

**WOMEN WORKFORCE AND THE PATTERN
OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE
REPUBLIC OF KOREA, 1962-1996**

**Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of**

Master of Philosophy

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This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "**WOMEN WORKFORCE AND THE PATTERN OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA, 1962 - 1996**", submitted by **Ms. Levis Leivon** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of **Master of Philosophy (M. Phil)** of the University, is an original work and has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this University or any other University to the best of my knowledge.

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Dedicated to my dearest parents...

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CHAPTER - I

CHAPTER I

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITION OF KOREAN WOMEN: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

“What peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she... a free and autonomous being like all human creatures nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the other” Simone de Beavoir.¹

Korea is one of the most homogenous nations in the world with its distinct ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity. However, the perception, pride and projection of its identity did not prevent it from duly acknowledging the enormous influence and impact of the world view, the ideas, the values and the institutions from China especially Confucianism. In terms of the spectrum of ideas, the scope, the spread and the sustained nature of the influence of Confucianism in Korea, there was hardly any parallel with China's neighbours.

¹ Cited in Harold Hakwon Sunoo and Dong Soo Kim, *Korean Women in a Struggle For Humanisation*,(The Korean Christian Scholars Publications,no.2, Spring,1993),p.1.

Confucianism was introduced into the Amnok River (Yalu) basin area in the 4th century A.D. and spread to other parts of the Peninsula. In the 14th century it was elevated to the status of the state's official doctrine and during the Yi-dynasty 1392-1910.²

The Confucian frame work, the norms and ethics, the centrality of the hierarchical, differentiated and iniquitous social order governed not only the Koreans personal behaviour but also their economy and polity. Given the Confucian - oriented social order based on hierarchical and iniquitous relations, the place and role of women too varied according to the segment of the population in which they found themselves. Confucius had probably very little to say about women per se.

According to Confucian customs, once married, a woman had to leave her parent's household permanently and she occupied the lowest position in her husband's family. she was often abused and mistreated until the birth of a son gave her some status in her husband's family.

² For details on Confucianism, see Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation: Study of Society and Ideology*, (Council of East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, 1992), p . 29 - 178. Also see, Peter H. Lee, ed., *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization*, Volume 1, Chapter 12.

Women were required to accept all the rules, which implied inferior status. Through out her life, a woman's duty was to follow the three obediences:

1. Before marriage to obey the father.
2. After marriage to obey the husband.
3. In the event of the husband's death to obey her son.³

Regarding these three obediences women had no say, but to obey them absolutely.

"Wives of farmers and workmen were obliged to work in the fields and the shops, and of necessity were permitted much greater freedom than their higher born sisters."⁴

Women were excluded from formal education during the Yi dynasty because it was believed that educated and intelligent girls might harm their families and ignore household affairs. The female members of the family were also to obey the command of order by males without any

³ Harold Hakwon Sunoo and Dong Soo Kim, no.1, P.12.

⁴ *ibid*, p.23.

hesitation. Houses were divided into male and female section, females were not allowed to enter the male section unless they were given permission by the master of the house.

In marriage, marriage within the same family was not allowed. Marriage was between equal social status. Girls were betrothed in their early childhood by arrangement between parents. The price of the bride was paid. Polygamy was in practice if the wife had not borne sons. It was only in 1894, by the Kobo reform, that full freedom of marriage without censure was accorded to a widow.⁵ Despite these restrictions, remarriage seem to have been quite common in the society. Although chaste widow hood was regarded as “beautiful custom” throughout the dynasty voices were raised infavour of abolishing the anti-marriage law.⁶

Women took full responsibility of family affairs and she was responsible for the education of the children in the family. Specially, for the girls, as there was no educational

⁵ Soon Man Rhim, *The status of Women in Traditional Korean Society* ,p.13.

⁶ Martina Deuchler, *The Tradition: Women during the Yi Dynasty*, in Sandra Mattielle, ed., *Virtues in Conflict: Tradition and the Korean Woman Today*, (Samhwa Publishing, Korea, 1977), p.40.

institution till the age of marriage, women played the role of a teacher, mother and caretaker with practical experience in family life and household affairs.

The women also took an active part in the family economy. She was expected to be an able and careful manager of the family finances. However, during the Yi-dynasty period, importance was given to the woman's kin group in economic as well as political affairs, but not for the commoner and the low-born females.

An institute for training of entertaining women was established during the early Koryo period and produced a number of trained women in traditional songs, dances, and music compositions. These women earned their living by entertaining the king as well as the diplomatic emissaries.

In the Yi dynasty the commoner were the backbone of the economy, but their economic condition and social status remained miserable. Their social and educational activities were restricted.⁷ So, they generally confined themselves to their farm work or routine task, household

⁷ Yung-Chung Kim, *Women of Korea: A History from Ancient Times to 1945*, (Ewha University Press, Korea, 1979), p.55.

duties and child rearing. But they probably had more equality with men than the upper class women. They were active participants in agricultural labour. During this period, silk was an important industry in which women took a prominent part, especially in the country side which enhanced their economic status and improved their living standard.⁸ However, the low-born and the commoner had dissatisfaction with their destiny and often revolted, specially because of their capitalizing on the social disorder brought about by various military coups.

Although most women were engaged in agricultural field, their economic contribution was particularly significant. Clothes and foodstuffs were sent to support the elites. Taxes were paid in clothes. Entertainers and slaves were essential to the nation's economic and social development till the colonial period.

According to the stipulation in the Kyongguk Taejon, male and female offspring were both entitled to inherit the father's property.⁹ In the case of a deceased son or

⁸ *ibid*,p.57.

⁹ *ibid*,p.101.

daughter, that share was to be given to his/her descendants. The most valuable items of inherited property at that time were servants and land.¹⁰ Since the Koryo period, an equal right to property inheritance was already recognized by the law, though there was a difference in law and practice. It seems that property inheritance rights were separate from the right of performing ancestor worship ceremonies and of succeeding in the family line.

The Korean customs of inheritance was different from Japan and China. In Japan only the eldest son inherited property. In China, although equal distribution was the rule, only men inherited.¹¹ But in Korea, inherited property was equally distributed between men and women during the Koryo and Yi-dynasty. However, there was consideration in inheritance property depending on whether one was a legitimate child or not.

During this period, law concerning property inheritance was more serious against the illegitimate than against women. The women's right to inherit must have originated during the traditional marriage custom of the

¹⁰ Soon Man Rhim, no.5, p.20.

¹¹ opcit, no.9, p.102.

husband moving to his bride's home for a certain period of time. As the new marriage custom where the bride moved into the bridegroom's home became more popular, the financial condition of a woman did not get as much attention as before. During the Yi dynasty, property rights of a married couple were stipulated joint ownership by law.¹² Even though it was a joint ownership between the couples, the women hardly exercised the right because the authority within the family rested upon the man.

In the Yi society, formal educational system of women's academic learning was supposed to be improper and contrary to the way a woman as mother and wife should behave because it was thought that an intelligent wife would harm her family and society by neglecting household affairs. Though women were not educated, they were taught how to manage home, self discipline, courtesy, propriety to their husband's family.¹³ They really lived a sacrificial life because a moral woman was an honour to her father. Woman who were interested in academic learning became professional entertainers or educated but

¹² op.cit,no.5,p.20

¹³ Cho Kyung Won, *Overcoming Confusion Barriers: Changing Educational Opportunities for Women in Korea*, in Joyce Gelb and marian Lief palley,ed., *Women of Japan and Korea:Continuity and change*,(Temple University Press,Philadelphia,1994),p.210

they were looked down upon in the society. In the later part of Yi dynasty they even warned that, women's reading books may bring evils, because reading was mainly for men. Eventually, they became dissatisfied with such submission, and by the time Korea began to move into modern times, some Korean women were ready for more freedom and poised to overcome this Confucian view of women.¹⁴

The beginning of education in the modern era for Korean women started in the early nineteenth century, which was partly because of the rise of Christianity in Korea.

The Treaty of Kangwha in 1876 was a turning point for the Koreans. The signing of the treaty enabled Korea to get exposure to the world outside, thus putting an end to its "isolation" and feudal state. Soon after, Japanese and westerner, mainly missionaries, poured into the land, the Korean society began to feel the influence of modernization.

¹⁴ cited in, *ibid*, p.211.

The arrival of the westerners began with the coming of the Catholic missionaries in Korea. In spite of repeated persecution, the catholic missionary work expanded, though it was forced to go underground. Hence, Catholicism could hardly organize a new educational system or participate in the enlightenment movement.¹⁵ However, catholicism began to spread among the Yangban and among the people of other social levels, which helped to break down class barriers between the sexes . In the meantime, protestants also came to spread their Christian doctrine.

The propagation of Christianity successfully brought about some changes in the attitudes towards the relationship between man and woman. It also brought about socio- political changes and promoted the social status of women. One of the most important roles played by the missionaries was in the education of women.

After the treaty of Kanghai in 1876, several missions were sent to Japan on observation tour. This group of fifty eight specialists and professional men spent seventy days

¹⁵ *ibid*,p.210.

touring Japan, visiting universities, normal schools, girls schools, agricultural and other vocational schools.¹⁶

They were really inspired on seeing these schools.. Shortly after , the new system of education was adopted in Korea directly from the western countries. In 1886, Korea's first school for women Ewha Haktang was established by Mrs. Scranton, a missionary.¹⁷ Its aim was to provide thorough Christian education and to make better Korean women. However, Korean parents did not want to send their daughters to schools run by missionaries. Because of this the reason Mrs. Scranton experienced difficulties in letting students in the first year.

In the late 19th century, new voices were heard advocating the improvement of women's status - the symbolic beginning of the women's modernization movement. The movement was fostered to a considerable degree by the emergence of Tonghak (eastern learning).¹⁸ Tonghak rejected the Confucianists obsession with the chastity of widows and demanded that women be permitted

¹⁶ *ibid*,p.213.

¹⁷ Park Yong - Olk, The Women's Modernization Movement in Korea,in Sandra Mattiele,No.6,p.100.

¹⁸ *ibid*,p.99.

to get remarried. Tonghak was oriented toward the peasants and taught its precepts through folk religion. Women acted as leaders and fighters in the Tonghak rebellion of 1894 against the external interference of Japan and the western nations and against the internal oppressions of the Confucius social system. Tonghak and catholicism did not successfully change the status of Korean women, they were the beginnings of a slow but steady move in the direction of women's equality.¹⁹

On 3rd February 1904, a protocol was signed between Japan and Korea by virtue of which Korea practically allied itself with Japan.²⁰ In 1910 Korea was annexed by Japan. Japan wanted to carry out its colonial policy which was possible only through education. Japan also planned to assimilate Korea culturally, politically and economically. Efforts were made to impose upon the Korean society new legal concepts under the Japanese regime. But the Koreans did not easily assimilate them. And those connected with the status of women in particular showed a tendency for survival. The position of women and their role in society

¹⁹ *ibid*,p.100.

²⁰ Lillais Horton Underwood and Lellei Horton Egan, *Fifteen Years Among The Top Knots*,(Royal Asiatic Society,Korea Branch, 1987),p.283.

was increasingly scrutinized and more and more women broke out of the domestic confines as a result of better education and employment. As mass education expanded the demand for women's education increased, and many women's organizations whose purpose was the education of women, were founded. Many women came to realize that education was the only way to save their country. But it was not as easy as they had thought. At the college level, the total enrollment in the college programme in graduation class in 1915 was only five.²¹ Seeing the scarcity of students, most missionaries were conscious that it was not the right time to open college for women although higher education for women was necessary. Only after a continuous struggle to spread education, "the government recognized the college course at Ewha as a regular college in 1925."²² Until the end of the Japanese rule, Ewha women's college served as the only liberal arts-college in Korea.

Japan, having planned to assimilate Korea culturally as well as politically, used education as the most important method for carrying out its colonial policy. But the

²¹ Yung Chung Kim, no.7, p.230.

²² *ibid*, p.231.

discriminatory policy was even more noticeable in women's education, which was perhaps the least concern of the government during this period. Despite the fact that the population of women was only slightly less than that of men, less than ten thousand girls were in high school in 1939 and in the primary level boys were three times higher than that of girls.²³ Besides, there were no government institutes of higher education for women, the only ones available were private institutions.

²³ *ibid*,p.234.

**THE DISTRIBUTION OF KOREAN STUDENTS
BY SEX IN 1939.**

		Girls	Boys	Total
1.	Primary school	306,000	912,067	1,218,067
2.	High school	9,537	19,343	28,880
3.	Professional schools	915	25,240	26,155
4.	Colleges and Teacher schools	1,131	15,182	16,313
5.	Universities	-	201	206

It is very clear from the table that a discriminatory policy was taking place in education.

There was also discrimination among Korean women teachers and Japanese women teachers. Korean teachers received only forty seven Yen while Japanese teachers were paid eighty one Yen. Besides discrimination it was the policy of the Japanese government not to encourage women to get higher education. "The only available women's college Ehwa, was ordered to close by the educational

decree of wartime emergency in 1943",²⁴ which took the whole community by surprise.

As a part of the mobilization plan, students were assigned to production jobs. They were sent to battlefield under the slogan of "work is teaching and teaching is training".²⁵

As a result, the education system collapsed. The schools were no longer institutes of learning but a place of training for the Koreans to become a source of labour for Japan's imperialist ambition. Women were also given military training as apart of education and all the necessary virtues of being a Japanese were taught as moral lessons in the class.

Although the establishment of women's education was painstaking, the consequence was highly expedient and it helped the Korean society to prepare for a democratic government.

With the development of education, Korean women started participating in the modern educational system as

²⁴ *ibid*,p.239.

²⁵ Under Governor-General Kaiso Ordinance concerning the mobilization of students in 1947.

students or as teachers. Many women started choosing their own career. During the same period, modern industry also began to absorb female labourers from among the less educated. Even the agricultural labour force was channeled into industry, though it was limited.

Nevertheless, "under the labour mobilization system in 1939 hundreds of thousands of skilled workers were mobilized and sent, first to various industrial sites in Korea and Japan," later they were sent to the theatres of war in the pacific.²⁶ Prior to this period, that is in the 1920's, there was the plundering of Korea's rice production".²⁷ Huge quantities of Korean rice were sent to Japan to overcome a severe crisis in Japan's own food supply brought on by maladjustment in its rapidly industrializing economy. Since rice exports to Japan exceeded the targeted amount, Korean consumers had to suffer despite bumper rice harvests. During this period Japan not only looked Korea as a food grain supplier but also as a market for Japanese goods. Japan was also interested in heavy industry in the 1930s, cheap labour being one of the

²⁶ Andrew C. Nahm, *A History of Korea people:Korea Tradition and Transformation*,(Hollym International Corporation,Korea),p.233.

²⁷ Ki Baik Lee, *A New History of Korea*,Translated by Edward J. Shultz and Edward Wagner (Cambridge,Mass,Harvard,1984),p.347.

components which comprised mostly of women. "Mineral production too increased at no less a pace than the manufacturing industries".²⁸

Japan introduced several measures for the mobilization of the Korean labour force. Korean farmers were compelled to deliver their rice directly to the government. "Many Koreans were pressed into labour force, conscripted for work in coal mines, in munitions factories and at Japanese bases in forward areas."²⁹

"Even young, unmarried women were mobilised in so-called volunteer brigades and forced to serve as "comfort girls" for the Japanese frontline soldiers. In the work of Scott Swanner on Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's frustrating colonial narratives; writing and the body in *Dictee*, mention that the female body was manipulated too. In other word as a comforter (*wianbu*) or as a prostitute (*maech'un*)".³⁰ However, John Lei argue, that prostitution does not arise simply out of men's desire or deviant women's willingness to offer herself but because of underlying structural

²⁸ *ibid*,p.352.

²⁹ *ibid*,p.353.

³⁰ Scott Swanner, 'Frustrating Colonial Narratives: Writing And The Body Indicted', *Asian Journal of Women Studies*, Vol.3, no.2, 1997, pp.130-52.

conditions and concrete social organization of gender exchange, rather than focusing on the social psychology of the individual involved. John Lei also emphasis stratification and international political economy. He opines that it is important to note that a particular group of men controls a particular group of women".³¹ Furthermore, international political economy influences the domestic economy. According to Enloe, the salience of gender is not only in analyzing international relations but is also significant in international politics for domestic gender relation. For example, in the case of 20th century Korea, Japanese colonial domination, the U.S. military presence and the post- war inequality between Japan and Korea, all contributed to the creation of reproduction of disparate social organization of sexual work.³²

The introduction of industrial technology through a small scale factory system also created a demand for a cheap female labor force. So advertisements were flashed in newspapers to recruit women. A number of women took

³¹ John Lei works on *The Transformation of Sexual Workers in the 20th Century in Korea*, for further detail, see Epeilman's, *Sexual Work On 20th Century Korea*,(ILO Publishing,1988),p.186.

³² *ibid*,p.311.

up jobs in textiles factories which were established in the initial stage of Japan's annexation of Korea. Some women were even taken to factories in Japan.

According to the census report in the year 1930, "Women workers in the textile industries increased to 189,764, comprising 23.1 per cent of the entire female employment, excluding those in agriculture"³³

Another important group of women after 1910 was that of office girls. When girls high schools started producing graduate girls, the employment of office girls also started. The first company in Korea to advertise for office girls was IL Han tile company: "needed girls with high school education aged fourteen to eighteen."³⁴ The next recruitment was in 1912 when Japan set up the Land Investigation Bureau in the Government General in which 130 men and 15 women graduates of high schools were selected to be office workers in the drawing section. However, women mostly took charge of graphic design and drawing.

³³ Yung Chung Kim, no.7, p.273.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p.274.

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Women's appointment in office work started relatively late in Korea. In the 1910-1920's there were very few women office workers compared with the situation, in later decades in which office work is the most prevalent occupation among the white collar working women. Women who worked during this enlightenment period in private or public offices were not looked on with favour. However, breaking the tradition by holding a job well into their marriageable years, made a great change in the lives of Korean women.

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There was also a great influx of women workers from rural areas during the Japanese colonialism. Many were dislocated from their land that led to migration to industrial areas. As rural women were dispossessed of land, they were deprived of income and of jobs. In order to earn their living they took up jobs in the industrial areas and in small sector industries like the textiles industries.

The educated Korean women at that time, however, sought different objectives in women education. Some women students abroad wrote about nationalism and equality. Some of them organized an underground society

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called *Yosong Aequuk Tongji Hoe* (Patriotic women in League).³⁵ This group was comprised of women graduates of Ewha University. They even made plans to send representatives to the Peace Conference to be held in Paris in January 1919. Therefore, it was not a coincidence that women took an active part in the March First Movement in 1919. The period from March 1, 1919 to December 1919 showed that all together 471 women were arrested,³⁶ which meant a large number of women took part in the March First movement.

Christian women's public participation in the independence movement was also noteworthy. They also began to collect funds for the imprisoned's families who were active in the political activities. The Korean educated women further collected funds for resistance fighters and inspired an anti - Japanese movement. Women from Methodist Church, like Pak Sung - IL, Yi Song-Sil, Son Chin-Sil, and Ch-oe Sindok also started Independence Movement.³⁷ Another group, Choson Women Temperance

³⁵ op.cit,no.33,p.260.

³⁶ Chong - Sik Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism*,(University of California press,1965),p.

³⁷ Yung Chung Kim,no.7,p.

Society to promote purification of family life and world peace through temperance and chastity was also organized. Therefore, the period of women's movement, was not simply for one individual liberation from stereotyped feminine roles but also for their collective social and political participation in the contemporary period of their country.

In the 1920s and 1930s the people of Korea faced many serious hardships. In the rural areas a large number of farmers were forced to give up their land and become tenants, while in the cities the problem of factory workers multiplied. In the schools there was serious discrimination against the Koreans by the Japanese. In order to solve the problem the Koreans had to find a new way. As labour and peasants reacted positively, the Chosen Labour Alliance was organized in 1924.³⁸

Another problem was low wages and low cost which became one of the most exploitative weapons of the Japanese colonial system. The Korean working women's wage was but a very meagre allowance which hardly met

³⁸ Park Yong - Ock, The Women's Modernization Movement in Korea, in Sandra Mattielli, ed., no. 6, p. 107.

their living expenses. On the top of that, there was unequal treatment. On an average, an adult male Korean worker received two won a day but a women received one won, Whereas a Japanese male worker received two won and fifty nine Chon and Japanese women get one won and thirty two chon a day.³⁹ Because of such unequal treatment of Korean working women, they organized strikes throughout the country which became a major social problem. Consequently, the women's movement developed on the line of western model. They concluded that the Korean women movement must take the economic problems of the Korean women as its central theme.

The women's movement continued through out the thirty five years of Japanese occupation with two objectives. One was to try to modernize the Korean women, and thereby free her from the rigid constricting Confucian orthodoxy that kept her in a lower status, through education and industrialization for economic independence so that she could maintain her freedom. Two, colonialism also demanded other roles by the women. The Korean women

³⁹ *ibid.*

acted as an active participant, as patriots, equal in status to men.

According to the census reports of 1920 and 1940, a drastic change took place. The number of economically active women decreased by over 700,000. According to them, the rate of labor force participation dropped from 54.4 percent to 36.4 per cent and the percentage of women in the total labor force was reduced from 34.6 per cent to 38.74 per cent. During this period Korean women workers remained as agricultural workers, comprising one third of the farming population. However, the number of women agricultural workers decreased by almost 500,000 between 1930 and 1940, industrialization and immigration being other reasons besides depriving of land by the Japanese.

In the manufacturing sector, there was a great reduction of women workers at around 220,000. The decrease in the number of women workers in manufacturing industries can be observed in the table given.

TABLE
EMPLOYED WOMEN IN INDUSTRIES
1930 - 1940

	1930		1940	
	Employment by 1000	Female Percentage	Employment by 1000	Female percentage
Agriculture	2631.0(79.8)	34.3	2.172.5 (83.1)	31.9
Fishing	21.6 (07)	18.9	15.8 (0.6)	12.2
Mining	0.7 (-)	2.5	5.6 (0.2)	3.5
Manufacture	278.6 (8.6)	53.0	51.2 (2.0)	12.0
Commerce	192.1 (5.9)	40.1	144.0 (56)	26.8
Transportation	0.6 (-)	0.8	3.0 (0.1)	2.7
Social Service	12.6 (0.4)	11.5	14.04 (0.6)	8.4
Domestic Service	58.5 (2.7)	75.8	131.8 (5)	78.2
Miscellaneous	66.1 (2.0)	17.6	66. (2.6)	12.4
Total	3.291 (100.09)	34.6	2.605.1(000.0)	28.7

Source: Census 1930, pp.246-47, Census 1940, pp.72.73.

The Korean society and economy experienced a great difficulty from 1945 until about 1960. Many important changes also took place in the post 1945 period. The concept of equality between men and women was written into the 1948 constitution but the most significant gains occurred in education.⁴⁰ Educational opportunities for women also increased. Korea underwent many drastic changes and began to realize the need for modernization and enlightenment. GDP growth averaged 3.9 per cent from 1953-55 to 1960-62. Industry grew at 11.2 per cent a year, significant by the third world standard.⁴¹

As economy grew and there were changes in the socio-political arena, the number of economically active women was supposed to increase but instead, it decreased as the society and economy experienced great difficulties, which led to heavy economic dependence on the US for aid, particularly after the total destruction in the Korean war (1950-1953). Despite some import substitution policies in industries and other reconstruction effort, almost 20

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Choi, Status of The Family And Motherhood For Korean Women, in Joyce Gelb and Marian Lief Palley, ed., no.13, p.

⁴¹ R.R.Khrishnan, *The State and Economic Development In Korea: Korea-India Tryst With Change and Development*, (Banejee for Khama, 1993), p.123

percent of the labour force remained unemployed, and more were under-employed.

The first national census after the war reported that in 1955, 63.7 percent of women aged 14 and above were economically active and of 25.2 percent of them were unemployed. Economic recovery was slow; the average growth of per capita GNP was merely 1 percent per year; and the economy was kept from collapsing only through massive economic assistance by the United States.

The primary policies of the period were aimed at ensuring the population's survival, reconstructing economic and social infrastructure, rebuilding industrial facilities and stabilizing prices. Little attention was paid to long-term economic development during this period.

CHAPTER II

CHAPTER 2

THE NEW PARADIGM OF DEVELOPMENT.

Korea witnessed profound and far reaching political economic and social changes with the seizure of power by the military under the leadership of Major Gen Park Chung Hee on 16 May 1961. Soon it became apparent that to consolidate the hold of the military the Park regime would launch a new strategy of economic development. The two inseparable aspects of the strategy came to be known as export - led industrialization and planned economic development through five year plans beginning in 1962.

Korea achieved a remarkable economic development through planned strategy from the First Five years Plan i.e. for the period 1962-1966. In the early 1960s, Korea's economic condition was similar to those of any resource poor, low income developing country. This was because of the massive inflows of foreign capital during the Post Korean War reconstruction and economic stabilization phase.¹ The

¹Tae-Ho Yoo, The Development of the Korean Economy during the last Three Decades, in Dong - Se Cha, Kwang Suk Kim, Dwight H Perkins,ed., *The Korean Economy 1945 - 1995: Performance and vision for the 21st Century*, (Korean Development Institute, 1997) p. 47.

government favoured import - substitution industries which produced basic materials such as cement and fertilizer in the beginning. It later adopted an out-ward looking growth strategy and promoted labor - intensive export industries such as textile and plywood.² The government also confiscated all the business assets owned by the Japanese before the liberation and turn into a massive ownership share of the economy.

The First Five year Plan's goal was to break out of poverty and consolidate the foundation of a self supporting economy.³ The government took immediate initiatives to improve the infrastructure through huge investment and to find financing for large industrial investment by those private firms that were willing to follow the priorities set in the Plan⁴.

In the First Five year Plan the government made efforts to check inflation to mobilize domestic savings, increase production and exports of manufacturing goods. The most urgent task was to develop social overhead capital such as electric power, transportation and communication, which

² Ibid. p-42.

³ Korea development Institute, "*Korea's Economy Past and Present*" (1975) p.

⁴ Lawrence B. Krause, *The Political Economy of South Korea; Fifty Years of Macroeconomic Management, 1945-1995*, in Dong - Se Cha, Kwang Suk Kim, Dwight H Perlins, ed., no.1, p.113

formed foundation of industrialization.⁵ It also prescribed outreaching industrialization strategy with an emphasis on the development of leading industries and on the removal of obstacle that obstructed industrial development.⁶ Importance was also given to investment in infrastructure and to the development of key industries like fertilizers, cement and steel industries. Building of roads and bridges, restructuring of Ports and construction of other communication facilities were given immediate attention. Besides , the government mobilized resources for developing energy, industries, such as coal, electric power and oil refining etc. The Plan was successful in achieving rapid economic growth, but by then many problems and disappointments were visible. ⁷

The Second Five Year Plan was launched for 1967-1972. Its goals were to push industrialization with full speed, to expand the foundation of agricultural production through farm land consolidation and expansion of irrigation facilities, to maintain a high price policy and to carry out special projects for the improvement of farms and fishing

⁵ Korea inflation". 1975. Korea Development

⁶ Sang Woo Nam & Jun Il Kim, "Macro Economic Policies and Evolution", in Dong - Se Cha, K. S. Kim, D. H. Perkins (eds.) , no.1, pp 149-150

⁷ Several reform measures were undertaken to correct the imbalances which included massive devaluation in 1964 an interest rate reform in 1965; tax reform in 1966-1967. Lawrence B. Krause, no.4, p.113.

incomes in order to equalize living standards with the industrial sectors. ⁸

Between 1961-1972, there was a change in industrial structure. The share of primary production was cut to half and manufactured goods became the largest originator of GNP in 1973. The government also lowered the price of the fertilizer for the farmers to lessen their burden and increase their income in order to raise their standard of life.⁹

The government push forward to the Second Five Year Plan on the foundation of industrialization achieved during the First Five Year Plan. Mobilization of investment was a prime move during this period. Some heavy industries such as steel, machinery and petrochemicals were setup. Farmers, encouraged by the increases in the supply and the improvement in distribution of fertilizers paid greater attention to the modernization of farming through intensive fertilization and technical improvement.

However, in the early 1970s, the Korea economy was facing internal and external problems. Following the oil shock, industrialized countries raised protective barrier against light manufactured goods from developing

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *op.cit.* p. 117.

countries. China and other developing countries were a threat to Korea's continued export. These adverse conditions forced the state to create a self reliant economy and for that changes were made in the industrial strategies. It had to diversify its industries.

The Third Five Year plan had the objectives of the dynamic development of the rural economy, sustained increase in export and the establishment of Heavy and Chemical Industries (HCIs) in order to avoid dependency on imported raw materials and intermediate goods and to realize the goal of self reliant economy. In 1973, under President Park Chung Hee's leadership the government announced Heavy and Chemical Industry Development Plan to increase the share of HCI in export. The HCI drive made big business, grew dramatically in the 1970s. It created an environment in which active participation in the HCIs targeted by the government was a must for any firm who wished to grow.¹⁰ As a result some technologically advanced industries began to appear in Korea. The plan also gave some priorities to balance regional development. The aim of the consequent HCI was to promote heavy industries like

¹⁰ Susan Mac Manus, "The three E's of Economic Development and the Hardest is equity: Thirty years of economic develop planning in the ROK, (I) and (II), *Korean journal* (Seoul, August – September 1990), p. 10. Also see Kamal Kishore Panda, "Role of High Education in Industrial Development of the Republic of Korea since 1962". (unpublished dissertation), 1998.

Iron and steel, nonferrous metals, ship building, industrial machinery, electronics and petrochemicals.

The number of subsidiaries of the 30 largest chaebols increase from 126 in 1970 to 429 in 1979, and many of the new subsidiaries made entry into new business. "For Chaebols participating in the HCI drive the rapid industrial reconstruction meant quick expansion through diversification into new industries, which was mostly financed by policy loans from the state controlled banks and equity investment from other subsidiaries with the same group."¹¹ During the plan, the government also undertook the new village movement, the "Seamul Movement" to drastically improve the income and living conditions of the rural people and to overcome the rural urban imbalance in growth.¹²

During the third plan period, the growth rate of heavy and chemical industries was 10.1 percent per annum while that of manufacturing and mining sector was 18.1 percent per annum on an average. The share of HCI in the manufacturing sector increased to 45.6 percent and the share of export of HCI to the total export was 29.8 percent

¹¹ Seond Min Too & Sung Soo Lee "Evolution of Industrial Organization and the Policy Response in Korea: 1945-1995, in n. 4, p.436.

¹² Byung Nak Song, *The Rise of the Korean Economy*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 137.

by the end of 1976.¹³ The third plan was still a success despite the disruption caused by the first oil shock in 1973, as the Korean economy grew by 11.2 percent per annum against a projected annual growth rate of 8.6 percent.¹⁴ The plan achieved considerable success in diversification of its market, of which the growth of construction industry in the Middle East and Europe was an important aspect.

When the fourth Five Year Plan (1977-1981) was launched, Korea was undergoing the crisis of balance of payment, however, the development of electronics industry by the private sector, set the pace of progress. During this plan import-substitution of computers and semi-conductor also accelerated which was out of Korea's areas of industries till 1976, though comparatively the plan was not satisfactory to the domestic demand.

In the Fourth Five Year Plan period the growth in the manufacturing and mining sector decreased to 10.3 percent per annum while there was a sharp increase in the growth of HCI i.e. 51.8 per cent in 1981. The amount of export by HCI was 45.3 per cent of the total output. This growth resulted because of high export growth in iron, steel and ship

¹³ Kamal Kishore Panda, n.11, p.

¹⁴ *Federation of Korea Industries, Korea's Economic Policies: 1945-1985*, (Seoul: The Hankook Ilbo Co. Ltd., 1987), p. 12.

building industries. Over all performance of the Fourth Five Year Plan was unsatisfactory, and the plan to promote technology intensive industry was also not much successful.

When the Fifth Five Year Plan was launched, Korea had already emerged as one of the most rapidly developing industrial and trading countries. The basic objectives of this plan (1982-1986) were stability, efficiency and balance. But the initial phase of 1980's indicated a very slow economic growth with high inflation and rapidly increasing foreign debts.

Therefore, the plan aimed at increasing productivity and international competitiveness through establishing skill intensive manufacturing sector by coordinating development of metallurgical industries, emphasizing domestic demand, guaranteeing normal operation to capital goods industries in a bid to ensure their continued development. Further, the plan emphasized for the first time the principle of a market economy encouraging private initiative and creativity.¹⁵ As a social development plan creation of sufficient employment opportunities became another target. In order to solve all these problems the plan began to give priority to skilled labour intensive industries. The economy grew at an average

¹⁵ Government of the Republic Korea: The Fifth Five Years Economic and Social Development Plan (Seoul: 1982), p. 82.

industrial policies were changed from being developmental to regulatory and limited in scope.

The sixth five year Economic and Social Development plan (1987-91) looked beyond developing an economic structure for self sustaining growth and represented the first phase of laying the foundation for achieving the status of an advanced state in the 21st century,

The three major objectives of the Sixth Plan were: (a) competition between government and major sections of society to establish an economic and social system for all people to realize their potential fully (b) Co-operation between Korean business leaders and workers to restructure industry and improve technology level. (c) promotion of balanced regional development by providing incentives to establish a fair market order. In the period, the major contents of policy reforms included the reduction of government regulation constraining growth of enterprises and intensive promotion of liberalization of finance imports and foreign exchange.¹⁹

The overall economic growth rate at the end of the plan period was 8.4 percent and industrial production growth rate was 8.3 percent. The share of light industrial products

¹⁹ Byung Nak Song, n. 10, p. 139.

declined and that of heavy and chemical industries products increased.

The Seventh Five Year Economic and Social Development Plan for the period 1993 to 1997. This plan focused much on internationalizing the economy. Incentives were offered to improve science and technology in order to equip the already existing skilled labour force with more advanced technological know-hows required for the Information Technology (IT) sector so that Korea could ensure itself a safer place in the increasingly competitive global market. Liberalization of domestic market with five trade principles was emphasized. Hence, R & D in industries were promoted and sufficient number of engineers, scientists and technicians were produced. This enabled the growth and up - gradation of the computer, semiconductor and telecom industries. All these factors combined with other socio-economic properties (in terms of its GNP, per capita income, literacy, health indicators etc.) attributed to what could be describe as a spectacular and impressive achievement for Korea, the joining of Korea as a member in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1996. ²⁰ In the seventh five year

²⁰ Korean Annual,(Seoul), 1997,p.123.

plan, the industrial growth rate was 7.3 percent. Mining and manufacturing sector grew on and the agriculture, fishery and forestry sectors growth was 3.5 percent in 1995.²¹ It is significant to mention here that the transition from a mere Labour intensive export industries in the 1960s and 1970s to a more skilled intensive export sectors also witnessed a remarkable change in the structure and composition of exports production wise. For instance, the share of exports of Textiles and apparels industries which was a whopping 40.8 percent of the total exports decreased to 19.3 percent by 1993 (but still it was the second largest export industrial sector only behind electronics). At the same time, the electronic sector which had a very marginal share of export i.e. only 3.5 percent in 1970 became the largest exporter with the contribution of 29.5% to the share of total export in 1993.²² Automobiles, steel products, footwear, ships, and general machinery were other key sectors which altogether accounted for a major share of exports over the period of 1970-1993. The scale and intensity of progress of the knowledge and technology - intensive industries onwards 1980's is noteworthy if their share of exports were taken into account. "By 1994, Korea's exports are \$ 96 billion,

²¹ *ibid*, p.123-24.

²² Anne Krueger, "Korean Industry And Trade Over Fifty Years", in Dong - Se Cha and others, ed., n.1, pp.342-25.

rural and urban sectors of the economy. The economically active population increased more rapidly than the working age population during the period, 1961-1993 reflecting a gradual increase in the labor force participation rate of female population. In this situation Korea's industrialization and growth provided enormous employment opportunities not only for persons already unemployed but also for those newly joining the labor force.²⁵

In order to generate more employment outlets the Korean government promoted labor-intensive manufacturing industries, such as textiles, footwear, wigs, electronics, plywood's etc, and as such the government promotion policies increased rapidly in the 1960's and 1970's.

Export-oriented industrialization and growth also resulted in a rapid increase of non-farm employment. This led to reduction of employment rates for the whole economy both for the urban and rural sector un-employment, of which it had reached 16% of urban labor force by 1963, decline to 47% by 1993, thereby reducing the national un-employment rates from 8.2 % to 3.2 % over the same period.

The structure of Korea's employment also changed because of the rapid increase in non-farm employment. In

²⁵ op.cit. p. 12.

the year 1963 non-farm employment was about 36% of total national employment. declined. This was because employees working earlier in the farms were absorbed by the manufacturing sector by 13 %, while employment in the social overhead and Other service sector increased from 28% to 46% during the same period.²⁶

The rapid growth of the economy and expansion of employment in the non-traditional sector could not have been possible without an increased investment in education. Education not only contributes to increasing average labor productivity for the economy as a whole but also expand the individual's opportunities for advancement in to better paying jobs and her social status. In this sync, Korea's traditional emphasis on education seem to have contributed to growth and at same time helped to improve the country's income distribution. Vocational and tertiary education was also emphasized and the number of schools and colleges imparting skill-oriented courses increased dramatically over the period. During the 1980's and 1990's, the state put more focus on non-formal education particularly skill training

²⁶ Ibid.

programmes which could result in the production of a semi-skilled workforce for its small-scale industries.

The commitments of the government and private sector as well as the Korean society's respect for learning led to a great degree of literacy among the Koreans over the period 1961-1996. Both the government and private sector had invested heavily for the development of human resources.

As a result, the average level of schooling of the working age population rose significantly between 1960 and 1980. The share of the working age population who had received some formal schooling increased from 57 percent of the total in 1960 to about 87 percent by 1980.²⁷ By 1996, the share of the working age population with basic formal schooling was above 90 percent. The average level of schooling for the male population was much higher than the female population. However, education of the female population also increased considerably during the early period.

However, over 50 percent of the labor force in Korea was still in the primary sector in period 1960-70.²⁸ But after that the share of the secondary sector in total employment

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

was continuously rising. This may be because, the prevailing industries such as textile, plastic and electronic are basically labor intensive. The rapid expansion of manufacturing output usually accomplished by rapid increase in employment. More under utilization of the labor force often occurred in the secondary sector due the consequences need to absorb the large amount of rural urban migrants.

In due course, the process of capital labor substitution occurred in the secondary sector and the excess labor force were transferred to the tertiary sectors. In Korea, the rise in the share of the tertiary sector acted as the reservoir absorbing the labor moving away form the primary sector.

The shifts in sectorial share of employment and output can largely be explained by differences in the income classification of demand for the products of different sectors. The shift away from agriculture was mainly because of the low-income elasticity of demand for agricultural products. On the one hand, the low-income elasticity of demand for agricultural products reflected the structure of

human wants with respect to commodities such as food and clothing.²⁹

The shift from agricultural might also be due to the greater inducement towards products of other sectors resulting from technologies and shift in the pattern of work and life closely in association with modern economic growth.³⁰

Since 1960's because of education and mass media women's consciousness of inequality has advanced a great deal. Since then they have a clear agenda for themselves even though biased socialization continue, to practice implicitly or explicitly even in state policy.³¹ Since then Korean employment policy has also significantly focused on the duration of employment opportunities. It was based on the idea that working condition and labor welfare through legislation of ideal Laws could neither increase job opportunities nor solve current and potential un-employment problem.

²⁹ Edward K.Y. Chen, *Hyper Growth in Asian Economies; A comparative study of Hongkong Japan, Korea, Singapore and Taiwan*, (MacMilan Press Ltd. London, 1979) P-33.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 34.

³¹ Irma Adelma, *Social Development in Korea, 1953-1993*, in Dong -Se Cha and others, no.4, p.

In the course of rapid industrialization, urbanization and improvement in education, various new social forces have emerged demanding substantial changes. The employment opportunities have increased drastically. In the year 1974, women employment percentage was 19.9%, in the year 1988 it was 43.6 % and in the year 1995 the percentage increased to 49.2 percent.³²

Industrialization had also resulted in changes in a tendency towards nuclear families, and changes in family life cycle. South Korean policies also focused deeply on health agenda. The health status of the people in south Korea have improved markedly since the inception of the first five year economic plan in 1962, including improved health status of women. Consideration of health as a women's issue was supported by formal and informal groups of scholars and writers, with informal organization playing an important function in addressing new and controversial topics.³³ At the beginning of the first five year economic plan of the Republic of Korea in 1962, the government implemented a rational family planning program that is now considered as a model for many developing countries. The

³² Lee and Kim, "The Status of Women", *National statistical office, Annual report on the economically active population Survey* 1996,1997.

³³ Lisa Kim Davis, "Korean Women's Group Organize for Change".p.

labor division at the Korean Women's Research Association advocates better enforcement and quality monitoring of existing industrial safety levels, which include provisions for regular employee health exams and plants safety inspections.³⁴

Child care for married women workers has become a serious social problem. In order to facilitate the participation of women in the economy the government has placed great emphasis on enlarging child care facilities to meet the provisions for working women. By 1992 the government had established day care centers in low income . In addition to the expansion of child care facilities, the government also has announced a nation wide after-school care programme.

Therefore, there has been an increase in women's employment rates, developments in the welfare and women's status. The rate of women's participation in economic activities had increased from 47.0% in 1990 to 48.75 in 1996. This is due to Korea's great accomplishment in the economic development and also because of the changes in the view of women. The rapid economic development was possible due to the increase participation of the people in the working force.

³⁴ Ibid, P-228.

CHAPTER III

CHAPTER 3

WOMEN WORKFORCE IN THE NEW PARADIGM OF DEVELOPMENT

Korea, after the adoption of an export-oriented growth strategy and with the simultaneous onset of the First Five Year Economic Plan in 1962, made a remarkable pace of progress in the last three and a half decades until the financial growth of 1997. This has been an issue of intense debate and discussion in the international forum for two significant reasons. Firstly, the pattern of industrial development through such a fact of rapid economic growth could be accomplished, which we discussed in chapter 2.

Secondly, it was largely through the participation and contribution of the work force in the new pattern of industrialization and the process of development process. What makes Korea distinguished and different is the participation of women labour force. There are several dimensions of the women work force in terms of contents and characteristics. It has been seen and observed that the women workforce has made a significant contribution to the process both within and across the industrial sector.

Therefore, this chapter discusses and analyzes the participation and contribution of the women workforce in industrial development as well as other socio-economic activities . Since the beginning of the First Five Years Plan in 1962, it would be divided into three broad category, namely:

1. Occupational and structural assessment:- It mainly deals with the nature of the women work force; distribution across different sectors; employment structure phase wise: 1960's, 1970's and 1990's.
2. Problems of the female workforce, which deals with segregation in the work place, low wages, their marginalization in employment opportunities.
3. Women's participation in the labor movements and policy measures, reforms undertaken to address their problems. Under these categories issues regarding labor movement, consciousness about their rights to equal wages for equal work, women labor organization etc, are discussed, besides government steps and policy measures.

South Korea underwent great difficulties from 1945 to 1960. But with the development of industries since the 1960's, employment for both men and women greatly expanded and the

participation of women in economic activities increased. The rate of the women's economic participation jumped from 26.8 percent in 1960 to 41.9 per cent in 1985 and 41.9 percent in 1985 percent in 1995.¹

In the 1960s, women were mainly employed in the light manufacturing sectors, and in rural areas women were mostly engaged in farming, agriculture and fisheries. In the year 1960 the percentage of females in the labor force was 2.7, 2.0 percent were in agriculture and in non agriculture sectors they were 4.1 percent of the employed force. In the year 1966, the percentage of female labor force was 3.8 percent, and in non-agriculture sector it was 5.5 percent and in agriculture female employment was 2.5 per cent.² Almost 70 percent of the total women workforce was engaged in simple agricultural activities. The growth of manufacturing industries like textile, rubber, or food processing, etc created enormous opportunities for women to participate in these activities. It also gave them exposure to new areas and avenues. Because of this, the proportion of females in the workforce soared up again, which had decreased during the Japanese colonial period in the 60's. Agriculture and other areas

¹ Shim Young-Hee , "Changing Status of Women in Korea", *Korea Focus* 2000, March -April. Vol. 8. no.2.

² Kim kwang-Suk, Pouk Joo., - Kyung, *Source of Economic Growth in Korea: 1 963-1982*, (Korea Development Institute),1985, p. 18.

of the primary sector absorbed large number of male and female labor and it is still so in the case of the female labor force. Young female workers are primarily found in unskilled intensive manufacturing jobs and have been concentrated in export industries.

In the 1970' s the scope of women's participation in economic activities has also expanded from the light industrial to heavy and chemical industry sectors. Domestically, heavy and chemical industrialization in Korea was strongly persuaded by the state to secure the legitimation of the Yushin regime to develop the defense industry in the context of the two Koreas and internationally to adapt to the new international vision of labor. The labor intensive sectors of the heavy and chemical industry have been moved to the third world (D. Kim 1987)³

Comparing the light industries with the manufacturing industries, the former's share decreased from 61.2% of the total manufacturing employment in 1963 to 45.6% in 1984, while the latter's share increased from 38.8% to 54.4% in the same period.⁴

³ Shim Yang Hee, "Women's Wage Labor in Heavy and Chemical and Gender Division of Labor in Korea", in Cho Hyoung and Chang Pil Wha, *Challenges for Women*, Women Studies in Korea (Ewha Women's University Press, Seoul, 1994), p. 44.

⁴ Ibid.

As a result, the participation of women's waged laborers in the heavy and chemical industries has increased. Thus, a significant increase occurred in women labor participation.

In the 1980's Women were found in almost in all the occupational fields, and the female participation percentage increased in all industries except for mining . In clerical and sales jobs the percentage of women participation increased.

Women were also employed as nurse, stenography and typing, domestic services. In the 1980's and 1990's there was a paradigm shift in the industrial pattern with diversification of Industrial products. Highly skilled sectors of electrical and non-electrical machinery and professional and scientific equipment were given priority and accordingly developed as core sectors. From 1980's, consumer electronics sector had been developing rapidly and production of electronics equipment, computers, semi conductors, computer chips saw remarkable growth. Korea became a giant in electronics and manufactured goods. With the expansion of information and communication technology in 1990's it became necessary for Korea to upgrade the labor force that could provide the high skill needed to handle the job in such sectors. It witnessed a change in the structure of employment towards highly skilled manufacturing based on the technical

ability of the workforce and subsequently the growth rate of employment in these vital sectors increased vastly. To put it in figures here, in ROK, the employment in high-skilled manufacturing industry as a percentage of total manufacturing employment jumped from 33.5% in 1980 to 52.3% in 1995 (according to the latest available data) which was the highest among the NICs.⁵

It was here that the gap and disparity between the female and male workforce began to increase. Male workers were viewed as capable and efficient for taking up the challenging opportunities. They had been imparted the required scientific and technical education in different S&T institutes and also in the R&D facilities established by the industries. They were assigned and entrusted, with skill-intensive industries. In contrast the female workforce were relatively less educated and were employed in blue collar jobs. More particularly, they fulfilled these requirements for typing, clerical, in assistance jobs, and trade, hotel and some financial services. It led to an imbalanced nature of employment. However, it has been observed that in the 1980's and early parts of 1990's as the demand for high skilled value added jobs increased, the position of women in the labor market became less secure because

⁵ See *World Employment Report 1998-99*, ILO, Geneva, Table 201, p. 38.

they were mainly involved in low-skill jobs. Though women in recent years began to participate in technical and managerial jobs, still the achievement is not upto the expectation as viewed with the pace of development.⁶

The Participation of women on wage labor greatly increased during 1960's to 1980's in the heavy and chemical industries. The proportion of women workers increased more specifically in textile industry than in machinery and chemical industries. In the field of fabricated metal products, machinery and equipment of increased, rising from 7.7% in 1963 to 30.4% in 1986. This shows that women workers not only increased in number but also that they participated in a greater variety of fields.⁷ Both male and female workers proportions of participation in the heavy and chemical industries increased.

However, with the economic development in Korea, women have been playing a significant role in Korea's rapid economic growth. In the 1970's, Korea experienced a sharp increase in the number of women in the workforce whose status and responsibilities have been upgraded mainly because a number of male and female migrated to cities and industrial areas. As

⁶ The Labor force participation rate is defined as the ratio of the economically active population aged 10 years and over by the population of all ages.

⁷ Shim Young Hee, no.1, p. 47.

industries progressed, demand for women workers increased and spread to highly technical, administrative, and managerial sectors, though women in managerial and professional sectors still form small minority. The majority of women workers are engaged in low-paid, unskilled manual labor and primary sector jobs.

Pattern was quite different regarding male workers. Male workers were predominantly in the Heavy and Chemical Industry, while the female workers were mostly in the Light Industries. The proportion of males in textile industry was less than 20% that of females which was about 50% and comprises about half of the total number of women, workers in the manufacturing industry.⁸ The statistics of 1986 indicate that in chemical industries the proportion of women workers was slightly lower than men. The highest proportion of women workers was found in the computer software industry program, media and semi conductor industries, which are called frontier industries. The reason why the proportion of women workers was always less in the heavy industries and chemical industries or, in other words, the complicated industries, is the lack of skill among women workers, besides segregation. Women who worked in the heavy and chemical industries were concentrated in traditional 'women sectors' such as the

⁸ Ibid., p. 49.

electronics, rubber and optical industries, which are characterized by unskilled and labor intensive work. This also shows the incidence of segregation against women workers. Considering the blue collar workers and white collar workers in the manufacturing industries, the number of blue collar women workers has always been higher than that of their white collar counterparts, textile sector with the highest percentage of 93.20% (1984).⁹ Segregation between blue collar and white collar jobs was quite significant in the sense that more women workers were employed in the blue collar, production sector than men workers, showing male domination over female labor. This was found specially in sectors such as textile and electronic where the proportion of women workers is high.

According to Shim Young Hee,¹⁰ the characteristics of blue collar workers are different from those of white collar and generally white collar workers dominate blue collar workers. However, this is not always true between men and women workers in Korea because white collar women workers are mostly secretary, accountants and clerks who are the lowest among white collar workers and cannot be considered to dominate the male blue collared workers.

⁹ Shim Young Hee, n. 1, p. 55.

¹⁰ Shim Young Hee is a professor of sociology, Hanyang University, Seoul Korea.

Age, marital status and education are the three basic criteria which are taken into consideration for selection among women in the advanced sectors. However, aged women, the married and the poorly educated women worked in the machinery sector. This may be because they had the work which did not need any other qualifications apart from skill. Many skilled male labourers also tend to move out to better fields. Single, young, unmarried female workers also moved to a better paying service sector. In the heavy and chemical sector the participation of women laborer was mostly in the field of the unskilled and labor intensive work and it was not based on one's qualification or skill. But male workers were always employed on the basis of their qualification and skill level, which indicated that the criteria for employment was not the same for both men and women. However, the consequence of the female exclusion is low wages for female workers.

In the graduate process the state intervened to attend to the demand and supply of skilled labor. Being the reason the state conducted the national skill qualification examination. Women skilled workers who registered as having passed the national examination constituted only nine percent of the total registered and in terms of their area of skills, the maximum were

concentrated in the field of communications (91%), with only 1.4% in machinery, 1.8% in chemical, 0.9% in electronics and 2.4% in textile in the year 1985.¹¹ These percentages of skilled labor among women in different fields only show that the number of female skilled labor is very low though the number of women workers who participate in the heavy and chemical industries is high.

In 1996, out of the total female workforce social overhead capital and other services accounted for a little over 66.1 percent; the mining and manufacturing sector absorbed nearly 20.4 percent and the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector 13.5 percent approximately.¹² The significant factor to observe here is that down the years, there was a declining trend in the share of employment for both male and female in agriculture and manufacturing sector, while the social overhead and service sector witnessed an unhindered increase. Again the share of females in the manufacturing sector declined at a higher rate in comparison to that of the male workforce. If it is compared with that of female employment in 1983, it seems that the structure did show significant changes in the share except for the manufacturing sector.

¹¹ Shim Young Hee, n. 1. p. 63.

¹² The figures are taken from *Korea Annual 1998*, p. 339.

TABLE: YEARS OF SCHOOLING BY SEX

(Unit: Years)

Year	Average	Males	Females
1960	3.81	4.78	2.92
1966	5.03	6.19	3.97
1970	5.74	6.86	4.72
1975	6.62	7.61	5.70
1980	7.61	8.67	6.63
1985	8.58	9.66	7.58
1990	9.54	10.55	8.58
1995	10.14	11.09	9.26

Source: Korean Educational Development Institute, *Educational Indicators in Korea, Annual*.

¹³EMPLOYMENT PERCENTAGE BY INDUSTRY 1983 AND 1996

Industry	Female Percentage		Male Percentage	
	1983	1996	1983	1996
Agriculture etc. including fishing and forestry.	1845 (39.5)	1141 (13.5)	2675 (29.5)	1264 (10.25)
Mining and manufacturing	901 (20.0)	1718 (20.36)	2066 (22.8)	2983 (24.2)
Social overhead capital and other services (including construction and others)	1920 (41.3)	5575 (66.14)	4330 (47.4)	8083 (65.51)

¹³ The number and percentage of employment of industry are calculated from the number of total female workforce and its breakup in the three sections.

The table clearly indicates that with transformation from agricultural to industrial economy the share of female labor force in the agricultural sector dramatically declined from 39.5 percent in 1983 to 13.2 percent in 1996 than in the services.

The share of female labor force in the manufacturing and mining industries remained almost the same in between 20 to 21 percent during the period 1983-1996.

Out of the total economically active population (population of 15 years old and over) the percentage of total female workforce to the total female population was 48 percent, while the percentage of male workforce to the total male population stood at 74.3 percent in 1993

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE (UNIT: 1,000PERSONS)

(in %)

YEAR	PARTICIPATION RATE		ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION		
	Male	FEMALE	TOTAL	FEMALE	FEMALE AS % OF TOTAL
1960	73.5	26.8	7,543	2,156	28.6
1966	78.6	31.5	8,654	2,679	31.0
1970	72.5	37.7	10,337	3,624	34.9
1975	77.8	45.7	13,350	5,174	39.8
1980	72.4	38.6	13,595	4,973	36.6
1985	69.6	40.6	15,554	5,969	38.4
1990	73.9	47.2	18,487	7,474	40.4
1995	76.5	48.3	20,797	8,364	40.2
1996	76.1	48.7	21,188	8,568	40.4

Source: Economic Planning Board, Population and Housing Census Report: 1960, 1966, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985. Annual Report on the Economically Active Population Survey, 1990, 1996.

Historically, the gender division of labor has its root in the cultural tradition of sexual segregation and subordination of the

labour market. Working women are not a homogeneous group but one that has been highly segregated, especially by age and marital status.¹⁴ Working women are divided into subgroups: unmarried young production workers in manufacturing industries, unmarried women in low status clerical jobs; married women in informal sector jobs, married women in agriculture and a small group of women employed in miscellaneous professions. The demand for female workers was also more selective than the mechanism with which formal sector employers discriminated against women.

In 1984, when a survey was done on 724 business firms employing more than 100 people,¹⁵ it showed that there was clear gender specification in terms of the method of recruitment, retirement age, promotion and job allocation. Women were predominantly categorized as unskilled workers and therefore, their wages were low and easily justified. Different factories have different definitions of women's and men's jobs, and rarely are men and women engaged in the same work. However, some employers prefer to have more women workers than men workers as production workers because of feminine qualities such as

¹⁴ Chang Pil – Wha , The Gender Division of Labour at work, in Gender Division of Labour in Korea, in Cho Hyoung & Chang Pil Wha, ed., no.3, 1994, P. 19.

¹⁵ Ibid.

obedience conscientiousness, patience and nimble fingers, which make women more suitable for jobs requiring constant attention.

There was a big difference in wages in the industries. There was wage difference in fields. The wages in the manufacturing sectors have always been lower than in other industries. Even within the sector wage differences are not unknown to the labours. Women workers have relatively long working hours and much overtime work. However, their standard of wages are always less than those of the male workers. There is also a high percentage of unpaid family workers. All the working women did not receive wages, only 60 percent in the age group 18-28. Outside this age group, only 20 percent received wage till 1980's.

A strong tendency toward sexual segregation also exists within the same occupational group. In both clerical work and production work, sexual segregation coincides with occupational hierarchy.¹⁶

Park Se Il, argues that what is important in Korean wage determination is not the productivity of a worker or her/his efficiency but what comprises the work force. Which implies that gender educational attainment and seniority of the worker act as

¹⁶ Chang Pil-Wha , *Women and Work": A Case Study of Small Town in Korea*, in Cho Hyoung and Chang Pil Wha ,ed., no. 3.

determinants of wages. However, a male worker with higher education gets a higher starting wage than a female worker with the same qualification.

Korean women have been marginalized in the labor market in the process of development and industrialization. But as many as 59 per cent are still in the informal or subcontracting sector and a substantial portion of them are in the urban informal sector. Overall, 76.8 percent of all working females are in the informal or subcontracting sector.¹⁷

The Human Development Report (UNDP 1995) indicates that Korea ranked 79th out of 153 nations in women's labor force participation (LFP) and 90th in the gender empowerment measures (GEM). The report also shows that Korea ranked 51st out fifty two countries in the ratio of men's and women's wage.¹⁸

Another internationally calculated report (WEF and IMD 1995)¹⁹ ranks Korea 48th out of 48 countries in terms of women's equal access to employment opportunities. This report also shows that despite their high commitment to economic activities, Korea women are not given appropriate opportunity to utilize they skills

¹⁷ UHN – CHO. "Female Labor in Korea", *Asian Women*, Spring, Vol. 2, 1996, p.59.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ WEF – (World Economic Forum) 1995.

and participate in the advanced sectors as compared to other developed countries.

When we compare the female labor in Korea to some advanced countries and some industrializing countries in Asia, the ratio of females to males is really high.²⁰

The comparison status of Korean female labor with that in some other advanced and industrialized countries is shown in the table below.

²⁰ UHN CHO ,n. 17. p. 56.

THE SITUATION OF FEMALE LABOR IN KOREA:

A COMPARISON

Item	Female labor as % of male	Unpaid family as a percentage of the total female labor force	Part time workers as a percentage of female employees %	Women non agricultural at wage as a percentage of men %.	Women access to employment opportunity
USA	65	0.5	25.4	75	6.0
Japan	64	15.2	38.4	50.8	3.3
German	-	3.7	34.0	75	5.0
UK	60	-	44.6	69.7	4.9
Singapore	58	2.0	Not available	71.1	7.3
HongKong	62	-	-	69.5	7.0
Korea	52	23.2	65.4	53.5	3.2

Source: UNDP Human Development Report 1995. International Labor Office Year Book ,Statistic.

In most advanced societies the proportion of unpaid family workers less than 5% in Korea. Though Japan has a lower

proportion, it is still higher than Korea at 15.2% whereas in Singapore it is only 2.0%.

According to the report in the urban labor market in developing areas, working women in the informal sector are forced to perform the role of standby workers, to receive low income and to carry the burden of both domestic and market works.²¹

Many working women in informal sectors did not intend to be force participants but were forced into informal sector work due to chronic instability or an insufficiency in the earnings of their husbands or sons.²² However, the most serious problem concerning women employment is not the average rate of women is participation but of structure and pattern of employment. It used to be assume that an increase rate of labor force participation would response women's social, political, economics status and bring power for the female gender, but unexpectedly in Korea, women's participation has no link with improvement in their status empowerment of organizational resources. It has made a great impact in the relationship between women and state. It mainly deals with gender equality. To deal with issues concerning under privileged or stigmatized category of

²¹ Tae Hongkim. "The Personal characteristics and work status of women workers in the Korean Urban Informal Sector", *Asian Women*, Spring, Vol. 4, 1997, p. 209.

²² Ibid. p. 209.

women, such as prostitutes, unmarried mothers, female heads of households and those who have left their families, women welfare projects and family planning have been introduced.

Child care policy is one of the most important state policy taken up by the state for the married female labour because several children who were left alone were often victimized because of frequent accidents.

Labour and wage policy was taken up to check the condition of working women's problems to working conditions and wages. Another measure taken for the female labour is about the limits about extension of working hour by contract. Article 57 provides that an employer shall be forbidden to place any female 18 years of age or older on overtime for a period exceeding two hours a day, six hours a week and 150 hours a year, even if provided for a collective bargain agreement.²³ Sex Equality in Employment Act was passed in 1989²⁴ to eliminate discrimination against women. The important contents of the Act are :

²³ Shin in Ryun's. "Legal right of woman as worker" In gender division of labour in Korea., in Cho Hyung and Chang Pil-Wha, no.3, (Ewha university Press.) 1994, P- 92.

²⁴ *ibid.* P-94-96.

1. Responsibility of equal treatment in recruitment and employment;
2. Equal treatment in wages which mean equal pay; and
3. Equal treatment in education, placement, promotion and equal treatment for retirement, resignation and dismissal.

The state and the local government also have responsibility to enhance the status and promote the welfare of female employees and to attempt to remove all circumstances which delayed female employees from utilizing their capabilities. Any violation of the Act's provisions called for punishment.

Any employer violating the prohibition of sex discrimination and dismissal, shall be punished by imposing fine. However, in Korea the labour law is still violated sometimes and so, it is necessary to make secure and strong legislation regarding workforce and employment in order to abolish discrimination in terms of sex, equality, free choice of occupation and right of labour.

As Korea took these policies and measures for women workforce in Korea, it is believed that all these steps, measures and policies enhanced women's status and promote women workers welfare contributing to economic transformation in Korea.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study begins with an historical survey of women's place and role in the Korean society. Korea is considered to be one of the most homogenous nations with a distinct ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity. However, the Koreans' keenness to preserve, promote and project their identity did not prevent them from generously acknowledging the civilizational impact and influence of ideas and institutions from China especially those associated with Confucianism. In terms of the world-view, the spectrum of ideas, the scope, the spread and the sustained almost hegemonic influence of Confucianism particularly of the Chu-hshi variant in Korea, there was hardly any historical parallel among China's neighbours. It is against this background that the place and role of women in what came to be described as traditional society has to be located. Confucius and his followers viewed the world as a single unit, natural in organization with a set of well-defined, rigid, hierarchical relationship. To facilitate and foster a pre-determined hierarchical social order it was considered essential not only to differentiate between and among various strata and segment of

the society but also ensure and enforce gender distinction. Woman was seen as born to obedience and her duty was to follow obedience in various forms. Women were excluded from formal education during the Yi-dynasty. Although most women were engaged in agriculture their contributions were sent to support the elites. During the Yi-dynasty, property right of the married couple was stipulated to joint ownership by law. In practice even women could hardly exercise their rights given the authority and power of the family which were exclusively yielded by the man.

Korean society began to undergo significant changes from about the middle of the 19th century due to pressure from within ^{and} the without. One of the areas, where changes came to be seen was in the status of women beginning with the 1860s. Criticism of the traditional idea of women emerged with the powerful Tonghak movement which shook the very foundations of the society. One of the most noteworthy characteristics of the Tonghak movement was the petition of human rights. The petition advocated, among others equality of the sexes, abolition of social hierarchies and distinctions. The espousal of the

concept of gender equality gave rise to a social awakening and consciousness of an elevated status for women and with it a new role in the society. For example, Choe Sihyong, the successor to Tonghak leader Choe Chen, came to be recognized for his efforts to propagate women's enlightenment. His followers sought to awaken Korean women through educational activities. The next milestone in the process of dismantling the traditional order and elevating the status of women in Korea came to be associated with the independence club organized in 1896 led by Dr. Philip Jaisohn. His powerful editorial in April 21, 1896 in 'The Independent' is worth quoting;

"Korean women lead a pitiful life. We appeal to the Korean people on behalf of these depressed women. Despite the fact that the women's life is never inferior to man's life, women have been mistreated by men. It is due to the fact that men are still unenlightened. Instead of becoming reasonable and humane, men try to use only their brawn to oppress women. How barbarous they are! But as the Korean women become educated and well informed, they will come to realize the equality of the sexes and will know how to handle unreasonable men. In view of these

facts, we call on the Korean women to be educated so as to become superior to men intellectually and morally, and to claim the right of women”.

During the later part of the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries also expanded their educational activities in Korea. In 1886, Korea's first school for women Ewha Haktang was established by Mrs. Scranton, a western missionary.

Korean went through the trauma of colonialism from 1910-1945. Among the various aspects of colonial totalitarianism, the indignity and suffering that the Korean women went through has few parallels in contemporary history. According to Dr. Helen Kim, one of the most renowned Korean education leaders; as per the Japanese laws. Women were treated as people of no importance and values and had to suffer doubly in serving man as well as the Japanese oppressors.

“During world War II and the Japanese colonial rule, debasement of Korean women reached its peak when the Japanese took “comfort women” for their imperial army. It was estimated that approximately 200,000 young Korean women, drafted in the name of army personnel or voluntary nurses, were

sent to the front lines as army prostitutes. Those young girls, 17-20 years of age, were sexually abused by the Japanese soldiers”

Japanese colonialism, to support its military industrial complexes and to sustain and strengthen its hold on the Korean people, sought to modernize agriculture and develop certain industrial sectors. To achieve these objectives it introduced a new pattern of education, and employment. While providing partial access to education for women it emphasized differentiation between Korean women teachers and Japanese women teachers and prevented the development of higher education among women.

As part of a military mobilization plan, women were given military training as part of education and Japanese cultural values were sought to be imposed on the Korean women. The introduction of industrial technology through a small scale factory system necessitated the demand for cheap female labour force which was particularly evident in textile factories.

The colonial polices did not succeed in its objective of subjugating and suppressing the Korean people. On the contrary, it aroused keen desire in their national consciousness

and pride in their national identity. One of the most powerful expression of manifestation of the Korean Nationalist Movement was the March 1, Movement, 1919. Even the Japanese official conservative estimate admitted that more than one million had participated in the movement. A Korean source puts the number at more than two million.

The fact that a large number of women actively participated in the movement was symptomatic of their spread of nationalistic consciousness among all sections of the Korean society. It also contributed to redefining and restructuring the social relations, thereby undermining the century old gender discrimination and distinction.

A Korean source puts the numbers at more than two million. For the period from March 1 to April 30, 1919, the statistics of the Japanese gendarmerie show 848 incident (332 with violence, 516 without), 357 incidents prevented a tally of 587, 641 persons involved, and rests of 26, 713 persons.

As for casualties, the same report lists Korean casualties as 553 killed and 1,409 injured, and the Japanese as 9 killed and 186 injured, (including of civilians, 1 killed and 30 injured,

statistic from nationalist sources, for the longer period from March 1, 1919, to March 1, 1920, show as many as 7,645 Koreans killed and 45,562 injured.

From all the available and highly divergent accountings it is evident that the movement was conducted on a large scale and was met by severe suppressive measure.

The artificial, arbitrary division of Korea in August 1945 had a disastrous effect on the post colonial, post second world war social, economic and political situation in the peninsula. The conflicting and chaotic situation, caused and compounded by external intervention and involvement, not only contributed to the emergence of two regimes, two states and two systems but tore asunder ^{the} this social fabric and structure in both parts of the country. It was a harrowing experience for the Koreans to be first exploited and humiliated by the colonial order followed by massive dislocation, migration and uncertainties. As the political and military situation inexorably led the peninsula to an horrendous war for three years with millions of casualties, Korean women's place and role had to undergo change. The war hastened the disintegration of whatever was left of the old

Confucius oriented social order and women's place and role in it. The compulsions arising from the loss of millions of people, especially men, in the battle field, the appalling conditions of a war ravaged economy thrust a new role on women of economic support for the family. As the war-torn economy began to recover under massive international support, more and more women were drawn into the workforce as wage earners. However insignificant the real income might have been, women also began to migrate to semi-urban and urban areas where more opportunities were created due to reconstruction efforts.

The seizure of power by military under the leadership of Major Park Chung Hee on May 19, 1961 has often been described to be the turning point in the political, military and economic history of contemporary Korea. For the first time in modern Korean history, the military became the major determinant in the polity and economy. Assured of the powerful backing of his soldiers, Park Chung Hee introduced a new paradigm of political economy of development with its inevitable social consequences. Its strategy of development rested on three factors: (i) strong state and strong army, (ii) state-led export

oriented accelerated pace of planned economic development; and (iii) optimum mobilization of resources from within and outside. As a result of the multi-pronged and integrated pattern of development, Korea began to witness dynamic and dramatic changes and diversified industrial development spread over several phases. The first phase was marked by the growth of development of low skilled labour intensive manufacturing sectors like textile, apparels, shoes, rubbers, wigs, food, processing, etc. in the 1960s.

The announcement of Heavy and Chemical Industries Plan in 1973 marked a change in the industrial strategy. To realize its goal of self-sustaining economic development through sustained export, big industries like steel, ship-building, and petrochemicals were promoted and provided high incentives.

To overcome the oil shock and protective barriers against light manufactured goods, these industries were established under the third significant phase after the world recession of 1980. Realizing the challenges from other growing economies like Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan, Korea had to diversify its industrial strategy again. Rapid development of electronics

sector was seen as the most viable option to ensure its share in the world markets. Consumer electronics goods, like home appliances, were given importance. The information technology revolution onwards the mid 1980s brought the 4th phase of industrial diversification. Korea began to concentrate on the key IT sectors, like telecom, computers and semiconductor chips. With new technologies, sophisticated value-added products were made and its share of export rose dramatically.

It is the pattern and process of development that generated employment opportunities in various sectors. One of the most striking features of the Korean pattern of development is the phenomenal expansion of workforce and employment opportunities both for men and women.

This can be illustrated by the fact that in 1963 the total Korean workforce stood at 7,662,000 or 34.9 percent of the total. By 1989, the total employment workforce had grown upto 17,515,000, with women totalling 7,125,000 or 40.6 percent. During the period from 1963-89, the number of male workers increased 2.7 times.

The percentage of women workforce remarkably increased. In 1970, 38.5 percent of the female population was employed outside the home. The figure rose to 41.6 percent in 1980s, 45.0 percent in 1988 and 46.5 percent in 1989 and 48.3 percent in 1996.

The composition and structure of the female workforce changed with the diversification of industries. In 1960s and 1970s the dominance of textile and apparel industries in its share of total export was largely possible due to the overwhelming participation of the women workforce. Besides, women were also employed in other small scale manufacturing industries and the primary sector. The Heavy and Chemical Industries absorbed some of the female workforce in low skilled jobs.

With the paradigm shift in the industrial pattern in the 1980s and 1990s, and the development of electronics, semi-conductors and microchips and telecom equipments, the need for skill-intensive jobs grew. Collaboration and joint ventures with various multinationals helped in providing the semi skilled workforce the requisite on the job training in R&D centres. Here

the participation of women workforce did not see significant improvement. They were discriminated against to take up higher technical jobs. The rapid growth of service sector and its rich contribution to the nation's total GDP could be possible due to the ability and efficiency of the women workforce. The share of female labour force was 66.14% in 1996 in service sectors which was higher than that of the male workers.

Although the Korean pattern of economic development gave rise to a remarkable increase in the women workforce, a number of issues regarding the status, terms of employment, income differentials, legal rights, working conditions, sexual discrimination, etc. continued to generate debate. There was indeed a perceptible enhancement in the socio-economic condition and the level of political awareness among the Korean women. Beginning in 1980s, several women's movements were launched to further sensitise the womenfolk and put pressure on the government on acceding to their demands and concerns. Owing to the heightened awareness and the developing need to empower their women and raise their living standard, the subsequent governments in Korea did enact laws and took

various measures in the area. Though the results are still far from the ideals desired, the Korean women have come a long way in improving their condition, fighting for their rights and struggling for continuous socio-economic-political development and gender equality enshrined in the Constitution.



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