments established women's bureaux in preparation for the mid-decade conference in Copenhagen in 1980. Extensive arrangements are now under way for the end of the decade conference scheduled for 1985 in Nairobi. Meanwhile, a new field known as 'Women in Development' has emerged, giving legitimacy to academic inquiries and policy planning pertaining to women in the Third World. Women social scientists and international aid agencies including the world bank are identified with this field. Their ideas and strategies are exported to the Third World to integrate women into the processes of economic modernization. Many non-governmental organizations and networks have also begun at the interna-

tional, national and regional levels to deal with issues specific to women such as reproductive control and sexual violence. Even the multinational corporations now give the liberation of women as a reason for their expansion overseas.

But the solidarity among women is tenuous. At every international women's gathering, the divisions of race, class, nationality and ethnicity erupt tearing at the roots of what brings women together. The official U.S. delegation is already discussing strategies to avoid the infiltration of such divisive issues at the Nairobi conference. Indeed, we can pretend that differences do not exist, or we can explore them and, in the process, reformulate feminism itself. The latter is more difficult and painful, but indispensable, if sisterhood is to become more than a slogan.

In spite of all the conferences, declarations, academic treatises and women's projects, many

women around the world have yet to hear of feminism or the women's movement. It is unlikely that they will, until opportunities for literacy and a general improvement in living standards are available to them. But it is also the case that some women who know of the women's movement show great antipathy and resistance to

feminism of such women is attributable to dominant interests, especially male ideologists which succeed in manipulating these women's fears about the risks and dangers of feminism. The New Right in the U.S.A. which depicts the women's movement as a threat to the alleged security of women's lives, and reactionary nationalist movements as the one in Iran, which denigrate feminism as a Western fad or an imperialist plot, are examples. The distortion of feminism by the media has also played its part in alienating some potentially sympathetic women from the fundamental concerns of feminism.

al freedoms for women - or if their resistance is to that particular brand of feminism arising out of the white, middle-class experience in the West, but popularly projected as 'the Women's Movement' by the media and 'most Western, middle-class feminists themselves. Those studies which have inquired into the consciousness of poor and Third World women without resorting to Western feminist concepts are quite instructive. They have revealed a great enthusiasm for and acceptance of the broad principles and objectives of feminism among such disparate groups as 'untouchable' women in India and poor black women in the United States.

feminism which has become synonymous with the contemporary women's movement. This distinction is at the root of many of the conflicts that break out among different groups of women at international women's conferences.

What is problematic of course is not that there are differences among women, but that there are inequalities and conflictive interests among us, as among men, based on the hierarchies of social class, race, nation, ethnicity, etc. For example, it is obvious that imperialism (Western economic, political and cultural hegemony) has given white women a higher social status in the world, over Third World women (women of color in Asia, Africa, Latin America as well as the racial minorities in the West). Similarly, women from the privileged social classes in the West

It is necessary then to make a clear distinction between feminism as a universal ideology potentially acceptable to most women and the middle-class, predominantly Western

The contemporary women's movement is of world historic importance. It has the potential to improve the quality of human relations everywhere.

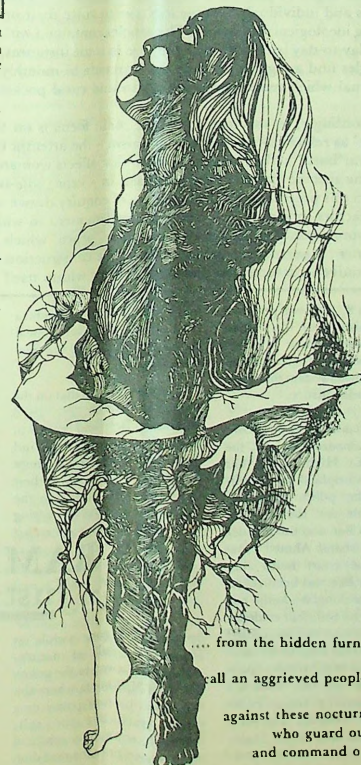
feminism. But why should any woman oppose feminism's attempts to eradicate those social constraints placed by sex which inhibit women (and men) from realizing their human potential? Indeed, why do so many women who stand to gain so much from feminism, see it as either irrelevant to their lives or are threatened by it?

Does this mean then that women who are alienated from feminism are ridden with 'false consciousness'? If the feminist vanguard were to enlighten these irrational women of the objective conditions of their oppression, namely male dominance, could a mass-based, international feminist struggle be launched?

To a large extent the anti-

Obviously, the answer is not that simple. We need to move beyond the familiar factors of male manipulation, media distortion and the implied false consciousness of the masses of women. Being careful not to blame feminism for the deteriorating conditions of many women around the world, we must ask nevertheless if the feminist theories and strategies currently available, are adequate for comprehending and changing the oppression of most women and the alienation of many from feminism. Have the class and cultural biases of contemporary feminism and the women's movement, for example, contributed in any way to the success of anti-feminist forces among certain groups of women? If reactionary backlashes against some of the hard-won victories of the women's movement are to be countered, a reassessment of the objectives and strategies of feminism is clearly necessary.

We need also to ask, if in fact, most women are opposed to the broad ideals of feminism - increased social and psycholog-



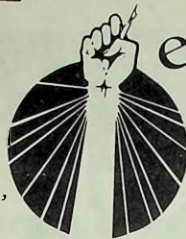
... from the hidden furnace of my spirit  
call an aggrieved people towards rebirth  
against these nocturnal beasts  
who guard our dreams  
and command our poems.

Don Mattera  
Black Consciousness Movement  
South Africa

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# editorial

*"And what is it but fragments of yourself you would discard that you may become free?"*

- Khalil Gibran

senseless destruction of human lives and instead fosters the construction and development of all human potential regardless of sex, caste, class, race or nationality.

Within this broader framework therefore, specifically, both direct and structural forms of patriarchal violence perpetrated against women, can be identified at one end of a societal continuum, which ultimately manifests itself in such forms as militarism, economic imperialism, racism, hierarchy et al. Rape and war for instance, are only two different facets of an all pervasive culture of violence.

Thus while the world is hurtling towards its self-determined goal of destruction and annihilation, there is an urgent need for a conscious and organised peace movement - the kind of movement, that while striving for military or nuclear disarmament, should also seek a more humane and just society - a movement that applies itself to the eradication of the causes of violence inherent in a particular system. The women's movement is part of this search.

Three of the major articles in this issue focus on the relationship between sexism, militarism and violence. They are papers which were presented by some of the women members of the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) at a conference held in August, 1983 in Hungary.

While envisioning a future and a culture of 'peace' through the grim, dark, violent reality of the present, we are also forced to take cognizance of particularly violent social explosions in countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America - explosions which are manifesting themselves in the form of liberation struggles. When one is forced to take recourse to violence to break through the oppressive political chains of colonialism or military dictatorship, what is the role of women in such strivings for justice? What meaning does one attribute to a 'peace movement', and what indeed, does feminism have to contribute in such circumstances? We look at these questions by focussing on some specific situations in Namibia, Pakistan and others.

The destructive, if pervasive, influence of a militaristic culture percolating into everyday situations was brought home sharply to us in Bangalore this year, ironically enough on March 8th International Women's Day. Four city women's organisations (Vimochana, Manini, Women's Voice and Bangalore University Women Law Students) were without valid reason, denied permission to take out a peaceful procession. Denied even the opportunity to assemble for a discussion, the women, who were walking up to the starting point of the procession were rudely intercepted, arrested and violently herded into the waiting police vans. We must have been the only city in the world which was forced to commemorate International Women's Day from within the precincts of a police station! This incident is only reflective of existing attitudes, even in a sovereign democratic republic like India, where the police force, like any other state machinery, reacts to any legitimate and democratic cry for justice as a 'law and order problem' and deals with it accordingly. This is also reflective of the totally unjustified notion that violence, or repression, is the only instrument which can effectively deal with such 'problems' and thus is a burgeoning culture of brutality, legitimised.

Is there not another way of thinking? Another way of doing? Can we not evolve another concept of power - not the power that is synonymous with authority and oppression, but a power that emanates from within oneself - a power that provides every individual with the space to realise and define herself and himself, not at the cost of others. A power that enables every individual to consciously cease being the oppressed or the oppressor - one therefore, that seeks a similar sense of 'empowerment' in everyone, in social movements... one that is generative and not degenerative. It is certainly not an alternative that is easily accessible in society today, but can it not be a vision we can begin to realise and nurture from among and beyond the fragments of today?

VIMOCHANA EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE

While working our way towards the vision of a new tomorrow, every individual in society has to see beyond what appears to be her or his reality and self image of today - a reality comfortable for some, but which has over the years evolved a tortuous schema of values, norms and attitudes, which directs our lives and structures our persona to such an extent that we become passive role players and not active; aware participants consciously charting our future.

We fragment that part of ourselves and reality which conditions us into playing roles of either the oppressor or the oppressed, even while retaining the positive in our culture, our ethos.... We fragment ourselves, only so that we can live again as individuals with a choice. When oppression is a reality, pain can also be our strength; not when we allow it to subsume and define us, but when we use it as a transcending force to redefine and reconstruct ourselves.

This is the vision of Vimochana, where we ideologically identify ourselves with a form of socialist feminism which does not reduce the women's movement to that of a 'male-female' confrontation. We cannot hope to bring about a change in the nature of the relationship between the sexes - a relationship based on the premise of inequality - without envisioning a total social transformation. We reject a society that functions within a discriminating socio-economic frame-work which can only find expression through stilling hierarchical structures of caste, class or patriarchy. To that extent we recognise the essence of exploitation in whatever form it manifests itself and work along with other struggling movements like that of peace, ecology or that of the dalits, students and workers.

While the women's movement seeks to change an external reality which manifests itself in destructive social formations and structures, it must simultaneously initiate and internalise a constant process of objectification and a dispassionate assessment of its objective reality.

'Sangharsh' while identifying itself as a part of this process, attempts to not merely provoke some kind of theoretical enquiry and debate around issues relevant to feminism but also hopes to provide a forum for discussion - a focal point for various women's groups and individuals to come together to voice their opinions, overcoming, yet maintaining ideological differences. The articles contained within it therefore, are not around local day-to-day issues although they are in some instances, focussed upon. These specific struggles find a regular outlet in the Kannada bi-monthly "Vimochana Varthapatra", a journal which reaches into the urban and rural pockets of Karnataka.

Accordingly, in this issue while the main focus is on the concepts of 'violence' and 'peace' as related to women and feminism - the attempt is more in terms of understanding the 'basis' of the personal violence that affects woman, rather than dwelling in detail over the specific forms it manifests itself in - rape, wife-beating, dowry deaths and the like. In this process, not only is the line of enquiry drawn towards the interplay of structural factors in society that create an environment in which violence can flourish, but also more generally, towards a concept of 'peace' which has its roots within a feminist perspective: a perspective honed towards the construction of a new society devoid of all exploitative structures and one that contains within itself a world view that decries the

March 8, 1984 will go down in the history of the Indian women's movement as a day when it was once again proved by the judicial system that there is no gender justice.

In what has come to be known as the Rameeza Bee case, the Karnataka High Court has once again upheld the acquittal of the police personnel responsible for the rape of Rameeza Bee and the murder of her husband Ahmed Hussain. The court holds that Rameeza Bee had been raped beyond reasonable doubt but there was no sufficient evidence to indicate who had committed the rape. This judgement came in response to the revision petition filed by the women's organisations i.e. Indian Federation of Women Lawyers, Vimochana and Stree Shakti Sanghatana (Hyderabad), challenging the acquittal of the eight accused police by the Sessions Judge, Raichur. In a separate

move, the state of Andhra Pradesh too filed an appeal against the verdict of the Sessions Court.

It will be recalled that on the night of March 29, 1978, Rameeza Bee had gone to Hyderabad with her husband, Ahmed Hussain, to see a Telugu film 'Yama Gola'. On their return from the late show the beat police finding her sitting alone in the rickshaw, when her

detention of Rameeza Bee, was severely tortured. As a result of this he died in police custody. As the news of the rape of Rameeza Bee and the murder of Ahmed Hussain spread, the public outraged by these brutalities of the police, attacked the police stations - this outburst took a violent turn, which resulted in the loss of twenty human lives due to the police firings. In a bid to contain people's anger against the misuse

## RAMEEZA BEE - Justice Denied

of power by the police, the Government of Andhra Pradesh instituted a one man enquiry commission under Justice K. A. Mukhtadar. Justice Mukhtadar in his findings convicted the sub-inspector and seven constables for the offence of rape and wrongful confinement

of Rameeza Bee and the murder of Ahmed Hussain and recommended their prosecution. On the basis of the Commission's report, the State Crime Branch Police suspended, arrested and charge-sheeted the accused police. But before they could be tried, the accused filed a petition in the Supreme Court praying for the transfer of the case to a Court outside Andhra Pradesh. The Petition was granted and the case was transferred to the District Court, Raichur, where the trial began on October 22, 1980.

From the entire legal proceedings it was evident that the prosecution almost acted in defence of the accused despite the fact that Rameeza Bee had in almost 21 identification parades, identified the police who committed the crime of rape on her. Justice Mukhtadar too, in his enquiry report had

pointedly noted: "There was not an iota of evidence to incriminate Rameeza Bee as a prostitute and Ahmed Hussain as a pimp".

The acquittal of the police in the Mathura case, of the husband and the in-laws in the Sudha Goel dowry murder case and now, the acquittal of the police in the Rameeza Bee case are all expressions of the male bias and prejudice that is inherent in the judicial system.

Donna Vimochana

Sangharsh is not 'regular' in the strict sense of the term. Its periodicity depends a great deal on the emerging relevance of, and responses to, any area of debate related to feminism. To this end, we invite responses from other individuals and groups, not only to the articles published here and the earlier publication, but also original contributions on 'women and the media' our theme for the next issue.

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Come, and pick up the rice scattered along the railway line drenched in the rain.

It's a bag of black market rice thrown out of the window just before reaching the terminus. There's rice spilt now on the rails. Come, and pick up the rice scattered now drenched in the rain.

Bring her back that woman the police hauled out of the train.

Ask her why her husband was taken to the war and killed

Ask her how she can raise her children with nothing in the till.

Ask her if she can live, starving.

Ask her whether her children have ever eaten their fill of rice. Ask her gently, Don't be embarrassed.

As she picks up the rice, grain by grain, she will tell you: the woman without a face, the woman without a history.

Ask her quietly, ask her and millions like her who live in the barrios, the bantustans, the bustis—in Calcutta, in the favelas of Sao Paulo, in the camps in Beirut, in Soweto, Tehran, El Salvador.....

• We women wandering exiles in a man's world illiterate strangers to the archives

We have no history

We cannot tell our daughters 'Your ancestors were wise in judgement'

generous and strong in battle'. We can only say 'This one died in childbirth that one outlived her usefulness as sweetheart, wife and mother!'

We can only say 'Your great grandmother is lost to us already.'

My own mother can no longer remember her own mother's girlhood name, or any detail of her life.'

We women in the third world are people with no history, but pilgrims in the darkness. In the growing social ferment of Asia, Africa, Latin America we must refuse to continue to live without a face, to speak without a voice. We must search for our own word, name our own reality, discover our own history; a history that will describe not only our degradation, our anguish, our tears, but a history that will also tell of our triumphs, our hopes, our dreams.

Though the understanding I bring to you and the meeting, has its roots in the specificity of a cultural and civilizational ethos that is of India and of life in the third world, the vision of the future towards which we move (whether we are women from the capitalist west, the socialist east or the third world) is of a vision of a future that we can determine, a future of peace. The appearances and manifestations it takes, the forms it expresses, the symbols it uses, will have a different emphasis each in the different cultures, but in essence, the vision is the same. The existence of the universality of women's oppression and of patriarchy as a world system, binds together

the movements of resistance which search for new possibilities to reach new horizons, opposing all concepts and structures that are obstacles for a more human social order; movements which seek a 'change beyond the change'; changes that will move the world away from wars and self-destruction, from systems that exploit and dehumanize, to the anticipation and creation of an authentic, humanist civilization that will 'restore to all human beings, their fullness and sovereignty over their own lives'; changes that will not be confined only to the transformation of the objective reality in material quantitative terms, although this is very necessary, but a change that envisions a transformation in the quality of life—in individuals, in gender relations, in political institutions, and the entire social fabric.

## The Wars in The Third World

It is here that two thirds of humanity is born into a world of hunger, of squalor, of deprivation; It is here that the developed countries through their multinationals, their technology, the new international division of labour, plunder and pillage with the flag of progress, of development. It is here that military dictators and fascist regimes in the name of 'national security' and other repressive legislation silence millions of its people; here that three-fourths of the global arms are transferred, here that the possibility of regional conflict heightens; here that local wars multiply; It is here that the conflict of the super powers is concentrated and most concretely expressed, dragging every nation in the third world into the polemics and polarity of the Cold War. For the big powers the world war ended in 1945; Che Guevara speaking for the peoples of the three continents describes in his Manifesto that 'while the war ended in 1945... the war in fact continued everywhere; throughout Asia, in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America'. To the industrialized nations these wars are limited, happening in distant lands to distant peoples, to the third world these wars are total, against whole cultures, against whole civilizations.

**A transformation in the quality of life in individuals, in gender relations, in political institutions, and the entire social fabric....**

It is necessary however, to make a distinction between the two super powers and not hold both equally responsible for the increasing military interventions in the third world. There are differences between the basic perception and policies of the Soviet Union which still seems to be 'those of aggressive defence', while that of the United States seems to be 'more dangerous and provocative in its general military and diplomatic strategies'. Military and political analysts note that the recent military policy of the United States of Amer-

ica suggests that should it's economic interests in the third world be threatened, nuclear developments and possibilities designed-for Europe could in fact be destined for the third world. Both the neutron bomb and the Cruise missile have been discussed on this list, on the assumption that their use against targets located outside the territory of the USSR and against non-European population would not lead to a full scale nuclear confrontation'. A 'limited' nuclear war? and will it be the third world that will provide it its nuclear theatre? What cannot be over emphasized is that with the multiplication of nuclear arsenals, the increasing availability of nuclear technology and the capacity to manufacture nuclear weapons, the race for nuclear arms is being globalized. More countries in the third world are joining the nuclear club, achieving nuclear capability and thereby soaring the possibility of a regional nuclear arms race and the use of nuclear weapons in regional conflicts. The line is very fragile between nuclear plants for energy and 'peaceful purposes' and the military implications of such civil installations.

Militarized states and militarism develops its tentacles and

roots feeding on the growing arms trade and transfers to the third world, whose share in the international arms trade has dramatically increased (from \$30.5 billion in 1973 to \$47.7 billion in 1983). About three quarters of the current global arms transfers is to the third world and many of them are among the poorest nations in the world. Besides the increase in the number of recipient countries there has also been a proliferation of advanced weapon systems, more facilities for arms production and a flourishing trade in repression technology — instruments of

torture, counter-insurgency and police weapons. The major competitors in the third world arms market are the USA, USSR, France, UK and Italy. Third world governments shop in their bazaars for the most modern and sophisticated weapons, qualitatively changing the character of the world weapons trade. Twenty years ago the bulk of the armament transfers, were unsophisticated and second hand. 'The current SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) Arms Trade Register covering weapons on order or being delivered in 1981, identify approximately 1,100 separate arms agreements. 94% of these contracts are for new weapons systems. 2% are for second hand weapons and 4% are for refurbished weapons. The bombs in Beirut, the tanks in Tehran, the napalm and nerve gas in Vietnam are not different from the Pershing II, the Cruise, the SS-20's: all these weapons are part of the same system, part of the repressive machinery used by the State to contain the increasing social explosions, resulting in the escalating wars within the third world — Pakistan and India, Iran and Iraq. Though the roots of these conflicts are often within the particular social formations, the ability of these countries to wage intensive and protracted wars is sustained by the increasing sales and transfers of advanced weapons from the developed countries, catapulting the wars of today to much higher levels of violence and brutalization. The import of these weapons are explicitly intended 'to help these countries defend themselves against external attack'. Studies of arms export data of the advanced countries however, reveal that a substantial portion of these arms are in fact used for internal repression: to deter the people's uprisings, to annihilate the political opposition. Recent arms deliveries to the third world have included police weapons, torture devices, surveillance systems, anti-riot equipment all totally unsuitable for anything other than internal security operations. Military policy studies also indicate

that besides arms and equipment, training is also given to the police and paramilitary forces most directly involved in the torture, assassination and incarceration of the political opposition, of whom more than 30% are women.

Women are the worst victims of the direct violence of war — they and their daughters are tortured, humiliated, raped; the torture chambers are an all male domain. The women's side of the war is rarely revealed and almost never documented. When the anti-war movements demonstrated in Washington against the 'Rape of Vietnam', they were not protesting about the rape and abuse of the Vietnamese women. With the increasing interventions of the US in Asia (Korea, Vietnam), to cite just one example, the activities at the US Naval Base in Subic Bay in the Philippines, were intensified and extended to include what was known as the R and R (rest and recreation) industry in Olongapo for the military. The R & R industry is an organized system of prostitution and violence against women. It claims for the industry the most economically poor sections of women to work for a pittance as 'hospitality hostesses', 'waitresses', 'entertainment girls'. In South Korea it is known as the 'Kisaeng' industry which provides 'service facilities' to the military personnel. Woman flagrantly violated, her body a commodity to be bought and sold, beaten and used.

Besides the wars between the nation states in the third world, it is necessary to take a closer look at the wars within each country — the fascist regimes, the coups d'etat, the military juntas and other coercive forms of State, which are at war against their own peoples; the war against the people's movements for liberation, the war against the blacks, the war against the workers, the dalits, the ethnic minorities, and more particularly the war against women.



## The War Against Women

This trend towards militarism in Asia and in the third world, is characterized by the penetration of the capitalist mode of production and the resultant marginalization and pauperization of the majority of the people, particularly the women. 'Women in the third world are the poorest among the poor, no matter how poverty lines are drawn; the most economically vulnerable, no matter what the nature of the crisis and are almost always to be found lowest in the occupational ladder of most economies, the last in line. Almost everywhere women are pushed into low-paid, low-skilled jobs; almost everywhere women work long

er hours, under more difficult conditions of work; almost everywhere lack nutrition, health care, maternity and child care facilities; almost everywhere used, abused, almost everywhere, insublime.

The process of capitalist accumulation in Asia has led to the increasing marginalization of women in the least productive sectors. The Status of Women Report, (India), depicts the dramatic decline in the employment of women in cultivation and in household industries, indicating that the women are losing their traditional mean of production and that work opportunities for women have been consistently declining over the last seventy years. Of the total women population in India, 80% live in the rural areas involved in agricultural operations. Statistics and recent research reveal that even in the agricultural sector, women are being squeezed out of categories like self-employed cultivators into the strata of agricultural labourers, on subsistence wages. In 1911, approximately 18 million women were cultivators while 13 million were agricultural labourers, while in 1971 about 16 million were cultivators and 20 million were agricultural labourers. While women in agriculture are concentrated in the lower strata in the lowest paid work, many more women are pushed out to join the ranks of the non-paid workers. The number of unemployed women increased in the last decade from 153 million to 219 million. Only 2.5 million women of the women work force are employed in the organised sector in India. Millions, of course, continue to work as unpaid helpers in family farms or non-farm enterprises, accounting for more than 35 million women workers. Women's work is largely unrecognized, under-counted and under-valued; the conceptual paradigms and analytical tools used to discern what does and what does not constitute women's work are sex blind; refusing any analysis of the gender relations and patriarchal attitudes which have largely contributed to women's status, place and role in society. This is true not only for India, but for other countries in Asia, the third world. While economic categories alone are insufficient indicators of the declining participation of women in paid work, if it is related to the prevailing economic and political systems, it reveals that the more repressive the State form, the greater the marginalization of the wage earners and the women wage earners in particular. Some of the most authoritarian and militaristic social formations which have developed an armament culture like Iran, Philippines, Indonesia, Brazil and Argentina show a very low participation of women in the sector of paid labour and these states are some of the largest importers of military equipment and armaments in the third world.

On the other hand, the economies of the Asian countries are being increasingly integrated into the world capi-

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# Towards International Feminism

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and the Third World, though themselves subordinated to their men, are placed in relations of dominance vis-a-vis poor women and men. The Radical Feminist assertion that all women are oppressed by all men, developed around issues of sexual control and violence, needs qualification in the context of such realities as the racist use of the rape charge against black men in the United States in the last forty years or so, or hundred and fifty-five men have been executed for rape. Four hundred and five of them were black. No white man has ever been executed for raping a black woman in this country.

Note too, that the contrasting racist and sexist images of white and black women here, depict the former as passive, dependent and delicate creatures to be protected and the latter as strong matriarchs or bad black women to be cast aside. These stereotypical images alone should raise questions about the prevalence of uniform models of womanhood and manhood for all groups.

Not surprisingly perhaps, feminist analysis and the women's movement arose within the ranks of the relatively deprived whites, not the absolutely deprived majority.

What is important to note is that the analytical categories and social change strategies produced by Western middle-class feminists, while couched in universal terms, are derived from the unique historical experience of their own social class and culture.

## Western Feminism and Middle Class Values

Both the nineteenth-century women's suffrage movement and the contemporary women's movement in the U.S., have emerged largely as responses by white, middle-class women to the contradictions created in their lives by the processes of capitalist industrial development. The nineteenth-century movement in particular, can be seen as the challenge of educated middle-class women already engaged in 'public' activities, notably the slave abolition movement, to the ideology of femininity that confined them to the 'domestic sphere'. Their aim was to legitimise their integration into public life through the vote and eventually to become the legal and social equals of the men of their class.

Similarly, the contemporary women's movement emerged

among middle-class women (some confined to the home and others already in paid employment) seeking greater integration into public life through satisfying careers and eventually equality with their men. This movement must also be seen in the context of increasing commercialization of domestic services and rapid absorption of women into the wage labour force.

The liberal integrationist strategies and their emphasis on legislative change, unite the two women's movements in the U.S. What distinguishes them, is the emergence of a newer more radical branch of feminism in recent decades which has politicized personal relations between men and women within the family. Extending its critique to other social institutions, Radical Feminism argues that women's liberation cannot be achieved without the overthrow of male dominance or patriarchy, which is the foundation of social life everywhere.

Many of the popular categories of feminist analysis today, such as the private-public dichotomy and the patriarchal nuclear family, are essentially articulated by white, middle-class feminists in the process of reassessing their unique historical experience under industrial capitalism. Like much of Western male scholarship then, feminist analysis and practices too are ridden with middle-class, and Western, biases. Feminist thinking which takes the middle-class experience as the norm, may not only be irrelevant and alienating to most women, but the social change strategies emanating from such thinking may have negative consequences for poor and Third World women and men.

In this regard, we should remember how the nineteenth-century women's movement in the U.S. which emerged from within the abolition movement, later capitulated to the racial and class politics of the time. When white supremacist politicians pitted the vote for women against the vote for black men, the suffragists, in their exclusive concern for the vote for women - that is white, middle-class women - went along with the racist forces. During the early decades of twentieth-century feminism, some feminists searching for allies in their campaign for birth control, took positions supporting the reduction of 'undesirable' elements in the population, such as blacks, foreigners (immigrants) and the lower classes. Such posi-

tions fed into the eugenics movement and the racial hysteria of the time. Unless the scope of feminism is broadened, the contemporary women's movement (in spite of its roots in the civil rights struggle), can again be aligned with white male politicians seeking to keep women, minorities and the working classes divided and conquered.

Perhaps the most important strategy of liberation advocated by contemporary Liberal Feminism, is the incorporation of women into the paid labour force as the equals of men. Indeed, for middle-class women formerly confined to domestic chores, a professional career can offer greater self fulfillment despite the new stresses that come with these careers. Women from the privileged social classes in the Third World have also benefited from the higher education and integration into paid employment.

But for the majority of other women, integration into the wage labour force entails at best, working as a factory or field labourer, and at worst, a maid or a prostitute. Can absorption into the prevailing structures of



employment bring liberation to most women? In the absence of changes in those hierarchical structures at the international and national levels, integration results merely in prestigious careers for a few women and men, but continued underpaid and undervalued work for the majority. Data now available indicates that unequal integration further deepens the class, racial and national cleavages among women, rather than help build sisterhood.

Demands made in the name of women's liberation by Liberal Feminist organisations in certain Third World countries, only exacerbate this trend. Take for example the cry for imported luxury kitchen equipment that would supposedly lighten the household chores of busy professional women. It is no secret that the conspicuous consumption of the privileged classes, diverts scarce foreign exchange from the survival needs of the masses of poor women and men in those countries.

Turning briefly to Radical Feminism now, it can all be argued that some of its basic postulates such as the personal is political, are broadly applicable everywhere. But a closer analysis of some of the specific institutions, such as the male-headed, nuclear family against which Radical Feminism directs its critique, helps recognize the limits of this analysis. Research into social classes and cultures outside the Western middle class reveals a

diversity of family structures. At least one-third of the households in the world today are headed by women. Research also shows that the family is not the primary focus of women's oppression everywhere. In some communities, especially those subjugated by racism as under slavery in America or apartheid in South Africa, black women have experienced family life as essentially supportive rather than oppressive. Women in such situations may consider labour for their families as their only labour of love.

It should also be noted that, while sisterhood may be a new discovery for Western, middle-class housewives isolated in their suburban homes, it has long been a reality for women in many sex-segregated societies whether in Asia, the Middle-East, or in the female headed, kin networks of the Caribbean and perhaps even in working-class communities in the United States. Of course it could be argued that the sisterhood prevailing in such communities is essentially conservative and directed towards women's survival rather than the overthrow of male dominance. Lesbianism, when it exists in these situations, is not politicized either.

Nevertheless, it must be recognized that the conjugal role relationship is not the central relationship for women in many of these communities and that their emotional needs are met primarily through their relationship to other women. In these situations, alternative class and cultural contexts may be psychologically freer from men, especially their spouses, than their Western, middle-class counterparts. Women's liberation then cannot be a uniform exportable ideology. It has to be defined and achieved contextually.



## Women's liberation cannot be a uniform exportable ideology. It has to be defined and achieved contextually.

My purpose here is not to denigrate either the legitimate concerns of white, middle class women, or their efforts to find freedom from their own particular oppression, but rather to begin placing western feminism and the women's movement in comparative and historical perspective. The contemporary women's movement is of world historic importance. It has the potential to improve the quality of human relations everywhere. But given the tremendous diversity and deepening inequalities among women, we must work toward an inductive and comparative feminist framework within which the concerns of wider groups of women can be adequately addressed. If not, the very legitimacy of feminism and the women's movement is seriously threatened.

## Capitalism and Feminism are they Compatible ?

Where do we turn then, for theoretical direction toward a more inclusive definition of feminism, and strategies for broadening the concerns of the women's movement? Few of the alternative theoretical frameworks and women's networks now emerging, do carry the potential toward making feminism relevant to wider groups of women.

Socialists have long argued that most women and men for that matter, cannot find liberation within the unequal and exploitative social relations under capitalism. The prerequisite for the liberation of women, that is non-bourgeois women, they point out, is their absorption into economic production within a socialist economy. The growing body of feminist research on the effects of capitalist development on women, particularly in the Third World, gives much credence to this position.

The processes of capitalist development in the Third World have led to the marginalization of women in the least productive and least remunerative sectors of Third World economies. While a handful of women have gained access to prestigious jobs, most women are confined to either unpaid or underpaid, or exploitative work, such as domestic servants, maids, prostitute, or sex workers, expansion of private property, wage labour, new technology and the cash nexus have disadvantaged women categorically. In many places in Africa for example, these new developments have robbed women of the relative independence and

term vision toward liberation presented by socialists are highly compelling. But in the absence of practical strategies leading to social revolution, the socialist vision can result merely in an evasion of the daily realities of poor women's lives. In the presence of poverty and massive unemployment, most women prefer exploitation on the job, to starvation. Those who are able to find regular employment, as a field hand on a plantation, or a 'hostess' in sex tourism, often consider themselves relatively privileged. Even many Third World governments that espouse socialist ideologies, including China, have not been able to extricate themselves from the constraints placed by the world capitalist economy. Their experiences bespeak the tremendous difficulties of realizing a socialist vision within a capitalist world.

Without abandoning the structural analysis and long-term vision of the socialists, it is nevertheless important to implement strategies that are of immediate value in improving women's lives. These should include the provision of literacy, credit and marketable skills for women and the incorporation of women's concerns within the agenda for a new international economic order (including the new world information order). Women's needs in particular must be included in the codes of conduct being devised for regulating the multinational corporations.

It is also important to note that although many poor and Third World women prefer exploitative jobs to starvation, they are ignorant, neither of their exploitation, nor the necessity for change. The courage and resourcefulness of poor women, both in the Third World and the West, have been indispensable historically for the survival of their communities and the world at large. Today we are beginning to hear of isolated but remarkable struggles by such women for higher wages and better working conditions in the multinational-owned factories of South East Asia, against nuclear explosions and the dumping of radioactive waste by Western powers in the islands of Micronesia; and against sterilization abuses in the U.S. and the Third world.

Reverting our attention now to the socialist position, it should be noted that while it provides a most incisive analysis of the politico-economic bases and class dimensions of women's oppression under capitalism, it lacks any real understanding of the cultural and psychological roots of this oppression. This becomes particularly clear in the light of the experiences of women in 'socialist' countries such as the Soviet Union. The persistence of a sexual division of labour and sexual hierarchy at 'work', and male resistance to the implementation of the Family Code - the first legislation anywhere toward equalising domestic work between men and women - in Cuba, are also highly instructive. They point out that the incorporation of women into social production and benevolent state legis-

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# A New Time Beginning

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talist market, stabilising the militarized and other coercive forms of State which assure the growth and sustenance of the present world order. The transnational corporations and today, the Free Trade Zones provide the market economies of the industrialized world with strategic military bases and geopolitical links; there is a fundamental connection between economic policy and the socio-political setting. The phenomenon of the increasing violation of human rights, the birth and growth of the torture state with its system of institutionalized brutality, is directly linked to 'the classical unrestrained free market policies that have been enforced by the military juntas'. For the last two decades, economic investment through the multinationals have been encouraged as the 'model' for development moving the emphasis from import substitution manufacturing to a policy that is oriented to the export market. The ruling powers in the Asian countries invite the multi-nationals offering all kinds of incentives or their investments - from tax free repatriation of profits to the supply of cheap labour, with an assurance of industrial peace free from labour unrest and a stable political climate. The creation of the Free Trade Zones is used as a strategy for rapid industrialization and this process is almost always accompanied by massive aid and arms to the police and the military for internal repression. The arms trade serves the multinational corporations with new points of entry into these economies, setting up co-production projects for the manufacture of arms, conditioned not only by the requirements of the third world, but by the demand of the exporting countries; 'the sale of arms to the third world has become a very important source of income for their economies'. The Free Trade Zones or the Export Processing Zones mushrooming all over Asia decidedly prefer women workers. In a public statement, the Investment Promotion Division of the Greater Colombo Economic Commission invited 'expansion minded manufacturers' unprecedented incentives and opportunities for 'profits that cannot be found anywhere in the world'. To ensure these objectives it promised a labour force of 600,000 educated, highly trainable, mostly English speaking men and women (women are preferred) with the most competitive labour rates in Asia (that is, the lowest wages). Besides a host of cost saving incentives, a liberal import duty on machines and so on, it promised that the Sri Lanka Constitution would guarantee 'the security of your investment'. It is not a coincidence then, that shortly after, the National Security Act was promulgated by the Government and later, a state of emergency declared. A recent analysis of the arms import data into Sri Lanka suggests that much of the weapons imported are used for internal repression.

In most of the Free Trade Zones, over 70% of the

workers are women. In the republic of Korea, women account for 75% of all workers in the export industries. In three other Asian Export Processing Zones (Kachung, Nantze, Taichung), 80% of all workers are women, and in the Export Processing Zone of Mauritius, over 80% of the workforce is women and so it goes on. Also, most of the women workers are young women who are unwilling to organize themselves into trade unions. An investment brochure describes 'the manual dexterity of the oriental female is famous the world over. Her hands are small and she works fast with extreme care. Who therefore can be better qualified by nature and inheritance to contribute to the efficiency of a bench assembly line, than the oriental girl?'

The revolution to change the objective reality without addressing itself to the subjective factors, has often only meant the replacement of one system of repression by another within the old rubric, of a male dominated society that respects war, the military, its weapons.

Many of the multinational enterprises, particularly the textile factories, garment, leather and electronic industries, prefer to employ women on low wages, in lieu of which they get maternity leave and benefits. The lower wages are justified as it 'costs the company for these benefits'. An essential factor in the preferential employment of women is that they provide a large, relatively unorganized work force so essential for industrial peace and the smooth repatriation of profits.

What is increasingly significant, is the manner in which gender is used as an important criterion for employment. The 'Masquiladoras', the multinational branches in Mexico, hire mostly women because 'they are more reliable than men; they have fine fingers, smaller muscles and unsurpassed manual dexterity. Also, women do not tire of repeating the same operations nine hundred times a day'. Women are considered to be best suited to monitor unskilled work: an ideology that asserts and justifies that anatomy is women's destiny. In her study on 'Integrating Women into Multinational Development', Marilee Karl describes how deeply social myths and sexist attitudes are perpetuated in order to strengthen the exploitation of women.<sup>11</sup>

Yet, in other sectors of modern industry when newer technology necessitates a redeployment in the work force, the tendency is to keep women workers on older non-automatic machinery, denying them training on new jobs which are assigned to men.<sup>12</sup> Pushpa Sunder goes on to illustrate that twenty years ago women used to work in reeling, weaving and the waste sorting sections of textile mills in India. The scenario today for the women textile workers is to be

confined to reeling work and no training facilities are provided because of their illiteracy and immobility.

Women squeezed out of agricultural and more traditional forms of occupation are pushed into the big cities, the slums, the factories, the multinationals, exposing themselves to new health and safety hazards, sexual harassment and other forms of degradation and violence. The multinationals, mass media, advertisements, tourism et al, combine to project an image of women as one of commodity, of sex object, an entire organization of society upholding its gender war, its war against women, quietly humiliating, beating, raping, burning its women. The burning of brides is a specific atrocity committed on the women in India, though concentrated in the urban areas

but now spreading to the villages too. The increase in the number of dowry deaths in the rural and unorganized sector, besides social and cultural factors related to the status of women in India, must also be seen from the context of the declining participation of women in the labour force and a subsequent decline in women's earnings; 'dowry' then serves as the compensation. Dowry deaths in India are a euphemism for cold-blooded, calculated murder; death by burning leaves very few traces. Thousands of these deaths go unrecorded and untraceable, or if reported, come under the heading of 'suicide' and not murder. The existing legislation in India on dowry (the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961) has many infirmities and inherent weaknesses, making both the giver and taker of dowry guilty for conviction; the conviction rate is almost negligible with most being acquitted; the others, if registered, must await investigation for long periods before the case comes to trial. Many are untraced, never heard of; the bride is quietly burnt to death; for the man, another marriage is arranged, another dowry. Dowry, rape, sexual harassment and exploitation, the double burden of work inside and outside the house, torture and abuse of women political prisoners, the effect of drugs exported by the multinationals on women's health, the atrocities on hijarian women, black women... the list of crimes against women is interminable.

But it is not sufficient only to list these crimes; we have come a little way, but there is still a long and difficult way to go; and it may not be out of place

at this juncture to ask whether some of today's choices which we make will help us towards our vision of tomorrow's world? I think particularly of the area of research and policy planning and programming that has come to be known as 'Women in Development', as I understand development to be intrinsically related to peace and to the kind of future we hope for; also for the reason that the issue of development is specifically relevant to the movements of change in the third world. Many of the reports, documents and literature in the field, besides the concrete development programs in the third world, are attempting to 'integrate women into the development processes' by this meaning that women are to be more intensely, more effectively brought into the existing unequal and exploitative structures of development; the emphasis here is on the integration of women but the context, the 'model' of development into which the women are to be integrated and made visible, the concepts on which this 'model' is built, is never questioned. The development model approach has attempted to squeeze reality into readymade compartments, of dogmatic concepts which prescribe formulae of 'progress', of 'green revolution', of 'catching up' of

the world market economy. For when the degree of self-reliance of the third world is measured by economics? of the extent of industrialization, of patterns of consumption, of gross national product? The New International Economic Order in calling for the re-location of industry, the re-deployment of resources, the re-structuring of institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, in fact continues to negotiate with the centre of the world economy, assuring the preservation of the essence of the existing world order, while pretending to search for new facades. Is the vision of women and the oppressed peoples of the world of a new international order, only an economic question? Would social justice and a more human, equalitarian society be assured if we re-deploy industry, re-allocate resources or restructure the World Bank? Would gender justice reach the millions of marginalized women if they were integrated into this process? Is the issue merely one of inequitable distribution or are we overlooking the fact that inequitable distribution is the necessary concomitant of a particular form of social order - the capitalist order?

Western was in fact, universal. The West has for the last several centuries imposed their 'models', their notions of development and progress, their science and technology all wrapped up in an ideology of domination on the third world. They speak of human rights, of technology transfers, of concessions, of crumbs, all the while refusing to admit the need for a real transformation of their economic and political institutions. Unhindered, the development of the productive forces has articulated itself in patterns of progress that are grotesque; the nuclear arms race, the trade and transfer of weapons to militarize the third world, the transnational corporations, the plunder of the world's natural resources, the technological choices. The developing countries are being 'integrated' into the world market system. Do we women seek a similar integration? Do we want technical solutions to what is surely a political problem? Shall we learn the 'female prone' skills of sewing, knitting, embroidery and participate in the 'income generating projects'? Shall we attend the women's literacy classes of the development planners and learn to accept our prescribed role and



'development'. Of course the words keep changing; we now speak of 'self-reliance', 'basic needs approach', 'new international economic order' etc., but the methodology used still remains euro-centrist, technicist, developmentalist, manipulated by the forces of

The concept of development, as we know it, has its historical and ideological roots in a world view that was imperialist and hegemonic. It announced that what was relevant to the West had to be relevant to the rest of the world; for all that was

status in society? Should we be thankful to the technologists (the 'appropriate' ones, no doubt) for making our burden easier and inventing the gobar gas plants, the smokeless chulas, the grinders? Or, is there yet another way?

## FEMINISM, A HOPE FOR THE FUTURE?

Can we find new words, envision new ways, create a new world view that would enable us to go beyond the existing orthodox models and classical paradigms? Will feminism and the women's movements 'have brought to human consciousness a thought it thought unthinkable, making another consciousness afraid?'

In this section of the presentation an attempt will be made to focus on the area of discussion related to women's participation in peace and international cooperation - in nation states, in political parties, in the new movements for change in the third world.

### Nation States:

On the question of human rights and the rights of women the United Nations addresses itself to the 'sovereign states', in the world. These declarations to which the nation states are signatories, then confer the responsibility for upholding these rights on the individual nation state. In the name of human rights, nation states which are signatories to this declaration may now legitimize the most

inhuman conditions of life, the most horrendous repression, the most sexist discrimination, of its own people. The abrogation of these rights then, become, in the name of law and order, in the name of national security, the internal concern of these 'sovereign states'. What is referred to are particularly the sovereign states in the third world which are increasingly moving towards blatant militarized regimes and other coercive forms of state. It is in this context that the many conventions of the United Nations related to the rights of women must be assessed. It is argued that the signing of the covenants (twenty one in all) related to the rights of women, is a step towards making women more 'visible' in the political life of

their societies, and yet, even today, the right to vote and participation in political processes is officially denied to women of eight countries in the third world: Bahrain, Kuwait, Nigeria, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen Arab Republic. Most of these countries are Islamic States where religious law is used to legalize the keeping of women in purdah, the imprisonment of women in the home. Of course, that women do have the right to vote does not guarantee that they will have the freedom to exercise it independently, and this is related to the general status of women in the societies of the third world. The International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and the

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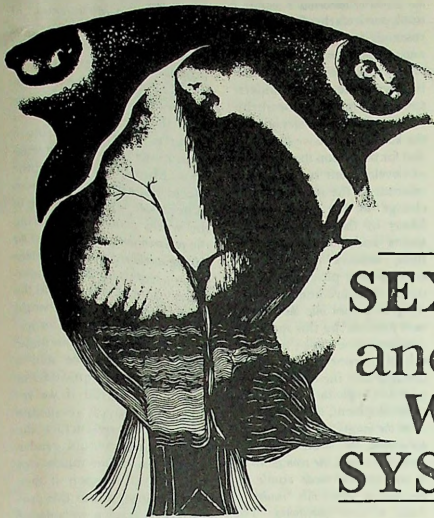


When I first began to explore the connections between sexism and the war system, raising the issue with peace researchers, one woman researcher suggested that a more relevant inquiry would be sexism in the "peace system," meaning the peace research "establishment." The statement reflected the primary perception feminists hold of peace research, another arena from which women and women's concerns are virtually excluded. For their part, peace researchers tend to see neither the exclusion, nor the relevance of the issues. And so it is and has been with politicians and "statesmen."

After the war, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) sent a proposal to the Peace Conference in Paris in 1919, suggesting measures aimed at avoiding a new war. When Emily Greens Balch, the first Secretary General of WILPF, received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946, the Director of the Nobel Institute, Gunnar Jahn, said: "I want to say so much that it would have been extremely wise if the proposal WILPF made to the Conference in 1919, had been accepted by the conference. But few of the men listened to what the women had to say. The atmosphere was too bitter and revengeful. And on top of this there was the fact that the proposal was made by women. In our patriarchal world, suggestions which come from women are seldom taken seriously. Sometimes, it would be wise of the men to spare their condescending smiles."

The gap between women's movements and the peace movement, certainly has its counterpart in the academic and research communities. This is probably a far more serious split, in that it separates the derivation of the theories and strategies which feminist scholarship and peace research apply to understanding and resolving conflicts which have their origins in the same fundamental causes. Thereby, each field remains inadequate to the tasks of deriving truly relevant knowledge and devising effective policies. While both have become more conscious of the inadequacies of the other, neither has acknowledged that these might be significantly reduced by a convergence of insights, gained from their separate inquiries into their common concern with overcoming exploitation and violence. Feminist criticism of peace research and world order studies dwells more on the inadequacies in perspective of those fields due to exclusion.

The mainstream discourse, of peace research (as indicated by publications in the journals), has been characterized as divided into two camps: the quantitative behaviouralists, and the critical peace research group. This division is



## SEXISM and the WAR SYSTEM

slightly misleading; some of the latter play with numbers, and many of the former are attempting to quantify the same values and hopes discussed by the latter. Sharp critiques from both camps, point out the necessity to study violence on the direct, personal and indirect, structural levels, although they cannot agree what violence is and how it may be recognised and measured.<sup>2</sup>

What stands out in this debate, is the lack of recognition that violence is differently experienced and participated in, by women and men. This lack is, I would argue, causally connected to the sterility and futility of debate.

Peace studies aim to bring about peace. As Juergen Deding has pointed out, such was the hope of the "pacifists and activists who were the godfathers (sic) of peace research." Research alone is useless; there must be the "opportunity to influence men (sic) and events."<sup>3</sup>

This lack of influence is not surprising, considering peace studies' naive about power. Berenice Carroll in 1972 published a superb critique of the inadequacy of the concepts of power and dangers of the "cult of power" in peace studies. Apparently no one was listening; these issues and concepts have not been taken up in journals.<sup>4</sup> In accusing peace researchers of naivete about power, I mean power in general, and men's positions and interests in the world in particular. "Power is exercised along gender as well as class lines: it is usually men who exercise power..." (Barbara Roberts, "Peace Studies and the War Against Women: A Survey of Research," paper, Canadian Peace Research and Education Association, 1982).

For its part, a world order and peace research critique, of feminism would emphasize its failure to give adequate attention to the major systematic and structural inequities which hold virtually all oppressive systems in place.

### Self Criticism : Feminism's Limited Approach to War.

My own critique of contemporary feminism as a political movement, as well as a field of study also focuses primarily on the lack of structural considerations, which in turn seem to impose some serious perspective limitations on its approach to war and the war system.

The primary limitation which world order perspectives would attribute to feminist perspectives, as they are applied to social, economic and political problems, especially problems of violence, is lack of structural analysis and an insufficient attention to the characteristics of the overall system. As the purpose of world order is to analyse systems in terms of their capacities to achieve values, without such systems analysis, world order advocates would purport that feminism cannot produce a valid nor adequate diagnosis of the fundamental problems.

One example of this limitation

narrow frame of reference; particularly its attribution of blame solely to patriarchy in its traditional form without acknowledging its present manifestations in militarism and neo-colonialism. One of the strongest statements in the report, while indicating a certain degree of transcendence of male dominated international politics, also, I believe, reflects this narrowness of focus.

For example, the Israeli participants proposed that "the dialogue between Arab and Jewish women has begun at this Tribunal shall continue within the framework of international feminism. As women we understand that our oppression is by men and not by opposing nationalities.

The Tribunal is the first International forum in which both Israeli and Arab women have each publicly condemned their own societies for their oppression against women rather than condemning one another."

myth of sovereignty, another significant support of the war system. It also fails to challenge the nation-state itself and all related international structures as essentially patriarchal.

A lack of structural analysis cannot, however, be attributed to Marxist Feminists, nor to those Third World feminists who would, in fact, not designate themselves as feminists, but see women's liberation as only one component of a wider global political struggle, liberation not only from domestic confinement in the home and other forms of purdah, but also and foremost, from oppressive economic structures of imperialism, particularly capitalist imperialism. Some such women scholars even reject the concept of patriarchy as a cause of sexist oppression, attributing it more to capitalist imperialism, ignoring the fact pointed out by Christopher Lasch, among others, that sexism has existed in many forms throughout human history and cannot be attributed only to capitalism (Lasch, p. 206). Even Nancy Chadarow in an interview about her research on gender, admitted that although her work was "an attempt to create Marxist Feminist theory... we need more than analysis of capitalism to understand male domination". It could be argued that a macro-historical, feminist approach, reveals that Marxism too, derives from patriarchy.

The apparent conflict between the two feminist perspectives, one emphasizing patriarchy, the other, imperialism, serves as an obstacle to women's movements' becoming a truly effective force in the global transformation process. For it is the universality of women's oppression and the cultural commonality of feminine values, which are the real potential of feminism as peace force and a transformative power (Devaki Jain, the Indian political scientist, has written very cogently on the universal element as the source of political power for women.)

Another somewhat fragment-

### For it is the universality of women's oppression and the cultural commonality of feminine values, which are the real potential of feminism as a peace force and a transformative power

was the International Tribunal on Crimes against Women which was held in Belgium in 1976. This tribunal has much to recommend it as an event contributing toward raising public awareness about the oppression of women, first in its specifying and documenting those forms of violence which could be categorized as crimes against women, and secondly as "a major accomplishment in breaking through nationalism: women of the world uniting to oppose patriarchy everywhere." The official report of the Tribunal, however, makes little or no recognition of either militarization or the economic control exercised by multinational corporations as a major cause of women's oppression, and it makes no reference at all to political or economic structures. This document seems to me to have been drafted in a very

I sincerely doubt that such a statement would have been made by most Arab women who, the changes in world power balance notwithstanding, still for the most part see themselves as oppressed more by Western imperialism, than by their own men. As women of the Third World, they know that all people in their society, both men and women, are oppressed. While women in these societies are certainly more oppressed, their oppression is part of a total system which such Western feminist analysis, has not taken sufficiently into account. Indeed, to assert "that our oppression is by men and not by opposing nationalities" is not only to ignore the structures which enforce sexist oppression and contemporary economic paternalism, but also to attribute to nation-states, a degree of autonomy they simply do not have, reinforcing the

ing and limiting tendency of some feminist work, is the centrality given to women's concerns, separating them from other political and social problems. Certainly, any feminist analysis would require that problems be viewed from a woman's perspective. Granted, specific problem impacts on women should be studied as a fundamental aspect of the diagnosis of any problem of public policy, but a diagnosis which is only concerned with one interest group, even when that particular interest group constitutes half the human species, the interests of other groups may be done a disservice in the proposed prescriptions. Such exclusion has certainly impacted negatively on women, particularly in public policy areas related to economic and social questions and especially in the field of

development. If the larger goal is research and political action for a more humane world society, then, clearly, the impact upon and the values of as many groups as are concerned with an issue, need to be taken into account. Conflicts of interest and values must at least be considered, if not resolved. As is demonstrated by the perceived conflict of interests between Euro-American feminists and Marxist and Third World women activists and academics, unless some resolution can be reached, these manifestations of separate interests can be a major obstacle to the achievement of the preferred worlds of all concerned. Certainly, they will slow progress in transcending the general system of oppression.

Here, however, it must be observed that such perception of separate interest is at once a commonly experienced stage in the "consciousization" of most oppressed groups and a necessary, though not sufficient, component of the analysis of any case of oppression. The oppressed must perceive fully and clearly, how their own interests are distinct from those of the dominant group. They must also comprehend the invariable consequences of the continued suppression and camouflaging of the conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed by the accepted social norms and the dominant political and economic institutions.

The actual experience of women in the peace movement, relegation to making the coffee, "manning" the mimeograph machine and providing sexual solace for "the activists," along with the failure of the peace movement to see the relevance and relationship of women's oppression to the war system, are two very sound reasons for separatism. The Vietnam experience is a case in point:

As a matter of historical record, by the time the Winter Soldier Investigation had been convened, the feminist movement and the anti-war movement had gone their separate and distinct ways, each absorbed with its own issues to the exclusion of the other, with no small amount of bitterness among movement troopers whose energies, ideologies and sense of priority, pulled them in one direction or another. As a woman totally committed to the feminist cause, I received several requests during this time to march, speak and "bring out my sisters" to anti-war demonstrations "to show women's liberation solidarity with the peace movement," and my response was, that if the peace movement cared to raise the issue of rape and prostitution in Vietnam, I would certainly join in. This was met with strong silence on the part of anti-war activists whose catch words of the day were "anti-imperialism" and "American aggression," and from whom the slogan - "stop the Rape of Vietnam" meant defoliation of crops, not the abuse of women.

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## The relationship of feminism to peace

A great peace activist like Mahatma Gandhi announced publicly that only women were able to save the world. He looked at women as the incarnation of *ahimsa*. Women had a different upbringing from men; they were a more peaceful sex and more capable than men of solving conflicts in a non-violent manner. He warned women against imitating men, becoming like men. He said: "She can run the race but she will not rise to the heights she is capable of by mimicking man". (Gandhi, 1940). This sentence resembles a feminist adage of recent origin: "The woman who strives to be equal to a man lacks ambition". Gandhi said that he had learnt the techniques of non-violence and civil disobedience from women, mainly from the British suffragettes. Gandhi was convinced that women should take the lead in the civil disobedience or satyagraha movement in India. He said: "I would love to find that my future army contained a vast preponderance of women over men. If the fight came, I should then face it with greater confidence than if men predominated. I would dread the latter's violence. Women would be my guarantee against such an out-break". It is a fact that more than 60% of the participants in the Salt March

"When the men kill, it is up to us, the women, to fight for the right to live. When the men are silent, it is our duty as we are filled with suffering, to raise our voices in protest."

Even among peace researchers we find that female peace researchers have other priorities for research than their male colleagues. They find that it is too much mindless weapon counting in peace research and too little about the human and social consequences of the arms race.

### Women - the oppressed sex

It ought to be an obvious fact that if women are the ones who have the greatest potential for saving the world, women also ought to be given the leading positions in society. As we know, this is not the case. On the contrary, all over the world women are second class citizens, oppressed and exploited. Frequently quoted United Nations statistics state that women are doing two-thirds of the work in the world (paid and unpaid), receive ten per cent of the salaries and own one per cent of the property.

Gandhi was of the opinion that even in the context of marriage,

It is totally absurd, and structurally impossible, to try to bring about world peace within a system in which aggression and conquest are considered synonymous with manliness or masculinity, and in which the one half of humanity which is taught to nurture and care, is excluded from social governance.

ends you want to promote.

### Does the end justify the means ?

To most feminists there must be a congruence between the nature of the end and the nature of the means to reach that end. To us it seems logical that if you want peace, you

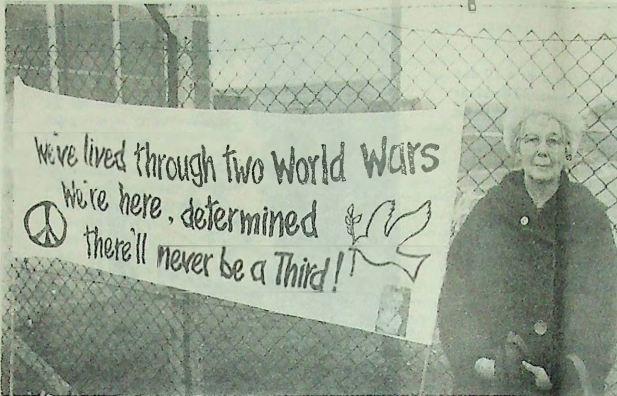
The answer is rather simple : those in power also have the power to define the world. They have the power to define concepts, to allocate prestigious words to their own thinking, and to stamp the thinking of others through words which have a negative connotation. Those in power also have the power to define concepts like defence, security and justice. They have

ment continue to see sexual equality, and other "women's issues" as peripheral concerns, something for action after more important things are done. But those on the right, who relentlessly work for hierarchical orderings, authoritarian controls and increased armaments, correctly perceive that sexual inequality is the cornerstone of the system they seek to impose

ly from men - and they are turning away from Reagan and from the Republican party in very large numbers.

Those on the right see the women's liberation movement and feminist ideas as a dangerous threat to the society they want to create. And they are right. Evidence strongly suggests that *the more militarist a society is, the more sexist it tends to be*. Gloria Steinem shows in a series of articles how Hitler crushed the German feminist movement as he militarized Germany. The Nazi movement was an essentially male organization. German women's virtue, according to Hitler, was to bear children. Preferably sons who were to become soldiers and propagate with the sword, the ideology of Nazism around the world. The nutshell version of his ideology is found in the slogan: "Kinder, Kuche, Kirche" (Children, Kitchen, Church).

The best available research from archaeology, anthropology, sociology, education, psychology, linguistics, economics, and other relevant disciplines point at a strong correlation between male-dominance, a generally hierarchic and authoritarian system and a high degree of institutionalized social violence. These findings also show that the horror and absurdity of our male-dominated, hierarchic and warlike system is not, as some religious dogmas have it, divinely ordained. Nor is it, as some scientists would have it, due to "man's killer genes". It



Britain's first Peace Camp was established outside Greenham Common air base, near Newbury, Berkshire, in September 1981 in protest at the proposed siting there in 1983 of 96 American 'cruise' missiles. Many other Peace Camps have since been set up.

prepare for peace. It is no matter of chance that Bertha Von

the power to stamp their own thinking as rational - a word of

on us all, and therefore also work relentlessly against sexual equality. President Reagan has found his ideology (much as Hitler did in Nietzsche) in George Gilder, whose book "Wealth and Poverty" he gave to all his cabinet appointees. Gilder claims that discrimination, both racial and

# TAKE THE TOYS FROM THE BOYS

were women. And out of the 30,000 people arrested in connection with the March, 17,000 were women.

Recent opinion polls in the western world tend to show that women have a different attitude than men to the military build-up, to the arms race and to the question of which means to use in order to reach the end: a peaceful and disarmed world. A recent Norwegian poll asking for the opinion on whether Norway ought to grant 49 Million Norwegian Kroner (approximately seven and a half million dollars) as Norway's contribution to NATO's infrastructural preparation for the stationing of the cruise missiles in Europe, showed that 76% of the women answered 'no' to this question, against only 46% of the men. Only 15% of the women answered 'yes', against 42% of the men. In earlier opinion polls concerning military questions, you find more abstentions among women than among men. Among more recent polls this is not the case. The previous abstainers among women are now voting 'no' to the continued arms race.

We may quote great Feminist peace heroes like Bertha Von Suttner, Frederika Bremer, Ellen Key, Clara Zetkin, who all believed that women had a special role to play in the creation of peace. In her peace appeal in 1915 to women in all countries, Clara Zetkin said:

women should guard against serving as mere tools of enjoyment for their men. (Ryland, 1977). He urged women to refuse to play along by dressing to please man, which could only confirm their subordinate status in the world. In an address to women in Ceylon, Gandhi (1927) said: "What is it that makes a woman deck herself more than men? I am told by feminine friends that she does so for pleasing man. If she was born as a woman, I would rise in rebellion against the pretension on the part of man that woman is born to be his plaything". Gandhi's vision of the role of women in Indian society, and his stand on specific social reform issues, were remarkably similar to that of leading feminists in India in the twenties and thirties of this century, women leaders like Sarala devi Choudharani and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya. In theory and public speech, although much of a co-feminist, in his own private life, he was in relationship to his wife, he was very much of a male chauvinist (Sharma, 1981). To most feminists, a male who deserves the term co-feminist, also shows a high degree of congruence between his private and public life. A co-feminist does not only take feminist stands publicly, but he also seeks to promote his wife's independent career and shares household chores with her. If you are working for an egalitarian society, you also have to arrange your household in an egalitarian manner. The means must be in harmony with the

Suttner fought for peace through the writing of pacifist novels and articles, through the participation in peace conferences and peace campaigns, while Alfred Nobel invented the dynamite. He once wrote to her that he was convinced that he did more to prevent war by his inventing the dynamite than she did through all her peace conferences and campaigns. He said that they were both fighting for peace, just through different means. "Our goals are the same". Alfred Nobel also wrote to Bertha Von Suttner: "When the day arrives that two armed nations can destroy each other within minutes, then all nations will shrink back and will dismiss their troops". That day has arrived, but the troops have not been dismissed. On the contrary, the great over-kill capacity of modern nation states has not stopped the world in rearming as never before in history. Nobel's tactics have not worked. To most feminists his thinking seems naive, irrational and illogical. We find that if the aim is complete disarmament, one must first stop further rearmament and start disarming. We do not believe in preparing for war if you want peace. We do not believe that in order to reach the goal of complete disarmament, we must first continue rearming. Rearmament is not disarmament. How is it possible that this highly illogical and irrational thinking be stamped as rational by those in power?

honour in a world where emotions are looked down upon and reason is highly valued - even though, according to most criteria, it is highly irrational.

### The relationship of sexism to questions of peace and war

In the patriarchal societies of our time, men stamp their own main-stream thinking as rational and manly. "You think and you act like a man", to them is a compliment, (to feminists, it is not), while to behave like a woman is no compliment in a patriarchal society.

Some peace-loving men have trouble understanding that the more women are oppressed in a society, the easier their own view-points will be disregarded if they can be labelled feminine. Those on the liberal left and center who speak of freedom, equality and disarmament

sexual, is a myth and that women get paid less than men because they produce less. The thesis by Gilder, which is actively promoted by the Reagan administration, is that women destroy their husband's productivity by working; men work hard only if they have women and children at home who would starve without them. To get women out of the labour force will restore the American family's viability. By re-criminalizing abortion - another goal of the Reagan administration - they evidently hope to create another baby boom. We might cite Hitler's ideologist Nietzsche (1885) here "Men should be trained for war and women for the recreation of the warrior". Gilder claims that feminism is incompatible with the objectives of black males. It is a consoling fact that where polls according to sex have been taken, it appears that for the first time since women have had the vote, they are voting quite different-

is rather the result of a 5000 year long detour in human cultural evolution

### Are we educating girls for peace and boys for war ?

The great tragedy of our time, as I see it, is that peace education from infancy onwards is mostly taught to the female sex, the same sex that is also oppressed in our society. Women are taught to nurture and care, to take responsibility for the welfare of others, to share power, to solve conflicts through non-violent means and to build up egalitarian structures. Many studies show that women have other values and priorities. Our upbringing has had some effect. While we are taught to care for others, our brothers are taught to conquer and kill, to be strong and play down emotions. It is totally absurd and structurally impossible to try to bring about world peace within a system in which aggression and conquest are considered synonymous with manliness or masculinity, and in which the one half of humanity which is taught to nurture and care is excluded from social governance. In order to build a lasting world peace we have to end the current sexually stereotyped socialization. A socialization where only women, the subordinate or "second" sex, are





# STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

## against women in India

Fifteen women died of burns in this city over a 10 day period between May 24 and June 4 this year. The blaze of deaths aroused public sentiments, but in all but three cases, nobody is likely to be punished.<sup>1</sup>

Bride burning most prevalent in Delhi.<sup>2</sup>

Bride burning is not a new phenomenon in Delhi. In 1981, the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs had stated in the Parliament, that the reported "Women burning incidents" in Delhi stood at 394 in 1980.<sup>3</sup>

According to official figures, 332 cases of "accidental burning" were reported in 1982, as against 305 in 1981. These figures show that nearly one woman is being incinerated everyday in the capital. But according to various women's organisations, an equal number of accidental burning cases go unreported. Many times this is on account of the refusal of the police to register the cases.<sup>4</sup>

The dowry witch-hunt has taken its heaviest toll in the middle class urban areas, but the burning of women for more money and domestic goods in the form of dowry, is quite widespread in the slums and rural areas.

Investigations have indicated that while woman burning is prevalent all over the country, it is more acute in Delhi, Haranya, Punjab, the Western Uttar Pradesh and the Saurashtra region in Gujarat. In Uttar Pradesh where I was engaged in a study of the rural women's work participation and sex roles, the maximum 'dowry deaths' were reported from Thakur and Brahmin caste groups. Both Thakurs and Brahmins are the high caste Hindus and have a recorded history of female infanticide.<sup>5</sup> Over a decade and a half ago, the Gujarat Suicide Enquiry Committee's report noted 90 percent of suicide cases to be of women.<sup>6</sup> 867 women committed suicide due to "family tensions" (as against 302 men) and "particularly in the cases of poorer women, the causes of the tension were often related to dowry".<sup>6</sup>

These are more than just crime statistics. They are a manifestation of political malaise in India and malady in the organization of our socio-economic system. If we want to understand the nature of structural violence on women in India today, it is necessary to look at women's subordination in the structure of material production. The issue of peace and women in a third world society can be studied only in a historical context. I have been struggling with the problem of a historical perspective on the subject and how the Indian leadership of the Nationalist movement period tried to involve women in the freedom

struggle and later in the reconstruction of society. To what extent has the family, given its present nature in India, been responsible for creating and maintaining structures and ideologies of subordination: structures that inherently resist the participation of women in decision-making and ideologies created by a sex/gender system to maintain existing power relations and forms of exploitation?

What is significant to our understanding, is that violence runs along lines of power in the sex/gender system. The family with its basic axis of the sexual division of labour is the principal institution that underlies the sex/gender system. The violence of women burning in the privacy of the home, has to be examined with regard to its systemic relevance. What I intend therefore, is to include more than just a description of the kinds of violence meted out to women. We need to look at the familial authority relations according to which the dowry violence is organized and of property relations which this authority structure realizes and maintains. The subordination of women in the internal life of families, extends beyond families of the specific type to instill a general understanding of women's domestic role. Socio-economic arrangements of sex/gender based on disparity, for example, lower wages for women, their under reporting in the labour force, and the disadvantaged position of women in health and education have been justified on the assumption that women's employment and physical existence is secondary to that of men. There is, therefore, a close connection between the dowry and the organisation of the political and economic system. In other words, the family approach legitimizes the

subordination of women in the policy making and organization of the economy.

The Constitution of India declared the equality of sex as a guiding principle and thereby acknowledged that a family should be a basically equalitarian unit, founded on equal rights and the willing choice by both the individuals who form a family. In practice, however, the subordination of women to men and junior to senior, pervades family life in all classes and castes in India. The ideology of subordination is required by the material structure of production. Women are subordinate to men (and thereby dependent too) because men may own land and hold tenancies while women by and large cannot. Customary practices preclude women from inheriting land as daughters, except in the absence of male heirs. This is wrongly justified that women receive their share of patrimony at the time of marriage in the form of dowry.

The Hindu Succession Act which has put the daughters on an equal footing with the sons in regard to the succession to the parental property, and the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, are not a dead letter by any means, but they can be appealed to in certain circumstances - in cases of disputes among families or where the land ceiling legal provision makes it expedient for larger land holdings to be divided 'on paper' among male and female heirs. In most of the cases, daughters waive their land rights in favour of their brothers. Otherwise, they would be denounced as 'selfish' sisters and would risk alienation or severance of the ties with the natal families. Women's effective exclusion from the possession and control of land, is largely the basis of their subordination and

dependence on men in the rural India.

Women marry over long distances and move out of their parental homes to the households of their husbands. Young women are advised that once married they should leave the husbands' house only after death and bear all pain and humiliation. In order to adjust in the new family, a daughter-in-law has to be on her best behaviour, submissive and obedient to her in-laws and demonstrating 'selflessness' about her possessions. Her husband's family receives cash, jewellery, and domestic goods usually made or bought specially for the purpose of dowry. It is incorrect to regard dowry as a kind of pre-mortem inheritance of the daughter who has to leave her natal family to join another family, but who has some rights over the former.<sup>8</sup> There are two important points in this regard; first the dowry

Unless there is a significant change in the hierarchical and authoritarian structure of family to effect women's socio-economic equality through their inclusion in the possession and control of land and other property, the extent of women's independence and freedom from structural violence would be limited.



is transferred directly to the bride.<sup>9</sup> The parents-in-law have full control over the distribution of dowry. Second, land is never gifted as dowry, as far as I know. In the final analysis, the woman is perpetually for she is unable to generate any wealth from her so called property, as a son would be able to do at a man's death. I would argue that the dowry witch-hunt in India stems from women's subordination in the structure of material production, the organisation of marriage and family and the sexual division of labour; these create gender specific personalities: men tend

to value their role as the principal one in the national economy and 'bread winners' and supporters of the family, while women are excessively undervalued for their dependence, ignorance of the outside world and preoccupation with children and household chores.

It is important to point out that it would be wrong to assume that women in India are passively groaning under an ever increasing oppression within and outside the family. Women have organized to protest the rape, sexual harassment and the burnings or killings of women. Demonstrations and meetings are organized throughout the country to protest against direct and structural violence on women. For the past few years in Delhi and other major cities in the country, women's organizations have organized sporadic demonstrations against the husbands, in-laws, lawyers and police officers involved in the cases of women burning or killing by other means. In early August 1982, thirty women's groups in Delhi jointly organized a protest march against dowry and they were spontaneously joined by several hundred women and by-standers.

These demonstrations on the one hand have acted as checks on the husbands and in-laws by exposing the real nature of violence or crime (often protracted harassment and battering of the woman followed by killing and/or burning her) and thereby disallowing an easy exit through a facade of suicide or accidental death. On the other hand, they have pressed for effective implementation of laws, tightening of the loopholes in the legal procedures and giving due consideration for women's unspoken experiences of harassment, torture and molestation, through proposals for reorganisation of arrangements for police enquiries. Women's organised efforts could no longer be ignored and the Government responded by setting up an anti-dowry cell in Delhi, with a woman with the rank of Deputy Commissioner of Police, in charge. It is obligatory for the cell to investigate cases of dowry harassment and any unnatural death of a woman within the first six years of her marriage. Strangely enough, the woman cop in charge

in a recent interview with a journalist, said:

"It is very difficult to decide whether a burn case is suicide or murder. In both cases the victim is doused from head to toe in kerosene and severely burnt. We feel that 80 percent of cases brought to our notice are suicides. The husbands and in-laws are certainly culpable because it is their harassment which drives the person to this act."

Notwithstanding, conscious women activists have made skits, plays, and movies on the oppression and exploitation of women and have launched pro-

tests setting up women's centres where women in distress could get in touch and get support and legal aid. Feminist magazines and network bulletins have reported on both the problems of women and their attempts at resistance.

Some feminist academics have questioned the limitations of social sciences in the study of demographic patterns and the female roles in economic production in their own society. A landmark was the report "Towards Equality" pointing out the national neglect of women and development programmes for women in the fields of employment, health and education.<sup>11</sup> Feminist researchers have been involved in studies of women's roles in the protest movements and their participation in nation building. These studies have further pointed out the existing inequalities in the socio-economic, political system, and how women's studies offer a new perspective which enables researchers and students to make an attempt to build an egalitarian social structure, within the family and community.

The women's protest through their studies and demonstrations has made this violent crime of woman burning, visible as a serious social problem. It has opened a whole new vista by calling attention to the oppression, conflict and violence hidden behind the portrait of love, support and nurturance in the family. This has led to a critical perspective on prevalent ways of thinking about the family. Nevertheless it would be too simplistic to say that we are on the brink of a profound change in the social structure in the direction of equality and justice.

Besides, there is, however, an absence of satisfactory theorizing in the women's movement in India. No serious attempt has been made to examine the material origins and perpetuation of male supremacy. The family in India has been explained in purely functionalist terms of the distinctive cultural features of the sub-continent. Social scientists have been engaged in debates on: (i) Whether the nuclearisation of the joint-family structure is taking place in India; (ii) Or whether the nuclearisation of the joint-family structure is not taking place.<sup>12</sup> A few of them concentrated on studies to know the extent of nuclearity or jointness in urban and rural families. They did not question the complex power relations between gender and generation that underlie the family, the ideology and structure of dependence and sexual division of labour that strengthen the patterns of inequality and the oppression of women and children.

In recent years, however, the family has emerged as a political issue in India. The Government has formulated policies to further strengthen the family, while the women's movement raised questions about family boundaries. A policy debate was ini-

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# STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE against women in India

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iated in late 1980 while discussing the Sixth Five Year Plan framework, wherein the planners maintained that the unmistakable way to improve women's position is to improve the condition of the family. The women's organizations pointed out that the proposed planning with it's women in the family approach, would not lead to greater equality in society, but to an increased polarisation between the sexes. As a result of pressure from women activists and scholars, a concession was made by incorporating a chapter on "Women and Development" in the Sixth Five Year Plan. The chapter admits that women are "the most vulnerable members of the family" and will continue to be so "for some time in future."<sup>11</sup> It further promises to give "special attention" to the interests of the 'vulnerable members'. Nevertheless, the Sixth Five Year Plan insists that "the family is the unit for programmes for poverty eradication."<sup>12</sup> The above account evidently spells out the interests of a welfare state in the family and in maintaining its power relations.

The problem of the repression of women in the family was acknowledged, but the family as the basic unit of economic development was maintained, thereby preventing a constructive analysis.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, it is easy to manipulate agitations and movements on the issue of family. The family plays in many ways, a repressive role on behalf of the State, and particularly so in a class-caste stratified, patriarchal society; and yet at the same time, for most women and men, it is the only place where they have opportunity for sexual and parental relationships, affection, care and emotional support.

Historically speaking, during the nationalist period under the leadership of Gandhi, there emerged a distinct approach to the role of women in society. The leadership realized that women were "condemned to domestic slavery" and therefore sought to liberalize the family to expand women's activities in the public sphere within politically acceptable limits.<sup>14</sup> Women were urged to give up the purdah and to liberate themselves from their family-centred roles and to participate in the struggle for freedom of the country. Gandhi viewed women's oppression as historic and nearly universal. He lamented their non-participation in social, political affairs, women's sexual subjection to their role as "man's plaything," women's lack of autonomy in the use of their bodies and their backward consciousness which made them accept their low social position.<sup>15</sup>

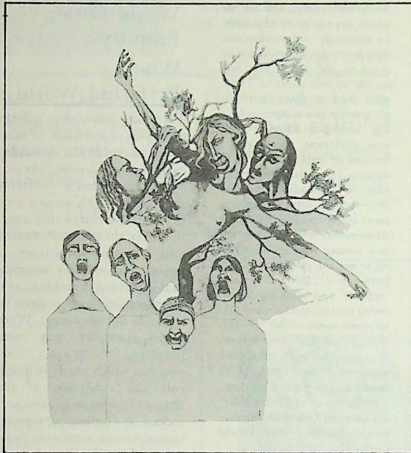
Women had developed, however, courage, endurance and 'moral strength' to deal with

these oppressions. In Gandhi's view, these qualities made women the 'natural leaders' of a non-violent struggle against the unjust socio-political system. He wanted to 'feminize politics' because women had the potential to give a blow to the established socio-political power structure and could be vanguards of a non-violent struggle for a just and non-exploitative socio-political order.<sup>16</sup>

This seemed a radical stance but the kernel of women's oppression, the sexual division of labour and thereby her subordination in the structure of

found outlook for the development of all', including the powerful class of the rich and landlords and the social structure of the hierarchical, patriarchal family.

In the thirties and forties there was an uneasy alliance between feminism and nationalism.<sup>17</sup> While women's organisations accepted a subordinate and complementary role in politics, they repeatedly came in conflict with the Congress when it threatened women's issues and alienated women members. At the initial exclusion of women from the Dandi March in 1930, the Women's



material production were neither fundamentally questioned, nor altered. The "natural division of spheres of work" between men and women was maintained, for a woman has the duties of motherhood and housekeeping. "She is essentially mistress of the house. He is the breadwinner, she is the keeper and distributor of the bread."<sup>17</sup> Gandhi observed in Sevagram that peasant "men and women work on the fields, the heaviest work being done by the males. The women keep and manage the homes. They supplement the meagre resources of the family, but man remains the bread-winner."<sup>18</sup>

The glorification of women's role as guardians of Hindu morality and spirituality and their self-sacrifice and endurance are central to the concept of non-violence advocated by Gandhi, while he has frequently referred to women in their domestic roles. One must admit though that there simply has not been enough research to do justice to Gandhi's views on women's historic role. Gandhi was against the excessive subordination of women to the men but not to the fact of women generally playing a socially subordinate role. This contradiction is related to the entire Gandhian worldview and idealism of 'mutual cooperation and pro-

Indian Association protested against the Congress leadership: "This division of sexes in a non-violent campaign seems to us unnatural and against all the awakened consciousness of modern women." The Association demanded, that "no demonstration organised for the welfare of India should prohibit women from a share in them."<sup>20</sup> The Women's Organisations thus admonished the Congress Party leadership and showed that political participation has a restricted meaning in a stratified, patriarchal society where women merely endorse the decisions made for them and do not determine their own actions, roles, institutions and socio-economic environment.

In the following years, the three basic components of the strategy of planning in India i.e. land reforms, co-operative farming and community development, in the fifties and sixties were ridden with class, caste and gender relations. Women's equality and development formed a feature of constitutional guarantees in post-independent India. Women were brought into development planning, the legal barriers to the advancement of women were removed, and individual women could rise to new positions. Women were formally given equal salaries for equal jobs, equal rights to property

and equal rights to control the means of production. However, while a number of legislative measures were adopted to guarantee legal equality to women to learn their new roles, the process of revolutionary transformation in the social position of women came to an end, by being submitted to an anti-participatory, elitist bureaucratic structure of exclusion and manipulation. The women's movement succumbed to anti-participatory tendencies of economic growth and modernization, in nation-building efforts.

The urban-centred development strategy in India, aggravated urban-rural differences, while making only a slight change in the role of middle class women. Women's household role was reinforced by the confluence of a family policy and development strategy that largely precluded mobilization of rural women through non-availability of education and lack of skill acquisition. Women, like the lower castes, in India's stratified society were treated as recipients not as participants, of development plans and programmes. There was hardly any government policy or programme carried out to organize rural women (who constitute 81 per cent of the female labour force) and to make them conscious of the benefits intended for them.

It is evident from the study of documents available on the Etawah Pilot Development Project, that planners and policy makers showed resistance to women's interests initially.<sup>21</sup> Later, when they introduced the women's component in the rural development programme, it was designed after the American Home Science Extension programme.<sup>22</sup> The integration of women into rural development through Mahila Mandals (Rural Women's Organisations), most of them were paper organizations, was a scheme with a middle class bias using American text books and equipment, for demonstrating home science techniques. Rural women were given training in crafts, sewing, kitchen-gardening, jam and jelly making. Its objective as stated by the Director of Women's Programmes, was to help the rural women become "a good wife, a wise mother, a competent housewife and a responsible member of the village community."<sup>23</sup> Protagonists totally disregarded women's work in the rural economy, specifically their contribution to agriculture and side-line production eg. cattle-rearing, fishing, weaving etc. Most of these wife-mother improvement programmes have proved a failure, because they are irrelevant to the needs of women in subsistence agriculture and are unable to augment women's income in any way.

In India, the state serves the interests of the ruling class and gender. Work opportunities and participation of women has been declining over the last several decades. The Green Revolution technology on the one hand denies women employment opportunities otherwise available to them, on the other hand stereotypes all

those jobs which pay less and require less skill, forcing women to take up jobs which come to be regarded as purely female tasks. As a consequence, the invisibility of women as producers of economy is enhanced and they increasingly lose ground in the traditional economic and decision-making roles. There was no attempt to redefine the roles of women; perhaps most important, the division of labour within the family retained all its force.

However, technological relationships and development planning are by no means the only impediments confronting women in India. Unless there is significant change in the hierarchical and authoritarian structure of family to effect women's socio-economic equality through their inclusion in the possession and control of land and other property, the

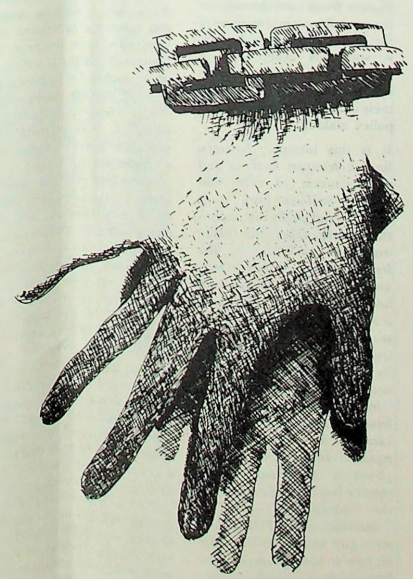
extent of women's independence and freedom from structural violence would be limited. The problem of structural violence is to be seen as the problem of the process of mobilising and empowering women to overcome their inability of the past and to acquire ability to redefine their roles in the sex/gender system and in the organisation of the economy.

With regard to the specific programmes for women's development, the task of planning and policy-making is to be seen as the reorganising and transforming of relationships within the organisation of marriage and family and to effect equality to the powerless, dependent and dispossessed masses of women, in the structure of material production and the distribution of property rights.

**Govind Kelkar**  
Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi

## Foot Notes

- 1-4. Indian Express, May/June 1983
5. Police Department document to Inspector General of Police NWP and Oudh. from Secretary to Government of NWP and Oudh, dated 13 October 1982. File No. 1544/VIII 661 A-4 of 1982. State Archives, Lucknow.
6. Kalpana Ram, "Women's Liberation in India", unpublished paper, June 1980.
7. A.R. Desai, Urban Family and Family Planning in India, Bombay: Popular Prakashan 1980, Chapter I and II.
8. I disagree with Goody regarding dowry as a means by which daughters inherit in Eurasian societies. J. Goody, Production and Reproduction: A Comparative Study of the Domestic Domain, Cambridge University Press, 1976.
9. "During the drafting of Hindu Code, Dr. Ambedkar had suggested a clear provision laying down that whatever was given as dowry should belong to the daughter. However, this was not pressed or pursued with the result that giving or rather demand for dowry grew so rapidly that even communities which never had this practice started following this." Lanka Sarkar, "Legal Aspects of Dowry" in *Hau*, Vol. 6 No. 3, March 1983.
10. Patriot, New Delhi, June 24, 1983.
11. Towards Equality, Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, Government of India, Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, 1974.
12. Dhirendra Narayan Ed., Explorations in the Family and other Essays, Bombay, Thacker & Co., 1975. See chapters I and II, also see, M.G. Kulkarni, "Family Research in India," in P.K.B. Nayyar, Ed. Sociology in India, Retrospect and Prospect, Delhi, B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1982.
13. For a detailed analysis, see Elizabeth Wilson, Women and Welfare State, London, Tavistock Publications, 1979.
14. M.K. Gandhi, Young India, 26 February 1918.
15. Vina Mazumdar, "Another Development with Women: A View from Asia", in Development Dialogue, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Uppsala, 1982: 1-2, pp. 67-68.
16. Sujatha Dasgupta, "Emancipation of Women in India", (Unpublished paper prepared for the Committee on the Status of Women in India).
17. M.K. Gandhi, Women and Social Justice, Ahmedabad: Navivan Publishing House, 1947, p. 27.
18. *Ibid*.
19. Geraldine Forbes, "The Indian Women's Movement - Struggle for Women's Rights or national liberation", in The Extended Family, Women and Political Participation in India and Pakistan Ed. by Gail Minault (Delhi, Chanakya Publications, 1981).
20. R.K. Sharma, Nationalism, Social Reform and Indian Women, New Delhi, Janaki Prakashan, 1981, p. 65.
21. Pilot Development Project in Etawah was precursor of Community Development Programme in India. For a detailed study, see Govind Kelkar, The Impact of Green Revolution on Women's Work, Participation and Sex Roles, Geneva, ILO, 1981.
22. Rekha Mehra and K. Sardamoni, Women and Rural Transformation, New Delhi, Concept, 1983, pp. 7-21.
23. Parimal Das, "Women Under India's Community Development Programme", in International Labour Review, No. 80, July 1959, pp. 26-45.







# SEXISM AND THE WAR SYSTEM

Contd. from page 6

Communications between feminist groups and antiwar groups were tense as they sought to raise our consciousness and we sought to raise our own. I am sorry that the peace movement did not consider the abuse of women in Vietnam an issue important and distinct enough to stand on its own merits, and I am sorry that we in the women's movement, struggling to find our independent voices, could not call attention to this women's side of the war by ourselves. The time was not right (Susan Brownmiller, in "Against Our Will").

There is little wonder that Brownmiller did not devote more time to the systemic and structural relationships between rape and the war system. (Her chapter on war deals with it as circumstances rather than system.) But one is given to pause by the lack of such connections in the fields of peace research and world order studies so preoccupied with structural analysis and systems approaches. The critique of this separatism levelled at feminism by both the peace researchers/world order scholars camp and peace movement activists, might well be tempered by a sensitivity to this process and to the subjective experience of oppression. There is no better way to fixate a stage of development than to respond to it as a permanent characteristic. Neither is there a more effective way to reinforce separatism than to accept the analysis of distinct interests as sufficient and to use it as the basis of exclusion from consideration in the overall systemic analysis of the problems at issue. In fact, it was this acceptance of women's issues as separate which frequently prevented their inclusion in research and policy making.

It is this interplay between limited feminist analysis and the exclusion of even that limited analysis from most research and policy discussions, that perpetuates the same masculine exclusion of the feminine from peace research and world order studies, as it has from the traditional social sciences and virtually all institutions of authority and legitimation. This exclusion in its turn leads to an even more negative trend among some "feminists" who interpret feminism as seeking "equal advantage" for women. Seeking equal advantage places the emphasis on "advantage" and in essence buys into the system of the "advantaged" and the "disadvantaged." Policies and strategies tend to concentrate on how to move more women from the latter into the former category.

do so than men. Women tend to identify with others as persons, not abstract groups or classes, and with particular human experiences such as bereavement, joy, motherhood, illness, etc. One suspects, for example, that it was this personal "human" view which led the white women of the southern United States to accept even before the "liberal" men, in fact, to encourage and co-operate with, the Civil Rights movement. It is most probably, too, what motivates so many women now into active mobilizing roles in the movement for peace and disarmament. It certainly accounts for a very particular difference between feminist and world order scholarship.

## Peace Research : Another Scientific Male Preserve

While feminism may be lacking in structural analysis, peace research has suffered several analytic shortcomings. Both peace research and world order

### The slogan "Stop the Rape of Vietnam" meant defoliation of crops, not the abuse of women.

such instruction is based on a not too subtle process of masculinization from wearing "business suits", to "completely objective decision-making." These behaviours call forth understandable criticism from many feminists as reinforcing of "the present system" which peace research and world order studies assume to be in need of "total transformation". Unfortunately for both causes, femininity and transformation, those few women who have gained real power status in board rooms, in the professions, and at the highest levels of state, are for the most part, examples of such masculinization, and, therefore, serve as oft quoted evidence that "women in power would be no different."

The presence of this "success syndrome" in the Euro-American women's movement is a significant impediment to the realization of the transformational potential of feminism; for it is but another manifestation of the feminine "personal view." It may be harder for women to perceive themselves as members of a class or as representatives of an abstract group because they are socialized to see things in personal terms and view people as persons rather than as components of abstract categories. It must also be recognized that the women most involved in the success syndrome come from the culture and class which had most isolated women from each other as has happened especially in middle class suburban communities and in modern cities around the world. Any group identity of such women is as likely to be with that of the successful men in their particular socio-economic class or culture, as with women of other groups. This is not to say that women don't identify closely with others. Indeed they are, because of their socialization to care for others, more prone to

studies have also been sorely lacking in the personal, the particularly human dimension of analysis and prescription. In no area is this more evident than in the minimal consideration they have given to women's issues and women's movements and the failure therefore to include sexism as a problem for research and analysis.

A more obvious, if not more serious, exclusion is that of much of the relevant work women have done in peace research and the participation of women themselves. Researchers like other professionals are always hard put to think of more than one or two "qualified" women to participate in or contribute to any scholarly endeavour. Qualified, of course, means conforming to masculine standards of professional competence; mostly, having passed in a manner previously alluded to, the appropriate masculine success tests. So it is that few women, and fewer feminists have been read or heard, much less "attended" to, in research and policy discourse. In the arms and militarization field this is especially lamentable. For no where are fresh views and new voices more urgently needed. As described elsewhere and referred to earlier, several women have organised and referred to activism of European Women for Peace, The Mobilization for Survival and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and have demonstrated both the vision and the power required for a peace force.



## Perspectives as women

Only twenty of the 41 answered the question whether women approached disarmament in distinctive ways. Several were clearly irritated by the question, and all, no matter how they answered the question, felt they had earned the right to be thought of as scholars, not women who were scholars. Nine gave an unequivocal "no" to the question; of these, two said education serves gender differences. Several mentioned hardliner women colleagues and pointed out this was the way to succeed in the field. On the other hand, six thought there were differences, and five thought there might be differences, for a total of 11, thus dividing the respondents fairly evenly into pros and cons. The "maybes" noted that women are outsiders in the arms control field, have a marginal status, tend to get less absorbed in the excitement of the power game, and on the whole, appear more objective. In meetings and conferences their interventions are said to be more to the point, less embroidered with rhetoric. Those who had a clear feminist perspective saw women as having developed different skills and different sensitivities because of their social roles as women, and therefore more likely to "humanize" the data they worked with, attempting more interpretation, trying for more reality testing. They felt that women were more inclined to see the interconnections between militarization, violence, and other features of social institutions. They would be more aware of the "ridiculousness of the intense preoccupation with military superiority" as one puts it (Elise Boulding, pre-publication draft, "Perspectives of Women Researchers on Disarmament, National Security and World Order").

Some of the real dangers of the exclusion of women's and especially feminist perspectives from peace research and education were highlighted in a testimony on proposals for the National Peace Academy :

It appears, however, that most of the Commission, Staff and Supporters are nearly strangers to most of the perspectives and insights that guide and inspire others and me in addressing and organizing for many integral dynamics of genuine peace and conflict resolution. Those guiding insights are especially feminist in philosophies, ethics and potential. No euphemisms for feminism will do: to avoid and/or devalue or marginalize the concepts, values and language of feminism would mean to be deprived of the insights, benefits and processes of this transformative and profound movement. Clearly, feminism is radical which literally means acknowledging and addressing problem-solving, in these instances, creating peace and conflict resolution. It is a basic premise of this testimony that sexism in its multiple personal and institutionalized forms throughout many societies is a (not the only) very root cause of violence of all kinds (Wilma Scott Heide, Testimony for the Record and Inclusion in the Final Commission Report to the President and Congress from the U.S. Commission on Proposals for the National Academy of Peace and Conflict Resolution).

This was a classic example of

the invisibility of women to the analysts and planners. Although the Women's Decade has made the "invisibility" problem more evident in the field of development planning, it seems not to have enlightened most areas of research and scholarship which deal with politics. Most especially those areas which deal with military and security issues have been almost as impervious to the "invisibility and consequent exclusion syndrome" as the established order has been consciously determined to keep women's concerns totally separate from hard security issues. It has also been reported that when Scandinavian women presented disarmament petitions with thousands of signatures to U.N. officials at the Copenhagen conference in 1980, the response was more or less, "Congratulations and thank you very much, ladies. Now let's get back to the real business of the conference."

## World Order Enquiry : Whose Preferred World ?

There are some very colorful examples of the habit of mind which underlies the invisibility exclusion syndrome, like one peace researcher's insistence that concern with women's oppression was distracting attention from the more substantive and pressing problems of peace; and another asserting that it was not a problem worthy of consideration because his wife was not oppressed. While these examples may seem frivolous, they reflect a condition for which there is ample relevant evidence of the absence of women's issues and, indeed, the limited representation of women authors in peace and world order. If, as the male scholars assert, the data has been derived and published as a scholarly contribution toward the planning and pursuit of a preferred world, where and how are women's preferences taken into account? This question which has been continually raised since at least 1975 has yet to receive a serious hearing. While world order inquiry has confronted the disparity in the perspectives, value priorities and political preferences between the First and Third Worlds, and at least taken into account the conflicting interests of East and West, the conflict of interest between men and women resulting from women's oppression has been ignored.

In his otherwise excellent essay on authoritarian tendencies, Richard Falk (A World Order Perspective on Authoritarian Tendencies, 1980) makes no reference to the regression in the status of women which inevitably accompanies the rise of authoritarianism. In his more recent essay on demilitarization (Normative Initiatives and Demilitarization : A Third System Approach, 1981), the omission of these factors in light of the more widespread articulation of the significant link between sexism and militarism is truly unfortunate. His very constructive suggestions on initiatives would have benefited greatly from the universal and profoundly transformative aspect that would have been con-

tributed by relating the necessity to transcend sexism in any authentic process of demilitarization. It would have been significant if he had traced the relation of every person on earth to the demilitarization process and focussed on an issue which is manifest in all three "systems" he discusses, the nation state, the United Nations and the global change movement, and on all "scales" from global to individual. It is in fact only issues of such truly comprehensive nature, which can serve as the real foundation of a global transformation movement.

World Order, even more than other approaches to peace research, tends to focus on issues which require a global analysis. For this, among other reasons, it might be expected that world order would, of its own nature, include feminist perspectives and demonstrate concern for sexism. The invisibility of the problem is a serious blind spot blotting out the most universal aspect of a system in need of transformation.

Another otherwise excellent working paper is also a cogent example of the tendency toward blindness to certain universals and exclusion by omission which frustrates this expectation and, paradoxically, at the same time, offers a very promising paradigm for feminist global analysis. Gernot Kohler's analysis of the entire international order as a system of apartheid (Global Apartheid), dividing the world into advantaged and disadvantaged is applicable, as well, to the sexist values and structures which impose sex role separation. The same analysis could be made of the sex role separation system as that applied to the global apartheid system in the economic, social and political spheres. A similar paradigm, of course, explicates most systems of oppression, all forms of



racism, colonialism and various manifestations of economic oppression. The fundamental paradigm which encompasses the common characteristics of oppression as they are manifest in all these phenomena has, however, not been applied by world order research to the problem of sexism. Even Kohler, in this most comprehensive analysis, does not acknowledge the analogy to sexism. What makes this especially lamentable is that sexism offers the possibility of analyzing not only the structural aspects of the social, economic, and political characteristics of oppression, but like racism, it also provides the basis for cultural and psycho-social analysis as well. In addition to all this, it offers the aforementioned element of universality which would make the analysis relevant to virtually everyone on earth. Yet sexism is not selected for the condemnation that racial and economic apartheid is.

Contd. on page 14



# The Status of Women in Independent India

A systematic examination of the impact of personal laws prevailing in the country, as they affect the trend of national development and particularly as they affect the contributions of women as active participants in the development of the society, according to me; is an area of research which deserve a great priority, in order to grasp the position, status and contributions of women in the country.

During the last decade, particularly after the declaration of International Year of the Woman, 1975 and subsequently a decade by U.N.O., a series of studies embodying valuable, interesting and thoughtful material on different aspects of women's life are being carried on.

In fact, a few research organisations and research units have emerged, which are undertaking fruitful studies to examine and unravel the transformation that is taking place in the position of women, particularly during the last 33 years. Examination and research on the impact of the plans, of economic opportunities, of political measures, socio-cultural as well as welfare measures adopted by the Government of India, and the role of voluntary organizations, have developed at an exponential rate. Studies on the impact of education, of the mass media like the press, radio, T.V., cinema, of literature and folk culture, in projecting and shaping the life of women, are also being organised. Similarly, a growing body of empirical surveys, depicting the life and situation of women working in various occupations have also been undertaken.

The monumental report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, entitled "Towards Equality", provides a comprehensive, panoramic picture of the changing status of Indian women. The Report suggests areas which are still relatively unexplored, but which fundamentally shape the overall position of women in India.

The Report rightly points out that "Modes of descent, types of family organizations, and the nature of the institution of marriage, provide the major contours of the socio-cultural setting in which women are born, brought up, and live their lives. These features of social organization are related to the economy in such a way, that while their roots often appear to lie in the economic system, even large-scale changes in the latter are not able to carry along with them parallel changes in these areas. The lag between the two is a matter of serious concern. These institutions in the Indian society have implications for the status of women".

The Report has also indicated the aspects involved in examining the impact of the modes of descent, types of family organization and the nature of the institution of marriage in shaping the status of women. For instance, whether the descent is,

been examined with all its ramifications as it should be.

The Constitution, through its preamble, has announced equality of men and women, as a basic norm of the evolving society. However, due to the operation of the pull of a number of historico-socio-cultural, economic and traditional normative forces, the State has permitted a number of personal laws with diverse and even contradictory rules regarding family, marriage, property, descent, inheritance, succession and adoption. The personal laws vary with regard to norms viewing males and females, with regard to their position, roles and functions. All these diverse personal laws affect the status and opportunities of woman in a far more fundamental sense than of men.

During my study on "Urban

**Examination of the underlying economic, social, political, cultural values and even personality premises embodied in the personal laws, is almost an uncharted area of study.**

matrilinal, or patrilineal, structures, functions and nature of inter-relationships involved in family organization, issues involved in the specific type of institution of marriage, viz. polygamy, monogamy, bride-price or dowry, widowhood, age at marriage, role differentiation, changing roles in changing milieu, and the situation involved in women's work at home and/or outside. The Report has also indicated certain specific problems arising out of the prevailing nature of descent, family and marriage, viz. prostitution, women in prisons, unmarried mothers, aged women, destitute women and others.

In short, the Report has highlighted the crucial need for studying the impact of the above mentioned phenomena in shaping the life of the women.

The Report has rightly devoted the next chapter "Women and the Law" to reviewing briefly the laws affecting the status of women, particularly focussing on certain aspects viz. polygamy, age of marriage, dowry, divorce, guardianship, maintenance, inheritance and have made certain general policy recommendations.

The Report has through its general observations, highlighted the need for a closer examination of these problems. Unfortunately, very little systematic work has been done on the crucial significance of prevailing personal laws which basically shape the status and opportunities for women in contemporary Indian society. The impact of personal laws in providing the setting for developing the personality of woman as a citizen as well as a free and active participant in overcoming the economic, social, educational and cultural backwardness of the country, has not

Family and Family Planning in India", as well as in the course of my active association with a number of organizations, researching and struggling to take up the problems of women with a view to prevent the injustice, atrocities and legal discrimination against women, I poignantly realised that a thorough analysis of the impact of personal laws, in different domains of women's life, has not been done upto now.

Personal laws effect the position of women in a decisive manner:

- In terms of her position both at home and place of work as well as her role and status in the larger society.
- In terms of marriage.
- In terms of family relations.
- In terms of property rights, inheritance succession, descent, adoption, right of ownership and others.
- In terms of her status and functions within the home.

A systematic examination of the impact of personal laws prevailing in the country, as they affect the trend of national development and particularly as they affect the con-

tributions of women as active participants in the development of the society, according to me, is an area of research which deserves a greater priority, in order to grasp the position, status and contributions of women in the country.

Such a study to begin with can cover the following aspects:

1. A systematic examination of the major personal laws, by evolving a set of indicators to measure the status of women in terms of the different facets of her life.
2. A systematic evaluation of the interpretation of various issues formulated in personal laws in the context of their interpretation in case laws.
3. To discover the overall normative and legal institutional ethos projected by personal laws and its relation to the ethos of the overall pattern of development pursued in India.
4. To discover the major value-premises about women underlying the personal laws of the country and discover their consistency



with the premise of equality of women as formulated in the Constitution's preamble.

5. To discover the economic and ideological functions presumed to be performed by the personal laws, evolved by the state, pursuing a specific path of development for eliminating backwardness in the country.

Dr. A.R. Desai  
Bombay University

## The Indian Widow



The burning pyre has subsided into a heap of cold ash wisps of smoke drifts upwards, slowly, casually, soon mingling with the strong winds.

She stands alone - young, vulnerable, defenceless, watching in fascination, wondering whether her life too will fade into nothing, like the curling smoke.

The graveyard is empty now, and the silence echoes, eerily. Her red bangles were broken into fragments. A significant gesture, it was said, and she smiled, with irony.

It is dusk now and sensation slowly creeps back into a numb body. She knew what it means to be a widow in a country she has hated and loved before.

Alienation, segregation familiar faces averted, and ridicule masked by compassion - to an insensitive world, will it mean the end of another being?

And the cry torn from cold lips - will it be an unheard voice in the wilderness?

Vinitha Joyappa

SANGHARSH



# WELCOME Dorothy Nyembe



On March 25, 1984 all fighting women of our country must stand ready to receive with warm welcome, the staunch veteran - Dorothy Nyembe - when the doors of the racist Kroonstadt prison open and release her after serving a full 15 year sentence for fighting for her people.

Dorothy Nyembe's release will be followed by Feziwe Bookholane on 3rd April and Elizabeth Gumede on 27th June. Today, more brave women are to be tried for treason.

These are clear attempts to intimidate us, and prevent us from fighting. We must fight back now - and ensure that all our women, know about our jailed women leaders and fighters.

Dorothy Nyembe, who was Natal chairperson of the Federation of South African Women before she was banned for the first time in 1963, played an important part in mobilising women during the Natal Women's Revolt in 1959 and 1960. The women were suffering. They were angry because the men were spending all their wages drinking "Bantu beer" in the beer halls owned by the white municipalities. African women were not allowed to brew their own beer. So, they organised and on June 18, 1959, 2,000 women from Cato Manor marched to the township offices and demanded that the beer halls be closed down.

The administration board refused, and the police attacked hundreds of women and children. Three people were

shot dead. Leaders like Dorothy Nyembe and Gladys Manzi, who has now just been unbanned after 10 years, called for a total boycott of the beer halls. At first the men were angry when women marched into the halls and chased them away. When they saw the police attacking the women, they joined the women's protest marches. The uprising spread also to the rural areas, and women burned the government's dipping tanks for cattle, which they were forced to fill with water without even being paid. When the police shot dead a baby on its mother's back in 1960, the people retaliated and killed nine policemen.

Dorothy Nyembe was arrested in 1963 and sentenced to three years imprisonment. In 1968 she was detained again and charged for helping the soldiers of Umkhonto We Sizwe. She was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment.

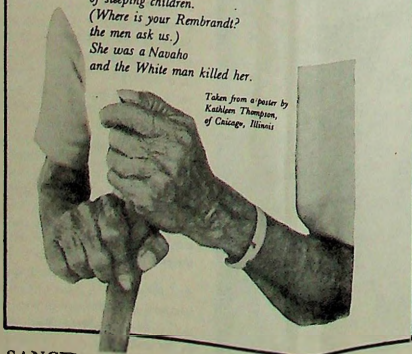
Let us make Dorothy Nyembe a symbol of the unbeaten and unbeatable fighting spirit of women who are prepared to go to jail, to be tortured and even to die for the freedom of our country and our people!

Voice of Women  
African National Congress  
South Africa

Once women wove blankets to warm their children out of love and, out of love and the fierce desire of their own hearts, they made them beautiful.

Their art did not hang on museum walls but covered the bodies of sleeping children. (Where is your Rembrandt? The men ask us.) She was a Naaoho and the White man killed her.

Taken from a poster by Kathleen Thompson, of Chicago, Illinois



SANGHARSH

from the Philippines

## Nelia

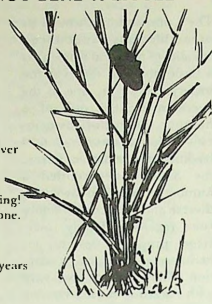
WHY ARE YOU SO HARD? THEY ASK  
WHY DO YOU NOT BEND A LITTLE?

They call it grace  
Swaying like the bamboo  
With the wind.  
Listen to it weave

The music of compromise  
While it kisses the ground  
At your feet  
Even bamboos however

Could only bend so much  
When the storm comes  
Listen to their cracking!  
They break one by one.

You could only bend so much.  
I would prefer to be a rock  
Smoothed by the years  
But unswaying



WHY ARE YOU SO HARD? THEY ASK.  
WHY DO YOU NOT BEND A LITTLE?

by Charita Roja

## THE ONLY WAY TO FREE OURSELVES

An Interview with  
Ellen Musialca, SWAPO\* Women's Council

The struggle of the liberation movement in Namibia is against both, South Africa currently illegally occupying its territory and outside forces of the western powers, which have consistently supported decades of illegal South African colonial rule in Namibia.

Although colonialism is a major factor in the oppression of Namibian women, there are, as in the case the world over, patriarchal traditions and attitudes dating back to pre-colonial society which persist ever today, and have been intensified and manipulated by colonialism. Among them are traditional notions about "men's work" and "women's work"

*What particular problems do women face in exile, in the refugee camps, and in the armed struggle?*

I think I should start from the very beginning, to say that it has been proved that no revolution will triumph without the participation of women. The SWAPO Women's Council was created in 1969 at a Congress held in Tanzania, to enable women to participate fully in SWAPO and in the armed struggle. At that time there were very few women who were active. Up to 1974, when our women started to come forward in their thousands, we were still faced with a lot of problems. Inside Namibia itself, it is very hard to communicate as women. The apartheid system that we live under does not allow women to move freely. You have to have an explanation to move from region to region. We are the people who are left in the villages, and you know that the work of the woman in Namibia is just to look after children, to bear them and to bring them up. Women also have to look after animals in the villages, while our men are taken away for long months - eighteen months at a time - for the rest of their lives.

We have to make our women understand the need to participate fully in the armed struggle - not by saying that we should go to work in the kitchen, or carrying guns for our men, but participating such that today there are Namibian women commanders. Some

women have sacrificed their lives on the battlefield; some are very good at communications, reconnaissance and in the medical field. Of course you also find that women in the camps are taking a very active role in our kindergartens, in our medical centres, as nurses, as teachers, and in productive work.

Men, especially in African tradition, have customs which hinder the progress of women and which look upon women as weak. But today you find that our men in the camps don't look at women just as women, to be separated out, to do the cooking. But work is divided up among groups irrespective of sex, whether it's gardening, cooking or any of the work of the camp. If you look at the leadership of SWAPO today, you find that both men and women are coming up to be members of the Central Committee, the Executive Committee. Women are starting to appear at the international level, in campaigning for SWAPO. Inside the country also, women are playing an active role; we feel proud that, despite the traditional barriers between men and women, women have started to understand that we have to fight together to fight the system, because we are oppressed as women, and we are oppressed as blacks - both men and women.

*How has the political consciousness of women changed as a result of their participation in the struggle?*

When women first started to

In the rising social explosions in the third world, more and more women for national liberation, into the movements for an equalitarian and just power, of their potential. In a myriad of ways, the movement transforms, refusing to fall into traditional roles again. Yet, many women in their ranks, experience sexist discrimination and attitudes: they are, in the struggle, often made to do the trivial tasks, the unimportant jobs, work, cook, wash, make coffee for the comrades.

The people's liberation movements in the third world must begin to question in which they develop their vision for change: for often, the military, the palace coups in the third world have only meant a replacement and power by the other: the guns used against the colonial oppressor and the people; the brutalization takes other forms. In this culture of politics, it is to, or the women's movement, if it has a stronger profile, is often integrated, to be subsumed, by the larger struggle, the larger organs that we seek in the third world, is the great "rupture" in society that for it must take seriously the issue of sexism within the people's liberation feminist perspective into the movements of people in Asia, Africa, I.

# WOMEN NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLE

We are bringing these flowers in remembrance of all the women who died in all the wars that men have fought.

We remember the nurses who died tending the wounded of both sides.

We remember the women who were raped by soldiers of their own country and by invaders, and who were then rejected by their fathers and their brothers and their sons.

We remember the women who died or were wounded because they lived in cities where bombs fell out of the sky.

We remember all our sisters, non-combatants, whose lives were ended or foreshortened or crippled because their fathers and brothers went to war against the fathers and brothers of their sisters in another land.

We weep for them. We do not forget them. And as we remember them, we dedicate ourselves to making a new world where we and our daughters can live free.

ISIS Kate Nonesuch

come out, in the early 1970's, you would rarely see a woman expressing herself. Inside Namibia, the enemy has made a point of depicting women as less than nothing, just something to be pushed into the kitchen and to stay there. This has made our women think that even if they are talented, they shouldn't show their talent. But when women started to come out, when we started to mobilise them, to prepare them to participate in any front that they are called to, you find that their consciousness has deepened. They don't feel that to take arms to go and fight, to die, is just a waste of time. They feel proud. When I visited the battlefield in May, I saw them sleeping in the open, in the cold, sometimes they didn't have enough food. I asked them: "Comrades, why did you leave

Namibia?" They said: "We just wanted to be trained, to go back and fight, because that was the only salvation, the only way to free ourselves"

*Can you say something more about the conditions of women in detention?*

I'll start with Gertrude Kadanga, the Deputy Secretary of the SWAPO Women's Council, whom we elected at the Congress in her absence. She was arrested when she was trying to come out to the Congress. Since then we have been trying to find out where she is in Namibia, but we have very little news. What we do know is that conditions for prisoners in Namibia are very bad, whether for men or women, and go under the same condition. People should understand that

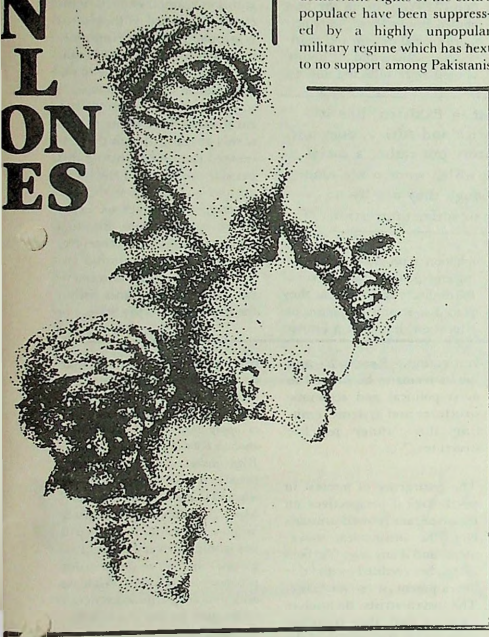




are drawn into the struggles of social order. For many women, a new consciousness of their own, refusing the stereo-typing, fight alongside their men, content and vision of the larger world, duplicating machines,

tion the conceptual framework (even those with a leftist bent) of one system of oppression often turned against their own women's issue as it is referred to as a 'wing' of the party to the left. But if the new socialism believe it is, then the struggle in movements, bringing a new in America.

# N L O N E S



## The Pakistani Women's Movement Today In the Forefront of the Struggle

Women in Pakistan, like their counterparts elsewhere in the world, have been the victims of double oppression, that of class and of gender. This means that in a country like Pakistan, they have had to struggle hard to win any concessions from a male dominated society, and have also had a hard time maintaining themselves and their families because the vast majority of the populace are victims of deprivation, social, economic and political.

One may ask why write on the issue of women's rights in Pakistan, at a time when the democratic rights of the entire populace have been suppressed by a highly unpopular military regime which has next to no support among Pakistanis.

except for some right wing conservative religious elements, and from a handful of industrialists and large landlords. The reasons are: first, that because this regime relies on the religious elements the issue of women becomes a critical one, even more so than during other periods in the history of Pakistan. These fundamentalist religious groups, while ambivalent on other issues like the relationships of labourer and capitalist, agrarian taxation and property, are in total agreement when it comes to the

question of women. Women are inferior to men, they proclaim, so their place is in the home, serving their lord and master, the male. Secondly, women, for the first time in the history of Pakistan, are organising a mass movement to fight not just for the preservation of the rights currently under attack but for a further deepening and extension of those rights. As such, they constitute the group that is in the vanguard of the political movement in Pakistan at this time, and need to be taken very seriously indeed.

At present, all political parties, with the exception of the Jamiat connected ones, are banned from holding public meetings. The Left, which was factionalised to begin with, has seen a further retrenchment with its leaders and most active cadre exiled, imprisoned, killed or underground. Since the traditional bourgeois parties, the populist Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Left have all been pretty much reduced to individuals, this has meant that the only organised groups publicly taking a stand against the regime, have been professional groups like lawyers, journalists and students.

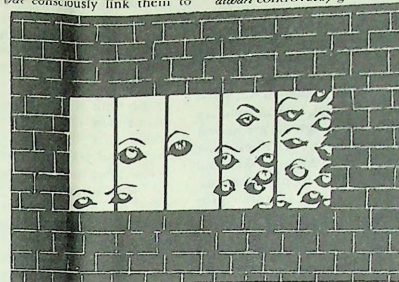
### MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO

The "Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo", in Buenos Aires, (Argentina), continue their struggle and search for their missing children and grand-children. Since the institution of the military regime in Argentina in 1976, thousands of people have disappeared, especially between 1976 and 1979. In March 1982, the grandmothers and mothers denounced the disappearance of 112 children. The members of the organization "Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo" are determined to find these children and get them back. Their ceaseless search and international support resulted in the restoration of nine children. This result formally denies the allegation of the military government that the children were dead. The mothers insist by saying that the military government knows where the disappeared children are, as much as they knew where to find the restored children. They call on all the countries represented at the United Nations, to commit themselves that they will, never again, use the systematic disappearances of children as a method of political repression. Until October, 1983, eleven children had already been restored! Some among them were given back to their families, for others, further steps are being taken.

The women's organisations have moved into the vacuum created by the absence of traditional political formations. Drawing on a membership that cuts across classes, they have challenged the regime and its henchmen publicly through forums, mass meetings, press campaigns, petitions and demonstrations. They recognised the importance of direct action at a time when the Left was saying the conditions were not conducive to such action. Being part of no political party, they address women's issues but consciously link them to

for the rural sector, range from a meagre 12 percent up to 80 percent in surveys done by women themselves.

The government sounds out its policies through the ultra conservative religious leaders. Thus the last two years have seen the emergence in the mosques and the media, television in particular, of mullahs proselytizing against women, and proclaiming the wonders of the Iranian model with regard to its position on women. This is exemplified by the *chador aur chadru* controversy generated by



broader issues of economic privilege and deprivation, inflation, exploitation and injustice. The women's movement in Pakistan, like its counterpart in Latin America and Africa, does not designate man as the enemy but rather a social structural formation within which women are among the most oppressed, though they are by no means the only ones to suffer oppression.

### Women and The Military Regime

Ever since Zia ul Huq's military regime came to power in 1977, women have been one of the target groups singled out for attack. In March 1983, the Majlis-e-Shoora passed a law of evidence ordinance, whereby the status of women is reduced to that of half a man in terms of her ability to bear witness in court. In case of rape, it is asserted that her testimony should be considered invalid. The murder of a woman is given a lesser penalty, than the murder of a man.

This degradation of woman to the status of half a being, or even a non-being, is merely the culmination of a series of attacks on women. Prior to this, the government issued other proclamations banning the participation of women athletes in international and mixed sports events, attempted to repeal the 1961 family laws ordinance which gave a modicum of security to women with regard to marital and property rights, announced its intention to eliminate coeducation and to institute separate universities for women with separate subjects and clearly a much reduced budget and consequent lowered standard of education. Census data are used to justify the government's intention to drive women out of the professions back into the home. Government statistics in Pakistan, as in many other countries provide a totally distorted picture of women's involvement in the workforce, and consistently underestimate their economic contribution. Apart from their contribution as domestic unpaid workers in their own household, estimates

### History of the Movement

The women's movement in Pakistan can be traced back to the pre-independence period when middle class women constituted a vocal element in the anti-colonial struggle as well as in the Pakistan movement. Many of the Muslim women involved in this process, did not work independently among women but alongside other, often male, family members. Their efforts led to a recognition of their contribution by Mohammed Ali Jinnah, who made a strong plea for the removal of constraints against women. As early as 1944, he told men: "No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you. We are victims of evil customs. It is a crime against humanity that our women are shut up within the four walls of the house as prisoners. There is no sanction anywhere for the deplorable condition in which our women have to live. You should take your women along with you as comrades in every sphere of life." Viewing the independent state of Pakistan as essentially a secular state, Jinnah said that women had claims to the same rights as minorities, nationalities or other oppressed groups within the limitations of a bourgeois, liberal, democratic state.

Following the creation of Pakistan, to which a vast number of those same mullahs unfortunately moved, the same women who had been active previously, decided to push their efforts further and concretise some of their demands

in detention in a South African prison, you don't sleep - the light is on for the whole 24 hours and they disturb you. This has resulted in many of our people coming out of jail in a disturbed and confused state. The conditions under which people are living in jail, whether women or men, I'm sure they have last been seen in Nazi Germany. It's up to women here to protest for their release. We ourselves cannot get information from the South Africans; there are many prisoners who have disappeared.

Can you comment on the dangers that women face of being raped by the security forces?

In Namibia today the situation is very bad. I'm not trying to exaggerate, but our country has been placed under martial law. You find the South African Police patrolling in the streets, and their work is to shoot on the spot, rape, and commit all kinds of genocide, by burning villages, and destroying food. This has resulted in many of our women leaving their villages and crossing into Angola for shelter. Our women are raped, whipped in public, tortured almost to death

Even those women who have left Namibia in a mass exodus with their children, are still followed by the South African Security forces, bombed and killed. South Africa announces they have killed SWAPO freedom fighters when in reality they have killed innocent people who are not armed, people who are running away from their own country.

What kind of solidarity can women in their countries give to women in Namibia?

It's very important for women in other countries to stand with us as women. As mothers, we should understand that it's our children, whom we carry for nine months, who suffer and die. It's important that women help us by writing petitions to the South African Embassy and to their own Government. We want our political prisoners released, especially Ida Jimmy, Gertrude Kandanga and Rauna Nambinga, and many others whose names we don't know. It's important for women to protest, as women, that these kinds of barbaric acts, by which South Africa harasses women, should stop. It's important that women all over the world should side with

women from the liberation movements in South Africa and Namibia. When we went to the Copenhagen Conference, we were very disappointed by the women from the West. I don't mean the Solidarity Committees, although it's up to them to put pressure on women to understand that it's we who feel the pinch. These women from Britain, West Germany and America were trying to force us to restrict ourselves to equality, development and peace, on the grounds that if we were outside these topics we would be trying to bring in politics. But we can't see how we can otherwise talk about equality, because in Namibia both women and men are oppressed as people; we don't vote; we don't control our natural resources; we don't have any say. This is very well known. We can't talk about development because we have been pushed out of our land - we don't have any land to develop. Even if you are inside the country you are pushed into the banatuns. We can't talk of peace because our country is at war.

Extracted from ISIS No 19  
The complete text is available from the Women's Committee, Anti-Apartheid Movement, London.

\* (South African People's Organisation)



### TO MY UNKNOWN SISTER IN BEIRUT

Sister, unknown sister whose dark eyes shadow my escape, are the olives bitter in your throat?  
Their pits embarrass politicians  
Your agony embarrasses politicians  
Sister, my sister, there are lessons to be learned from death

D. H. Melhem  
reaches out to the women of wounded and isolated Beirut - city of blood and ash, city that had become a resting place for countless Palestinians who have calculated their accommodations by decades. Perhaps one of the lessons to be learned, suggested by the poem, is that the bombs that generate death also generate memory and renewed determination to regain that patch of homeland for which so many have died.



**TAKE  
THE TOYS  
FROM  
THE BOYS**

Contd. from page 7

taught the behaviours of love and peace, while "mankind" is from infancy handed toy swords and guns and taught to kill.

To me, it is obvious that we make a big mistake in peace education, if we do not consider the fact that boys and girls are given a very different education in our society, both at home, in school, through the media and through leisure activities. Girls are taught behaviour, skills and values which are highly esteemed in any peace education program, at least when peace education is defined as critical and oppositional, committed and engaged, for specific values.

At the same time, girls are taught to be the "second" sex, to be oppressed, to be quiet and let the boys, later the men, talk. Boys are taught behaviour and values which are antifunctional to a committed peace education. At the same time, boys are taught to be the first sex, taught to downgrade and humiliate. Girls even at the age of fifteen do ninety minutes of unpaid housework per day, while their brothers and school-mates at

the same age do only sixteen minutes of unpaid housework per day. Time studies from the Central Bureau of Statistics, also show that husbands do exactly the same amount of unpaid housework per day whether their wives are full-time career-women or whether they are housewives.

If we go on teaching only our daughters the behaviours of love, peace and co-operation, while we teach our sons to compete and give them war toys, then we ought to strengthen the self-confidence of girls and later give women the leading positions in society. If we still want to let men play a leading role in society, or share the power equally with women, we ought to abandon their war toys, break their toy guns and swords and perhaps ask them to look after small children in the neighbourhood, and we ought to play down the competitive elements in boys' games and teach them co-operative physical activities. It is a challenge to peace educators to look closer into the peace building elements in the education we give girls and into the warlike elements in the education we give boys. This education is life-long. It starts when the children are born, goes on through adolescence and into adulthood when the boys are further socialized in the military. "The Army will make a man out of you", while the girls see their fulfillment as mothers and wives.

**Birgit Brock-Utne**  
Peace Research Institute  
Oslo, Norway

**Sexism and the War System**

Contd. from page 10  
much less even mentioned in most of the litanies of oppression.

There is some reason to suspect that it is precisely because of its universality that it is ignored. For once it is recognized, even those of us who put forth the problem diagnosis acknowledging sexism as the tap root of oppression, will have to acknowledge our own need to take part in the prescriptive process. Like the Orwellian equal pigs, we who live in a sexist society are all sexist, though some are more sexist than others. Not only will we have to admit our own acquiescence if not to the system at least to its norms and its manifestations, but also, if we are truly committed to transformation, we, too, will have to change. This means giving up some control, as with the much denounced nation state, it means the relinquishment of certain aspects of personal sovereignty and control over others - a process which comes especially hard to the masculine mind whether it resides in a male or a female body.

**The Cartesian Trap:  
The Fundamental  
Sexism of  
Social Science.**

The masculine mind tends to reject the sphere of feeling, and masculine "sciences" denigrate "emotionalism." Personal change requires confrontation of feelings, of the emotional components of the situation to be changed. While there is some recognition that political change requires beha-

vioural change, the masculine scientific approach even manages to depersonalize this process to obscure it with the "objective analysis" of "social sciences." The masculine mind which has been socialized into sublimating and suppressing the emotions, particularly the "softer" feminine feelings, prefers to deal with this aspect of social and human experience by "professionalizing" it into scientific form such as psychiatry and sociology. World order

**In the Forefront  
of the Struggle**

Contd. from page 13

through the legal code. Women were given the right to vote, but their ability to run for office was curtailed by a system of quotas set aside for women. Ostensibly, this was designed to ensure minimal representation, but in reality it was used as an excuse to deny women seats contested in a general election. Following a long struggle, they finally succeeded, under Ayub Khan's military regime, in getting passed the Family Laws Ordinance, 1961. This ordinance recognised women as rightful heirs of agricultural property under Islamic law, made second marriages contingent on the consent of the first wife, made divorce more difficult for the male and for the first time, gave women the right to initiate divorce, on certain specified grounds only. A system of registration of marriages was also introduced for the first time.

Never adequately implemented, this ordinance was nonetheless considered a major victory by women's groups. It was a recognition by the State of the need for reforms to better the status of women. Also,

insists on the consideration of values, but as is the case with its true parent disciplines, avoids the true seat of value formation, that which educators (education is a semi-feminine profession) call the "affective domain," the world of feelings.



the women's movement at Pakistan's inception was led by middle class elements. Having received relatively more educa-

cognisance of the law and were able to manipulate it to their own advantage. By virtue of the family law coming into effect their rights as women were safe-guarded. Yet the law did not penetrate very far. Working class women in the urban areas were only marginally able to benefit from it, to the extent that they either had middle class patrons, or that some progressive organisation was willing to take up the fight on their behalf. Rural women, isolated as they were from the political scene, continued to be in, pretty much, the same condition as before. The women's organisations existing at that time, the All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA), being the best known among these, were primarily social welfare and charity organisations and the nature of their work reflected this. In

**The women's movement in Pakistan, like its counterparts in Latin America and Africa, does not designate man as the enemy but rather a social structural formation within which women are among the most oppressed though they are by no means the only ones to suffer oppression.**

tion than women of other classes, and being part of the political mainstream, often related to men who were in politics, these women were

addition to providing relief during emergencies, taking care of the destitute and orphans, they placed a strong emphasis on education, but took a limited

investigation. Research into causes seems to be limited to overt political and economic structures and systems, omitting the "inner psychic structures." The resurgence of interest in psychological perspectives on the arms race is owed primarily to the anti-nuclear movement, and if any scientific field is to be credited with this development, it is medicine. The psychiatrists themselves, have put forth their contributions within the context of the physicians movement, and some of them, have come tantalizingly close to fully exposing the raw center of the human psyche from which war and violence comes forth. Yet, none of these significant recent works have given any serious attention to some significant possibilities for understanding and policy response which lie in feminist scholarship. Given the nature of the threat they pose, the preoccupation with nuclear weapons and impending annihilation, rather than with the institution of war and the promise of transformation, is understandable, but still disturbingly outward, and it seems to me nearly as phallic as the preoccupation with building and "improving" them.

In the name of scholarship, world order in particular, and peace research in general, have steered clear (in spite of protestations of intellectual "radicalism") of digging into the fundamental root causes of war, which certainly "begins in the minds of men" and no

attention to the personal and

behavioural has been sorely lacking. This may be why in spite of elaborate models and inspired visions of preferred worlds, we have no sound, workable transition strategies, why we have not a clearly marked route "from here to there." It may also be why there are still such strong contradictions

**The world in which sexism festers most and inflicts the deepest pain is the world in which the roots of the war system are continually cultivated by suppression and oppression of half of what it means to be human.**

The world in which sexism festers most and inflicts the deepest pain is the world in which the roots of the war system are continually cultivated by suppression and oppression of half of what it means to be human.

feminist peace researcher would seek to change that working. Both seem to have gone along with the symptomatic, reductionist approach which declares the need to treat the illness and try to halt the spread of the infection, but does not necessarily conduct a true pathological or etiological in-

vestigation. Research into causes seems to be limited to overt political and economic structures and systems, omitting the "inner psychic structures."

approach in its provision, restricting it to the creation of APWA college, and the setting up of a few vocational training and handicraft centres. Their attitude was paternalistic, their approach basically reformist, and their reach, limited. In a sense, they reflected their class position-altruism combined with reforms, tinkering with the system but never fundamentally challenging it.

The coming to power of Bhutto in 1972, saw the emergence in Pakistan, for the first time, of a popularly elected populist regime that drew support from workers, the rural peasantry and women. The 1973 Constitution granted women rights closer in accord with United Nations stated principles, modified to fit Pakistani reality, along with a promise to extend education on a mass scale to all groups, including rural and urban women. Women's groups, though they increased in number during this period, remained in the background in that they did not perceive themselves as being under attack from Bhutto's regime. They chose, therefore, to exploit the favourable environment to push for an extension of women's rights within the framework of the State, not

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our actual lived values and the world order values we articulate. (Why is it seemingly so much easier to apply these values to political analysis than to personal behaviour?)

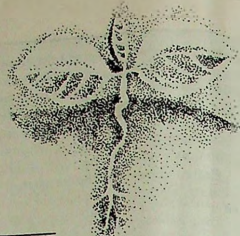
Why, indeed, do we acknowledge sexism as a social problem but remain reluctant to admit to it in ourselves? Most probably, it is precisely because we know how deep it lies within our very beings, that we are reluctant to put it in our professional agendas. What we seek to avoid, is the scorn of our colleagues in the "scholarly" mainstream whose "scientific" standards we purport to observe and uphold, so as to legitimize and validate our field as a science (at least a social science though those are admittedly "softer" i.e., feminine disciplines). The war system has brought us to the brink of annihilation, and we still refuse to face the very fundamental feeling it arouses, fear. The society is paralyzed by the masculine suppression of emotion. Surely peace research and world order studies should attend to this paralysis as the first priority in transition. Yet, for the most part we, too, continue to close out the world of feeling and the repositories of that world, feminine values and women. The male chauvinist bias of the field was, however, inevitably given the intellectual formation of the researchers and the environments in which the research is pursued. Academics, like all institutional power bases is profoundly and scandalously sexist. And on the academic firm, the sciences, both natural and social, are somewhat "more sexist" than other disciplines. The social sciences in which some semblance of ethical and human concerns might have been expected to wield some influence have gone to extremes to prove themselves as sciences. Concerns which carry feminist

Contd. on page 16









## Feminism

### A Hope for the Future?

Contd. from page 5

Convention of Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women, two important Conventions on Women's Political rights have been ratified by only a few countries in the third world; four in Asia, four in Africa and nine in Latin America.

The role of women in the government and higher echelons of decision making is only of token participation. "The token woman must 'integrate' herself within the dominant structures, must 'accommodate' herself to the existing masculine values, must not dare to move beyond' hospitals, children prisoners and women; nothing in short, that might frighten men and bring them to think that women may invade their territory". If ever women have reached the positions of Ministers, they have always been given the portfolios of welfare, health, children, women, all the time reinforcing every traditional sex role, while the bastion of political power remains essentially a male preserve. Is it possible for women to really contribute to peace in the world functioning through societal structures that are completely sex blind?

#### Political Parties:

Are political parties very different? Here, what is being

specifically referred to are not the political parties of the traditional liberal model, or of the extreme right in whose position and party programs, women are objects of reform or welfare, but to political parties and movements which project an image of 'progressiveness', of 'radicalism'; particularly, political parties of the 'left' in the third world. While there is an urgent need to increase the visibility of women's issues challenging both the capitalist and patriarchal relations in society, most of these political parties have responded to the women's movement as being 'disruptive of the class struggle'; and dangerous to the cause of the 'revolution'.

Hence, women have been organised into the 'women's wings' of the party, leaving all the important decisions to the political bureaux and other party decision-making bodies where the closer one gets to the top of the party hierarchies, women become increasingly invisible. The party often benefits from the 'tasks' performed by the women which are no different from the labour she must do in society - cooking, typing, making coffee for the comrades; even women who have been directly involved in the national liberation struggles have been 'sent home' after the

revolution, or at most have been appointed as Ministers of Culture, or Women's Welfare by the new revolutionary Governments. Ideals of equality and the dignity of women are very much part of the vision of liberation movements and these political parties, but often the women encounter discriminatory and sexist attitudes as they fight 'alongside their men', and when they come to power, women are often returned to their homes and to their traditional roles. This is not that the very crucial roles and tasks performed by the women in these political parties and movements are not recognised, but that these questions must be asked of movements in the third world whose choices today will determine the kind of socialism we will have tomorrow. Any analysis that dogmatizes that the revolution must come first and once the means of production are socialized (removing the material basis for women's oppression) we may speak of women's liberation, or worse, that women will be automatically liberated, must look again at the revolutions in history. While it cannot be denied that women have certainly made several material gains within these societies, there still remains the struggle against the system of patriarchy.

Can the histories of whole cultures, of whole epochs be encapsulated into economic frames that may explain the appearance, the structure of phenomena, the social reality, but categories which do not and cannot capture the essence, the history of peoples? Can we continue to use the paradigm of the class struggle only, to explain the divisions and discrimination of gender?; attempting through the single model, as do the capitalists with

their development model, a subsumation of all social phenomena, refusing the questions, denying the challenges?

### New Movements for Change

#### Mother, Woman

Mother, Woman  
Walk and raise your fist  
Affirm your decision to be free

You are salt; You are sap  
You are strength; You are work  
Thus you are life,  
In the fields,  
In the factories,  
In the home,  
You have the truth of your strength  
From your life-giving bosom

Don't walk three yards behind  
Your comrade and the Revolution,  
Walk in front of them.  
It's your place by right  
Mother, Woman  
The Revolution is You



### Choices today will determine the kind of socialism we will have tomorrow

The women's movements and the new movements for a new socialism in the third world move more than ever today to need towards developing conceptual frameworks, which are born of a praxis that is rooted in the specificity of its social and cultural processes and are able to dialectically relate the particular to the universal. This socialism must seek a creative alternative to bourgeois liberalism and to orthodox marxism; a new socialism that will not confine itself only to changing the objective reality, to the material conditions of life, but one that would seek a

qualitative change in individuals, in gender relations, in political processes. It is extremely difficult to think of qualitative changes in the perspectives of the social transformations in the third world, for the immediate need expresses itself more in quantitative terms; more food, better shelters, sufficient wages. Yet, history continues to indicate, through the phenomena of the 'leftist' military juntas, the palace revolutions and so on, that the revolution to change the objective reality without addressing itself to the subjective factors has often only meant the replacement of one system of repression by another within the old rubric, of a male dominated society that respects war, the military, its weapons: If the socialism of the future is indeed the 'great rupture' in society that we believe it is, then we need a vision that would seek a 'change beyond the change'; a socialism that is humanist and pluralist, developing in a world of different civilizations and cultures. This would lead to a qualitatively more human social order, a new consciousness, a new political praxis. This political praxis recognises that the struggle for a new social order will find its expression in a diversity of social movements - the women's movement and feminism, which expresses another world view has a great significance and contribution to make to this alternative vision of the future, for an alternative social order as against the present military world order. The inter-relatedness of these movements for social change - the workers movements, the movements of the dalits, the blacks, the peace and human rights movements, the women's movements represents the beginning of a general awakening to that new phase of our evolution which alone can promise us any future....16

The women's movements and these new movements for socialism in the third world are as yet only mushrooming but firmly rooted in the struggles of the people; hopefully these movements will produce a form of politics, a political culture that will move away from the dominant culture, expressed through the intensifying militarism which pervades every dimension of society. It is not difficult to see that we are at an end of an epoch, 'when every old category begins to have a hollow sound, and when we are groping in the dusk to discover the new'.<sup>17</sup> Yet, the end of one epoch also signals the birth and transition to a new time; a time for new ventures, a time for new visions, a new time beginning.

### The closer one gets to the top of the party hierarchies, women become increasingly invisible

The women's movements and the movements for societal change will not be identical in the different societies, each will bring to it its own emphasis, its own specificity, its own forms of organization, its own practical politics. For instance, the women's movement in the third world while recognising that a fundamental transformation of class society is necessary would emphasise the specificity of the oppression and exploitation of women and would link its struggle to the struggles of the other oppressed sections of society. It is too early to see what forms of solidarity and collaboration these movements might take; what is significant is that the resistance has begun, new paths seem to open independent of the existing models and ideologies, a new time beginning.

Corinne Kumar-D'Souza  
Vimochana

Excerpts of presentation prepared for UN Expert Group Meeting on "Women and Peace" (in preparation for 1985 International Women's Conference), Vienna, December 1983.

15. Mother, Woman "The Revolution is you: translated by Nadine Samanich" - Capaldi, Anonymos, Moonbeams. The poet reminds us that we women have internalised certain subordinate roles assigned to us throughout history. If revolution and freedom are to be fully realised these roles must be cast aside.  
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## sexism and the war system

The fundamental sexism of our intellectual tools and our political strategies must be confronted and transcended. Feminism has begun to challenge the political structures, it must also challenge all intellectual paradigms.

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values or perspectives, while sometimes considered, are given very low priority and seem to be something of an embarrassment, particularly when natural scientists deride the scientific pretensions of the social scientists. Peace research and peace education in their attempts to gain a foothold in the scholarly community, have sometimes tried to be 'more quantitative than thou.' "Even world order inquiry with its avowedly normative perspective and value orientation has gone to great lengths to establish its scholarly credentials. These circumstances, for a whole host of reasons, a number of them discussed in earlier sections of this essay, militate against feminine influence and women's participation.

These circumstances, while they may be inevitable are not irremediable, and they must be openly reviewed and amended. Not only because they perpetuate sexism in peace research, but most especially because they serve to prevent

peace research from producing and applying transformational knowledge. Nor are they excusable, having been brought up to researchers on many occasions over the past decade and by many critics of the western intellectual establishment. One of the most relevant and cogent of these being the feminist futurist Hazel Henderson who has referred to the sterile rationalism of the sciences as the "Cartesian trap", a nice enunciation of the whole culture and mind set. In an argument reminiscent of Garcia Chafardet's about the distortion of masculinity and femininity inherent in sex role separation, Douglas Sloan asserts that the distortion of science, "scientism" resulting from its separation from human and ethical concerns, is in large part responsible for the development of our present nuclear peril. The dualism it has fostered has tended to fragment knowledge, fragment experience and denigrate the intuitive and imaginative capacities we need so desperately at this juncture. These latter traits, we agree, are fundamental

feminine elements forced out of intellectual and political discourse by masculine rationalism and reductionism. While this mind set still controls the flow of the scientific mainstream, there are some refreshing contemporary currents from which we can take hope.

Since at least the beginning of the twentieth century, much has happened within science that calls into question the exclusively reductionistic, mechanistic, and objectivistic understanding of reality that nineteenth century scientific assumptions seemed in so many ways to support. Increasingly in this century, the data generated in scientific inquiry, the interpretive frameworks employed to make sense of the data, and the understanding by scientists of their own methods of inquiry have all become less and less congenial to a world view reared exclusively on a positivistic foundation (Douglas Sloan, *Insight-Imagination: The Emancipation of Thought and the Modern World*, 1982).

It has long been my belief that world order inquiry is just such an interpretive framework. It

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has attempted to be more holistic than other world affairs studies; it aspires to the identification of universal human values; and, at least at the level of articulation, it abjures male chauvinism. As a woman I have often felt uncomfortable in settings of world order inquiry. As a feminist I have always been comfortable, if not satisfied, with the world order framework. For me, it works to explicate most of the structural, the skeletal issues of the global social order while feminism serves to flesh out the inquiry, to give it the human, living dimension sought by all global humanists. And I would place most world order scholars and most feminist peace researchers in that category. However, the goals of global humanism, the

world order movement and universal feminism, all require that the fundamental sexism of our intellectual tools and our political strategies must be confronted and transcended. Feminism has begun to challenge the political structures, it must also challenge all intellectual paradigms. Virtually every paradigm, every discipline, every mode of inquiry is based on the model of masculinity as human, the male as the norm for human development, personally, socially and intellectually. Our intellectual tools, therefore, are inadequate and inhumane and need to be redesigned according to a balanced, fully human model of the person. This redesign task is, however, as much the responsibility of peace research

and world order studies as it is of feminism.

Neither women in general, nor feminists in particular, have rejected the significance of war as the major threat to survival. While some see the liberation of women as a necessary first, but not necessarily simultaneous, step toward the abolition of war, there have been no outright refusals from feminists to consider the other issue, and the exploration of the connections between the structural and personal is at least underway among feminist scholars.

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# A plea for Gender Justice

Let me, at the outset, state my testament of faith : India can never really be free until the last Indian is free. And Indians, except by political fiction, can never be free until the last mother, sister or daughter is free. And, if I may whisper the truth, Indian Womanhood, in large numbers, but with marginal exception, is still living behind feudal - colonial bars, in cultural chains, familial fetters and under legal, political economic and social discrimination, now covertly, now overtly, but never in fearless equality. The husband, the father and the son, as in Manu's vicious verse, are still the bosses who matter. Bonded labour, as woman's lot, is writ large on the law of life, even though some of them, out of long habit or sublimated fear, even love their chains. Don't point to the statue of the woman prime minister or the figure of some lady governor to contradict me. The Constitution of our Socialist Republic has textually liberated woman and guaranteed her dignity and personality. No bonded womanhood in Bharat? Law and life are distant neighbours.

The crime of gender injustice committed for so long, on so many, shall be fought in the homes and in the offices, in the factories and in the farms, in the fields and in the streets, in the slums and pavements, in the brothels and parlours, in politics, public offices and the professions, in the ranks of capitalists and landlords, as among workers and tillers even with crimson labels I see gender exploitation omnipresent and omnipotent, with women and children at the victim's end.

Today, the Indian labourer sells his sister and child to Gulf Arabs and other foreigners for covert causes with court proceedings to cover up the sale; in Madhya Pradesh markets tribal girls and in Karnataka Yellamma's lustful customers buy innocent damsels as devadasis! No middle class wife is free because her husband finally decides for her, except on some tremendous trifles. From Sita to Kasturba, Rani of Jhansi and Sarojini Devi are splendid exceptions; the weight of invisible irons are felt by one gender. They call her 'the better half' to hide the horrid sin. If I exaggerate to make myself heard in this noisy world, it is my way of protest against law's insensitive silence at this lawlessness.

"For every social wrong there must be a remedy. But the remedy can be nothing less than the abolition of the wrong."

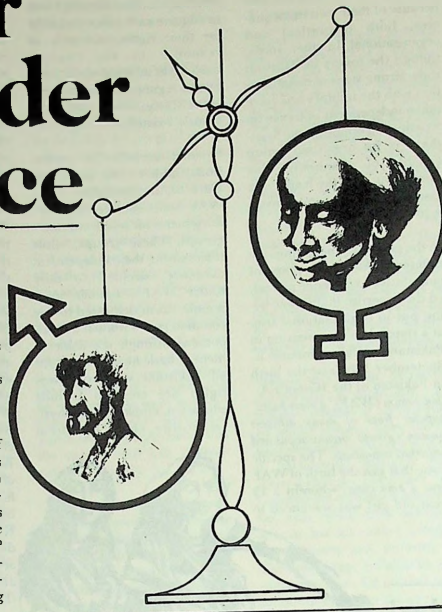
Victory for the exploited is indivisible. The exploited men cannot win, leaving women in bondage. The cause is human and transcends gender. We must have a revolutionary theory and radical strategy. The constitution-in-action is

our revolutionary testament and operational technology; a gender movement on the militant march with aware cadres in numbers; is our social locomotion; woman's personhood and potential, in all its dimensions and without inhibitions, is our destination. This fighting creed must impregnate law and life

What is the lot in law of woman in the mass? How does it compare with their kismet in the callous universe of masculine dominance? What tools and techniques and feasible projects have to be fashioned? These claim our immediate attention. Principled pragmatism, not slogan-mongering adventurism, is social realism. The basic strength of gender justice is that it is rooted in the Constitutions creed. Articles 14 to 16 declare the legal equality of the sexes - a non-negotiable fundamental. Though sex discrimination is anathema for the paramount law, have the legislatures kept true faith and allegiance with the basic mandate? Has the Executive, which has the effective responsibility to actualize the equality of women, raised their marital and material status, their rights to property and employment, their social, official and political opportunities, to match that of men? Empirical studies challenge the legal fiction of gender equality. Even the Judiciary has at times, betrayed the weaker gender by constitutional cruelty. To unveil the long gap between fiction and fact, assumptions and actuals, a flood of empathetic but authentic research is urgently needed. Society's great guilt towards the weaker gender will shock and shame the nation's surviving patriots.

Before women's condition in law and life is eyed, we need unbiased studies, fearless findings and follow-up blueprints. Masculine domination had prevented and polluted researches on gender injustices. Now that the National Committee on the Status of women has consented society to some extent, some vital issues are thrown up:

Why had understanding of women's contribution to society been shrouded in so much mystery? Why had planners and social scientists seen women's concerns as of welfare or peripheral, rather than central to the developmental process? What are the historical and value dimensions of changes in women's roles and status in Indian Society? Are the empirical dimensions and indicators of status selected by social scientists to analyse women's position applicable to



all groups of women? Identifying an inter-relationship between certain demographic and other trends, the Committee concluded that they were indicators of "a process of change which is moving in a direction opposite to the goals of our society and its plan for development". The Committee also identified major information gaps and elite biases which had affected the shaping of policy and programmes for women's development.

My first submission to all those committed to national reconstruction and confidence in the rich capacity of women to make substantial contribution to the country's planned development, is to organize a heavy shower of researches, inquiries, investigations and studies from many angles and in many fields, all focussed on realities of inequality, gaping injustices, legal shortfalls, the why and how of the current situation and the know-how of delivering political, economic, social and cultural justice to the suppressed gender. A national upheaval of awareness involves a solar exposure of injustices to the mental-moral vision of the people. Militant research is the desideratum.

**"For every social wrong there must be a remedy. But the remedy can be nothing less than the abolition of the wrong."**

The second submission is that male exploitation of women extends to the working class and peasant class where the capitalist ethos and feudal folkways diehard. Karl Marx has, with tragic foresight, gone on record :

*Now the capitalist system buys children and young persons under age. Previously, the workman sold his own labour-power, which he disposed off nominally as a free agent. Now he sells his wife and child. He has become a slave dealer.*

on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The Non-Aligned Nations - Havana and Delhi Meets - have shown considerable interest in the cause of women and it may be rightly said that there is female ferment present in the International Legal Atmosphere and International Gender Jurisprudence mandating equality, and non-discrimination emerging as part of the human order.

The Copenhagen World

Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women is a landmark with global dimensions and implications :

"The fact is that women's issues and political issues cannot be separated. Worldwide, women clearly acknowledge that global political considerations demand their attention. Worldwide, we are sophisticated enough to distinguish between substantive discussions on specific measures and actions to aid women and political polemics on issues that the World Conference could not resolve. The ability to make that distinction between substantive recommendations and rhetorical polemics, and then resolve to make the United Nations system more responsive to the feminist perspective of most women of the world on global issues, is our best hope for the future." (Viviani L. Derryck, Director 1980)

But it must be remembered that, generally speaking, international law has been often cipherised in practice because there are no formal executive institutions to enforce it. Nevertheless, the world is moving more and more towards moral compulsions upon member States to accept and implement international instruments. The parameters of Universal Gender Jurisprudence are clear as is lucidly set out in Article 1 and 10 of the 1967 Declaration. I have maintained the view that having regard to Article 51 of our Constitution and the moral pressure of international conscience, the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women is an interpretative input in de-coding the meaning of Indian constitutional and other legislative provisions.

The law of the Constitution is perfectly plain that sex equality is a guarantee and the State has positive obligations towards women in their various roles as workers, as mothers, as wives and the like. The humanist concern for the woman's condition is compassionately evident in Parts III and IV of the Constitution, provided we read the text in the light of the struggle for Independence and in the context of the radical standards of gender justice expressed in International Instruments. The Supreme Court, a few years ago, did interpret with benign concern for feminine welfare, the provisions relating to plantation labour and maternity benefits.

By and large, though law did not stipulate it, the Hindu way of life stipulated the respective roles of bread-winner and home-maker for man and woman. The denial of a right by birth to a Hindu daughter to a share in the joint family estate flowed logically from the fact that her place in her parental family was only temporary, as she was transplanted to her husband's family on marriage, a very early marriage in those days. A son never left a family except on death. This basic circumstance accounted for the difference in status between a son and a daughter in a family. Hindu law conceived the joint family as a unit of ownership of property as ancient Hindu

society was organised family-wise. That is one of the roots of inequality between the sexes in Hindu law

While the British showed general disinclination for reform of the law bearing on woman's lot, still when glaring injustices came to its notice, Whitehall acted through Indian legislation. Of course, the Sati was stamped out long ago, but that apart :

"One of the early attempts at redressing the disabilities of Hindu woman was the Central Act XVIII of 1937, the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act which came into force on 14-4-1937. Before the Act, a Hindu woman had a right to maintenance from her husband's share of joint family property and in default of a son, grandson or great grandson, she would inherit his separate property. The 1937 Act destroyed the concept of survivorship and enabled her to share her husband's estate with her son or her husband's death. This Central Act was supplemented by provincial enactments extending such rights to agricultural properties also.

The Hindu Succession Act has conferred on woman absolute rights in what she inherits as an heir to her husband, parents and children. She can adopt a child in her own right! She can be an adoptee. She can divorce her husband and remarry, if so minded. From Sati, she has progressed to widow remarriage. The widow's remarriage no longer results in her forfeiting her rights in her late husband's estate. Central Act 30/56 has displaced the Hindu Widow Re-Marriage Act 1856 in this respect. A group of companion Acts have codified Hindu Law and have, in the process, projected an image of a Hindu woman who is no longer handicapped by reason of her sex only in the matter of civil rights.

In the eyes of law, some civilized provisions conferring substantial equality in the matter of marriage and ownership of property have emerged since Independence. Prime Minister Nehru and Dr. Ambedkar had to face fierce reactionary resistance then. Articles 14 to 16 are a high promise of equality, pursuant to which, some legislations on marriage and divorce etc., also have been enacted. The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, confers the right to equal wages for equal work on the woman. Monogamy is enforced both on the Hindu man and the Hindu woman. And even regarding inheritance, the Hindu women's status is, in large measure, equal. Equal opportunities for employment under the State (which expression includes the Public Sector Enterprises, thanks to the liberal interpretation by the Supreme Court) are equal for men and women, although this mandate does not currently operate in the vast private sector of the national economy.

Even so, the law is what the law does and the test is not the text but the fact of how law affects life;

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It is a crime against humanity  
that our women are shut up within  
the four walls of the houses  
as prisoners.

## In the Forefront of the Struggle

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in antagonism to it.

Not until three and a half years after the military take over in 1977, were women once again to emerge on the political scene as a mass force. This time, however, the organisations that came into being, though they have a historical continuity with the past, are qualitatively different in their emphasis and approach.

### A Transformed Movement

The late sixties and early seventies saw a blossoming of intellectual activity and grassroots organisation, albeit in embryonic form. Women in larger numbers joined the profession and though their numbers were relatively small as compared to men, they made a significant contribution. Television in particular, broke the taboos generally connected in Pakistan with music and the arts. College going women with artistic talents took advantage of this opportunity and become instrumental in portraying a different woman. A recognition of the media's transformational capacity may lie behind the current regime's attempts to drastically alter its programming and personnel.

The mushrooming of left wing parties in the late sixties and early seventies, tied as they were with the working class and the peasantry, drew into the political arena, women who were previously totally dissociated from it. Not only did this serve to politicise more women than ever before, but it also gave them badly needed organisational experience. Even though women joined the left, the position of different left groups vis-a-vis women remains unclear. Although in most cases the rights of women are formally recognised at a theoretical level, at the personal level where theory is acted out, a lot remains to be desired. Also, organisationally, left parties have reflected the male orientation of society as a whole in that few women have risen to positions of significant responsibility.

All of this past history culminated and waited for the right conjuncture to express itself. The prelude came during the first few years of military rule during which the reconstituted state came to rely very heavily on Islam as an ideological weapon. The three groups most under attack, workers, peasants and women, were not deceived by this ideological cover. Given that the State in Pakistan under the military has seen fit to take away the hard pressed rights won by all three groups under previous regimes, the linkage between the State

which is viewed by most Pakistanis as the most reactionary, repressive regime in the nation's history, and the Jamiat elements, has served, in Pakistan, to totally delegitimise the fundamentalist version of Islam in the eyes of these three groups.

The current regime has denied to workers the right to strike. Among the rural tenants and landless labourers too, there is a severe sense of deprivation. The fact that a tenant can today be evicted at will, despite laws to the contrary, tells him that the State is his enemy. Seeing the religious elements linked to this type of State, they are strongly in opposition to them

regime's manoeuvres, but also because of their own inadequacies, both theoretical and organisational. In other words, though the toilers in Pakistan show strong signs of dissatisfaction with the military and have taken independent initiative on occasions in opposing the State there is no organised group capable of channelling this discontent, and the leadership essential to such a movement is just not there.

In the case of women, things are different. All these years of cumulative experience provided the expertise that is now being put to organisational use, at a time when the situation in Pakistan critically demands it. September 1981 saw the birth in Pakistan of the Women's Action Forum (WAF), a mass based, popular front of many different women's groups, organisations and concerned individuals. The specific issue that saw the birth of WAF was a zina case, wherein a 15 year old girl was sentenced to

solves lead - that the need was to educate each other and fight for their rights, not only in response to the current barbarism inflicted upon them by this regime, but also to overcome inequalities that previously existed.

Created initially by professional middle class women in Karachi, in September 1981, WAF soon received the endorsement of seven women's groups. These groups, while maintaining their independent existence, decided to rally under WAF's banner in a popular front, dedicated to one common goal - women's development through the achievement of basic human rights for all Pakistani women. These rights are seen to include education, employment, physical security, choice of marital

minorities, as well as to working class women. Their panels and workshops reflected this new membership by including such topics as inflation, consumer consciousness, the nationality question, the latter being brought up because among the WAF founders were Sindhi women who took this question very seriously.

While deepening its base, WAF was at the same time, extending it. October 1981, saw the creation of its second chapter in Lahore, the capital of Punjab province. This was soon succeeded by others in Islamabad, Peshawar, Bahawalpur, Lyallpur, Quetta, as well as a number of other cities. It was made clear that anybody who so wished could initiate a WAF chapter, provided they were willing to adopt the charter drawn up by the Karachi chapter. The activities of each new chapter would however, be subject to scrutiny by the two oldest chapters, Karachi and Lahore. If any discrepancy is seen between the activities of the local chapter and WAF's charter, that chapter is subject to expulsion.

WAF's chapters are also encouraged to incorporate as many of the women's organisations existing in each area as possible, this with a view to extending the reach of the organisation, facilitating co-ordination, and avoiding duplication of effort. WAF recognises the centrality of the gender question as a determinant in the formation of a united front for women. In their organisation as a mass movement, they constitute a dynamic force in that their activities are constantly expanding, membership growing, and the base expanding at an accelerated pace. By virtue of this dynamism, emerging so shortly after their coming into being, WAF is clearly in the forefront of all other political formations in Pakistan at this time.

Not only is WAF a mass organisation, it is also democratic in its structure, in that it is non-hierarchical, and non-bureaucratic. It has no president or secretary, and decisions are arrived at through discussion. A working committee handles organisational matters connected with different chapters and each chapter sends a representative whenever all the chapters meet. In terms of its organisational structure, its membership and its programme, therefore, WAF represents a radical departure from previously constituted women's groups in Pakistan.

### Important Achievements

In its battle with the regime, the women's movement, on the surface, seems to have lost more often than it has won. In February 1983, 200 women demonstrated in Lahore against the proposed changes in the law of evidence. At least 20 of the participants were injured in their clash with the police, and another 30 arrested. In spite of this demonstration and the support the women got from men,

the proposed changes were nevertheless rammed through the puppet legislative assembly less than a month later.

They were also unsuccessful in their attempt to pressurise the regime into sending women athletes to international sports events last year, specifically the Asian games in the fall of 1982. The move to institute separate universities for women and the dismantlement of the family laws ordinance have both temporarily been shelved, but it is expected that the regime will reopen these matters at a later date, in a manner opposed by WAF and other women's groups. The one big victory WAF has had in its confrontation with the regime has been the removal of Israr Ahmed from television, although he continues to hold his post as a member of Zia's handpicked consultative council.

When one moves away from attempting to draw up a score-board saying "regime's wins, women's losses" which seems to be a fairly limited way of viewing the whole matter, the gains, though intangible, seem fairly substantial. Women have for the first time adopted an organisational stance which makes them an important force that any political group in Pakistan will now have to reckon with. They have broken out of the old pattern of reformism and paternalism which have characterised the Pakistani political scene for too long, and have initiated a process of education, organisation and informational work that will leave a mark on women for times to come, regardless of whether WAF survives as an organisation or not.

In broadening and deepening its base, WAF has been conscious that it is not sufficient merely to critique the regime on the grounds it sets, but to deal with those issues that immediately touch the lives of the average Pakistani women, who are not concerned with universities, whether separate or co-educational, or with women's involvement in sports events, to cite but two examples. To this end, they have initiated discussions on topics of more immediate concern like child labour, growing narcotics use, scarcity of public services, suppression of women, crimes against women, all issues affecting the working class very directly. They have initiated serious research on the status and condition of women in Pakistan in order to concretise their position and work. In a public fashion, they have kept in the forefront the opposition to the current regime. To this end they have blitzed the media with articles, comments, enquiries, and in so doing have recruited more and more women into their ranks, as well as gained increasing support among men.

The task of organising women is much more difficult than that of organising either workers or peasants. One has to struggle not only against economic forces but also against the social taboos that have a strong sanction in Pakistani society.

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## Blind Girl Punished For Being Raped

On August 6, 1983, women's organisations in Lahore held an emergency meeting to protest against the court award of 15 lashes to a blind girl Safia who had been raped by her employers.

Safia, a young blind girl, worked as a domestic servant for a week. Then she returned home and told her mother she had been raped by Maqsood, her employer's son. Some days later when Safia's mother was not at home, Maqsood's mother came and again took her to the house where she was raped by Maqsood's father. As a result of the rape, Safia became pregnant but she hid the matter from her father, who came to know of it only a few months later. He then solicited the help of village officials and police to register a case of rape (*Zina bil jabr*), but

these people refused to help him. Only after the child was born and died, did Safia's father manage to register a case of rape.

The court acquitted the accused men for "lack of evidence", because the current law in Pakistan requires four adult male eyewitnesses to prove rape. However, since Safia, an unmarried girl, had borne a child, this was treated as evidence of her having committed adultery by consent (*zina bil raza*). She did not get the benefit of doubt which the men had got, because the fact of her having borne a child was used against her. Thus the court converted the case of rape to a case of adultery by consent, found Safia guilty of zina and sentenced her to 15 lashes in public.

Report from Pakistan  
Karachi Daily News

as well. One would expect therefore, that the movement against the regime in Pakistan would be composed of these three elements - the workers, the rural peasantry, and women. Facts show otherwise. Let us examine the specificity.

The bourgeois political parties in Pakistan are all top heavy and have a very weak mass base. Their ties tend to be more traditional and their programmes generally incoherent and opportunistic. This of course excludes certain groups from the minority province, especially Baluchistan, where, because of the nature of the national movement, these parties have a more defensible stand. The Pakistan People's Party which is still the party that speaks for large segments of the toilers, has seen its leaders killed, imprisoned, exiled. The left groups, which also had a base among the workers and peasantry, are in a state of disarray partly in consequence of the

flogging in consequence of her having married a man of a lower class background, contrary to her parents' wishes. This sentence triggered off a response among women, combining as it did issues of class, social morality and choice. Following as this case did, upon the heels of news about women professors being molested and removed from their positions women being tortured for their political beliefs and affiliations, restrictions on the professional activities of women, imposition of dress code requirements for women public employees, action was felt to be imperative. It was also recognised that help could not be expected from other quarters, either from the Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD), or the left, since these groups were fighting for their own survival, and had not previously taken a very active part in any national effort to push for women's rights. Women recognised that this was a fight they must them-



status, planned parenthood, non discrimination.

Recognising the enormosity of the task confronting them, the organisers proceeded cautiously. Initially they devoted their attention to fighting to preserve rights currently held, but under attack from the military. Given their limited numbers at this point, a lobbying cum pressure group approach was used. The first task undertaken was a national signature campaign based on five issues affecting women. Over 7,000 signatures were collected between October and December 1981, and the document was presented to Zia ul Haq.

Realising even at its inception that the State was unlikely to concede other than token demands if it limited its activities to submitting petitions, WAF decided to broaden its base. Towards this end, in January 1982, the Karachi chapter of WAF organised a two day symposium on "Human rights and Pakistani women" with simultaneously running workshops on education, law, consciousness raising and health. This was the first of a series of symposia and workshops held on a wide variety of topics of interest to women in English, Urdu, as well as the regional languages.

Initially made up of urban based, middle class women, WAF also began to reach out to



## In the Forefront of the struggle

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WAF's desire to constitute a mass organisation can be seen not only as a consequence of the nature of the question they are addressing, but also as a consequence of the lessons learnt from the past, where, too often, groups isolated themselves from the bulk of the population because of the rigidity of the positions they took. Such rigidity often led to the degeneration of differences into personal squabbles, factionalisation, and stagnation.

### Some Limitations

We have earlier alluded to the mass character of the women's movement, drawing as it does women from all classes. This has been an integral part of the movement, though there is not always agreement between the women who belong to the older women's groups like APWA which have a strong upper class bias, and WAF members who have either just entered the political current, or have had previous experience with different Left groups. The latter tend to view issues along class and national lines, and though aware that the gender question is a critical one, their approach to ways to resolve gender discrimination, extends beyond that of previous groups. Although thus far all these various groups have worked well together, it is possible that there may be a parting of the ways when, and if, the more radical elements begin to push for changes that are both class and gender based, and as means are sought outside formal structures. It is important to note that this division is not seen as immediate, but is merely pointed to as a possibility.

The different WAF chapters are incredibly uneven in their membership composition, and this unevenness is reflected in their work. The Lahore chapter is clearly the most advanced politically, and more willing to take actions that other chapters might back off from. The demonstration in February was organised by this group.

The decision making structure is also subject to modification. Since there is so much unevenness between different chapters, there has been some concern among the more advanced segments in the movement that certain individuals in certain chapters might derail the movement by pushing for a more conformist, collaborative approach. In order to avoid this happening, attempts are being made to restructure the internal organisation. The balance between democracy and centralism is always a tricky one and so far a resolution has been shelved. When the restructuring does occur, however, there is no doubt that it will not satisfy everybody, and its repercussions will be felt in the composition of the organisation.

Similarly, WAF has so far had no formal membership struc-

ture or elective process. Responsibility has been based on work contributed. Indications are that this matter too will be placed on the agenda this year. The tenor of the movement will be critically affected by the path chosen.

What this unevenness and class heterogeneity suggest, is that once the regime begins to take a more antagonistic stand towards WAF in particular, and the movement as a whole, there is a possibility that the more uncertain elements within its membership might choose to leave the ranks rather than engage in confrontational activities. The extent of this falling away is impossible to predict, since a large section of WAF's membership consists of women who have previously had no political experience, and therefore have not stood the test of time. There is no doubt however, that some of the women with close ties to the bureaucratic elements, who have more at stake in the system, will leave.

Its urban character also means that the WAF, and the women's movement, as a whole, still have not been able to reach the rural women, who constitute one of the most oppressed segments of the Pakistani population. This is a shortcoming that will only be rectified as the membership increases, and a deliberate attempt is made to spread out into the countryside. Given the nature of the popular struggle in Pakistan, which has always taken its inception in the cities, this bias, at least in the initial phase, is to be expected. Also, given the linkages between the workers in the urban centres with their rural counterparts, it is expected that as working class women become more integrated into the movements mainstream, this link will be made organically.

Inherent in the movement, as in other progressive formations previously existing in Pakistan, is a tendency towards tailism, that is, to allow the regime to determine the direction of struggle. The more advanced elements in the women's movement seem to be cognisant of this possibility but the newer recruits are so tied up with day to day reactions to the military's policies, that the wider issues and needs could easily be lost sight of. By letting the regime set the agenda, women will be permitting the forward motion to be determined on the terms of the State and not on their own definition of what needs to be done. There is a critical need therefore, while responding to the day to day attacks on women's rights by the regime, not to let this sap all the energy. It should also be kept firmly in mind, that a lot of these legally won rights really mean very little in the existential reality of the bulk of Pakistani women. Transforming that reality necessitates educational and informational work rooted in an autonomous women's movement. WAF is to some extent trying to deal with this matter by setting up legal, publicity and

research cells, whose work will be to provide, not only information, but also the infrastructural backup needed if this additional information is to mean anything in concrete terms.

Certain chapters in WAF have stressed the non-political character of the movement. This assertion, combined with the fact that the wives of many prominent bureaucrats and upper class males are active in its ranks, has to a certain extent contributed towards the tendency of the regime to allow WAF's continued existence in public. However, there are indications that this is a fragile existence. The demonstration in February is an indication that the regime is becoming uncomfortable with the women's movement, and is beginning to see it as more of a threat. This is unavoidable if the movement is to continue to be dynamic. As soon as WAF sheds its non-political stance, there is every chance that the regime will ban it from meeting publicly and legally.

The women's movement must make a conscious attempt to keep from slipping into an elitist position, such as happened with previous women's groups. To keep the movement limited to the question of legal rights is to fall into the trap of letting the state determine its tenor. Even if these rights were to be granted, which admittedly at this point seems a pipe dream, we have seen that, as in the past, they will go a very short way in actually transforming the reality within which the bulk of Pakistani women live. In order to achieve real change, for-

malism must be shed, and an understanding of the nature and dynamics of class and national oppression as a whole must be developed.

The women's struggle in Pakistan, as elsewhere, is a struggle that will not be won overnight. Regardless of whether the military regime stays or goes, it is a struggle that will continue on into the future. The proponents of the women's movement must therefore prepare for an extended struggle. This they can do only if they develop the organisational capacity to deal with the possibility of a future when they are no longer permitted to operate legally. They can do this by forging close links with the most progressive sections of society, and by maintaining their relative autonomy on the gender question.

Women in Pakistan, by taking the initiative in confronting the military regime in an organised public fashion, have shown their determination to be part of a nationwide struggle for societal change. They have denounced the regime's brutalities, not only when they affected women, but also other groups like students and minorities. The time is ripe in Pakistan for women to push for putting the gender question on the agenda of progressive groups. This is a strategic and a tactical question for both the women's movement and for the progressive movement in Pakistan as a whole.

Shahnaz Ahmed  
(from The Pakistani Progressive,  
Vol. 5, No.1, Spring 1983)

Vimochana's Fourth Film Festival, held between March 12 and 20, 1984, in Bangalore showed the very different perceptions that the different directors have of women. Interestingly, only one of the 7 films screened, was directed by a woman, reminding us that the film industry is very much dominated by men, and hence suffers from a measure of insensitivity towards women, even in its more progressive form. Hopefully, this slant will be much reduced as more and more women participate in film making.

## The Fractured Image

It was fitting that the film festival should have been inaugurated by Ms. Prema Karanth, and her film, 'Phaniyamma'. 'Phaniyamma' (Kannada), has been well accepted by feminists all over the world, shaking them out of temporary complacency by showing the horrific customs that women have been victims of. It is the story of a child widow who is ostracised from mainstream society, because of the customs of the day. Being very submissive by nature, Phaniyamma encounters a younger generation of women who are learning to rebel against their oppression—a young bride who refuses to go back to her unjust in-laws, and a young widow who refuses to shave her head. Phaniyamma watches, and far from criticising them, she who has learnt of the hypocrisy of men, supports their iconoclasm. Phaniyamma, and the film, therefore act as a catalyst for change in a sexist society.

In 'Ekakini' (Malayalam), Director G.V. Panicker explores the rhetoric of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' by juxtaposing a newly married couple in their sexual stereotype. As the feminine sensitivity of the bride clashes hard with the macho masquerade of the groom, the film ends with the girl summoning the courage to walk out on her husband. While the intentions of the director were honourable, he never seemed to question, or work against the accepted 'feminine' values, which unfortunately made the film less interesting than it could have been.

'Angivera' was a subtle film, showing the development of a young girl in newly communist Hungary. Vera is influenced by two women, one a dogmatic ideologue, the other a non-ideologue, who has not reformed, who has not rejected life and laughter in her rejection of the film progressivism. Vera seems to tilt away from the humane Maria, an impression confirmed by her betrayal of her lover at a party meeting. The film raised questions about the role of feminism in a communist society, as to whether women can manage to retain the warmer aspects of femininity, or inevitably co-opt with the cold logic and self seeking ambition of the male superstructure.

Bergman's 'Cries and Whispers' was interesting, because it depicted the underdeveloped love-hate relationship between three sisters, one of who is an agonised invalid and dies in the course of the film, leaving the other two sisters with a new begin-

ing for their lives.

'Portrait of Liv Ullman', traced the accomplishments and emotions of Norwegian actress Liv Ullman, her relationship with friend and lover Ingmar Bergman and that with her little daughter. The documentary reminded one of Simone de Beauvoir (in the 'Second Sex'), who says that the greater actresses transcend the set in roles they create, whereas for others, acting only brings a triumph of their narcissism. From her sensitive comments on motherhood and on the complex experience of being a woman, it would seem that Liv Ullman belongs to the first category. Still, it is worth mentioning that acting is one profession where women are not torn between contradictory aspirations, where often their professional success contributes, if anything, to their sexual valuation. While this makes it easier to escape the yoke of men, as Beauvoir puts it, it is only the more sensitive actress who will go beyond mere exhibition, and give meaning to her life by giving meaning to the world.

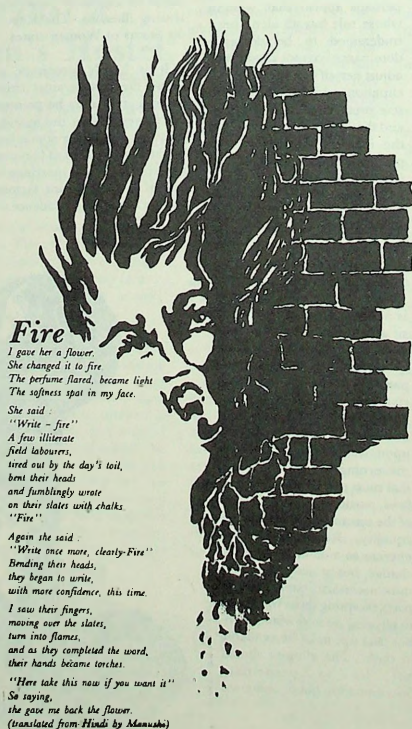
Coming nearer home, one of the better screenings in the festival of films on women was 'Dakhol' (Bengali), directed by Gautam Ghosh. The protagonist is Andi, a gutsy widowed mother of two, who is fighting a losing battle against the wealthy zamindar for possession of the fallow land made rich and fertile with the years of toil and tears put in by her and her husband. The film brought out starkly, the need to link up the women's movement with a broader class struggle, and the double burden of poverty and womanhood that Andi carried.

A major event in the festival, was the premiere of Kumar Shahani's new film 'Tarang' (Hindi). Already chosen for exhibit at the coming Tashkent Film Festival, Tarang is Shahani's second venture after 'Maya Darpan', made 12 years ago. Tarang is in epic form.... a film about greed and ambition, frailty and sacrifice, the class struggle and militancy.... all the gamut of emotions that have been the building blocks of the human condition today.

Even more interesting than the film however, was the general symposium that followed the screening of 'Tarang'.

Kumar Shahani himself addressed the audience on 'Structural Violence Against Women'

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### Fire

I gave her a flower.  
She changed it to fire.  
The perfume flared, became light  
The softness spat in my face.

She said  
"Write - fire"  
A few illiterate  
field labourers,  
tired out by the day's toil,  
bent their heads  
and fumblingly wrote  
on their slates with chalks.  
"Fire"

Again she said  
"Write once more, clearly - Fire"  
Bending their heads,  
they began to write,  
with more confidence, this time.

I saw their fingers,  
moving over the slates,  
turn into flames,  
and as they completed the word,  
their hands became torches.

"Here take this now if you want it"  
She saying,  
she gave me back the flower.  
(translated from Hindi by Manushi)

Engraved from  
MANUSHI



Contd. from page 17

Although the Constitution, in its basic declaration, is broad enough to ensure equality of men and women before the law, its interpretation and implementation have led to gaping disparities. For instance, the personal laws, especially the Islamic Family Law, contain gross discrimination in the field of marriage and divorce, succession and inheritance, guardianship and maintenance. But such inequality before the law and unequal protection of the laws have survived the lethal claws of Article 13. The Courts have watered down 'equality', by the doctrine of reasonable classification, as justifying differential treatment and have gone a step further to hold that classification of communities on the basis of religious denominations may be regarded as reasonable and therefore, constitutionally sustainable. Muslim womanhood could well have been salvaged if constructive judicial statemanship had adopted a more humanistic perspective to constitutional construction of Articles 13 and 14. But judges are no better nor worse than others in society, whatever the halo of their office; and, on crucial issues, where prejudice affects thinking, objectivity is a myth in court, as out of court. I still plead that the absurdity and acerbity of personal laws, irrationally cruel to women, may well be relieved by the High Bench which can afford to play the statesman and enforce gender justice, even in family law by imaginative application of the egalitarian creed of Articles 14 and 15.

Look at the ugly, nonsecular and grossly discriminatory situation in regard to Christian Succession in a progressive State like Kerala. I tried, when I was a Minister there, to unify the law in the three regions of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar by the uniform application of the Indian Succession Act throughout the State. My Bill was resisted vociferously by the Congress and Socialists, obviously at the instance of masculine and other vested interests. The Bill could not be proceeded with and today in India 1983, in Kerala, which has seen Marxists in power and the Congress which boasts of secular credentials, we have the Travancore Christian Succession Act, which gives next to nothing to the female gender on succession, and the Cochin Christian Succession Act, which gives something, but not a fair share, to women on inheritance and the Indian Succession Act, which is substantially more just to wives and daughters of Malabar Christians. As for Muslim women, apart from their discrimination in inheritance, how can it be that, in the egalitarian ethos of our constitutional order, the triple talaq can fatally snap the marital rights of a woman while in most other Islamic countries, even in Pakistan, marital rights and the law of divorce are far more amelioratory than in India. Justice Khalid of Kerala wrote many years ago in a concluding paragraph of a judgment on Muslim Divorce:

Before parting with this case, SANGHARSH

I feel it is my duty to alert public opinion toward a painful aspect that this case reveals. A Division Bench of this Court, the Highest Court for this State, has clearly indicated the extent of the unbridled power of a Muslim husband to divorce his wife. I am extracting below what their Lordships have said in Pathyil Vs. Moideen (1968 KLT 763).

The only condition necessary for the valid exercise of the right of divorce by a husband, is that he must be a major and of sound mind at that time. He can effect divorce whenever he desires. Even if he divorces his wife under compulsion, or incest, or in anger that is considered perfectly valid. No special form is necessary for effecting divorce under Hanafi law... The husband can effect it by conveying to the wife that he is repudiating the alliance. It need not even be addressed to her. It takes effect the moment it comes to knowledge. Should Muslim wives suffer this tyranny for all times? Should their personal law remain so cruel towards these unfortunate wives? Can it not be amended suitably to alleviate their sufferings? My judicial conscience is disturbed at this monstrosity. The question is whether the conscience of the leaders of public opinion of the community will also be disturbed. (1972 KLT 512 on 514)

This see-saw of law shows a political judicial disposition to woman's welfare, and readiness to surrender to religious fundamentalists and communal chauvinists. The Indian Adoption Bill became a casualty in Parliament for communal cowardice. And Mathura's case, a rape episode which ended in conviction in two courts, met with a magic acquittal in the Supreme Court because gender justice was sacrificed at the altar of moth-eaten rules of evidence.

I do not propose to be exhaustive in my probe into pervasive gender injustice. It is enough to say that even in the administrative areas, there is foul play. Muthamma's case (AIR 1979 SC 1868), shows how even the rules of the Indian Foreign Service displayed vulgar discrimination against women and the Court nearly shot down the provisions. Likewise, in the Indian Airlines Corporation Rules, air-hostesses were subjected to shameful discrimination and the Supreme Court (AIR 1981 SC 1829) struck down a part of

**A veneer of legal equality exists in favour of women but beneath the surface injustice is writ large.**

the injustice but sustained, to my surprise, another part.

It looks as if Indian women as a class, are unworthy, even to be peons, as a Kerala decision discloses. Justice Potti has had to flay the Government of Kerala for perpetrating such gender injustice as to deny women the right to become last grade servants under the pretext, that these posts involve arduous duties. Those males

# A plea for Gender Justice

who have watched female workers in summer's blistering heat on road construction and other hard toil cannot complain that women are unfit for the soft jobs of chaperais. It is masculine prejudice that is at the bottom of the rule and it is good that the Kerala High Court has exposed the vice. The Court observed:

The right of women should not be denied on fanciful assumptions of what work the woman could do and could not do. Whether the work is of an arduous nature and therefore unsuitable for woman, must be decided from the point of view of how women feel about it and how they would assess it. It is regrettable that decisions of material consequence said to be in the so called interest of women, purporting to protect, the position of women, are generally taken not after any consultation with representative bodies of women, but unilaterally by the administrators, most of whom carry with them the hang over of the Past, the past of male domination in our social set up.

Judged in the background of our traditional attitudes and conventional sentiments it may perhaps appear that woman whose role has all along been understood to be domestic dominance, cannot expose and adjust herself to some of the occupations which have been the sole preserve of men hitherto, and that might perhaps explain the inaccessibility of several posts to women. Just as the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s in the United States aroused a new national sensibility to sex discrimination, situations may arise in this country too, compelling women to seek enforcement of what is due to them. Woman is no longer content merely to sit at home expecting the man to earn the bread for the family. Both are quite often equal partners in sharing the financial burden of running the home. This social change must necessarily have its impact upon traditional perspectives concerning women's role and that must call for change in our laws, particularly so in the light of the constitutional mandate of equality. Rules should not operate as a deterrent to such change, but promote it. A time must necessarily come when all posts, excepting those which due to physical reasons women cannot take up, must be available to them. The attempt should not be to perpetuate discrimination but to obliterate it.

Although the legislatures have not been activist enough to enact measures under Article 15(3), one symbolic statute may be mentioned as a dubious gesture of well meant futility.

suicide among young married women. Increasing the age of marriage to 18 is desirable because, until then, a girl is not physically and mentally mature for the responsibilities of parenthood.

Gujarat has made child marriage a cognizable offence and provided for the appointment of a Child Marriage Prevention Officer. This is a good lead, and to ensure better enforcement, it is necessary that all offences under the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, should be made cognizable and Special Officers appointed to enforce its provisions.

The Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act, 1956, hardly helps womankind because of the loopholes in the text, half-heartedness in execution, and thanks to judicial interpretation, stultification when prosecution is launched. The truth is that neither the

**"To disarm the strong and arm the weak would be to change the social order which it's my job to preserve. Justice is the means by which established injustices are sanctioned."**

legislature or the judiciary nor indeed the administrative culture, has the social will to save the weaker gender. I remember introducing, while a Minister in Kerala, a Dowry Prohibition Bill in the Kerala Legislature which had teeth and would bite, not merely bark if enacted and enforced, which was furiously opposed by the Church and a few other religions in Kerala, with the result that I had to allow the legislative bill to lapse. By contrast, the Central Bill which was enacted with out much opposition, had no teeth and, may be, no intent to bite, salved masculine conscience and slumbered on the statute book. The basic issue of gender justice that occurs to my mind is as to whether we, as Indian humanity, do accept the axiological import of one woman

It is hardly necessary to argue the case against child marriages. It may be pointed out however, that the Suicide Enquiry committee appointed by the Government of Gujarat, reported that child marriage is one of the significant factors leading to the high incidence of

and one man - one value. The injustices of the past are not in the least disturbed by the presence to justice of the present and we judges and politicians and civil servants play Judas to the Jesus of our Constitution. Does Anatole France ring a bell for the Indian elite when he acridly says:

"To disarm the strong and arm the weak, would be to change the social order which it's my job to preserve. Justice is the means by which established injustices are sanctioned."

I should really request the suppressed gender to rise in insurrectionary non-violence for translation of constitutional rhetoric into domestic and public reality, so that woman, in the fullness and fairness of equal partnership, may emerge to shape a new Bharat. Neither a doll nor a drudge nor a criminal's helpless target shall woman be, but a builder of

Bharat, a partner in society and a free person with potential in her own right!

Let us look at the facts of life bearing on gender justice, now that we have some idea of the crisis of hypocrisy from which law and justice suffer. A dialectical approach to the pathological conditions of female handicaps, reveals the inhumanity of man to woman. Women, in every religion, every community, every caste and every tribe, are second class citizens. Thus the exploitative factor in society is compounded in their case. They are a backward class, maimed physically and manned physically. Even in rich communities, woman has a raw deal. For instance, among Marwaris, with higher levels of prosperity, the young woman is exposed to dowry deaths, disowned after pompous marriage by parents and detested by in-laws who make more demands, with hara kiri as the only hope of escape. The girls are not qualified to be self-dependent or employable, with confidence to walk into the wide world when, like a bear at bay, she has to live her own life. Girls are brain-washed into believing that matrimony is their destiny.

Averages often hide many ugly facts. If we examine State average literacy rates further, the position is very unsatisfactory, with references to scheduled castes in general and scheduled caste women in particular. There are 46 districts in the country (mainly in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh), where the literacy rate among scheduled caste women is less than 1%, going down even to 0.2% in some cases. At every level it seems the girls and women are neglected.

We reach the tragic inference that our educational system has treated the female of the species as untouchable and unapproachable.

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## Behind High Walls: A Working Women's Hostel

Contd. from page 21  
cusing them of an attempt to murder. By this time the management had enlisted the help of the police who were of course completely in connivance with them. Police presence on the campus was used as a means to intimidate and terrorise the women into complete passivity.

Since Vimochana had been completely involved in the struggle, and had, in fact, even been implicated in the charges filed against the residents by the council for the management, it made out an application to implead itself as a party to the case. This application was dismissed after partly listening to the argument of the lawyer. In November 1983 the case was transferred to another court.

The legitimate struggle of the girls was vindicated at yet another point when the women were acquitted in a majority of the false criminal charges filed against them. What made the victory sweeter was that along with the judgement order of acquittal, strictures were also passed against the concerned police officials investigating the matter.

In a spirit of unholy vengeance on January 2, 1984 although a 'status quo' had been granted to the inmates, the management taking the law into their own hands, completely cut off the supply of water and electricity. By this time the harassment had reached intolerable limits and of the original number of 140, only 35 women had stayed back.

The management made determined attempts through petty forms of harassment to coerce the women into leaving the hostel. Among the very definite strategies they used towards this end, were sending telegrams to the parents of the women asking them to come and take their daughter away since she had been arrested, and exerting pressure on the hostelites through their employers asking them to apologise to the management if they did not wish to lose their jobs.

Getting the domestic staff to help them in their efforts to break the morale of the residents, they even descended

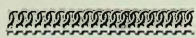
control the recalcitrant management. In fact, the apathy and lack of objectivity and sensitivity on the part of church officials and their attempt to defend the management, made it amply clear that they would spare no effort to ensure that the ripples of tension would not be allowed to spread outside the church circles, and by granting themselves an 'above law' status, they could take refuge in religious sentiments only as a strategy to contain and diffuse the struggle.

(b) Further, taking advantage of this protected status and fortified by a pious, religious image, the management found it easy to use official machinery like the police and public opinion, to break the morale of the protesting residents. In the eyes of the public, the credibility of such managements is rarely called into question, while the character and veracity of the residents, who being women staying away from home is always suspect.

(c) As an extension of the fact that the Brigitte hostel has to be viewed in terms of the changing status and role of women in Indian society, the residents of these hostels for working women have a historically evolved, ethical and even legal right to ask certain basic questions about the (mis) management. This also has to be seen in the context of the socio-economic background of such women. In the Brigitte Hostel, for instance, a majority of the women having at best a Pre-University education, are working as secretaries in private firms, earning an average salary of Rs. 350/-. Supposedly, 'social service' organisations meant for providing shelter to such women, in the ultimate analysis are reduced to mere 'self service' organisations.

What has to be done to counter the prejudiced and avaricious attitudes of managements incapable of running hostels for independent working women in need of security and shelter? Even if long term plans can foresee the setting up of independent community housing structures managed by residents, the more immediate need is for progressive legislation which brings within its ambit, all such hostels regardless of their social or religious standing.

Vimochana



## The Fractured Image

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in Cinema' bringing up several points that are well worth greater discussion and debate.

Often, he said, the theme of a film is mistaken for its content, citing the example of 'Insaf Ka Tarazu' the much criticised film which, while ostensibly decrying the fact of rape, actually invites a sexual relationship with the protagonist.... Zeenat Aman.

He spoke of the natural impa-

## Unionising For Their Rights: The Gayathri Women

'Gayatri Womens Welfare Association', an ancillary unit of the HMT watch factory, was started with 30 employees in 1976, with the intention of helping physically handicapped as well as economically and socially oppressed women. The work consisted in assembling watches from the components obtained from the main Hindustan Machine Tool (HMT) factory unit. The number of employees increased from the initial 30 to about 100, by 1978. During 1978-81, the workers production reached an all time high of 5 lakh watches resulting in a substantial profit for the management. However, service conditions deteriorated, the salaries of even the senior most employees stagnated at a mere Rs.250/- while the authoritarian attitude of the management became more oppressive. The reason given by the unconcerned management for the non-increase in salary, was that the loan of Rs.16 lakhs they had taken from the bank had to be cleared. Disillusioned and disappointed, the workers formed a union in November 1982. This however, led to the unjustified suspension of the office bearers of the fledgling union. Enraged at this, the employees undeterred by their economic and social conditions, started their struggle with a tool down strike. In their hunt for justice they met all the top level politicians, including the Chief Minister. For a month they even went on a hunger strike in front of the Labour Commissioner's office.

Since at this point a few politicians also got involved and went on a hunger strike in support of the employees, the government intervened and forced the management to

come forward for some kind of agreement. Meanwhile, even before the agreement was signed by the management, some of the women workers got beaten up by the police on one occasion. At present, although the agreement has been 'accepted' by the management, the inhuman harassment still continues to be meted out to the workers within the factory while 5 of the union members are facing an enquiry - the struggle therefore still continues.

Within this ongoing struggle of the women employees of the ancillary unit, there are certainly some wider fundamental, if, provocative, political questions related to that of women's rights and women's struggles that can be discerned.

For one, the management of the Gayatri Welfare Association comprises of eleven women belonging to the higher echelons of society, whereas the employees coming from the lower middle class and lower class, are mainly widows, physically handicapped and dalits. The struggle, although seemingly a typical management - employee confrontation, therefore goes deeper, and on analysis, reflects the class contradiction of the women's struggle.

Ironically, the all woman management has been using a typical strategy, imbued through the values of the male dominated society, to control and suppress the struggle of the women employees - a struggle aimed at the right to live with dignity. So 80 desperate women today are being exploited by women of a higher class, under the deceptive if hypocritical guise of social service. For instance, the management threw the girls out of the

hostels they themselves had provided as accommodation, without caring that the women had been literally forced out into the streets without basic necessities like food and shelter. The management, using its position as a group of high society women, has also resorted to the typical mode of casting aspersions on the characters of the girls who because of their backgrounds, are vulnerable to such attacks. The forming of the union for better service conditions and decent wages was the only 'provocation' for the management to resort to such underhand tactics.

'Women are against women' is often repeated to describe situations like this. And what we in the women's movement must be aware of is that while there are issues (dowry, rape, sexual harassment and so on) on which women can unite, we must not forget that we are also divided by class, by caste.

Despite determined efforts through their union, the women employees continue to bear the intolerable harassment at their place of work. The intervention of government has also not brought any relief. The militant workers still continue their struggle to achieve justice. If the management continues to be authoritarian and high handed and the government proves itself incapacitated to solve the problem, whom can the women employees turn to for help? At this juncture when no short term solution seems to be working, the situation warrants a radical change in the functioning of society. This applies to all the issues we are involved with and the Gayatri struggle is only one such example.

Champavathi H.S.  
Vimochana

tence of activists towards change, but he warned of the dangers in expecting art to change immediately with the social condition of women. If cultural activity is to change, it has to fall back on questionable methods, often succeeding in reinforcing prejudice, instead of displacing images to get new meanings. While facile and easily understood images are needed, the only way to radicalise cinema content is to take recourse to traditional vehicles of expression and try to work against them, maybe by raising new slogans.

His speech was followed by a long and lively debate, where the director was grilled about his work, his own exploitation of Smita Patil's sexuality, which he strongly denied, and a general question and answer session about the condition of women in film and society. Sadanand Menon, a journalist from Madras, spoke on the portrayal of women in South Indian films. He lamented the fact that while men's roles have undergone tremendous differentiation over the years,

women were still trapped in iconic images like those of the Umman Cult, where primal woman, the handmaiden of superstitious bigotry, reigns supreme.

"Why do women consume their own devaluation?" he also asked. That is a question easily answered. Even now, when women are beginning to take part in world affairs, it is still a world of men. A woman still seeks a definition of herself through the eyes of men, and if men portray her as a seductress and doorman, it is hard for her to break that image.

That is why a new cinema, a cinema of and for women, is so strongly needed in India. The big screen is the only means of mass entertainment development. If it is influential enough to serve as a trampoline into the political arena, it is also a major cultural vehicle for change. A few signs are showing that women are coming into their own in Indian cinema... not very radically so, but at least differently from men. Hopefully, in a larger context, film festivals and discussions like the one presented by Vimochana, have their own role to play in fostering a climate for this social transformation.

Robini Nilekani



The soul that walks in fear knows no freedom....., and the soul of a woman is fearful. Little wonder, when she is entrapped within a vicious circle of violence that constantly seeks to not merely violate, exploit and even destroy her being, but also define and direct her very process of becoming.

# Women and Violence

*waves of raging torment  
instill in my soul  
a fear so deep,  
a feeling so numb,  
a protest so mute,  
that another myth of freedom  
is stifled without a sigh*

What explains her unconscious if passive acceptance' of stereotypes and preformulated roles? Why does the woman allow herself to be used, abused and exploited through institutions like the media? Why is she susceptible to particular forms of direct violence like rape and other demeaning forms of sexual and physical harassment?

To find answers to these, we cannot merely seek recourse to pedagogues like Freud who unabashedly claim that the distinguishing traits of a female personality are "passivity, masochism and narcissism", granting such phenomena a biological and psychological inevitability. We must go beyond finding explanations in immediate realities to analyse the kind of structures in society which perpetuate such forms of personal and structural violence.

A complex interplay of the forces of an unequal socio-economic system and the institution of patriarchy generates an ideology and value system which seeks to propagate itself through an invidious process of socialisation and structural forms of violence i.e. institutions such as the law, media and family, which reinforce social and economic relations and roles. Personal violence against women, like rape and dowry deaths therefore only reflects the systematic violence of our society that creates conditions which are in themselves destructive. This understanding should prevent us from viewing acts of physical violence against women as isolated incidents attributable mainly to individual aberrations. Oppression of and violence against women has, very definitely, a cultural psychological, material and sociological base.

This is clearly to be perceived in countries like India where on account of unequal social and economic structures (like that of caste

and class) an endemic and perpetual violence is generated which is expressed through marginalisation, lack of opportunities and discrimination against large sections of the people. Within the structures of class and caste domination, the submission of women to men remains a constant feature — they are discriminated against not only on the basis of caste or class but also gender.

Structural violence is inherent to the patriarchal family structure which institutionalises power and gender relations. Women who work can not shrug off their household duties. Moreover the patriarchal framework by imposing traditional behaviour patterns and prescribing roles, clearly limits their entry and participation on an equal footing with men in the economic, cultural and political spheres.

The media is yet another form of structural violence which not also helps to reinforce gender roles (the self sacrificing, passive wife of our hindi films is an obvious example) but also reduces women to mere sexual objects to be exploited and used. This portrayal of women as erotic, sexual objects forms the basis for prostitution or pornography, perpetrating still other forms of violence. In advertisements for instance, the point of sale becomes not the product but a woman who is used to titillate the readers and viewers, juxtaposed incongruously as she may be with the product. The copy and the visual one in such cases by no stretch of imagination or logic, are linked to each other. Reducing a woman to an object as a voyeur's delight or glorifying and reiterating traditional roles (e.g. the ideal woman in the 'Vanaspathi' advertisement) then becomes an economically and ideologically viable venture for that dominant group or strata of society



which benefits from such an act.

Structural societal violence, as reflected in the patriarchal family structure whose main ideological function is geared towards moulding children into sex roles, is further specifically institutionalised in the system of dowry — a concept which not merely reinforces the lower status of woman, stamping her as an economic liability, but has also of late, begun carrying within itself a possible death warrant and a sanction for psychological and physical torture of the bride at the hands of the in-laws.

In today's highly consumerist society, a bride has become a source of substantial capital for the groom and his family. When the bride fails to live up to material expectations, she is considered disposable and is either done away with or is driven to commit suicide. The structural form of

violence implicit in the dowry system in such cases, finally erupts into direct physical violence.

This raises questions about the 'stability' of a family structure within which artificially maintained relationships show signs of violent disintegration in response to the slightest external pressure. Cruelty to wives and other women in such domestic situations is a fairly common feature. The dynamics of such family violence, in this context, is much more complicated since it is also linked to the problems of unequal social and economic structures. In fact, studies have shown that the shortage of resources in a family group increases the incidence of violence in the family, thus verbal and physical attacks on women and children is one symptom of such a problem.

Rape as a form of personal violence, is not merely a physical assault and symbolic of the degradation of

woman kind, but a violation of the most sensitive part of a female psyche. Susan Brownmiller defines it as "a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear" It is only of late that rape is being viewed as a criminal attack against an individual and specifically a woman. Otherwise, the shocking sentiment implicit even today in the law besides the attitude of society, is that a woman "asks for it" or in a spirit of condonation states that a rapist is an individual giving in to his 'natural virility'!

Although one cannot negate the fact that a rapist could be a psychologically disturbed male, lust is not the sole reason for rape. Mass rape has frequently been used as a political weapon to either punish opponents or intimidate lower classes, harrjans and tribals. Every victory or defeat in war is

celebrated or avenged by raping the women folk. This dehumanising form of violence can be traced back to the concept of a woman as a piece of property which can be bought, sold, guarded or ravished as the situation demands.

Today, the increase in incidents of individual violence like eve-teasing and other forms of sexual harassment, could be attributed to the fact that women are not only being seen more outside their homes, but are also in the process, stepping away from normative behaviour patterns. In the absence of traditionally defined attitudes towards women in such roles, people in general, define their own attitudes, and men in particular, formulate their reactions which are conditioned by environmental factors.

Violence against women is basically only reflective of a general culture of violence being nurtured in today's society. With values of 'maschismo' and the competitive spirit inculcated during the socialisation process itself through institutions like the family, school and media, ultimately these aggressive little games get logically extended into the most organised and legitimised form of violence-war. Wars not only throw entire social, political and economic systems out of balance, but also indirectly unleash forms of savagery specific to women, like rape.

While it would be 'unrealistic' to presume that we can do away with violence in all its myriad forms, surely we can do away with certain consciously and unconsciously developed structures, concepts, processes and attitudes which perpetuate it? The most basic if 'simplistic' remedy would be to initiate the levelling out of unequal social systems which encourage skewed power relations based on sex, caste, class and race. But, perhaps, some of us in the interests of self-survival, would consider even that venture 'idealistic'?

*While the anguished souls  
mutely cry out in agony  
One tormented spirit breaks out  
and beckons  
a new fear  
a new questioning  
a new hope.....?*

Madhu Bhushan  
Vimochana



Why women burn—II  
Marriages going up in flames

In a world of varying values  
Child raped and killed

Widowhood—plunge  
from light

Alleged sex  
maoine held

Working wives—servants  
two masters

Victims of  
ad-verent onslaught on fair sex

Here, pure Parachute  
Because you care

WHY CHABIRANI WAS  
RAPE VICTIM AND MUTILATED  
WOMEN BURN—IV  
Police, society apathetic

RAPE VICTIMS:  
THE LEGAL ODDS

Your son-in-law beats me every day  
and then I rode full speed  
up the mountain  
and shot the monster.

WHEN SHE  
GROWS UP  
SHE WILL  
IMITATE YOU

While the anguished souls  
mutely cry out in agony  
One tormented spirit breaks out  
and beckons  
a new fear  
a new questioning  
a new hope.....?



Give Me Justice!





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# Rethinking women and development

Over the last two development decades, there has been much evidence to show that the situation of women in developing countries has deteriorated. As we enter the third development decade, there are several questions to be raised regarding the nature of development, and the role of women in it. To understand why women have been left out, a brief historical review of development is essential.

## 1960-1980: from then to now

During the first development decade (1960-1970), the world's gross international product increased by one trillion dollars. Of this, 80% went to the industrialized nations (average annual increase: \$1000) and 6% to poor nations (incomes less than \$200). At the end of the first development decade, an annual growth rate of 5% had been achieved by most developing countries. Also increasing were rates of unemployment, population growth, and the disparity in people's incomes. By this time it had become clear that in spite of rising GNP, the essential needs of people were not being met.

At the same time, developing nations were being depleted of their natural resources at an alarming rate - either in the form of direct imports to developed nations, or as raw material for production of potentially exportable commodities. The development strategy in the 1960s had concerned itself with increased food production to meet increasing population growth. With technological revolutions such as the Green



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## A resource guide for organization and action Women in development

In their first years, women's movements tended to concentrate on issues directly affecting women in their own country - job discrimination, violence, child care. As the women and development debate has gained momentum, however, women have begun to address some of these issues of international politics and economics from a feminist point of view.

ISIS, the Women's International Information and Communication Service, has compiled a resource guide "to recent thinking and literature about women and development and

to the feminist critique of these". The areas of focus are multinationals; rural development and food production, including appropriate technology and income generation; health; migration and tourism; and education and communication.

The overview articles in each chapter are followed by a list of selected resources as well as descriptions of action groups, institutions, and governmental, intergovernmental and development agencies which produce materials on the issues discussed.

The article "Rethinking women and development" on this page is a shortened version of Anita Anand's introductory article to the guide. It is the hope of all those women who have contributed that "the shared insights, ideas, experiences and resources... will contribute to developing a new theory and practice of development which includes a feminist perspective".

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 1211 Geneva 2,  
 Switzerland.

Revolution, this had been achieved, yet food shortages were acute. Massive population control programmes were promoted, yet the real reasons why people had children were never fully understood by the population experts.

With the increasing militancy of the developing nations, a more palatable form of development had to be devised. So new concepts were developed by the experts. With the use of terms such as 'basic human needs,' 'new directions,' 'meeting the needs of the poorest of the poor,' and more recently 'growth with equity,' a whole new development jargon emerged. The developing world retaliated with the New International Economic Order (NIEO), demanding a fairer share of the world's resources, fairer trading patterns, and more input into international decision making. Currently, the two sides maintain these positions with the developing countries pushing for the NIEO, seeing BHN (Basic Human Needs) as a ploy to avoid dealing with structural issues. The developed countries continue to talk of human rights, land reform, technology transfer, without admitting the need for real change in their own economic practices.

During these two decades, women working on develop-

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## Rethinking women and development

women in development were being propagated, the nature of development, as it existed, was never questioned. The proponents of such thinking were in basic agreement with mainstream development thought. The only quarrel with it was that women had been left out. Even to this day, the most ardent proponents of integrating women into development have not realized that neither mainstream nor marxist models have room for women, as neither group has addressed the problem of patriarchy. Society's acceptance of male domination has pervaded development work. Though much lip service has been paid to the equal participation of women in the male-dominated development circles, this has remained by and large 'integration' without much thought or attempt towards genuine power shar-

market economy (70 to 80% are involved in subsistence work), these indicators have little validity. As women make up 60 to 90% of the agricultural labour force and produce 44% of all food, why is it crucial to talk of income-generating projects? Rather, would it not be better to recognize women's current productivity? Most developing economies have moved or are moving from agrarian-based to industrial-based economies, in spite of what their governments may claim. During this process, the structure of agriculture has suffered. With growing emphasis on cash cropping and non-food crops, subsistence farming has suffered a major setback. This has had serious repercussions on women and the rural communities. Through subsistence farming, most of a rural family's and com-

who have been forced into non-farm work. However, it further exacerbates the problem of vanishing subsistence farming and food dependence on foreign markets. Enlisting women in new jobs, largely for manufacturing export items, often requires their migration to urban areas. Skills that women are taught are 'female-prone' - a term used to describe skills which women are supposedly best at, such as sewing, knitting, embroidery, and which are low-skilled, low-paid, and easily replaceable. Local and multinational industries such as textiles, electronics, and agribusiness have capitalized on this shift and preferentially hire women. Paying low wages for long hours in unhealthy and hazardous working conditions, these industries claim they are liberating women. Multinationals have been keen advocates of this

Continued from page 1

ment issues were suffering the same fate as women in general. They were considered marginal to the process of the highly intellectual development debate, and were treated as such. In the early 1970s several European and North American women began advancing the concept of 'integrating women into development'. Their work pointed out that development had actually harmed women, that many women in developing countries were worse off than before. More studies were conducted by social scientists, political scientists, and other academicians, confirming these findings.

In 1975 the International Women's Year conference declared a decade that would concentrate on women the world over. Since then, at national and international forums, women's role in the economic process has been a major component, and the race for 'women in development' was on.

## Integrating women into development: a pseudo-feminist myth

The definition of integration is 'to form into a whole'; 'to incorporate into a larger unit', 'to end segregation of and bring into common and equal membership in society or an organization' (Webster).

In the case of 'integrating women into development', if the 'whole' is development then we can assume that bringing women into development would end an essentially sexist process of progress. However, when the literature and theories about

ing with women. For mainstream development models, development has meant the 'integration' of developing countries into the international market system, whereby the notion of 'growth' was to be manifested in increased economic production. Towards this end, education and employment were considered a means for income generation. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that common indicators used to determine women's involvement in development have been employment and education.

## Income generation: no questions asked

When most women live in rural areas and in a non-

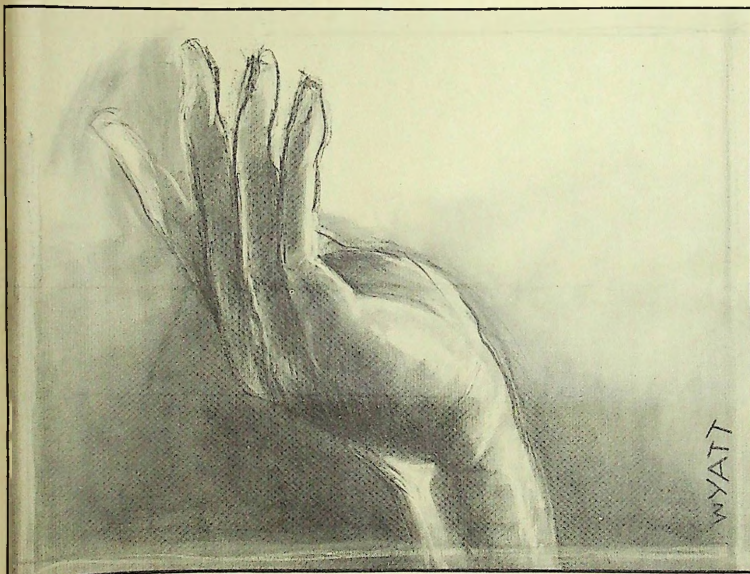
munity's needs were met. Excess edibles were sold or bartered in local markets for commodities such as soap and clothes. With increasing numbers of women having to shift to cash cropping, and with meagre economic returns, the family's needs are not being met. Nutritionally this has taken a heavy toll on the health and well-being of rural communities. Former food-producing communities are now growing cash crops or non-food crops for export to urban, national and international markets. Whereas once they were somewhat self-sufficient, they now mostly rely on government hand-outs or foreign aid. Income-generating projects may be a godsend to women with few opportunities for subsistence farming and few or no skills for alternative work in a limited job market,

transfer of women's work from self-sufficient to market-oriented types. The industries well realize the gold mine they have struck with women who are usually the most willing to work, the easiest to fire, and the least likely to unionize. Income generation advocates little realized the complexity of issues when they suggested this. With little or no protection for wages, benefits and work, women are the most abused section of the formal labour force.

## Education: literacy or critical consciousness?

Education, along with income-generation capacity, has been perceived as the key

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## Rethinking women and development

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to the golden door of success and equal participation of women in the development process. It is true that women need education to be able to participate in society, but the nature of this education has not been sufficiently questioned.

In industrialized societies or urban areas of developing countries, education can be a stepping stone to economic self-sufficiency. However, the educational systems in most developing countries are relics of their colonial past, and irrelevant to the needs of most people, especially women. The education is either highly specialized (in which case women have to compete in a narrow job market) or too general (in which case women have access only to the lowest paid jobs). Economically, even such education is beyond the means of most people. If a child has to be educated, preference is given to the male child, who is a better asset in terms of financial returns. For the affluent, educating women is an exercise that will increase their price in the marriage market.

If education is to have any value for women, it must be a means to raise their consciousness about the oppressive structures that keep them in positions of powerlessness. Most educational systems do not provide a climate for such thinking skills to develop. In developing societies, most educated women — the leaders, academicians, professionals in establishment organizations — perpetuate the status quo. The reasoning behind this is that if the patriarchal system has worked for them, it should work for all women. Demands for traditional education from Third World wom-

en and others come from a lack of perspective of what this limited privilege can be used for.

When a woman is relatively powerless and has little control over what is happening in her environment, education for literacy is meaningless. What she craves is knowledge of why she must bear so many children, work endless hours without respite, be beaten and raped, have an alcoholic husband, and go hungry. Existing educational systems have not provided women with the tools to understand and analyze the true nature of social, political, and economic systems that govern their lives and oppress them, and this is why they have failed. If women are to be change agents in their societies, the education offered them must be a tool for consciousness raising and action. This end result cannot

now demanding technologies that meet the needs of their budgets and projects.

Taking off from the 'small is beautiful' ideology, the concept of appropriate technology emerged. Developed countries rushed into developing ones with new designs and innovations that would revolutionize the developing world. Recognizing that women do back-breaking work for long hours, the women-in-development community sought solutions once again in technology. Instead of examining why women, after hard work in the fields and markets, have to return home to cook, care for children, gather fuel and water and take care of animals, the development planners seized upon appropriate technology. Smokeless stoves, grinders, seed hullers, weeders, hoes and such were invented and improved upon

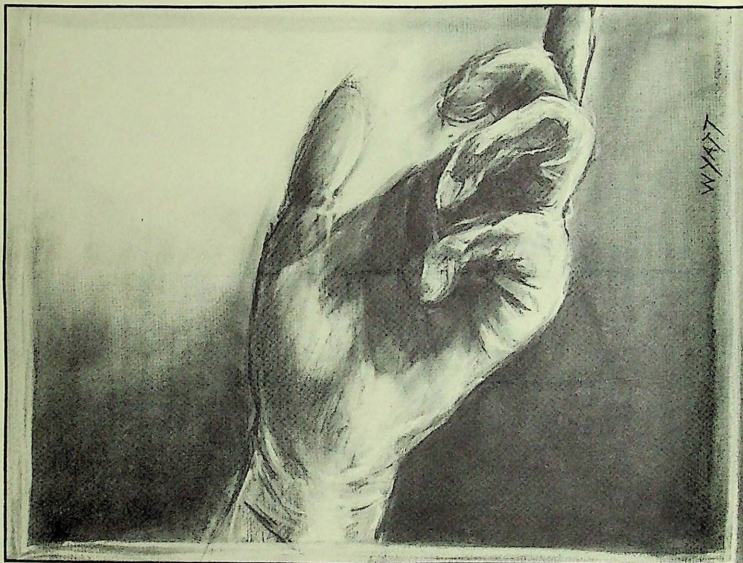
societies, and often involve resources alien to the local environment. Even when the appropriate technologies are locally developed, they are often done in research laboratories and academic institutions with little input from the women and men in the field who will be utilizing the technologies.

## Health

Most of the health care focus around women has been in family planning and nutrition. While it is important for women to have access to information and services to control their fertility, much of the help offered has been misguided and controlled mainly by population specialists and family planning agents, who are usually men. Reproduction information and services made

search), as well as non-food items. Towards this end, land once producing food to meet the needs of the community is being used for cash-cropping and income generation. To alleviate this problem, solutions are being proposed and implemented such as food substitutes (e.g. soy-meal) which are alien to the diet of the local people and, therefore, rejected. Questions relating to the overall structures of agriculture, of land ownership, crop priorities, etc., are hardly ever raised. If they are, it is in the light of reformist measures such as land reform or water reallocation.

If a society were committed to maintaining a fair standard of health for its people, it would devise and implement systems of agriculture and health care that would make the goal possible. As long as foreign exchange earnings and modernization are higher priorities for most developing societies, basic health care will remain an illusion. Research and development emphases will be on diseases which affect mainly the elites (e.g. cardiovascular diseases), with little attention to the politics of malnutrition and reproduction. Development experts, unwilling to question the power and control of medicine and researchers, will continue to ignore the role of women in the health and planning process, except as a means to serve the experts' ends.



IF Illustration No. 106

be brought about by learning the three Rs or being drilled in nutrition and family planning.

## Appropriate technology: appropriate for whom?

Transfer of technology has been a major ingredient of mainstream development work. This transfer has filled the coffers of many multinational corporations that manufacture and export heavy equipment, has supported highly specialized and largely intellectual research and development institutions, and has meant large investments for developing countries. It has proved an expensive and futile exercise and developing countries are

to cut the time spent in these tasks. The inherent sexism in permitting men to return from the fields, bathe, eat, and go visiting with friends has never been questioned. Job sharing of 'women's work' is unheard of. Similar questions can be raised regarding technical innovations that have supposedly eased the burden of women's work in developed societies. Have the vacuum cleaner, dishwasher, blender, ice maker enabled a woman to have a more equal relationship with a man? Equality cannot be achieved as long as women are seen as marginal to the existence of men, society, or development.

The new directions in technology suffer from the same malady as development. They are male-dominated, designed mostly in developed

available to women are largely male- and establishment-controlled, and unsuited to the life-styles and bodies of the women receiving them. Additionally, services such as regular check-ups and pre- and post-natal care are rarely available. A similar situation exists in the area of nutrition. The popular thinking is that most people in developing countries do not have sufficient know-how to balance their diets and need to be educated. However, it can be said that development has done more to undermine the possibility of achieving a balanced diet than to help it. Development strategies, supported by international food politics, have pushed for the boost in food production of items for export (to earn foreign exchange for sophisticated technology and re-

## Toward a theory of women and development

For women to become a vital force in their societies, change will have to be based on a new theory of development which embraces feminism. Feminism poses some challenges to development theory and praxis that must be addressed if any effective and inclusive work on bringing about a new order is to be done. It questions the artificial barriers between the political, social, and economic aspects of society, and how individuals relate to these orders. Feminism asserts that the personal is political and personal change is a prerequisite to societal change ... the internalization and subjectification of being a change agent. It insists that the experience of women be recognized and validated in all work related to change. Examples of how this theory can be developed already exist, in progressive women's movements all over the world that are challenging the

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**Rethinking women and development**

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power of patriarchy. Women are organizing, speaking out against injustice in the home, workplace and society. These struggles are not restricted to upper- and middle-class women (as we are often told), but evident in working class and peasant women's groups, who have a long history of struggle against oppression. At the same time, the struggle against patriarchy and economic oppression cannot be separated from the struggle of those who are poor and powerless. Progressive women's movements can be separate, and part of all those who work to bring about a just, participatory, and sustainable society.

**Strategies for change: reform or radical?**

There is no one strategy that will ensure equitable development for all. However, there are several directions that such strategies can go which could enable equitable development. If change were to be categorized in two broad areas - reform and radical - each category would have certain strategies that would enable change to be brought about.

Reformist strategies are those which are devised to alleviate problems (e.g., food stamps for the hungry, unemployment compensation for the unemployed) without much attention to the cause of the problems. Radical strategies are devised by examining the root of the problem, and proposing alternatives to presently existing structures that are responsible for creating the problems. Whether strategies are reformist or radical in nature,

they can go hand in hand, especially in societies where a total transformation of the political, social, and economic system is not in sight, but there must be understanding of the means and the end.

The US 1980 Democratic Political Convention illustrated the need for such awareness. Political reforms meant that for the first time, women were half of the delegates to the national convention. However, as a columnist, Richard Reeves, pointed out, "Women, even when they share floor space at a convention, may never truly share political power or change politics. The game has rules made by men and they have a life and momentum of their own". Such reforms are important, but should not alone be taken as necessarily representing a real shift toward equality in

ible, with maximum participation of all people. For those in the developing and developed world it means study, consciousness raising, dialoguing and brainstorming about how people can gain control over their economies, no matter where they are. It means concentrating on the problems locally, state-wide, nationally, and internationally.

A feminist approach to this future would require that this process happen before 'development' is planned. It would also require the participation of women in every step of the way.

And finally, women - and men who are concerned about development - must learn to stand fast. Too long the theory has prevailed that when other more pressing issues of politics and peace are dealt with, then humankind will be able to turn to



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decision making. Both reformist and radical movements share a common goal for change. The underlying ideologies of the two are different, but reforms rightly integrated can become steps to more long-term change.

**Helping shape this future**

Individuals and institutions interested in building this new just order need first of all to do more intentional thinking about the kind of political, social, and economic order that will meet the needs of all people. Towards this end, development must mean the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services in the most equitable manner possible,

the needs of women. The challenging idea of our times is a determination to build a world less divided between rich and poor, the weak and the powerful. In moving to this goal, the old theory can no longer hold. True development, just development, cannot happen when the needs, talents, and potentialities of half of the world's population are seen as secondary and marginal. That is why feminism is not a frivolous concern. It deals with work, with struggle, and above all with the dream of a new day for all peoples.

By Anita Anand, Consultant, International Development, 712 4th Street N.E., Washington, D. C. 20002, USA.

**Facts and figures**

**Women and health**

■ Maternal mortality rates - the risk of dying from pregnancy-related causes - vary greatly in different parts of the world. In Europe today, the rates are as low as 6 per 100,000 live births compared to rates up to 1,000 per 100,000 live births reported in parts of Africa and Asia. Unregulated fertility, high rates of illegal abortions, and partial or total absence of care during pregnancy and childbirth are main causes.

■ About one-half of non-pregnant and two-thirds of pregnant women in developing countries (excluding China) suffer from nutritional anaemia, a syndrome often caused by a combination of malnutrition, infection, and almost continuous child-bearing.

■ If all births were spaced at least two years apart, infant mortality could be reduced by an average of 10% and one-to-four-years child mortality by around 16%.

■ Infant and maternal mortality are highest among teen-age mothers. Women who become pregnant while they are still adolescent have a much higher risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth. In some countries a considerable proportion of first births occur to young women under 20. Postponing the first birth - whether by marrying at a later age or by suitable family planning - will greatly improve a woman's health status, make pregnancy and childbirth less hazardous, and give baby a healthier start in life, and mother a chance to mature physically, mentally and emotionally.

■ Out of approximately 125 million annual births in the world, roughly 20 million are low-birth-weight (i.e. one in six births), with a higher risk of death and a lower potential for healthy growth and development.

■ It has been estimated that there are about 300 million couples who do not want any more children but who are not using any method of family planning, chiefly due to inadequate access to services in the developing world, especially in rural areas and urban slums. As always, the poorest layers of the population are the last ones to be provided with social services.

■ If women the world over were able to have the children they say they want, the crude birth rate would range between 16 and 28 per 1,000 population rather than the present range of 28 to 40.

Source: WHO.



# Women's time

Almost without exception, low-cost strategies for promoting the health and growth of children demand more of their mothers.

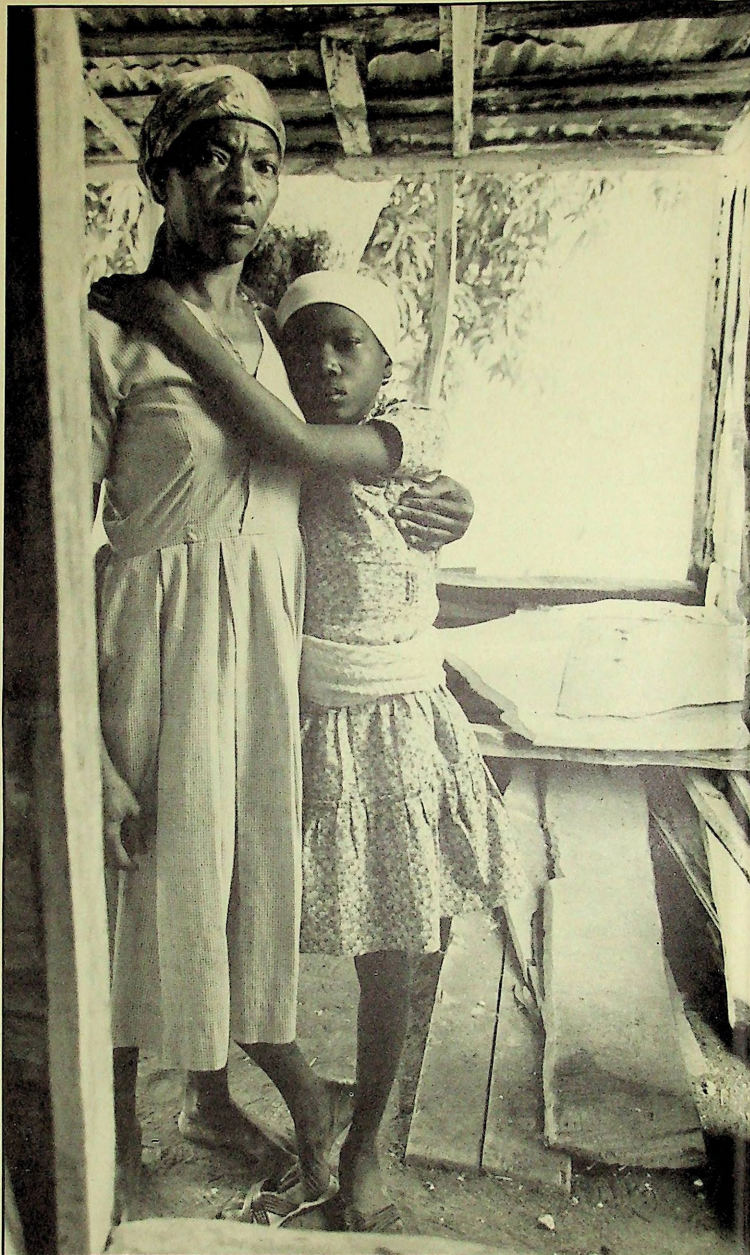
Longer breastfeeding consumes time and energy; oral rehydration therapy demands time and patience to mix up a fresh solution each morning and administer it slowly several times a day to a sick child; preventing malnutrition will mean taking a child to be weighed each month and spending more time in the preparation of the four to five feeds a day which are necessary to adequately supplement its diet; and making sure a child is immunized means repeated trips to health clinics or vaccination posts.

## Too much work

Yet many of the women of the poorest communities in the developing world are already working 12 to 16 hours a day. Often spending many more hours in the fields than men, women are responsible for at least 50% of family food production in the developing world. Once the harvest is in, it is also the woman's job to do all the pounding, winnowing, grinding, boiling, straining, drying, and storing of the family's staple foods. On top of that, women are normally responsible for collecting firewood and drawing water, gathering fodder and looking after animals, tending kitchen gardens and marketing any surplus, cooking and washing up after meals, cleaning and washing clothes, sewing and weaving, maintaining social obligations and attending to the sick and the elderly—and all of this is on top of the tasks of bearing and caring for children.

If the mother lives in one of the slums or shanty towns which now house almost a quarter of the developing world, then she may also face the special difficulties of depending entirely on the market-place for her family's food, of long hours away from home as she struggles to earn an income, and of an overcrowded and dangerous environment in which to bring up her children. In the five largest cities of India, for example, 60% of all families live in one room—and most have neither safe water nor hygienic sanitation.

In a rural area, the mother is likely to face different prob-



IF Photo No. 519

NICOLE TOUTOUNI

lems. Usually, diarrhoeal and other infections come during the busiest seasons of the agricultural year. Once the rains have begun, hoeing and planting cannot wait. Once the crop has ripened, the harvest must be gathered in. At these times mothers cannot keep returning to their homes to administer more oral rehydration solution or to prepare one of the small and frequent meals which a weanling child needs. In one

African nation, for example, surveys have shown that women's work in agriculture means that many small children are fed, on average, only 1.6 times a day.

As important as a mother's time is her energy. And again the unequal standing of women, and sometimes their out-and-out exploitation, means that the mother is frequently ill and tired, devoid of the capacity for extra effort which improvements in

her child's well-being may demand. Of the 464 million women in the Third World, for example, no less than 230 million are estimated to be suffering from energy-sapping anaemia.

To the long hours of physical toil in fields and homes must be added the physical burdens and nutritional stresses of repeated pregnancy and of breastfeeding. At the age of 30, a woman has often spent 80% of her adult life in the

stressful processes of reproduction and breastfeeding. The result is that too many women are worn out by work and by child-bearing. Every year, half a million mothers die from causes related to maternity. And for every other mother who dies, many struggle on in a state euphemistically known as 'maternal depletion'.

## Too little support

If mothers in poor communities are to put into practice the strategies now available for protecting the lives and the growth of their children, then they will need more than just information—they will need practical support from their men, their communities, their leaders, and their governments. They will need, for example, technologies which relieve them of the hours a day spent collecting wood for an inefficient open stove, or the hours a day pounding grain with a pestle and grinding it with a stone, or the miles and hours a day spent carrying water. They will also need a fairer division, within the family, of labour and of food. The woman, often working longer and harder, often eats last and least. In her own childhood, the future mother usually has less to eat than her brothers with the result that her growth is impaired and her own children may be born—and may grow up—underweight. In pregnancy, the mother is often left too small a share of the family pot with the result that her baby is malnourished even before it is born.

In times of breastfeeding, the mother often does not eat the extra 500 calories or so of food each day which she needs, with the result that her own body becomes depleted by the protection she gives to her child.

In short, progress in women's rights is possibly the most important of all advances for improving the lives of women themselves and for supporting mothers in the task of using the new techniques to bring about a revolution in child survival.

Excerpted from the 1985 *State of the World's Children* report, Chapter VII: "Women's time", edited by Peter and Lesley Adamson, published for UNICEF by Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1984.



# UNICEF and

## The situation of women in poverty

Although circumstances vary in different areas, certain generalizations can be made about poor women in developing countries.

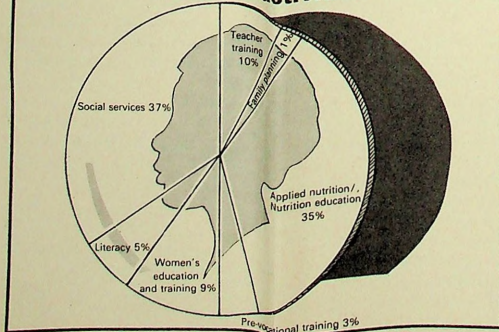
- In many countries the ratio of women to men is greater in the poorest income groups than in the population as a whole; the economic standing of the poorest households often depends on the women's income-earning capability, even though they are at the height of their child-bearing years.
- The 16-hour daily workload documented for many rural women increases during peak periods of agricultural labour and in times of community responsibilities.
- Evidence points to sex biases throughout life in favour of males in the allocation of food and the treatment of illness, as reflected in lower female nutritional status and higher female child mortality rates - girls' mortality is lower than boys' at birth, equal to boys' mortality at ages 1 to 2 years, and double that of boys' at ages 2 to 5 years.
- An estimated 10 to 30 million girls undergo mutilating circumcision operations before puberty.
- One-half of all women of child-bearing age and two-thirds of pregnant women suffer from anaemia.
- Maternal mortality rates in some developing countries are up to 200 times higher than in Europe and more than half a million women die of causes related to childbirth each year, leaving millions of motherless children.
- Illegal abortions kill up to 200,000 women yearly and permanently injure countless more.
- Overall, half the female population is illiterate. In at least 16 countries, female illiteracy is 85% and above, and more girls than boys fail to enrol or drop out of primary school, inflating the ranks of the illiterate. Un-schooled women are likely to have more children and are less likely to enrol their children (particularly daughters) in school, perpetuating the cycle of female impoverishment.
- Women's access to land and food production has been severely affected by accelerated shifts of land to male-controlled cash cropping and increasing deterioration of land reserved for women for subsistence agriculture. Where governments promote cash cropping, it has been shown that subsistence production steadily declines while export crops record consistent success. Women in many cases are excluded from membership in agricultural cooperatives and from receiving the benefits of agricultural technology and extension services.
- Women in both urban and rural households are increasingly responsible for providing family income because of male unemployment/un-



IF Photo No. 520

J.-C. CONSTANT

1982-1984 - Expenditures for selected women's activities



deremployment and absence, and the erosion of traditional kinship obligations that supported women.

● Mass production and capital-intensive technology in urban areas and mechanization in rural areas have squeezed women out of traditional spheres of production and at the same time reduced the demand for their labour in wage employment. Rural women are thus relegated to marginal, seasonal or part-time jobs on farms and plantations, and urban

women to low-status, irregular and poorly remunerated work in the lower echelons of informal sector activities. Migrant women are particularly vulnerable in urban areas.

● Work options, particularly in urban areas, are limited because of child-care problems and because impoverished women are physically depleted as well as unprepared to compete in the world of work.

● Households headed by women are increasing and

appear to be the most likely to suffer economically, with single and abandoned mothers being the most vulnerable group. The evidence to date shows that women-headed households have lower incomes, less access to productive resources, more children and fewer secondary sources of income than male-headed households. There is evidence that child malnutrition is most severe in households where men have migrated for labour and send no remittance home.



# women

## Strengthening women's programmes

The evolution of UNICEF policy on women reflects the increasing awareness of women's multi-faceted role in the health and development of children.

The early focus on relief, basic health, and social services was reflected in actions centred around mothers, child caretakers, home-makers, and the schooling of young girls. Since the mid 1960s, however, it has become increasingly evident that raising the status of women is necessary for social development. This awareness has led UNICEF to adopt an expanded definition of the mother's role, one that supports not only women's nurturing/reproductive functions but also their needs and responsibilities as economic providers, food producers, and community leaders, emphasizing combined actions that offer synergistic benefits for women and children's well-being.

■ The connection between programmes for women and the child survival and development revolution needs to be strengthened, in order to more effectively empower mothers with the knowledge and the techniques they need to protect their children's health and growth. Programmes that enhance women's capacities to act (literacy, skills, health, availability of water, fuel and technologies), advance their influence in the community (participation, leadership, decision-making), increase their cash earnings and productivity (occupational skills, access to credit, cooperative training), and actively involve them in the implementation of development programmes (as extension workers, health auxiliaries, project personnel, village motivators) need to be fully supported.

■ A more comprehensive approach to women's health needs should be developed, that also covers adolescents and the elderly – the foundations for healthy mothers are laid early, and older women play an important role in infant and child care. The capacities of communities to organize, plan, and



IF Photo No. 521 MAGGIE MURRAY-LEE

implement health programmes with minimum dependence upon core institutions should be strengthened.

■ Nutrition programmes should be linked to some of women's other critical social and economic needs by incorporating literacy and skills-training components into basic nutrition education programmes, strengthening informal child-care arrangements in the community, including men and older women in health and nutrition education programmes and sensitizing them to the issues of food distribution and discriminatory health care, and making safe and suitable alternatives available to those women who cannot breastfeed because of physical depletion or who can only partially breastfeed because of work.

■ The whole process of learning needs to be intensified: for young girls, ensuring maximum enrolment in and completion of primary school; for adolescent and adult women, strengthening



IF Photo No. 522

JAIN GUEST

family-life education, promoting literacy, and revising non-formal education curricula in order to make them more relevant to women's needs and multiple roles.

■ In order to bring about food self-sufficiency and a reduction of poverty, women must have greater access to agricultural training, technical assistance, and inputs such as water, fuel, seeds, food storage facilities, etc.

■ Stronger advocacy efforts need to be undertaken to mobilize community-based as-

sociations, women's groups, rural extension services, and the mass media to carry the message of responsible parenthood and family planning to all members of the community.

These proposed actions reflect UNICEF's integrated approach to the problems confronting low-income women and children. Their framework stresses:

– the need to improve the socio-economic status of women for their benefit and as a prerequisite to social de-

velopment;  
– the need to emphasize programmes that will reduce the heavy workload of poor women and improve their health;  
– the interdependence between the health of infants and children and the availability of resources for women.

From UNICEF response to women's concerns, Policy Review, UNICEF, Executive Board, 1985 session, E/ICEF/1985/L.1, 7 February 1985.



# Little girls' rights



IF Photo No. 523

The neglected needs of the girl child have come in for critical review by women's organizations and youth groups in India, in consultations and action-oriented workshops being organized to highlight the common concerns of the Women's Decade and IYY.

The fact that the first – and most crucial – decade of every woman's life remains a period marked by deprivation and discriminatory treatment has come into sharp focus. The balance sheet of actions taken during the Decade reveals few initiatives on behalf of the girl child, and experts in women's studies feel they have stumbled on a major 'perception gap'.

Honest review of this 'crucial decade' was an important feature of a two-day national NGO consultation of women held in New Delhi in early April – and participants generally acknowledged the need for concerted NGO advocacy and action to remedy their neglect of fundamental aspects of women's equality and development. The consultation, which brought together over 200 women from all over India, was the result of a joint initiative of the YWCA of India, the All India Women's Conference, the National Federation of Indian Women and the Centre for Women's Development Studies. Both UNICEF and the Indian government provided technical and funding support.

Those who took part in the lively exchange of ideas and experiences and worked to formulate a common statement and a wide-ranging set of recommendations for both government and NGO action included lawyers, journalists, teachers, dramatists, union leaders, social workers and grass-root activists, government planners and social scientists.

Discussions focused on health, nutrition, education, unorganized and organized employment of women and girls, law, media portrayal, women's political partici-

pation, and peace. The influence of social attitudes was debated in relation to each topic – and this highlighted how many options are closed for the weaker sex from the earliest years.

The recommendations of the NGO women's consultations were shared with the international conference of non-aligned and developing countries hosted in New Delhi by the Indian government a week later. They will also be conveyed to the NGO Forum in Nairobi in July.

The prospects – during IYY and beyond – for female youth were debated at a day-long workshop organized by the NGO Forum for Ideas and Action during the same time. About 100 Forum participants began to work out community action plans that would promote better social attitudes towards the 'rights of daughters', and encourage more equitable care and socialization of girls as a first step towards making their participation in society both more meaningful and more rewarding.

The NGO women's recommendations are now percolating to other parts of India via the 200 women who forged them into a manifesto that women's groups and women in different professions could implement. The youth Forum plans to carry its workshop activity to another metropolitan centre, Calcutta, to motivate and mobilize young people there. The girl child – too young to raise her voice in either setting – may yet be heard before the Decade ends.

By Razia Ismail, Information Officer, UNICEF, New Delhi, India.

# "This is but one UNICEF volunteer's story"

In September 1981, I had my first 'real' involvement with UNICEF. Although as a teenager I had collected pennies for UNICEF at Halloween, it was not until I had become a mother myself that I became a volunteer.

Early one morning while breastfeeding my then four-month-old son and simultaneously watching the morning news, an advertisement about UNICEF came on TV. Suddenly, reminiscences of my journeys to Africa came to mind – pictures of African women wearing flowing dresses with babies strapped on their backs. So many of those women share the same concerns that I do about having a healthy child, but their options are much fewer than mine.

I recalled how in Ghana I saw mothers lined up at a health clinic to have their children weighed and immunized, and that it was a UNICEF-supported project. I recalled in the countryside of Senegal and Tanzania the prayerful faces of those mothers who had walked long distances in hopes that their sick babies could be cured. And these, too, were UNICEF-supported projects. That afternoon as my son lay sleeping, I realized how blessed I was to live in a country where he has a chance to grow up healthy, and where there are many ways for me, as a mother, to become better educated about nutrition, etc. Immediately, I telephoned the Volunteer Division of the local UNICEF office. I was invited to come in as soon as possible.

I arranged to have a woman keep my son one day a week and began my new role as a volunteer, still somewhat ignorant of UNICEF's many programmes and the roles of its National Committees. I thought that selling cards was the only function of a National Committee, and that caring for sick children was UNICEF's only concern. What an eye-opener and education I received! Initially, my volunteer re-

sponsibilities included typing, preparing mailings, answering the telephone. As time progressed, my role evolved as well as my responsibilities. An early project that I became involved in was a Sunday School's participation in a 'Trick or Treat' Halloween activity for UNICEF. It was a success for a first attempt, and a little over \$1,000 was collected.

The following year I returned to work as a primary teacher (remedial reading specialist) and was therefore unable to volunteer my time as I had done previously. My commitment to UNICEF, however, remained. I was able to become involved in activities such as contacting other volunteers to, for example, sell cards at a fair, or help with the promotion of the Gandhi film.

## More exposure to UNICEF

I also felt the need for the community from which I originate (a Black community) to have more exposure to UNICEF. The UNICEF staff was supportive of this idea. In this vein, I sought out some organizations that I felt might be interested in supporting a UNICEF project, particularly in Africa or the Caribbean. The South-East Regional Director of the US Committee for UNICEF, Sheryl Manley, came to speak to some of them. One of the organizations is now preparing to make a financial contribution to an educational programme in the Caribbean.

I also began to coordinate many of UNICEF's art exhibits in the public schools, and presently I have gotten several Black organizations to sponsor UNICEF art exhibits at local libraries. The response has been phenomenal.

During the spring of 1983, I undertook the project of involving the oldest Black women's sorority in the world (Alpha Kappa Alpha)

in a collaborative global service project with UNICEF. I was lost at first as to how to begin, who to contact, etc. After making a number of long-distance calls and writing letters, I was finally steered in the right direction.

## A global service project

The national president of the sorority was very receptive. Interestingly enough, the organization had recently created a group called 'Women Involved in Global Concerns', which addresses the needs of women in developing countries. And it was seeking a global service project.

After careful consideration and with input from the US Committee in New York, I decided that a Liberian West African UNICEF Project would be the most feasible. Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority then recommended UNICEF as the global service project for any interested chapters. To date, several chapters have contacted UNICEF offices in regard to suggestions. I have had articles on UNICEF published in the sorority's journal, and some of the sorority's regional directors have drawn their members' attention to UNICEF. The final thrust of this project will be to have the sorority make a sizeable contribution to UNICEF-supported projects in Liberia.

This is but one UNICEF volunteer's story. Unfortunately, it is not entirely a success story, but I hope my experiences will encourage others to give of their time and monies to support UNICEF. There are so many projects in the Third World that need support. And we can help make the difference. Let's all give more support to UNICEF! Children and women in the Third World need it!

By Beryl Graham Kalisa, Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

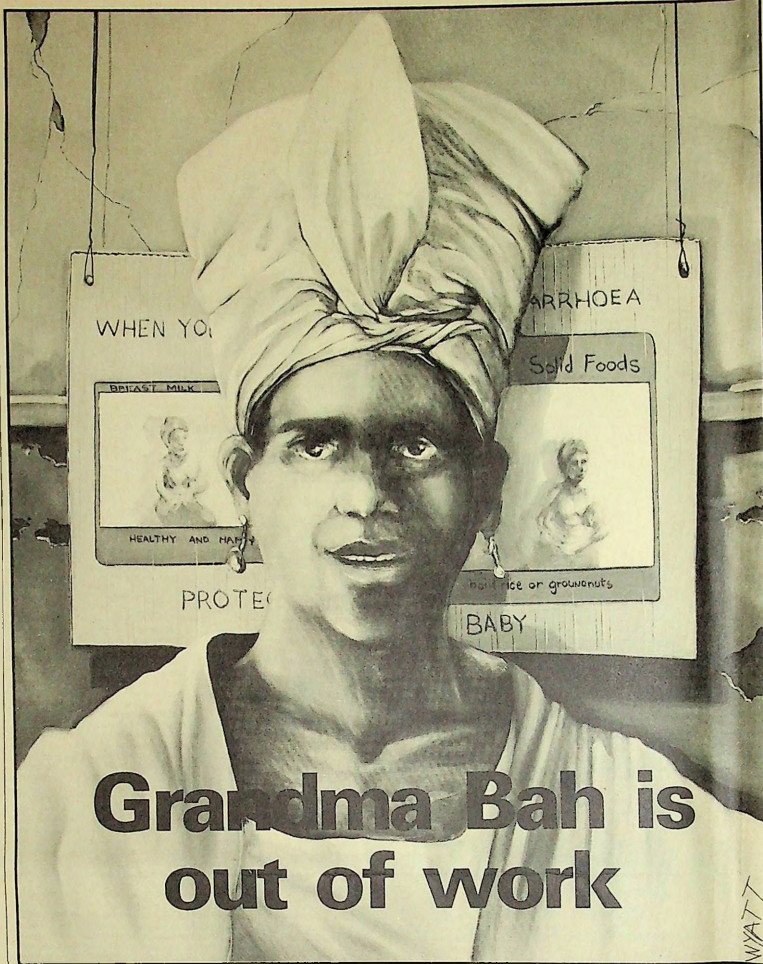


Grandmother Rohey Bah, one of The Gambia's 800 Red Flag volunteers, is out of work. For over two years she had demonstrated to village mothers how to mix a simple sugar-salt solution to administer to children when they have diarrhoea. "All the mothers know how to make it now", she said, when we visited her in her village of Kerr Chernu on the North Bank of the Gambian River this November. "They don't need me any more."

The Red Flag volunteer project was part of a mass education campaign launched in 1982 by the Gambian Medical and Health Department with the support of USAID to fight dehydration caused by diarrhoea, one of the main causes of infant mortality in the country.

Firstly, the programme aimed at training all categories of health personnel. Nutritionist Haddy Gabbidon was the national counterpart on the programme. "We used three teaching methods", she explained. "The radio, with regular messages and songs on oral rehydration; three types of printed materials; and face-to-face teaching." Once the nurses and community health workers had been trained, they in turn became responsible for training the community volunteers chosen by their villages.

"We had about 1,000 red flags printed, with a picture of a healthy baby on them. Each health worker was to go to about ten villages around her station and teach ten Red Flag volunteers", Haddy continued. "They were not only taught the importance of rehydration and the correct way to prepare a sugar-salt solution, but also the necessity of continuing breastfeeding and giving solid foods. We particularly stressed the fact that ORT does not halt diarrhoea, but



## Grandma Bah is out of work

IF Illustration No. 108

prevents the dehydration that can be fatal", she went on. "On the radio, we reinforced the message in the vernacular by telling mothers, 'Every time you see a red flag, you know it is the right place to go when your child has diarrhoea'."

Then each volunteer was given a 'Special Diet for Diarrhoea' poster, a handbill explaining how to mix the

sugar-salt solution, and a red flag to hoist in her compound.

Though her red flag days are now over, Grandmother Bah still has her poster: "To mix the sugar-salt solution you must clean three Julpearl (a Gambian softdrink brand) bottles and fill them with clean water", she explains in Wolof, showing us the first picture. "Then you clean the

container for the solution. With the Julpearl bottlecaps you take one measure of salt - it must be level - and eight measures of sugar, and put them with the water in the container. Then it is important to stir the ingredients so that they dissolve. When the child has diarrhoea," she continues at the next picture, "he should continue to be breastfed because the breast

is best for the baby. Bottle-feeding should be discouraged because it is dangerous; it causes the infections which produce diarrhoea. Breast-feeding protects the child from infections. If the child is off the breast", she said as she came to the last picture, "he should be fed solid foods like rice porridge and powdered fish".

"One can also add the juice of four limes or oranges, or even coconut-milk", Haddy put in. "They provide the potassium contained in UNICEF's packaged oral rehydration salts."

Asked what effects the administration of the solution had on the children, Grandmother Bah, having tested the method several times on her own grandchildren, replied, "When a child has diarrhoea, his eyes are dull, the skin stretches, and his backbone sticks out; but after the treatment, the eyes brighten, the skin becomes firm and the fontanelle fills out."

At the beginning of the programme her compound was always busy with activity. But to her the fact that the mothers no longer come back for advice is confirmation of the programme's success. An evaluation recently undertaken by Stanford University testifies to this. Preliminary results show that two-thirds of the mothers in the country have learned how to make the sugar-salt solution and put it into practice, and one-third know how to make it but do not use it.

New mothers are taught diarrhoea control by the nurses and midwives when they come to the infant welfare clinics. "The mothers just have to know about it", said Isatou Dibaia, a nurse at the Brikama Health Centre, "we have nagged at them so much".

By Maggie Murray-Lee, Information Officer, UNICEF, Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

### The Netherlands

## Course on maternal and child nutrition

The International Course in Food Science and Nutrition, annually held in Wageningen, The Netherlands, will in 1986 be focused on the theme: 'Maternal and child nutrition: the prevention of the main nutritional disorders in the world'.

The course will be directed towards the alleviation of the nutrition and health problems of pregnant and lactating mothers and young children, these being the most vulnerable groups in many developing countries.

The programme is designed to be of particular relevance to those who are responsible for or involved in the planning and implementation of programmes dealing with mother and child nutrition and health.

#### The requirements for admission are:

- an academic degree (B. Sc. as a minimum), or its equivalent in nutrition, food technology, home economics, medicine, or a related field of study;
- a professional position with tasks related to the theme of the course and through which dissemination of the acquired knowledge is possible and can be expected;
- some years of practical experience related to the theme of the course;
- fluency in the English language.

**Course period:** 7 January - 5 June 1986

**Venue:** International Agricultural Centre, Wageningen, The Netherlands.

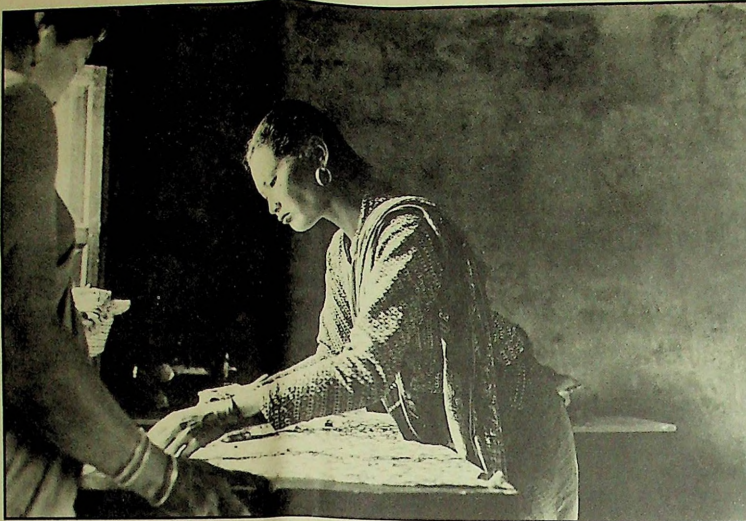
**Fellowships:** The Netherlands government has a number of fellowships available for this course.

**Language:** The course will be conducted in English.

**Application:** For further information about the course or the fellowships and for application forms, contact the Netherlands embassy in your country or write to the course secretariat at the address below. The closing date for application for the course as well as for a fellowship is 15 August 1985.

**Address:** International Course in Food Science and Nutrition, Lawickse Allee 11, 6701 AN Wageningen, The Netherlands. Tel: 08370-19040.





IF Photo No. 524

MARK FEISENTHAL

# More than a question of equity

On the ridge at 12,000 feet, a chilly fog clamps down and the travellers are glad to reach a hut. Inside, a Sherpa family is brewing tea for people on their way to a festival nearby. The bright-eyed girl who serves it is Sabitri, age 12, the youngest of seven daughters and two sons. She is the only one of the girls to have attended school.

What does her father think of a girl like her learning to read and write? "Well, she should know how, a little bit anyway. And knowing how to count is useful," Sabitri, warming to the strangers, hesitantly tries out a few English phrases. Her father laughs: "Oh, she's only been to school for a few years, she doesn't know much." But he leans forward and listens, and breaks into a broad, toothy grin when he hears the foreigners answer his daughter in English. When asked to discuss changes in the status of women in Nepal over the last ten years, Bina Pradhan expresses some reservations. It is a subject she is well acquainted with. A lecturer in economics at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan University, she is a member of the Centre for Economic

Development and Administration, which between 1979 and 1981 published *The Status of Women in Nepal*, a comprehensive set of background reports and field studies. Mrs. Pradhan contributed to the study a paper on institutions concerned with women as well as a monograph on women of the Newar ethnic group. She has been a perceptive and often critical observer of government and donor agency efforts on behalf of women. "It's a cultural issue of such depth - a decade is not enough time. It's a whole process of unlearning and relearning. In the social sciences and in economics, gender has never been an issue. If you want to introduce new seeds, new inputs, the gender differential is not taken into consideration. You just go

ahead with one of your traditional methods and hope that the women are taken care of. It would open up whole new areas if you developed paradigms for women's activities."

The original study drew attention to figures that summed up the hard lot of the Nepalese woman: literacy among less than 5%, an average of 6.8 live births per woman, a life expectancy at birth of 43 years - five less than men.

More important, perhaps, the study created a conceptual model of ever-widening spheres of economic activity, starting within the household, moving to the family's agricultural production, to the bazaar and village market-place, and finally to the larger world of towns and cities away from home. The

study established the major extent of women's contribution in the first two spheres, indicative of the substantial but unrecorded role women were playing nationally in a largely subsistence economy.

The study argued that women were caught in a vicious circle: "Since in the process of modernisation, the centre of economic activity moves away from the household towards the market sector, the problem of inside/outside dichotomy and consequent dependence of women on men for intermediation with the outside limits both supply to and demand from women for modern development resources." Reasoning that women were already an important source of production, the study concluded that to improve women's access to credit facilities, training, and functional education, not to mention community services, would be of vital importance in the national development strategy.

## Educated women in social development

Chandani Joshi is the chief of the Women's Development Section of the Ministry of Panchayat and Local Development. If Mrs. Pradhan is the skeptical academic, Mrs. Joshi is her complement, a tireless lobbyist for women and their capabilities. She is quick to point out that women are not just beneficiaries, that the goal is to tap their potential; and that although her section administers programmes specifically targeted at women, women are becoming involved across the board in education, health, agriculture, and business. She points to a rising awareness among educated women about issues of social development. Her section is responsible for a 15-month-old information exchange which has 70 members and meets monthly. WDS appoints Women's Development Officers (WDOs) to work in the field and in essence act as a two-way conduit between village women and banks and government agencies.

The role of the WDO is key. "I was told that the idea of the WDO was a dream - 'You'll never find educated, qualified young women from the district of the project site; you won't get them to work in villages' - we've disproved those myths." At present there are just under 60 WDOs and assistants working in the UNICEF-assisted Production Credit for Rural Women

(PCRW) programme, which uses the formation of women's groups as the basis for income generation and community development activities.

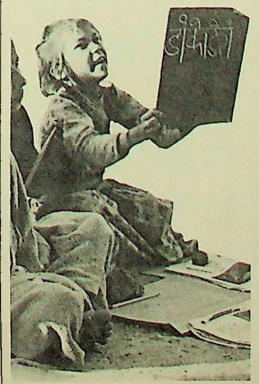
Shanta Khadga has a good job: she is a senior programme assistant at UNICEF in Kathmandu. She agrees that more educated young women are taking jobs and are willing to go to rural areas to work - "Women I've talked to say, 'At first we were hesitant, now we find we're enjoying it.'" Ms. Khadga and her sister were the first generation of women in her family to be sent to school, and to her, family means a community of 700 to 800 people in the Kathmandu valley. Ms. Khadga was the first person, male or female, in this family to get a university degree.

Her work takes her to the sites of the Small Farmers' Development Programme, one component of which is the formation of women's groups with the same goals as the PCRW groups. She finds a greater confidence and an increased awareness of how to tap resources among women who have participated in the SFDP groups. "Once women take responsibility in a group, they take the job very seriously. Before they're in a group, they're often indifferent; but once they become involved, they do the job well."

## Teaching them they have rights

When Chandani Joshi says of rural women, "They've needed someone to wake them up", she could have been describing Indra Gurung, who has been a WDO in Gajuri, a two-hour drive west of Kathmandu, for the last three years.

"They'd been doing the same work for years and years," she comments, "with no new ideas. After we'd been there a year or so, things began to change - for example, they began to ask for family planning. They used to say babies



IF Photo No. 525



were 'gifts from God'. Now they understand that they can do something." She adds, "Now they know that they can get help from the health post, from the vet, and so on. Low-caste people used to let themselves be dominated by others; now we've started to teach them, convince them that they've got rights. "Village women would look at us - educated women who came out to villages - and would say, 'How lucky you are; we can't leave home even for a day, we were never able to study.' So we would talk about why they were weak, and they became extremely interested in learning new things, learning new skills. In that way we travelled around the villages, building self-confidence. "But in Nepal, things happen slowly... there are so many hills!"

**Finding time for school**

One reason why women have traditionally had low rates of literacy and formal training in agricultural skills is because female labour has always been important within the family to assure that land and livestock resources were fully utilized to provide a subsistence base. Little girls are not sent to school because their labour is needed. An education-for-rural-development project in Nepal's remote Seti zone has added early morning classes for girls

who do not otherwise attend school. Rajmani Shrestha is one of the rare local women who has finished high school and has a teaching certificate. She worked hard to get volunteer labour from her community to build a primary school once the UNDP/UNICEF/UNESCO-funded project offered support; she has also taught several classes for out-of-school girls. Attitudes about the role of girls - and poverty - are still major obstacles, she says. "If the girls can get a job portering loads from the airport, they won't come to class. People say, 'What's the point? They won't get any money for it.'" However, the girls themselves are lively and eager participants, and there continues to be a demand for the classes from communities. Female attendance at literacy classes has also increased significantly in the area, reflecting the interest women have been displaying nation-wide in becoming literate. This year in Seti there will be over 100 classes of around 20 participants each; roughly 60% are women.

Bina Pradhan cautions against the complacency that can be caused by the existence of an office like WDS: "It should see whether women are involved in all sections of government. If there's an office, everyone tends to dump all issues on that one bureau." WDS is in fact beginning to place WDOs in programmes administered by the Ministry of Agriculture; women are also filling positions in the health infrastructure and the educational system in greater numbers than before.

Despite obstacles, which they have always faced with tenacity and spirit, Nepalese women are beginning to take advantage of opportunities with increasing self-confidence. Although at first a limited group of educated women have benefited from the new chances, they are establishing a precedent of achievement for what Shanta Khadga calls "the thousands of women willing to do something," but whose lives have yet to be effected by the accomplishments of the Decade. Projects that assist rural women in becoming more productive, that introduce time-saving elements such as community water-taps or child-care centres, that increase self-confidence and self-reliance, are being recognized as vital to overall national development not just because equity calls for it, but because efficiency requires it.

By Mark Felsenthal, United Nations Volunteer, Assistant Information Officer, UNICEF, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Interview

**An irreversible movement**



Marie-Angélique Savané, from Senegal, has in her own soft-spoken way become one of Africa's leading women sociologists and feminists. President of the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD), and Project Leader of UNRISD's research programme on Food Systems and Society in Africa, she has been involved in research on rural development, nutrition, planned parenthood, and women's rights.

*IF. In your opinion, has the Women's Decade had any effect on the status of African women?*

M.-A.S. The Decade has definitely served to create a much greater awareness of the problems of women and development in most of the African countries, where national mechanisms have been set up - women's bureaux, ministries, associations, etc. I think that even if these structures have not always been very effective, have not touched the roots of the problems women face, they have brought about a real awareness, which was one of the objectives of the Decade.

The non-governmental organizations have had a significant impact in bringing about changes in the conditions of women, whether through small- or large-scale projects. My only regret is that the Decade is ending without the emergence of a clearer stand by African women. In only a very few African countries has the idea of feminism caught on. I don't mean a feminism which is an imitation of Western movements, but the result of a thinking through of our societies' development in re-

lation to us as women, a search for other possible approaches we could follow so that African women would reap the fruits of their labour.

*IF. Wasn't the Decade in a way responsible for the creation of AAWORD, since it was at the Mexico Mid-Decade Conference that a movement in this direction started?*

M.-A.S. Yes, in fact the creation of AAWORD was one of the responses of African women, at least in the realm of research, to the new possibilities opened to them. There was a greater chance of it being accepted than if the Decade had not existed. Through AAWORD what women researchers were saying was that "we, too, want to contribute, by means of research which will enable us to better understand women's problems and suggest solutions".

*IF. In spite of the lack of feminist movements in most of the African countries, do you feel that governments are moving ahead in improving women's status?*

M.-A.S. The governments' new awareness was not an endogenous phenomenon. It was created primarily by the

various pressures coming from the outside world. I think that now everything depends on who is in power. In some countries, the heads of state and certain ministers are very sensitive to women's issues. We have been able to get the idea of social justice for women accepted - conferring to women the status they deserve, recognizing their rights, etc. But, at the planning level, there is still a great deal to be done. I don't think we have yet found the arguments to bring bankers, economists, planners, to include women as a human resource in their development plans. We have been caught up in the need to explain, to justify, and have forgotten that it is also necessary to provide quantifiable facts and arguments proving that development cannot take place without women, because of the important role they already play.

*IF. In other words, in areas such as access to credit, access to land ownership, labour legislation, there has been little progress?*

M.-A.S. Some of our governments have signed conventions, and it would be an error not to recognize the advances made here and there during the Decade. But overall, people haven't realized the need, for example, for agricultural credits geared specifically to women, since women don't have access to land ownership, and so have no way of providing a guarantee. In some countries, such as Bangladesh, there have been experiments in credit for women. Africa could also benefit from such programmes.

For there's no point in fooling ourselves - we're a long way from being able to own land. In most African countries, the pressure on land resources is increasing, especially since the traditional methods of crop rotation are still widely used, and require a considerable amount of land. But if women could at least have access to credit and begin to buy fertilizers, pesticides, etc., they could increase their productivity and their income. Access to credit would also open new possibilities to women in urban zones. Those who have been successful so far have done it all on their own.

*IF. Do you feel that this is the principal problem facing African women today - economic survival? Or are there also other equally crucial problems?*

M.-A.S. The economic problems are important. But I think we have too great a

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MARK FELSENTHAL



Kenya

**Breast milk sharing**

Kenya's largest maternity hospital is pioneering an innovative method of ensuring that every baby delivered there is breastfed. In the Newborn Unit at Pumwani Maternity Hospital, mothers who have milk but cannot breastfeed are expressing their milk so it can be fed by tube to their infants. It is usually the premature babies and those with jaundice or other infections who benefit from the practice, as well as those babies whose mothers have cracked nipples or other problems in breastfeeding. When occasionally a mother has no milk, another woman will express the excess she has and 'share' it. The idea of breast milk sharing was introduced in the late 1970s, but met with resistance. Most mothers found it culturally unacceptable that their milk should go to another child. Now, however, after several years of education work by Nairobi's highly active Breastfeeding Information Group (BIG) and the hospital staff, the practice has been widely accepted. Said one mother, as she expressed her milk with a pump, "It's quite comfortable. I don't mind it going to another woman's baby. It's good to help other mothers who don't have any milk".

Up to 90 babies are delivered at Pumwani Hospital every day. Situated as it is in a low-income shanty area of the city, the children are generally susceptible to complications due to maternal malnutrition, infections, and all the problems associated with urban poverty. According to consultant paediatrician Dr. Edward Lubulwea, the incidence of infections has decreased dramatically since breast milk sharing was introduced. "Diarrhoea has almost disappeared since we started", he claims.

All the breast milk expressed is used the same day; none is stored. Prudencia Kimbugwe Malongo of BIG points out that although a breast milk bank might be a good idea in theory, there is a danger that milk taken away from the hospital might be fed to the baby in a bottle. Although breast milk is intrinsically better than infant formula, it can still be contaminated through the use of bottles that have not been properly sterilized. Therefore, for the moment, breast milk sharing is limited to tubal feedings by hospital interns.

Bottlefeeding is still initiated in many Kenyan hospitals. A

study carried out in Nairobi in 1982 revealed that 78% of mothers surveyed knew that a glucose solution given by bottle was the first feed their newborn baby had received in the hospital. At Pumwani, it's a different story. "We have no bottles here", claims Sister Gatogo, who is in charge of the Newborn Unit. "Bottles are old-fashioned!"

Lindsey Hillsam, Information Officer, East and Southern Africa Regional Office, UNICEF, Nairobi, Kenya.

India

**Women leaders for rural reconstruction**

Two women who are government leaders in India obtained UNICEF support to attend leadership seminars at the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR). Amita Paul, Project Director for the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas Project of Bihar, and Rukmani Haldea, Director of Women's Programmes of Rajasthan, were participants at the 21st Seminar for Senior Managers, held 29 October to 24 November 1984, at IIRR's campus in Silang, Cavite, the Philippines.

The main thrust of the Bihar Women's Project supervised by Amita Paul is to bring poor rural women into the mainstream of the development process by helping to identify and provide employment opportunities for them. UNICEF is sharing the costs of this programme with the government and will help primarily to establish the project infrastructure and develop the training modules and materials.

The Women's Development Programme, as stated by Rukmani Haldea, began operations in May 1984 and will initially cover seven districts of Rajasthan. The aim of this pilot project is to empower women to improve their social and economic status through their own efforts and to involve them actively in the development process. A key element will be the training of village women.

The foundation of IIRR's work is its 'social laboratory' of village communities where people-oriented development programmes are tested and refined. Ms. Paul and Ms. Haldea were particularly interested in the role of women in rural reconstruction and spent three days living in these villages to see

the programmes in action. IIRR's 23rd and 24th training sessions are scheduled from 28 October to 22 November 1985 and from 10 February to 21 March 1986.

By Marilee Reiner, IIRR Director of Resource Development, New York, USA.

Afghanistan

**A plan to reduce infant mortality**

Afghanistan's State Planning Committee and UNICEF signed a Plan of Operation for 1984 and 1985, which has four main objectives for Kabul:

- reducing the infant mortality rate (IMR) and increasing the child survival rate (CSR);
- planning, monitoring, and evaluating IMR/CSR-related activities;
- optimizing the all-round development of children; and
- improving the situation of women.

The Plan calls for the active involvement of all relevant government and non-government organizations and institutions to help in 'going to scale' in respect to the IMR/CSR actions. The Women's Club Organization, the Afghan Red Crescent Society, pharmacies, factories, and religious leaders are all being involved in the effort to reduce the infant mortality rate in Kabul.

The means chosen to reach this goal focus on the immunization of all children and mothers, the minimization of the effects of diarrhoea by the use of ORT, the promotion of child growth monitoring, and the improvement of nutritional status. Advocacy efforts to inform, motivate, and educate all sections of the population on issues and actions related to IMR/CSR constitute a strong core of these actions. At the same time, the Plan also emphasizes the improvement of the drinking water supply and sanitation facilities in all children's institutions, health centres, and hospitals. Early childhood education, better-quality primary education, and women's education and development are the other significant components of the Plan.

A joint UNICEF/WHO study showed that the IMR in urban Kabul (with a population of nearly 2 million) is around 110 per 1,000 births. This figure, while much below the national figure of 200 to 210 cited in UN/UNICEF documents, still places Kabul in the 'very high IMR'

bracket, although at the lower end of the spectrum. If the scaled-up efforts of the last two years continue in Kabul and the Plan of Operation is implemented as envisaged, a steep reduction of IMR seems within reach in a reasonable period of time.

**Day-care centres**

With women increasingly entering the work force, organized care for their young children, especially during the breastfeeding period, has acquired a new urgency. A programme to set up day-care centres in institutions and other work places was initiated by the Ministry of Education in 1983. Forty-six such centres have been set up by the Department of Kindergartens, and the idea is catching on with other organizations such as the Women's Club and the Women's Continuing Education Centres. More centres are in the process of being established. The programme keeps the young infant close to the mother during the most crucial period of its life.

**An irreversible movement**

Continued from page 11

tendency in Africa to concentrate on them, and to forget the problems related to our status, our oppression. Much has been said about female excision, but there are also the tattoos, the mourning customs - all sorts of social norms which confer to women an inferior status, and shackle them in terms of finding personal fulfillment. There is also the problem of education. With universal education, the number of girls enrolled in schools has increased, but they have not been able to go beyond a certain level because of difficulties of access to certain types of education - scientific fields, for example. Progress in this area is blocked because, in our patriarchal societies, the men don't yet accept the idea of women playing an equal role, of providing women the conditions necessary for them to be able to catch up in spite of their late start.

*IF. How do you think progress can best be made without provoking the kind of backlash that we've seen in some other countries? Through government action, through NGOs?*

M.-A.S. I would say that the best strategy is to 'walk on both legs' - even though I know that many African

governments have internal problems and conflicts, and so are not prepared to resolve the many problems facing women. I believe very much in NGO action, but the NGOs must re-examine themselves. At the present time, most of them in Africa are affiliates of North American and European NGOs. Africans must find a way to generate indigenous NGOs which are able to build on village organizations and structures, and which can deal with all of the problems facing both village men and women. This kind of approach would lead to a greater awareness of the need to increase women's productivity and their participation; for at the local level, even if there are things that are difficult for the men to accept, at least they recognize that women make an important contribution. The governments should also be supported in the positive measures they take and be pushed to go even further. It's obvious that at the moment we're living in a very troubled political climate in Africa. There's no guarantee that the conflicts will not cause every new step forward by women to be questioned in relation to traditional values. Unless the development models that are chosen are better suited to solving our problems, it's obvious that people will tend to turn to tradition, to religious fundamentalism, which are incapable of generating new attitudes, a new development.

*IF. Do you think that the processes put into motion by the Decade will continue nevertheless?*

M.-A.S. I think the women's movement is irreversible. Whatever the detractors may say or write, the fact that a Women's Decade has existed has already been an important victory.

By Janet Nelson, Information Officer, UNICEF, Geneva.

**Corrigendum**

**Youth efforts rewarded**

In our article in IDEAS FORUM No. 20, p. 12, on the work youth are carrying out among the street children of Manaus in Brazil, one of the young women's names was incomplete: that of Marcia Barauna, 21, who was one of the first street educators to work with the 'wild' kids. Our apologies.

**International Code: update on implementation**

The Central Planning Department of Tonga has informed us that on August 7, 1984, the government "officially adopted the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes in its entirety and as a voluntary measure".

According to the key to the table on implementation status, Tonga should therefore have been listed as being in category 9 (IDEAS FORUM No. 19, p. 18).



## Interview

# Half of the population — the women — were left out

Aminata Traoré is Director of Research and Planning within the Department of Women's Status in the Ivory Coast, with which she has served since 1976. With a Ph.D. in social psychology, she is also Research Officer at the Institute of Ethno-sociology at the University of Abidjan.

*M. M.-L. As we near the end of the Women's Decade, how would you sum up the situation of women in general in West Africa? Has the Decade brought about any changes?*

A. T. The Decade has certainly not gone unnoticed in our region. There have been two levels of influence: first, on our approach to development problems, and secondly, on actual programmes at the grass-root level. The Decade has helped to reinforce an emerging awareness of the role of women in the development process.

As you know, many parts of Africa, including our own, are struggling to survive in the face of an encroaching desert. In addition, over the last 20 years, our governments, in their efforts to become more autonomous after the period of colonial domination, made a certain number of errors in their choice of development models. Now we realize that too much importance was given to cash crops, and our own food needs were underestimated. In trying to identify what went wrong, we realized that an important oversight was made in the management of our resources: half of the population — the women — were left out of all decision making, and yet they are the ones who are responsible for feeding the nation, and who hold many of the answers to the present food crisis.

*M. M.-L. Can you give some examples of measures that have been taken to better integrate women into development plans?*

A. T. In many of our countries, the political parties have had women's branches since the 60s. But since 1976, more technical government agencies have been created, such as ours. We set about developing an approach stressing the micro-economic side of development, since many of the agribusinesses have been facing financial difficulties.

What is particularly significant is the fact that we have been involved in the preparation of various development plans. Even though we might not have the necessary funds to carry them all out, at least they spell out what the women's role should be in each programme. This new emphasis on women has been strengthened by the realization that the women are often the most stable element in a community, since the men are often forced to migrate in search of employment elsewhere. The women have thus been deeply implicated in all primary sector activities: agriculture, processing of fish and other seafood, handicrafts.

We have also initiated projects to alleviate women's workloads — for example, by establishing day-care centres, installing shelling machines and mills. Now, after ten years of research, of participation in the planning process, of project implementation, we have a fairly clear idea of the approach we can promote in each area. We hope that even though the Decade is over, we will be able to extend the solutions we have developed.

*M. M.-L. What have been some of the specific objectives of the Women's Decade in the Ivory Coast that you feel have been reached?*

A. T. First of all, to set in motion a process of consultation. We created a National Commission for the Advancement of Women, which pulled together technicians from various departments and prepared a basic platform in education, training,



IF PHOTO No. 527

MAGGIE MURRAY-LEE

employment, and legislation. However, in all of these areas — which are inter-related — we realized that in spite of government efforts, not much progress was being made for socio-cultural and economic reasons. There seemed to be two areas for possible action: sensitize parents to the importance of educating their daughters as well as their sons; develop the informal sector, which offers numerous possibilities for women. We carried out research region by region on the local resources, women's activities, their problems and possible solutions. We devised radio and television programmes to both inform the public and make women aware of the fact that through our Department they could get information on their rights, training and employment possibilities, etc. In the rural areas we opened some 50 development centres and trained some 100 young women to work in the villages, forming village committees and helping to organize small-scale food process-

ing industries and day-care centres, to increase food production, etc. In the zones where there are no health posts, they also maintain pharmacy kits and provide nutrition and health education.

We also created 75 training centres with 293 instructors to train rural 'animators', teach women leaders how to plan and implement projects, provide courses on family life education to other trainers and social workers, and carry out workshops in dyeing, operating small restaurants, etc.

These programmes of course are limited in coverage, and have served primarily as pilot projects to enable us to test our approach. On the other hand, the results we have seen in terms of heightened awareness have been remarkable. It used to be that, when you talked about women, a lot of people would laugh — now they don't any more. Before when we asked men, "why don't you include women in your training programmes," they would often answer, "be-

cause we don't know how to talk to them, they are very busy, we don't know how to get them to meet with us". Now men, who before took women's role for granted, are beginning to realize that women's status isn't necessarily normal or immutable. One mustn't forget that, as a young nation, we are having to feel our way in so many areas, that when someone raises a new problem, it must be extremely troubling for the decision makers. This is why we are doing our best to use our meagre resources to find solutions, and then to say, "here are the problems, here are the solutions, give us the means to act".

*M. M.-L. You mentioned previously the problem of women-headed households due to male migration. This applies especially to the Sahel, which is the area you yourself come from. How do you see the future for these women?*

A. T. It's an enormous problem. The men are migrating out of the area in hopes of bringing back a little money, but the situation is such in the towns, that they are either unable to find work, or are so badly paid that nothing is left to send. So now women from the Sahel are also appearing on street corners in Abidjan. We can't leave them out there where they come from — to wait for a slow death — but without resettlement services, all they can hope for in the cities is abject poverty. We need to develop new structures to support these populations...

*M. M.-L. Do you think it would be worthwhile to have another Women's Decade?*

A. T. Yes, it would, for between the falling prices of raw materials and all our natural disasters, we no longer have the necessary resources to maintain existing programmes, much less launch out into new ones. The Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women helped us to do a great many things — in fact, half of our projects have been carried out with money from the Fund or other UN agencies. Without this source of support, we may lose some of the headway we have made. Our governments simply don't have the means to cope with all the critical problems they face, and, even though there is a greater awareness of women's status, its improvement has not yet become one of the national priorities.

By Maggie Murray-Lee, Information Officer, UNICEF, Abidjan, Ivory Coast.





IF Illustration No. 109

WYATT

# Youth in service to the most disadvantaged

In one of his preparatory reports on IYY (A/36/215 of 19 June 1981), the UN Secretary-General specified that "a strategy should be formulated to achieve maximum youth participation in society, based on the needs and aspirations of youth, particularly those with little or no access to opportunities for education, work, welfare services, or anything more than a subsistence existence, and who therefore have little possibility of influencing the circumstances in which they find themselves."

In response to this call, the International Movement A.T.D. Fourth World in Senegal decided during IYY to give the most disadvantaged youth a chance for their voices to be heard, to identify and publicize local initiatives aimed at promoting the participation of disadvantaged youth in their country's life, and to support projects reaching out to these youths. Hundreds of testimonies were gathered from youth in both urban and rural areas — they revealed the difficulties faced, but also uncovered the wealth of ideas Senegalese youth are coming up with in response to the needs of the families in their communities. Some of these initiatives are described below.

## Project 'Discovery'

Each summer a dozen young people in Dakar collect the children in their neighbourhood who are wandering idle and unsupervised in the streets, their parents out struggling to make a living. The young people are all volunteers. Some are in vocational training programmes during the school year, and so have specific skills they can teach the children.

Others have brought with them their own experiences in various youth movements. Some 80 children are thus occupied for the two-month holiday, working in groups of 8 to 10.

The youth also try to broaden the children's horizons by taking them to visit public buildings, craft centres, parks, the beach, etc. A small fee is requested to cover costs, but solutions are always found for those who are unable to pay.

Some of the activities are also continued during the school year, on the Wednesday and Saturday afternoons when the children are out of school.

## Art with a social aim

An association of young artists (painters, musicians, actors, etc.) from the poorer sectors of society have decided to put their talents to the service of the children around them. Sensing the despair that was driving many of the children to juvenile delinquency, they created a theatre group for 6- to 17-year-olds. The group provides the children with a

structure and an objective for their lives, and a positive outlet for self-expression.

The association is now working to create a children's library, and organize remedial and literacy classes. It also hopes to open a centre for unemployed youth with the help of local artisans.

## More personalized health care

Other young people in Dakar have been mobilized to help out in the health centres in the low-income areas, where many of the poorest are often reticent to seek medical help out of a sense of shame for the rags in which they are dressed, their children's thin arms and legs, their unsightly skin diseases.

The role of these young volunteers is to serve as extra 'ears' and 'legs', to be accessible to the people who visit the centres, taking the time to listen to their problems and ensuring that the children receive all the care they need. The young people also go out into the neighbourhood, visiting families who have not come back to complete their child's treatment, and developing relationships of trust with those who otherwise would not dare come to the health centres.

## A village school

In a village in the Fatick region, the local youth association decided that the long

trek the children had to make to reach the school 4 km away was a deterrent to their pursuing their education.

They therefore met with the village adults, and persuaded them to request permission from the Ministry of National Education to open a school in their village. The permission granted, the next step was to provide a building. The young people agreed to make a monthly contribution of at least 500 CFA apiece — this was no small sum for them, as they were all either students or domestic employees. Those villagers who could afford it added to the funds, and after two years they finally had enough to build a school. The village today has two classes, and will soon add a third.

The youth group is in addition campaigning for a reduction in the bride price, which is so high that many young people cannot afford to marry, and so end up moving out to urban areas. Those parents who try to scrape up enough money are left much the poorer by their son's marriage.

## Strong arms for a village of ex-lepers

One school organizes projects for its students each year during the long holiday period. Five to eight young people are assigned to each project, many of which have been requested by rural or disadvantaged groups.

One such project was to help a village of ex-lepers. Because of the terror inspired by their disease, the ex-lepers are isolated in a separate village, in spite of the fact that they have been cured. Often, however, the disease had taken a heavy toll before being arrested — many have lost fingers and toes. The young people therefore spent two weeks helping them to clear and prepare their fields for planting. They also established links with surrounding 'healthy' villages, who until then had refused to buy any of the ex-lepers' produce for fear of catching the disease.

Upon their return to town, the young people conveyed the village's various needs to the appropriate bodies, in order for it to continue to receive the assistance so badly needed.

International Movement A.T.D. Fourth World, Post Box 3118, Dakar, Senegal.



IF Illustration No. 110

WYATT





IF Photo No. 528

MARK FELSENTHAL

# An unwanted burden

From the knoll on which she lives, Kanchhi Bogote can see the gleaming white buildings of the new Maharajgunj Teaching Hospital, symbol of Nepal's hope for a new generation of health professionals and care. As far as hope in her own life goes, however, it might as well be a thousand miles away, for she has been living a social nightmare that would rival the most melodramatic Bombay film for pathos.

As she tells it, she was the youngest of three children. Fatherless from age two, she was hastily married at 15 to a man who claimed to have money and property, and had neither.

The man was more interested in gambling and drinking than in working, and Kanchhi began working in her brother's fields to support herself and the two children she soon bore.

She moved into a small mud-brick house on the edge of her brother's property, continuing to work in his fields. Soon after the birth of the second son a little more than a year ago, the husband disappeared, leaving Kanchhi entirely dependent on her brother and his family. During the heavy rains of the past monsoon, the house collapsed, leaving her without support, without a home, and with two small children.

In Nepalese society, once a woman marries, she is considered part of her husband's family and most ties with her maternal home are cut. When Kanchhi fell ill and was unable to work, she became an increasingly unwanted burden on her brother. Neighbours refused to help and she was unable to get enough for her two children and herself.

## A glimmer of hope

The glimmer of hope for Kanchhi Bogote came when a neighbour contacted a voluntary social service organization working in the area. One day, two young men arrived to hear her story and see what they could do. They told her, to her surprise, that they could provide bricks and materials and that they and others would help her build a new house — provided she would, on her part, secure the land deed in her own name to ensure that no one could take the new house away from her. They also told her that she could get milk and enriched flour for her children at a weekly health clinic held in a local school.

The organization — the Godaveri Alumni Association (GAA) — has been working in the underprivileged community of Gangabu, just north of Kathmandu, for nine years now. It provides nutritional supplements, drugs and health care, skills training and services on a small scale to the members of the community who need them. The GAA is composed of graduates of two prestigious high schools in Kathmandu and this social service programme is one of the

group's activities. Working with volunteers who come for one afternoon every week, the GAA has established two weekly clinics and a weaving workshop, and is about to inaugurate a water supply system of 20 tapstands in the community.

The designation of 1985 as International Youth Year has focused attention on the ability of groups like the GAA to perform community welfare services with volunteer labour. Other groups have been organized from within the community itself, typically with support from a Junior Chamber of Commerce or a Lion's Club. Nepal has an already established network of youth organizations that have served to inculcate the principles of the country's *panchayat* democratic system of government.

International Youth Year and youth groups in Nepal have received considerable attention and press coverage as a result of royal patronage. Prince Dharendra, brother of King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah, is chairman of the International Youth Year Committee, which is composed of various groups concerned with youth or having a youth-oriented component. Among these, the Youth Activities Coordinating Council is concerned with the activities of youth clubs involved in social service work.

Kanchhi Bogote still has a hard time ahead of her, and she is not the only Nepali woman in such a predicament. But in terms of hope, the efforts of the volunteers of the GAA and youth groups like it will make a lot of difference.

By Mark Felsenthal, United Nations Volunteer, Assistant Information Officer, UNICEF, Kathmandu, Nepal.

# Facts and figures

## Youth

■ With one and a half billion people aged between 10 and 24, there are more young people alive this year — as a proportion of world population — than there may ever be again.

■ In rich and poor countries alike, death rates are lowest for 10- to 24-year-olds. Their bodies are at their strongest to resist diseases that kill their younger brothers and sisters. The mortality rate for children under 10 in Thailand and Sweden, for example, is nearly twice that of 10- to 24-year-olds.

■ Accidents are the leading cause of death of young people in the rich world, accounting for half of these deaths in the USA. And they're a growing threat in the developing world too, causing one-quarter of deaths to 10- to 24-year-olds in Paraguay, for instance. Suicides are also claiming an alarming number of young people — 16% of deaths in Japan and 6% in Thailand for example.

■ Over the last two decades secondary school enrolment has nearly doubled in the developing world, while in industrialized countries 84% of 12- to 17-year-olds are now in school. Progress in some countries has been startling, with 100% of the USSR's high-school-age youngsters in school by 1979 compared with just 49% in 1960. And in that same period Malaysia, Jordan, and Peru all trebled their high-school enrolment rates.

■ Today, three-quarters of the world's people live in rural areas. But by the year 2000 half the world's people will live in cities. And many of those migrating to cities — between 20 and 40% in rich and poor countries alike — are aged 15 to 24.

■ Unemployment and underemployment are the most serious problems confronting young people today. In the queues of people waiting for jobs in many countries, it is young hands that are left idle, with 15- to 24-year-olds accounting for 70% of the unemployed in Syria, 67% in India, and 60% in Ghana.

■ Some countries have been making valiant efforts to harness the energy of their young people, realizing that they are the most productive human asset of family and society. China, for example, has found jobs for 29 million people — that's three-quarters of the urban employed — in the last five years. In Shanghai alone, one million new jobs have been created for young people since 1977.

Source: who.



## GDR

## Peace — a deep concern of youth

In the past few years, special 'action years' proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly, such as the International Year of the Child (1979) and the International Year of the Handicapped (1981), have had an impact on the discussion of specific problems within the scope of education and health programmes all over the world. This will hopefully also be true of the International Youth Year (IYY).

The aims of IYY are to promote development, to advance the struggle to safeguard peace, and to mobilize youth to take a more active part in their societies. IYY is also well suited to making people aware of the fact that there is no reasonable alternative to peaceful co-existence between states with different social orders.

In the German Democratic Republic, a government commission has been set up to encourage and coordinate relevant activities at a national level. These activities are being discussed by members of the Free German Youth Organization and the Ernst Thälmann Pioneers' Organization, as well as by other social organizations such as the Confederation of Free German Trade Unions, the German Red Cross, and Urania, the national society for the dissemination of scientific knowledge. The IYY activities undertaken are particularly suited to make a contribution to the 1985 World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow.

Education for peace and international friendship and solidarity is already enshrined in all major laws, decrees, and guidelines relating to the integrated educational system of the GDR. It is thus incorporated into the programmes of all educational facilities — the kindergartens, the ten-year comprehensive schools, the vocational training institutions, the colleges and universities as well as the adult training institutions.

The history books, for example, are organized so as to encourage the children, by means of comprehensive reading material and related assignments, to develop an interest in historical events with an emphasis on the struggle for peace and international friendship, and against policies which run counter to a détente. In literature classes, the pupils

study the works of other countries, thereby acquiring a better understanding of other peoples' customs. In music lessons, they are acquainted with the music and folk songs of other nations. Foreign language classes introduce the pupils not only to the languages, but also to the cultures of the countries where these languages are spoken. The natural sciences ensure the acquisition of scientific knowledge on the complete equality of the races. The children are taught that biologically there are no inferior or superior races, that the differences still existing in the levels of development today are the results not of biological, but of social factors.

The GDR's National Committee for UNICEF is also making available material on IYY, which provides information on the plight of children in many parts of the world.

By Dr. Erich Taubert, Professor, Teachers' Training College Erfurt/Mühlhausen, and member of the National Committee for UNICEF of the German Democratic Republic.

## Luxembourg

## Small but enterprising

A special IYY commission has been created under the auspices of the Ministry of National Education and the National Youth Service. The many activities it has planned are centred primarily around a mobile exhibit, which includes the Third World and peace as one of its themes. This exhibit will tour the entire Duchy, with parallel conferences, debates, etc. taking place at the same time. Information materials and teaching kits will be distributed to schools to encourage teachers to include Third World issues in a more systematic way in the school programme, at all levels of post-primary education. A Third World Day will also be organized in all post-primary schools.

The Luxembourg Committee for UNICEF is working closely with this national commission as well as organizing other activities of its own: a chamber music concert put on by a youth club, a chamber music competition open to groups from four countries, and fundraising activities by the Scouts. Other projects with youth organizations are also in preparation.

## An IYY project

## Children whose voices have not been heard

CHILDREN'S EXPRESS is a newspaper column whose major goal is to give children an opportunity to speak for themselves. It is carried over the United Press International wire service to over 2,500 newspapers world-wide.

This year, in response to IYY, CHILDREN'S EXPRESS is organizing round-table discussions among children 9 to 13 years old on primary issues in their lives, such as working parents, divorce, sex education, alcoholic parents, and disease or disability. The tape-recorded discussions are transcribed and edited into a column, using the children's words only.

CHILDREN'S EXPRESS would like assistance in reaching those children whom it is not able to reach directly, children whose voices have not been heard: children of war, refugee children, immigrant children, hungry children, orphans, children in institutions, children of migrant workers, foster care children, children in group homes, poor children, run-aways.

It is therefore inviting those who share its concern to enter into the process of oral journalism by organizing round-table discussions among groups of children 9 to 13 years old. (Occasionally, CHILDREN'S EXPRESS includes an older child when his or her experience is unique and not otherwise obtainable.) These tape-recorded discussions may be led by a teenager or an adult, and should relate to the experiences and feelings of the children involved.

Suggested guidelines for a successful round-table have been drawn up and can be obtained upon request.

CHILDREN'S EXPRESS will pay a fee of \$75.00 for those round-tables published in its column, and to this end requires a typed manuscript of the discussion (translated if necessary) as well as an original tape.

Experience has shown that these special round-table discussions are almost always published and have been some of the best articles for United Press International. For further information, contact:

CHILDREN'S EXPRESS,  
20 Charles Street,  
New York, N.Y. 10014, USA.



IF Photo No. 529

GARRY DAVIS

## Guatemala

## Attention to rural youth

For IYY, four NGOs in Guatemala have formed a Committee for the Support of Rural Youth. They are the Society for Guatemala Youth of Tomorrow, the Association of Community Health Services (ASECSA), the Alliance for Community Youth Development (Save the Children), and the Unitarian Universalist Service Com-

mittee. Their objectives are to generate inter-institutional support for training programmes for rural youth, to channel youth concerns toward the development of their communities and nation, and to stimulate a general reflection on the problems of rural youth, which will hopefully lead to a policy document.

## Seattle wants kids

Seattle, Washington, in the USA, has embarked on a plan to make itself a better city for children. Called 'Kids' Place — A Kids' Lobby for a Vital Seattle', the project began by asking 60,000 children what they like and don't like about Seattle.

Their ideas are going into a kids-first urban policy and five-year plan for making Seattle, in the words of Mayor Charles Royer, "the very best city in the nation in which to raise a family". Between 1970 and 1980, Seattle lost 36% of its children and youth, while the overall population declined 7%. "If you have a city that's not a place where children like to live, it eventually becomes a place where adults will not like to live", said Robert Aldrich, a paediatrician and urban planner who helped spearhead the effort.

Not surprisingly, children told pollers they like beauty, cleanliness, and order in their city. They also like Seattle Center — the 1963 World Fairgrounds which has been turned into a park/amusement centre — and as a result the children are involved in a current renovation and long-range plan for the park.

Other Kids' Place programmes are dealing with some of the things children don't like about the city — its noise, filth, and danger. For one thing, a new emergency telephone system displays the

address of the caller automatically when someone dials '911'. A child calling for help is more likely to get aid fast. Pedestrian safety improvements will be designed with children in mind; lower windows will be placed in such public facilities as the aquarium. Park and recreation facility fees will be lowered as well.

The city also hopes to attract more children by offering bonuses to developers who include child-care centres in new housing projects. City employee benefits will include new leave options for new fathers and adoptive parents, plus sick leave for parents caring for sick children.

"The real test", said Arlis Stewart of Metrocenter YMCA, which is coordinating Kids' Place along with the City of Seattle and the Junior League, "will be whether adults are willing to listen to kids long enough to see if their ideas work. Can the people who've seen children as clients, see them as constituents?"

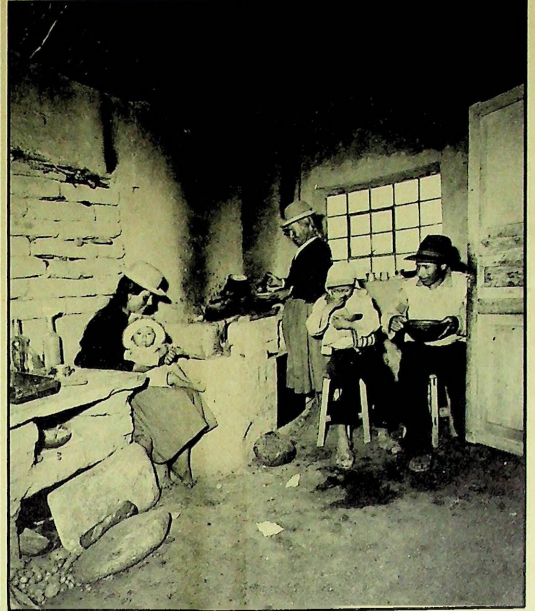
By Stephen Silha.



# Japanese children want to know



IF Photo No. 531 GARRY DAVIS



IF Photo No. 532 ILO



IF Photo No. 530

Riko Nakashima remembered that when she was quite young she dropped a coin in a UNICEF collection box on Children's Day in May. But now that she was 12 and had seen a TV film about what UNICEF means in the daily life of a little girl in Thailand, Riko wanted to learn more.

Travelling one and a half hours by train from her home in Saitama Prefecture, she came with her teacher, Mr. Yasu Yonezawa, and five of her seventh-grade schoolmates to Tokyo to find out how they might help children less fortunate than themselves.

At the offices of the Japanese Committee for UNICEF, they sat down with the young staff members, who are eager to expand their educational programmes beyond the 7,700 schools that already promote projects for UNICEF.

"This committee represents our school," explained the teacher, "and these students wish to have some specific examples of children's needs in developing countries". During the few hours they spent at the office they saw films, posters, and study materials about the need for Vitamin A to prevent blindness in Bangladesh, the health care programmes in

the Philippines, and the kindergarten educational efforts in China, as well as a variety of projects concerning clean water and sanitation in Africa and Latin America. The children listened with fascination. They were also told about the three caravans that go out into the towns and villages of Japan twice a year to show films and distribute UNICEF materials in an effort to reach as many people as possible.

## Hope for the future

Although the Committee's 16 staff members stress fundraising (and they manage to turn over to UNICEF 90.6% of their collections, amounting to over \$ 5 million last year), their emphasis is not just on donations. Rather they see development education as necessary for the future of the world community.

They were delighted when after their briefings the seventh-grade youth committee from the school in Saitama Prefecture gave what has become a typical response. "We should show a UNICEF film at our yearly school festival," said Riko, "and then have a special project so that our classmates have a chance to contribute. But our project should also help them to understand what it might be like to live and grow up without enough food, clean water, books, or medicines."

The other girls and boys with her nodded their agreement and began discussing the ideas they would recommend to their school - perhaps a game to show how the difference in the distribution of the world's resources is one cause of poverty or a plan to give up one meal each month, with the saved money going to UNICEF, so that each student could experience, if only briefly, the sufferings of a hungry child.

When children care about other children, there is hope for the future.

By Elizabeth Bowne, UNICEF volunteer, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, USA.

## 'Jornadas de Lisboa' on development education

In late March 1985, 10 of the 11 members of the Latin Group of National Committees for UNICEF met in Lisbon to discuss 'what teacher for what programme?'

Hosted by the Portuguese Committee and co-organized with the French Committee, this meeting was an important opportunity for committees to discuss joint policy issues on development education and strengthen cooperation among themselves.

Equally important was the Latin Group's commitment to assist the Portuguese Committee and Portuguese educators in establishing a strong development education programme in that country. The meeting was very well attended by Portuguese educators, and the active participation, keen interest and expressed commitment of other persons such as the First Lady of Portugal and the Secretary of State for Education indicate the potential for such a programme in Portugal. The event was well covered by the Portuguese media and the French newspaper *Le Monde*.

## A new way of viewing the world

The participants specified what they felt should be the orientation and the spirit of

school programmes at all levels, from pre-school to secondary and beyond, and developed a set of basic principles governing the training of teachers to implement these programmes. The participants felt that to be truly effective, development education should permeate the entire school curriculum, and in fact represent a new way of viewing the world. This means that it is far better for development education to be the concern of every teacher rather than delegated to specialized staff. Training programmes should consist of an initiation into Third World issues, followed by periodic documentation to update teachers' knowledge and deepen their understanding. The teachers should see their role to be that of imparting information and conveying the various aspects of development problems - development education must never become a soapbox for a particular political stance. The complete text of the resolutions adopted on development education programmes can be obtained from the Development Education Unit, UNICEF, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland.

By Jesper Mørch, Development Education Officer, UNICEF, Geneva.



Méchiméré, an important centre in Kanem province, has seen its population swell from the original 1,640 to 7,818. The new villagers live in two camps of stick and matting huts which cling to the slopes beneath the village. Their only belongings are what they could carry on their heads. They have a few cooking pots, a mortar and pestle, the clothes – or rags – they are wearing, no rugs, no blankets despite the all-pervading cold at this time of the year.

Why the people flocked to Méchiméré is not difficult to understand. There is a dispensary, a UNICEF nutrition centre – whose clients jumped from 260 to around 1,800 – and a school with a canteen. It is also a centre for the distribution of WFP dry food rations through Care-Chad.

### Caught unawares

Despite such amenities, however, the severity of the drought and the upheaval it caused caught the government – and the aid agencies – unawares.

As people started converging *en masse* to food distribution points like Méchiméré, several things quickly became apparent. Firstly, as Wali Shah Wali, UNDP Resident Representative in N'Djamena said recently, "Chad throughout its history has had to import food, but when there was a drought the situation could be kept under control. Now that thousands have died of hunger, there is a new situation and the risk that it can get out of control."

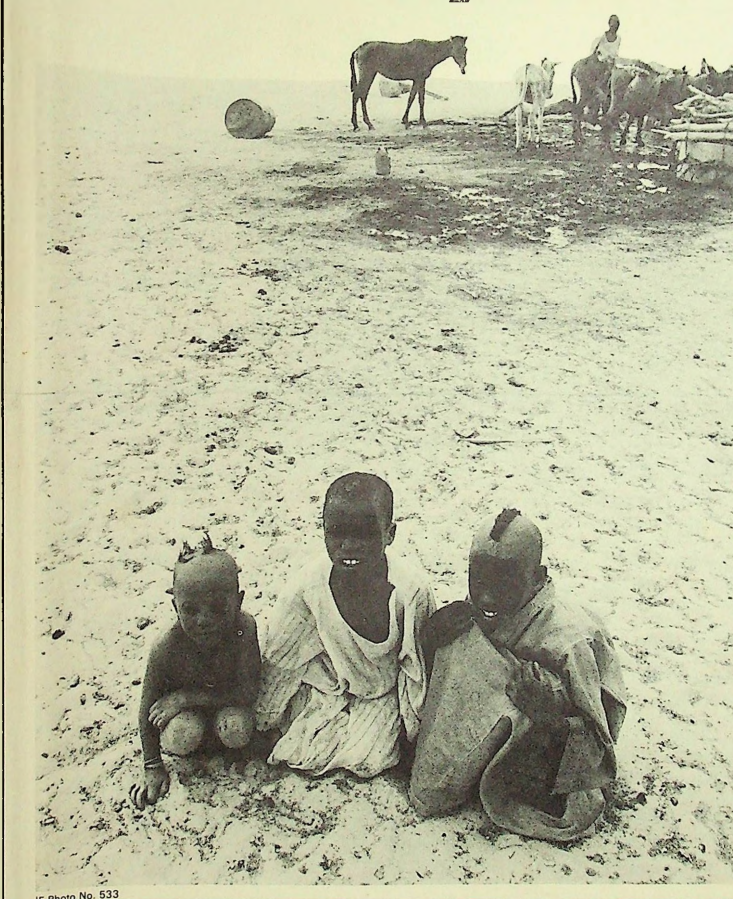
Secondly, it became clear that urgent measures were necessary to discourage over-large, unmanageable concentrations of people with their attendant health hazards.

Thirdly, it was equally evident – as proven later when WFP scraped the bottom of its food barrel at the end of November – that the whole population could not be hand-fed in feeding centres and that a longer-term solution was required.

### Wadis, a partial solution

A partial solution to these problems may have been found. The Sahelian belt, stretching from the Kanem in the west to the Ouaddaï near the Sudanese border, is interspersed with *wadis*, natural depressions with oasis-like vegetation, and is blessed with a generally high water table and soil made fertile by years of frequentation by animals.

# Upsetting traditions and life-styles



IF Photo No. 533

## The Chad drought

□ The longest and most severe drought in Chad's living memory reached a climax in 1984. Rainfall and harvests in the Sahelian belt were practically nil. Even parts of the usually self-sufficient south were severely affected. □ The result is a massive population movement such as has never before been witnessed in the country in modern times, upsetting life-styles, traditions, and family structures, disrupting trade, defying statistics. □ The men move south or west with their herds, or when these are dead, towards the towns in search of work. □ The women, children, and old people left behind crowd around food distribution centres in the main villages.

With the National Organization of Rural Development (ONDR), various NGOs such as Care-Chad, Secadev, Africare, as well as UN agencies, WFP and UNICEF, have started resettling displaced people in food production projects in suitable *wadis* throughout the region.

Care-Chad is supervising one such project near Cheddra, Kanem province, about 200 km north of N'Djamena. Some 1,300 heads of families – over half of them women – of the 6,000 families registered in four camps along this old river bed (in the last century canoes used to travel up from Lake Chad) have volunteered to take part in the programme. Work began in several *wadis* on 1 December. By mid month, land had been cleared, wells were being dug – one for each family plot of about 0.25 ha – and equipped with an Egyptian-type *shadoof*, a water-drawing device with a pole, bucket and counterpoise. The plots were divided into sub-plots by irrigation canals. The ground is as hard as nails. The farmers' only tools are the traditional hand-made *dabas*, or hoes, provided by UNICEF or bought on the market. Work progresses surprisingly fast despite the difficulties. As a measure of encouragement, farmers have been issued with their first food-for-work rations. These will be continued for four to five months, until farmers can live off their own produce.

### Total revolution

A dynamic 24-year-old Chadian, Mbaïro Ngoniri-Gos, coordinates the Cheddra project. "Many of the farmers are nomadic or semi-nomadic herd-grazers", he said. "This small-scale cultivation means for them a total revolution in traditions, life-style, and pattern of work." To help such farmers adjust, the ONDR has sent two agricultural advisors and Care-Chad has trained local farmers as instructors to give their new neighbours technical advice.

Similar projects were also started by WFP and Africare in December in the Bîteha and Sabar *wadis* in Ouaddaï province. Work went so fast that three weeks later seeds were sprouting. So far the projects cover 1,200 ha and occupy about 2,500 active people (about 1,500 families). Altogether, similar production projects will involve some 20,000 families (each family counts for five people).

Even if it does not rain in 1985, Mbaïro Ngoniri-Gos is optimistic about the future.

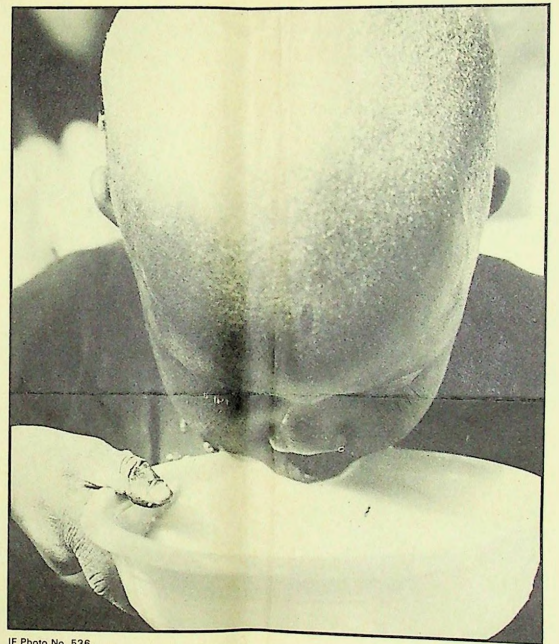




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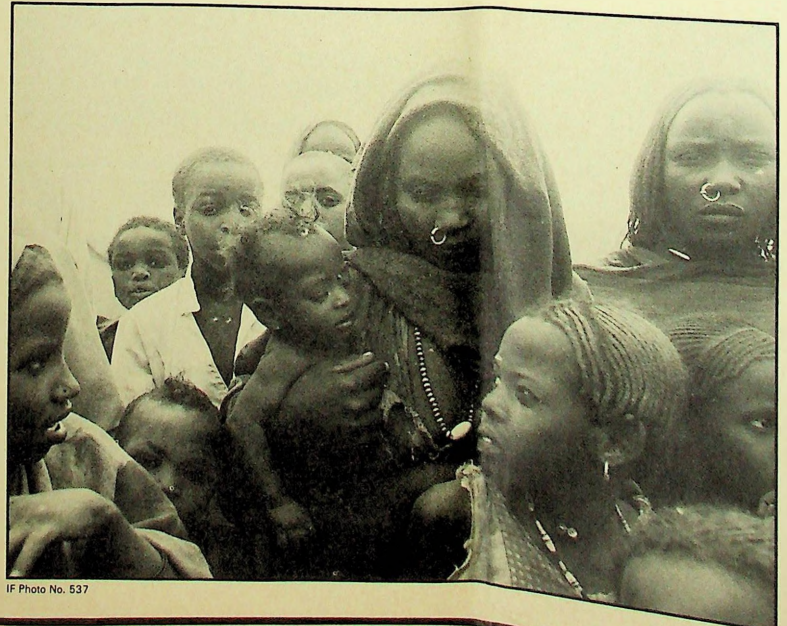


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"In the Kanem alone", he explained, "there are over 200 *wadis* with about 4,000 ha of cultivable land - enough to feed the whole of northern Chad." Luckily, the Kanem sits on a uniform, stable water table so that even the drought will not adversely affect water supply. In *wadis*, the water is at a depth of two to four metres. "About 90% of these *wadis* were hitherto unexploited", he went on. To break in more *wadis* would, however, require considerable investment in capital and equipment. The scrub needs to be cleared; wells need to be made more permanent, new trees need to be planted. Several *wadis* have already been buried in sand. In fact, according to Mbaïro Ngoniri-Gos, to save the Kanem urgent dune-fixing and reforestation schemes will be necessary in the next

year or two; otherwise, he says, "it will be too late". The biggest question mark, however, concerns the weather. Climatologists classify the Sahel as a region with an annual rainfall of between 300 and 750 mm. In N'Djamena rainfall in 1984 dropped to 260 mm. Says UNICEF hydrogeologist, Alain Matthys, "What was the Sahel should now be reclassified as 'sub-desert'." Whether it rains or not, the government and the aid agencies will have to study very carefully the various alternatives affecting the future of these men, women, and children.

**Text and photos by  
Maggie Murray-Lee,  
Information Officer,  
UNICEF, Abidjan,  
Ivory Coast.**



IF Photo No. 537



# Zimbabwe — a food exporter once again

Zimbabwe expects a bumper maize harvest estimated at three million metric tons this year. Thanks to the widespread rainfall which started in October 1984, the country will have enough maize to enable it to join the ranks of food exporters once again.

"What is encouraging", says the UNICEF Representative in Harare, Saidi Shomari, "is the fact that an estimated 50% of the harvest will come from the small-holder farming sector which, by tradition, will retain an estimated one million tons for domestic consumption." The Grain Marketing Board, the country's sole buyer and seller of grain, will receive two million tons for export to neighbouring countries.

Zimbabwe became an importer of food after three consecutive years of severe drought. The food deficit has severely affected about two million people, and in some areas, relief supplies distributed by the government were all that people had to eat.

## Struggling to recover

The nutritional status of children has been seriously affected, and the government has had to establish a national supplementary feeding programme for children under five. It has also been reported that the general health conditions have deteriorated in the drought-stricken areas, with increased rates of diarrhoea and measles, in particular.

"The emergency supplementary feeding programme will most probably be phased out after mid 1985, except in the southwestern regions, where the security situation continues to remain unstable", says Shomari. UNICEF, in close cooperation with the Swedish International Development Agency, the World Food Programme, and a number of NGOs, has been assisting some 10,000 supplementary feeding centres where 270,000 under-fives are being fed. Trucks and other logistic requirements have

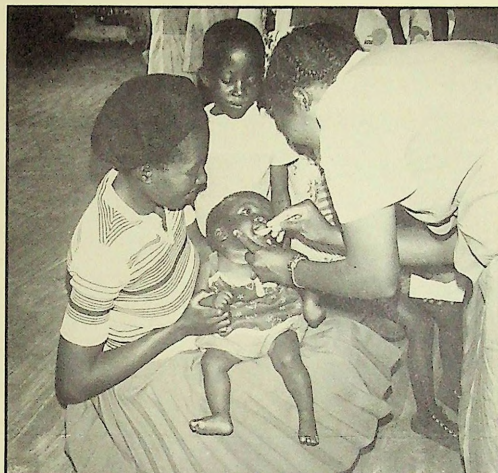
been provided to ensure a regular flow of foodstuffs. While Zimbabwe will now once again become self-sufficient in staple foods, child malnutrition will continue to be prevalent due to a number of factors which require the initiation of long-term measures. These are especially important, should a drought re-occur. Shomari emphasizes that from this year onwards, UNICEF will support the government's long-term efforts to improve the nutritional status, including strengthening the nutrition surveillance system, promoting communal gardens, improving food conservation and storage facilities, and providing nutrition education. However, in drought-stricken areas, further assistance is required to upgrade rural health centres (estimated to number 160 in Matebeleland alone) and improve water and sanitation systems.

## Drought refugees from Mozambique

The country's drought situation has been compounded by the influx of an estimated 30,000 displaced Mozambicans since early 1984. To date, 13,000 persons have been accommodated in four camps established by the government in Manicaland and Mashonaland Central Provinces. The government has continued to encourage displaced Mozambicans living in local communities to move to the camps.

Although another large influx of displaced Mozambicans has not been reported recently, it is expected that those who are already in the country will stay throughout 1985.

The four camps have been supplied with basic drugs,



IF Photo No. 538

HELENA GEZELIUS

maternal and child health equipment, growth charts and scales, and cooking utensils for supplementary feeding. Cold-chain equipment has also been provided and immunizations are being administered at clinics established in the camps. An estimated 100 Mozambicans have been trained in simple health care, including growth monitoring and oral rehydration therapy.

Besides the health and nutrition programme, formal and informal education ac-

tivities have been organized in the camps. Textbooks have been provided and the Ministry of Education has conducted orientation courses for Mozambican teachers. Summing up the situation, Shomari affirmed that, "Although the priority will continue to be health and nutrition, skills-training and income-generating activities will need to be expanded".

By Rebecca Katumba, Information Officer, UNICEF, Kampala, Uganda.

## Publications

### Information for Action: Issue Papers and Resource Guides

Community participation is desirable, but should training be delayed until it occurs? Should community health workers be broadly educated or trained for specific competencies?

The World Federation of Public Health Associations

- staff of private and voluntary organizations
- students, teachers, and trainers
- health planners, managers, evaluators
- health service providers.

The Resource Guides summarize books and articles and describe periodicals, projects, and resource institutions specializing in specific areas of primary health care, while the Issue Papers present an in-depth look at the issues involved in certain aspects of primary health care, providing flexible, un-dogmatic suggestions based on experience.

For a list of the Issue Papers and Resource Guides now available, write to:

APHA Publication Sales  
1015 15th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20005 USA.

The American Public Health Association and the World Federation of Public Health Associations would also like to announce that their newsletter, *Salubritas*, after a year's suspension, is back again as an information exchange in primary health care. For subscriptions, write to International Health Programs, APHA.

## Information on children

### Directory

UNICEF Geneva has just published a bilingual (English and French) *Directory of Centres in Europe Providing Information on Children*. Conceived as a working tool for those who need information on the situation and problems of children, it provides essential descriptive facts (name, address, contact person) and additional useful data (nature of centre, public served, products), for 200 national institutions in Europe and regional and international organizations sited in Europe.

Address queries to: UNICEF Reference Centre, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland.

### Compendium

*Childhood Information Resources* describes and evaluates more than 1,100 key sources of information on children and childhood, assembling in one volume the countless sources and statistics on children that have been compiled over the years. Virtually every aspect of children and childhood is covered. Included also are special chapters on statistical measurements, tests and assessments, and parent education.

Available for \$45.00 plus \$2.45 for postage and handling, from Information Resources Press, 1700 North Moore Street, Suite 700, Arlington, Virginia 22209, USA.

has started an Information for Action series to give non-experts "the information they need to operate in the technical program areas that have been identified by governments and assistance agencies as key to lowering mortality". Initially funded by UNICEF as in-service training materials for its field staff, the series, because of its proven value, is being made available to the entire international health community:

- staff of bilateral and multilateral development organizations
- ministry of health and other government officials





PLAYING BODYGUARD  
Twins Kanaka and Ishan Kadam

OH

Photo Prashant Nadkar



Dear God" began the letter. "Are boys better than girls? I know you are one boy who is, but do try to be fair." Eight-year-olds were asked to write to God as part of a school exercise and this was one girl's most nagging doubt.

The debate on who makes the superior sex is one that rages in the home, at the workplace and, perhaps most fiercely, in the playground—often with ambiguous results. There has always been a tendency to see boys as made for success, particularly in a male-dominated society like India's. However, for the young male population, the outlook no longer remains rosy.

The evidence of weaknesses in boys is getting tougher than ever to overlook. Scientists are discovering biological differences that can make boys more impulsive, more vulnerable to neglect and less efficient classroom learners. And social pressure often compounds biological vulnerability. Boys today are growing up with tremendous expectations, but without adequate emotional fuel or the tools they need to succeed in school or sustain deep relationships.

Eleven-year-old Kanaka and Ishan are twins, but they are worlds apart. Kanaka is an extrovert, who has a finger in every pie. She is keen to make friends, likes to dress well, learns Bharatnatyam and represents her Mumbai school at sports. Ishan is good at studies, but is an introvert. He says he likes games, but can hardly spare time from his homework. Their father Dr Vinod Kadam admits that Kanaka is the tougher of the twins. "She is assertive and will not take anything lying down, even from a boy," he says. "She is also extremely protective about Ishan and plays his bodyguard in school and in our colony." Today's educated girls feel closer to their families, have higher aspirations and boast better assertiveness skills.

Boys traditionally were thought to be better in maths and science, but girls are storming that bastion too. Boys also lag behind girls of their own age

group in reading and writing. New research indicates boys' vulnerabilities and indicates that they can be traced back to the womb. Male newborns are also more emotionally demonstrative than females—a fact proven in experiments.

Scientists have found some intriguing anatomical differences in brain structure making it hard for boys to process information and even read faces, but easier for them to excel at gross motor skills and visualise objects in three dimensions. Women's brains are, on average, 11 per cent smaller than men's. There is no difference in IQ among males and females because female brains are not simply a smaller version of male brains. From a strictly evolutionary standpoint, the female brain is a bit more finely developed.

Brains are composed of grey matter (where information is processed), white matter (fibres that transmit electrical impulses from brain to body) and spinal fluid (which acts as a buffer from the skull). The most recent research shows that males have less grey matter and more white matter. And in women the corpus callosum, nerves that link the right and left hemispheres of the brain and help the two sides communicate, is thicker. As a result, the female brain is more adept at verbal skills. Girls utter their first words earlier, string together complete sentences first and generally surpass boys in tests of verbal fluency.

Boys also need more time to process information and respond. Some researchers advocate a later start in school for boys, because they are expected to do too much too soon but their brains are not ready for it. The result can be a lifelong struggle. Not all girls are precocious, and not all boys are delayed, but more number of child psychologists feel that later enrollment would be far more beneficial for the male child.

# BOY!



By Farwa Imam Ali & Dnyanesh Jathar

Boys have a problem: girls. The fairer sex is catching up and excelling in most fields they set their heart on, robbing boys of their sense of superiority.

The Indian home, too, is seeing a change with the girl child often stealing the thunder from her male sibling.

Twin sisters Nehal and Sejal Vaghiani of Chennai had grown in big brother Santosh's shadow for years. But that did not daunt them from winning their place in the sun. While Santosh flunked the higher secondary exam, the twins sailed through with flying colours. "Their father couldn't imagine how the boy could fail while the girls succeeded," says mother Savitha. Santosh took to smoking to cope with the tension and when his parents confronted him, he broke down. "Santosh's father was dismayed at the thought of a boy crying," says Savitha. "I knew my son was a softie. My girls were always tougher."

## Biologically speaking, the female sex is stronger

Dr Lakshmi Vijaykumar,  
Chennai psychiatrist

Parents are awakening, slowly and cautiously, to the fact that girls are sugar balanced with spice, while boys are struggling to cope with traditional stereotypes of holding power. Psychiatrists, psychologists, and educationists say the writing has been on wall for sometime now.

The race starts at conception. While more boys than girls are conceived—the speculation is that sperm carrying the male's Y chromosomes swim faster than those carrying the

larger X chromosomes—this biological pole position does not last long. Perhaps to offset the speed advantage, when mothers experience stress, male embryos are more likely to perish and the male foetus is at greater risk from almost all obstetric complications. Also, when a baby boy is born, he is trailing the average girl, developmentally, by six weeks.

"Biologically speaking, the female sex is stronger," says Dr Lakshmi Vijaykumar, a psychiatrist at



Photo/V. Ramesh

## Mind mistresses

They came with considerable quizzing experience, but to upstage the men while being the minority is remarkable. Of four winners of *Mastermind India* since its inception in 1998, three have been women. Dayita Bira Dutta, 43, a Dehradun-based schoolteacher, won in the first year, K.E. Priyamvada, a 27-year-old publishing house employee, in 2000 and Archana Garodia Gupta, a 35-year-old Delhi businesswoman, in 2001, in the episode to be telecast in June 2002.

Quiz contests may sprout on TV channels like weeds in a neglected garden, but BBC's *Mastermind* remains a class apart. While most

quiz programmes try to keep their questions fairly simple—sometimes absurdly so—for fear of losing viewers, *Mastermind* remains resolutely high-brow, unmindful of ratings. "The questions are tough and intentionally so," says Siddhartha Basu, producer and quiz master of *Mastermind India*. "*Mastermind* makes no concessions to mass taste. In this show we cater to the highest common factor, not to lowest common denominator."

What makes the women's win remarkable is that only a sprinkling of women enter the contest. In 2001 for instance, only 12 of 64 who took the preliminary written test were women, and that was the most in the four years since the contest started. In the

first year, when Dayita won, there were only five women competing.

"I think women quizzers take their task more seriously," says Archana. "Women take whatever they do more seriously. Or rather only those women who take their work or their interests very seriously are able to continue pursuing them. Those not too serious easily get sidetracked towards their domestic concerns, of which they have many more than men, and give up their interests."

Basu does not believe women have any special talent for quizzing. "I think all the three women who won did so because they were exceptional individuals," he says. "It had nothing to do with their being women."

Debashish Mukerji



## Fighting shy

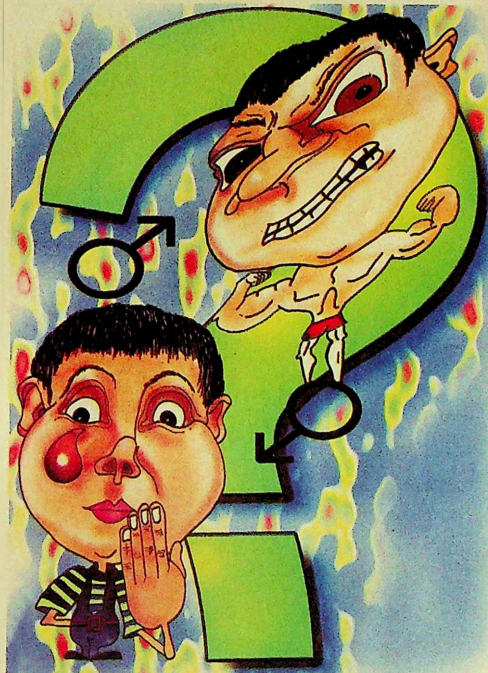
Another Mumbai home, another sibling role reversal. Dino's mother, Shiny Davis, just cannot persuade the 11-year-old to learn to ride a bicycle. "We tried to teach him. But he likes only to stay at home," she says. Five-year-old Dincy, his sister, is full of beans and more mature. When they have guests she does the rounds introducing herself. "Dino is very good at studies, but is quiet moody," says Shiny.

Chennai's Voluntary Health Services. A girl has two X chromosomes. If one develops a defect, the other one manages to take charge. The male, however, has an XY combination. If the X chromosome has a problem, there is no alternative. "Research has shown male babies to be more vulnerable at birth," says Lakshmi. "Out of hundred babies born, about 45 female infants will survive as compared to 35 males." And this is only the beginning.

Both sexes work to fit themselves into the slots allotted to them by parents, peers and society. However, there is little congruence in the macho image that boys like to project and reality. "Many boys find it convenient to avoid problems while girls look at them as opportunities to test their problem-solving skills," says Shantha Joseph, counsellor at Chennai's SIET College.

The rejuvenation of the fairer sex could not have come at a worse time for the boys. Research indicates that the ratio of children suffering from learning disabilities, bed wetting and stammering is loaded against the boys in a 2:1 ratio.

Santosh would not study and was often caught playing pranks. So much so, the eight-year-old's parents found it difficult to handle him. "He was diagnosed with attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity," says Mumbai psychiatrist Dr Rajendra Barve. "More boys suffer from this disorder than girls and the reasons are purely neurological."



Illustration/Samita Rafter

**When boys get emotional, parents and other adults often encourage them to tone it down. The result can be isolation that plagues men into middle age**

Boys are also emotionally more vulnerable than girls says Barve. "The instances of bed wetting, nail biting, shyness and avoidant behaviour are found more in boys than girls," he says.

Research shows that emotional losses, tragedies and failure of any kind hit boys harder. But while there is evidence that boys may feel more stress in emotional situations, they routinely show less. When placed within earshot of a crying baby, boys have higher increases in heart rate and sweatier palms than girls, but their behaviour belies their biological reaction: their typical response is

to ignore the crying. Girls, who tend to be more articulate and verbose, do not internalise stress.

When boys get emotional, parents and other adults often encourage them to tone it down. The result can be emotional isolation that starts in boyhood and plagues men into middle age, often with emotional, and even physical, consequences. Research also suggests that the emotional brain is "more primitive" in men. Women make use of an emotional processing centre adjacent to the speech areas of the brain, which makes it easier for them to link emotions to speech. Child psy-

# I-have-the-power syndrome

Boys grow up believing they have a 'rightful' power over mothers, sisters and other women. Their experiences at home and in school, and with friends or neighbours strengthen this belief.

A new school of psychiatry is trying to understand such behaviour: it takes into account socialisation in India, feminist understanding, the idea of masculinity, gender biases and behavioural psychology. Dr Shekhar Seshadri, additional professor of psychiatry at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences in Bangalore, is a staunch advocate of the new school that is devising an alternative process or parallel socialisation process aimed at asking boys, 'Why can't men be more like women?'

Seshadri points out that men want to be more powerful than not only women but other men also. When boys grow up, their masculinity gets constructed on the theme of sexual conquest. They underline their superiority in bed, and boast about their sexual conquest to other men. This structures power relations in the peer group.

In war, men first pillage cities, kill other men and rape women. The construction of their masculinity is centred on subjugating women and other men, and they are bogged down by fears and anxieties which constantly pop the question, 'Am I man enough?'

Masculinity, Seshadri argues, should be a natural endowment rather than a condition defined by power relations. "Why can't men be associated with tenderness and nurturing?" he asks. "Why should it be sexual conquests and achievements that make them anxious about lack of power?"

According to him, the form of socialisation practised in homes and schools is tragic because boys lose out on the friendship of women and women lose out on the friendship of men. "We need to challenge and question these stereotypes."

Seshadri, in association with the Save the Children Fund and Unicef, has initiated the Masculinities Film Project in India. The set of four films aims at understanding how boys construct knowledge and at starting a process of discourse with boys.

Without a culture of discourse, he notes, most children develop notions of gender and power based on the conservative images in the cinema and on television. The film project—a part of the teacher training syllabus in Karnataka—offers images and symbols that motivate boys to look at human beings with their own struggle for an identity. "These are not message films. They take a slice out of life where there is the possibility to connect to and challenge all power structures as a start," he says.

Seshadri passionately believes it is possible to redefine masculinity. Underpinning his belief is film actress Suhasini's statement, 'I want my son to have the right amount of masculinity, the right amount of femininity and the right amount of humanity.' He, however, adds: "There is some hope for boys, but none for men."

N. Bhanutej

chologists advise that it is necessary for parents to teach their sons to match words with feelings, to build a vocabulary for the emotions that they often have trouble expressing. Not all of the old stereotypes are unfounded, though. Toy weapons and action toys do fire them up.

Male and female stereotypes are very visible in society for boys and girls to see, but girls have scored because they now think beyond traditional roles. There is, on the other hand, no dramatic change in the perceptions about a boy's role. Earlier, women were allowed to study after much debate. Today they are assertive and think of it as their right.

The competition has shaken the boys and they find themselves in turmoil. Gone are the days when the birth of a girl caused worry among the parents. Sanjana, at 7, proved preco-



## Why can't men be associated with tenderness and nurturing?

Dr Shekhar Seshadri, NIMHANS

sciously helpful when her father met with an accident in Mumbai. "She inquired if I had informed everyone and asked about the medicines her father had to take," recalls her mother Annie. She is good at studies and sports, and is competitive. Her brother Sanjay, 13, on the other hand, does not know how to express himself and needs to be pushed to study. "When he goes to the market and does not find a particular





Photo/Prashant Nadkar

## Sanjana, 7, is good at studies and sports, and is competitive. Her brother Sanjay, 13, on the other hand, needs to be pushed to study

item, he will not think of an alternative on his own," says Annie.

Psychologist Pratima Havaldar says she has no data that conclusively indicates boys are becoming more insecure and vulnerable. Any pressure on them could be due to the social influences in their growing years. "In our male dominated society, a boy feels he should not cry because it is girlish behaviour. But is tear formation different in boys and girls?" she asks.

Housewife J. Farzanah believes that much of the physical and psychological resilience built into the girls generates from their religious leanings. "Girls are more spiritual," she says. "While biological differences may make boys more impulsive, they do not seek relief from God as much as girls do."

Psychiatrist Dr Anand Nadkarni of the Institute for Psychological Health (IPH) in Thane feels that girls are better focused than boys. "They have a tremendous urge to express and learn. In teenage years,

the emotional development of girls is much faster than the boys." At the IPH career conferences the response of the girls has been qualitatively better. "The questions girls come up with have substance," he says.

As a point in evolution, girls have, over the years, learned to turn the genetic, socio-cultural disadvantages into advantages. While sociologists agree that the boys' ego have taken a beating, they also believe that the boys are not provided an insight into the condition. Clinical psychologist, Dr R. Karthikeyan of Gemba Consultants in Chennai says: "Neither schools nor parents have taken the lead. How many schools have psychologists on their board? How many screen the boys for early signs of dyslexia?"

Everything seemed hunky-dory on the outside for 16-year-old Vinod Krishnan, so his parents were surprised when they noticed a drop in his grade, coupled by smoking, drinking and a tendency toward drugs. At counselling he said that his

parents, both of whom were working, had no time for him and his sister, who was brilliant at studies, made him feel insecure.

"Until about a decade ago more boys achieved ranks while the girls edged past them in the overall pass percentage," says Karthikeyan. "Today, even that bastion has fallen with more girls occupying the top slots."

Laila Bhatkal, founder member of Sapling, a school for slow learners in Mumbai, says more boys suffer from this disorder than girls. "Seventy per cent of our students are back in the mainstream," she says. "But the girls are able to sustain jobs and the employers are happy with their skills, but the boys seem to have difficulty in settling down."

"Boys do lack focus when it comes to studies," says Meghana Londhe, supervisor at R.M. Bhat High School in Mumbai. "They are emotionally tougher, but not sincere and serious like the girls."

Dr Anand Nadkarni says that girls have the urge to prove themselves because of a variety of psychosocial reasons. Girls realise that muscular strength is becoming redundant because of scientific and technological developments. "On the other hand boys seem to be getting complacent," he says. "They shape up in a typical masculine aggressive way because aggression has been the male stereotype. That is why when they are pushed they behave in an aggressive manner."

Thanks to the media, boys are distracted by numerous channels that reiterate *film* values and funds. "Films show people getting drunk to cope with difficulty," says L. Venkateshwaran, an undergraduate commerce student. "So though I don't particularly like the taste of beer, I drink it for the effect." The signals of rebellion boys hope to endorse as symbols of being strong—misuse of alcohol, rejection of traditional values, increased overt expression of independence—leads them to being projected as the weaker sex today. Maybe they could follow Rudyard Kipling's advice in the poem *If* and keep their head when all about them are losing theirs.



THE EXCISE DUTY HIKE IS BEING VIEWED AS A DISGUISED "WAR CESS" FOR THE TROOP DEPLOYMENT ALONG THE BORDER (LEFT)

Finance and Policy, agrees that the government desperately needed to shore up the budget but disagrees on the way that it is being done.

Siphoning off surpluses accruing to one segment of the public sector to another will not help the financial health of the public sector as a whole, he says. The surpluses accruing in the oil pool account will be diminished greatly.

"Is there a financial emergency?" asks D. Raja, national secretary, Communist Party of India. "What is the meaning of springing an ordinance like this on the eve of the budget session?"

This entire exercise, according to Raja, will deliver well-performing public sector units to the altar of disinvestment. "Oil companies have been posting profits and these profits are being diverted to plug the fiscal deficit. Later, these oil companies will be shown as inefficient and non-profit making and sold off cheaply," he says. He calls this a "burdening of PSUs".

According to Raja, there were better ways of fiscal management like bringing more people into the tax net. "Successive governments have ignored the potential of the rural rich as tax-payers. Now subsidies on kerosene and cooking gas are also to be cut. When corporates do not cough up their taxes, should the honest be taxed more?" he asks.

The tax department has been able to tap only 23 million of the potential, 40 million direct tax-payers. It is not adequately equipped to bring more people into the tax net.

Come April 2002, oil prices will be out of government hands: under the WTO agreement, oil pricing systems are to shift from the administrative price mechanism to a market-driven one. The government's move therefore is seen as a carefully thought-out and executed "speculative windfall profit".

Nistula Hebbur

# Spike the hike

## Raising excise duty on petro-products will not help the economy

On January 11, Indians woke up to a surprise. Newspaper headlines announced cuts in petrol and diesel prices. Indians have always been subjected to hikes in petrol and diesel prices with the "oil pool deficit" being the standard excuse for the exercise. For the first time in years petrol price came down by Rs 1.39 per litre and diesel by 8 paise.

The excise duty on them, however, was raised steeply. On petrol it was raised to 90 per cent from 32 per cent and on diesel to 20 per cent from 16 per cent. Armed with a new ordinance granting it powers to raise excise duty to an unlimited extent, the finance ministry indulged in an "intelligent piece of financial juggling" which is expected to rake in Rs 1,500 crore.

According to T.G. Keswani, consultant at the Punjab, Haryana and Delhi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, it is at best an "intelligent financial engineering". "International oil prices have come down after September 11, and a surplus of about Rs 500 crore was accruing to the oil pool account," he says. "By levying extra

excise duty this surplus is being mopped up by the finance ministry instead of remaining with the oil pool account."

According to him, it is like taking money out of the right pocket to be put in the left. "The oil companies are government-owned, so the transfer of cash goes from the petroleum ministry to the finance ministry, with no permanent solution to the problem," he says.

Coming just before the budget session of Parliament in February, the move is also being viewed as a disguised "war cess" for the massive troop deployment after December 13. Another viewpoint is that the mounting financial deficit—a whopping Rs 79,133 crore till November 2001—necessitates this "emergency step".

While finance ministry sources deny that the move has anything to do with the movement of troops—the tab for which is nearly Rs 1,000 crore—they admit worries about the high budget deficit.

Dr Amaresh Bagchi, professor emeritus, National Institute of Public

Photo/AP



HOMOSEXUALS

# SEX, LIES, AGONY AND MATRIMONY

Over 80 per cent of the country's gays are trapped in "normal" marriages. Counsellors are now telling the younger lot to stay single and assert their identity.

By VIJAY JUNG THAPA and SHEELA RAVAL

**O**FTEN THE STILL NIGHT would stimulate an old, aching desire in Rakesh Anand. "It came on strong and could not be ignored," explains the 38-year-old businessman. It forced him to ransack his brains for white lies that allowed him to leave home—"I need a long, relaxing walk" or "The office just called, something's come up". His pretty wife would look disappointed, his five-year-old daughter nod angelically. But that rampant desire rationalised everything as he gurned his gleaming white Tata Sumo down the road to a nearby park. Within lay a dark, shadowy world of homosexual love where furtive male figures strutted their stuff, longing for eye contact. Anand slithered into this realm with the ease of an experienced man—moving through the darkness with a painted smile. An ancient mating ritual was already in progress as he paced up and down, trying to attract attention. Finally, someone would

walk up to him, a minute of whispered conversation, and then both would melt into the darkness. "A few gropes and a quick orgasm. Then I felt as if I had rid myself of this horrible desire and I hoped it would never come back."

But those still nights kept coming back. Finally, driven by spasms of guilt, Anand went to a gay counselling centre in February this year. To his horror, he learnt that his sexual preference tended more towards homosexual than heterosexual. He hadn't had sex with his wife in months—but cruising the park for sex occurred almost once a week.

His sexuality—which should have been stark and clear to him—had been enveloped in a haze of denial. Learn to be comfortable with it, it is a part of you, he was told. Today, after several counselling sessions, Anand realises he has two options ahead of him. End his marriage. Or tell his wife. Which, in the end, may lead to the first. He hasn't had the courage to decide yet. "I get so angry when I think of all the unnecessary pain I've caused others by doing things I did not want to but thought I had to—like getting married," he says.

Anand is just one example of a large section of married gays in the country. Though there is no consolidated statistical study on the Indian gay population, activists stick to the internationally accepted figure of 5 per cent homosexuals in any given male population—taking the figure for the country to 1.3 crore. Out of this, an estimated 80 per cent (that is, 1.04 crore) are married, point out experts. Today, gay activists all across the country have decided to take a strong

**By getting into a heterosexual marriage, activists feel gays**

**aren't facing their sexuality in a responsible way.**

stand against such individuals. Many are actively counselling urban homosexuals against marriage. And to those already married, the advice is to stay faithful to the wife, and if that isn't possible, then to come out into the open. The accent is on finding one's sexuality and learning to live with it. Says Ramesh Menon, who helps run gay-support group Hamsafar Trust: "We believe that these men are not facing their sexuality in a responsible man-



Illustrations by JAYANTO

ner." He cites countless examples of men who get married because of tremendous societal pressure, yet often gatecrash gay parties for sex. "Such men are avoiding their own sexuality. They are too scared to believe they are gay. Yet they come to us for permission to rationalise their gay activity."

The trouble here, of course, lies in identifying one's sexuality. Or more specifically, determining a gay identity. Unfortunately, desire cannot be divided

into black and white areas of homo and hetero. Counsellors often apply the Kinsey Scale, which is derived on the premise that most people fall somewhere between 0 (totally heterosexual) and six (totally homosexual) on a sexual preference continuum. The rationale behind the scale being that heterosexual and homosexual are not opposites, but two possible positions on a continuum of sexual desire. One might be a two on the scale (preferring hetero sex, but occasionally enjoying homo sex), or a four (tending toward homo, but really liking both). Counselling sessions try and help a person map his sexuality, taking into account variables like attractions, fantasies, be-

haviour and emotions. "Once we're reasonably sure that here is an individual who is only attracted to his own sex and doesn't feel anything is missing, we advise him to stand firm against getting married," says Owais Khan, who runs Delhi-based Hamrahi.

Easier said. Ask Mumbai-based Rakesh Purohit, an engineer who knew he was gay. Oblivious to this fact, his family arranged a match and even fixed a wedding date. Purohit, with much trepidation, announced he was gay and that simple confession ripped the family apart. "My father beat me up, abused my friends and started calling me a 'she'—in the end, he wore me down. I agreed to get married." Today, his wife Sunita is already in denial: "I don't think about what he does. I don't ask him where he goes." That the problem is enormous is indicated by the Hamsafar helpline that receives an average of 80 calls a week. 75 per cent of them relating to gays being pressured to get married, or married and having problems. With devastating results. Keith Parera, a computer analyst, was taken first to a priest and then a doctor to cure him of his homosexuality. Finally, he was "blackmailed" into marriage by his mother who said a homosexual would mean his sisters would have to go unmarried. But after two years of marriage, he walked out.

Trouble is, a true sense of what your sexuality really is can dawn upon an individual anytime. For Narendra Sood, it happened at the "near elderly" age of 56, after having been married for 16 years with a teenaged son in tow. "No, it wasn't as if I woke up one morning preferring young boys," he says. He came out as gay, he reasons, because of a lot of abusive heterosexual marriages that he saw around him. And worse, he felt it happening to him—hating his wife because she did not arouse him in any way. Adds Sood, who now lives with a 36-year-old boyfriend: "I feel I have crystallised from a bisexual to a homosexual... now I clearly realise marriage was a mistake."

However, that's just one version. Many

activists feel a lot of homosexuals find it comfortable and convenient to maintain the facade of "respectability" by getting married. In India, homophobia is a reality and examples of discrimination a dime a dozen. Says Khan: "Many married gays feel that by providing for the wife, not sexually but in every other sense, they have done their bit." Besides, sex and love aren't the only reasons people get married. Says Anjali Gopalan, executive director of Naz Foundation, an NGO that works on AIDS awareness and runs a helpline for gays: "Many of them feel, I need someone who will look after me when I am old and others feel the need to have a child." Naz, in fact, is one organisation that doesn't counsel gays against marriage.

But look at it from a homosexual's point of view. Trauma starts from adolescence when he starts realising he is different from others. "It's frightening. I felt I was the only one with such feelings. There were no role models or people I could identify with," says Abhishek Modi, a 30-year-old executive who now openly flaunts his sexuality. It's so much easier to flow with the current pretending you are just like the rest. And that kind of denial leads to strange perversions. At Mumbai's KEM Hospital's sexology clinic, there are a large number of cases where essentially homosexual men come to "learn" how to function in heterosexual relationships.

Says Dr Prakash Kothari, the sexologist there: "It is really a dilemma. I have started encouraging married gays to achieve arousal by fantasising they are with men rather than their wives." And then there are others who don't define themselves as gay; yet indulge in acts of homosexuality. Points out Riyad Wadia, who made India's first gay film, *Bomgay*: "To them, gay means someone who plays the passive part during sex. So long as they are performing the active part, whether with their wives or their male lovers, they think their masculinity is still intact."

But what about the wives—how do they fare? Says Dr Ajit

## VOICES

"I get so angry when I think of the pain I've caused others by doing things I didn't want to but thought I had to—like getting married."

"My father beat me up, abused my friends, called me a 'she' and wore me down. In the end, I agreed to get married."



Bhide, a psychiatrist with Bangalore's St Martha Hospital, who is a consultant to several counselling groups, "It isn't the homosexual who is trapped in marriage, it is the wife." The lack of physical gratification—in some cases the marriage hadn't been consummated in two decades—leads to intense frustration. Rita Sen, a Delhi-based executive in an advertising agency, is one such wife. Her husband Patrick confessed three years after marriage that he gets turned on by men. She tried hard to understand. "But I would keep picturing him having sex with men and I felt humiliated." Three months ago, she slashed her wrists when she saw Patrick wearing a dress and make-up. She survived, and today Patrick has agreed to keep their vows of monogamy. "But I'm not sure ... because he still isn't having sex with me."

**I**N some cases, activists point out, wives seem to accept their husband's sexual preference as "destiny". And the joint family system—that great shock absorber—helps them cope in strange ways. Sudha Kerve, a 33-year-old Mumbai housewife, found that her husband treated her like an untouchable. Her mother-in-law's taunts that she was barren led her to confess this. Nobody believed her until the mother-in-law caught her son in bed with a



## Homosexuality is more in-your-face today and wives, once ignorant, are refusing to tolerate gay husbands.

male cousin. The taunts stopped and the family was extra nice to her, advising her not to file for divorce as it would taint the family's name. Her mother-in-law even took her aside and suggested she sleep with a particular relative to produce a child so everyone would think their relationship was normal. Says Sudha: "I have accepted this. At least the family looks after my other needs."

But cases like Sudha's seem more a relic of the past. Today, homosexuality is more in-your-face, with satellite tv, movies, media and the Net openly flaunting it. And wives, once ignorant, are getting wiser. "An increasing number are refusing to tolerate their husband's homosexuality," says Dr M. Watsa of Mumbai's Family Planning Association of India, "and a number of marriages are breaking up." In fact, the Hamsafar Trust, now plans to

form a support group for wives of homosexual husbands. Besides making them aware that they now belong to a high-risk group for AIDS, gay activists monitor cases and recommend therapy if the situation gets out of control. Says trust Chairman Ashok Row Kavi: "If we see the wife is unhappy but self-reliant, we advise a breaking-up."

At the bottom, though, the struggle to keep the institution of heterosexual marriage away from homosexuals really boils down to establishing a gay identity. The argument is that if more and more homosexuals are going to get married and relegate their homosexual part into a shadowy world of squalid sex, nothing will change. "Instead of coming out, there will just be more unprotected, anonymous sex, more disease, trauma and pain," adds Khan.

Mandeep Singh, 31, an interior decorator, argues that his sexual desire

has everything to do with identity. He's seen it all—though attracted to men.

he got married, is now divorced and has lost the custody of his only child. He considers himself a confirmed homosexual, though he is kind of disappointed. "Don't get me wrong. The sex is great—the way it was meant to be. But sometimes I need a stronger emotional bonding—man to man—and that isn't happening." Having walked in and out of fleeting relationships with his male friends over the past one year, he seems to have put a finger on why he isn't really satisfied. "It's because we're all still, in a sense, inside the closet. We haven't gained an identity, we're still on the fringe." Ideally, Singh hankers for everything a heterosexual wants—a good life, a family, children who will look after you when you grow old. Except he wants to do all that with a man he loves. "That is all that really matters to me. That will be my real identity." Hard fought and hard won.

—with STEPHEN DAVID

(Names have been changed to protect identity.)





DELHI DURBAR



## Tasting rain n' rally

WHEN it snows in Shimla, Delhi freezes, goes the saying about the geographical climate. Now, it seems that when it rains in Bhopal, Delhi sneezes. That is about the political climate.

For the last many weeks every political eye had been trained on Bhopal, the capital of Arjun Singh's Madhya Pradesh. The Congress high command was watching every move of Chief Minister Digvijay Singh and his MLAs to find out the extent of sympathy the expelled rebel enjoyed.

Finally, when Arjun's rally took place on March 9, Congress elders were left peering at the weather chart, literally. And they were relieved when it poured in Bhopal that day. Even as the rally was on, the Congress spokesman announced with a flourish that it was a literal washout. But he added in a soft undertone, "I heard they are reassembling after the rain."

Anyway, within minutes it rained in Delhi.

## Saying no to PM

WHO would not like to fly with the Prime Minister? Almost everyone would consider it a great privilege, but not Kerala Chief Minister K. Karunakaran.

Karunakaran was on his 'n'th trip to Delhi to persuade Narasimha Rao to retain him as the ruler of Kerala. Rao had summoned him, but when Karunakaran landed, the Prime Minister's office could not allot him time for an appointment.



Someone in the PMO then had a brainwave—ask Karunakaran to fly with the PM to Bihar where he was going to campaign for a day. Without seeking the chief minister's consent, they scored out all the newsmen detailed to accompany the VIP and put in Karunakaran's name.

But Karunakaran, who had flown around the country with Indira and Rajiv, politely declined the offer. In the end, the PM flew out with just his staff.

## Some lumpsum

THE golden handshake scheme was introduced primarily to enable public sector undertakings to trim themselves and cut losses. Whether that is happening or not is open to question, but the chequerer is



certainly taking on a lean, mean and positively hungry look. The government has admittedly spent Rs 1,548 crore of the national renewal fund on sending its workers on a permanent vacation.

But it was not a holiday that enthused the majority of the work force. Of the five lakh workers whom the government expected to pack off, only 75,000 have responded.

Wouldn't that mean a spending of Rs 20.64 crore to see the back of each employee? A fanciful amount that has depleted the government coffers. However, neither are the workers laughing all the way to the bank! The magic of mathematics did someone say?





# SEX IN THE CLASSROOM

**It worries the parents and makes the teachers queasy and the government cautious. But educationists and health experts assert that only lessons on sex can save children from catastrophe in the AIDS age.**

**T**HE place: A high school in Delhi. Manpreet Ahuja, the biology teacher in class 10, is waiting for the lunch-hour bell. In the last 40 minutes or so, she had covered the chapter on the human reproductive system. Now she is eager to leave, and avoid the "scandalous" questions from the boys and the embarrassing

giggles of the girls. This was one chapter Ahuja dreaded—year after year, she had flitted through it and wriggled out. And for the class of 1994-95, it was no different.

Months later, Ahuja was stunned by a headline in *The Times of India*: "Virginity no longer precious for Delhi varsity women." The report was about a survey on sexual attitudes and behaviour that an Indian researcher from a Canadian university had conducted among 661 students from two universities in Delhi. More than half the girls had said casual sex outside marriage was acceptable. Three-fourths did not even think satisfying sexual relationships were necessarily related to love.

"*Zamana badal gaya*," (times have changed), Ahuja sighed. "These students from moneyed families are damaging the reputation of other students as well," she thought and turned to the next page, unaware that more than half of 3,846 boys and girls, aged 15-29, from various strata of society in 13 cities considered them-

selves mature enough to make decisions regarding their sex lives. Or that a third of them did not know what sexual intercourse was—results of a survey done by the Family Planning Association of India (FPAI).

Ahuja was also unaware of the finding of the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) that 40 per cent of those infected by HIV/AIDS in India were in the age group of 15-30. Or that a third of 10,325 college students in four cities had said they did not mind having sex even at the risk of AIDS, according to a National Service Scheme study. NACO estimates that half of all new infections in the next five years would be in the 15-30 age

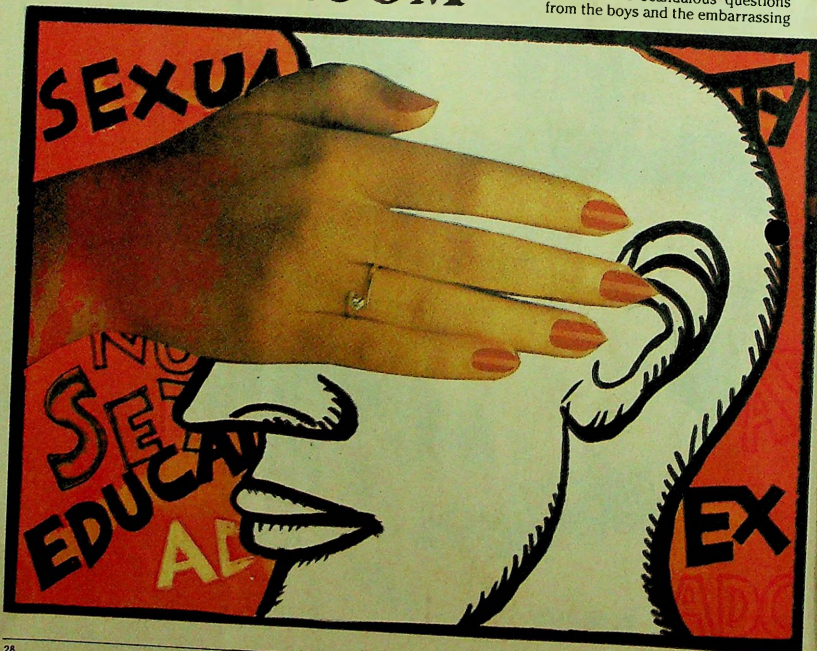
**In some areas in Bombay researchers have found even eight-year-old girls watching blue films with grownup persons.**

group. "I wish I knew earlier," sighed Ahuja. "But then, what can I do about it?"

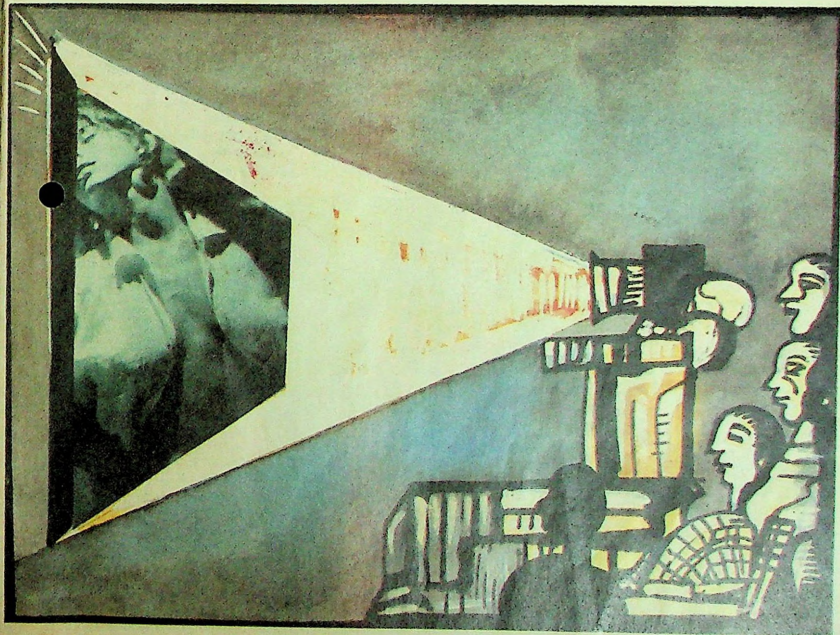
The level of ignorance is astounding. For instance, during a Universities Talk Aids (UTA) campaign of the department of youth affairs, a college-goer in Calcutta asked, "Why should a guy use a condom. It is only girls who should use it."

Yet the government seems to be cautious. "There is no need to introduce sex education in schools," Arjun Singh had stated last September when he was minister for human resource development even as educationists and health experts demanded sex education to prevent a "catastrophe". Meanwhile, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the top education policy-making body in the country, gropes for a national consensus to introduce sex education in the garb of "adolescence education".

When Procter & Gamble tried to promote its sanitary napkins by gifting booklets on menstruation and re-

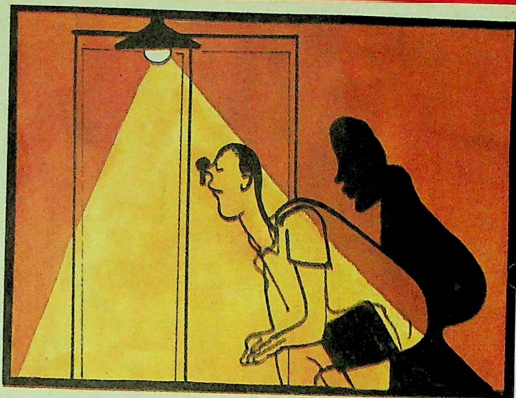


ILLUSTRATIONS: AMAN





As Dr Kothari says, common misconceptions about masturbation may compel a person to indulge in deviant and criminal sexual behaviour.



productive functions to high school girls in Dhanbad, Bihar, the Bharatiya Janata Party termed it an assault on the country's culture and swabbed the issue into its "swadeshi" movement. Reason: the company was a multinational. It was as if girls in Dhanbad never menstruated and didn't need to be told about it. The final product: immense confusion in the minds of parents, teachers and uncertainty in the minds of educationists and policy-makers about the urgency for sex education in schools.

If there is a single educational issue that can instantly arouse emotions and evoke varying views across the country, it is the question of introducing sex education in schools.

"All parents want to believe that their daughters are virgins and sons *bramacharis*. I call this the 'denial syndrome' as this is not the case," says Dr Bhagban Prakash, programme adviser in the department of youth affairs and director of the UTA programme. Dr Raj Brahmhatt, consulting sexologist and fellow at the Kama Institute of Sexual Studies, Bombay, has an explanation.

"Decades ago, the age of menarche (when one attains puberty) and the age of marriage were almost the same. But today, while the age of menarche has reduced thanks to increased levels of nutrition and other living habits, the age of marriage has gone up drastically because of social changes." As a result, the young are floating in a long period of heightened sexual curiosity.

"Ideally, it is desirable that our boys and girls restrain themselves from sexual activity till they are married. But there is a huge gap between what is desirable and what is happening," says Dr Brahmhatt. Studies by the Unit of Family Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Bombay, corroborate his views. According to Murli Desai, head of the unit, boys and girls in the



city's chawls and some lower income group areas become sexually active at 14 or even 13. Says she: "We also found that in some areas, eight- and nine-year-olds were watching blue films with those aged 55 and 60. We have children from all groups exposed to such activity."

Sexuality, of course, is nothing abnormal. Dr D. Narayana Reddy, sexual medicine consultant at the Dega Institute in Madras, says: "We are not only human beings but also sexual beings. All our roles, family

and social, depend on gender. So curiosity among children about sexuality is normal. But the question is where do they get their answers from? Home? Parents? Teachers? Or pornographic literature and blue films?"

"Sex being a taboo word in India, most of the children rarely get answers from parents ridden by personal inhibitions," says a paediatrician. Or as an 18-year-old puts it, pre-pubertal boys are left to attain "enlightenment" on their own.

But surprisingly, even girls complain that their mothers do not adequately inform them about their vital reproductive functions. Says Kavita Sharma, a postgraduate student at Delhi University: "My mother, a graduate, had not told me anything before I had my first periods at 13. And I thought I had got cancer or some other fatal disease, seeing all that blood." Kavita is yet to forgive her mother.

The ignorance and inhibition of the parents also reflect in the widely prevalent but little-talked-about incidents of sexual abuse of children. According to Dr Manju Mehta, additional professor in the psychiatry department at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, quite a few cases of pre-pubertal girls who are sexually abused can be traced to their not being told about sexual behaviour. She cites the case

Some schools like the Sardar Patel Vidyalaya and Bombay International School have already devised their own sex education programmes.

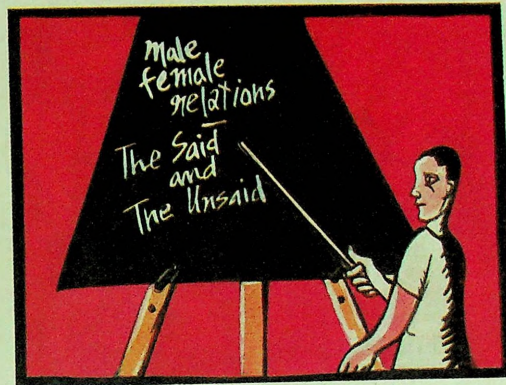
of an eight-year-old girl from a well-off family who was taken advantage of by a family friend. The poor thing did not know what was happening and said "the uncle wanted to play with me."

On the other hand, another girl could ward off a friend of her father who made advances towards her when she was alone. She had been warned about males "trying to get physical". Sexologist Dr Prakash Kothari of Bombay traces the causes of criminal sexual behaviour to misconceptions about masturbation. Says he: "If sexual desire becomes intense and a partner is not available, the only possible release of sexual tension is by masturbation. But rampant myths about masturbation often discourage individuals from indulging in it. At such times the intensity of sexual desire outweighs moral bindings and compels the individual to indulge in deviant and criminal sexual behaviour."

In the absence of avenues at home to provide answers to children's queries, the next natural assumption would be that schools would fill the vacuum. But the syllabi contain sketchy topics that touch upon the anatomy and physiology of the human reproductive system, and vague references to contraception, family planning and sexually transmitted diseases. All of which teachers like Ahuja fleet through in an hour or two.

Dr Vimla Nadkarni, head of the Unit of Medical and Psychiatric Social Work, TISS, was in charge of a study to monitor and evaluate the AIDS education programme in Bombay Municipal Corporation schools last year. "When we conducted a pilot test before launching the programme," she says, "we found out that we were going to talk to students about AIDS when they didn't know what penis or semen was. I was very surprised to see that the text-books said nothing about the reproductive system."

Lack of information, however, is not the only reason for the teenagers' confusion about their sexuality. Experts unanimously point an accusing



finger at television and cinema for adding to the ignorance of the teenagers and titillating them at the same time. "Both urban and rural kids these days are exposed to so much male-female relations on TV and in movies. These two media implant a lot of mis-

conceptions in the minds of teenagers," feels Dr Nadkarni.

Dr Reddy appropriately terms this concept of laying physical emphasis by the media, not just in films and television serials but also in advertisements, as projecting a "body im-

## Adolescence education How, when, to whom and what

AS a follow-up of the recommendations of the national seminar held early last year, NCERT is preparing a general framework of adolescence education. It will place the draft for discussion at the five regional seminars which start this month. As recommended by the national seminar, the framework will have the following components:

### Process of growing up

Will include all critical issues relating to the growth of a child into adulthood—physical and social aspects, sex roles and sexually transmitted diseases.

### AIDS education

Content related to the causes and consequences of HIV/AIDS, preventive measures and social responsibility towards persons having AIDS.

### Drug abuse

Will include situations in which individuals fall prey to drugs, consequences, preventive measures, treatment and rehabilitation.

One of the recommendations of the national seminar is to adopt an integrated strategy to incorporate elements of adolescence education in the content and process of school education. These elements which may not be incorporated in the textbooks are to be covered through co-curricular activities and other suitable modalities. It is suggested that the integrated approach be adopted up to the secondary stage. At the higher secondary stage, a separate semester course may be developed.

The actual process of pushing through adolescence education involves preparation of a package by NCERT for handing over to its counterpart in the states, the state educational research and training councils, which will introduce adolescence education in the state syllabi.

—YPR





age". Says he: "The emphasis here is sexual, be it an ad for coffee powder or underwear, and it is easily picked up by all youngsters." And once that happens, says Dr Nadkarni, the youngsters are constantly battling to balance these new-found values with family values. The consequences, according to Dr Kothari: a tremendous amount of sexual frustration which is often manifested in the form of deviant sexual behaviour, increasing cases of promiscuity, casual sex relationships, unwanted pregnancies,

teenage motherhood, and an alarming increase in sexual crimes and sexually transmitted diseases. Adds he: "The situation is further aggravated by the rampant myths and misconceptions regarding sex."

Do boys and girls think about the same things? Is it correct to think about the opposite sex? Why do boys get sexually more aroused than girls?

"We regularly are asked such questions by both boys and girls during our sessions in schools," reveals Jayanthi Nayak, manager of the

**Adolescents with strong guilt feelings about wet dreams often suffer from psychosomatic problems which the doctors have found hard to diagnose.**

Parivar Seva Sanstha, a voluntary organisation which runs the Marie Stopes clinics in the country and has a Family Life Education project. Dr Reddy, who answers readers' questions in a Telugu magazine, discloses that almost all the questions young readers ask are related to sex: Why have I started developing acne? Isn't the shape/size of my penis/breasts peculiar? Why do I have an erection at inopportune moments? Should I neck or pet? Is masturbation harmful? The list is endless.

The misconceptions are so strong that teenagers often develop complexes which affect their behaviour. Dr Mehta says AIMS regularly gets cases where the illness has its roots in sexual guilt, as in the case of an 18-year-old boy who suffered from headache, anxiety, nervousness and insomnia. It was after considerable questioning that doctors diagnosed that the illness was psychosomatic. The boy harboured strong guilt feelings and misconceptions about wet

## Sense and sensitivity

EXECUTIVES from Procter&Gamble's Calcutta office visit half a dozen high schools in Dhanbad city in the last week of November. Their sales promotion talk to girls in classes nine and 10 is followed by gift packets. Their contents: a 'Camay' soap, a packet of 'Whisper' sanitary napkins, and a booklet on reproductive health. As whispers reach a Hindi newspaper, it screams on front-page: '*Chhattraaon ke beech ashleeel pustakon ka vitran*' (obscene booklets distributed to students). And the dusty mining city in south Bihar is in the grip of a scandal.

*Kahani Kishorawastha ki (aur kuch baatein sayanon ki)*—Teen Talk (and other grown up stuff)—first earned the ire of *Prabhat Khabar*, Dhanbad's largest circulated morning paper. It felt that the 12-page booklet contained information about issues which "let alone girls, even boys are restrained from reading openly". The newspaper took offence to the last section that talked about pubertal changes in boys, erection and ejaculation.

Dr J.K. Sinha, principal of Indian School of Learning, one of the schools in which the booklet was distributed, objected to another paragraph in the same section. "There it said something to the effect that girls would like it if they had boyfriends and that it helped

dissolve gender differences," he told THE WEEK. "This word 'boyfriend' creates a lot of contextual complications when used in Hindi. The book was probably translated from English; the translation made a lot of difference."

While the local media cannot escape the blame for sensationalising the incident, the role of Procter&Gamble raised several questions and left much to be desired. Dr Sinha said that the executives had wanted students from classes 6 and 7 also to be included in the sessions, which he refused. Were these executives competent to handle such sessions?

"We do not impart sex education," said a Procter&Gamble spokesperson, insisting that the company's focus was only on the health and hygiene of schoolgirls and that the topics discussed in the booklet did not fall under the umbrella of sex education—an obvious stance to avoid unfriendly publicity.

The result of a shoddy marketing strategy and prudish media response, the Dhanbad incident ultimately mirrored the brittleness of public sensitivity. As Dr Sinha said, "Introducing sex education may be easier in Delhi than in Dhanbad." The message could not be clearer to the experts involved in framing the adolescence education package.

—Y.P. RAJESH IN Dhanbad



## One-man crusade

"I will give up my practice and take up the responsibility of introducing and overseeing the implementation of sex education in the country," says Dr Prakash Kothari, the high priest of sexology in this part of the world. Coming from one who charges Rs 3,000 for consultation, the declaration does sound dramatic. But it springs no surprise on those who know the missionary zeal with which Dr Kothari pursues his profession and research; he sees only two patients a day and takes a week off every month for reading.

Dr Kothari presented a draft proposal for a National Sexual Health Education Programme to President Shankar Dayal Sharma during the third Asian Sexology Conference in Delhi in December 1994. The draft is based on his research and the immense experience gained from treating 40,000 patients. He has also referred to sex education models in Sweden, Hongkong, the UK and the US.

The draft divides the curriculum into five parts: human sexual development, interpersonal relationship, interactive abilities, sexual behaviour and sexual health. Though there has been no response as yet from the government, Dr Kothari insists that the proposal be implemented and sees himself as the key resource person to coordinate the project.

The draft has drawn criticism from Dr Mahinder Watsa of the Family Planning Association. "It is very unfortunate that Dr Kothari's proposal is a unilateral approach to the issue. Moreover, it is sourced extensively from models existing in western countries. It would have been more relevant if he had considered Indian conditions and values and got inputs from others in the field," Dr Watsa told THE WEEK.

"Yes, I definitely have inputs from western sources but they have been amalgamated with my experience in the field here," says Dr Kothari. "There is no need for me to copy from western sources when I have disproved several popular western theories about sex. It is easy to criticise but difficult to create."

—Y.P. RAJESH in Bombay

dreams and masturbation. Another pre-college boy could not talk to girls: he was scared he would have an erection if he did.

**ARE** these not reasons enough for the introduction of sex education in schools? Don't growing children need to be told about the physical and emotional changes taking place in them instead of letting them believe that a drop of semen is equal to 100 drops of blood and losing it causes immense weakness? Or that eating a preparation of brinjal and bitter-gourd cures AIDS? Educationists and health experts invariably raise such questions.

But many parents and teachers fear that sex education, instead of guiding teenagers, might make them experiment with the new-found knowledge. They say this might lead to an even more disastrous situation. "Sex education has existed in schools abroad for decades, but has it curbed sexual crimes or sexually transmitted diseases there? Has it changed per-

**Sex education is not about sex only. It also includes values, interpersonal relations, the ability to make choices, the benefits of monogamous marriage.**

missive sexual attitudes? Instead, it has been seen as ineffective with the alarming growth of AIDS in the last decade," says an educationist in Delhi.

"By talking to children about sex, we will be encouraging them to have free-sex. It is no awareness programme. By asking them to insure themselves against AIDS you are licensing them to go ahead and do whatever they like," says K.K. Chakrabarty, 39, a chartered accountant in Calcutta. "We have two daughters aged 11 and 15 but we have never felt the need to talk to them about sex," adds his wife, Radhika.

"Sometimes I think that we, the experts who promote the cause of sex education, are to blame for this misconception about sex education," feels Dr Mahinder C. Watsa, director of Sex Education Counselling Research Therapy Training (SECRT) department of FPAL. He points out that most people wrongly think that sex education implies just the biological processes related to sex or that students would be taught about

sexual intercourse.

"Sex education includes values, interpersonal relations, the ability to make choices and to have the knowledge to say 'no' when you have to say so," says Dr Watsa. Besides, sex education would include gender roles in a male-female relationship, values of marriage and the benefits of a monogamous relationship. Says Dr Kothari: "Sex education is not merely a discussion on how babies are born but encompasses biological, psychological and sociological aspects of human sexual behaviour."

"Those making a hue and cry against the introduction of sex education in school curriculum have a western perception of sex education where it exists amidst sexual anar-

chy. The question is: Is it relevant to our milieu also?" asks J.L. Pandey, reader in the department of social sciences and humanities, NCERT, who heads its population education programme and has been entrusted with the responsibility of developing the adolescence education package for the country.

Another expert involved in the NCERT effort reveals that a WHO sex education package included a demonstration of condom use with penis-shaped objects. "We told them that we just could not do something like that in the classroom." Obviously, those who formulate a sex education package have to keep in mind local socio-cultural values and sensitivities. But condoms or no condoms, Dr

Reddy is emphatic that educating children about sexual matters does not lead them to sexual activity. A survey conducted in some Madras colleges in 1982-83 had found that 40 per cent of the 1,000 respondents were already sexually active. There was no change in the percentage when the survey was repeated in 1988-89 and in 1994 in the same colleges after the introduction of a sex education programme. Says Dr Reddy: "Sex education or no sex education, there is this 40 per cent section of the students indulging in sexual activity. The introduction of sex education made no difference there, but it definitely helped the others as the numbers did not increase despite changing mores."

A major contributing factor to the misconceptions about sex education, some experts feel, is the "condom-centric" AIDS-prevention campaign. Concern has been voiced at various levels that the campaign promotes sexual activity by its greater emphasis on safe sex through the use of condoms than on monogamous relationships or abstinence. Dr Reddy

warns: "The anti-AIDS programme is committing a great blunder by linking safe sex to just the use of condoms—making it condom-centric and not person-centric. The condom concentrates on just the physical dimension of sex." The right definition of safe sex, according to him, is sex that is free from physical, emotional and social trauma for the people involved.

**ETHICAL** questions apart, educationists are thinking deeply about the modalities of introducing sex education which would be easily accepted across the country. And the first step in the direction is to call it "adolescence education", which they believe will help erase ill-conceived notions from the minds of parents and teachers. This is to be followed by a consensus on the syllabi, the age of children who are to be taught, and the staff to handle the topics. NCERT has planned five regional seminars this year for arriving at a consensus before finalising the package at a national seminar.

Pandey of NCERT does not think the government will go back on its

## Filling a gap

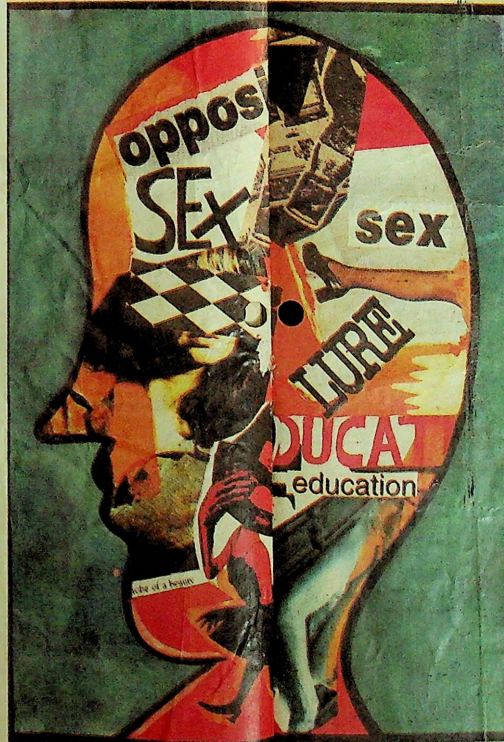
FROM the first residential conference on human sexuality and family life education held in 1975 to the 15 Sex Education Counselling Research Therapy Training (SECRT) centres across the country, the sex education programme of the FPAL has come a long way.

The association has been training community and youth leaders to talk about sexual and reproductive health. SECRT's counsellors also talk about sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, behavioural changes in youth and problems related to them. The expert group of SECRT has offered several guidelines to impart sex education in schools.

According to the guidelines, formal talks on family life education should start in class VI and continue till class XII. They suggest that 40 minutes a week be devoted to the subject and that some topics be discussed separately with boys and girls.

### The syllabus

1. Human developmental stages and emotional changes.
2. Changes during adolescence.
  - (a) Physical (b) Emotional (c) Social (d) Sexual (e) Hygiene (f) Knowledge of protection against sexual abuse.
3. Myths and misconceptions about sex
  - Topics include masturbation, night emissions, size of breasts, hymen and virginity.
  4. Reproduction.
    - (a) Love and marriage (b) Reproduction, pregnancy and birth (c) Male and female reproductive system, ovulation and fertilisation (d) Family planning and contraception (e) Sex roles within a family, awareness of femaleness and maleness, relationships and responsibilities (f) Divorce.
    5. Venereal diseases.
      - Symptoms, prevention and cure of STDs/AIDS.
      6. Variant sex behaviour.
        - Homosexuality, pornography, obscenity, promiscuity, prostitution and rape.





statement in the Lok Sabha on August 10, 1993, that the proposal to introduce adolescence education had the total support of the human resources development ministry. Another senior member of NCERT feels that Arjun had not been adequately briefed by his aides before the press conference in September where he stated that there was no need to introduce sex education in schools.

Deciding on the syllabi, etc., is not expected to create problems as voluntary organisations like SECR and PSS, and individuals like Dr Kothari have come out with sex education packages for the Indian context. The tougher task is to make the teachers handle the subject comfortably in the classroom. Most of the teachers are conservative and uncomfortable with their own sexuality and feel inhibited to take up adolescence education.

"When I hesitate to buy a condom openly, how do you expect me to talk to my students about condoms," asks the principal of Indian School of Learning, Dhanbad. Echoes another

principal of a much-sought-after public school there: "When I want to buy a condom, I make sure the shop is not run by a former student of mine and that none of my students is around. And we are expected to talk about sex!" Dr Bhagban Prakash hits the nail on the head: "Introduction of such a programme requires strong academic will, not political will. The objection won't come from politicians and students but from teachers and the education system."

Evidently, teachers and counsellors, irrespective of the subjects they regularly handle, will have to be drafted into the adolescence education programme if they are comfortable talking about sexual issues and

**Implementing a comprehensive sexual health programme is seen as a long and arduous struggle. It involves a change in ingrained attitudes.**

can handle a classroom situation. Moreover, there is unanimity over the need to train the chosen staff comprehensively and take the parents into confidence through parents' teacher associations. While some educationists and health experts desire that parents supplement the adolescence education programme by being open to discussions at home, the suggestion again implies the onerous task of changing their strongly ingrained attitudes.

Little wonder even Dr Kothari calls the efforts for implementing a comprehensive sexual health programme a "struggle", one which is "long and potentially arduous". Says he: "The struggle is against the pseudo-religious orthodoxy of a short-sighted social system and not culture." None the less, he is optimistic. The dream of healthy sexuality in an ideal social environment, he is confident, is achievable through a concentrated and systematic effort by devoted professionals. Amen.

—Y.P. RAJESH with reports from  
bureaux





# 'YES' FOR SEX

Students and principals give a massive mandate for sex education in schools and colleges

SEX is one secret that the adults so passionately keep under wraps. They enjoy doing it but do not want the kids to have anything to do with it. They do not think twice before stuffing their children's textbooks with funny-sounding subjects like cybernetics, real analysis and immunology but are not in favour of defiling the leaves with details about how people make love. They grudgingly allow that mandatory, bowdlerized chapter on reproduction and invoke the examples of bees and birds and flowers but would not tolerate anything beyond that. It is in a way a sweet revenge for them: 'nobody taught us this sex-vex business', seems to be their stock response.

## FROM WHOM DID KIDS LEARN ABOUT SEXUALITY?

PARENTS	25
TEACHERS	27
FRIENDS	65
RELATIVES	6
DOCTORS	10
BOOKS/MAGS/ NEWSPAPERS	64
TV/CINEMA	60

All figures in percentage

## WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS SEX EDUCATION?

(RESPONSE OF PRINCIPALS)	
EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM	65
PARENTS	47
CHILDREN THEMSELVES	12
NO RESPONSE	4

However, the information revolution that has the world in its twirl—the BBC recently gave a blow-by-blow account, a real inside story, of the sexual act by inserting a camera into the female reproductive organ—and the increasing awareness that in the AIDS-age, knowledge could be life-saving have many teachers and par-

ents cast away their inhibitions for the first time.

But whether sex becomes part of the curriculum or remains an extra-curricular activity, it is unlikely that many educationists would deem it to ask the children what they want, what is good for them. Convinced of this were the representatives of Mar-



## WESTERN LIFESTYLES SHOWN ON TV INCREASE SEXUAL AWARENESS

DISAGREE COMPLETELY	5
DISAGREE SOMEWHAT	8
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	9
AGREE SOMEWHAT	29
AGREE COMPLETELY	45
DON'T KNOW	5

## SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES IS NECESSARY

	STUDENTS	PRINCIPALS
DISAGREE COMPLETELY	8	4
DISAGREE SOMEWHAT	6	8
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	8	6
AGREE SOMEWHAT	18	27
AGREE COMPLETELY	57	53
DON'T KNOW	4	2

keting & Business Associates (MBA), a market research agency commissioned by THE WEEK to do a survey on sex education among students and school principals. For, the managements of 40 schools in Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Bangalore refused permission to interview the students.

However, when the all-important question was finally put to 490 children of various schools in these cities, they came out with a resounding mandate in favour of sex education in schools and colleges. Given the option to choose from five stock responses, more than half the number of respondents (57%) unhesitatingly indicated that they 'agreed completely' that sex education was necessary while another 18 per cent 'agreed somewhat'. Eight per cent, for reasons best known to them, 'disagreed completely' while six per cent 'disagreed somewhat'. About 12 per cent of them did not mind it either way.

The majority opinion among the 49 principals (53% agreed completely while 27% just agreed) who participated in the survey was not different from that of their wards. But four per cent of them just could not stand the suggestion while eight per cent 'disagreed, though not completely'.

The survey, conducted among 239 boys and 251 girls in the 13-17 age group, was not only to find out if they wanted to know about sex but also to assess their present level of awareness about sex-related topics and how they had acquired that half-knowledge.

Most of the students (65%) got their stuff by discussing among themselves while an equal number (64%) depended on publications. Television and movies proved useful for many (60%). Neither teachers (27%) nor



parents (25%) inspired confidence in most of them and only a few (10%) took the trouble of taking their doubts to a doctor.

Fifty per cent of the respondents complained that standard books on sex were not readily available but 18 per cent had encountered no such difficulty. A large percentage (31) had nothing to say on this score, perhaps showing that they had never felt the need to look around for books.

Most of the children saw nothing wrong in their being curious about sexual matters (53%) but some, mainly boys, did feel that it was good to be a little coy about coitus (27%).

With nobody to tell them about sex, it should not shock anyone to know that a large number of students (27%) did not consider sexual relationships an important element of human relationships. Nor that about 30 per cent of them felt that sexual entanglements need not be emotional relationships. Comfortingly, as many as 54 per cent disagreed with the first view while about 32 per cent opposed the second.

Good looks were identified by 47 per cent of the students as the factor that made a person sexually attractive. But it was not a key element for 24 per cent while a great number of them (28%) were not sure on what drew them like a magnet towards members of the opposite sex.

The spirit of gender justice was reflected in the opinion of most (52%) when they ruled that there should be equal freedom for girls and boys in sexual matters. Boys (55%) were more progressive about it than girls (48%). Their principals too gave a mandate for equal freedom by a 59%-32% margin.

The secretive nature of adults on matters concerning the flesh seemed to have rubbed off on the young ones, too. About 26 per cent of the students did not want their parents to trouble them with advice on sexual matters. They would rather look after them-

Interestingly, this opinion found favour with only 16 per cent of the principals. The streak of independence among children was most evident in Bangalore (35 per cent) while it was least in the country's capital (17 per cent). But 56 per cent of the students and 74 per cent of the principals wanted children to go by what the parents told them. The problem here is that parents are unusually laconic when it comes to the three-letter word.

There was a brute majority (72 per cent) against the theory that only those who were on the verge of a wedding needed to know anything about sex. However, 16 per cent felt comfortable about being ignorant about the art of making love unless their parents wanted them to tie the knot in the near future. That the country was a breeding ground of myths

could safely leave some of these boys and girls together; as many as 30 per cent did not know that 'sexual intercourse occurs when the male sex organ enters the female sex organ'. Perhaps not surprisingly, the ratio of ignorance on this point was 33 girls: 26 boys.

Mercifully, a large number (1) knew that AIDS is caused by a virus called HIV and that the disease could be avoided by using a condom (77 per cent).

But there were a few who knew neither of these facts, making all those propaganda campaigns look like the handiwork of idiots. And some who may have heard of a condom have no use for it; they (20 per cent) failed to see that they are meant for use by males. Most of those who were not privy to this vital bit of information were girls.

These responses clearly give a resounding 'yes' verdict in favour of educating the students on sex. But who will bell the cat? A large number of the principals (65 per cent) believed that it was the responsibility of the school educational system. Parents should share it too, said 47 per cent of them while 12 per cent felt that the children should learn all on their own.

Opinion was divided on whether there should be more open discussions on sex; while 45 per cent wanted a more open attitude, 36 per cent disagreed with them. Few among the principals felt that there was no need to impart sex education before a person got married.

But a substantial number of them (38 per cent) seemed to fear that exposure to information on sex would heighten curiosity and lead to experimenting on the part of children. And 49 per cent of them did not find any harm in such exposure and 12 per cent were not sure of the consequences.

So, can the kids do without sex education? Well, they might just about manage it. But it does not take a Freud to see that a sense of guilt born out of ignorance and coupled with repressed desires can reduce many of our kids to emotional wrecks. Therefore, what is stopping us from introducing regular periods (not a bad word, any longer) on the most interesting subject after sundown? Intercourse within the course could well provide the much-needed masala to our syllabi and send the attendance ratings skyrocketing.

—C. SUJIT CHANDRA KUMAR

## AWARENESS LEVEL

### MENSTRUATION TAKES PLACE WHEN...

FERTILISATION OF OVUM BY SPERM HAS FAILED TO TAKE PLACE 28

DON'T KNOW 42

### MASTURBATION IS AN ACT WHICH IS...

A NORMAL PART OF GROWTH 43

DON'T KNOW 42

### A PERSON CAN AVOID CONTRACTING AIDS BY

USING A CONDOM 77

DON'T KNOW 13

and misconceptions about sex was also obvious to 65 per cent of them while about 10 per cent missed out on that point completely.

It did not require an elaborate analysis to see that the children had a glaringly low level of awareness on sexual matters. Most of them (81 per cent) knew how long it took for a baby to be born. But eight per cent could not spot even that simplest of answers, '9-10 months'.

No surprise then that half the respondents did not know that masturbation meant manual stimulation of sex organs or that it was a normal part of their growth and development. Words like coitus and orgasm did not embarrass many. For, they had never heard them in their little lives.

It also seemed that the parents



# Garment Workers

## Identifying Legal Issues and Strategies

**Roopa M**

New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI), Bangalore

Paper presented at the Consultation on

**'Labour Standards in the Indian Garment Industry', Bangalore, 29-30 September 2003**

Jointly organised by Civil Initiatives for Development and Peace-India (Vividep-India), Bangalore, Oxfam-GB, Hyderabad, the Network of Social Action Groups (NSAG-Fedina), Bangalore and the Gender Studies Unit of the National Institute for Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bangalore.



# Garment Workers

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For Copies of this document and full Report of the Consultation on  
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## Garment Workers: Identifying Legal Issues and Strategies.

An unfairly dismissed garment worker would rarely resort to the courts, let alone seek a trade union, to espouse her cause. What does this portend? An increasing number of workers seek no redress for unjust dismissals for a host of reasons, be it, in acquiescence of the growing trend of untenured work, lack of a collective process that would instigate and support a demand for justice, and/or, more importantly, a lack of faith in the judicial process, per se. Several studies over the decade, on the conditions of the Garment workers, document violations of the protections and benefits for workers, under the various statutes. In the light of the continued violations, and the possible increase in pressures on the Garment industry to compete with global markets, following the phasing out and eventual dismantling of the quotas under the ATC (Agreement on Textiles and Clothing) by January 2005, it is pertinent at this juncture to take stock of the prevailing conditions, analyse and strategise, with a view to evolving an effective legal response.

It must be conceded that there are several labour statutes in India that adequately protect the rights and conditions of work of the Garment workers. Implementation of these statutes, however, has been tardy and entirely dependent on the strength of the workers to pressure and lobby the labour department and the Government. Consequently, the legal challenges are linked inextricably, to the workers' ability to organize and use effectively the available protections under the various statutes.

The legal challenges need to be examined from both ends of the spectrum - nationally through implementation of local laws and also viewed from the angle of a 'supply chain', with the

principal employer being a transnational corporation, which is ultimately responsible for pricing and delivery norms. Thus, in building a legal strategy, we need to view the issues broadly, as both local/national issues and transnational/international concerns.

**Local/National concerns:** The Garment industry in India has a large female workforce. Concerns range from particulars such as lack of evidence of employment, per se to systemic ones such as lack of faith in the judicial process. Identified below are some of the legal issues that individual workers face, based on various field studies, which document the workers plight. These are based on the situation of the garment industry in Bangalore, which is largely factory based, and hence do not look at the particular legal issues pertaining to other situations, like for example putting out systems or export promotion zones.

**Wages:** A large number of workers are paid below the minimum wages. Workers are invariably required to clock more hours than that provided under the statute.<sup>1</sup> The productivity norms are so set that overtime becomes inevitable and workers who are not willing to work late are asked to leave. Overtime payment is erratic and not necessarily in keeping with the prescribed norms.<sup>2</sup> They are not paid for the overtime (oc), as the management claims that the 'oc' is a result of the workers not having completed the targets set for them.

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<sup>1</sup> The Factories Act provides for a regular working week of 48 hours.

<sup>2</sup> The Minimum Wages Act provides that a worker is entitled to overtime if/s/he works in an employment for more than nine hours on any day or for more than forty-eight hours in any week at the following rates:  
(a) in the case of employment in agriculture, at one and a half times the ordinary rate of wages;  
(b) in the case of any other scheduled employment, at double the ordinary rate of wages.



The Equal Remuneration Act prohibits discrimination between men and women in payment of wages wherever their jobs are identical. Article 15 of the Indian Constitution also proscribes the State from discriminating against any citizen on grounds only of sex. Article 16 provides equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State. No citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State. Men are preferred in tasks involving higher skill and higher pay. Also the line supervisors in most factories are men.

**Productivity:** The productivity expected from the workers is, many a time, unreasonable, resulting in overtime, undue stress, poor performance and related health hazards. The linking of wages to productivity and setting up of independent reasonable productivity norms is an issue that has not been addressed, legally. Such a law must address the linking of intensity of work to the duration of the work day (subject to a maximum of eight hours); the intensity of the work to the quantum and frequency of rest periods; and productivity standards based on humane time and motion studies.

**Lack of Statutory Benefits:** Most of the pay slips of Garment workers contain a deduction against Provident Fund<sup>3</sup> and ESI<sup>4</sup>. It is however, not uncommon for workers who have put in nearly a year's work to not possess a PF or an ESI number.

However, no bonus<sup>5</sup> or gratuity<sup>6</sup> is currently being paid to the Garment workers. Workers are terminated on completion of five years and reemployed after a brief period, in a bid to avoid the benefits due to workers under the Payment of Gratuity Act.

Under the Maternity Benefit Act, maternity benefit is paid to employees who have been employed for not less than 80 days<sup>7</sup>. It is observed that there is no uniform implementation of this Act. While some factories are known to grant maternity leave, others reportedly harass pregnant women workers into leaving their jobs 'voluntarily'.

**Lack of Other Benefits:**

**Leave:** Under the Factories Act, every worker who has worked for a minimum period of 240 days shall be allowed leave with wages for a number of days calculated at the rate of one day for every twenty days of work performed by him/her. The Act also provides that an employee is allowed a day of rest every week (ordinarily Sunday), but the employer may fix any other day of the week as the rest day for any employee or class of employees in that scheduled employment. Garment workers often clock overtime on Sunday<sup>8</sup> and this is rarely voluntarily. Workers who refuse to work overtime (either on a Sunday or on each working day) are threatened with dismissal.

<sup>3</sup> The Employees' Provident Fund Act applies to workers whose wages do not exceed Rs 3,500 per month in some industries and establishments. The employer and the employee are required to make matched contributions of 8.33 per cent to 10 per cent of the employee's salary to the fund.

<sup>4</sup> The Employees Provident Fund Act, 1948, provides certain benefits to workers in case of sickness, maternity and employment injury. The scheme applies to a factory and the wage ceiling currently is 6,500/ per month. Both the employer and the employee make contributions to the ESIC.

<sup>5</sup> The Payment of Bonus Act, 1965 requires payment of bonus to certain categories of workers whose wages do not exceed Rs 2,500 per month. The Act ensures payment of minimum bonus of 8.33 per cent per year, with maximum bonus not to exceed 20 per cent of salary or wage earned during the accounting year.

<sup>6</sup> Under the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972, retirement benefits for employees who have worked for a minimum stipulated period with an employer (generally 5 years and more) is provided for. It is considered as a reward for long and faithful service. Terminal gratuity works out to 15 days salary for each year of service.



**Health and Safety:** The Factories Act ensures that protection of health and safety of the workers in all industries is maintained. This is a statutory obligation. Both employers and employees are required to observe the safety and protection requirements. Non-compliance with these requirements is liable for punitive action by the concerned Government authority. Workers in the ironing section regularly report injuries due to poor insulation and lack of adequate protection equipment at the work site. Continuous work, with heavy iron equipment takes a toll on women workers health and there are reports of severe arm and back injuries.

**Facilities and Conveniences:** The Factories Act also provides that the Factory shall be kept clean and arrangements for adequate lighting, drinking water, latrines and urinals, should be provided. Workers have complained of harassment by supervisors, when it comes to use of toilets. It is also noted that there are inadequate facilities in most factories. The Act also provides that if a worker has to work in a standing position, sitting arrangements to take short rests should be provided.

**Crèche:** If there are more than 30 women workers, the employer has to provide for a crèche under the Factories Act. Most factories claim to have a room set aside for a crèche but they are not functional. Facilities being poor, women prefer to leave their children with their families.

**Workman's Compensation Act:** According to this Act workers and/or their dependents are provided with relief in the event of accidents arising out of or in the course of employment, causing death or disability.

**Lack of Security of Tenure:** On being employed, workers are asked to sign a blank sheet of paper, which is then converted

into a resignation letter, at the will of the management. The threat of dismissal is therefore a constant one. Workers also avoid challenging such action, as they fear being black-listed by the employers, who share information on 'trouble makers'. Many of the workers are terminated for minor errors/offences and without a disciplinary proceeding. In fact, the Garment factories would rarely contain a record of 'termination', with all employees opting to 'resign'. These forced resignations are rarely challenged as workers sometimes find that proof of employment and lack of evidence, are their very first hurdles. Faced with questions of survival, most workers, especially migrant women from rural areas, prefer to move from one factory to the next, rather than engage in a prolonged legal battle.

Under the *Industrial Disputes Act, 1947*, no employee in any industrial establishment who has worked more than one year may be retrenched without being given one month's notice in writing indicating the reason for retrenchment. The employee is also entitled to compensation of 25 days salary for each year of service completed. The dismissal of workers may be contested through a petition to the Government. The Government has activated the National Renewal Fund (for rehabilitation and retaining of workers displaced from sick units) on a non-statutory basis. It is common to find en masse dismissals, in Garment factories, during non-peak seasons.

#### **Sexual Harrassment:**

In the absence of legislation covering the issue of Sexual Harassment at the Workplace, the Supreme Court in *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan*, has laid down the necessary guidelines and norms<sup>68</sup>. A brief summary of the Vishaka guidelines:

It is the duty of the employer or other responsible persons in work places or other institutions to prevent sexual harassment and to provide procedures for resolution of complaints. Women who either draw a regular salary, receive an honorarium, or work in a voluntary capacity - in the government; private sector or unorganized sector come under the purview of these guidelines.

### 1. Preventive Steps

Must be undertaken by employers or other responsible authorities in public or private sectors as follows:

- a) Express prohibition of sexual harassment should be notified and circulated.
- b) Prohibition of sexual harassment should be included in the rules and regulations of government and public sector bodies.
- c) Private employers should include prohibition of sexual harassment in the standing orders under the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946.
- d) Appropriate work conditions should be provided for work, leisure, health, and hygiene to further ensure that there is no hostile environment towards women at workplaces and no woman employee should have reasonable grounds to believe that she is disadvantaged in connection with her employment.

### 2. Complaints Procedure

Must provide a Complaints Committee headed by a woman and not less than half of its members should be women.

Complaints Committee should include an NGO or other organization that is familiar with the issue of sexual harassment.

Complaint procedure must be time bound.

Confidentiality of the complaint procedure has to be maintained.

Complainants or witnesses should not be victimised or discriminated against while dealing with complaints.

The Committee should make an annual report to the government department concerned of the complaints and the action taken by them.

### 3. Disciplinary Action

(a) When the offence amounts to misconduct under service rules, appropriate disciplinary action should be initiated. (b) When such conduct amounts to an offence under the Indian Penal Code, the employer shall initiate action by making a complaint with the appropriate authority. (c) The victims of sexual harassment should have the option to seek transfer of the perpetrator or their own transfer.

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<sup>11</sup>It is paid at the average daily wage, calculated for the three months preceding absence on maternity leave, and is paid for a period of six weeks before delivery and six weeks after. However, the employee also has the option of taking the full 12 weeks after delivery. It is prohibited to employ female employees during the six weeks after delivery, miscarriage or termination of pregnancy. Pregnant employees can request that they not perform arduous work or work which involves long hours of standing or which is likely to interfere with the pregnancy, the normal development of the foetus, adversely affect health or cause a miscarriage up to 10 weeks before the expected delivery. In addition, if the employer does not provide free facilities for pre- and post-natal care, the employee is entitled to a medical allowance. Maternity benefit can be paid in advance for the period preceding the expected delivery, upon proof of pregnancy (Sections 4, 5, 8 and 9). One month of leave and benefits is available for women who are ill due to pregnancy, delivery, premature birth, miscarriage, termination of pregnancy and tubecomy if medical evidence is provided. This is in addition to the normal 12 weeks maternity leave and allowance (section 10). Under section 11, in addition to other scheduled breaks, nursing breaks are to be provided twice daily until the child is 15 months old. It is prohibited to dismiss, or issue a notice of dismissal for, an employee while they are absent on maternity leave, or to vary her conditions of service. Dismissal of a female employee during pregnancy does not deprive her of her right to maternity allowance or medical bonus allowance except in cases of gross misconduct. No deductions from wages can be made on account of maternity leave, the fact that lighter duties were performed before taking maternity leave or the taking of nursing breaks (sections 12 and 13).



#### 4. Other Provisions of the Guidelines

(a) Sexual harassment should be affirmatively discussed at worker's meetings, employer-employees meetings and other appropriate forums. (b) Guidelines should be prominently notified to create awareness of the rights of female employees. (c) The employer should assist persons affected in cases of sexual harassment by outsiders or third parties. (d) Central and State governments are required to adopt measures including legislation to ensure that private employers also observe guidelines.

for the protection of the rights of women against sexual harassment at the work place. Women routinely complain of supervisors who verbally and physically abuse them at the workplace. Women complain of multiple levels of abuse, both at the production line by supervisors and masters, and at the level of production managers and factory managers. Sexual Harassment Committees are not the norm in the Garment industry, despite of a large female workforce.

#### Opposition to Formation of Unions:

Any attempts at forming a union in a factory, have been quelled at the first whiff, by dismissing the active cadres. On the flip side, it has been difficult to unionise the workers, as there is a sizeable floating population of workers; a large women workforce which is not amenable to the traditional unionizing methods; and a lack of vision or a new strategy within the unions to respond to the increased informal and lean production methods adopted by a globalised capital. Participation in unions is also impacted by worker perception of unions, which stem from a fear of job loss to lack of faith in a collective process. Unions are rarely seen as an empowering process. In the past unionization efforts have often lead to factory closure and en masse job loss. The practice in many business houses to register

factories as separate companies allows them to close factories at will and move production elsewhere. Collective bargaining, which results from unionization and leads to higher wages and better enforcement of statutory benefits to workers, is thus not a norm in the Garment sector. While the managements have been effective in crushing unionisation efforts, unions have been slow in educating the workers and building effective coalitions across the garment industry, and with other sections of the organized workforce.

Under the Trade Unions Act, 1926, registration of a Trade Union is permissible and certain protections and privileges are accorded to safeguard the interest of the employee. This Act is applicable to all the unions and association of workers/employees and under the amended Act, seven or more workers can register a union, if the union has a membership of 100 workers, or that of 10% of the workforce.

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<sup>4</sup> A brief summary of the Vishaka guidelines:

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d) Appropriate work conditions should be provided for work, leisure, health, and hygiene to further ensure that there is no hostile environment towards women at workplaces and no woman employee should have reasonable grounds to believe that she is disadvantaged in connection with her employment.

2. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

## Poor Enforcement of Existing Labour Laws:

In exploring an effective national strategy, we must take into account the realities of a changing judicial sensibility. While the trends are more stark and apparent, at the higher level of the judiciary as the judgements are reported, it is unclear how this percolates down and affects the lower levels of grievance redressal - both in the labour courts and also at the labour department. Is there a perceptible shift? Are lawyers innovating in response to the changing trends, and if yes, what has worked?

A study to examine and map the current trends in enforcement of labour laws pertaining to the Garment Sector would be the first step to understanding the implementation machinery and the policy thrust of the Government. Further a mapping of the number of cases filed for labour violations, both by the workers and the labour department/ appropriate government departments, in the last decade, would more fully expose, the effectiveness or otherwise, of the existing dispute resolution mechanisms available to redress workers grievances.

**Transnational/International concerns:** While a large number of the workers' concerns can be tackled locally/nationally in the Indian context, where there are large number of benefits and protections, still available in the statute books, there are many issues that are inextricably linked to globally processes, which may need to be addressed at that level. The phasing out of the Multi-Fibre Agreement by January 2005, present both challenges and opportunities to the Garment industry. The dismantling of quotas would denote a new phase of increased competition. Though there are no empirical studies to show that higher cost of labour, results in the flight of capital to

cheaper labour markets<sup>2</sup>, China and its flexible labour laws, are touted as a threat to the Indian Garment export industry. In the absence of any international labour standards that are binding on all countries, exploitation of workers are justified and peddled, as the only 'comparative advantage' of the developing countries. Although the ILO has identified a set of core labour standards and there are a string of other ILO Conventions that lay down standards for conditions of work, the same has no teeth.

How do we give teeth to the ILO Conventions and the Core labour Standards? Is the WTO, a possible (however, limited) mechanism for the implementation of the ILO standards and other human rights protections? Briefly stated, the debate on linking trade and labour rights is that, the proponents of linking of labour rights to the WTO argue that trade linked sanctions will drive local governments to enforce labour rights and standards in their countries, with respect to traded goods. Opponents counter by stating that the linking is a protectionist

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agenda being put forth by developed countries seeking to subvert the WTO and impose restrictions on trade from developing countries, whose comparative advantage is cheap labour. Opponents to the WTO and its undemocratic character, believe that the linking would further legitimize the WTO and adversely impact national sovereignty.

The fall out of the lack of an international body to monitor and implement basic labour rights, has resulted in a host of international consumer bodies and concerned citizens seeking to regulate and enforce labour standards through many different tactics ranging from shareholder resolutions and other ethical investment activities, codes of conduct and 'social labeling' requirements and even consumer boycotts.

**Codes of Conduct:** The code blends elements of existing corporate codes into a set of standards, which contain prohibition related to child labor, maximum workweeks, harassment and abuse, forced labor, and other issues. Integral to the code is definitive monitoring, including both internal and external (i.e., independent) evaluations of compliance. The Codes of conduct has been used with reasonable success in large factories and in units that produce branded products. An issue to note is that in many instances the codes do not emphasise the right to association and collective bargaining as a necessary part of any enforcement.

Another legal angle that needs scrutiny is the liability of transnational/multinational corporations for violations of workers' rights. While there are precedents in the US, UK and parts of Europe of corporations being held liable for violations of civil and political rights, in a third country, liability for

violations of the social and economic nature, has not been extensively examined. The issue of corporate wrongs and liability of multinational corporations was the subject of a seminar organized by Clean Clothes Campaign.

### **Conclusion:**

Finally, it must be stated that there are three key actors in this struggle - capital, labour and the Government/State - each with a perspective that must be taken into account in formulating any legal strategy. While the Capital seeks to garner more profits, its interest in protecting the labour force, is not entirely minimal. Capital wants a legal atmosphere that ensures a trouble free, efficient and productive labour. The Codes of conduct methodology is an attempt at social partnership between capital and labour. It must be acknowledged that this has limited reach. A wider but more effective arrangement is welfare state regulation that mediates the interests of both labour and capital. The Government policy, will ultimately determine the effectiveness or otherwise of the implementation machinery. In the absence of a socially responsible capital and a welfare state with a positive regulatory agenda, a strong unionized workforce, is the only tool to ensure protection and furtherance of labour's interests. and it can even substitute a Government lacking in the political will to respond to the needs of labour.

In conclusion, it must be said that the principal challenge is not only that of poor implementation of laws as a result of a policy trend favouring flexible labour laws, but also one of organizing a work force, to raise demands for basic rights and protections.



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