



International

WOMEN *in Action*



FOCUS: Women And The Law

SPECIAL FEATURES:

Women and Peace

Language and Sexism

2/95

ABOUT ISIS INTERNATIONAL

Isis International is an international non-governmental woman's organization, founded in 1974 to promote the empowerment of women through information sharing, communication and networking. It's network reaches over 50,000 individuals and organizations in 150 countries.

Isis International coordinates its activities from two offices, one in Santiago, Chile and the other in Manila, Philippines. In 1983 another completely new project was launched that of Isis-WICCE a Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange based in Geneva, Switzerland until 1993 when it relocated to Kampala, Uganda.

The major components of **Isis International-Manila** are: the Resource Center and Information Program, which links local and regional centers of information to bring women, ideas and resources together. The Communications Program which publishes quarterly magazine, Women in Action, monthly newsletter Women Envision, as well as other regular information packs, books; and the Research Program, which designs and carries out research on the most important issues affecting women in the region and is conducted in partnership with women's groups in the Asia-Pacific.

Isis International-Santiago, offers an extensive Information and Documentation Center primarily to women in Latin America and the Spanish-Speaking Caribbean. It is linked to groups in Latin America, the United States and Asia through the use of new technological instruments and procedures. Isis Santiago created a women's health network involving women of the Latin American and Caribbean region in 1991. Since 1988, the Santiago office has worked on the goal of eradicating violence against women through the Program on Violence Against Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. It publishes journals, newsletters and books in Spanish.

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Isis Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange in Kampala, offers a Documentation Centre with a network of 15,000 contacts in 152 countries and individuals who are working on issues of concern to women. The Kampala Women's action oriented resource centre collects and disseminates information covering a wide selection of topics. The International Feminist Network (IFN) mobilizes international support for campaigns organized by women while The Exchange Programme offers women activists, especially from developing countries, the opportunity to meet and share ideas, skills and experiences. Isis-WICCE's Publications Program produces a bi-annual magazine, in English and French, and, and a women's information update in English, Spanish and French. An important part of Isis-WICCE'S program is the strengthening of collaboration within the Africa region as well as between Africa and other regions.

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"Woman throughout the ages has been mistress to the law, as man has been its master."
Freda Aklen

Laws for the most part are written rules that have kept women in their place, whether it be in the home or in the fields, tending the children and animals. Laws bar women from exercising basic rights especially the unwritten rules. Take for instance the murmuring in Iran, that women are routinely raped while held in detention or prison. Officials claim that there are no such written policies to this act but women will whisper to the opposite. Even developmental policies dominating Asia hold a double standard for women. Across Asia, the indicators of modernization and success are the incessant erecting of tall concrete buildings, the number of Mercedes on the road, the wide use of cellular phones, hoarding of guns and weapons, but when it comes to the human rights and individual freedoms for women, the "evils of the materialistic west" are quickly invoked.

As women we know early on that certain rules are for men and others are for women, even if the same law is supposed to be across gender boundaries, the application depends on your gender and/or class. Case in point is the article "till Divorce do us part" which looks at the divorce laws in Asia.

But have we sat around and just let these patriarchal system run roughshod on us? Our gains --- the right to vote, the right to education, the right to work --- will prove that for centuries we have been challenging these laws. The most difficult legal terrain has been the laws that rule the personal domain and our sexuality. But we continue to push, analyze, question, redefine and enlarge both 'the spirit and letter of the law'.

In compiling this issue we found that women are creating many changes, especially in the area of our sexuality and in the personal domain. Take for instance, the Philippines, where women successfully passed a sexual harassment bill as well as redefined old colonial Spanish laws on rape.

In India and Japan, women lawyers are analyzing the existing laws through feminist lens. They are working with

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other women's groups to change laws and to hold governments accountable to newly signed pro-women laws.

In Sri Lanka, women have used the existing bribery laws to prosecute against sexual harassment in the absence of harassment laws.

In South Korea, women are organizing and changing old laws discriminating against women.

In the U.S.A., female employees of the CIA have won a landmark case against one of the U.S. oldest and exclusive 'good old boys network.' The list goes on.

The power of law and military rule have long been the prerogative of the patriarchal system, but just as we see women challenging the legal arena, we see women taking on peacemaking roles in times of conflicts. In our special feature **Women Waging Peace**, we focus on women who are trying to change the ravages of war with waging peace. In the same section, we take a look at the current war in Algeria that has targeted women as the main casualties of a largely religious conflict. We listen to refugee women testifying against war atrocities.

In this **Women in Action** issue, we added a second special feature. We could not resist the idea of passing up the opportunity of sharing with you a few interesting articles on **Language and Sexism**. For example, Tomoko I. Sakita takes a look at how in Japan Nippongo and English languages carry sexism further.

In **Conversations**, two Muslim women, an Iranian and a Bangladeshi share with us their thoughts on Islam, the west, and women. Grace Molisa writes about the women in **Vanuatu**.

As in our past issues, our resource center staff invite you to take a look at the new books from the **Isis Shelves** through the book reviews. Inspiring poetry and tasty recipes are featured too.

In Action highlights dynamic women making news. One of them, we are proud to feature is Yayori Matsui, who is a member of the Isis International Advisory Council.

Finally, we have added a new section, **What do you Think?** We are encouraging dialogue on issues women have suggested. The topic in this issue is donor based funding vs income generating and program independence. Women want to know what you think. We will publish your responses and comments in upcoming issues.

We look forward to seeing you in Beijing where all 40,000 of us will meet, speak out and remind the world one more time that we are -- **WOMEN IN ACTION!**

AFGHANISTAN

Talibs In Afghanistan Let Women Die In Childbirth

Original sources: The Guardian, UK newspaper; De Volkskrant, Feb 2, 1995; Haagse Courant, Dutch newspaper, April 8, 1995; reprinted in the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights Newsletter 49, Jan - Mar 1995.

Talibs in Afghanistan (Islamic teachers and their students) now control large parts of the country including four or five provinces.

While many people may feel safe and at peace with the talibs in power, others fear the country will be controlled by a severe regime with little respect for women's rights. Already, in the areas

controlled by the talibs, girls have been banned from school, female teachers have been fired, and school directors are being advised to restyle the curriculums in order to re-establish the madrassahs, religious colleges.

The talibs canceled all training for midwives, contending that women should not work. Furthermore, they urge male doctors to deny any treatment to their female patients; in a city like Kandahar, many women die in childbirth.

Other restrictions that have been recently imposed on women include sanctions on going out alone; they should be accompanied by a man, and even then, they should be veiled. Women who challenged those restrictions have been known to be tortured by fanatic talibs. Just before going to print, the latest news that reached us suggests that the restrictions for women going out have been relaxed; provided that they wear a burqa (which covers the head and the whole body, leaving only some holes to look through at eye level), they are allowed on the streets again. Also, nurses and midwives are allowed to work again in the hospitals.

CHINA

Female Farmers 'Key To Nation's Growth'

Source: Associated Press, South China Morning Post, June 24, 1995.

Female farmers are the key to China's economic development because they produce between 50 and 60 percent of the food their countrymen eat, according to a study released yesterday by the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

"China's remarkable economic progress has been both a cause and a result of the increased empowerment of rural women," it said. In the future, women living in rural areas would produce a greater proportion of the food because they were becoming better integrated into the country's economy and men were going to work in cities, fund president Fawzi Al-Sultan said.

But rural women still faced discrimination and a large proportion of them lived in poverty, he said. Despite improved education, laws affirming women's equality and the government's efforts to alleviate poverty only 48 percent of rural women can read and most cannot borrow money to put into rural businesses, the study said.

Rural women worked an average 11.35 hours a day compared with 10.06 hours for their male counterparts.

The report called for an expansion of training programmes for women, particularly in remote impoverished areas, greater access to credit, including direct loans to women, and implementation of laws ensuring equality of the sexes. Beijing co-operated with the Rome-based fund in preparing the 131-page report, "The Status of Rural Women in China", which was released in London. The fund is a development agency affiliated with the United Nations.

Mr Al-Sultan said the study was one of the most extensive international surveys of women living in the countryside in the developing world. "Especially during the past decade and a half, the social, political and economic status of rural women in China has undergone dramatic improvement," it said. "However, long-ingrained ideas and practices do not vanish overnight, despite laws, and Chinese women -- in particular rural women -- still have a long way to go before they are, in fact, treated as equals of men."

Amnesty Caims Abuse Of Women In China

Source: South China Morning Post; June 28, 1995.

Chinese women who express dissenting views face harassment, imprisonment and sometimes torture, says a report released on June 27 by Amnesty International. The 27-page report, titled Women in China: Imprisoned and Abused for Dissent, was timed to draw attention to human rights abuses in the host nation for the United Nations World Conference on Women. The report concludes that dissidents in China who are women face the same harsh treatment their male counterparts receive.

Women also suffer rights abuses associated with China's compulsory birth control policy, including forced abortions. Women "continue to suffer human rights violations for activities which are considered entirely legitimate and central to the work of NGOs across the world," the report said. They have been jailed for participating in demonstrations or discussing issues that would be the subject of public debate in other countries. Women who have criticised the Government or pursued the release of detained relatives have been harassed and detained, it said.

Among the women mentioned in the report is Ding Zilin, a professor who has asked the Government for a full account of the June 4, 1989, violent suppression of the pro-democracy protests in Beijing. Her son was killed in the crackdown. She and her husband, Jiang Peikun, have been under almost constant police surveillance, and both lost academic positions and part of their salaries.

The report also gave examples of torture including beatings and electric shocks.

Fiji

Fijian Women Organize Around Rape

Source: Kinesis; March 1995.

Fiji women's groups are outraged by the repeated lack of convictions for rapists, and are organizing to raise awareness of the sexism of the judicial system.

In a recent court trial in Labasa's Magistrate Court, six men, who admitted to having raped a 15-year-old girl, were let-off because the Magistrate said the "well-built" girl appeared to look older than her age. In his sentencing remarks, the Magistrate suggested that because the victim looked as if she were

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NEWS & NOTES

the age of consent (17), she may have consented to having sex with all the men. Authorities are reconsidering whether to file an appeal.

In another case, a Chief Justice in Suva was criticised by women's groups for saying that, because of a teenager's previous sexual experience, her rape at knifepoint would have no adverse effect on the victim. In yet another case, in Nadi, a magistrate passed a lenient sentence against a rapist because the woman he raped was drunk and asleep when he attacked her.

GERMANY

Supply Cannot Meet Demand For Women In Reunified Germany

by Roby Alampay
Source: Today, June 12, 1995

"Did you buy your wife?"

Elnora Held, a Filipina in Berlin and the wife in question, couldn't believe what she was hearing. It wasn't so much the query as how it was asked. She and her husband, a German, were at a dinner party when Mr. Held's friend approached. He asked "so coolly, matter-of-factly" with "no malice at all." Small talk and nothing more. I knew that many Germans had this attitude toward Filipino and Asian women, but when it was asked right in front of me, I was dumbfounded."

A new study released by Ban Ying (Thai for "House of Women"), a nongovernment organization, documents the plight of Filipino, Thai and former Eastern bloc immigrants, lured, brought or bought from their native lands as mail-order brides, or hired to work Berlin's cobblestone streets as prostitutes.

Sigrund Katins, Elnora's co-staffer in Ban Ying, discusses their paper *The Trade in Women in Berlin* --- a first attempt to document the problem.

The market in women has existed for years, in cities all over Germany, all over Europe and the Western world, Katins begins.

Thais and Filipinas, singled out -- in that order -- from all other Third World women have been among the primary "goods." Poverty at home or at least just the promise of a better life abroad had lured them to Germany. Invariably, many ended up as wives to divorced or middle-aged German bachelors, or as prostitutes. Either way, many risked -- and found -- trouble.

"Everybody knows that many Filipinas here are being abused, kept prisoner by their own husbands," Elnora says. Ban Ying receives around five walk-in

Filipinas and Thais a month in an undisclosed center for abused women in Berlin. "They found out about our center by word of mouth, usually. Filipina friends or even friends of their husbands tell them about us or us about them," Elnora says. "Now we're coming out with posters -- in Thai and Filipino -- to try to reach more women who may need our help."

Ban Ying offers counselling and legal services. The most important task now for the organization is to document a phenomenon that in many ways is still not acknowledged by the German legal system. Ban Ying laments the lack of hard data on the plight of women in Berlin. In mid-1994, it only knew that 3,799 Thai and 621 Filipino women were registered -- as tourists -- with the police in Berlin. Authorities would only acknowledge that "the actual number (of trafficked women) must be much higher" because "the estimated number of unknown cases is very high."

Beyond defining the market, though, Ban Ying notes with alarm an apparent expansion of this network of exploitation -- a rise that ironically corresponded with Berlin's own rebirth and liberation.

"After 1990, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the markets for everything expanded," Katins said. Former East Germans, deprived of political and economic choices for an entire generation, wanted a taste of all the forbidden fruits the West had to offer, and provided room for expansion.

"I shudder when we speak in these terms," Elnora says. In this harsh reality, after all, the same forces affecting car sales are the same factors at play in the exploitation of women. "But I know that it's unavoidable, discussing 'the market.' It's the only way to understand the problem."

HONG KONG

Source: Hong Kong Standard Vol. II, nos. 3 & 4, July - Dec 1994.

Nepalese Domestics Trapped In Sex Racket In Hong Kong

Up to 50 women from Nepal are being forced to provide cheap sex to their countrymen and Indians in Hong Kong. A spokeswoman for the Joint Action Network for Nepal (Jann), Sujita Shakya, told the Hong Kong Standard that a number of the 600 Nepalese women recruited by Hong Kong-based recruitment agencies as domestic helpers and sales girls allegedly ended up working as prostitutes in the territory.

The trafficking of Nepalese women started about four years ago because of

the growing demand for cheap sex in the territory.

Today, Hong Kong is the second biggest market for Nepalese victims of sex trafficking. The bulk of Nepalese victims - estimated at 100,000 are in India.

Mainland Women Tricked Into Working As Domestics

Rural mainland Chinese women are being forced to work as domestic helpers in Hong Kong in spite of their having applied for non-domestic jobs. Chinese maids, who are often aged over 50, do not usually complain about their illegal work because they receive a higher salary than foreign domestic helpers. Because they can communicate better with their employers, their salaries are comparatively high, ranging from \$5,000 to \$8,000 a month.

Jump In Number Of Indonesian Domestic Helpers In Hong Kong

Indonesian domestic helpers already outnumber Thais, but Filipinas are still the favorite amahs. According to the Immigration Department, the total number of Indonesian maids reached 9,000 at the end of August. Indonesians form the second biggest group of foreign maids after Filipinos, who account for 115,000 of the 130,000 foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong. Thais, formerly the second biggest group of foreign domestic helpers, have remained at 7,000. At the end of 1993, the number of Indonesians was 6,000, while there were still about 7,000 Thai maids. In 1993, the number of Filipina maids was 105,000 out of the 120,000 foreign maids registered. The director of the Asian Migrant Centre attributed the rise in the number of Indonesian maids to aggressive promotion by recruitment agencies. "Agencies have been promoting Indonesian maids as cheap and hard working," she said. Many Indonesian maids were paid only (HK) \$1,500 a month, while the minimum wage up to September was \$3,500. A higher minimum wage of \$3,750 took effect at the start of this month.

INDONESIA

OPEN WOUND, Labour activist's murder haunts military

by John McBeth in Surabaya, Indo.
Source: Far Eastern Economic Review,
June 22, 1995.

Last year, lawyer Trimoelya Soeryadi asked two army colonels if they could arrange for him to meet their boss, East Java's regional commander. Trimoelya, defending one of eight people accused of murdering Marsinah, a 25-year-old labour activist, had publicly claimed she died in army custody. Now, he told the officers, he wanted to assure their general that he wasn't anti-military.

Days later, the officers told him they couldn't pass on his request. If they did, they said, they would be investigated for having contacts with the Surabaya-based lawyer. "Imagine it, two colonels, and they were too worried about their careers to do even that," Trimoelya marvels. "The bad thing about Indonesia is this all-pervasive fear -- fear to do this, fear to do that."

Police have now reopened the investigation into Marsinah's abduction and murder in May 1993. More than any other case, the brutal death of the lowly watch-factory worker has focused international attention on the plight of Indonesian labour, on the military's often heavy-handed intervention in strikes -- and on the methods that are routinely used to extract confessions. The case has its beginnings on May 3, 1993, when workers at Sidoarjo Catur Putra Surya watch factory went on strike, demanding payment of the minimum wage and dissolution of the local unit of the government-controlled labour union. The strike was settled the following day in talks between labour leaders, including Marsinah, the management and government and army representatives.

Although one of the conditions of the settlement was that the strikers would not be penalized, army officers summoned 13 male workers to the military district command on May 5 and forced them to sign letters stating they were "voluntarily" resigning from the company. Angry over the way the military had gone back on its word, Marsinah went to complain.

Trimoelya says newly-appointed regional commander Maj.-Gen. Imam Utomo has acknowledged that Marsinah was at the district headquarters until 9 p.m. on May 5. What happened to her after that remains a mystery. Three days later, her body was found lying on a roadside

200 kilometers from where she disappeared. A post mortem indicated she had died as a result of injuries inflicted during torture, including having a sharp object shoved into her vagina. Despite widespread coverage in the Indonesian press, the investigation languished for more than six months. Then on October 1, the factory's owner, Judi Susanto, seven civilian employees and Porong sub-district military chief Capt. Kusaeri were detained. Having been taken from their homes without arrest warrants, they were held incommunicado for 18 days at the 5th Division military headquarters in Surabaya.

The defendants later claimed in court testimony they were tortured into admitting their involvement in a murder conspiracy. Susanto says he was given electric shocks, burned with cigarette butts, ordered to mop the floor with his tongue and forced to eat his own vomit. On October 19-20, the defendants were moved to the provincial police headquarters and formally charged with killing Marsinah.

In subsequent trials, during which the defendants recanted their alleged confessions, Susanto was sentenced to 17 years imprisonment and the others to terms ranging from seven months to 13 years. The Supreme Court decision quashed the convictions. The military now says it will also exonerate the army captain, who has served a nine-month sentence for allegedly failing to report his knowledge of an impending crime.

"There are two aspects to this case, a cover-up and a frame-up," says Trimoelya, who also figured in the recent successful legal action against the government's closure of the newsweekly Tempo. "But where I think the military very wrong is that it tried to frame not one person, but nine people. Why involve many? In a conspiracy like this, you think the fewer people who know about it the better."

The state-appointed commission which has drawn high praise for the independence it has shown in some controversial cases, later declared the wrong people were on trial and the real culprits were still at large. It said there were indications that torture had been used to extract confessions. The report was largely ignored and the trial went ahead.

KOREA

Korea Approves Ordination Of Women

by Obk In Kim and Wbaja Hwang, National Organization of Korean Presbyterian Women
Source: Decade Link no. 16, March 1995

The 79th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) has voted to ordain women to the office of elder and pastor. The final tally showed 701 commissioners in favour of ordination and 612 against.

Now, the amendment must be approved by two-thirds of the 51 presbyteries in the PCK. To win approval in the presbytery, the amendment must be passed by a two-thirds majority. "We ask for your prayers as we work toward this goal and toward the date when women will be recognized as full partners in ministry in the denomination. The simple recording of a vote can't reflect the deep meaning this movement of God's spirit has for us. As we celebrate the Assembly's action, we acknowledge, with gratitude, the countless generations of Korean women who were and are builders of the church in their country. We give thanks for this "cloud of witnesses", for their courage and vision and faithfulness to the Gospel in the midst of tremendous struggle."

MALAYSIA

Malaysia For Domestic Violence Bill

Source: The Women's Tribune Watch, vol. 8, no. 2, 1994; appeared again in Decade Link No. 16, March 1995

The Malaysian parliament has moved one step closer to the passage of a domestic violence bill. While the Joint Action Group on Violence Against Women (JAG) welcomed the parliament's consideration of such a bill, they hope next year's version will include several key positions omitted in the current version. JAG believes any legislation should include the definition of domestic violence as a specific crime; provision of victim/survivor assistance; the separation of protection orders from criminal proceedings; inclusion of compulsory counselling for the abuser; and specific police procedures on the handling of domestic violence cases. JAG has actively lobbied for the enactment of the Domestic Violence Bill for eight years.

MAORI

Maori Women And Fisheries

by Nikki Searancke-Ngati Porou
Source: Greenpeace New Zealand, Green Women's Network Newsletter no. 3, Autumn 1995

Nikki's research into the role of Maori women in traditional fisheries management has raised some critical political issues. Although her focus has been on traditional knowledge, the women she has spoken with are very aware of intellectual property rights aspects of the issues and of the realities of use and development of fisheries. For the traditional kafdaki (guardians) of a resource it has become dangerous to reveal too much.

Knowledge is a taonga which must be treasured and protected as much the kaimoana itself. When asked for details some will say "that's my business" meaning that they are protecting traditional knowledge. The example of kina shows the joint venture between iwi and the Japanese had some initial success in harvesting the readily accessible kina but Maori people are now struggling with issues of traditional guardianship and control of the resource. Maori coastal hapu are setting bottom lines and defining boundaries which in essence protect their traditional kina beds and maintain the mana and control of the hapu itself. Maori women or indeed their hapu on the coast, do not reject use and management of fisheries, but this must evolve from a process of consideration by the traditional owners including women as resource managers. Gatherers of kai for centuries, Maori women must have a voice in the fisheries access and sustainability debates. For Nikki, her work on past fisheries leads into the future.

PAKISTAN

PAWLA Produces Legal Literacy Films For Women

Source: Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies, Vol. 1 Number 2, 1995 Karachi-Pakistan.

The literacy rate among women of Pakistan is very low and legal literacy is practically non-existent even amongst literate women. To combat this the Pakistan Women Lawyer's Association (PAWLA), has produced six video films on different legal issues. These films namely Rishta Ilzam, (Accusation), Warasat, (Inheritance), Dastak, (knock at the Door) were prepared by Ms. Rashida Mohammed Hussain Patel, President PAWLA. She has taken each

topic based on the cases which came before the Legal Aid Centre of PAWLA. For out reach areas, PAWLA has a Mobile van which is equipped with a television set and V.C.R. Seminars follow the film showing. A woman law officer accompanies the Mobile Van to give legal advice to the women.

Rishta (Marriage contract) is the first film produced by PAWLA, is Rishta. This film concerns, Talaq (divorce) by a husband. PAWLA considers that the unilateral "Talaq" by the husband is one of the major problems creating hardship and misery for the wife and children. Aurat Ki Awaz (Woman's Voice) concerns the cases of women who seek divorce. The film creates awareness among women about their rights and the procedure for getting divorce through courts of law.

PHILIPPINES

Girls Added To 3 Gs In Isabela

By: D. Gorecho
Source: TODAY April 25, 1995.

Politicians in Isabela province in the Philippines have expanded the three "Gs" - guns, goons and gold of Philippine politics to win votes. They added girls to the list. Sources said local beerhouses were often short of guest relation officers' because politicians were treating barangay officials, their ward leaders and supporters to a good time in girlie bars from the start of the election campaign until elections were held in May. "They [politicians] bring them to sing-along bars and disco houses to keep them in their political camps or make an impression," said a source, who did not want to be named. "In a sense, wooing them". One mayoral candidate was said to have taken with him at least 40 men, mostly barangay officials, to a local night, club where an estimated 60 girls work, including a 14-year-old. Most of the girls came from Manila after nightclubs in Ermita were ordered closed by Mayor Alfredo Lim. Others came from rural areas of Bicol and Samar. "I went straight to this town without seeing what Manila looks like," said 19-year-old Glenda, a Bicolana. She said she couldn't tell if her customer is a politician's guest or not but emphasized that the club manager often warned the girls to be cautious with the men from neighboring Quirino province. Men from Quirino have gained notoriety among club owners for prodding the girls to escape; the latest such incident happened in March.

SOUTH AFRICA

Women And South Africa: SPEAK Speaks No More

by Fatima Jaffer
Source: Kinesis March 1995; #301-1720 Grant Street, Vancouver, BC USA 246; Tel: (604) 255-5499; Fax: (604) 255-5511

Speak, the most widely read and one of only two national feminist publications in South Africa, has ceased publication of its monthly magazine and closed down its radio project.

The decision to discontinue Speak operations was made early this year after most of the skilled personnel at Speak resigned for newly available jobs in the mainstream media, following the first multiracial, non-apartheid elections in South Africa last April.

Speak was founded in 1982 at a time of great proliferation of civic, anti-apartheid organizations. The women who formed Speak, like others in the Left, saw a need to link the struggles of peoples in local communities to the broader national struggles taking place. But history had shown that even while women are the driving forces of liberation movements, the issue of women's equality is sidetracked once revolutions are won. And so the women at Speak decided to ensure women's liberation would be an integral part of the national liberation right at the start. Speak became an organizing tool for women.

ISIS thanks all the women who produced SPEAK over the years. We will miss your voices and the magazine as a source of news and knowledge about women in South Africa.

TAIWAN

Taiwan: Married Women Stand Up

Source: Taiwan Industrial Relations Bulletin no. 28, April 10, 1995.

On 2nd of March, 1995, members of the Women's Solidarity Alliance demonstrated at the freeway toll station, south of Taipei, against the Freeway Bureau's ban on employing married women. The bureau requires its women toll collectors to remain single as it would be inconvenient for married employees to do the night and overnight shifts. The poster of one demonstrator says: "I am married. I want to apply for a job. I protest the decision to deprive married women of their rights to work." There has been growing advocacy from workers' groups and women activists against companies imposing the regulations to dismiss female workers after marriage. They stressed the regulations are unfair and a kind of discrimination.

IN DEFENSE OF WOMEN --- LAWYERING IN A FEMINIST CONTEXT

AN INTERVIEW BY

MA. VICTORIA CABRERA-BALLEZA



In the latter part of August 1994, two women sought the assistance of the Women's Legal Bureau, Inc. (WLB, Inc.). The women were dismissed by an NGO because they engaged in a lesbian relationship with each other. A complaint for illegal dismissal was filed by WLB on behalf of the two.

A woman employee of a local court was demoted for saying 'no' to the sexual advances of the court's presiding judge who sexually harasses women employees and women litigants who happen to be in his sala. The woman filed an administrative case for grave misconduct and abuse of discretion against the judge, but the Supreme Court dismissed the case for "lack of merit". WLB filed a motion for reconsideration but it was also dismissed by the Court. The dismissal led WLB to ask: if no fair hearing can be expected from the highest court of the land, where can a woman seek redress?

In this interview, Atty. Eleanor C. Conda, Executive Director of the Women's Legal Bureau, Inc. shares with us the dynamics and complexities of working with the legal system from a feminist perspective.

Q: You've been into feminist lawyering for the last five years. Our readers would be interested to know what it is ...

A: It's the use of the law, the use of the legal system and processes to advance the women's cause, observing and upholding feminist principles. Translated into what we're actually doing, an example would be our feminist legal services to the women. Why feminist legal services? Because primarily we believe that legal services should be empowering. We depart from the traditional lawyer-client relationship wherein the lawyer's a giver or has the power in terms of knowledge of the law and the processes and the client is at the receiving end, at the mercy of the one with power. In our case we believe that it should not be so. In the case of a feminist lawyer, the whole process should be empowering to the woman, the client. Meaning, each conference with the woman is an opportunity for her to realize that her situation is only part of a bigger situation of women. It becomes a consciousness-raising session. It's also an occasion for the woman to find herself and to realize what she can do - like preparing for hearings or affidavits. At all times we believe that it should be the woman who should have control over the case. The feminist

lawyer is only out there to guide the woman in that process of making a decision and help her assess the pros and cons, in the end making the decision herself. And feminist lawyering - because we believe that the legal system is just one of the arenas for women's struggle. Working within the legal system is only a short term strategy for us. If we're only talking of one woman, one case, one domestic violence situation, one rape case, that will topple down the status quo of patriarchy, no. However, we also use the legal system to question the constitutionality of the law. Legal servicing has a long term aspect in that sense. When you're talking of discriminatory laws, we can use the legal system to strike them down for being invalid or unconstitutional.

Q: How did you get into feminist lawyering?

A: In 1990, there were two friends in law school who sat down and assessed where they wanted to go when they become lawyers - that was Evalyn (Atty. Evalyn Ursua, the current Deputy Executive Director) and myself. We considered the options before us, and we realized we had no option at all.

Q: That's interesting - especially when a lot of people are going into lawyering and look at it as a lucrative career ...

A: Yeah, and we said we want to make some meaning out of our being lawyers or our being about to be lawyers and there was nothing in the horizon for us that we wanted to do. But then we did not stop there. We found legal services as very limiting because that meant working within a system that we knew would be against the women. So we said the approach should be holistic - which means we had to adopt long term strategies like education and policy advocacy.

Q: Can you tell me a bit more about WLB? What are the objectives, the programs and services you provide?

A: We were officially registered in February 1991. The Bureau (WLB) has five major programs, closely interwoven with and complementing each other. We have the Feminist Legal Services (FLS), Policy Research and Development (PRD), Policy Information and Advocacy Assistance (PIAA), Women's Developmental Legal Education (WDLE), and Publications and Public Information (PPI) Programs.

Under the FLS Program, we provide legal assistance to women and women's organizations. The Program aims to promote the creative use of

traditional legal methods and avenues to fight for the cause of women and to inject gender sensitivity into the administration of justice.

Through the cases we handle under FLS, we work for the elimination of discriminatory laws against women. The FLS Program offers feminist legal assistance to women in cases involving gender-related issues and to women's organizations in matters relating to their operations. Legal services made available by the Bureau through this Program also includes preparation of legal opinions and memoranda for its clientele.

Q: Who can avail of your programs and services?

A: Any woman or any group of women from different sectors.

Q: Going back to your programs and services...

A: Yeah, going back...The PRD Program provides the baseline information and the policy proposals required for undertaking policy advocacy. To complement the material output of the PRD, the PIAA puts forward policy proposals to pertinent agencies. It also paves the way for the effective involvement of women in the legislative process by offering legal and technical support to advocacy groups. WLB is one of the founding members of SIBOL, a feminist legislative advocacy network which drafted the women's anti-rape bill.

The WDLE Program provides trainings and seminars to women's groups to equip women with basic legal skills and knowledge to enable them to deal with their peculiar situations themselves. This is WLB's way of further supporting other women's organizations. Moreover, the Program promotes feminist lawyering among law students and attempts to gender-sensitize them through symposia, dialogues, and law internship arrangements with schools of law.

The Bureau also produces popular educational materials and disseminates legal studies and researches through our Publications and Public Information Program. We consider this as another way of promoting feminist lawyering and a venue for disseminating feminist legal principles and theories within the legal profession. We used to run a weekly radio program on women's issues and the law intended to demystify the law and legal processes for women. But due to lack of resources, we had to discontinue the program. We have plans of reviving the radio program, though. In fact we are also considering going on television. We work a lot with the media and we believe the media plays a very important role in advocacy.

Q: Before setting up WLB, were you already active in the women's movement?

A: Not really within the movement. I was with the Senate then. I was the first technical assistant of the first Committee on Women and Family Relations of the Senate in 1987 under Senator Rasul. So I had a chance to work from within and to work with women leaders.

Q: So far, have you encouraged more women law graduates to work with the Bureau or at least consider feminist lawyering as an option?

A: To some extent, yes. Firstly, by taking in law students, by making them part of the Bureau's work, as full-time or part-time personnel. Secondly by encouraging and accepting interns although we've never really come up with a systematic, organized internship program simply because we don't have the person to conceptualize the whole thing. In 1993, we initiated the formation of a volunteer lawyers network. Members are women lawyers from different fields.



ELEANOR CONDA

Q: Do you have male lawyers who work with you in some of the cases you handle?

A: We have a very basic problem in accommodating male lawyers in the Bureau because of the nature of the cases we handle which are mostly rape cases or domestic violence cases. It's going to be very insensitive of us to have a victim - survivor relate her case, especially at the first instance, to a male lawyer. We also believe that at this stage in our work, as a feminist legal resource organization, we're still challenging the very male-oriented principles or patriarchal legal provisions of the law. We're not actually closing the doors, no! Perhaps in the future we can think of working with male lawyers. But right now, in the present phase in our work it is best that we limit the handling of cases to

women lawyers. Men can be involved in the cause but in another capacity.

Q: Have you had any project where men were involved?

A: Yes, in our Community-based Approach to Violence Against Women (Combat VAW) Project which is implemented in urban poor communities. We train some women to become legal advocates who will respond to cases of violence in the community. The reactions vary from outright hostility on the part of the male member of the family who can either be a father, a brother, a husband or a live-in partner; to passiveness, not caring what the woman does. But there were also some men in one community who showed willingness to help the women. At the very least, they tried to understand what the women were trying to do and expressed interest in also learning what the women learned. So outside the project, we had to come up with a short module on the issue of VAW for these men.

Q: What came out of this training with this group of men?

A: After they underwent the four-day orientation, they decided to form themselves into a support group. They decided they wanted to support the women because they felt they could do things that probably the legal advocates could not do, like talking to the other men about the issue over bottles of beer or intervening when a man batters his wife.

Q: For many of us, when you say law, when people talk about law, it sounds high-fallutin. Do you have attempts in your programs to demystify the law?

A: Everything that the Bureau does is an attempt to demystify the laws. For a long, long time, the legal profession has held the monopoly over the knowledge and skills related to the law. Thus, we try to simplify the language; we adopt popularized methodology. And of course we try to

preparing a legal document is part of the process of demystifying the law. We look for every possible occasion to discuss what is happening with a certain case or where in the process we are in. That way, women slowly lose that awe or fear about the law because a big part of such attitude stems from ignorance about it.

Q: What is the status of the petition?

A: It was dismissed for lack of merit. This signals that the Court is not ready yet to address the issue of trafficking or at least consider issues from the women's viewpoint.

Q: Don't you find this frustrating?

A: We're quite pragmatic about it. We look at it as part of the whole process of advocacy within the legal system. It's a first step. It's part of the process of raising people's awareness of the legal system as well as drawing public attention to the issue. In the latter, we work with friends in the media. So, when a case is dismissed, all is not lost.

Q: How do you foresee legislation on women in this country? Do you think there will be more legislators proposing bills that will advance women's status?

A: In the past Congress or even in other Congresses, we've seen posturings on the part of legislators when it comes to women's issues. And I think we will see more of that. This indicates that somehow women are beginning to be looked upon as a political force. But we're not talking yet of a women's vote enough to sway or influence results of elections.

Q: So far how many bills on women have been passed and what are these?

A: During the 9th Congress, three out of more than three hundred bills on women filed. One on social security, another on sexual harassment and another providing for assistance to micro and cottage business enterprises.

Q: Can you tell me some of your success stories in the Bureau?

A: If by success stories you mean outstanding achievements of the organization, I'm afraid that I may not be able to answer your question. For us in the Bureau, successes or victories come in seemingly small but important ways. Like women transforming themselves and finding their strength and power, after making the initial difficult decision of taking control of their situations. Women learning about their rights and asserting them. Women and some men seeing sense in the SIBOL rape bill and doing their bit for the campaign for its passage. Media tackling issues like rape and domestic violence. Women lawyers responding to our call for volunteers. And so on. For some, these may not be earth-shaking gains at all. But for us, they matter. They bring us nearer our goal.

Q: In terms of cases won?


A: We have a number of them over the years. Earlier I talked about our feminist legal services. Following the principles we abide by winning a case, for us, is and should not be the be-all of our legal services, although it is important. As important or more important is the woman's empowerment as she goes through the legal system or acts on her situation.

Q: What are most of the cases that women approach you for? What is the average number?

**THE LAW IS NOT GOD-GIVEN,
IT IS MAN-MADE.
THEREFORE IT CAN BE CHANGED.**

develop a critical attitude towards the law. For example, we stress that the law is not God-given, it is man-made. Therefore it can be changed. Once the women have the basic knowledge about laws, then they find out that they can actually use them. And this is proven in our community-based projects. The legal advocates have acquired the confidence, because of what they learned from the trainings, to deal with authorities like the police, the prosecutors.

For women's groups there were also attempts on our part to demystify the legal processes. In 1992, we filed a petition for certiorari before the Supreme Court on a trafficking case that was brought to us. We asked some women's groups to take part in preparing some portions of the petition. Providing them with an opportunity in



Engaging with the legal system through case handling or advocacy for changes in laws, is fraught with dilemmas. Dilemmas such as the possibility or fear of cooptation.

E: Mostly rape and domestic violence cases. As of June 1995, the Bureau has 89 active cases. Since we started in 1991, we have accepted more than 200 cases.

Q: What criteria do you follow in accepting cases?

A: We have two criteria. One, the case must involve a gender-related issue. Two, it could be any of the following: the woman is indigent or has no capacity to pay; the case involves far-reaching policy implications; or the case is sensitive or involves risk. However, we make it a point that cases that are not within our mandate are referred to other lawyers.

Q: Do you charge any fee?

A: We follow a socialized fee structure according to the capacity of the woman to pay.

Q: How do you handle cases of domestic violence wherein the women opted to reconcile with their partners or husbands when you have already gone through the whole process of documenting the case and filing charges?

A: We go back to the premise that it is the woman's life and nobody else's. Should the woman decide to go back to the husband or the live-in partner, it's her choice. But only after a really informed process of decision-making. That decision, I think, should be looked at from a larger context wherein a woman goes through the cycle of violence. The wooing part, the courtship, are part of the cycle. It's a cycle from which a woman will find it very, very difficult to get out of. All we could do is support her in the process, in trying to muster enough strength, enough confidence to eventually get out. Based on our working with women victims/survivors of domestic violence, there are many factors -- such as a woman's economic powerlessness, the children, pressure from family -- that render it difficult if not impossible for a woman to do something about the situation of violence that she is in or see her case through the end. We have to understand this. In the end, if a woman decides that she would reconcile with the battering husband or live-in partner, we could only stand by and assure her that we are still there should she need us.

Q: How do you look at the forthcoming World Conference on Women in terms of advancing laws pertinent to women?

A: The Platform for Action that will be discussed by governments during the Beijing Conference addresses problems that have long been faced and suffered by women. Governments will again commit to take action, including legislative measures, in response to various issues. Whether or not governments will be true to their

commitments and accountabilities under the Platform for Action would depend on their political will and sincerity, which most likely would not be there. Where then does this leave us advocates? International documents like the Platform for Action set standards which we could use in our advocacy, specifically, for changes in laws or for measures or programs that would be in the interest of women. They include undertakings which women could hold their respective governments accountable for. We advocates have yet to optimize the use of these international documents in our work in our respective countries.

Q: How would you assess the impact that the Bureau has made in the women's movement?

A: We are celebrating our fifth year in February 1996 - probably by that time the Bureau would be more prepared to talk about the impact, if any, of its work. But maybe the mere presence of a group in the movement that uses the law as entry point, somehow reminds women that there is a legal aspect to consider. But I still think it would be best to talk to the groups and individual women that we've worked with and let them answer your question for us.

Q: This is the last year of your term as Executive Director. What are your plans after your term?

A: I would like to continue working with sisters in the movement and being involved in the process of change. But this I may have to do in another capacity. Immersing myself in the Bureau for the past five years precluded my going into other endeavors. I want to try out other possibilities for me professionally. On the personal front, I hope to have more time for my significant others, for reading, writing and reflection and for growing spiritually. In other words, go on with the process of be-ing and becoming, which for me is what life is all about after all.

Q: What do you consider to be your most valuable learnings as a feminist lawyer?

A: Engaging with the legal system through case handling or advocacy for changes in laws, is fraught with dilemmas. Dilemmas such as the possibility or fear of cooptation. However, I realized over time that as long as there is certainty in a person's convictions, her 'bottomlines' while working within the system will not be difficult to define. Still, this does not mean letting down one's guard. There should be constant reflection about one's self and what is happening, and continuous reexamination of one's premises, positions and views. I think that my being a feminist lawyer has helped me much to grow.▲

REVISITING "THE FAMILY" THROUGH LAW

RATNA KAPUR

Source: VOICES: A Journal on Communication for Development Vol. II NO. 2, 1994. Published by Madhyam Communications, P.B. 4610, 59 Miller Road, Benson Town, Bangalore 560046, India Fax: 5586564, 569261

"The Family" is a term that is more often assumed rather than explained. There is a need, says RATNA KAPUR, to recognize the diverse forms of family that exist in India today, and review the laws that assume just one family form.

In this edited version of her paper, Ratna Kapur discusses how law reproduces and reinforces a dominant understanding of "the family" and unequal gender relations and explains why it is important for feminists to challenge this dominant understanding and how law can be used in this process.



Legal definitions of family.

The predominant conception of the family in law is that of the joint Hindu family. Yet this definition is primarily a legal construct for regulating property ownership and not an attempt to codify the ways in which people actually live as a family. At the level of law, the joint Hindu family is comprised only of those males, who, by birth, have an interest in joint or coparcenary property. Women cannot be coparceners, but have an interest in the share of their husband's property. The law is more revealing of the gendered nature of the distribution of property, rather than of the actual composition of the Indian family. It is nevertheless interesting to note that this central legal definition contemplates a "family" where all the members are male. There are several other legal definitions of the family, which focus generally on the greater generational depth of what constitutes a family unit. For example, the term parent means different things under different legal provisions. Under the provisions of the Fatal Accidents Act, 1855 it includes the father, mother, grandfather and grandmother, and "child" includes a son, daughter, grandson and daughter. However, under the proviso to section 6(1) of the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, the term parent refers only to the father if he is alive and not the grandfather, and only the father as the parent can be convicted for the marriage of his minor daughter. Legitimacy also determines, in part, who is or is not a parent.

The status of being a parent or child is also limited according to consideration of age. Under the Children's Act, 1960, a child means a boy who has not attained the age of 16 years or a girl who has not attained the age of 18 years. This definition reflects the gendered notion of dependency, that is, a girl is considered a child for a longer duration than is a boy. Taken together, the provisions operate to safeguard patrilineality and the son's inheritance rights while balancing the patriarch's right to avoid some type of legal responsibilities for his illegitimate children. In summary, the father is always a "parent" when he wishes to exercise that authority; a boy is always a "son" when property is being distributed; a daughter is usually a "child" until she gets married; and a mother is a "parent" when her illegitimate child needs vaccinations. Notions of dependency also reflect a patrilineal organization of the family, in that a married woman is assumed to sever all economic ties with

her birth family and become the responsibility of her husband's family. Despite the diversity of family forms both in fact and in different laws, the normative joint family arrangement is the most common way in which people define the family in India regardless of its lack of correlation to their own domestic arrangements.

Divorced from reality

At the normative level, the law plays an important role in sustaining a certain understanding of "the family" that obscures the diversity of family forms as well as women's experience of "the family". The terms on which marriage and family operate are not encoded in statute, but are revealed at the point of the breakdown of marriage. Divorce cases provide some of the most important insights about marriage and family life. They also expose the economic vulnerability of women caused by marriage and the sexual division of labor.

Adultery

Adultery is a common ground for divorce for men and women in almost personal laws, yet the cases reveal how these provisions play out differently for husbands and wives. The courts have frequently accepted allegations of adultery by the husband against the wife, on the basis of circumstantial evidence, overlooking the wife's contention that her husband wants to marry a second time, and the easiest way of getting rid of her is by making allegations regarding her fidelity.

Under the provisions of the Indian Divorce Act, adultery is considered a more serious wrong in the case of wives than of husbands. Thus, a husband can secure a divorce on the grounds of his wife's adultery, but a woman needs to prove an additional ground, namely, cruelty, rape, incest, bigamy, or desertion in order to secure a divorce. The discrimination in treatment has been justified on the grounds that the consequences of adultery for men and women are different, that is, a woman can get pregnant. This reasoning serves to restrict women's sexual conduct, confers legitimacy only on motherhood within the institution of marriage, while at the same time penalizing women for having the capacity to reproduce.

The decisions reveal the assumptions of property on which the adultery law is based as well as the passive constructions of women's sexuality. The rights involved are men's rights over exclusive

sexual access to their wives. Any transgression of that right is construed as a breach of his rights of property over his wife's sexuality. A woman is not implicated in the offence, partly because of the law's construction of her as chattel as well as the assumption that female sexuality is passive and that she could not therefore be the "author" of such a "crime".

Cruelty

Cruelty is a common ground for divorce under the different personal laws. Yet, like adultery it has been interpreted to mean different things depending on whether the petitioner is a husband or a wife. The refusal to have children or to abort a foetus has served as grounds for divorce in the case of husbands. In two particular cases the husband was granted a divorce on the ground that an abortion by the wife without the husband's consent constituted cruelty. A woman's refusal to have sexual relations with her husband has been held to constitute cruelty by the wife. Such decisions coupled with the fact that marital rape does not constitute a criminal offence and is specifically exempted from the purview of the rape provisions, leaves a wife little choice in deciding and defining her sexual relationship with her husband.

Maintenance

The formal legal provisions and decided cases on maintenance provide some insight as to how women are constructed as economically vulnerable and dependent. It is a point of marital breakdown that the relative poverty of women and the role of marriage in creating women's economic dependency is revealed. The law operates in a way that reinforces and reproduces women's dependency and the sexual division of labor rather than addressing women's needs, the ostensible justification for the existence of maintenance provisions. The most significant change in this area of law came after the Shah Bano judgement, with enactment of the Muslim Women's Protection of Rights on Divorce Act, 1986, which took away a right to maintenance that Muslim women had previously enjoyed. In fact, the low sums awarded in maintenance cases under all personal laws, exposes the fact that women's domestic labor is not considered to be valuable and only serves to reinforce their dependency. Thus, the payment of maintenance to women has to be earned and serves as a sanction over women's sexual behavior. The effect of this legal practice was to make all separated women into potential economic pariahs. As soon as they had a sexual or an implied sexual relationship with another man they could be forced into an economic dependence on him and the patriarchal marital relationship was reconstituted. It also encouraged a surveillance of women's sexual behavior by separated husbands who had much to gain from discovering their wives had sexual liaisons. When a woman sets up a sexual relationship with a man, maintenance is no longer available. Maintenance laws become a surveillance tool over women's sexual conduct. The law is less concerned about whether they are economically disadvantaged, than it is about the morality and fault of the parties.

Challenge and change

When speaking about change, and the extent to which families are identified as a source or site of women's oppression, we need to address what is to

be done? Can the law play a counter hegemonic role to challenge the dominant understanding of "the family" and the unequal gender relationships on which it is based?

Feminists have demonstrated very different and often contradictory responses to the family. There are those who have struggled to highlight the inequities and abuses that women have experienced in the family, primarily in the form of rape and domestic violence. This approach tends to construct women as victims, that is, they focus on dowry deaths, sati, domestic violence and rape within the family. It is important not to ignore the extent to which women are individual agents, functioning in an albeit limited and socially conditioned environment. There is a need to recognize women as individuals, with agency, with some degree of autonomy within very limited spheres of their lives and it is important to recognize the complexity of social arrangements of the family and of the role of women within it. We need to develop an approach in our analysis and strategies that recognizes the extent to which women are victims, but we also need to preserve and affirm their power and dignity however limited it maybe, in their own lives. It is important not to simply accept prevailing ideological constructions of women as victims or passive agents, for it is such a perception that has led to a protectionist approach towards women, in law. They are perceived as weak, passive, and incapable of decision making and thus, the power of the State and the family over women has been legitimated. Others have resisted efforts to highlight the inequities women experience within the family on the grounds that such challenge will break the family which is an important source of security and support for women. Recently it has been perceived by some activists as a strategy that would be unacceptable to women in rural contexts and the working class. Such a response is not only paternalistic and elitist, but it is also simplistic. Such arguments operate primarily as a way of dismissing or delegitimising feminism and reinforcing right wing positions which are constantly seeking to reinforce "traditional family values" and "rescue" the family critiques and challenges of feminism, regarded as a product of the decadent West.

Feminist Strategies

In developing legal strategies to address women's oppression in the family, we need to question our own assumptions about law as instrument of male power that oppresses all women in the same way. By breaking the myth of the homogeneity of law, it is possible to recognize the potential space that law offers in challenging dominant assumptions about women and the family. It is important to recognize that the law has specific impact on women insofar as it promotes specific forms of regulation of women; it accords women with fewer rights than other persons; and it continues to construct women as economically dependent on men. Yet this does not mean that the law treats all women the same. By appreciating how the impact of law is mediated by women's religious, class, caste, sexual and marital status, we can begin to identify some of the contradictions that exist within the law which will allow space for change. ▲

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till Divorce do us Part

Source: Asia Magazine, February 1995

In Asia, as women become more emancipated and life around the region grows more frenetic, couples are deciding they can't stick together till death do they part. Joyce Moy reports.



Confucian ethics and Asian traditions decree that you love the person you marry - rather than marry the person you love. Historically, divorce around the region has been a non issue: husbands who did not learn to love their wives took on concubines. As for the women - well, besides being financially and socially dependent on their husbands, their role in this deal was to bear children and bring them up. What's love got to do with it?

Times have changed. Education and economic independence have effected a dramatic turnaround in the status and social well-being of women. As a consequence, rather than suffer in silence, increasing numbers of Asian women are opting for divorce as an end to marital misery. Singapore marriage counsellor Benny Bong observes: "Husbands have to play a dual role these days - both as the head of the household and as a marriage co-partner. But they are not trained for the partnership role. They see negotiating with their wives as a sign of weakness.

"On the other hand, women want recognition that - in addition to being a wife and a mother - they are also working and thinking persons. My husband feels that to ask their wives for an

opinion is to open a can of worms. How much weight should they give to such opinion if it differs from their own?"

The fact is that divorce - once regarded as an illness of a decadent Western society - is on the rise around Asia. Marriages are falling prey, not only to women's emancipation, but also to the stress of coping with the demands of the fast-changing, revved-up pace of modern urban living. Associate Professor Wimolsiri Jamnarnwej remarks: "Everyone is working to make money. Husbands and wives have no time for each other. They travel separately to work each morning, leave home early, arrive home late; they don't talk."

Horace Lee, a Hong Kong marriage counsellor, agrees: "In Hong Kong, the hectic pace of business demands that both husband and wife spend most of their time working, with only one day out of the week for leisure. If spouses have different priorities and ideas on how to spend this off-day, conflict will inevitably ensue."

Thailand records about 47,000 divorces annually, and the numbers are increasing at the rate of two-and-a-half per cent per year. Taiwan, struggling to cope with the social upheavals brought on by being an economic powerhouse, is clocking more divorces annually than it is building highways - 1.4 percent of all Taiwanese marriages today end in divorce. Hong Kong estimates that one in every 10 marriages break down and Japan's count of broken marriages is 17.9 out of every 1,000.

On the legal front, while divorce legislation around the region has generally taken a great leap forward, each country has its own set of laws. A snapshot survey of the state of divorce around Asia follows.

THAILAND: Adultery is the most common cause of divorce here. Adultery is also the conspicuous exception to the principle of equal rights under civil and commercial law, which was granted to Thai women in 1985. In the case of adultery, the cards are stacked in favor of the husband, who can sue for divorce immediately if his wife is unfaithful - one instance provides sufficient grounds. However, the wife can only bring charges of adultery against her husband if he is proven to be living with and supporting another woman.

Associate Professor Wimolsiri, who is also resident of the Women Lawyers Association, explains that deep-rooted traditions endure among Thai men and that, despite the introduction of monogamy in 1935, the practice of the "minor wife" is still widespread.

She would like to see this change. "Adultery should be defined as in the West," she says. "There should be equal grounds for divorce; men should not keep secret wives. The family law from 100 years ago allowed polygamy; but in 1935, after the emplacement of constitutional monarchy, a man was required to register his legal wife. But even today, men have more than one wife."

However, Wimolsiri, who is advisor to the National Committee on Women's Affairs, does not hold out much hope for immediate change - not with 300 men and just 16 women in parliament. "Many MPs have minor wives," says Wimolsiri. "Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai is a good man, but even he has not registered his marriage."

"There are 10 grounds for divorce in Thailand: adultery; bad habits such as drug abuse; criminal activity or prostitution; physical abuse; desertion for more than one year; disappearance, when a spouse has not surfaced for more than five years; lack of support; refusal to have sex; insanity for more than three years; breaking of a written agreement (for example, the spouse promises not to get drunk); and dangerous diseases such as AIDS or any contagious and incurable disease. All apply equally to men and women - except for adultery."

Although child custody is usually granted to mothers with secure jobs, with fathers ordered to pay child alimony, typically women end up with the shorter end of the stick. It is estimated that 80 percent of divorced mothers do not receive child support payments from their ex-husbands.

Supatra Nakhapuew, law consultant with the Women's Friend Group, says: "Most divorced women do not pursue the issue of child support, preferring to struggle on alone. Child alimony currently is not enforced. Divorced fathers often claim their salaries are only enough to pay their own expenses."

TAIWAN: In this emerging affluent society, where women executives are multiplying at an exponential rate, a tug-of-war is taking place between emancipated women and tradition, ally-minded men over the age-old practice of keeping ashau lau por (little wife). In addition, women still get a raw deal when their marriages come unstuck. Lawyer Shen Mei-chen laments: "The present laws are backwards and unfair to women."

If both parties agree to custody of the children and division of property, divorce is a straightforward matter. A couple can sign a written agreement in a lawyer's office in the morning and have the divorce legally registered in the afternoon. The problem - especially for the woman - starts when there is some dispute or when the husband opposes the divorce.

Shen explains, "The courts will not grant a woman a divorce unless there is proof of beating, from a doctor or a lawyer. Taiwanese generally regard divorce as immoral and therefore are reluctant to be witnesses in such situations."

Current guidelines also require a battered woman to produce no fewer than 10 individual instances of violence. "Being hit once is not enough for the court," says Shen. Even if she is granted a divorce, a woman is unlikely to come out of court with more than the clothes she has on. Maintenance payments are an alien concept. The current law gives automatic custody of any children to the husband. Property, even if it is held in the woman's name or given to her by her family, cannot be disposed of without written permission from her husband. While a 1985 amendment has relaxed the ruling on joint property, this is not retroactive. Hence, all property acquired by the couple before June 3, 1985, belongs automatically to the husband. On the social front, there is still a strong stigma dogging the divorced woman. "If a woman is divorced," says designer Dinny Wang, "a man's family will think there is something wrong with her - that she's not a good wife, not a good mother."

But, as elsewhere in Asia, the climate is changing. Two women's groups - the Awakening Foundation and the Warm Life Association - have launched a signature campaign to petition for a change to the island's divorce laws. They are hoping to get 100,000 signatures to prove to the government that the proposed amendments have popular support. The revisions cover grounds for divorce, required proof of mistreatment and divorce settlements, including fair division of property, maintenance payments and abolition of automatic custody rights to the husband. The bill is expected to take between one and three years to pass through the legislature.

JAPAN: Divorce legalities are surprisingly simple, if uncontested divorce boils down to filing the relevant paperwork (which can be completed without a lawyer) and costs Y300 (US\$3). However, social conventions hold sway and still today, divorce is taboo because

it violates Japan's strong family institution.

Divorce is not just two individuals splitting up - rather, it is two families who are shamed socially. A married woman is regarded as the property of her husband's family. Among the various traditional wedding rites, one includes recording the bride's name under the husband's family register, kept at the village temple or city office. A move to de-list her name makes the woman - and her children, if any - a social outcast.

A housewife in her late 40s confesses that although she has often contemplated ending her unhappy marriage, the consequences have held her back. Her children would never see their grandparents again, because in leaving their father, she would have shamed that side of the family. The toll exacted extends even to the next generation: conservative corporate Japan would frown on hiring children from divorced families.

At present, there is no legal separation period after which divorce is automatically granted. A pending revision to the civil code proposes a "living apart" period of five years, after which a divorce is granted regardless of whether the other partner agrees. This, says a member of the Japan Bar Association, will simplify the process even more.

Similarly, social acceptance of divorcees is gaining ground, albeit very slowly. A new television series, *Wedding Bell*, which introduces prospective partners along the lines of a traditional *omiai* (matchmaker), regularly features divorced men and women - often with their children and parents in tow. The tone is positive, promoting the idea that divorce is normal in today's society.

PHILIPPINES: With the majority of the population Catholic, divorce is non-existent, although legal separation is an option, remarriage is not allowed.

Now, however, things have loosened up, with the advent of Article 36, an amendment in the family code that provides for civil annulment on the grounds of psychological incapacity. Article 36 relaxes the rules for consenting adults by allowing for a civil annulment. "It's a modified divorce," lawyer Jose Ramo Remollo admits.

The theory behind civil annulment is that you weren't married in the first place, because (and this is admittedly a simplistic interpretation) you didn't understand the marriage vows. So you couldn't be held responsible for fulfilling them. By assuming you weren't married in the first place, the law clears its own conscience neatly and preserves the inviolability of marriage. It also leaves spouses free to remarry.

Psychological incapacity can manifest anytime; theoretically, you can still prove it past your golden wedding anniversary. Couples married prior to the 1988 family code have until 1998 to avail themselves of Article 36. The result, says Remollo is "a rush to the courts."

According to canon law, psychological incapacity includes psychic disorders that "render a spouse psychologically unfit to assume

the essential functions and duties of marriage." Among these are homosexuality, habitual alcoholism, philandering, and - what a wide berth this next provides - emotional immaturity or irresponsibility.

"If a man was a heavy drinker," Remollo notes, "or was womanizing at the time of marriage, he can manifest psychological incapacity by neglecting or abandoning his family."

"Because annulment supposes that no marriage existed, neither party is under any obligation to support the other. Couples may agree to a distribution of property, however, and in all cases the law protects the children."

HONG KONG: The courts grant a divorce based on five points: unreasonable behavior; adultery; desertion; uncontested suit after a two-year separation; and five years of separation. Providing that there is no argument over division of assets and custody of children, divorce can be relatively straightforward, dispensing with the need for lawyers.

In the pipeline is a recommendation by the Law Reform Commission that petitions be permitted after one year of marriage instead of three, and after one year of separation, instead of two.

SINGAPORE: To achieve a divorce here, couples must have lived apart for at least three years before initiating proceedings. In addition, they must have been married for at least three years. Lawyers and marriage counsellors say that "living apart" is the most cited reason of divorce - a convenient cover behind which all kinds of dirty linen can be kept from the public eye."

Although the government continually emphasizes family values as a cornerstone of Singapore's society, broken homes are increasingly common. Marriage counsellor Maureen Lim blames the current materialistic society for the breakdown in marriages. "How does a working couple juggle the message to excel and work harder with the message to spend more time with the family? The trade-off used to be less time with the family in order to bring more money. But this trade-off is no longer acceptable," says Lim.

There is no social stigma attached to being a divorced woman, but there are financial disincentives. For example, a new small-families improvement scheme only provides housing and education subsidies to a mother if she stays in her marriage.

For the financially independent woman, this is not a stumbling block, however, lawyers say working wives do not generally seek maintenance for themselves after a divorce. But men are usually required to provide maintenance for children in the custody of their ex-wives.

Interestingly, Singapore is about the only country where divorce laws allow the man to claim a stake of his wife's assets. In a landmark ruling last April, a judge awarded a 56-year-old pastor and self-proclaimed househusband a share of the family flat that his teacher wife

paid for. The flat was valued at S\$355,000 (US\$241,045). The judge ruled that he should receive S\$50,000 on the grounds that he had done most of the housework.

MALAYSIA: As Islam is the official religion here, two sets of laws apply - non-Muslims are governed by the Law Reform (Marriage & Divorce) Act 1976, while Muslims subscribe to Syariah laws.

Under the 1976 Act, a non-Muslim couple may file a joint petition of divorce by mutual consent after two years of marriage. This is the fastest and cheapest method to get a divorce, since there is no contest and both the parties have agreed on an amicable division of assets.

Should there be a dispute, either party can file a petition claiming that the marriage has irretrievably broken down, citing adultery, unreasonable behavior or desertion for more than two years.

Before the petition is allowed, both parties are compelled by law to undergo conciliatory proceedings at a marriage tribunal set up by the National Registration Department. However, most lawyers agree that the lack of experts such as marriage counsellors or psychologists at the tribunal makes this provision merely a formality and a delaying tactic.

The divorced man pays maintenance, he must give financial support to his wife until she remarries, and to the children until they are 18. Lawyer Balwant Singh Sidhu calls this reverse discrimination; a woman is required to pay maintenance to her husband only where he is "incapacitated, wholly or partially, from earning a livelihood by reason of mental or physical injury or ill-health."

Syariah law is more complicated. According to lawyer Kamar Ainiyah Kamaruzamn, there is no equivalent of an uncontested divorce. One party always initiates the proceedings. There are four types of divorce: talaq, taqliq, fasakh and khuluk. Only the first - talaq - is initiated by the man; the three others filed by the woman.

Under talaq, a man need not justify why he wants a divorce. The court will not look at the cause of the divorce but to the form, i.e., that the divorce is executed fairly in the interest of both parties.

A woman can file a divorce by taqliq if she feels that there has been a breach of a stipulated condition by the husband. Valid reasons include non-payment towards household maintenance, desertion or cruelty.

Under fasakh, a woman can be granted a divorce based on a number of grounds, such as if the husband is imprisoned, impotent, or contracts a sexually transmitted disease.

In khuluk, it is the woman who wishes the marriage to be dissolved and offers compensation to her husband. Marriage is seen as a contract in Islam, whereby a woman offers herself to the man. For the contract to be binding, there must be a form of exchange -

the mas kahwin (marriage gold) comprises jewelry, money and other gifts given by the man to his bride. A woman who files for khuluk must return all the mas kahwin.

Under the talaq, taqliq and fasakh, a woman is entitled to compensation, which may be given in a lump sum or staggered over months or years. She is not entitled to further maintenance after this.

Custody of the children normally goes to the mother for sons aged seven or younger and daughters aged nine or younger. Child support is provided by the father - for boys until they start working for girls until they are married.

Muslim law allows a man to have up to four wives, provided he can adequately support each fairly. However, with financial independence, Muslim women today do not readily accept a polygamous relationship.▲

Note: (a letter to the Editor of Asia Magazine clarifying the law in Singapore). Under Section 88 of the Women's Charter, there is only one ground for divorce, the petitioner must prove that the marriage has broken down irretrievably. Proving any one of five factors can establish this, i.e., adultery (by the respondent); intolerable behavior (by the respondent); continuous desertion (by the respondent) for two years immediately preceding the petition; the couple has lived apart for at least three years, and the respondent consents to the divorce; and the couple has lived apart for four or more years. Marriage may also be dissolved through annulment or by judicial separation.





THE PATH TO GENDER EQUALITY IN JAPAN

BY HAYASHI YOKO

Source: AMPO Japan-Asia Quarterly Review vol. 25, no. 4-vol.26-1.

The Japanese government has often been criticized over its male-centered policies and institutions. Since ratifying a key U.N. convention, however, it has been reluctant to take appropriate measures. Hayashi Yoko, a lawyer who works on issues of human rights, analyzes the ways in which the government has improved its discriminatory legal framework and what it has accomplished regarding the legal and substantial equality of gender.

It has been ten years since the ratification, in 1985, of the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Japanese government was initially hesitant to ratify the Convention after it was adopted in the UN General Assembly in 1979. But at the 1980 Copenhagen Conference (during the UN Decade for Women) it finally ratified it. This was achieved through the efforts of women's groups all over Japan, by the work of women Diet members and by women in the mass media who shaped public opinion.

The CEDAW obligates signatories not only to abolish discriminatory laws against women, but also to take measures to abolish discriminatory customs. It is said that the Convention aims not only at "equality before the law" (*de jure* equality) but also "substantial equality" (*de facto* equality).

EQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT

The central reason for the Japanese government's hesitation to ratify the CEDAW was that Japan did not have the legal framework required by the Convention to prohibit discrimination against women in employment. Just before ratifying it, however, the government enacted the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL), claiming that this fully provided the required standards. Suspicions remain, however, that the EEOL violates the Convention.

What is clear, in any case, is that this law has not changed the work place for Japanese women over the past decade. At present, women make up 33% of the total work force, and their average length of service has increased to 7.3 years. Their salaries, however, are only 60.2% (and this excludes part-timers) of what men earn. If we include part-time workers this rate drops to just 49%.

Many companies reacted to the enactment of the EEOL by introducing a "career track system" for their employees.

They divided their employees into two categories: managerial track, or *sogoshoku*, and general clerical work, or *ippanshoku*. People in the *ippanshoku* track (most of them are women) are never transferred to other branches, and this is where women have found themselves. Companies manage women and men differently. There have been many reported cases of women choosing *sogoshoku* to work the same amount as men but faced discrimination in placement and promotion, and were forced into conditions where they cannot cooperate with the other women in *ippanshoku*.

The government, for its part, began a policy to cope with the "problem" of decreasing children. The Day Care Leave Act was enacted in 1992 and workers, regardless of sex, in both public and private sectors can take a leave for one year to raise babies. Starting from April 1994, 25% of the salary has been provided to employees during their leave, and they have been exempted from local taxes. A similar act to allow workers to take leaves to take care of aging parents has been presented in the Diet and will soon be passed.

We can thus see that the government is trying to encourage women to work longer, while at the same time helping them to have babies and giving them time to take care of them. During the last decade, however, there have been no new policy initiatives to give equal treatment to women in employment.

The reason why the Japanese government can ignore demands by women for equal treatment is that it does not recognize them as individual human beings. The government sees all women as "housewives," or workers giving partial support to their families. The tax and social insurance systems treat married women as possessions of their husbands, labelling them "dependent family members," and encourages them to only work enough to receive an income not high enough to be taxable.

The demands of the women's labor movement are for equal payment and the establishment of affirmative action programs. They are calling for a substantial revision of the EEOL, which merely says that "employers have the duty to achieve" goals in promotion, recruitment and employment. Many women also want to see the formulation of a clear definition of sexual harassment as well as the establishment of provisions to punish assailants.

NUMBER OF PREFECTURAL GOVERNORS, CITY MAYORS, AND HEADS OF TOWNS AND VILLAGES, BY GENDER

year	Prefectural Governors		Mayors		Heads of Towns and Villages	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
1980	0	47	0	644	2	2,606
1985	0	47	0	650	2	2,597
1990	0	47	2	660	1	2,569

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs

Along with these movements, women are questioning the tax system which contains preferential treatment for "housewives," and hope that the system will change to make the unit the "individual" rather than the "household."

EQUALITY IN FAMILY LAW

It came as a blow to many women when the government failed to revise the family law at the time it ratified the CEDAW. The government insisted that the Civil Code guarantees "equal rights for women and men" and there was no need to revise it before ratifying the Convention.



During the last decade, however, many cases have been filed demanding, for instance, for married couples to be able to carry different surnames, the abolition of discrimination against children born out-of-wedlock, or the abolition of a provision which forces women to wait six months after a divorce before remarrying. In a case involving discrimination against children born out-of-wedlock in terms of inheritance, the Tokyo High Court ruled in 1993 that this practice was unconstitutional, and the Supreme Court is now set to issue its own ruling.

In the midst of this, the Ministry of Justice began in 1991 a revision of the Family Law, and issued a "draft for a platform for revising the Civil Code" in July 1994. At present, a council is collecting opinions from experts in various fields. Concrete plans for the revision have not yet been made, so I will point out the critiques that women have of the current Civil Code:

(1) Marriageable age: The Civil Code stipulates that men must be at least 18, and women at least 16, to be able to marry. This treatment, however, is discriminatory and should be changed to an equal one.

(2) Period of prohibited remarriage: In a very discriminatory provision, women are prohibited from remarrying until six months after a divorce. It is explained that the goal of this provision is to avoid the confusion over the identity of the father in case the woman becomes pregnant. However, at present it is possible to identify the father of a baby through medical examination.

(3) Denial of legitimacy by mother: Babies who are born to a married woman are automatically presumed to be the husband's, but the husband has the right to deny paternity. This provision can deprive mothers, children, and real fathers the right to know the truth. The law should be revised to give mothers a say in regard to the granting of legitimacy.

(4) Forcing married couples to bear the same surname: Under the Civil Code, married couples must bear the same surname, and in 97% of cases couples use the husband's name. This provision discriminates against women who want to retain their own family names. The freedom to choose one's own family name should be guaranteed.

(5) Discrimination against children born out-of-wedlock: Under the Civil Code, an illegitimate child receives only half the inheritance amount given to a legitimate child. The rationale behind this provision is that it protects legitimate marriage. This should not, however, be used as a reason for discrimination against their children. We must abolish this discrimination. Up until recently, legitimate children have been listed as "first son" or "first daughter" in residential cards and family registers, whereas children born out-of-wedlock were listed simply as "child." In 1994, however, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued a circular notice saying that all children should be listed simply as "child." The Supreme Court will soon issue a ruling concerning the discriminatory provision on inheritance, and there is strong possibility it will be deemed unconstitutional.

In addition to the above, some part of the draft of the Civil Code revision written by the Ministry of Justice suggests the introduction of "no fault divorces." Some women are criticizing this.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

The Criminal Code, which was drafted in 1908, prohibited abortion and the government encouraged a "more birth, more children" policy during WWII. After Japan's defeat this policy was changed into one of population control, and the Eugenic Protection Act legalized abortion in some cases.

This Eugenic Protection Act derives from the National Eugenic Act which was devised by the Nazis. It aims at the annihilation of inferior genes by means of abortion. Under this law, "economic reason" can be sufficient grounds for abortion, as can pregnancy caused by rape, and threats to the mother's health. It is possible to say that Japanese women acquired the "right to abortion" earlier than women in other countries, but punishments for abortion remain in the Criminal Code. Proposals to eliminate the economic reason from the provisions of the Eugenic Protection Act were submitted to the Diet in 1972, 1973, 1982, and 1983, but they did not pass.

The law does not stipulate how late into the pregnancy an abortion can be performed. In a 1989 ordinance by the Vice Minister in the Ministry of Welfare, the period was cut from 24 weeks to 22 weeks. It can be said this action demonstrates the government's fears of falling numbers of children.

In addition, the Eugenic Protection Act requires the "consent" of the unborn child's father before performing an abortion. This violates the women's rights to abortion as one of the rights of privacy.

There are many other problems concerning reproductive health and rights. One major issue today is the rapid development of reproductive technology. No brakes have yet been placed on the commercial use of surrogate mothers or surrogate deliveries. Last year 13,000 people used in vitro fertilization, but the use of fertilized embryos is not under control of any law. The government just depends on moral regulation by the Medical Association for decisions on the use of fertilized embryos. The long and short term effects of the use of hormones on women's bodies must be more carefully studied and publicized.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

In 1946, the first election in which women could participate, 39 women were elected to the House of Representatives. The following year, however, their number dropped to 15, and has not recovered. In the House of Councilors 12 women were elected in 1950, since then their numbers have gradually increased and in 1989 came to a peak with 33 elected women. It is said that it is easier for women to win seats in the House of Councilors, which has a proportional district system, compared to the House of Representatives, which has typically had multi-member districts. In the 1989 House of Councilors election, Doi Takako, the chairperson of the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ), helped many women to be elected amidst a voter upswell against the consumption tax.

We need to review the electoral system today, and to get political parties to formulate affirmative action policies to allow women to participate in the process of decision-making.

Today the political arena is in the midst of the largest reform since World War II. A new electoral law, based on single-member districts, has been enacted. No election has been held under the new system yet, but many people predict that the number of women Diet members will fall even further due to harsh competition and political parties' ignorance toward encouraging women candidates.

In addition, the SDPJ, which once stood women candidates under a platform of "protecting the Constitution" and "peace," changed its basic policy as it formed a coalition with the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). It is uncertain where the few hundred million women who once voted for the SDPJ will go. Many people now feel that it is critical for Japanese women to create a new political movement centering on grassroots/feminists movements, which will replace the SDPJ. My view is that the conditions for Japanese women in the future will be greatly affected by the outcome of such efforts.▲



CHANGES IN MARRIAGE LAW BRING GREATER EQUALITY

Source: Sister Namibia,
Vol. 6 October 1994

FOCUS:
WOMEN
AND THE
LAW

Married women in Namibia are no longer to be regarded as minors in the eyes of the law. After much deliberation, the Women and Law Reform Committee has proposed amendments to the Marriage Act. The amendments will mean that the concept of men holding marital power no longer exists. In terms of the existing concept, a man is regarded as the natural head of the family, he is the boss over his wife and children and has control over the possessions and person of his wife. With marriage in community of property, the husband has the sole mandate to administer the couple's property. He does not need his wife's permission to buy or sell property. However, all these restrictions on the humanity of a woman will disappear when parliament, as is expected, accepts the amendments of the Women and Law Reform Committee. Ms. Nashilongo Shivute of the Department of Women's Affairs said they hope to submit the amendments to

parliament before the end of this year. She said that since independence, women's groups have demanded changes to the common marriage law. Women have often pointed to the Marriage Act as one of the most discriminatory on the Statute books. If the amended Act comes into force, it will be applicable to all marriages, including marriages that came into force long before the new Act. The man will lose his marital power, and both man and woman will be equal in terms of the law. The implications of the changes are, for example, that there will be communal ownership of property and properties. A man will no longer be able to buy or sell property without the knowledge of his wife. Just as a woman who was married in community of property was not able to close contracts without the signature of her husband, the husband will no longer be allowed to sign contracts without the co-signature of his wife. Although the amendments are not

without loopholes, they bring significant improvements to the position of married women. An example of such a loophole relates to women who are the breadwinners of their families. They will still need the signature of their husband, even if he is unemployed, for certain contracts such as buying and selling property. Another loophole affects illiterate women. A man could previously get rid of family property without the consent of his wife. But now he needs her signature. However, if the woman cannot read, her husband can cheat her and she can give her permission without knowing the contents of the contract. However, a clause has been inserted, stipulating that a wife can take the husband to court if he cheated her. The Amendments also stipulate that both the man and woman will from now on have equal access to children. This means that both share responsibility for their children and decisions affecting the children should always be taken in their best interest.▲

In South Africa women can use the Bill of Rights to challenge discrimination. Cathi Albertyn looks at how. Zolile and Nthabiseng were married by a magistrate 38 years ago. For 30 years they lived in a house rented from Soweto Council. The house is in Zolile's name, although they both contributed to the payment.

When Zolile died Nthabiseng had to see to matters. She went to the Department of Home Affairs to register his death. Because Zolile had not made a will, Nthabiseng was told to take her eldest son to the magistrate so that her husband's estate (belongings), including the house, could be transferred to the son. This is what faces many African women who marry in civil law. After their husbands die they are told that customary inheritance applies to them. This means the eldest son inherits the property and the widow has no rights. One of the worst things which happens is that many women lose their homes to their sons. The new Bill of Rights says all people are equal no matter their race, sex, gender, religion, language, belief or disability. It also says no person should suffer discrimination because of his or her race, sex or gender. It can be said that the Black

Administration Act (which upholds customary law on inheritance) violates women's human rights of equality and freedom from discrimination. Foremost, the law violates women's rights to equality because it puts women in a disadvantageous position, by not accepting women's rights to inherit from their husbands. The law often has a terrible result - like women being forced to give up their homes. Secondly, the law discriminates against women because it treats them unfairly. In this case it discriminates on the basis of sex and race. It puts African women in a worse position than men. White, Indian and 'coloured' women who may marry out of community of property are entitled to inherit at least R125000 of their husband's property when he dies without leaving a will. This law is called the Law of Intestate Succession, intestate means when you die without leaving a will.

What practical steps can Nthabiseng take to challenge these violations of her human rights? First, she can ask the Minister of Justice to allow the Law of Intestate to apply to her. Or she can get her sons to sign a sworn statement saying they do not want the house. The magistrate can then

transfer the property to her.

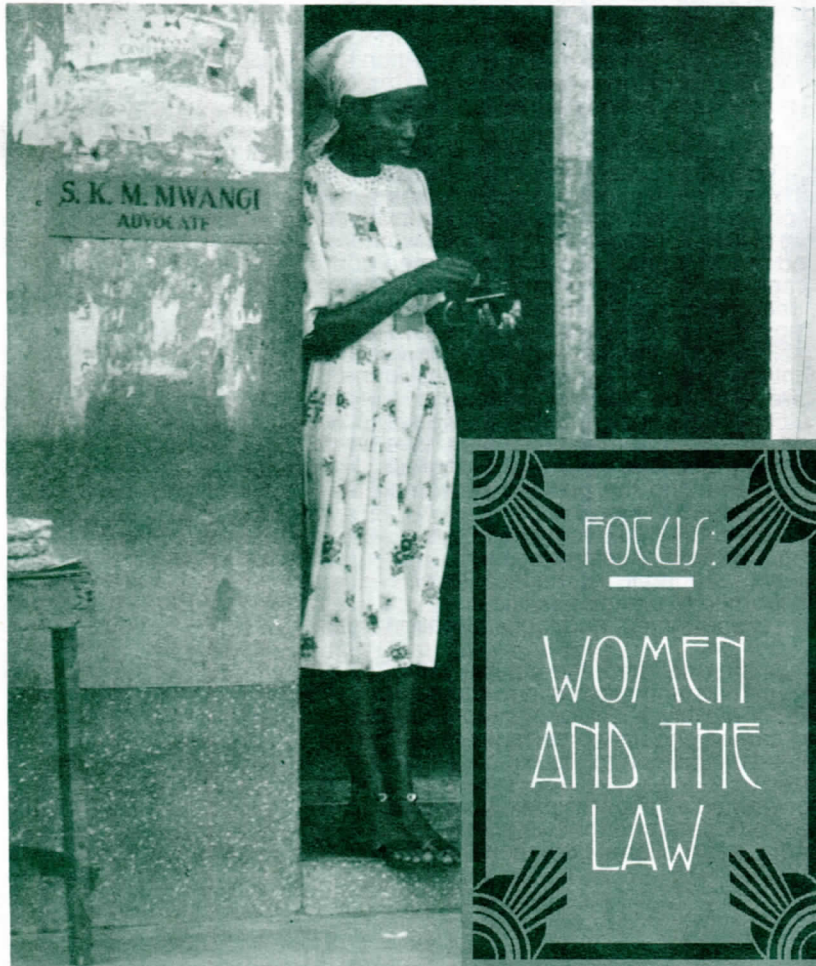
The problem with these solutions is they do not challenge the law. They depend on the goodness and kindness of the minister or Nthabiseng's sons if they decide not to help, she is still left without the house.

Nthabiseng can get together with other women in the same position and organise with women's organisations to lobby the government to change the law. This can work well and is a cheaper than using the courts.

Nthabiseng may also try legal ways of changing the law by taking her case to the Constitutional Court. She can ask the court to strike the law down as being a violation of her human rights. If the law is struck down, the Law of Intestate Succession will apply to her. Once the Human Rights Commission is established, Nthabiseng would also be able to lay a complaint with the commission.

It is up to us to challenge violations of our human rights and insist that the government acts to end them. s.

Cathi Albertyn is a lawyer working at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies in Johannesburg.



**WHY
LOSE
YOUR
HOUSE
BECAUSE
YOU'RE
A
WOMAN?**

Source: SPEAK NO. 67:
December 94/ January 95.

71 **WOMEN** *in Action*

UNHEEDING LEGISLATORS TAKE NOTE: WOMEN IN THE PHILIPPINES ARE FAST LEARNING THE ROPES OF LOBBYING, AND NO LONGER GIVE UP QUITE SO EASILY

by Perla Aragon-Choudhury

Source: Depthnews Women's Service, May 1995

When the tenth Philippine Congress with its newly-elected members opens in July, among those expected to figure in the legislative scene are women lobbyists who will be pushing for bills on women. An important bill on sexual harassment barely made it to the finish line in the Ninth Congress, which passed only three women-specific bills.

Eleanor Flores, soft-spoken and ever-smiling, is with the Women's Program of the Confederation of Independent Unions in the Public Sector which lobbied for the passage of the Sexual Harassment Bill.

Ms. Flores has known heartaches working for the certification of legitimate labor unions, one of them in a well-known hamburger store chain. Her helping a graduate student do a thesis on the sexual violence experienced by women workers led to work with the women's desk of other labor union federations, where she helped draft the anti-sexual harassment bill passed by the Ninth Congress.

Ms. Flores recalled one of the tactics she used to get sexual harassment on the legislative agenda. "We were at a seminar in a resort when Senator (Ramon) Revilla (owner of the resort) walked in. I immediately asked permission to 'ambush' him with a request to sponsor the bill."

Lobbying at every opportunity has marked the activism that has resurfaced since 1986, after the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos was forced to flee the country.

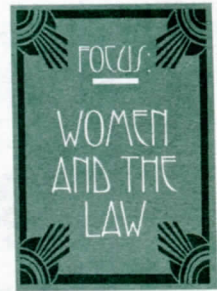
"Plain citizens, NGOs (non-governmental organizations), academicians -- we all took seriously that brief moment of empowerment and wanted to be involved with government," recalls Cecile Hofman of SIBOL (an acronym for "joint women's initiatives for social change") composed of 11 groups. Lobbying by women goes back to 1907 when the first bill on suffrage was filed, and women had to work for it until 1937. "Lobbying has become recognized as legitimate and worthwhile work even if women lobbyists are not registered professionals and have no funds for such activities as cocktail parties. Not only is the issue served; the general public, women and people in government are educated as well", said Ms. Hofman.

For women lobbyists, however, there might be "distinct limitations like the perception that women can become a pain in the neck and that they have to be sweet in their dialogue", she pointed out. Because women advocates have been criticized as being too aggressive for the masculine nature of Congress, Ms. Hofman says they face a challenge in presenting the position of women in a manner acceptable to someone not that open to the issue.

A second challenge is convincing women that legislative advocacy is a course of action that will uplift their status without causing too much disillusionment, and allow them to organize around it. At the local level, advocacy is a good training ground for women to exercise political participation, get a clear grasp of action programmes, and focus attention on a limited number of issues.

Ms. Hofman sees a third challenge: women must become familiar with the whole process of legislation, political dynamics and players in and outside government -- the Church, for instance. "Fourthly, it is important to carry out awareness and consciousness-raising campaigns on women's issues. The one SIBOL ran for the anti-rape bill raised discussion to the national level and encouraged full discourse", she reported.

Ms. Hofman concluded: "In asking for women's full participation, we may have to create a new language for men to understand that we are a disadvantaged half whose empowerment, international documents now say, means improving humanity itself." ▲



SENTENCED FOR BRIBERY, NOT SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN SRI LANKA

Source: Populi, the UNFPA magazine, Nov1994; reprinted by Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights Newsletter 49, Jan-Mar 1995

When the security manager of a Sri Lankan government agency demanded sex from a woman guard in his department in return for a transfer she needed, he knew he could never be charged with sexual harassment. There are no provisions to punish sexual harassment in Sri Lankan law. Nevertheless, in a landmark case, the Sri Lankan High Court has sentenced him to seven years in prison by defining the sexual harassment as a form of soliciting bribery under the Bribery Act of 1954. Sexual harassment has been openly complained of in Sri Lanka for only one year now; the law is still unclear and insufficient. For the time being, sexual harassers can be convicted only if their actions can be linked to other offenses such as bribery, rape, assault, seduction, intimidation, or intentional insult.

*International Consultation
On Women as Peacemakers*

DAUGHTERS OF WAR, WOMEN FOR PEACE

By Pi Villanueva

"What would happen if six women were negotiating for peace instead of the six male politicians from the former Yugoslavia?" a journalist asked an old woman in a bombed out village.

"There would not have been a war in the first place if women were running the place."

The story is told by Zorica Trifunovic, a tourism worker turned peace activist from Belgrade in the former Yugoslavia. True or not, the story may well sum up the sentiments of Zorica and 13 other women from various conflict areas who met at the Ateneo University in the Philippines last May 29-June 2, 1995 to share their experiences and insights about war and peacemaking. This gathering was timed in preparation for the Beijing Conference in September this year. In the public forum called Gender and Peace, held on the last day of International Consultation, the participants highlighted the experiences of women in situations of armed conflict. What emerges from their stories is the reality of gender dimension in both war and peacemaking.

GENDER DIMENSION IN WAR

The experience of war is different for women and men. War, with its phallic-inspired symbols and glorification of the "male virtues" of physical strength, bravery, pride and gallantry, is a male preserve. It is not a historical accident that all military establishments are entirely male. Trained to respect hierarchies and to follow, and become authority figures, men thrive in war situations where the individual is subject to the triumphalist calls for collective unity, sacrifice, and victory at all cost.

In war, men do the bloodletting. Women, the bleeding. Ging Deles, executive director of the Philippine-based Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute, one of the sponsors of the International Consultation enumerated the direct effects of war on women in her paper presentation entitled "Women, War, and Peacemaking." These are economic dislocation, intense sense of insecurity, sexual harassment and assault, breakdown of traditional social structures, and weakening of women's organizations.

Men of course are also victims of war. Foot soldiers are cannon fodder and pawns in the war games of vain glorious empire-seekers. But the participants in the International Consultation chose to highlight the particular ways in which women suffer as

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"WOMEN IN BLACK", FOR FIVE YEARS, PROTESTING THE OCCUPATION

women in situations of armed conflict. There is something in war, they say, that makes women's oppression and exploitation seem more acute.

For one, the treatment of women as sex objects is magnified in war situations. The experience of the "comfort women" of the Japanese Imperial Army, for example, is not a special phenomena but part of a long and continuing history of turning women into sex slaves. Women are, after all, the property of men, to be defended if they belong to one's camp, and to be ravaged and put up for ransom if they belong to the enemy. In Burma, for example, women from the minority nationalities are being forced by the army of the Burman majority to be their porters during the day, and their sex slaves at nighttime.

Far from being a behavioral excess, wartime rape is a conscious and systematic act. In the case in Bosnia, Rwanda, and in earlier conflicts like the India-Pakistan-Bangladesh border clashes, rape has been used as a strategy for "ethnic cleansing." Rape in this sense is not only a violation of one woman, but is considered a grave and final insult to the whole ethnic group. Many women who are assaulted in this way either die from the violence of the rape or by the hands of their own relatives out to defend the honor of the clan or tribe.

Another impact of war on women is the intensification of their double burden; women have to work more in war situations. Women are conscripted to the factories and fields to keep the war machine humming and the food supply flowing. Yet, they are still expected to fulfill their task to keep the fort safe, hearth warm, and home and "virtue" intact.

Even when whole communities are scattered into refugee camps and herded into hamlets, it is the women who are tasked to keep together whoever and whatever is left, according to Shanti Satchithanandam of Sri Lanka and Bola Olufunwa of the London-based Akina Mamawa Akrika who are both working with women refugees of war. In forced migration, women, according to Shanti, also suffer more than the men because they are more rooted in their environment. "I have seen women in refugee camps who were traumatized by the very fact that they were separated from their family, their home, their neighbors, and their lettuce garden. And there is no effect on men," said Shanti who is a convener of the multi-sector-based National Peace Council in Sri Lanka and a program officer of the Community Aid Abroad.

Even as combatants or army reservists, women suffer as women in war situations. In Israel where women are given military training and arms to defend the state, the attritious war against the Arab world has slowly chipped away the early victories of women. Ariella Friedman, a doctor of psychology from Israel recalled coming home in 1967 from her studies in the United States to an Israel dramatically changed by the war. "We all began with the idea of the equality between men and women, but the years of war have led to the lessening of the status of women," Ariella said.

In war, women are told to close ranks for nation, tribe, clan, or movement because dissent can be exploited by the enemy. "In a time of conflict, to talk against our men and their oppression of women is seen as weakening the cause or the fight for national identity," Ariella lamented. "Many women have been forced to toe this line by pain of isolation, if not death. Ariella cited the peace group of Arab-Israeli women called El Fanar whose members are being harassed and threatened to be killed because of their active campaign against the murder of Arab women who are accused by the

community of having brought dishonor to family and tribe.

Because war or the use of arms to settle conflicts reduces complex issues like resource scarcity, identity, power or ideology into a contest of military superiority, women are left with conflicting feelings about their being women and their being members of a particular tribe or nation. "I know of some women who are active in the peace groups who do not want to be identified with feminism. They say 'we're for peace but do not push us into feminism'," recounted Ariella.

RESISTANCE

Women have always been pictured as victims of war, and indeed they are. Mass consciousness is awash with the image of women, often with a small child in tow, fleeing from a war zone. But the participants in the International Consultation also showed how women, despite the hostile environment and attitudes towards peace activism, are resisting not only war's impact on their lives, but war itself and its ill-logic.

Tanya Gallegher who is as old as the current civil war in Northern Ireland recounted the efforts of Mairead MacGuire and her colleagues to build grassroots organizations for peace, an effort which won for them the Nobel Peace Prize in the 1970s. She took issue with the way many men in her country belittle women's peace efforts. "The men they say: 'well you already tried that, but it didn't work, now did it?'"

In Israel, women who protest against the war are dismissed outright. "Women are told that yes, your feelings are understandable but state decisions can not be guided by how you feel," Ariella said.

Zorica, who is a member of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, recounted how in her country it was a group of women who first called attention to the dangers of extreme nationalism and ethnic pride. The women in the former Yugoslavia, said Zorica, were also the first to form peace groups, and the first to defy the government ban on peace demonstrations.

Ela Gandhi, a grandniece of the Mahatma and a member of parliament and treasurer of the African National Congress Women's League, recounted the perseverance of the women in the anti-apartheid movement in demanding that women be made part of the peace process in South Africa. Their efforts, said Ela, have somehow paid off. In the post-apartheid Parliament, 100 of its 400 members are women.

In the Philippines, women, according to Ging Deles, are the backbone of the peace movement because they provide the important but often "invisible" backstop work and secretariat function in most of the campaigns and activities. Ging, however, lamented the fact that very few women are in strategic positions in the peace process. The negotiating panels, for instance of all the contending parties in the current peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the communist and Moro insurgencies are dominated by men.

Palestinian and Israeli women, according to Ariella are also defying political and cultural restrictions on speaking out against their respective nation's "just war." She cited the Women in Black, a group of Palestinian women in Israel who stand for two hours every week along major city streets, covered from head to toe in black cloth and silently holding placards that say "Stop the Occupation." "The women (in black) are using symbols that are usually used against them for protest," Ariella said.

WOMEN AS PEACEBUILDERS

Women, according to the participants of the International Consultation, make good peacebuilders. According to Ging Deles, women have a longer perspective about peace and war because they know that peace is a necessary condition for bringing up their children. Women, because of their role as housekeepers, are also more attuned to conserving and judiciously using resources and this gives them a different view of what matters and should matter. This inclination of women towards peace because of their traditional role as primary care-givers is dramatically captured in the words of Olive Schreiner (1911):

"There is, perhaps, no woman, whether she has born children, or be merely a potential child bearer, who could look down on a battlefield covered with the slain, but the thought would rise in her. 'So many mothers' sons! So many bodies brought into the world to lie there! So many months of weariness and pain while bones and muscles were shaped within; ...so many baby mouths drawing life at woman's breasts; --all this, that men might lie with glazed eyeballs and swollen bodies, and fixed, blue unclosed mouths, and great limbs tossed --this, that an acre of ground might be manured with human flesh!'"

The capacity of women to be good peacebuilders stems from the very conditions of marginalization and invisibility in which they have been forced.

Because they have been shut out of the power centers and the competition inside these centers, women have less emotional baggage and are more inclined to work out a compromise even in difficult situations. Their marginalization gives women a distinct perspective of power and conflict which enables them to act and speak out with less consideration for the status quo. "Women are freer to recognize the peace solution and not to be afraid to work for it," Ariella declared.

The participants in the International Consultation may have stressed the particular characteristics of women as peacebuilders, but they also addressed the question of women's role in the perpetuation of structures and values that sustain and perpetuate war. After all, women are often the transmitter of values and social codes within the family. In the document which they signed at the end of the Consultation, the participants resolved to "further the cause of peace" not only in the national and international levels, but also at the level of the home. They also raised the issue of women's part in the running and maintenance of the war industry and military establishment. In fact, one of the consensus points in the Consultation is a call for "dramatic action(s) to withdraw women workers in (the) war industry, and to condemn war firms."

The International Consultation ended with a declaration of the participants to further strengthen and intensify their peacebuilding efforts. They also resolved to carry the peace agenda to the Beijing Conference and beyond.▲

WHAT DID THE MEN DO?

Even in situations wherein family members are dispersed and whole communities are sundered, the gendered roles of men and women persist. Shanti recounts her experience with women refugees in her country:

"In 1992 there was complete devastation in the eastern province. In one area, the military during their flushing out operation against the militants were also killing villagers as they moved on. Villages along a 50 kilometer stretch were affected. On the eighth month every person, dog and cat had evacuated the villages and sought refuge in the jungles. These people were very poor--most people affected in war are the poor, women and children--and had no means, no savings, no skills for employment. The women built temporary shelters. They went to these field and collected grains of palay and organized a community kitchen. They cooked for their people and looked after their children. Snakebites were rampant because it was a rainy season and when the rain comes, the snakes also come out searching for a higher ground. To have other food stuffs, the women sold some of their palay grains and bought corn which they planted and harvested. What did the men do? Well the men had certain responsibilities too. They brought the Red Cross people. Once, they caught a wild boar which the women cooked."





Refugee Women

Ms. Homayara Etemadi, a Muslim and Afghan refugee herself, is an advocate on women's issues and an effective lobbyist and spokesperson for issues affecting refugee women. Her work is carried via the International NGO Working Group on Refugee Women where she serves as Chair. She shared her experience and insights with other women at the conference held in Tehran, Iran on The Role of the Woman and Family in Human Development, from May 22-25, 1995.

able to make interventions in UN conferences, and we are listened to by governments when they want to listen to us.

❖ How can we influence it, can we have an impact on the UN, can we change this world? How can we do it?

I don't say that our Working Group has been fantastically successful, but I think in this, in the challenges women and even refugee women, we have made some progress. I say 'some' because I do not want to praise ourselves too much. Through its advocacy and lobbying efforts the group has been able to bring about changes not only in the attitude of United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) but also in its policies. Through the pressures of the UNHCR headquarters and ferocious lobbying with governments, we were able to encourage the UNHCR to introduce in 1989 the policy on refugee women. The following year we worked with UNHCR to produce guidelines for the protection of refugee women. Moreover, UNHCR, through a lot of encouragement from the Working Group, on the Working Group's part, appointed a special coordinator for refugee women. In more recent years, in fact this year, UNHCR has drafted guidelines for the protection and assistance of refugee women victims of violence and trauma.

UNHCR, has introduced policies that are being implemented in the field. In fact, this year, going through an assessment we found, to an extent, there is a change within the UNHCR's method of work, real changes, giving refugee women access to employment, giving refugee women the appropriate health services, involving refugee women this time in implementing programs that are implemented by UNHCR.

Most Refugees are from Muslim Countries

...What is little known is that 80% of today's refugee population, are Muslims. It is very strange, that no one really did the statistics or counting what is the refugee population? where do they come from? and the findings

are that they are Muslims. Our group identified this. We felt that there was a need to sensitize Muslim governments, the international community, as well as NGOs, to the particular needs, resources and aspirations of Muslim women.

No Business as Usual

NGOs and others working with refugee women became aware of the lack of attention to the special needs and resources of refugee women. At the end of the decade, concern grew among some NGOs based in Geneva, Switzerland that the momentum of attention on refugee women's issues needed to be maintained. We did not want that after the Nairobi Conference, UNHCR and other organizations active in issues of refugees resume their 'business as usual', [approach] especially if 'business as usual' is men de-emphasizing or even ignoring refugee women's issues. The International NGO Working Group on Refugee Women, in order to focus on refugee women issues, began sharing information among NGOs and are monitoring and advocating for refugee women with UNHCR and the United Nations system as well as with governments.

Therefore, in collaboration with the Islamic Relief Organization in Saudi Arabia in November, 1994, we convened a conference on uprooted Muslim women. That conference had a wide outreach to Muslim refugee women themselves and it was amazing to see the faces of the refugee women from the Islamic world. We had refugee women from Cambodia, we had refugee women from Vietnam, we had refugee women from Azerbaijan, we had refugee women from Africa, from Somalia, from Kenya, and this brought home to us the extent the Muslim areas are affected by these wars and post-migration.

The recommendations that came out of the conference were due to the contribution of refugee women themselves, so they do reflect the actual needs and the actual aspirations of refugee women.

The other aspect of the recommendations is that they addressed the misconceptions that



Here are excerpts of what she had to say.

❖ Who are the refugee women?

It is the one face of a refugee woman staggering to a refugee camp in Malawi, carrying a baby she has just given birth, her legs still blood stained from having delivered among the bushes. It is the hopeless stare of an 80 year old Bosnian woman who was raped after witnessing the rape and murder of her daughter, granddaughter and 4 year old great-granddaughter. Alongside these faces of suffering I see faces of courage and resilience. That of a Cambodian woman returning who after some training and financial help set up a business and is now able to provide economically for her handicapped husband and her children. It is the face of Somali female doctor who has won the struggle for her health clinic for women. It is the face of the Afghan woman who against all odds singlehandedly established a school for girls.

The Working Group is part of the sub-committee on the Status of Women of the conference of NGO's that has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. This position that we have enables us to attend UN foras. We are

have reigned for many years among the international humanitarian agencies, on the type of assistance that should be given to Muslim women.

❖ *How can we draw attention to the suffering caused by ongoing injustices?*

... war, ethnic and religious conflict, tribal custom and peace, mass deprivation of human rights are the apparent causes of post-migration. But the undeniable and root causes are the non-functioning of the world's political, economic and social structures. When we help refugee women, we're just aiding refugees. We are not attacking the real causes so that refugee populations do not exist. How can we bring about change? And how can we draw attention to the suffering caused by occurring injustices. Our group, I mean, many NGOs, those around this table, use every opportunity that is there. UN conferences provide this (opportunity). For example, during the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, our Working Group was there. We were also present in the Conference on Population and Development and the Copenhagen Summit on Social Development and in each of these occasions we lobbied with government on refugee women issues and drew attention to the economic and social causes of refugee populations. We are the victims of today's injustices.

We have prepared for Beijing. We were lucky to be able to give our draft recommendations to the UN Secretary General so that they could include them in the draft program of action. This is an achievement when we have so many challenges before us. To have these recommendations translated into commitment and concrete action and allocate sufficient funding.

Our network represents 30 private, and public NGOs and individuals concerned with refugee issues, and we will work towards having the objectives and actions recommended in the platform implemented. We invite you to join us, not only to support refugee women but to work with us in order to create ways on how to achieve peace in which social justice and mutual respect has meaning. The culture of peace should replace the day-to-day culture of violence which is causing so much suffering to humanity. ▲

Ms. Etemadi and the Working Group are based in Geneva, Switzerland.



"I am Fatima Patarawanabe, a university lecturer in Baghdad. My husband was martyred by the Iraq regime. They threw him in an acid pool. I have a daughter and a son. I've been in Iran now eleven years and I've been teaching at the Supreme School, a school of higher education of law in Tehran, and I am continuing my studies at the university.

I would like to express my thanks to the organizers of this symposium for giving me this opportunity to talk about the situation of the Iraqi women and also to talk about my own situation as a refugee woman who has settled in some republican ground. The first thing that I want to say is that the important thing when we talk about the Iraqi woman, is that she is not a woman born in a particular juncture of time. Rather she was born in history carrying with her various opinions and aspirations that helped, now I would like to say that the Iraqi regime has destroyed these aspirations of hers.

What I'm about to say to you is the Iraqi women's situation today. Women whose voices cannot be heard anywhere and there are no supporters for them, speaking out for them. I wish to say my own story in this speak-out so that it will serve as an example.

I was taken into prison twice in Iraq by the Iraqi regime. The first time my first child was a baby and the second time when I was pregnant with my second child. A lot of pressure was put on me. As a result, for example, my right shoulder was broken. What I wish to say is what happened to my sisters? I met one sister whose left breast had been cut off. First I thought she had some disease but when I questioned her I found that the Iraqi regime had cut off her left breast because she was breastfeeding her child, that child might grow up to be a rebel, that's why they cut it off. Now the point that I wish to say is I find it my duty to say anywhere and everywhere that these are living example. A lady called Swali, she's been imprisoned for years, the reason for that was she rented a house for one of our brothers, Mujarebi, and she's been put in prison for years for this, and there she has suffered grave, various violations. One example is they took her clothes off and the interrogators used her body as ash tray and there were various other tortures the kind I would not mention them. All I like to say is the Iraqi women have suffered greatly but no one has heard their voices.

There are about fifty thousand Iraqi women in Iraqi prison, and most of them are educated. The lady that I mentioned, Ms. Swali, is an engineer. The other lady that I mentioned whose left breast was cut off is a doctor and there are many all over the place.

Anyway, I walked for fifteen days to mountains with my two children and reached here. Now I've been living here in peace and following my educational activities. Fortunately I was able to attend the university and study English. My children were sent to school by a foundation here and I wish to say there was no discriminations against my children and the children of other martyrs. There's no differentiation between Arabs, Iranians, etc. here... I have a very good life here and glad to say I've been to the heart of God and I live in peace here. I would like to end here."

TESTIMONY FROM AN IRAQI REFUGEE WOMAN LIVING NOW IN IRAN.



Dr. Elmira Souleimanova a Woman of Peace

An Interview by Luz Maria Martinez

Since the break up of the Soviet Union we hear names like Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan at times they become confusing or become all in one. We know that there is ethnic strife in some of these countries but we are not always sure which country is which and who is fighting with who, and why. It becomes confusing in this "new world order".

One thing we are sure of is that where there is war, women are affected. Some are suffering direct abuses and others are risking their lives and personal comfort to raise the voices of those being victimized. One such woman is Dr. Elmira Souleimanova, an activist, scientist and leader in the women's movement in Azerbaijan.

Q: Tell me a little about your country?

Elmira: Since 1920, Azerbaijan was part of the Soviet Republic. Now we are a country of 7 million people, located on the border of Europe and Asia on the coast of the Caspian Sea. It is a country of rich national resources, iron, copper, gold petroleum, gas and other minerals. We are also a country of cotton and natural silk. We have an ancient history, culture and heritage. In Azerbaijan we have more than 80 nationalities and ethnic groups represented, most being highly educated.

Q: Why is your country being attacked by the Armenians?

Elmira: Armenia is our neighbor next door. It is a small state with practically no natural resources of their own. The Armenians are trying to put forth a delirious idea of the "Great Armenia- from Sea to Sea." This means from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea. They have territorial pretensions to capture the lands not only ours, but of some other countries too. As we are their nearest neighbor, from time to time they have tried to cut off our lands. But they couldn't do anything more that create a sea of blood, death, and curse those whom they have given so much woe. If we lost some our lands now, it is only temporary. I am sure that with the help of the international community we shall make up all that we have lost.

Q: Is this not an ethnic war?

Elmira: Not at all, it is not national, ethnic, religious or any other kind of conflict. We have lived with one another for many years in peace, free of conflict have had so many mixed families from both nationalities. Today the entire world recognizes that we have become the victims of Armenian aggression in order for them to have their territorial expansion.

Q: Tell me about the women's movement in your country.

Elmira: In the former Soviet Union there was only one women's organization in each republic with the same name, "Women's Council." Now the women's movement in our country is represented by more than ten organizations and women's associations; Women and Development, Business Women, Petroindustry, Women's Rights Protection, Islamic Women's Council, Jewish Women's Council, etc. For the Beijing World Conference, we have an organization the National Preparatory Committee.

Q: Are you a member of any of these organizations?

Elmira: Surely, I am head of "Women and Development Centre", a centre where we study the worlds women's movement strategies. For example, the Nairobi Conference documents, the Jakarta Conference, the Draft Platform of Action of WCW, we work out strategies and priorities of the women's movement in my country. We prepared here the programme of priority activities for Forum '95 and shared with other NGO's through the National Prep Committee. We attract to this work not only women's groups but all the NGO's inside the country. The process will go on beyond Beijing. We try to discuss our problems in Parliament, to ratify women gubernatorial conventions and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW 1979) being among them.

Q: Tell me a little bit about yourself?

Elmira: I am a doctor of chemistry, a professor, honourable chemist and head of the laboratory at the Institute of Petrochemistry Processes in the Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences. I specialize in

organic and petrochemistry, have authored more than 200 publications, and am responsible for thirty innovations in petrochemical syntheses. As a scientist and women's leader I have participated in lectures and reports in some gubernatorial conferences in more than twenty countries, for example, Germany, Austria, USA, Egypt, Jordan, Greece, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, etc. In Indonesia (1994) I was representative to the Prep Conference for Beijing '95. I was named as coordinator of the Central Asia Subregion NGO's for the upcoming Forum '95. So I am a member of Asia-Pacific Working Group. I'm married and happy to say that I have both a beautiful son and grandson.

Q. How did you get involved in the women's movement? In working on issues of peace?

Elmira: I had to choose this way of life. We lost our best sons, daughters. In the capital of my country, Baku there have appeared a new kind of compatriots who have never been seen before. It is impossible to be indifferent. Mothers who lost their children, who have become widows at a young age, orphans, refugees who lost everything they had fleeing from fire and war. I have seen so much woe and tears, young invalids who lost their hands, so many young women are being brutalized and some of them are going mad. They are so fragile mentally that touching them can send them off screaming and into a complete nervous breakdown. Some women are in deep depression and suicidal because they had to witness the sexual abuse of their small daughters or sister as well as themselves. I have seen thousands of refugees, women, children, elderly, living for so long in tents in camps. All our hostages, who are still in Armenia. Refugees need immediately to be returned to places of their origin. It's impossible to get accustomed to such a way of life. That is why we need to help. We have opened for them our houses and our hearts. I am sure that everybody who is trying to expand their richness must realize that when we die we take nothing with us underground. But those of us who can share some of our money, goods, etc, with those who needs it more, with love and respect. It is the richness of your own, of your prosperity.

Q: Have you seen any results since you have been involved?

Elmira: Yes, of course! The most important is that at the 39th U.N. Session a resolution was passed by the United Nations Commission on Status of Women. The resolution was adopted addressing the need to liberate and return to the countries of origin of all civilians, which includes women, children, and the elderly, who were captured as hostages at the time of war and armed conflict. This resolution must be put into practice before the Women's World Conference in Beijing.

Q: How can other women help you in stopping the atrocities that are occurring in your country now?

Elmira: All women, in each organization should try to do the best they can to stop the war, to help it's victims, to call on the world community to take effective measures against those states who are responsible for the violation of human rights, peace and security and apply economic, political and military sanctions. By appealing that there be repatriation of all the people of Azerbaijan and to allow women back to their homes.

To respect the human rights of the people of Azerbaijan.

To use the Beijing Conference as a place where we consolidate and urge those countries in war and armed conflict to undertake the rapid and unconditional release of women and children who have been taken hostage.

Q: These are big tasks how can women's organizations or individuals make a difference?

Elmira: We can find effective ways to influence the policy makers in our states. Organize dialogues between women in countries in conflict and between governments, NGO's and people of governments and different countries. We can also prepare strong conflict resolutions with appeals to the U.N., international bodies, heads of governments, and religious communities and invite them to input into World Peace policies. We simply cannot sit back and allow women in particular to be victimized all in the name of war.▲



The war raging in Algeria between government troops and armed bands from the FIS (Front for Islamic Salvation) is claiming many victims among the Algerian population. While the non-francophone Western media has primarily focused on attacks on policemen, foreigners and journalists, there is yet another group in Algeria who are menaced by the Islamic gangs: women. Even in the best of times women were not admitted in this country as equal citizens but now they are being raped, decapitated, and shot while in their homes, schools, streets and places of work. No matter what their age, origins or manner of dress. The FIS has declared that women must disappear from public life. Even on TV, female announcers must be banned to make way for their male colleagues. Since many women in Algeria (as everywhere else in the world) are the sole breadwinners for their children, parents and other relatives, the leader of the party, Abasi Madani, proposed that women who were working out of necessity should be paid a

as well. Girls and women are deemed unworthy of the slightest respect and treated as though they were the worst villains on earth. Raped, brutalized and forced into slavery, their lives frequently come to violent ends at the hands of their tormentors. Beheading is a popular technique among the FIS gangs. The victims are primarily young women, aged nine to twenty, and those who survive their experiences often can't count on any help or sympathy at home. According to an Algerian tradition, the very fact that they were raped brings dishonor on their families. It is not the terrorists who bear the responsibility for such an atrocity but the girl, whose family's reputation has been tarnished by what happened to her.

Take the case of Khaira, a young girl who lived with her parents in a remote village. She was kidnapped from her parent's house before the eyes of her family. Five men armed with Kalashnikovs came to requisition her "in the

WOMEN In Algeria LIVE IN TERROR

BY ANGELINE ACHTERBERG

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PEACE

gratuity for staying at home. Their jobs would be taken by men, thus solving the enormous unemployment problem in Algeria in a single blow. Simultaneously, the level of public safety and morals would rise dramatically as soon as women disappeared from the street, making the police force superfluous.

Even before the first elections in 1991, FIS supporters began using strong-arm tactics to implement this ideal. Young girls and women who are deemed to be living too independently were intimidated by musclemen posing as preservers of "law and order." In one case, a student, properly attired in Islamic dress, who wished to attend an evening lecture on the university campus, was stopped at the door of her hostel by an Islamic brother, who whipped her brutally with a leather belt.

Increasingly, real brothers also began forbidding their sisters and mothers to wear Western clothing, leave the house or even watch TV and listen to music. Fathers who disagreed with this policy were threatened with violence.

As the struggle between fundamentalist bands and Algerian government forces becomes more violent, hatred against women increases

name of God" to keep house for them in their hide-out in the mountains. When the father resisted, he was informed that it was an "order from the emir." The girl was abducted with violence and kept prisoner in a cave far from her home. Along with another prisoner, an old woman, she was forced to wash clothes and cook food for the gang members, who raped her every night. Although she is one of the "lucky" ones who came back alive, her father has sent her to live with an aunt in the city rather than take her back into his home.

In the countryside, whole villages are being terrorized. The gangs come down from their mountain hide-outs to attack and plunder the villages and rape and kidnap the women. In one case, a girl of fifteen from a poor peasant family, who had been taken from school to help out on the land, was waylaid one morning by three men who knocked her out and took her in a car to their hide-out. She was kept prisoner for two months and subjected to gang rape. Finally, when one of the gang members noticed she was pregnant, he removed her handcuffs and let her go. Sometime later, totally disoriented by her experience, she was discovered by policemen in a deserted area.

(turn to p. 52)

Have you ever stopped to think how much a 'labor of love' each book a woman writes and publishes entails?

Take for instance the books off the Isis Shelves. A book comes into Isis house via mail or hand carried by women who in their travels bring books where they are stamped, recorded and jacketed by one of the Isis women. Another woman then leafs through it, takes down its bibliographical notes, abstracts its content and catalogues it. The book is then placed on the library shelves where other women can find it and make it part of their continuing education and search for knowledge.

Yet, before it reaches the Isis house it is already the product of the labor of other women (and men)--the writers, who through many hours of blood, sweat and tears are able to complete the works they present their editors who in turn pass it on to the proofreaders, lay-out artists, graphics designer, printers, advertisers, sellers, etc. Isis in turn provides a channel by which these women's creations can reach more women and become more.

With this in mind we have carefully selected five books for review. They are: May Sarton's book, *At Seventy* (note: at the writing of this issue, Ms. Sarton passed away. We will miss her.); *Bamboo Shoots after the Rain*, a collection of short stories by contemporary Chinese women in Taiwan; *Relationships*, an extract from the correspondence of two Indian writers--a man and a woman; *Economists and Environmentalists*, a recording of conversations and discussions with world-famous economists and environmentalists; and last but not the least, *Reversed Realities*, an analysis of gender hierarchies in development thought.

The poems featured in this issue are also diverse--in theme and authorship. CHRYSTOS, a Native Menominee-European feminist writer makes her debut in RCIP Update via two poems reprinted from her book of poems. These poems are *Alone*, and *The Border Razor*. Another prolific poet is Vijaya Dabbe from India whose works *Farida Begum*, and *Miruguva Gorigalu* (*Glittering Tombs*) are reprinted here from the book *Women Writing in India* which we featured in an earlier issue. We also the short story *A Flat to Rent* by Isel L. Rivero, a darkly humorous sketch of life as a lesbian.

As our selection shows, some poems and creative writings, come to us through women's books, magazines and journals. Others we encounter through their crafters--women we know or women who know us. We want only to share them with other women, the men too we hope.

Just as we selected books to stimulate the mind, poems to excite and soothe the soul, we have added recipes to nourish the body. These recipes are contributions of the Isis staff. We hope it will encourage you to share with us some of your own recipes.

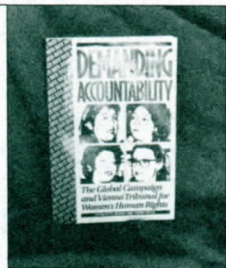
There's also a new page in this issues. It's called "Cassandra's Daughters" named after a Trojan princess, who was wise and possessed visionary powers. In this section we will feature short reflections by women on life, love, joy, pain, war, peace, passion, revolutions, evolutions, health, death, sex, ...the list goes on.

Without the products of the labor of women, past and present, here and elsewhere, known and unknown, the RCIP Update will not be possible. It is in many sense a skein, a thread, a strand in the web of women writing and reading and writing and reading women who labor to put to words and to memory the lives and struggles of women everywhere. (PV)



BOOKS:

Bunch, Charlotte and Relly, Niamh. Demanding accountability: the global campaign and Vienna Tribunal for women's human rights. New York: UNIFEM, 1994. 169 p. RN HUM 02139.00B



As the UN Conference on Human Rights ended, gender-based violence and women's human rights emerged as the conference's most viable and widely covered issues. The final document produced at the conference -- "The Vienna Declaration" -- sounds an historical call to recognize the elimination of "violence against women in public and private life" as a human rights obligation and supports the necessity of treating the "equal status and human rights of women" as a priority for governments and for the UN.

Demanding accountability documents women's organizations' strategies leading up to, during and after the Women's Conference on Human Rights. It excerpts and discusses the testimonies and other statements from the Global Tribunal on Violations of Women's Human Rights. The Tribunal testimonies are said to have forced many people to rethink women's rights as human rights.

All UNIFEM publications are distributed by:
Women, Ink.
777 UN Plaza, 3rd Floor, New York,
NY 10017 U.S.A.

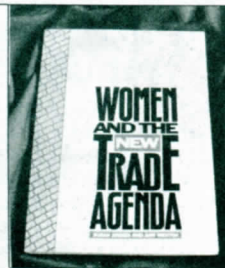
Brandt, Barbara. Whole life economics. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1995 243 p. RN DEV 02087.00B



Whole life economics charts the widespread alternatives to corporate control of people's lives and introduces "real life economics" that is as much about a more caring daily life as it is about allocating resources on a macro level. The book also discusses the re-emergence of grassroots initiatives and cooperative informal economic sector largely ignored by mainstream and traditional economists.

Available from:
New Society Publishers
4527 Springfield Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19143

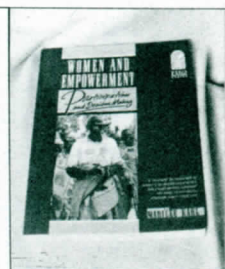
Joeke, Susan and Weston, Ann. Women and the new trade agenda. New York: UNIFEM, 1994. 91 p. RN DEV 02100.00B



This slim work forwards the assumption that effective economic policies need to be sensitive to gender relations because women's economic contribution have always been invisible in traditional economic analysis and in economic planning. The authors discuss the gender issues that are emerging as trade policies and agreements change. They also present general information about trade trends, issues and management. They then examine the gender-specific outcomes of trade, lessons learned from examining export-oriented strategies implemented in the past decade, and potential options and limitations for women of trade-related employment. Finally, a series of recommendations for future advocacy work is outlined in the conclusion.

All UNIFEM publications are distributed by:
Women, Ink.
777 UN Plaza, 3rd Floor, New York,
NY 10017 U.S.A.

Karl, Marilee. Women and empowerment. London: Zed Books, 1995. 173 p. RN DEV 02086.00B



The empowerment of women through their increased participation in all aspects of political, social and economic life has become one of the major goals of democratic and participatory movements, as well as women's organizations throughout the world. One of the founders of ISIS International, Marilee Karl examines the vital interaction of women's increasing participation, decision-making and empowerment. She also discusses the legal, economic and social obstacles faced by women around the world and examples of how women are meeting the challenges.

But beyond offering an understanding of what participation and empowerment are, **Women and empowerment** seeks to promote women's participation at the grassroots, national and international levels. Finally, the book outlines the strategies, mechanisms and tools that women are using for their empowerment, focusing on the new priority and perspectives that women have and are bringing to today's discussion of issues.

Available from:
Zed Books Ltd.
7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF
United Kingdom and
165 First Avenue, Atlantic Highlands
New Jersey 07716, U.S.A.

FROM THE SHELVES OF ISIS

BOOKS:

Aung San Suu Kyi. Freedom from fear and other writings. New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1991. 338 p. RN POL 02121.00B

This collection of essays written before her incarceration, reflects Aung San Suu Kyi's beliefs, hopes and fears for the peoples of Burma and their struggle for democracy. The subjects of Aung San Suu Kyi's works are varied, ranging from remembrances of her father, Aung San, leader of Burma's anti-colonial struggle, to essays on the literature and cultural heritage as well as intellectual development of Burma. There are also essays, speeches, letters and interviews resulting from her involvement in the Burmese peoples' struggle for democracy and self-determination. As a bonus, Hungary's president and eminent writer, Vaclav Havel contributed the foreword.

Available from:
Penguin Books Ltd.
Harmondsworth,
Middlesex UB7 0DA
United Kingdom



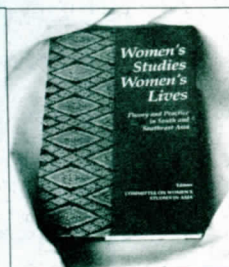
Turning to issues of sexual and reproductive health and women's rights, Correa argues for the indivisibility of health and rights. She identifies the challenges which women in the South need to tackle and suggests appropriate strategies for political action by the international women's movement around these issues.

Available from:
Zed Books Ltd.
7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF
United Kingdom and
165 First Avenue, Atlantic Highlands
New Jersey 07716, U.S.A.

Committee on Women's Studies in Asia (ed.). Women's studies, women's lives: theory and practice in South and Southeast Asia. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1994. 208 p. RN EDU 02091.00B

In this collection of essays, individual women's studies scholars and practitioners from South and Southeast Asia share their thoughts on themselves as women, and on the impact of women's studies on their lives and work. The writers reflect on their individual life stories and through these trace the different trajectories of their involvement in the field of women's studies. In doing so, they lay bare a dimension that often remains hidden in accounts of the discipline--that of the personal--and show how deeply it is interwoven with the political.

Available from:
Kali for Women
B 1/8 Hauz Khas
New Delhi 100016, India

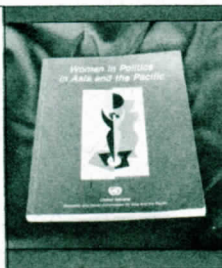


UN-ESCAP. Women in politics in Asia and the Pacific. New York: United Nations, 1993. 204 p. RN POL 02097.00B

Women's visibility in public life and their participation in political processes are becoming increasingly evident in the Asia and Pacific regions. But despite the many achievements of women in the region, politics continue to be dominated by men. To boost regional efforts to enhance women's role in politics, the UN-ESCAP in cooperation with the Center for Korean Women and Politics, organized the Seminar on the Participation of Women in Politics as an Aspect of Human Resources Development, held in Seoul, Korea in November 18-20, 1992. This thin volume contains the proceedings of the Seminar, including the "Seoul Statement on Empowering Women in Politics" which was signed by the seminar participants and country papers presented by keynote speakers.

For inquiries about

UN-ESCAP publications:
United Nations Building
Rajdamnern Avenue
Bangkok 10200, Thailand



Fisher, Judi and Wood, Janet (eds.). A place at the table: women at the last supper. Melbourne: LBCE, 1993. 90 p. RN REL 02098.00B

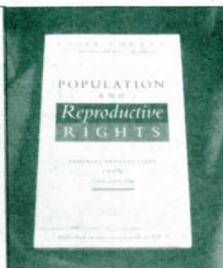
The understanding that only 12 men were invited to the last supper is a crucial point in the development within the Christian churches of the idea that only men can become priests and ordained ministers. The book examines the exclusion of woman from the New Testament accounts of the last supper and from the art that portrayed it. It concludes by appealing for an end to gender separation, starting with the inclusion of women in the visual depiction of the last supper. The book editors heed this call by featuring the works of some women-artists.

Available from:
The Joint Board of Christian Education
Second Floor, 10 Queen Street
Melbourne 3000, Australia



Correa, Sonia. Population and reproductive rights: feminist perspectives from the South. London: Zed Books Ltd., 1994. 136 p. RN REP 02099.00B

The book attempts to bring the voices of women from the South to the ongoing debate on population and reproductive rights. With a critical feminist perspective, Correa examines the detrimental effects on women of past and present fertility management policies.



Zohar, Danah. **The quantum self.** London: Flamingo, 1991. 245 p. RN IDE 02095.00B

Using the developments in modern physics, Danah Zohar, herself a physicist, shows that people cannot separate themselves from their surroundings. Zohar demonstrates how a more participative view of humankind's relationship with the universe is essential if it is to discover its true nature. She also asserts that quantum physics is the new foundation upon which both science and psychology can be based.

Available from:
Flamingo Books
77/85 Fulham Palace Road
Hammersmith, London W68JB, UK



Williams, Christine. **Gender differences at work: women and men in non-traditional occupation.** Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989. 191 p. RN SEX 02117.00B

Examining the experiences of women in the military and men in the nursing profession, Christine Williams debunks popular stereotypes about masculine women and feminine men. She demonstrates how the maintenance and reproduction of gender identity is very different for men and women. Williams shows, for example, that while men in the nursing profession exert greater effort than women to distinguish their roles from those performed by the opposite sex, women in the military seek to minimize the role differences between themselves and their male colleagues. One of the book's conclusions is that the achievement of masculinity is today intertwined with demonstrating superiority and essential differences from females.

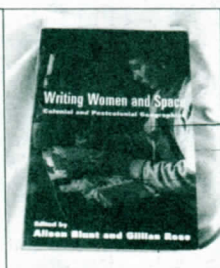
Published by:
The University of California Press
Berkeley and Los Angeles
California, U.S.A.



Blunt, Alison and Rose, Gillian (eds.). **Writing women and space.** New York: Guilford Press, 1994. 256 p. RN IDE 02125.00B

The book examines questions of mapping and space, the intersection of race with class and gender, and strategies of critiques and disruption. Using travel accounts, captivity narratives and letters as texts, **Writing Women and Space** raises questions about white women's historical complicity with, and resistance to hegemonic and imperialist mapping strategies. It also addresses the need for critical study of women's colonial and post colonial experience and for rethinking mapping and the concept of space, both its social and personal aspects.

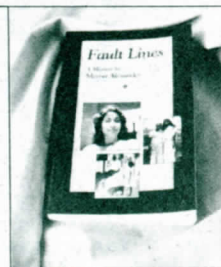
Available from:
The Guilford Press
72 Spring Street, New York
NY 10012, U.S.A.



Alexander, Meena. **Fault lines.** New York: The Feminist Press, 1993. 226 p. RN LIT 02134.00B

From India to Sudan to England, and finally to the island of Manhattan, poet Meena Alexander traces her growth as a writer and a woman over borders, through decades, and across cultures. In this journey, Alexander claims the fragments of a life left scattered by multiple migrations and uprootings.

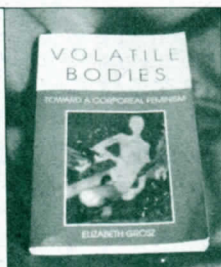
Available from:
The Feminist Press at
The City University of New York
311 East 94th Street, New York
NY 10128 U.S.A.



Grosz, Elizabeth. **Volatile bodies: towards a corporeal feminism.** Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994. 250 p. RN IDE 02101.00B

Feminists, like philosophers, have tended to ignore the body or to place it in a position subordinate to, and dependent on intentions. In **Volatile Bodies**, Grosz demonstrates that the sexually specific body is socially constructed; that is, biology or nature is inherently social and has no pure or natural origin outside culture. Because it is the raw material of social and cultural organization, the body is subject to the rewriting and inscription that constitute all sign systems. Grosz shows that the theories of, among others, Freud, Lacan and Foucault theorize the male body. She then turns to corporeal experiences unique to women like menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, lactation, and menopause to lay the groundwork for a feminist conception of the body.

Available from:
The Indiana University Press Publicity Dept.
601 N. Morton Street
Bloomington, Indiana 47404, U.S.A.



Cordero Fernando, Gilda and Francisco, Mariel. **Lady's lunch and Other Ways to Wholeness.** Quezon City: GCF Books, 1994. 227 p. RN LIT 02157.00B

A book for women and little women, for men and little men too. It offers a descriptive chronicle of two women's lives coming to terms with themselves and with their world. Told in many ways through anecdotes, tales, and even recipes, this book will not only delight the reader's eyes through its design, layout and illustrations but will also be enlightening, refreshing and delightful for the mind and soul to feast on.

This book relives the idyllic life of pre war Pampanga and Manila to the commuters' chaos of today viewed from the eyes of two convent bred and rich girls turning into women. It gives



FROM THE SHELVES OF ISIS

traditional, home-spun wisdom and healing like hilot and herbal baths to soothe the body. Unabashedly bourgeois, the book recounts women's discovery of sexuality, coping mechanisms, married life, motherhood, love affairs and life after mid forties.

Available from:
GCF Books
37 Panay Avenue
Quezon City, Philippines

Gilden, Julia and Friedman, Mark (comp.). **Woman to woman: entertaining and enlightening quotes by women about women.** New York: Bantam-Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1994. 205 p. RN LIT 02089.00B

Read wit, humour, biting one-liners on a wide range of topics like life cycle, relationships, spirituality, money, business, to science and technology by women. The women who speak here, although predominantly Americans and Europeans, come from different social and political backgrounds, race and professions. The spirit of the book is to give the reader a rapid scan on women's opinions. But more important than this is that the collection of quotes brings out women to be heard and read.

Available from:
Dell Publishing a division of
Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group,
Inc.
1540 Broadway, New York
NY 10036, U.S.A.



Stearns, Liza and Burris, Mary Ann (eds.). **Reflections and resonance: stories of Chinese women involved in international preparatory activities for the 1995 NGO forum on women.** Beijing: The Ford Foundation, 1995. 328 p. RN CUL 02158.00B

This is a collection of essays and reportage of some of the Chinese women who have been involved in the preparation for the 1995 NGO Forum on Women. The women-teachers, student, journalists, lawyers, social workers, medical practitioners, and researchers-wrote about their selves and their observations of the world. There is also a section called "Dialogues" which records actual roundtable discussions of some of the women about women's work, overseas meetings, and girls and boys.

For inquiries about the book:
International Club
Jianguomenwai Dajie No. 21
Beijing, China 100020



JOURNALS & PERIODICALS:

Gender Review: Kenya's Women and Development Quarterly

Interlink Rural Information Service
Kodi Road, Nairobi, Kenya
P.O. Box 12871, Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: (254)-2-603572/3,
Fax: 603574

Published quarterly by

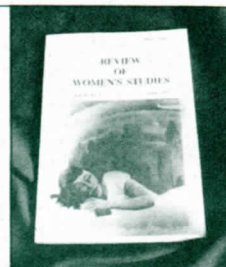
IRIS, a non-governmental, non-profit making media and research organization based in Nairobi, Kenya. **Gender Review** reports on environmental, social and development issues affecting women. First published in June 1994, the magazine tackles development problems of Kenyan women from a policy and legal perspective.



Review of Women's Studies

University Center for Women's Studies
Magsaysay corner Ylanan Sts., University of the Philippines, 1101 Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines

Published twice a year since 1990, **Review of Women's Studies** carries articles by feminist scholars as well as research reports and abstracts of ongoing studies on women's concerns, feminist poetry and fiction and book reviews.

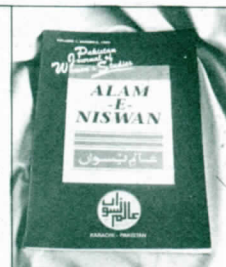


Alam-E-Niswan: Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies

C-12, Staff Town,
University of Karachi
Karachi 75270, Pakistan

First published in 1993,

Alam-E-Niswan comes out twice a year, every January and July. Its major interests as a women's journal are interdisciplinary research, conceptual and analytical papers, research on curricula and teaching strategies, reviews of books, films and theatrical performances, and reports on national and international conferences, workshops and symposia.



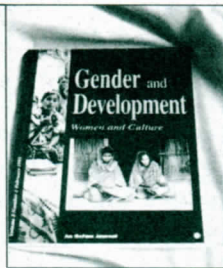
INFORMATION PACKET:

FROM THE SHELVES OF ISIS

Gender and Development: An Oxfam Journal

274 Barbury Road,
Oxford OX2 7DZ,
United Kingdom

Formerly known as **Focus on Gender**, the new **Gender and Development** is published in February, June and September each year. It offers a forum to exchange views, record experiences, describe models of good practice and disseminate information about networks and resources. Recent and forthcoming themes include North-South cooperation, women and culture and women and rights.



Lola Press: International Feminist Magazine

*Friedrichstr. 165, D-10117
Berlin, Germany
Tel/Fax: 49-30-6093719
*P.O. Box 6914 Windhoek,
Namibia
Tel/Fax: 264-61 220156
*Eduardo Acevedo 1320 Ap.
102,
11200 Montevideo, Uruguay
Tel/Fax: 598-2 424 180

Lola Press is a bilingual magazine published biannually in Spanish and English. Its main objective is to divulge and encourage feminist debates in all regions of the world. Some of the issues tackled in its pages include feminism in Africa, women and power, Brazilian women and elections, women's strike in Germany, and women's organizing in the Czech Republic.



Women and Environments

736 Bathurst St., Toronto,
Canada M5S 2R4

Published by the Weed Foundation, **Women and Environments** tackle diverse issues like community development, green consumerism, urbanization, rural women, networking, etc. This thin but substantive periodical comes out quarterly each year.



Hecate, A Woman's Interdisciplinary Journal

P.O. Box 99, St. Lucia,
Brisbane, Queensland 7067,
Australia

Hecate comes out twice yearly and is published by the Hecate Press and the Unit for Women, Ideology and Culture of the English Department at the University of Queensland. For the last twenty years or so, it has published historical and critical articles, creative works and graphics, bibliographies and reviews. Hecate's stress is on analysis which employs a feminist, Marxist, and other radical methodology.



Towards Women-Centered Reproductive Health (Information Package No. 1:1995) prepared and published by the Asia-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW). Kuala Lumpur, 1995.

ARROW's information package addresses the questions raised by population, health, family planning and women's organizations related to the preparation and implementation of the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo.

The package comprises three booklets -- **Broadening the Concept**, **Addressing the Needs**; **Ideas for Action**; and an **Annotated Bibliography**. This package which highlights views and experiences from Asia and Pacific, contains excerpts of about 40 articles, papers and reports have been reproduced in this package. In the bibliography, 50 key monographs, articles and papers reappraising population and family planning programs have also been reviewed.

This package is a useful resource for all organizations concerned with women's health and women's rights.

Available from:
2nd Floor, Block F
Anjung Felda, Jalan Maktab
54000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Fax: 603-292-9958

Photographs of Book Covers by Bing Concepcion

POETRY

CHRYSTOS ▲ Self-educated artist and writer, born to a native American Menominee father and a European mother. Proud lesbian for twenty-nine years.

From her book *Dream On*, Press Gang Publishers, Vancouver, 1991.

ALONE

IN THE QUEER BAR WITH ICE WATER THAT COST \$1.50
TWENTY YEARS AND HUNDREDS OF GIRLFRIENDS LATER
I STILL
DON'T KNOW HOW TO DO THIS
NEVER WILL
SO I ENJOY THE CLOSELY SWAYING WOMEN'S BODIES
FLICKER OF SIMMERING DESIRE
IN THIS ONE PLACE WHERE WE CAN SORT OF BE
OURSELVES
THAT IN EVERY TOWN IS ALWAYS SMOKY, TACKY & NOT QUITE CLEAN
WHERE CLASS & RACE DIM SOMEWHAT IN RED SPINNING LIGHTS
A HAZE OF BOOZE
SOBER
THIS IS NOT MY HOME
BUT THERE'S NO PLACE ELSE TO GO
IN A STRANGE CITY



SANDRA TORRIJOS

THE BORDER RAZOR

At u.s. customs nervous I know I'm going to be inspected
because the rich american white couple in front of me
match every nice tourist ad you've ever seen
& the line behind me is all white
so I stick out like a sore red thumb after the hammer misses
Holding my breath even though I know it makes it worse
I move forward juggling sleeping bag, old jacket, worn
suitcase & overflowing shopping bag
He wants my driver's license & punches me into his computer
I panic
He reads for too long giving me too much time to wonder
if a radical Indian activist can cross the border
or an ex-mental patient or someone with a dusty
but served jail record
I can't remember if Lesbians are illegal
Finally with a reluctant shrug & a piercing stare he lets
me go
still suspicious he watches me stagger back to the bus
I wonder how long until the time when I'll be kept
& if I can speak
what I'll say in my defense



SANDRA TORRIJOS

VIJAYA DABBE ▲ Born in 1952, an active member of Samata, a women's group in Mysore, and teaches Kannada at Mysore University.

From: *Women Writing in India Vol. II: The 20th Century*, edited by Susie Tharu and K. Lalita., The Feminist Press, The City University of New York, 1993.
Translated by Tejaswini Niranjana

MIRUGUVA GORIGALU

(Glittering Tombs)

Who waits until they're born?
Sacks of dreams atop a fetus
Fetuses atop the sacks of dreams---
do you raise an eyebrow?

They waited
for the infant to emerge.
The baby, not seeing the tomb,
breathed deeply
for those who had faith.
Then shrieked and cried
to shatter their faith.

The mother-in-law put
into her lap this woman
born for her son.
Unable to make her cry
the infant gurgles
blinks its eyes.

As warm dumplings
slid down the throat
Mother's promises
stuck
and began to pound.
The mouth opened
but said nothing.

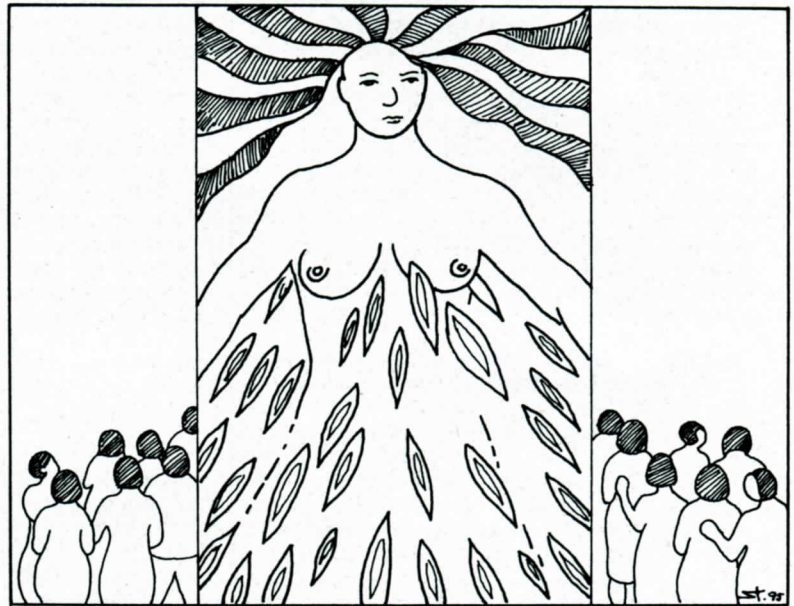
Year after year
a new dress for the New Year
a purse for the arm
a rose for the hair
so it ran ... without stopping.
Around ten in the morning
people began to throng the streets.

Father in the easy chair
passing his hand over his head
made a vow about family honor
tried to believe.
It wept
two days
in a darkened room.

A thread that cuts
through the friends'
bunch of dreams.
Their life buried in this one
simmering in the woes they embraced
the word-corpse slept.

In front of this nearly-old
woman
who sits splitting
the eyelashes of those
forty bygone springs,
the glittering tomb winks.

SANDRA TORRIJOS



Farida Begum

(Mrs. Farida)

*People have not seen Farida
without her purdah.*

*Day, night, college, factory
the street, elsewhere, nowhere
have people seen Farida
without her purdah.*

*Farida's mother
roams the streets in a cotton sari.
The mother's mother wore
an unwearable piece of cloth---
this everybody knows.*

*Perhaps you can get
a glimpse of Farida's eyes
through the lace in front.*

*If it flaps a little in the breeze
she sweats and feels faint
as though it had fallen.*

*The little groups outside hotels and shops
simper as they dream of the fair beauty
behind the black curtain.*

*Laughing inside the veil
she turns
into another alley.*

SHORT STORY

IN SEARCH OF A FLAT TO RENT

BY: ISEL L. RIVERO

Translated by Soledad Dominguez and Alicia Porrini
Source: Lola Press No. 2 Dec. 1994
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The problem began the moment they started looking for a furnished flat to rent. They would be students, baby-sitters, childhood friends, cousins; youth can cover many things but it is not always easy to close the eyes of the nasty-minded.

They thought the best would be to go separately. Then they changed their minds. Everything depended on the person that rented the flat. Identity should be flexible, depending on what happened on the face-to-face chat with the landlord or landlady. So, they should be prepared. Stories should coincide, should be corroborated beforehand, so as not to be confused or embarrassed when knocking at the door.

It might have been better to go to a real estate agent. But they should battle this issue as a matter of principle. Who cares if two women want to rent a furnished flat? In some buildings, proprietors even asked for references and prospective tenants had to fill in long questionnaires on morals and respectability. These owners did not realize that to have access to these big buildings of thirty floors and more, one had to go to several marginal neighborhoods and streets where indigent children sniff glue and even smoke marihuana once in a while. For sure, the subversive problem was not renting a furnished flat, but that two daring women thought that it could be done in daylight. The well-known senator and the old magnate of the building industry kept some hidden furnished flats for their concubines, until one morning, the headlines of the daily newspaper read: "Blonde X accuses Don Cacho of bigamy; Famous Model commits suicide in Rosa neighborhood, she lived in a penthouse rented by Don Cacho..."

But if they were not students and came from the provinces, and they were university professionals, why was it that they weren't married, why weren't they someone's concubines or prostitutes?

What do two single women do living together?

It was not very difficult to see that two single women can have lots of fun living together. The thing was to find the flat. And it could not be just anywhere in the city; since they were women, they had to live in a safe neighborhood, in case some degenerate rapist would be interested because they were women and they lived alone.

Do air hostesses live with their families? And singers? Or do they live in someone else's house, hidden in the darkness without name?

Discrimination against women will truly have ended when two single women can rent a flat without having to give explanations, without feeling embarrassed, without needing to hide the fact, without caring about having a joint bank account, and that they only need one bedroom.▲

REFLECTION

Cassandra's Daughters

* Cassandra, seer and Trojan woman. Gifted with the ability to see into the future, but cursed to carry the burden of her knowledge because no one, the jealous gods declared, will ever believe her visions.

"In our community as soon as a baby is born, it is the women who prepare the food, the clothes, the flowers, the ribbons, the menu. Everything is fixed by the women. And then when all has been set, a priest, who is a man, will come and officiate in the baptismal of the baby. In funerals, it's the same thing. When somebody dies, it is the women who wash the body of the dead. They also organize all the details--the cups, the flowers, all the little things needed in the ritual for the living and the dead. Again a priest, and the eldest son or the brother or father of the deceased--all men--will come to officiate in the ritual. It seems to me that it is women who weave the basic fabric of a society. And the men, they put the embroideries on that fabric."▲

SHANTI SACHITHANANDAM
woman, peacemaker
International Consultation on Women as Peacemakers
2 June 1995

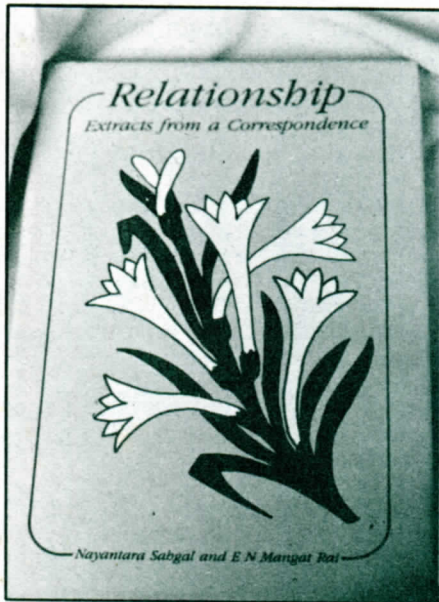
BOOK REVIEWS

RELATIONSHIP

Extracts From a Correspondence

reviewed by **Liddy Alejandro-Nacpil**

by Nayantara Sahgal and E. N. Mangat Rai
Kali for Women
A 36 Gulmohar Park
New Delhi-110049 1994



It is rare to find someone with whom you feel free to be totally honest, with whom you are not afraid to be who you are, with whom you are able to share your feelings, thoughts, ideas and are understood and appreciated. Rarer still to find the other so passionately interested in getting to know everything there is to know about you, what and how you do, what you think, etc., from the most profound and beautiful to the most ordinary and mundane, not out of wanting to or presuming to possess, but as part of desiring the fullness of a relationship with the wholeness of a person. It is a beautiful relationship which combines love and friendship and makes possible such depth of trust and confidence, comfort, assurance, honesty, integrity and caring that brings out the best in people and allows the worst to be

revealed, understood, accepted and if necessary, also forgiven.

Perhaps many go through their lifetimes never having this chance, never knowing what it is like, never even imagining that it could be possible. The web of structures, cultures and norms that divide people and determine their relations, including love and friendships between and among men and women, whether individuals are conscious of these or not, alienate people from themselves and from each other, making it difficult to achieve wholeness and fullness of both being and relations. This is especially true for women, whose lives are mainly defined by roles – wife, mother daughter, single woman, married woman, widow; whose relationships with others are expected to be within the confines accepted behavior associated with the roles one is supposed to assume especially when it comes to relationships with men; whose worth are determined in terms of how they measure up to the standards and pattern of behavior associated with each role. Who you are, what you can be, is chopped up into little pieces that fit into these various roles, and pieces of you that does not get lost or submerged in the day to day effort to play your various roles. It is overwhelmingly difficult to affirm who are much less have a sense of your wholeness.

The letters between Tara and Bunchi chronicle a relationship that is precisely so special that it was pursued and sustained despite the pain and suffering it extracted from them both. The pain is not simply because they are not free to pursue it as freely and fully as they wish, but because they have already other commitments and roles both public and especially private that they are committed to honor and fulfill.

Tara, or Nayantara Sahgal, comes from a distinguished family in Indian society. She is the daughter of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, once a governor of Maharashtra, and a niece of Jawaharlal Nehru, first Prime Minister of India. More than this, Tara is a writer of several novels, political commentaries and non-fiction essays and articles. Bunchi, or E.N. Mangat Rai was a respected public servant until his retirement in 1971. Also an author and writer of several books in various capacities in the Indian Civil Service for over three decades including Chief Secretary for the most part of Pratap Singh Karon's tenure. Both Tara and Bunchi were married to other people. Tara is also mother to three children, who were of minor age when their relationship started.

Like many women, Tara was married to a man who had very traditional concepts and expectations of marriage and wife. Unfortunately, her marriage is a familiar story. Tara had a relationship including sexual with another man prior to their engagement and marriage. It was a source of deep resentment for Gautam, her husband and the cause of their first crisis and contributory to the bigger perpetual crisis in their marriage. She was deemed less valuable, even unworthy, because she did not come into marriage pure and virginal. The usual restrictions surrounding a married woman were further reinforced by this "past". The possessive nature of Gautam's attitude towards his wife was punctuated with bouts of violence whenever his fragile male ego was challenged and his claim to ownership of Tara was threatened. "Peace and harmony" prevailed only when Tara obediently complied with all the "duties" of a wife. To Gautam, as with many men, the measure of the health and happiness of marriage had to do with the fulfillment of his expectations and how neatly and well the marriage fell within the pattern of his life. the needs and expectations of the woman, his wife, either does not come

into the picture at all or are assumed to jive with his own. While he allowed for a certain freedom for Tara, this permitted freedom can only be intellectual in nature, enough only for her to pursue her vocation as a writer, and only enough so it does not threaten what he sees as her main reason for being – that of wife and mother – and the stability of their marriage as he sees how the institution should be.

Beyond the beauty, fierceness and strength of Tara's and Bunchi's relationship and their struggle to strain against the restrictions of their other roles and commitments, the letters are a story of Tara's struggle with her marriage. This struggle was a struggle by itself and not as an outcome of her relationship with Bunchi. It was a struggle with her own concepts and values about marriage vis a vis Gautam's. It was a struggle with the actual realities of their marriage. But all the more made intense and painful because of the threat Tara's relationship with Bunchi presented to Gautam, and the contrast it showed to Tara against the state of her marriage. It was a struggle all the more complicated as Tara tried to reconcile her effort to sustain her marriage with the pursuit of the other relationship, tried to bring some rationality to her actions. Bunchi seemed to have much less difficulty in reconciling her relationship with Tara with the reality of his marriage to someone else. Men usually seem to have less qualms about claiming happiness for themselves even if it may go against their other commitments. But it is touching to have genuinely felt Tara's pain as his, and how he was willing to restrict his happiness and the fulfillment of his needs for her own protection and safety.

In spite of Tara's anger and frustrations about her marriage, her recognition of the dehumanizing state which Gautam and the kind of marriage he insisted subjecting her to, and her identification of Gautam's flaws, she did not lose sight of his humanity. Part of her struggle was to try to understand him, even empathize with his pain, to be critical of her own weaknesses and mistakes which contributed to his behavior and the nature of their relationship. This echoes how many women are. This ability is at once a strength of women as well as what can sometimes hamper them from seeking freedom.

Coming back to the relationship between Tara and Bunchi, the letters depict not only its special nature but also the pressures it underwent. Such a relationship could not be celebrated openly, had to be hidden from society and more painfully from other loved ones and friends, can only be sustained on stolen time and space. Such a relationship could have easily been eroded by shame or guilt, could have easily been rendered ugly by society's unforgiving and prying eyes. Its strength is also expressed by the fact that it did not succumb. But then, one can also wonder that perhaps such relationships are not subject to the normal stresses, to the ordinariness, of day to day living that it can remain to be seen as always special. That perhaps in such relationships, one is never able to get enough of the other person and the relationship that it remains to always be so passionate.

The story in these letters on the surface is not extraordinary: two people trapped in unhappy marriages, forging and pursuing a relationship with each other from which they are able to fulfill needs their marriages cannot, a story of marriage and extramarital relationships. People are usually predisposed to passing simple judgements on such stories, from whatever perspective: traditional, feminist, conservative, liberal, progressive ... but this book shows you why one cannot, maybe should not.

The letters show that the authors must indeed be good writers. They are articulate, vivid, coherent, whether they are communicating ideas, random thoughts, describing their feelings, talking about ordinary situations in their lives or their major crises. One might sometimes experience some slight degree of difficulty in reading owing to the peculiarity of Indian English and references to events and contexts in Indian society. But the main reason why the book is not easy reading is because every so often one is made to stop and reflect.

Reading the book, one is not simply allowed to take a close look into the intimacies and problems of other people's lives, one is not simply an audience to their life situations as these are unfolding. The feelings, ideas, insights, experiences, particular anecdotes, joys and pains etched in these letters cannot but resonate with some aspects in our lives and in the lives of other people, other women we know. Tara and Bunchi's historical and cultural context, social and economic standing, family backgrounds and education of course define the parameters within which their problems and struggles are concretely shaped and pursued. But certainly there are human yearnings that are universal.▲

The feelings, ideas, insights, experiences, particular anecdotes, joys and pains etched in these letters cannot but resonate with some aspects in our lives and in the lives of other people, other women we know.

BOOK REVIEWS

At Seventy, A Journal

reviewed by Fe Maria Arriola

by May Sarton.

WW Norton and Company, NY, London. 1984

At seventy, is a woman on a post-menopausal decline? Is a writer's literary work on a denouement? Are the adventures that spice up "the seasons of women" over?

Not so, says May Sarton who "feels younger at 70 than at 50 or 60." In her journal, AT SEVENTY, she writes:

"Those previews of old age were not entirely accurate, I am discovering. And that, as far as I can see, is because I live more completely in the moment these days, am not as anxious about the future, and am far more detached from the areas of pain, the loss of love, the struggle to get the work completed, the fear of death."

The journal, started on her seventieth birthday is a day-to-day account of an entire year. It was not an exceptional year in

what, on the surface, is an ordinary life in a quiet village in England. The journal has no dramatic highlights, no moments of great passion (except, perhaps, that one poignant entry on the day she was told of the death of her "one true love").

But it is written by an extraordinary woman with enough *jure de vice* to last another seventy years. One comes across the words "happy" and "good" so often and she is so appreciative of people, of nature and of her blessings, big and small.

"Now I wear the inside person outside, and am more comfortable with myself," she writes. In some ways I am younger because I can admit vulnerability and more innocent because I do not have to pretend."

The journal almost makes me look forward to being old. Which is wonderful news to women who have been duped into considering youth and beauty essential to their happiness.

She writes mostly about her "priorities" -- "first, friends, then work, then the garden."

The friends are many; the friendships deep and warm and strong. Some were nurtured over the years, some are newly made. Regrettably it was not her "year for passion" or the reader might have gathered valuable insights into a mature lesbian relationship. May Sarton handled this aspect of her reality with subtle delicacy, mentioning it ever so casually, even while sorrow over the news of the death of her lover gives us a glimpse of the depth of her capacity to love.

Work during this period consisted of poetry readings, lecture, a novel and this journal which went into publication shortly after the year's end. She would go on to write more books, validating the claim that age is no hindrance to creative productivity.

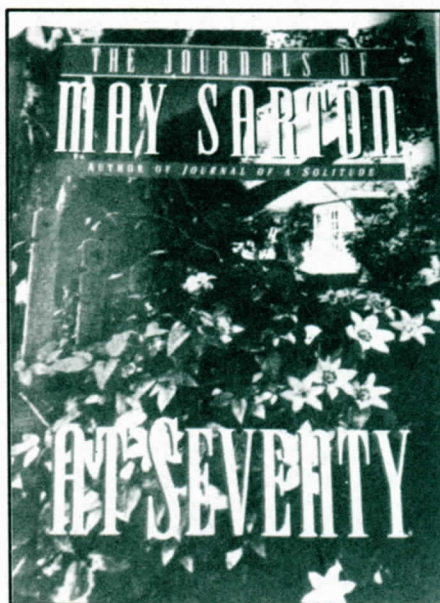
The journal is strewn with little poems and quotations. These spice up the text as well as illustrates her points.

And the entries on her garden, the "secret extravagance" where her "madness lies", will delight the reader who would share her concern for the nurture of nature's beauty and bounty.

As journals go, AT SEVENTY tells us not only what sort of a person but also how good a writer she is.

"Writers must write journals the way painters are driven to do self-portraits," to check their development as artists and persons and to chart the direction they are taking.

May Sarton's journal is not, we find, an exercise in self-indulgence. She has, after all, at this point gained stature and some fame as a writer. Thus at seventy, she is well within her right to publish a journal and to share her spontaneous intimate thoughts and feelings with those of us prepared to enjoy the company of a wise and happy woman.▲

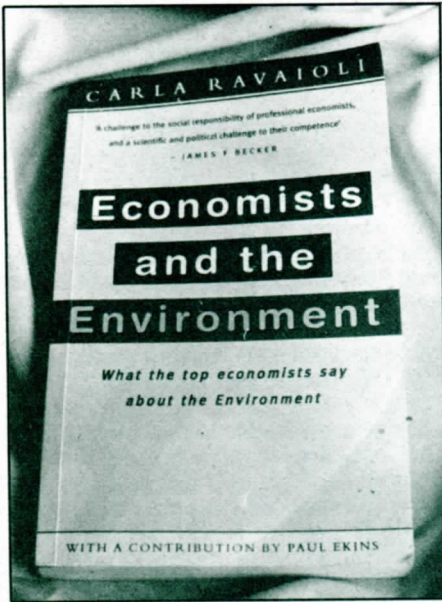


BOOK REVIEWS

Economists and the Environment **What the top economist say about the Environment**

reviewed by Susan Y. Morales

by Carla Ravaoli
Zed Books Ltd.
7 Cynthia Street, London NI 9JF, U.K. and 165 First Avenue
Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey 07716 USA, 1995



Economists and the Environment is a crisp compilation of economists' views on the environment. The book is on the main compilation of interviews with leading economists in the world today. Carla Ravaoli, a feminist and former Italian senator interviewed the likes of mainstream economists Samuelson and Friedman and staunch environmental economist Georgescu-Roegen. The transcripts of the interviews were both amusing and revealing in seeing the unease with which most 'big-shot' economists relate to the environmental issue.

The book's format allows the reader to imagine sitting in the middle of a roundtable discussion with all of these economists whom one have known only through the vast books and articles which they have written. The style of exposition which simulated a dialogue among the economists effectively enjoined the reader to this rich exchange of ideas.

A caveat, however, is that it started out from a certain antagonism against the economists and this somehow got in the way of encouraging a bond between the economists and the environmentalists. In this regard, mainstream economic doctrines have always been attacked by those in alternative fields of studies such as by the environmentalists. When asked to comment about "consumerism", for example, and its subsequent contrary effects on the environment, most of the economists tended to start off from a premise that government interventionist policies aimed at curtailing consumption impinge on economic freedom which in turn induces more economic distortions. When asserting this position, economists sound like the lovers of the obscure and the abstract which they are often accused of.

Nevertheless, Carla Ravaoli cautions in her concluding chapter against outrightly assuming that economists are completely indifferent to environmental concerns. Much of the impression of "indifference" in the part of economists is perpetuated by their fetish for neo-classical economic models and the silence of grand mainstream theories and economic methodologies to social realities. Even as such, theorizing on environmental economics has flourished over the years, though most hypothesis may be on the "fringe" - the evolution of new methods and theories and the propagation of new economics will take time. Still, the beginnings that have been undertaken are enough to catalyze the dissemination and distillation of new ideas towards environmental enlightenment. The second part of the book, written by Mr. Paul Ekins is a good survey of theories on resource and environmental economics.

The discussions in Economists and Environmentalists cover a wide field of issues. First of all the environmentalists premised their position on the observation that environmental degradation has been increasing exponentially. This is so because, according to them, costs to the environment are not imputed into the prices of goods. The externalities produced by either consumption and production activities are unvaluated in an economy. Thus, if a person invests in a logging firm, the only costs included in its computation is the labor and equipment being used.

But, the continued denudation of forests has wide and far reaching consequences which no single person takes responsibility for. According to some economists, a way to put a handle on this situation is through government intervention regulations and policies. However they also recognize that leaving the logging industry alone to the market would mean the rapid depletion of trees and the subsequent destruction of the ecosystem surrounding it. Hence, the type and extent of government intervention is a point of contention. Some economists who are believers of the free-market argue that intervention should be minimal. In fact, an extreme position would be that, as long as a system of property rights are in place, then the resulting level of environmental degradation is optimal. This level is what the people have chosen. On another level, to be able to prevent pollution in production, government support to training and technological innovations should be funded. (continued next page)

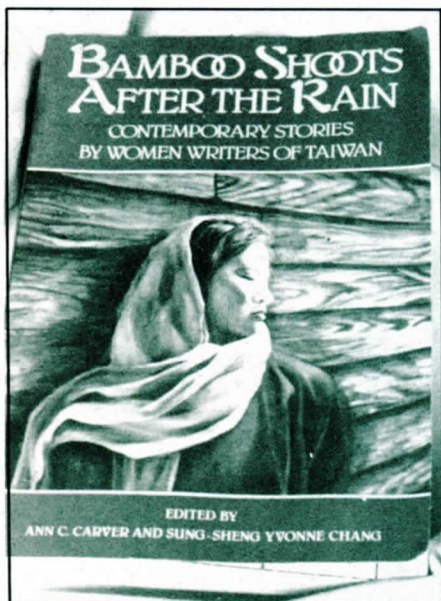
BOOK REVIEWS

Two important issues raised in the discussions were sustainable development and "consumerism". Sustaining development, according to the environmentalists, would mean accepting that the world is finite and thus, development should consider this constraint. Merely depending on national income as a measure of economic well-being is myopic. The fixation with economic growth without looking into the core of an economy's resource base is a prescription for disaster. While production growth should reach infinity, resources are finite and therein lies the contradiction.

On the other hand, the economists argued that the exploitation of natural resources is imperative for economic growth. One should not prevent the growth of incomes. This same growth-centered development paradigms complements the rising "consumerism", an attitude promoted in the present world economic order. In this regard, the views of environmentalists and economists regarding the role of advertisements also differ from each other. To many of the economists, advertisements only influence consumers in as much as they are informed of the possible. To the environmentalists, advertisements imbibe a quality of life and therefore, heightens the sale of products through a conscious creation of demand for these products.

To weave these concerns raised in the Economists and Environmentalists with the basic environmental problems that confront Third World Countries is necessary. As the breadth of proposals which have been forwarded by the world's premiere economists provide compelling insight, the dynamics of the environmental problem in Third World Countries needs to be considered. Tax policies on pollution is widely recommended. When applying this to the Third World Situation, the effect becomes distraught and taxes on pollution may only imply more costs to the poor. On the other hand, for government to properly regulate polluting activities and to invest in technological advance towards less environmental hazards would mean that government should be willing to channel more of its budget for environmental protection. With basically cash strapped governments the environment is left to be exploited. Moreover, the fact is that developed countries relegate polluting activities to developing countries.

The roundtable discussions and interviews conducted by Clara Ravaioli with premier economists and environmentalists has bridged the large gap between mainstream economic theorizing and environmentalism. On this note, Economists on the Environment should be treated as an enlightening introduction towards further reflections.▲



Bamboo Shoots After the Rain **Contemporary Stories by Women Writers of Taiwan**

reviewed by Tess Raposas

edited by Ann C. Carver and Sung-Sheng Yvonne Chang
The Feminist Press at the City University of New
York, 311 East 94 Street, New York, N.Y. 10128 1990

"*Bamboo Shoots After the Rain*" reflects much of the post war cultural-evolution of Taiwan. Edited by Ann C. Carver and Sung-Sheng Yvonne Chang, the title suggests birth, and new life. Its depiction of the travails, aspirations and persuasions of Chinese women from Taiwan is a welcome introduction to their everyday situation and literary life.

The collection also managed to provide the reader a strong sense of history by covering the works of three generations of women writers—the first generation of the 1950s - 60s, middle generation of the 1960s, and the younger generation of the 1970s,—and in the process, highlighting the value systems in each. Carver's

essay, "Can One Read Cross-Culturally?" and Chang's critical introduction of the works are by themselves illuminating. Chang provided the background by which these works were produced but also outlined the specificities of each generation. Also useful are the writers' personal introductions via the biographical headnotes in each of the works.

The writings of the older generation who are described as "largely privatistic, non-subversive and uses idyllic lyricism and sentimental structure of feeling" comprise descriptive short stories portraying the

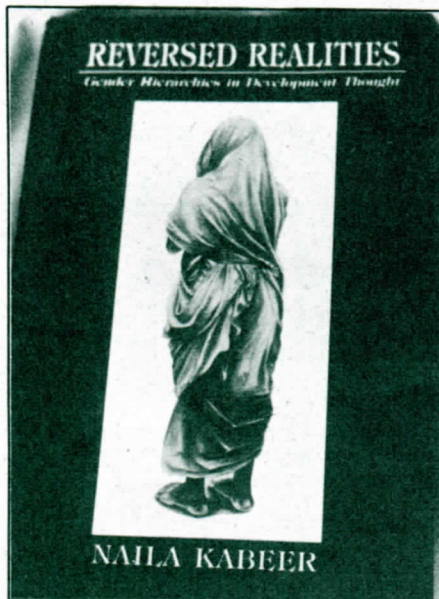
BOOK REVIEWS

status of the Chinese women in Taiwan. "The Candle" by Lin Hai-Yin indicts the feudal Chinese family system through its portrayal of the wasted years of the mistress of a Mandarin family who retreats from life after her husband takes a concubine. P'an Jen-mu's "A Pair of Socks With Love" is about an upper class Chinese family living through the revolutions of China affirms the shared humanity of oppressed and privileged.

The writers of the mid 1960s use wide-ranging themes which reflect their generation's quest for challenging boundaries. "A Woman Like Me" by Hsi Hsi, is a story of a woman cosmetician caught-up between her romantic passion and profession. This piece comes out strongly in an unusually skillful piece.

Set in the time of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, "Chairman Mao is a Rotten Egg" by Ch'en Jo-hsi, revolves around a child who's playful remark about the "great Helmsman" gets her and her family into trouble. Oppression remains in revolutionary China, and this is the unequivocal statement of this story published a year after Mao's death.

Stories by the younger generation attempted to raise gender issues and concerns, although the topics--women-bonding, singlehood, old age, and teen-age suicide--are still limited. In "The Mulberry Sea" by Yuan Ch'ung-ch'ung, two very different women--the willful Yang Ch'iang and the traditional Mrs. Lu--with very different lives are shown to share the same fate: the harsh double standard of society. In "Journey to Mount Bliss" by Chiang Hsiao-yun, the lively Sister Chang encounters the cantankerous Mr. Fu, and they each struggle to cope with their twilight years. For Mr. Fu, growing old meant losing a male's central role both in and outside the family. It is the independent and lively Sister Chang who pushes Mr. Fu's character to redefine his life based on his new situation. Significantly, the collection ends with this comic and optimistic look at aging, and at life in modern China.▲



Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought

reviewed by Emma P. Valencia

by Naila Kabeer.

1994. Kali for Women. New Delhi. 346pp.

The book by Kabeer argues that mainstream development thought, largely informed by neoclassical economics with its emphasis on market forces, is inadequate to address the problem of power relations and gender inequality which are the roots of the marginal status of women in development policy and practice. Most development models informing development policy are couched in abstract and apparently gender-neutral concepts (the economy, the GNP, the market, the formal sector, the informal sector, poverty line and so on). On closer analysis it becomes apparent, according to the author, that these supposedly neutral terms are in fact imbued with male bias, presenting a view of the world which obscures and legitimates ill-founded gender asymmetry. These forms of analysis help to disguise and legitimate the gender asymmetries which are embedded within the central concepts of development.

The book advocates the reversal of several aspects of development thought.

First, a reversal in the hierarchy of knowledge that informs development thought. The new development paradigm would start from the vantage point of the most oppressed -- women who are disenfranchised by class, race and nationality -- so that the complexities of subordination can best be grasped and strategies devised for more equitable development. This viewpoint from below can help to realign development paradigms more closely to the real order of things. This is not to signify that only the dispossessed women of the Third World matter, but rather that without a structural transformation of the lives of the poorest and most oppressed sections of all societies, there can be neither development nor equity.

A reversal of allocational priorities is also advocated. If the satisfaction of human need rather than the exercise of market rationality is taken as the criterion of production, then clearly a much more holistic

view of development becomes necessary. Human well-being would be the measuring stick for development rather than the volume of marketed goods and services alone. Activities which contribute to the health and well-being of people would be recognized as productive, regardless of whether they are carried out within the personalized relations of family production, the commercialised relations of market production or the bureaucratized relations of state production. Markets would take their place as simply one of a variety of institutional mechanisms through which human needs could be met, rather than as the sole arbiter of 'value'. Such an approach would promote both class and gender equity and women, particularly poor women long disenfranchised by growth-dominated development strategies, would be key actors in the development process.

Within this reversed hierarchy of development priorities, a different notion of gender equity from that promoted through early WID advocacy becomes possible. Current development policy defines women's economic agency as equivalent to that of men, ignoring their greater embeddedness in familial and domestic responsibilities. If the care of human life and well-being were to be given the same value in development priorities as the production of material resources, then the provision of welfare services (which decreases efficiency of the market) would be seen as complementary to development goals rather than antithetical to them. It would free women to pursue economic livelihoods if they choose to, or were compelled to by their circumstances, rather than imposing a predetermined set of life choices on them. Planning for gender equity on the basis of social justice, rather than of formal equality requires recognition of the full weight and implications of the gender division of labor in the lives of women and men, and of the different needs, priorities and possibilities that it gives rise to. Gender equity requires that welfare is seen as complementary, rather than in opposition to efficiency.

The earlier stress by WID advocates on equality of opportunity for women was premised on the belief that the problem lay in discriminatory barriers to women's employment and education which would enable them to compete with men. But the author emphasizes that public institutions have not evolved neutrally but in deeply gendered ways. They reward certain kinds of skills and abilities over others and certain kinds of economic agents such as those unencumbered by bodies, families or sexual identities. Consequently, problems of sexual harassment, the need for separate toilets or breastfeeding facilities, provision of paid leave to have children, absenteeism due to illness in the family, only emerge as problems when women join the workplace. Thus, the author concludes that training women in marketable skills and abilities will not put them on an equal footing with men in the public domain as long as public institutions do not accommodate the different bodies, needs and values that they bring to the workplace. Gender equity thus goes beyond equal opportunity; it requires the transformation of the basic rules and practices of public institutions.

The book is a rich source of fresh ideas and critical viewpoints. It dissects household economics and critiques the assumptions neoclassical economics holds about the household which have informed and shaped a range of different policies that have so often overlooked women's needs and interests. Population policies espoused both at the national and international levels are analyzed for their failure to address women's rights and needs. Moreover, the different viewpoints regarding fertility control among feminists are given space and analyzed.

The book is replete with examples of development projects that have failed because they failed to consider the specific needs of women and the existing relations which define these needs. It is a convincing argument for continuing critical analysis of mainstream development policies and practices which seemingly promote women's interests but in truth impede or derail the progress towards women's full enfranchisement that women's groups have painstakingly achieved. ▲

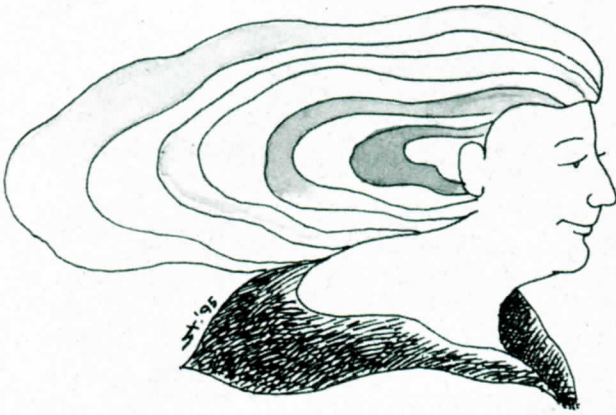


SANDRA TORRIJOS

Photographs of Book Covers
by Bing Conception

ISIS' KITCHEN

SANDRA TORRIJOS



Members of the ISIS Resource Center and Information Program share some of their favorite recipes. These kitchen-tested nuggets are guaranteed to be inexpensive, nutritious, and tasteful. Try them out for a different culinary experience. Better still, share your own favorite recipes with other WIA readers.

PINK CITRUS COOLER

Ingredients:

1 cup fresh citrus fruit* juice, squeezed
2 cups sweet potato tops or young leaves
2 liters water
ice
sugar

Procedure:

1. Boil sweet potato tops in two liters of water for one minute.
2. Take out tops and set aside. Allow water to cool to room temperature.
3. Mix cooled sweet potato water, citrus fruit juice, and lots of ice. Add honey or sugar to taste. Adjust amount of citrus fruit juice to taste.
* any citrus fruit can be used --orange, lemon, grapefruit, lime, mandarin, pomelo, etc.

TIPS:

SWEET POTATO TOPS ON THE SIDE
(Remember, the sweet potato tops set aside in the "Pink Citrus Cooler"?)

1. Mix with tomato (sliced) and fresh cilantro.
2. For a different dip: one tablespoon of fish paste mixed with one teaspoon of citrus juice.

CRAB-SPINACH OMELETTE

Ingredients:

1 clove garlic, peeled and crushed
1 onion, minced
3/4 c. ripe tomatoes, minced
200 gms. ground gluten
250 gms. crab meat
1/2 cup carrot, chopped finely
3 c. spinach leaves, washed and drained
4 tbsp. cooking or soy bean oil
salt and ground pepper to taste
4 eggs

Procedure:

1. Saute garlic in 1 tbsp. oil until golden brown. Add onions and stir until transparent. Stir in tomatoes and cook until soft and juicy.
2. Add gluten, crab meat and salt. Cover and cook for 10 minutes while stirring occasionally.
3. Stir in carrots, spinach and turn fire off. Sprinkle with ground pepper. Let cool.
4. Beat eggs and fold in crab mixture.
5. Heat pan and oil. Scoop mixture on pan and slightly brown each side.

TIPS:

For fluffier eggs, separate egg yolks from egg whites. Beat egg whites until soft peaks form and add egg yolks one at a time.



MATISSE

THE CONTRIBUTORS

Liddy Nacpil-Alejandro is a founding member of Sarilaya, a socialist-feminist organization in the Philippines. She also runs the Leandro Alejandro Foundation which was established in memory of her husband who was assassinated by military agents in the mid 80's.

Fe Maria Arriola writes for a living and has co-published several coffee-table books. Current projects include the screenwriting for Isis's first docudrama film and editor of the Isis natural healing book due in August, 1995.

Maria Victoria Cabrera-Balleza writes and edits for Isis Manila's monthly Women Envision. She had a chance to interview Atty. Eleanor Conda after attending a session on women and international law.

Anoma S. Jayawickrema considers herself as an 'internationalist'. She is Sri Lankan born living in the United Kingdom. Anoma is currently pursuing her graduate studies at the University of Sussex in England.

Luz Maria Martinez coordinator for Women in Action attended the first Muslim women's conference on The Role of the Woman and Family in Human Development held in Tehran, Iran, mid-May. There she met Muslim women leaders from around the world, and introduces some of them to our WIA readers.

Grace Mera Molisa a prolific writer from Vanuatu has been active in women and political issues in the South Pacific. She played an instrumental role in setting up the Women's Section in the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, the South Pacific Women's Resource Bureau at the South Pacific Commission in New Caledonia and part of the independence movement in Vanuatu.

Susan Morales is a young economist with the Freedom from Debt Coalition in the Philippines. She reviews the book, *Economist and the Environment*.

Tomoko I. Sakita is enrolled in a doctoral program in Kyoto University in Japan. Her interests include linguistics, language, education and women's studies. She has conducted research on gender differences and sexism in language and education in Japan, a subject she says, that has not been sufficiently studied in Japan.

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A LETTER FROM ALGERIAN WOMEN

The following letter, which was received in WGNRR's Coordination office in January 1995, was written and signed by "The Women of Algeria" who, for fear of their lives, need to remain anonymous. (ed.)



Dear Sisters,

Thank you for publicizing the appeal from the Global Sisterhood Institute and the Women Living Under Muslim Laws regarding Ms Darabi and the Hidjeb in Iran (Newsletter 47). This is a very important step in support of all women for whom the Islamic veil is a symbol of oppression. The attempts to impose the Islamic veil in French schools constitute a revealing insight into the clandestine work going on among migrants in the West and give a good idea of what will happen in countries like Algeria or Egypt if the Islamic fundamentalists ever take power. It is regrettable that you were not aware of this situation earlier.

Events are taking a dramatic turn in Algeria, where the directors of schools, universities and other institutions regularly receive letters commanding them to impose the Hidjeb on all women and girls from the age of ten onwards. In the so-called "liberated" zones controlled by the FIS (Front for Islamic Salvation), the Hidjeb is compulsory and sports and songs are forbidden in the schools where, of boys and girls are taught separately, with the best teachers being reserved for the boys.

But there are worse evils afoot. "Ethnic purification" is not confined to Bosnia. Nobody speaks of the collective assault which terrorize the inhabitants of small, isolated villages in the mountains of Algeria; of the armed gangs of fundamentalists who regularly descend from their hide-outs in these regions to raid and plunder the defenseless villages, stealing whatever they need and raping the women, all in the name of Allah. No one dares to travel by road anymore for fear of the "false roadblocks" set up by the "madmen of Allah" who, disguised as policemen, carry out searches, kill whomever they please and kidnap young girls. In the villages, parents are afraid to send their girls to elementary or high school; adolescents are kidnapped, many disappear; sometimes their mutilated bodies are discovered, sometimes they survive; but those who return to their families alive have undergone physical and psychological traumas which will mark them for life.

We count on you to inform women all over the world, and particularly in non-francophone countries, of what is happening in Algeria, the country which, 20 years ago, was a beacon for all Non-Aligned and Third World nations."



Women in Algeria... (from p.30)

WOMEN ARE RESTRICTED IN ALL SPHERES OF PUBLIC LIFE

The Kedyai family who live in the region of Reghaia, were woken one morning by the violent knocks on their door. Before they were able to get to the door to see who it was, they heard gun shots and the door came down with a loud thud. The terrorized family saw a group of men enter their home and force the family members to lay face down. The father heard footsteps next to him and felt a person come very close to him. After a few seconds there were the sounds of two gun shots. He closed his eyes waiting for his turn but after a few quiet seconds they left the house. Upon rising he found his two daughters Karima 21 and Amal, 18 shot dead, one had been shot in the heart and the other in the temple. It appears that one of the young girls had accepted a date from a young man who was a policeman. The other girl was killed simply because she was a girl. She too was "punished" for the "crime" of her sister.

After women risked their lives to demonstrate against this reign of terror on March 8 in Algiers, the religious terrorists have taken up the task of murdering women with renewed diligence. Now it is the wives, fiances and sisters of policemen who have become the targets of vicious assassinations committed before the eyes of children and family members. The objective of these attacks is to force the release of imprisoned female FIS members.

Many Algerian women who had the opportunity to flee the country have done so, usually to France. For most of the threatened Algerian population, however, this is not

possible. Besides, there are a number of Algerian women and men who, despite everything, refuse to abandon their country to Muslim extremists. Schoolgirls and students continue their education, some of them camouflaged in Islamic costume, others with uncovered heads and the clothes they have always worn. Women journalists and intellectuals are courageously resisting the FIS by means of articles and even demonstrations in Algiers.

In the Algerian press, the Agony Aunt columns are full of letters from women complaining about what they have to put up with from their hierarchical superior or their male colleagues. Female job seekers also complain about the conditions that are laid down when they apply for a job in the private or public sector.

Naima, Zahia, Nassima, Djamila and Amal are aged between 20 and 28. They all possess a university diploma or a professional certificate. They are unemployed or have quite simply been thrown out of their jobs because they refused to cooperate with the sexual advances of their employers. Naima, aged 26, completed her studies two years ago and has not been able to find a job because, as she says, she repeatedly refused to acquiesce to the "amorous" desires of her various potential employers. Nassima, 25, a divorcee with no children, encountered the same problem but, as she stressed, it was even worse in her case because, "in our society, a divorced woman is considered to be an easy touch."

All of these women need our support in their daily struggle against the physical and moral threats to their existence.▲

Source: Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights Newsletter 49, Jan-Mar 1995, NZ Voorburwal 32, 1012 RZ Amsterdam, The Netherlands, with additions from a news report in The Sunday Chronicle, Cronica de Manila, June, 11, 1995.

WOMEN USED AS WEAPONS OF WAR

Source: Today (Asahi\NYT) July 19, 1995

In front of hundreds of people, former Imperial Army surgeon, Ken Yuasa admitted conducting biological experiments on Chinese prisoners during World War 11 and having intercourse with sex slaves stationed at Japanese military brothels.

Yuasa, who practices at his clinic in Tokyo's Sugunami Ward attended a seminar July 2-4 on "Sexual Slavery and Slavery-like Practices in World War 11." organized by the International Commission of Jurists.

He said he had sex with comfort women-euphemism for sex slaves-four or five times while serving at a military hospital in China.

In an interview with the Asahi Evening News, Yuasa 78, said sex slaves were an integral part of the Imperial Army. "They (the sex slaves) were like weapons, without which Japan could not have carried out war," said Yuasa, who was assigned to a city then called Luan in China's Shanxi Province in 1942.

Oppressed by the military brass, soldiers turned to the comfort women because they had no other way to unleash their pent-up frustration. The women kept them going, he said.

About 100 comfort women-most of them Chinese and Koreans-were in the entire province. He checked some of them for venereal diseases.

About 1000 Japanese soldiers and military police were stationed in Luan and the neighboring area. Up to 90 percent of the troops had use of the brothels, he said.

Sex slaves were placed under strict military control so they could not escape. They were beaten if they were disobedient, he added.

Since the late 1950's, Yuasa has urged Japan to own up to its wartime atrocities.

PREVALENCE OF SEXISM IN ENGLISH EDUCATIONAL TEXTS IN JAPAN

by Tomoko I. Sakita

This paper examines the treatment of women in currently used materials in English in Japan. It aims at providing evidence for the hypothesis that Japanese English education has not reflected the efforts and changes made in the Japanese to diminish its sexist features. English is taught in junior and senior high schools in Japan as the only foreign language. It is also taught in most of the universities and some of the elementary schools. Since the first language Japanese is claimed to be sexist (Sakita, 1991; Cherry, 1988), then if the only foreign language for Japanese children also has sexist features, it would work as another factor reinforcing sexism in Japanese society.

LANGUAGE
AND
SEXISM

CONTENT ANALYSIS

10 English textbooks widely used in Japanese junior and senior high schools were chosen for content analysis. They were published through 1989 to 1992 from 8 publishing companies.

Introductory level textbooks have a balance between females and males for character roles, and females appear more frequently than males as main characters. At intermediate and advanced levels, males appear much more frequently as characters and as main characters. In introductory textbooks, females are slightly more visible than males, and as the level goes up, females become far less visible than males.

The numbers of females and males in exercises and model sentences show the same pattern. The reasons for this are first, due to the lack of vocabulary and restricted grammatical structures, introductory textbooks mainly deals with topics such as school life and family life in which both genders appear generally in parallel. Second, introductory textbooks have the same characters throughout the textbooks, who are introduced with pictures on the cover pages. It is thus easy to equalize the gender.

Qualifications of main characters in the stories show the imbalance between genders. At the introductory level, the main characters are mostly students, and the only two that have jobs are males. At intermediate level, females have 3 jobs while males have 6. At the advanced level, females have 3 jobs while males have 22. Women's jobs are such as a writer who was forced to use a male pen-name and a lecturer characterized as "The Girl with a Thousand Boy Friends." Five female main characters whose jobs are not given include a girl who received a love letter and a woman who had difficulty getting married. Seven males whose jobs are not specified are cases such as "a boy who talks with animals" or "a boy who sent a love letter."

In terms of qualifications of all the characters in the stories, 24.5% of 53 females have 9 kinds of jobs, and 75.5% appear without occupations. On the other hand, 49.5% of 107 males have 44 kinds of jobs and 50.5% have no occupations.

Women's jobs are very limited. Nurse, secretary, therapist, assistant, and lecturer are assigned only to women. It is a clear stereotype that women have the assisting jobs while men have independent jobs of a very wide range.

When people's gender is not specified, they are often referred to by the pronoun he. This is true for all kinds of people such as an American publisher, a Chinese diplomat, an Italian, my neighbor. It is hard to interpret this use of he as a generic masculine pronoun including both women and men, because when the job secretary appears, all of a sudden the

The illustrations and photographs which portrayed occupations used females for 7 jobs, and males for 25 jobs.

pronoun she or he is used as in:

"When talking to a Westerner, however, you had better make your point pretty quickly, or his secretary will come in and say that her boss has another appointment." (New Horizon I p117)

It clearly suggests that the secretary is always a female job, while boss is male.

Although women are described in terms of marital status such as wife and widow (11.3%), there is no equivalent for men. Women doing shopping are often referred to as "housewives" whether or not they have jobs.

The illustrations and photographs which portrayed occupations used females for 7 jobs, and males for 25 jobs.

The adjective category which contain proportionately more adjectives for females than for males is Physical Appearance. In this category, for men 7 out of 8 adjectives (87.5%) concern height or size, while for women, 11 out of 15 (73.3%) suggest attractiveness: beautiful; charming; pretty; lovely. This means that women are described by their appearance and men by their body size. The Intellect/Education adjectives are used more for women than for men. But careful examination of the sentences reveals that the adjectives are used differently for women and for men. For men, wise (2), learned, and clever simply modify nouns as in: "He must be a very wise man to do such a thing" (Why English p116). On the other hand, when these adjectives are used for women (intelligent (2), clever, cleverest, excellent, foolish), they accompany nouns or other adjectives implying that intellect for women is secondary: "She may be clever, but she is too selfish." (Daily p38) "... an excellent housewife ..." (New Age English p186); "She was intelligent as well as kind." (New Age English p60); "The girl is both beautiful and intelligent." (New Age English p186). Moreover, the effect of "cleverness" given to a woman is judged only among women: "No other girl in her class is as clever as Jane" (Daily p41). In Physical State/Condition category, 7 out of 8 adjectives (87.5%) used for women concern illness or weakness. Among Rapport/Reputation/Environmentally Descriptive adjectives, famous, successful, and distinguished are used only for men. It suggests that fame and success are associated only with men. Similarly, in Emotionality/State of Mind category, calmness is suggested as a men's domain because calm is used only for men.

The activities and topics show a gender stereotype, too. Sports is a male dominant topic. 32 (84.2%) out of 38 instances appeared with males. The category Complain has only women. Women are portrayed with a stereotype that they are emotional, cry, and complain. Men talk big, fast, and slow. Women talk long, fast, and in order to relieve stress. The category Come Home/Stay Home show a clear contrast that women stay home while men come home. In the housework category, women do all sorts of works including sewing, washing dishes, washing clothes and knitting, while men's work is only cleaning his room. Taking Care and Having

Pets are female-dominant. All 6 instances of Taking Care are with females, and none with males.

The pronouns referring to animals increases the gender imbalance. 85% of 20 animals are referred to by he and 15% are by she.

Girl is often used in contrast to man in the sentence as "Girls should take their rightful place in society, beside men" (New Age English p132).

Women are often not even given names. In Enjoy English IIB Lesson 16, all of the 7 males appear with title plus full name 5, full name, or first name, while the sole female character is referred to as "his sister" although she plays one of the most important roles.

Kid: Mama, why doesn't Papa have any hair?

Mother: Because he thinks so much, dear.

Kid: Why do you have so much, Mama?

Mother: Because - go away and do your lessons.

(Enjoy English p80)

Many jokes use certain images of women as stereotype. For example, a stereotype manifested in the adjective survey that intellect is a male dominant category is used in a joke as follows: Kid: Mama, why doesn't Papa have any hair? Mother: Because he thinks so much, dear. Kid: Why do you have so much, Mama? Mother: Because -- go away and do your lessons. (Enjoy English p80)

Translation causes a problem, because the Japanese language demeans women considerably in the way it refers to women (e.g., Cherry, 1988). For example, in one exercise, students are instructed to translate a cat's utterance in a Japanese novel *I Am A Cat*: "Shujin wa mainichi gako e iku (My master goes to school everyday)" into English. A note says, "Be careful not to translate shujin (master) into husband in this question." The word shujin is defined in *The Sanseido Japanese Dictionary* as (1) master; (2) the person one is serving; (3) husband, common way to talk about one's husband. So the textbook author warns that shujin in this case means "master" not "husband." This reminds students that "master" and "husband" are treated as same in the Japanese language.

The authors often lack attention to the quality of information they convey as well as to the psychological effects the textbooks have on students. For instance, "housewife" and "full-time mother" are argued as some female students' future careers in the last chapter of one of the advanced textbooks, which the students read right before finishing school.

Finally, it is shown that the materials in currently published Japanese English textbooks are hardly "current." 48.9% (n=44) of all the stories examined were written before 1974, or most likely much before 1974 since many of them are not the original years. More than half of them were written from the 1920s through 1974.

CONCLUSION

In every category of this study, there is evidence that sexism flourish in Japanese English textbooks. Women's deep-rooted invisibility was clear in gender participation in number, content, and even in pronoun usage for animals. It was manifest in occupational roles in both texts and illustrations. Far more women appeared without occupations, or they had limited stereotypical jobs assisting males. Stereotyped sex roles became clear both in adjective usage and in activities and topics and so on.

The unconscious influence of the sexist textbooks on the students at the age of building up their value systems is immeasurable. The sexist textbooks would lead the foreign language education to fail to achieve one of its goals of culture learning, expressed in: "A traditional rationale for foreign language learning has been the expansion of the individual's cultural horizons, the development of tolerance for cultural diversity, and the acquisition of more data for deciding where one fits in the world" (Hartmen & Judd, 1978). If we teach children English without reflecting its change, in addition to their already sexist first language, we surely fail to expand the children's cultural horizons. The teachers and publishers in Japan should become aware of the biased features in the textbooks and start setting the guidelines for the textbook design. Let us achieve teaching children more egalitarian use of the language and world-view.▲

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THE GLOSSY magazine cover hit me with its bold red title: "BITCH", it screamed. The first thing which came to mind was, "This is a womyn's magazine," but something did not seem right. The "cover girl" was no glamorous, svelte beauty all made up in Estee Lauder and dressed up in some Yves St. Laurent outfit. Instead the "cover girl", which stared endearingly into my eyes, was a collie dog, with her head cocked slightly to the left and one of Santa Claus' berets sitting on her head (it was the Christmas edition). After a moment's confusion, I understood that "Bitch" was indeed a womyn's magazine.



I THINK (WITH LANGUAGE) THEREFORE I AM (WHAT LANGUAGE MAKES ME) by Jacqueline Ann Surin

Source: ASIAN STUDENTS ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE December, 1994. 353 Shanghai Street 4/F, Kowloon, Hong Kong Tel: (852) 388 0515 Fax: (852) 782 5535

Language and Reality

Language is more than a system of symbols. Because we attach meaning to these symbols, language has the power to define our reality.

A clear example of how language reconstructs reality for us is the use of the word "bitch" for a womyn. Not only is this description meant to be derogatory, it also connotes a womyn who is predatory, unreasonable, power crazy, difficult, scheming and malicious. The minute this word is used on a womyn, it immediately conjures up such an image in the minds of people.

However, the use of the word in such a context is erroneous if we look at the word "bitch" in its original form. The bitch, or female dog, is the one which is hounded by male dogs. She is the one which is relentlessly chased by packs of male dogs

and is at their complete mercy once they catch her. The concept of Bitch, the magazine, was indeed a brilliant one because it not only shocked and induced its readers into turning the pages, it also challenged the fundamentals of how meanings are attached to language, and by doing this the magazine also exposed how this process can reconstruct our reality.

Another example of how language can re-colour and re-shape our reality has been the use of euphemisms in government propaganda. In the Gulf War, the senseless deaths of innocent Iraqi womyn and children at the hands of the Americans were dubbed as "collateral damage" by the US Government.

This propaganda succeeded in masking the brutality of US bombings in Iraq as

something which was necessary and inevitable. The question to ask then, is how are meanings attached to the words we use in any language. Who defines the words we use? Which social group benefits from the definitions we attach to the words we use?

Language is Arbitrary

It is important to realize that words are given their meanings quite arbitrarily. In the example of the Gulf War it was a clear case of the US having the power to define, arbitrarily, what the reality of the situation was in Iraq.

In the example of derogatory or disparaging descriptions of womyn, it is the patriarchal society which holds the power to define what words mean. Case in point - "bitch". Because we use language to think, to visualize, the atrocities of allied bombing in

Iraq are reduced to a necessary evil that could not be avoided. Because we understand our surroundings through our verbal descriptions of it, a womyn who is a "bitch" is no longer the one who is being preyed upon but has become the predator instead. Thus is the power of language to define our reality for us.

As has been demonstrated, meanings are attached arbitrarily. Social, political and economic factors all come into play to define the meaning of the words we use. The fundamental issue at hand here is that the power to define our language and subsequently our realities lies in the hands of those who are in positions of power to do so.

Patriarchy & Language

In a patriarchal society language serves the interests of the powerful and dominant group in society, i.e. men. The existence of a power relationship between the two genders is clearly manifested in the language we use.

For example, in academic fields, degrees are called "bachelors" and "masters". Academic qualifications have nothing to do with marital status, yet it is described in terms of the male gender. Why not call universal degrees "spinsters" and "mistresses", instead? But in patriarchal society it would not do well to attach intellectual competence to the female gender.

Languages Subordinates Womyn

Language is used to define womyn as being in a status lower and less noble than men. Look at how the English language describes womyn as either madonna or the whore. The female sex is constantly being sexualized or infantilized. As a result womyn are seen as either sex objects that can be wolf-whistled at or "fondled"; or immature and unable to own property, to apply for a bank loan or to fill in the income tax forms.

In a marriage ceremony, the couple are pronounced "man and wife", but never "husband and womyn" because a womyn has no identity of her own unless she plays the role deemed superior to her sex, by society.

At the office womyn are continuously categorised as "sweet-young-things" or "Dragon Lady". In the social arena, womyn are either the "perfect housewife and mother", or a "homewrecker". Often also, the female gender is attached to disasters and symbols of dread. A police van is called a "Black Maria" while hurricanes carry numerous female names like Arabella and Betsy.

Womyn are put in subservient, subordinate positions to men through negative name-calling that not only defines how a woman should act, it also derogates and dehumanizes her. Examples abound - "sweet young thing", "pussy", "bitch", "witch", "iron lady", "Queen control", "homewrecker".

Nobody would call an assertive man, "iron man". In fact, the only Iron Man I know is a fictitious character in a comic book and his name is in reference to his superpowers and not to his personality. Concepts such as "he" representing both men and womyn are not only arbitrary, they marginalise womyn by making men the dominant group in society. Language is thus used as a form of social control to ensure that womyn adhere to the social norms that will perpetuate the subordination of womyn. The desire to be independent, to be free to decide on her own, to achieve excellence academically and in her career, and to pursue her own ideals, are all seen as deviant behaviour which should be controlled.

Need for Change

It is for these reasons that feminists reject the so called "natural" use of words, terms and concepts that give men dominion over womyn. It is for these reasons that

feminists see the need to change the language we use.

It is also for these reasons that we must all make a conscious effort to address women as spokeswomyn, not spokesmen; womynkind, not mankind; and even womyn, not woman. It is imperative that womyn learn to reclaim their identity and individuality through the language we use so that we can be free from one more structure that continues to subordinate us.▲



Nonsexist dictionary rules out manholes and snowmen

By: ALAN RAYBOULD&CC&DD

Source: TODAY (Reuter) May 10, 1995

"Manhole" is out. Use "sewer access hole" or "sewer opening." "Abominable snowman" is frowned upon. Please refer to "abominable snowman creature." "Gentleman farmer" may be used if really necessary for historical accuracy. But "gentleman" ought to be in quotation marks "to signal that the term as used might be offensive not only to women but to those farmers who by exclusion are considered 'ungentlemanly.'" These politically correct recommendations are to be found in *The A-Z of Non-sexist Language*, the first reference book of its kind to be published in Britain. Its author, Margaret Doyle, is an American with a degree in women's studies. She is a freelance writer and copy editor in London. Doyle said her goal was not to obliterate words or usages," but rather to offer alternatives and she was conscious that some of her alternatives would have a wider appeal than others. "Mostly, people will change their language not by being told to, but they accepting natural alternatives," she said. The book, published by The Women's Press, is the latest contribution to the debate about "political correctness" although, as Doyle points out, that term is now little more than "a useful [though wildly misapplied] label for ridiculing an opposing viewpoint. "A more serious accusation is that the attempt to remove sexism from language may be worthy, because language helps form perceptions, but could lead to a colorless, artificial form of communication that no one takes seriously. Take "daddy-longlegs," an evocative word for flying insect with long spindly legs. Is this a sexist word that should be dropped in favor of crane-fly, as dictionary suggests? Should chess pieces be renamed to avoid offense? The dictionary lists optional alternatives such as

"sovereign" for king, with the queen becoming "deputy sovereign." Even Doyle appears skeptical here." Some people advocate replacing sex-specific names of chess pieces, especially as the power they wield reflects a sexist hierarchy, with the king at the top, although the queen has more freedom of movement," she writes. The book argues that the use of language, intentionally or not, can be exclusive and English has an underlying presumption of a norm that is "white, male, heterosexual, middle class." "Businessman, chairman and most other words ending in man are given as blatant examples of sexist use.

Less obvious, but just as exclusive, are words such as receptionist and secretary, etymologically neutral but so completely identified with women that the adjective "male" is normally placed before them if the job is filled by a man. That would not matter too much, except the identification of a job as "women's work" often goes hand-in-hand with low pay and a tendency to demean the skills involved. Doyle says that the struggle for control over language is a political contest. "Consider, for example, the Conservative government's appropriation of the language of the liberal left, where 'care in the community' and 'empowerment' now mean cuts in welfare and service provision," she writes. Even for the most aware, language can be a minefield. Take labels regarded as offensive, only to be taken up by militants and used with pride- "dyke," for example. "Like 'bitch,' this term is being reclaimed by some lesbians as a positive label, though it is still used as an insult to refer to 'unfeminine' lesbians by others," reads the reference under this heading. "Use carefully." ▲



Vanuatu Women's Center



Departments:
IN ACTION

by Marilyn Tahi, Coordinator

In 1992 three women came back from the first workshop on violence and women. The workshop was organized by the Fiji Women's Crisis Center for Pacific women -- the first of its kind. The three women delegation were from the police and the women's groups. These women began organizing and planning how their future work will be. The first activity in 1992 was the first observance in Vanuatu of the 16 days of activism. There was a two-week workshop on violence and women, ten-day media program and two-week exhibition. This is the first time Vanuatu women spoke out on this issue of violence against women.

The three women began seeing clients. Between September and December 1992 there were 26 women. The three women were not qualified, graduate counselors, they were activists and community workers. During the workshop two days were focused on counseling skills. Now, in Vanuatu there is a Center offering counseling for abused women and children and men also use it. In 1993 180 women came to the Center, in 1994 there were 158 new clients. This meant that the women in 1993 were seen again in 1994.

The Ministry of Women allocated a small office space for the Center, but on 8th March 1994, the Prime Minister wrote and asked the Center to vacate this office in 7 days. Since then, the office is based in rented premises. There are 5 staff, with 3 counselors. There are also 3 volunteer counselors. These women

were all volunteers from 1992 to June 1994 when Australian government through the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) approved a three-year funding program.

Activities we do or carry out in relation to combatting violence in Vanuatu are: Awareness workshops on violence in town as well as outer islands; the Awareness Programs, we have an all-female theater group performing plays on rape, domestic violence, child maintenance, nutrition and family planning; we visit female prisoners in prison weekly; we go to courts with our clients to give support; we have Radio programs; a survivors' group which have monthly meetings; we run basic counseling skills training undertake community/public talks; and, in 1994/1995 we have introduced a legal literacy program.

Our story shows that if one is committed and has good communication skills, one can do activities to help women and communities. In Asia and Pacific I'm sure we have a lot of skills we can utilize, but we are waiting for someone to come and do it for us. When one knows what they want the path is clear. This is our story. It has not been easy, but we have learned throughout the journey, and gained respect.▲

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YAYORI MATSUI: RETIRING INTO ACTIVISM

Source: Asia-Japan Women's Resource Center, Shibuya-Coop Rm. 311, 14-10, Sakuragaoka, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150 Japan

A NEW WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION HAS BEEN SET UP IN JAPAN BY INTERNATIONALLY-RENOWNED FEMINIST JOURNALIST YAYORI MATSUI, IT IS THE ASIA-JAPAN WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER. ITS PURPOSE OF EMPOWERING JAPANESE WOMEN BY SHARING MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ASIAN WOMEN'S SITUATION AND THEIR STRUGGLE AND BY TRAINING YOUNG JAPANESE WOMEN THROUGH VARIOUS ACTIVITIES.

THE RESOURCE CENTER PUBLISHES A BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE "WOMEN'S ASIA 21", WHICH FUNCTIONS AS A TYPE OF CLEARING HOUSE DISTRIBUTING INFORMATION ON THE BEIJING CONFERENCE FROM INDEPENDENT POINTS OF VIEW FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY.

YAYORI RETIRED FROM THE ASAHI SHIMBUN LAST YEAR, AFTER THIRTY-THREE YEARS! SHE SAYS, "IT IS HARD TO RECALL THOSE DAYS WORKING AS ONE OF A FEW FEMALE REPORTERS IN THE NEWSPAPER OFFICE, WHICH WAS A TYPICAL MAN'S WORLD. NOW I'M LIBERATED FROM SUCH AN OPPRESSIVE WORLD AND WORKING AS A FREELANCE JOURNALIST, WRITING MAINLY ON WOMEN, DEVELOPMENT, HUMAN RIGHTS, ENVIRONMENT AND OTHER ISSUES FROM GENDER PERSPECTIVE."

YAYORI, WHO IS A MEMBER OF ISIS' INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL, HAS PUBLISHED MORE THAN TEN BOOKS AND ALSO EDITED OR TRANSLATED VARIOUS OTHER BOOKS, AND PLANS TO WRITE MORE BOOKS AFTER THE BEIJING CONFERENCE.

SINCE HER RETIREMENT, SHE HAS BEEN EVEN BUSIER THROUGH INVOLVEMENT IN PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES TOWARD BEIJING AS EAST ASIA SUBREGIONAL CONTACT POINT, AND AS A

COORDINATOR OF AN INDEPENDENT WOMEN'S NGO NETWORK IN JAPAN.

SHE HAS ORGANIZED OR COORDINATED THREE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES IN JAPAN: THE ASIAN WOMEN'S TRIBUNAL ON WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS IN TOKYO IN MARCH LAST YEAR HELD JOINTLY WITH AWHRC: THE FIRST EAST ASIAN WOMEN'S FORUM WITH MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED FOREIGN PARTICIPANTS FROM SIX COUNTRIES/TERRITORIES (CHINA, TAIWAN, SOUTH KOREA, HONG KONG, MACAU AND MONGOLIA) LAST OCTOBER AND THE INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON JAPANESE ODA AND ASIAN WOMEN WITH ELEVEN WOMEN FROM TEN COUNTRIES.

BESIDES PREPARATION FOR BEIJING, YAYORI IS OCCUPIED WITH MANY OTHER ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS CHAIRPERSON OF THE CITIZEN'S NETWORK TO SUPPORT JAPANESE-FILIPINO CHILDREN. AT THE NGO FORUM, THERE WILL BE A WORKSHOP ON ASIAN MIGRANT WOMEN IN JAPAN.

"I'M ALSO BUSY AS A MEMBER OF A JAPANESE GROUP 'FRIENDS OF THAI WOMEN', WHICH IS ACTIVE IN HELPING THAI WOMEN VICTIMIZED BY TRAFFICKING INTO THE JAPANESE SEX INDUSTRY. THE PEOPLE'S FORUM ON CAMBODIA ALSO MAKES ME BUSY BECAUSE I'M IN CHARGE OF ITS GROUP 'WOMEN AND CHILDREN'. (I DO ALL THIS BECAUSE) JAPANESE SOCIETY HAS TOO MANY PROBLEMS WHICH I FEEL TOO IMPORTANT TO JUST CLOSE MY EYES." (WE SHOULD ALL 'RETIRES' THIS WAY. ED.)▲



The world needs a mother. In modern times the Fabric of humanity is torn into fragments, divided into hostile factions on the basis of conflicts between nations, races, religions, social classes and political viewpoints. At a more subtle level we find an even more devastating force, the force of inner conflict, eating up the lives of so many people in our societies, bringing with it depression, violence, drug and alcohol abuse and an evermore confused sense of moral values. We have tried with great sincerity to legislate changes, to alleviate the suffering of people around the world, to unite the nations and to promote the concept of brother and sisterhood of the human race but to little or no avail. Where is the actualization of these ideals? Must they remain forever in the abstract?

For the last twenty-five years Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi has been teaching and transforming human beings, sparking what has been called a 'gentle revolution' known as Sahaja Yoga. 'Sahaja' means 'born within' or 'spontaneous'. 'Yoga' refers to the union of the individual consciousness with the highest reality -- through the awakening of the spiritual power within each of us, called the 'kundalini' in Sanskrit and known by a variety

of names in many cultures of the world. Not coincidentally this inner power, with its transformative potential, is known in many traditions as the energy of the feminine, of the mother.

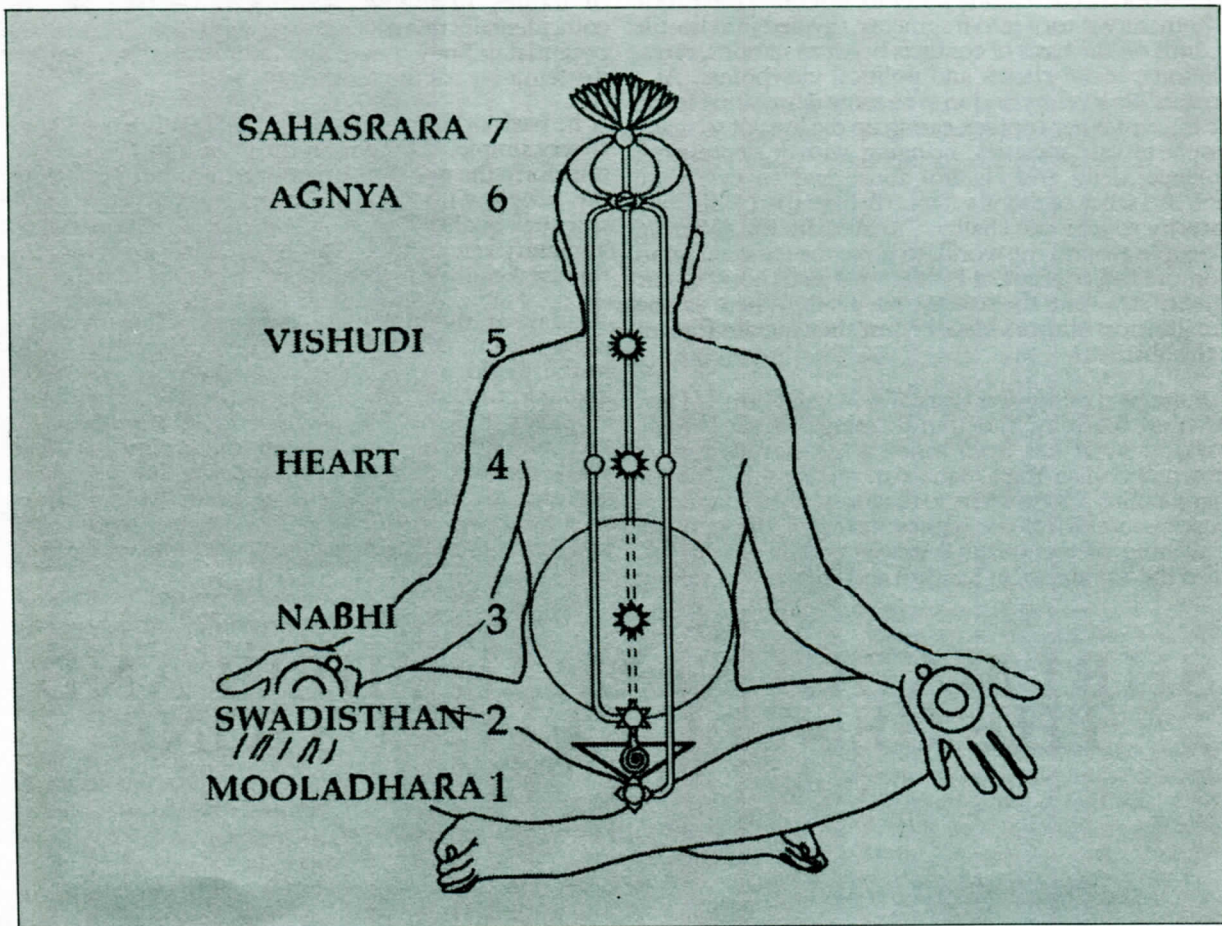
The basis of the gentle revolution, that is Sahaja Yoga, is very simple. It hinges on the notion that in order to transform the world, the first step must be to transform the people who populate it, to awaken their innate spiritual qualities with which the heights to which humanity can aspire to can be attained. In short, it is this awakening which is the work of Shri Mataji.

Today, at the age of seventy-two, Shri Mataji is recognised as one of the most significant spiritual figures in the world, and is still travelling almost constantly, giving lectures on Sahaja Yoga and how it addresses the world's problems. More importantly, at each of her programmes, Shri Mataji offers the experience of the awakening of this new awareness. She has never accepted any money whatsoever for her work, insisting that what she is offering is love and self-knowledge, and that these are things which cannot be paid for.

SHRI MATAJI NIRMALA DEVI AND THE GENTLE REVOLUTION: SAHAJA YOGA

by Anoma S. Jayawickrema & Steven Wollenberger





Shri Mataji has often stated that the powers of a mother, like compassion, love, understanding and nurturing, are the only powers which can genuinely transform an individual and which can thereby really transform the world. She has pointed out that these motherly qualities are the powers which are innately available to women, and reflect their true nature. It is for this reason that Shri Mataji assigns a vital role to women in the work of worldwide transformation. With the awakening of the Kundalini, these qualities are very much enhanced. They are however, by no means valuable in women only. Shri Mataji has pointed out that when these powers are awakened in men, they develop a saintly nature, and a unique balance of dynamism and compassion blossoms forth in their personalities.

Shri Mataji is herself a living example of these qualities. Amidst the demands of an exhausting schedule, Shri Mataji may one day address the UN in New York, or a medical conference in Moscow, and the next day spend hours helping to work out the personal problems of one sincere person, often a complete stranger. She demonstrates time and again a remarkable concern for the individual wherever she goes, and manages to give an almost impossible amount of time to helping those with personal concerns, while at the same time spearheading the world-wide movement of Sahaja Yoga.

A biographical review of Shri Mataji is no less impressive. Shri Mataji was born to parents prominent in the Indian independence movement, she spent several years in her childhood living in Mahatma Gandhi's ashram. Later, while studying medicine at the Christian Medical College in Lahore, Shri Mataji led the student struggle for freedom, and was imprisoned as a patriot. In 1947, she married Dr. C.P. Srivastava. Sahaja Yoga has been acclaimed throughout the world and Shri Mataji has been welcomed by heads of States and praised by international spiritual leaders in every continent. In 1987, Sahaja Yoga was endorsed by a UN charter, adopting it as a practice recommended for the establishment of world peace and the betterment of humanity.

Sahaja Yoga was founded in 1978 by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi. The central message of Sahaja Yoga is that there exists, within each and every one of us, the power to achieve 'self-realisation' and the awareness of a higher consciousness. It is not merely theoretical or rhetorical but is actualised and experienced on the central nervous system. When this happens the feminine power innate to all, called the 'Kundalini' in Sanskrit, is spontaneously awakened and each individual is enabled to cultivate the virtues of gentleness, peacefulness, protective love and compassion.▲

SAHAJA YOGA (UK), tel. no. (+44 1799) 584686 and fax no. (+44 1799) 584 019

Youth

KENYAN PARENTS RANKED LAST AS SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATORS FOR THEIR ADOLESCENTS

Source: International Dateline, A Population and Development News and Information Service, March 1995.

According to a peer-to-peer youth sexuality survey conducted in Kenya in early 1994, most young people between the ages of 13 and 19-half in school and half get information about sex from their friends or peers. The next most common sources were books, magazines and movies. Parents were mentioned the least number of times in the survey as being sources of information about sex. Nearly all the young people interviewed said that their peers were sexually active, noting that the average age for girls to start is 12, while boys begin at age 13. But both sexes said that the ideal time to begin sexual activity is not until age 20. When asked about sexually-transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS, the teens said that they got most of their information from radio and television, followed by schools and school teachers. Again, parents were mentioned the least number of times. When asked what parents, teachers and the older generation were currently telling them about sex, the most common response from the teens was "nothing." If anything was said, according to the survey, it was usually to tell the teenagers not to have sex or that sex was only for marriage. The teens surveyed said that the biggest changes they had witnessed in their lifetimes were the beginnings of multi-party system and drastic inflation in Kenya. They said that AIDS is the biggest threat facing both them and their country.

TEEN MOTHERS' BODIES CAUSE RISK OF PREEMIES

Source: TODAY (NYT-Washington) May 8, 1995.

Teenage girls who become pregnant have long been known to face a higher risk of having premature babies and other complications, and a new study says biological factors may be an important reason.

Researchers at the University of Utah said that a study of more than 130,000 pregnancies indicated that teenagers faced higher risks than older women even when such risk factors as low income, poor education, bad health habits, e.g. smoking, and inadequate access to health care are taken into account.

They say the results suggest biological problems associated with immature bodies of the youngest mothers may contribute to prematurity and their babies' low birth weights. They speculated that young mothers might compete with their fetuses for certain nutrients or that their wombs might not be sufficiently developed.

The study, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, challenges the belief that pregnancy problems associated with young mothers are mostly related to their poor socio-economic status, including the fact that many are poor, undereducated, come from racial minorities and get poor prenatal care.

The researchers found even that even white, middle-class teenagers who get good health care are almost twice as likely as older women to deliver premature babies. The study "challenges the contention that teenage mothers who receive adequate prenatal care will have reproductive outcomes as good as, or better than, those of older mothers," said the researchers.

Abortion

PRESIDENTIAL VETO GOES AHEAD IN POLISH ABORTION

Source: Pro-Choice News-Writer, 1995.

Poland's lower house of Parliament (Sejm) has failed to overturn a presidential veto on amending the 1993 law which forbids abortion on the grounds of economic or social hardship. As soon as the law came into effect at the beginning of 1993, pressure began for an amendment to allow abortion for social reasons. President Walesa, a traditional and loyal Catholic, invoked his powers as president to veto the resolution.

The Sejm then referred the issue to three of its standing committees. At the end of August 1994, they reported that the Sejm should try to overrule the veto -- and criticized Poland's exclusively Catholic stance at the Cairo conference saying that it should instead reflect the diversity of views in Poland. Accordingly, the Sejm once again voted on the proposed amendment but did not get the two-thirds majority necessary to overturn the presidential veto.

Meanwhile, according to an article in *Studies in Family Planning*, Polish women, especially those in rural areas, have experienced fear, anxiety and humiliation since the March 1993 law severely restricted access to abortion.

Departments:
HEALTH
UPDATE

ILLEGAL ABORTIONS AMONG YOUNG GIRLS

by Malika Ladjali, Sante Sexuelle et reproductive des jeunes, study carried out for the Independent Commission, April 1994

Source: CAFRA News Vol. 8 No. 4.

One per cent of illegal abortions is estimated to result in the death of the woman. This mortality rate is more than 1,000 times lower when the abortion is done legally and under medical supervision. Five million of the 50 million abortions carried out each year are amongst young girls aged between 15 and 19. Because they are inexperienced, they realise they are pregnant at an advanced stage, frequently after the first three months.

They often consult backstreet abortionists after having tried dangerous drugs, bleach, quinine, detergents or having to tried to stick pointed objects such as knitting needles into their womb. Abortion complications among young girls are often more serious than amongst older women because they are often badly informed about available health service facilities and are afraid of consulting them. In many African countries, as many as 60 per cent of women in hospital due to abortion complications are under 20 years old.

STANDARDIZATION OF ABORTION LAWS DEMANDED IN MEXICO

Source: FEM, feminist monthly, Mexico, Dec 1994; reprinted in Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights Newsletter no. 49, Jan - Mar 1995.

On September 28, 1994 (Day of Action for the Decriminalization of Abortion in Latin America and the Caribbean), during the ceremony at the Monument to the Mother in Mexico City, Ana Maria Hernandez, of Salud Integral para la Mujer (SIPAM), pointed out that it is necessary to standardize laws specifying the grounds for legal abortion across the different Mexican states. She explained that the Penal Code of Mexico Federal District allows

abortion when the pregnancy is due to carelessness of the woman, result of rape, and when the woman's life is at risk. In Yucatan, Puebla, Veracruz, Oaxaca and Colima, it is allowed for malformation of the fetus. In Guerrero, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Tlaxcala and Zacatecas, abortion is allowed when continuation of the pregnancy constitutes a risk to the woman's life.

"The decriminalization of abortion is a public health matter, and a question of democracy and social justice," said Hernandez during the ceremony.



YOUNG, VULNERABLE AND FEMALE

Source: Decade Link No. 16, March 1995.

Young women are the group most susceptible to HIV infection. According to a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) study on AIDS, 70% of the 3,000 women a day who contract HIV and the 500 women who die daily from AIDS worldwide are between the ages of 15 and 25. The study, which was conducted in three African and two Asian countries found:

- In Thailand, the HIV infection rate is greater among women between the ages of 15 and 25 than among all other women combined.

- In Uganda, there are more than twice as many reported AIDS cases among 15-to-25-year-old women than among men of the same age.

- In Rwanda, more than 25% of women who become pregnant and about 17% of those who engage in intercourse before they are 17 years old will become HIV-positive.

Dr. Michael Merson, Executive Director of the WHO Global Programme on AIDS, has listed three causes for high infection rates in young women.

Women are biologically more vulnerable. As the receptive partner, women have a larger

mucosal surface exposed during sexual intercourse; moreover, semen contains a far higher concentration of HIV than vaginal fluid. Women thus run a bigger risk of acquiring HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Women are epidemiologically vulnerable. Women tend to marry or have sex with older men, who may have more sexual partners and hence be more likely to have become infected. Women are also epidemiologically vulnerable to HIV transmission through blood. In the developing world women frequently require a blood transfusion during pregnancy or childbirth — for example, because of anaemia or hemorrhage.

Women are socially vulnerable to HIV. Men are expected to be assertive and women passive in their sexual relationship. In some cultures, men expect sex with any woman receiving their economic support. Whenever these traditional norms predominate, the result is sexual subordination, and this creates a highly unfavorable atmosphere for AIDS prevention.

When subordination leads to disaster

Women's sexual subordination is a direct result of their lower status in society, lack of independent income and lack of control over their sexual and economic lives. This dependency only heightens women's vulnerability to HIV infection.

In many societies, girls are married at a very early age. They are also the most frequent victims of incest and rape. Non-consensual, hurried or frequent intercourse can inhibit mucus production and cause genital trauma, increasing the likelihood of infection. Young women's lack of control over the circumstances under which intercourse occurs thus puts them at greater risk of HIV infection. Men often prefer to have sexual relations with younger women, who are assumed to be sexually inactive and thereby "safe" from HIV. These also places these girls at high risk of infection.

Setting Priorities

Though women are at the center of the growing HIV epidemic, the national and international response to this major health issues is weak and inadequate. For women, mothers and children, large gaps exist between need — medical psychological and welfare — and services or support to meet those needs. Nor is sufficient effort directed towards policy development. Policies on HIV-infected pregnant women, for example, do not generally take into account reproduction rights. Screening policies are discussed without considering the capacity of the prenatal care system. Economic factors are rarely considered while discussing prostitution. Most importantly, women are rarely involved in the formulation of AIDS policies. As in most other health and social issues, policies of AIDS are “made by men - for men”.

PEOPLE WITH HIV/AIDS HAVE RIGHTS, TOO

Source: TODAY May 11, 1995

The Manila based organization REACHOUT AIDS Education Foundation, an AIDS service organization that advocates non-discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS, recently released its new poster that focuses on the basic human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS.

The following are the rights reflected in the information, education and communication materials: the right to confidentiality, the right to disclosure, the right to counseling, and the right to social-support services.

The person with HIV/AIDS has the right to the assurance of confidentiality on all information pertinent to their health status and health behavior. It is the person's discretion to disclose their HIV status to whoever, whenever and wherever they please. The individual's wish for privacy should be respected.

Also, a person with HIV/AIDS has the right to be provided with

access to correct, accurate and unbiased information which will guide in making informed choices. The individual has the sole right to decide on the alternatives most beneficial in relation to their sexual behavior, health practices and family life. People with HIV/AIDS have the right to avail of basic health-care services. They should not be deprived of their right to social services, insurance services, spiritual guidance and legal aid.

The intent of this communications effort is to enlighten people about the social implications of the disease and at the same time replace irrational fear, existing biases and prejudices with a deeper sense of humanity, compassion and understanding. The Reach Out office in Manila can be contacted at 632- 895-1369.

PREGNANCY RELATED HORMONE USED TO TREAT AIDS PATIENTS

Source: TODAY May 11, 1995.

Hormone produced during pregnancy could become the newest treatment for Kaposi's sarcoma, the most common cancer in AIDS patients, according to a new study.

The report offers scientists a clue as to why men develop the cancer at a much higher rate than women, the study's author's said.

The research, published in the journal *Nature*, shows that human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG), a hormone present in high levels during the first trimester of pregnancy, destroys Kaposi's sarcoma cells by binding to them.

In the study, newborn and adult mice were injected with Kaposi's sarcoma cells. All of the adult mice and the male newborns later developed tumors. But the four female newborn mice did not, and they remained tumor-free after they became pregnant.

The cancer cells also were injected into mice in early-and late stage pregnancy; those injected in the early stages of pregnancy did not develop tumors, and the late-stage

pregnant mice showed smaller tumors that did not spread.

“The hormone was not blocking, but killing Kaposi cells, and it doesn't kill normal counterpart cells. This is without apparent toxicity to the animals,” said Dr. Robert Gallo, chief of the National Cancer Institute's Tumor Cell Biology team and a coauthor of the study.

If further studies confirm the new report, the pregnancy hormone may be used to treat Kaposi's sarcoma, according to the government researcher.

Gallo speculated that the reason HIV-infected women have a low rate of Kaposi's sarcoma even if they are not pregnant is because one element of HCG is similar to a hormone released during the menstrual cycle.

Because HCG is not a feminizing hormone, it should not cause problems eventually used to treat men with Kaposi's sarcoma, Gallo said.

Kaposi's sarcoma tumors typically develop as purple blotches on the skin. Although the cancer is common among homosexual men who are infected with the AIDS virus, it rarely develops in uninfected people.

Treatment with HCG would ease the concern about the negative effects of strong cancer medications on patients with already weak immune systems, the Nevada researchers said.

AIDS WOMEN TAKE RISK OF BEARING KIDS

Source: TODAY May 10, 1995

NEW YORK (NYT) - Sandy L. spent years in soul-searching discussions with her husband before they decided, out of love, to have a baby despite the risk. In Brooklyn, Monica Hernandez went through similar heartache, pregnant with a fifth child when so much about her future was uncertain.

These two women, the first a doctoral candidate with a good job, the second a homemaker who relies on welfare, share a

moral dilemma: They both have AIDS. After learning they had the virus they both decided to risk the odds that the children would someday have it, too.

Yeah, it is selfish," said Sandy L.. "Having a child is always selfish. I don't think my reasons are any different from any other woman. I think I can be a good mother."

Some couples are deciding that the risks of infecting the baby are no worse than other dangers in their lives or that the medical advances allow them to manage the risks in an acceptable way. The odds of an HIV-infected mother passing the virus to her child are 15 percent to 30 percent. New studies suggest that by taking the drug AZT during pregnancy and labor, women can reduce the risk to 8 percent.

Hernandez, 30, four months into an unplanned pregnancy, said she could not bring herself to have an abortion.

More women who have HIV or AIDS are knowingly taking the same risk, according to doctors and social workers. Their choice springs from the intersection of new science and new attitudes among people with AIDS, who are living longer and more comfortably than ever and are choosing not to see the virus as a death sentence.

NOTES

BANGLADESH: MORE WOMEN THAN MEN DIE AS A CONSEQUENCE OF CYCLONES/FLOODS

Source: Development and Gender in Brief trial issue, BRIDGE, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, BN1 9RE, U.K.; Tel. no. 01273 678491.

Environmental disasters are not gender neutral in impact. Studies in Bangladesh show that women suffered most after the 1991 cyclone and flood. Among women aged 20-44, the death rate was 71 per 1000, compared to 15 per 1000 for men. Since emergency warnings were given mainly by loudspeaker and word of

mouth, women's lower literacy does not explain these findings.

Other factors lay behind women's higher mortality. Women were left at home by their husbands to care for children and protect property. Women's saris restricted their mobility. Women were malnourished compared to men and physically weaker. During the cyclone, the lack of purdah in public shelters may also have deterred women from seeking refuge.

Following the cyclone, the lack of female personnel in emergency medical teams inhibited women from seeking medical care. Equipment taken into disaster areas was inadequate to meet the needs of women. Many women lose breastfeeding infants during environmental disasters. Pumps to express breastmilk are essential to avoid serious infection and debilitating pain. Equipment and medication are also needed to handle the increase in miscarriages which always follows disasters.

HIDDEN DANGERS IN NAIL POLISH

Source: Utusan Konsumer mid-March 1995 No. 324.

Ladies, think twice before you paint your nails. That harmless-looking nail polish which you use to color your nails can cause you serious harm. Surveys shows that some popular brands sold (eg: Revlon and Cutex) contain toluene.

Toluene, also known as methyl benzene, is a toxic solvent. Low-level exposure to this chemical can affect one's mental functions, behaviour, menstruation and hormonal levels, and fetuses in pregnant women.

Exposure to toluene can also have long-term effects on the liver, heart and nervous system. Mild side-effects include irritation of the mucous membrane, headache, vertigo (giddiness), nausea and loss of appetite. Toluene is easily absorbed through the skin but it is eliminated slowly from the body, especially in obese people.

NORPLANT REMOVALS DELAYED

Source: International Dateline, A Population and Development News and Information Service, March 1995.

Women are often forced to endure delays and censure from over-zealous service-providers when requesting removal of Norplant, the five-year sub-dermal contraceptive implant. This conclusion is from a study of 1,151 women in Bangladesh. Reasons for delays can include over-worked physicians, understaffed clinics, or not enough personnel trained in Norplant insertion and removal. But the study also shows that women are often forced to negotiate with doctors who cite the cost of the implant and refuse to comply with the removal request. The authors say that "providers walk a fine line between encouraging clients to continue using the implant in the face of non-threatening side-effects and refusing outright to remove the implants." In a related study, researchers found that clients in Bangladesh and other countries learn which reasons are deemed acceptable to Norplant removers and use those reasons when requesting removal. The Bangladesh study authors say that, "placing barriers to removal and allowing providers, rather than clients, to decide the legitimacy of reasons for removal will undermine the credibility of both the method and the family planning program."

END

CONFERENCES

WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION TO MEET

The 9th Annual International Conference on Women in Higher Education will be held on January 4-7, 1996 at Camino Real Paso del Norte Hotel, El Paso, Texas. The conference is hosted by the Women's Studies Program and the Division of Professional and Continuing Education, the University of Texas at El Paso. The conference will focus on women in their various roles in higher education. Previous conferences were attended by participants from Australia, Canada, Greece, Mexico, Argentina, Turkey and Bahrain. The conference will provide an opportunity for networking and discussing possible collaborative research ventures. Paper abstracts on women in international education, multicultural women's studies issues, equity issues, women in their disciplines, women's roles in higher education, career mobility, minority women in higher education, and support systems for women in higher education.

Contact: Office of Women in International Development, University of Illinois at Urbana, 320 International Studies Building, 910 South Fifth St., Illinois.

BRAZIL: FIRST CONFERENCE OF WOMEN PAJES (SHAMANS)

In 1994, GRUMIN's President, Eliane Potiguara, was honored by PEN CLUB INTERNATIONAL, both as author of the book "A Terra e a Mae do Indio" (The Land is Mother to the Indian), a teaching aid published by GRUMIN with support from the World Council of Churches' Anti-Racism Program, and for her dedication to the struggle for indigenous rights. The award to Eliane Potiguara was supported by the Committee of Writers in Prison during its 58th International Congress, which voted unrestricted political support for indigenous writers. Potiguara was appointed an honorary member of PEN CLUB WET (USA).

Before Brazil was "discovered", it held more than 5 million Indians. Today they number 250,000. In the past, indigenous women used to have the final say in Assemblies. They could go against the word of their fathers, brothers or husbands. The invasion, sexual violence and the psychology imposed on some women have led them to shelter themselves in the rear guard of our men. Old women in some tribes still have the last word and are venerated as great sages. For 10 years, GRUMIN has been fighting to restore respect for indigenous women in the home, in the community and in the country.

The National Seminar "Indigenous Women's Health: Our Right" voted and approved a proposal to hold a First Conference of Women Pajes (Shamans). This decision was taken because, in some communities where colonial and neocolonial influences are strong, women have no effective participation in spiritual activities and little recognition for their spiritual gifts.

Preparatory stages to this conference involve the creation of four community herb gardens in four different states, to recuperate and preserve a variety of herbs that have fallen into discredit since the arrival of allopathic medicine, which has also served to undermine the status of the pajes and women herbal doctors, as well as traditional methods of childbirth and curing. For all these reasons, the Seminar also discussed Indigenous Women's Reproductive Rights at length.

Contact: GRUMIN: Namello Soares (240-9294). Rua Ambrosina 82 - Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; tel/fax 55-21-207-6798.

Departments:
BULLETIN

REPORT

IS POVERTY FEMALE? A NEW BRIDGE REPORT

It has become common in development circles to talk of the 'feminisation of poverty'. The phrase implies that poverty is becoming a female phenomenon, or that women are becoming poorer relative to men. This trend is often linked to an increase in the number of female-headed household, to the informalisation of labour markets and, generally, to the economic crises and adjustments of the 1980s in Latin America and Africa.

Because many studies in poverty do not look inside the household, evidence is lacking to show a feminisation of poverty. Moreover, the evidence we do have does not always show that more women than men are poor, or that their proportion among the poor, relative to men, is increasing.

Certain groups of women - including some but by no means all female heads of household - may be particularly vulnerable to poverty. Women are discriminated against within the household, in legal and property rights, in access to financial resources, in labour

markets and by public sector institutions. But not all women are poor and not all poor people are women. It does not advance attempts to combat gender discrimination, or assist in poverty alleviation efforts, if women and the poor are treated as synonymous. A new

BRIDGE Report explores the relationship between gender discrimination and poverty.

For more details of the report write to: Development and Gender in Brief, BRIDGE, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, BN1 9RE, U.K.; tel.no. 01273 678491.

FELLOWSHIPS

HARVARD UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES A NEW JUNIOR FELLOWS PROGRAM

The Society of Fellows, Harvard University announces The Junior Fellows program for three years beginning July 1, 1996. Junior fellows receive no credit for the courses, need not be working towards an advanced degree other than for the Ph.D.; and are not required to make reports. They are free to devote their work to productive scholarship. They may undertake sustained projects of research or other original work or they may devote their time to the acquisition of accessory disciplines, so as to prepare themselves for the investigation of problems lying between conventional fields. Students should have demonstrated their capacity for independent work. Eligibility: Persons of exceptional ability, originality and resourcefulness; fellow must be at an early stage of his or her career; they are ordinarily college graduates; men and women from any field of study; recent recipient of or are candidates for the Ph.D. Candidates are nominated by those under whom they have studied. A letter of nomination should include an assessment of the candidate's work and promise, the address of the candidate, the names and addresses of three people who have agreed to write additional letters of recommendation by early October. Deadline: September 18, 1995.

Send nominations to: Society of Fellows, Harvard University, 78 Mount Auburn Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION

Dorothy Marchus Senesh Fellowship in Peace and Development Studies for Third World Women. Awarded every other year at IPRA annual meeting. The next award will be given in Spring 1996. The prize (\$5,000) is available for third world women who have been accepted into a graduate programme and whose graduate work is to be focused on issues related to the focus of IPRA.

Contact: Elise Boulding, International Peace Research Association Foundation, c/o Conflict Resolution Consortium, Campus Box 327, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309-0327 USA, Tel: +1 303 449 1617, Fax: +1 303 492 6388

MACARTHUR FOUNDATION

Program on Peace and International Cooperation Grants for Individuals and two-person teams, including scholars, journalists, policy-analysts and others who have a proven ability to do creative work. Projects should address the relationship between peace, security, violence, or co-operation. Grant periods may be as long as 18 months. Grants range from US\$10,000 to US\$65,000 for an individual applicant, with US\$100,000 the maximum for a two-person project. Deadlines are February 1 and August 1, 1995

Contact: Grants for Research and Writing in Peace and International Cooperation
The John D and Catherine T MacArthur Foundation
140 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, IL 60603, USA

JENNINGS RANDOLPH PROGRAM FELLOWSHIPS

Annual fellowship competition for professionals and scholars to conduct research projects on the sources of violent international conflict and ways to sustain peace. Deadline: October 15, 1995

Contact: Jennings Randolph Program,
US Institute for Peace, 1550 M St NW,
Suite 700 J,
Washington DC 20005, USA
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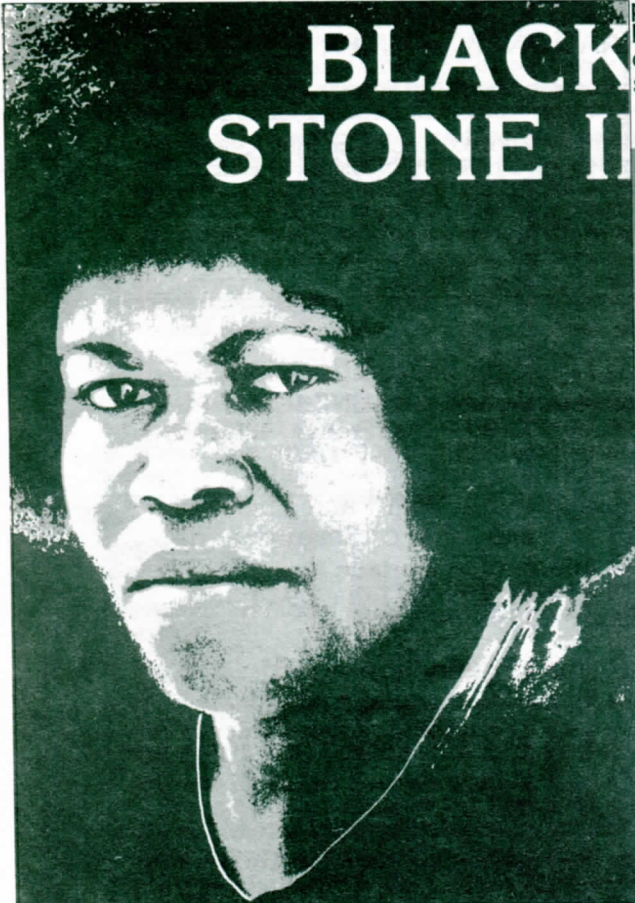
Source: International Alert Update Issue No 4; Nov 1994.

Vanuatu, Melanesia and the Pacific have come a long way since the lifetimes of our grandparents, our parents, and even in the decades we ourselves have lived and operated or become conscious of our social environment and how we are situated within it.

Since our ancestors allowed white people onto our shores and let them live with us and influence us we have increasingly accepted their ways while trying to retain some vestiges of our Melanesianness. If development is taken to mean retaining some elements of our own knowledge while acquiring enough introduced knowledge and technology to interact with the rest of the world on an equal footing, then we can say that we have made progress, but we have a long way to go.

On the part of our own knowledge or culture we have lost sight of those elements that need to be adapted for application in the present for our benefit. On the part of introduced knowledge we are behind in communications, economic empowerment and political participation. Men and women are different but they have the same needs. Men and women are born into the same environment having in place the same institutions, channels and processes for their political involvement and empowerment, but along the way rules are made and applied to produce two different situations, one for men and another for women.

The root cause of the social, economic and political power imbalance between men and women in Melanesia is land. Land ownership. Land use. Land administration. To own land is to be secure. To be someone. To be independent. To have power. To have



BLACK STONE II

Melanesian Women Moving On

by Grace Mera Molisa

authority. To have status. Without land the woman is nothing. Without land the woman herself becomes a commodity on the male market. The woman, without land, becomes available to be sold, bought and owned as a movable asset.

If Melanesian women want their status to change for the better, we women have to look at our land tenure systems and our land-use behaviour patterns to ensure

that they meaningfully cater to women's needs. One way of making the appropriate changes to cater to and accommodate women's needs as whole human persons is to involve 'women's issues at every level of development, particularly politics.

'Women's issues conscious women', means continuous training on-the-job, on gender issues, to eliminate negative attitudes and habits, inject positive attitudes, introduce effective approaches for the equal development of our human resources and build on our existing strengths for the continuous improvement of the status of women.

Only when 'women's issues conscious women' are in politics, administration, and all decision-making bodies, will changes occur in women's favour. Otherwise you can have token women in high positions but they won't be any use for women because they will have the same mind set as men. They will always agree with men, obey men, be afraid of men and go along with men.

'Women's issues conscious women' in positions of power take initiatives to work within the system in favour of women. Suitable women in relevant jobs breathe feminism into everything they are involved in. Otherwise women just maintain stereotypical men's executives and men's-will-obey.

On a development continuum Melanesia contrasts sharply with other parts of the Pacific Region because sections of the Melanesian population can be spread right across from both ends of the continuum unlike those parts of the Pacific that are mono-cultural, mono-lingual, never colonised, where women have pride of place. In those situations women's problems would seem to be fewer and easily unified approaches to their solutions relatively easier to come by.

Developments so far

Melanesian women have made gains in the critical areas of concern but have a long way to go in all of them to arrive at a situation that we can all be satisfied with considering our Melanesian diversity and our spread across different stages of development. Against this background particular areas are immediately clear as requiring emphasis and focus for future attention.

To name a few - Melanesian women are allowed to vote and could contest elections. Very many women's interest groups exist. A Women's Resource Bureau has been set up at the South Pacific Commission (SPC) Secretariat for the coordination of women's activities in the South Pacific. Some networking is happening. However not much more is happening, just like there is very little or no lobby to positively support the Bureau at SPC and correspondingly the Bureau cannot do more than it tries to do with the scarce resources at its disposal.

Problems encountered

In my experience in Vanuatu the problems encountered on the way to achieving the progresses we have so far made all boil down to one. The one major problem is women. Women against women. One on one. Group against group.

Women bickering, in-fighting, disuniting, disorganised, defending petty parochial territories, pursuing personal power bases. Women unable to rejoice in the success of another woman, unable to be together in hard times, unable to be together in good times, women are woman's worst obstacle. We women are our very own worst enemy.

All other difficulties posed by culture, politics, or any other classification can be overcome if we women get our act together and put our collective will to it.

Vision towards 2000 AD

I have an active faith in women. I hope we women can find the ways and means to cast off our pretenses and excuses in order to recognise and accept truth and reality enough to be able to work together, with a common vision, in striving for common goals, addressing our common needs, collectively advancing our cause, concertedly uplifting our common status.

I believe that at year 2000 AD we can look back and be able to measure by all the statistics and quality of life indicators and say that we have moved on from 1995, and that women in the leadership of women's groups and departments can say that they have in place clear frameworks within which to exercise their functions, and, what is more, that they know what they should be doing in those positions.

Where do we go from here? Health, education, politics, economic empowerment. Critical areas of concern have been identified globally, regionally, sub-regionally. We Melanesian women need to take the same areas of concern and re-prioritise them. Let the national machineries, NGO machineries know who we are and what we are doing, so that they can put in place mechanisms in different ministries and institutions to monitor and co-ordinate our activities in an integrated manner, ensuring continuous improvement nationally as we Melanesian women and men move on towards equality, development and peace.

Outlook for the future

Vanuatu is an archipelago supporting a multi-cultural, multi-lingual population. Archipelagic countries have communications topping their list of administrative and other problems. Communications is the motor to every human action. Communications on every level, every dimension, personalised verbal forms and documentary forms from the simple speech used in the time of Noah's Ark to the electronic mass information super highways beyond 2000 into the twenty-first century. We women can't go very far or anywhere if, in the first place, we don't come to grips with communication and make it work for us.

The one area that women are not moving into is politics. All Melanesian countries have had exceptional women in the corridors of power but their numbers are to-date acutely small. We women need to know that when men are by themselves in the political arena they end up seeing and thinking only of themselves. It can happen and it happens. Women need to be there to let it be known that women exist, to say what women have to say, to make sure things happen the way women want things to happen.

Women have in place in 1995 the ratification of CEDAW without reservations. Vanuatu women have to look at the feminisation of poverty as the root cause of their lack of power, low status, and violence against women, in view of our respective Melanesian land tenure system, recognising that land is the source of our Melanesian identity, Melanesian livelihood, Melanesian economic resources, Melanesian political power, Melanesian authority and status.

When we arrive at this view, it is clear that the determining factor is land ownership. Land is the source of economic authority. Who owns it? Who controls it? Who administers it? Who uses it? Who works it? The long term outlook for Vanuatu women in this area is to look at our land ownership and land use systems and to make appropriate changes for the economic empowerment of women.

CONCLUSION

To conclude I want to come back to communications. Communications is a big field. We can get lost in it. We can't go anywhere unless we recognise it for the animal or thing it is and domesticate it so we can ride it or use it. Even in the simplest matter of speech or talking there is a great deal more to it than conversing in gossip. How we use the language we speak can do or undo so many things. We women need to find out how we can use the things we have like language and talking, or communicating, with each other, in ways that can benefit us mutually and collectively.

In Vanuatu the most common chorus of the women's movement song is "I didn't know, we don't know."

We all sing it many times. What percentage of women in each of the Melanesian countries know the Beijing process enough for us to say we understand about women's human rights awareness and the women's movement as it happens:

in our mind
in our house
in our village
in our island
in our country

and how we personally and organisationally are contributing to that process of women's rights awareness and development?

Ni-Vanuatu women are very good at criticising what someone else is doing and complaining ... "if - only - this... and if - only - that..." What is important in our development is not that which will happen if ... this ..., or if ... that... What is important is what each one of us is able to do and we get on and do it. Development is not what someone else does. Development is what we do ourselves to help ourselves.

We women have to learn to re-direct our energies away from our personal jealousies, envy, covetousness, that go into excuses and pretenses that make up our dishonesty to ourselves and everyone else, so that we can start looking at our own selves and gear ourselves to doing what we can do to improve our situation and doing it to the best of our ability so that we can be the best that we can be in the field that we choose to be involved in. So that when people see us and think of us, they can see and think of different aspects of the Image of God in us, through us, enough to be drawn to our vision so that we can draw nearer to each other, nearer to God, as we, together, move on, towards equality, sustainable development and peace because together we stand, divided we fall.▲

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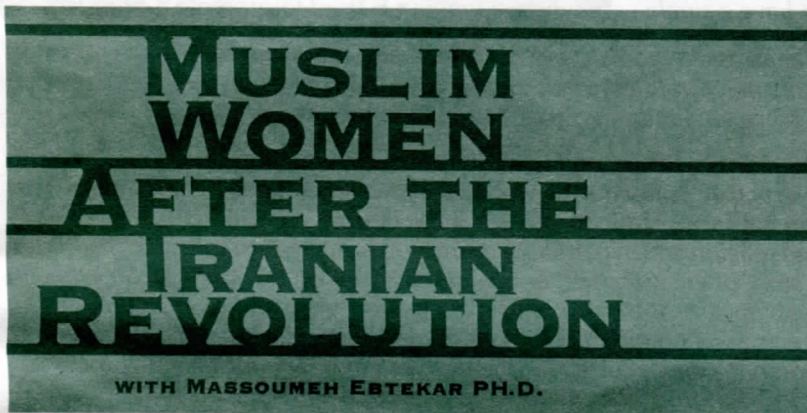
Massoumeh, active in women's issues in Iran, speaks to our interviewer Luz Maria Martinez on women's issues prior to and after the religious revolution in Iran.

Massoumeh with a doctoral degree in immunology is involved in the new emerging field of Cytokine Production Patterns. With this demanding profession, she still finds time to serve as the Coordinator for the Women's NGO Coordinating Office, Fourth World Conference on Women-Beijing '95 and serves as a Board member to the Center for Women Studies in Tehran.

Q: You had been telling me previously that things changed for you when you went to Nairobi in 1985. How did you go from doing immunology research to women's issues?

Massoumeh: Women have the ability to be multidimensional in giving of themselves. This is something that I feel is particular to her womanhood. The experience I have with men is that they do not have the ability to think about something, listen to something else and talk about something else at the same time. Where usually I see women they are doing the dishes, thinking about their project or something, and at the same time are listening to their child or somebody in the house. This is a natural aspect of women's life to be more involved in several functions, they usually carry double or triple responsibilities and that means that more is demanded from them, that they feel more responsible towards issues going on around them. I think that this is one of the main reasons, that being a woman I had to play a role in issues that affect women.

[By the early 1980s] we were faced on one side with a revolution that had changed many ideas and a whole new world has opened up for us, to go and learn and experience other ideas. On the other hand there was a global involvement on behalf of the women which we could not resist.



Q: Explain to me a little how you perceive the women's movement in Iran prior to the revolution and after. From Western media what we get is that women are more oppressed now than before, that women are clamoring for freedom.

Massoumeh: I think that is part of a basic problem. The root lies [in the fact] that we lost dialogue with a major portion of the world after our revolution, due to the fact that media was generally controlled by particular groups who did not welcome the revolution, they embarked on a campaign to distort, to censor the picture of things that were going on inside.

[Under the Shah] Iran was actually very closed politically, opposing groups were severely oppressed, the Shah was an American stooge, and, naturally, news was not coming out on what was happening in the country at that time, but most importantly, the identity of the Iranian nation was in crisis. Who are we? What is our history? During the Shah's regime all they could look at was the West.

I had just entered college and I could see how the young people were confronting this wave of Westernization and they did not like it.

Q: The young were primarily those who were not liking this?

Massoumeh: The young and the informed. There was also unrest in religious and intellectual circles. Intellectual women began choosing national and religious attire rather than Western attire. For example, women wore the chador even though it was legally banned at that time. At the slightest sound coming from the students they would arrest a few and beat a few with these electric prods. I remember these memories very vividly, how the Shah was trying to suppress the movement.

Women who chose the traditional covering at this time were threatened to be expelled from the university and so it became a national resistance. In 1978-79, it became clear that what the people were looking for was a religious alternative, they felt that religious, moral and spiritual values were a betterment to society and their way of life.

By covering our bodily beauty, our sex with Islamic dress the woman can show her intellect, her imagination, her creativity, and cover her sexual attraction and leave that out of the social sphere. In that way society is not engaged in issues that should be related to family members who would not exploit that dimension. And in the society she would be able to interact freely, the ability to display her capabilities to work without having the fear of being exploited sexually. This was a decision that was made by the women themselves. It may be that the West just did not understand, or it maybe that they had no intention to believe in another form of living.

It was actually democracy that brought religion into power. The Shah tried to separate church and state - politics and religion, but it was the people who chose religion in the mainstream of their life. So that was exactly democracy in the sense of the word.

Islam as a religion does not in principle advocate repression of thought as long as other peoples rights are not infringed upon, but the definition of freedom is different according to Islamic context.

Freedom is a positive value and can only entail positive values. So that is a major difference in perspective. Freedom is given only in the dimension where growth is conceived, where development exists.

The media could not exploit the women anymore as an object for sex, or as an object of promoting the sales of any commodity. We have women working in media as script writers, camerawomen, actresses, women producing shows, directing movies, but we do not have a single case where a woman is used to promote a product.

[In Iran] films show the love between a man and a woman, but not a man and a woman having sex together. These films do not show women's advancement or human values. We have many films on the role of women outside of the family and inside. Okay, these are limitations, but has anyone tried to understand?

Q: In doing research I have read some feminists who are saying similar things to you, but other feminists who say that the patriarchy of the Islamic structure is hurtful to women, many issues have been cited of how women are exploited within this patriarchal form. How do you see these issues?

Massoumeh: With issue of patriarchy and religion and in particular Islam, you have to go to the basic principles. I go back to the story of creation. The story of creation has serious implications on our outlook on different issues on how we see women as human beings. In the Islamic story of creation, man and woman are created from a single being with no particular emphasis on either sex. Contrary to other religious texts that say that women sinned first, according to the Koran the sin occurred for the both of them. The mistake that they had, they had together, both are asked to repent and they both do repent and both begin a life on earth together.

In essence this shows a major difference in outlook between Islam and other religions. There is only one single version of the Koran throughout the whole world. Interpretations are different, if we refer to the book and make specific references to the book, we would not have any problems.

Women are free to work and earn as a result of their work. There is no such thing as a man dominating the earnings of a woman. Now whether this type of interpretations has occurred later as a result of a particular misogynist view point, that's something else, but according to the text and scriptures a woman keeps what she earns. So we have financial independence, human values which are exactly the same as the man. Her rights to marriage are the same. When we enter the sphere of the family we have equality but we have differences. That was the point which has always been mistaken to result in discrimination. When it's said in the Koran that the woman inherits half of [what] the man [inherits], immediately we have the action that this is discrimination. But we see that when she marries irrespective if she works or not, her husband has to provide her with her daily sustenance. You see, with half of the inheritance that is lost there is somehow compensation with this principle. On the other hand entering marriage does not curtail her freedom, she still has the right to pursue her education and to work.

We have a decree in Islamic jurisprudence, the woman can obtain a salary for working in the home of her husband. That has been recently implemented in the legal framework of the Iranian civil code. That means that when a woman wants to obtain a divorce, she can ask for the years she has worked in her husbands home, she can ask for compensation and she will be accorded.

Q: I don't think many of us know that. That is a very progressive legislation.

Massoumeh: *It is very progressive. Usually divorced women are left with nothing. They don't have youth anymore, they are usually old, they don't have a job, they don't have anything. By religious jurisprudence the woman has the right to ask for divorce, but the principle is that the man is the person who accepts the heaviest responsibility in this contract. He has the heavy burden the women's is a bit more relaxed.*

It's different to the Western concept of marriage it's one person actually accepting the heaviest burden. If the woman works, she has no responsibility to do so. She is doing this for love or sacrifice. That gives it a beautiful esthetics value. Women do this very naturally in Iranian society. So since he has the obligation, according to the basic principle he has the first right to break the contract. But the woman is also given this right, but it is secondary to [the man's] right.

Q: Why then would you say that Muslim feminists are also critical of the issues within the Islamic structure, the family structure, the women's rights structures? For example, the right of the man to beat his wife.

Massoumeh: *That is one specific point in the Koran. It is specific only to where the woman becomes unfaithful to her marriage. Even the interpretations clarify that this is a very specific case and many people believe that this is a psychological threat where women become totally irresponsible. Of course there is abuse. Many men abuse it. On the other hand, we have liberal measures to confront this. We have many cases where men are taken to court in cases of beatings but while I attest to the fact in Islamic societies it is not a common issue.*

Q: You mean in Iran, it's not a common issue?

Massoumeh: *No it is not a common issue in Iranian culture. Again it's how you interpret it. For example, the matter of taking more than one wife, polygamy. That is brought up as somehow contrary to the rights of the first woman. Again this has been taken out of context by the Western media, but not only by the media it is abused and exploited to the interest of the men.*

In the Koran [there are] cases where women need to be taken into the sphere of the family, [for example, due] sometimes to the imbalance of the population. One man should do this not on the basis of his egocentric lust and desire, but he should bring her into the spirit of the family, to help her and her children to overcome the disaster, and financial problems that she may have.

Q: Can he have children by this woman?

Massoumeh: *Yes he can. But again it's a very specific contract. The Koran states that it is very difficult for a man to practice and maintain justice between two people who he might have preference for in certain circumstances and since you cannot practice justice, you should stick to one.*

It is not the general law where man can run after two, three, four different wives. It has been abused. But just because something has been abused, it does not mean that it is basically wrong or detrimental to the woman.

Q: What are the issues happening or that you see currently affecting Iranian women?

Massoumeh: *The issue affecting the Iranian women is the struggle to engage herself in the decision-making process. The women have to be more effective in projecting their particular views, to be able to prove to the administration that it's to the benefit of the whole country to incorporate women's views and concerns at the national level. It is happening more and more as women are becoming more active, more informed as they are developing their strategies at the level of the NGO's, at the level of national machineries. We have two national machineries established in the last three years.*

There is one national machinery at the level of the President's Office, the Bureau on Women's Affairs. She is there as an advisor to the President. There is another machinery, the Socio-Cultural Committee of Women, a senior level committee to plan at the highest level educational and cultural programs related to women. There is also a women's commission related to the Interior Department which is very active in bringing women active in the provinces and rural level into decision making processes, getting their views.

The picture is not as bad as it is being depicted on the outside. There are a lot of things to be done in the basic principles, a lot to be established. We believe principally that a divine religion cannot be androcentric or misogynistic in the true sense of the word. It cannot be because it is something coming from God. God does not see any difference in his creatures, except in the level of sincerity and purity.▲

Massoumeh is married to a man who she describes as her main motivator in her work and is the mother of two sons age 7 and 12 who she says will one day make good husbands as she is already begging to raise so they understand the importance of women's rights.

Hayat, a Muslim feminist is a writer, poet, past director of the Boston Women's Foundation in Boston, Massachusetts, and coordinator for Isis International-Manila Beijing activities. Hayat shares her insights on the issue of feminism and Islam with Isis interviewer Luz Maria Martinez.

L: Tell me a bit about your background. Were you raised Muslim?

H: Yes. I was born a Muslim and grew up in a family that was Muslim. I watched my parents being Muslims and learned the principles of Islam from them but there was no training to be a Muslim. It just happened to be how my family worked. So when I was 12 or 13, I found something was missing from me and I started to learn about Islam by myself. I appreciate my parents for letting me discover the religious experience for myself. I studied Islam and made it a part of me but I also went through the usual, typical cycles, get to college and decide religion isn't for me. Give it all up. Then, you know how it is, you come back to it in a better way.

I'm a practicing Muslim. And I'm a practicing feminist. And I don't see a contradiction.

L: Tell me more why you don't see that contradiction.

H: Maybe it's because of the way I define feminism. I define feminism as an effort by all of us, particularly women, to create a world that is honorable and just. I feel that is exactly what Islam is trying to do as well. The spirit of the revelations in the Koran, is also about how to create a world that is honorable and just. So to me it's the same issue and the same struggle. So I find that it is not a contradiction at all.

L: Many fundamentalists see feminists as a threat to the Muslim way of life. Why is that?

H: Well, I don't know if they even know what feminism is. I think what they are mostly reacting to, the fundamentalists, is what they perceive to be western values being imposed on women. But.. I don't want to



ISLAM AS A SOURCE OF POWER

with Hayat Iman

be sitting here being an apologist for so-called fundamentalists. Let me talk, rather, about the western view of Islam because that is really more to the point. I've lived in the West long enough to be aware that there's a gut reaction as soon as they hear the name Islam.

For instance, when the West looks at the women's struggle within Islam, they tend to focus on the countries or the areas where they feel that women's conditions are really not up to par. However, why are they looking only at countries that they feel are doing negative things? Why not look at the spectrum of Muslim countries? If they did, there wouldn't be a way to stereotype. It's a very complex world with many cultures, many divisions, many other factors, particularly patriarchy, playing a role.

..."I DEFINE FEMINISM AS AN EFFORT BY ALL OF US, PARTICULARLY WOMEN, TO CREATE A WORLD THAT IS HONORABLE AND JUST. I FEEL THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT ISLAM IS TRYING TO DO AS WELL."

L: There seems to be a lot of attacking of the feminist. Whether they be western feminist, or feminist of Muslim countries. I heard from feminist in Indonesia that they are having to struggle with the term feminist, because they are seen as children and men haters, family destroyers. What is the fear?

H: I think it's quite simple. I lived in the U.S. and no one is happy with the term feminism. Even liberated women are having a problem calling themselves feminist. I have never had that problem because I have been very clear from the very beginning what I believe feminism to be. There used to be a definition we all had about creating a world where oppression does not exist. But we are all victims of the tremendous exploitation of the word feminism by the media. You ask anybody what feminism means in the U.S. and they will have a shudder reaction as well, and that is because we have been co-opted. It's been taken away from us and turned to whatever extreme might have been in the women's movement. If you read *Backlash* by Susan Faludi, she talks of this defining description of all feminists burning their bras. But it never happened! This is one example of distortion. It's a way of trivializing women's serious demands for economic opportunity and equity.

I don't think there is a clear understanding of what it is (feminism) but if you take away that label and begin to talk about what women need, what women's rights are, the respect due to women, and the things that make us feel bad-if you talk about it in those terms, I can guarantee you in any discussion all over the world-women would say the same things.

L: Do you think we would be able to agree on the strategies to address those problems?

H: Most probably not. As it should be. For instance, in talking to the feminists here they also were talking about the fact that equal pay for equal work maybe the rallying cry in one society, it may not necessarily be where we are in another society. I think one of the key issues that keeps arising is where women should focus their work. Should it be within the family sphere? or outside the family sphere? I have a very clear opinion on that. First of all I disagree that women's role has lessened in families. All over the world, sometimes in the most difficult circumstances, it is women who are keeping families together. Secondly, I think women's input is desperately needed outside the family, in society itself.

What we need to do really is to create a construct that has our impact on it. That has the female perspective on it, the woman dimension. Participating in that society is not enough, we need to impact it enough to change the conditions.

L: Bringing it back to Muslim teachings, the teachings of the Koran, how would it be different if people followed the teachings?

H: I'd like to point out that the principles behind Islamic inheritance laws underlines equity and women's rights to own property. Islamic teachings encourage literacy for women and support economic activities by women. Now whether men allow them to pursue these activities is another matter.

The Koran is a written revelations that does two very important things: on one hand it gives you spiritual guidance, on the other hand, it gives you ways to conduct a society, That's where the problem comes in. Because in the formulas on how to conduct a society you can end up being very rigid about it. You must read the Koran as elucidating principles. It doesn't tell you exactly what you must do. I think one of the main lacks of the Muslim society is that we have never had the opportunity for women to interpret the Koran. We have never had a women's interpretation of how it should be understood.

L: So you think if woman had the opportunity to look at the teachings and interpret them through a women's perspective things would change profoundly-the way society would carry out?

H: If a woman had a chance to interpret the Koran it means already that things have changed. It means that the control is not only focused in one sphere. It is a more egalitarian society where a woman's view point is appreciated and welcomed.

In the Koran, you know, it says you shouldn't pray because you are menstruating. This has been interpreted as thinking of menstruation as something dirty, negative and unclean. Like in most societies men think of it that way. But I think of it in a totally different way. I think women are not supposed to be praying when they are menstruating because they are already doing God's work. They are already busy looking after themselves. It's like 'okay, you don't have to bother about it right now' because you are already involved in something that is holy.

L: Tell me more of how you see how the west is misinterpreting women's choices within Islam?

H: I am a Muslim woman and I have had so many western women tell me to my face 'yes you are oppressed', and they are sure of it and no matter how much I resist and say, well no I don't think I am, they just can't believe it.

L: Why do you think they say that?

H: Well that's a question they will have to interpret. But, I think it's flowing out of a general negative feeling of Islam. I have done a lot of reading and talking about it in the west. For instance if you read about a Muslim who may have shot a few people, the headline is bound to talk about his Muslim background. But you have murders everyday in all kind of religious settings, but you don't talk about the Hindus who are killing Buddhist or the Christians who are going around shooting people in McDonalds. You don't usually associate every negative action with a religion and blame the religion for it. But there is an unthinking way of doing that when it comes to Islam. I think people find Islam very threatening. In fact what is happening is that the capitalist society needs an enemy.

You have to keep up a hyped up sense of danger and enemy out there so you can sell your arms. The arms industry is very hidden but probably the largest business going in the world right now. This was satisfied during the Cold War. I now find that they are trying to do that by creating a new enemy. They are very consciously creating Islam as the enemy. I think any typical knee-jerk reactions women feel are somewhat broader than just the woman issue. Women must be careful that they are not getting sucked into this larger manipulation that is happening.

L: I guess in a way it does not behove us to get into arguments like you are a feminist of the West or you are a feminist of the south. Engaging in these conflicts among feminists regardless of religious background seem useless when it's an overall problem of men saying how the world is run and we (women) don't have much say on how it works and is developed.

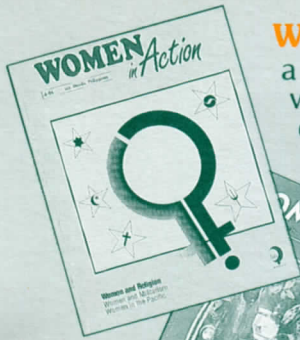
H: I think women need to find comradeship with each other because what we want is a just and honorable society. If we can find enough allies in men who can support that process then we will be able to do it. Part of that is allowing women the opportunity to participate on this dialogue of justice. This is not a problem of a Muslim woman or a Christian women neither of a western feminist nor an eastern feminist. It is a world wide phenomena between men and women.

But having said that, how we deal with it in each society is going to have to be on our own terms. I don't think it's very useful for western feminists to undercut the source of strength for us Muslims women. They shouldn't do that because if that's our source of power ...that's where we get our strength to make changes. It's not from being extracted from that process. Women are not stupid, women in Islam will know what's just and not just. I don't want to give up Islam as a framework. I believe Islam has justice, has potential for me and for all people if they would only look at it. Why should I give that up? I want to struggle within that construct.▲

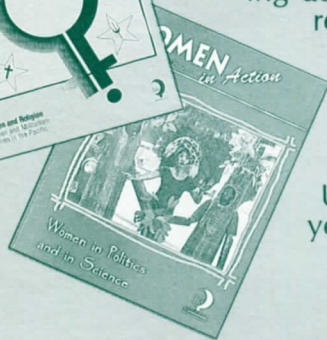
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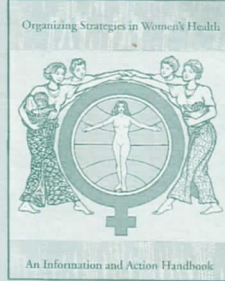


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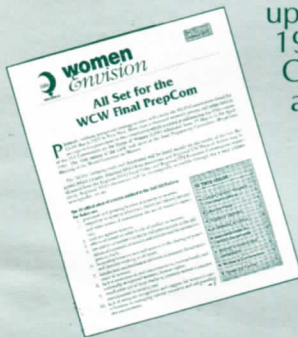


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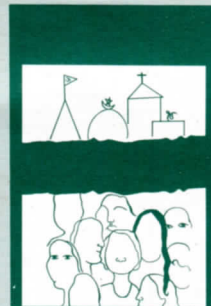


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