

**UNITED NATIONS
AND
WOMEN'S ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT**

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CHANDA GURUNG

**CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL POLITICS,
ORGANIZATION AND DISARMAMENT
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067, INDIA**

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CHANDA GURUNG

INTRODUCTION

The problems faced by women today are as old as the history of mankind. From time immemorial discrimination against women in one form or the other, has been a part of the social fabric in different parts of the world. It is true that at some stages of history, especially in the ancient period, women occupied high positions in literature as well as in social and political institutions. But by and large the lot of women have been that of servitude to male chauvinism.

It was in the 19th century that feminist movements for the emancipation of women and recognition of status at par with men, was incepted and gained momentum in Europe and America. Women's issues were dealt with, both at the national as well as at the international forums, with the aim of improving their status and giving them equal rights as enjoyed by men. However, it was only the post war period which has witnessed universal recognition of the principle of equality and non-discrimination. The United Nation's Charter was the first international instrument to give recognition to this principle. It was for the first time that equal rights of men and women, universally applicable throughout the world irrespective of colour, race or religion, received due emphasis. The United Nations also insituted the Commission on the Status of Women in 1946 to promote equal treatment and development of women.

It should be noted here that "equality" does not mean that men and women are 'equals' but, that every person is entitled

for certain conditions which are essential for the development of the full potential that nature has bestowed him or her with, as a human being. Further, in claiming these conditions, what has become known as human rights, there should be no distinction on any grounds, whether of caste, race, religion, language, colour or sex.

Over the period, a number of instruments have been adopted by the United Nations and other international organisations, which covers almost every facet of human life by way of identifying the socio-economic conditions essential, for the realization of human rights and elimination of all forms of discrimination, as well as special provisions for the vulnerable section of the society. Nonetheless, efforts to seek implementation of the international norms of human rights have drawn attention to a grave reality: nearly two-thirds of the world's population do not have the necessary socio-economic infra-structure for the implementation of the international norms of human rights; and nearly one billion people are victims of illiteracy and poverty, enduring disease, hunger and shelterlessness. Such a recognition of the reality has prompted the international community, as represented at the United Nations to promulgate the right to development.

Development includes all aspects of life and society-social, economic, political and cultural. The Declaration on the Right to Development adopted by the General Assembly in December 1986, further points out that development not only

involves the cultural, legal, political, and socio-economic aspects but also that of human rights, as there can be no development without the full realisation of human rights. As such, these rights should be enjoyed equally by both men and women. As people are the means as well as the end of development, full and complete development can be achieved only by the active and maximum participation of both men and women. So, unless women are given their rightful role there can be no development -- socio-economic, political or cultural -- in the true sense.

Since women have an equal stake, as men have, in the process of development and continuous progress of the society, it is imperative to integrate them into the development process. The first step for achieving this is to improve the status of women and free them from the traditional role confined to that of a 'mother' and a 'house-wife' only. Efforts are being directed, as the various reports indicate, through women's movements in various parts of the world and the measures adopted, both at the international and national levels, to integrate women into, and maximise their participation in, the development process.

How do we assess the progress, if there is any, and is it in the desired direction of these efforts? How do we define, in real terms, the concept of development? To what extent are women involved in the development process? What are the measures and recommendations that the United Nations and its specialised agencies have adopted to integrate women in the development

process? How would one assess the overall change, if any, that has been brought about in regard to the status of women as a result of the international and national efforts?

These and related questions are the subjects of this study.

This study is divided into four chapters.

Chapter I attempts a overall survey of the status and role of women in the different phases of history and also analyses the historical processes of the emancipation and development of women through the ages prior to the inception of United Nations' operational activities in 1946.

Chapter II analyses the efforts made and the recommendations and measures adopted by the United Nations and its specialised agencies in raising the status of women to maximise their role in the development process.

Chapter III deals with the problems of development of women of the developing countries in the context of the North-South divide.

Chapter IV discusses the specific role which women can play in the process of development and to what extent they have been included in the development strategy especially in the Third World.

Chapter V attempts an overall assessment and conclusion.

CHAPTER I

WOMEN THROUGH THE AGES

A perspective analysis of the role of men and women in a given society would indicate that both play vital roles, in their respective ways, in the maintenance of, and continuance of, social culture and structure. Nonetheless, tradition has it that women have been treated as subservient to men and that the biological distinction between them is being carried out to a point of male-dominance and servitude of women-folk. It is a historical fact that women have been regarded as inferior in status, and have been debarred from political activity and denied any degree of initiative in the economic field; they have been largely destined to attend to family chores, and in the economic field their role is that of helpers to the men-folk in carrying out their traditional occupations, be it farming or other home-based small industries.

STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE ANCIENT PERIOD:

In the ancient period the society was simple, based on hunting and gathering of food or on rudimentary cultivation, as people moved from place to place. In such type of economic activity, limited as it was, not much of a distinction existed between the roles of men and women as it evolved later on with the progress in civilisation.

The most fundamental feature of women's work in this period was its familial base. The family was the key economic unit and each of its member was employed. Survival outside the

family, for both men and women, was almost impossible.¹ It is true that the predominantly manual and physical labour required by the land placed restraints on the work roles of women, but, this did not lessen their importance. Women's work was equally vital, thus giving them importance, if not primacy, in the family. However, ultimately, the fact was that although women's work and role was crucial, it was not equal to that of men nor was it pleasant or as rewarding. As the work was physically demanding, women's lot greatly depended on their health and energy and only those who had the physical strength survived.

Women also participated in the simple and uninstitutionalised politics of the tribe, informally and indirectly through their men-folk by manipulating and influencing them. Women influenced and manipulated their men-folk either by forcing domestic disputes into the public domain or by simply threatening to shame their menfolk in this way. Another way was by playing on men's fears of their supposed supernatural powers.² But the greatest source of women's influence in the political and public affairs was their role as structural links between kinship groups in the society, as the family and kinship were the fundamental basic institutions of everyday life. This role of theirs enabled the women to mediate in marriages which often lead to political alliances and also gave them access to an invaluable information network which

¹Patricia Branca, Women in Europe Since 1750 (London: Croom Helm - 1978), p. 17.

²Vicky Randall, Women and Politics (London: MacMillan Education Ltd. - 1982), p. 15.

could further strengthen their influence and role.³

Women also participated in the religious and other cultural activities as there were no taboos and restrictions. Infact, women in those days played active role in all spheres of life and held a high status. Examples of this can be found in many societies of those days, such as, the ancient Egyptian society where women were held in high esteem and enjoyed a high status; the French family before the medieval period allowed women independent control of property and equal satus with men;⁴ in India during the Vedic Age, women were held in high esteem and they enjoyed equal socio-cultural status with men, they had the right to read and recite the Vedas and other sacred and secular texts, and many of them played very important roles in the formulation of social policies and code of conduct.⁵

Thus, in the simple societies of the ancient period, although women's participation in the various fields of life was not equal to that of men, they enjoyed a high status and were not regarded as inferior to men.⁶

³ Ibid.

⁴ J.Z. Giele and A.C. Smock (eds.), Women - Roles and Status in Eight Countries. (New York: Wiley-Interscience Publication - 1977), p. 146.

⁵ K.L. Bhowmik (ed.), Development of Women and Children (New Delhi: Inter-India Publication - 1988), p. 8.

⁶ Martin King Whyte, Status of Women in Pre-industrial Societies (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978). p. 155

STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD UPTIL THE 1600s

The role and status of women began to change as population increased and society became more complex. The medieval period was a period of feudalism. This period was dominated by theology and religion, and people accepted whatever was said to them by the Church or other religious institutions without any question; men lost all their rationality. In such a situation the period became one of the darkest periods of civilisation, and as usual women suffered the most. They were regarded as inferior in every field. Although they still played an important role in the production, in other spheres of life they were treated as second-class citizens. Agriculture was the main occupation and women worked along with men. They also shared the work of their men-folk in other productive work carried on by the family. But they did not get equal remuneration, as men did, for their work, nor did they have any right over their earnings. Thus, in spite of their vital and important role in production women were economically very much dependent on the men.

During this period school education was provided chiefly by the religious institutions and charitable institutions, and only boys were allowed admission. Girls were not allowed formal education, not even primary education. They were only taught domestic work; for their place was strictly in the home. Girls of the richer and higher classes were taught decorative skills and social graces. There was much concern about the "proper" role of women - with what was "suitable" education and "appropriate"

work.⁷ Thus girls were only trained and taught to be good house-wives and mothers.

The lot of the married women was even worse. They were completely under the control of their husbands. They had little or no control over their own fertility, had no economic rights and had no control over their children or house-hold. Their status was almost like that of servants or mere helpers with no rights or control of their own lives.

There was a sharp drop in women's political influence and participation also. Women hardly had any say in the public policies and decisions. It was unthinkable for a woman to come out and take active part in politics or public affairs. As it is, during that period, common people, both men and women, hardly had any say in the political affairs, as those were the days of absolute monarchy. But even in cases where people were allowed some say, however insignificant and small, there was no question of allowing women to participate.

This feudal period, dominated by theology and religion, continued for quite some time.⁸ Then slowly things began to change as people began to be more rational. This change was brought about by many famous scholars and thinkers like John Wycliffe, Machiavelli, Martin Luther and many others, who taught

⁷This trend first set in the Western societies and then it spread to the colonial countries or what is now known as the Third World countries also - Giele and Smock (eds.), n. 4. p. 156

⁸White, n. 6. p. 167.

the people rationalism. So people now began to rationalise things before accepting them blindly, as they did earlier. This naturally led to great developments and inventions, thus bringing about industrial revolution by the late 18th century. With the beginning of the industrial revolution, agriculture became more advanced and the factory system started, leading to urbanisation. The agricultural revolution brought about the separation of the production and consumption areas into man's sphere and woman's sphere respectively. This changed the women's work situation; they lost their place in production. Besides, the conditions of scarcity faced by the society during that time led to the male productive elements being highly valued, resulting in the sharp drop in women's status.⁹ Women had authority only over house-hold affairs and caring of the young children. Men, on the other hand, were regarded as the superior managers in all spheres of employment, public, economic, political and military affairs.

As the factory system began, employment opportunities for women began reducing. Work in the factories were mostly gives to men only. Their physical disabilities put women in a disadvantageous position as it was regarded that greater physical strength was required for factory work. Tradition also inhibited the expansion of women's work in the factory. It was regarded that it was not a woman's job to weild machines. Besides, women themselves were skeptical about factory work due to tradition and they entered only those areas in which they had

⁹ Branca, n. 1, p. 33.

worked earlier, such as, weaving and spinning in the textiles factories, and later on the food processing factories.¹⁰ Later, as more factories came up and more labour was required, more women began to get employment in the factories. But they got only low status jobs with meagre pay. As such, women were economically very dependent on men.

Education was still not given to girls, but there was some progress, as some European countries and America did allow primary or basic education to girls. But besides this, girls were not given any higher education. Learning of domestic skills, decorative skills and social graces were still regarded as the only necessary education for girls. The male monopoly in education went quite unchanged for a long time and even the governments and their laws and policies of recruitment and admission inhibited women.

The situation of the married women was the same, if not worse than it was in the medieval period. They lost all legal identity, had no control over their own fertility, had no property rights and had no control over their children and home also. Women were merely to look after the young children and to do the house-hold chores, while the husbands were actually in full control over everything. Despite such social injustices the laws of the countries made no attempt to change this condition of married women as marriage was regarded as essentially private. So, although the husband, as the head of

¹⁰ ibid. pp. 33-34

the family and the 'protector', was supposed to provide for his family, this was not legally enforceable. Wives had no legal recourse even against physical assault by the husbands. Women had no divorce rights either. Thus married women had neither any recognised economic independence nor any legal rights and their plight was miserable.¹¹

At this time the political situation had changed to some extent from what it was in the medieval period. The people were now given some political rights, like right to vote, and they could take some part in the making of public policies. But, for women there was no change; they still had no say in the political and public affairs. It was still unthinkable for a woman to come out and take active part in politics. Women had no political rights at all. As a result their needs were never taken into consideration by the male politicians. But they did take part in other kinds of activities that indirectly, as well as intentionally, influenced the making of public policies. They took part in food riots, took up charitable and social service functions and, most importantly, as mothers they were important agents of their children's political socialisation.¹²

Thus from the medieval ages till the 1800s women's status in society was very low. They were economically and socially dependent on men, they had no legal identity after marriage and

¹¹More details in Randall, n. 2, p. 109; and Branca, n. 1. pp: 76-90.

¹² Randall, n. 2, pp. 41-42.

hours of work were passed by the governments of the various countries.¹⁴ Gradually women workers began to be given equal rights as the men workers, from the later half of the 19th century.

At the same time, factory work stopped being the prerogative of men, and women workers began to flood the various jobs in the factories and the offices too. This was due to the huge demand for labour as factories and industries began to increase. But discrimination in pay and choice of jobs still remained. It was only in the 20th century that laws for equal pay started to be passed as demands for this grew steadily.

Married working women, specially those with small children, found it more difficult as they had to look after their homes and children and at the same time work under the same conditions as others. Slowly these women workers began to get some special privileges in order to lessen their burden, with the concept of welfare state as this concept led to the starting of state supervision of women as mothers and home-makers.¹⁵ The state, through health authorities, social workers

¹⁴In England a law limiting the hours of work, to ten hours per day for women and children workers were passed in 1847 and in the 1850s laws regulating the sanitary condition and safety of female workers were also passed. In France laws limiting the hours of work for women workers were passed in as early as 1848 but durable and effective legislation in this started only from the 1870s.

In Denmark and Germany such laws were passed in the 1870s; and in Belgium, Holland and Scandinavian countries such laws were passed within the next two decades.

Branca, n. 1, p. 43.

¹⁵ Randall, n. 2, p. 111.

and even school teachers, helped these women workers in looking after their houses and children, while they worked. Provisions for maternity leave, specially within the public sector, also started.

In the educational field too, women advanced steadily from the 19th century onwards. The concept of education for girls first started in the late 18th century in England and America, and it gained momentum and intensity in the 19th century onwards. There was all-round agreement that girls should also have access to proper and formal education and the national governments began to take more interest in the education of girls. In America girls were allowed primary education from the 1830s¹⁶ and in England too, at the insistence of the Taunton Commission of 1864, more schools were opened to give sound basic education to girls. Similarly in France, Ferry's reforms in the 1880s led to a steady increase of educational opportunities for girls at the primary level.¹⁷ Very soon secular day schools were established all over Europe and America to provide children of both sexes with primary education. Thus by 1900 there were about as many literate women as men in countries like England, France and America.

But the aim of the feminists was not only to get primary education, but more importantly, to gain access to higher education and professions also. Due to their ceaseless efforts

¹⁶ ibid., p. 117.

¹⁷ Branca, n. 1, p. 173.

women began to get access to higher education by the 1880s. In England secondary education for girls started with the opening of the North London Collegiate School for Ladies by Miss Buss, and Miss Beale's School at Cheltenham in the 1880s. In France also, secondary schools were opened for girls and in the 1880s the Souborne University was opened for women also. Similar developments took place in other European countries too - women in Sweden were allowed to take matriculation examination for university education by the 1870s; in Norway women got higher education from much earlier, i.e. from 1837, when the Oberlin College began to admit girls; and by the 1890s women could graduate from Radcliffe College, Yale and the University of Chicago also.¹⁸

Thus by the end of the century there was a great development in the general education of women. But the professional schools and colleges were still very reluctant to admit women. The struggle in this area took longer and was more difficult. But finally by the early 20th century women did succeed in getting the basic legal rights for gaining admittance to the various professional schools and colleges. This naturally resulted in women gaining access to the professional jobs such as medical, legal, engineering fields, etc.

Changes for the better came about in the lives of married women also, as marriage laws became steadily less harsh. Movements for the rights of mothers over their children, the rights of divorce for wives, and their economic and property

¹⁸ ibid p. 174.

rights started and soon spread over the whole of Europe and America. As a result, major reforms came about in the later half of the 19th century. The national governments started to pass various laws either improving or giving these rights to wives.

In England the Guardianship of Infants Act was passed in 1886 giving women the right of custody over their children after divorce or after the father's death. This Act was further widened in 1925 giving mothers virtually exclusive control over their children with fathers having very nominal rights. In France and Italy although fathers still had the legal rights over the children, women got the right to acquire custody of their children after the father's death. In America, reforms in laws concerning the custody of children started from as early as the 1830s.

Reforms in divorce laws started in England with the passing of the Matrimonial Cause Bill in 1857, which allowed the wife also to plea for divorce on grounds of misconduct plus adultery by the husband. Later, this Act was further reformed and finally a new Matrimonial Cause Act was passed in 1923 setting the same grounds for divorce for both the sexes. In France, divorce on grounds of incompatibility or mutual consent had been introduced in early as 1792 but the Napoleonic Code restricted the grounds of divorce and finally it had been completely abolished in 1816. But due to the pressure of the reformist movement, divorce on grounds of cruelty or injury was re-established in 1884. Other European countries also followed

suit gradually, and in America the 19th Amendment to the Constitution gave the wives the right to sue their husbands for divorce.

The movement for reforms in the economic rights of married women was first started in England in 1855 by Barbara Bodichon through her pamphlet entitled "A Brief Summary in Plain Language of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women". The efforts of this movement led to the passing of the Married Women's Property Act in 1882 in England, which gave married women the legal right over the property they brought into the marriage. In France, although the women could make traditional marriage contracts protecting the property they brought into the marriage, they had no legal economic rights. Due to the reformist movement, a law granting separate pension dues and benefits of employed wives was passed in 1886 and in 1891 a law allowing women to manage their own property was also passed. In Norway, wives were recognised as equal partners in marriage and had equal legal and economic rights by 1888 and this was further widened in 1927. In Sweden, laws granting married women the right to dispose of their own property and earnings was passed in 1874. Similar reforms were introduced in other European countries also. In America, the Married Women's Property Right was passed

in the later half of the 19th century.¹⁹

But despite all these reforms, married women still faced other inequalities. Wives still had no share or right of the property acquired during marriage, and they still had no protection against violent husbands.²⁰ They also had no control over their own fertility as information on birth-control and abortion was not allowed. Reforms in these areas set in only in the 20th century.

Women also fought for their franchisement right and other political rights. As stated earlier, women had taken active part in the general revolutions of the 18th century and also in other political and social struggles. This stirred up strong interest among the women and some men about women's political rights, as such, various movements demanding women's suffrage started in the early 19th century. This struggle was taken up by many individuals and organisations,²¹ but inspite of such an early start, women in Europe started to get this right only in the 20th century, because till 1900 only in New Zealand women

¹⁹Details of changes in married women's lives given in Randall, n. 2, pp. 104-112; and in Branca, n. 1, pp. 167-171.

²⁰Even in England the wives were not allowed a share in the property acquired during marriage until the 1970s. Besides, wives started to get some limited protection against violent husbands only from 1976 when the Matrimonial Proceedings Act was passed.

In America also wives were economically dependent on husbands till the 1970s.

²¹One of the earliest persons to take up the cause of women's right to vote was Victor Considérant, who demanded a vote for all adults of both sexes.

had the right to vote.²² In Finland women got the right to vote in 1907, Norway gave the women this right in 1913. In England, after several bills to this effect had been introduced and rejected in the Parliament many times, women finally got the right to franchisement in 1917 and soon Germany and Sweden also followed suit in 1919. American women got this right in 1920 and in France and Italy the women got this right in 1945.²³

Enfranchisement gave a new role to women in politics. They could now participate in, and influence, politics and public affairs directly. Due to women now being included in the constituents, the male politicians began to be more concerned about women's needs and as a result many social reforms and laws were passed in order to appeal to the women constituents.

Although women got the right to vote they did not, and were not allowed to, enter politics directly in a substantial number. Women did not vote as frequently as men, and there were very few women politicians. But this trend also started to change gradually and women too began to take almost equal part in politics.

In the colonial countries the condition of women was even worse than in the countries of Europe and America. There were numerous restrictions for women in all spheres of life, as a result they were debarred from many social, religious, political and economic activities. The practices of female seclusion,

²²Women in New Zealand got the right to vote in 1893.

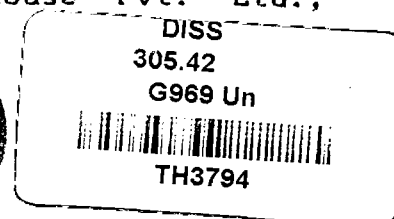
²³By 1970, according to a United Nations survey 123 countries had given women the right to vote.

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female infanticide, child-marriage, suppression of widows, etc. were followed and accepted as the custom and norms of society. In these countries the first spate of changes and reforms in the lives of women were brought about by colonisation, although at the same time colonisation also brought about new forms of suppression of, and discrimination against, women. Colonisation introduced western education which paved the way for giving rise to many great reformers. Inspired by the western education and ideas, especially the ideology of equality, these people fought for women's right to equality. Besides, some of the practices of these societies were against the principles and laws of the colonial powers and as such these governments took steps to abolish these practices. Due to the ceaseless efforts of the reformists, women finally got the right to education also. Slowly other reforms were also introduced; the practice of female infanticide, child-marriage etc. were abolished and reforms like widow-remarriage was introduced. Besides these, many other traditions and customs that were the cause of social injustice to women were abolished, as a result women's lives became more bearable.²⁴

Besides these steps taken by the national governments, the various international forums and organisations also took measures to alleviate the status of women and emancipate them from the centuries old life of servitude. In 1902 the

²⁴Details in P. Thomas, Indian Women Through the Ages, (Bombay : Asia Publishing House - 1964); Padanis and Malani, eds., Women of the world, (New Delhi : Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1978).



International Convention at The Hague dealt with conflicts of national law concerning marriage, divorce and guardianship of minors. Again in 1904 and 1910 the International Convention dealt with the suppression of traffic in women and children.

The League of Nations took more firmer steps in this direction by declaring in its Covenant in Article 23 (c) that the members of the League would "entrust the League with the general supervision over the execution of agreements with regard to the traffic in women and children". The League also sponsored the adoption of a convention in 1921 to take firmer measures in stopping traffic in women, and for this in January 1922, the League set up a committee on the Traffic on Women. Besides this, the League also set up a Secretariat to women to deal specially with women's issues. In 1935 the League decided to consider the question of status of women in its political and civil aspects also. Although the League was not able to do much in this regard, still it helped in bringing women's issues in the fore and making the national governments and other organisations take more interest in this matter.²⁵

Thus it can be seen that the status and role of women in the society has not been the same throughout history. In the first stage, i.e., the ancient period, women enjoyed equal status in society and had an equal role to play in the production, in the second stage, i.e. the mediaval period, women faced the most miserable and darkest period of history. Then

²⁵Details in D.C. Gupta, The League of Nations, (Delhi : Vikas Publishing House, Pvt. Ltd., 1974).

slowly from the 19th century things began to change for the better, especially due to the various feminist movements of the 19th century. The women's movement of the 19th century fought some of the grossest forms of inequalities and discrimination practiced against women. It was due to this movement that women once again began to get their rightful place in society gradually, and although it could not attain the full goal the beginnings towards the right direction was made.

CHAPTER II

U.N. MEASURES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN

The United Nations Organisation formally came into existence in October 24, 1945. This was an event of great significance as it heralded a new era of cooperation among the nations, regarding all matters - social, political, economic and cultural. During this period, i.e. the late 1940s, a number of independent states emerged in Asia and Africa, following decolonisation. Both these events played a vital and important role in the political, economic and social liberation of women.

The United Nations was the first international organisation to give a clear and comprehensive statement on the principle of non-discrimination on grounds of sex. The Preamble of the United Nation's Charter states that the member States have reaffirmed "their faith in the equal rights of men and women". The Charter also calls for "universal rights and freedom for all" without distinction as to sex.¹ It was due to the efforts of the United Nations that the principle of non-

¹The struggle to get women recognised in the charter of the U.N. was led by Jessie Street (Australia), Burtha Lutz (Brazil) and Minerva Bernadino (Dominican Republic), aided by Isabel Urdaneta (Venezuela). These women spear-headed the movement to get a special clause included in the charter specifying the eligibility of women to hold any position within the U.N. system (Art. 8). The inclusion of this article was opposed by the U.S.A., U.K. and Cuba. But finally this article was included in the Charter by a vote in which the U.S.A. and Cuba voted against and the U.K. abstained.

discrimination became universally recognised and accepted in the post-War period.

The first step of the United Nations to help in achieving the goal of equality of sexes was that of establishing the Commission on the Status of Women in 1946. In the first session of the Economic and Social Council, the nucleus of the Human Rights Commission suggested the setting up of a sub-commission on the status of women. This was opposed by the United States of America and the United Kingdom. They argued that the Human Rights Commission itself should deal with the matter of status of women, otherwise it would seem as if the United Nations did not consider women as human. But those in favour of establishing the commission argued, that it was because they felt that throughout history most nations had followed the idea of not considering women as human, where human rights were concerned as such rights were enjoyed only by men, that it was very necessary to set up a separate commission to protect and promote the status of women.² Finally, the Commission on the Status of Women, as a nucleus sub-commission under the Economic and Social Council, was established by the Council resolution 11 (II) on June 2, 1946. Later the sub-commission was expanded into a full commission. The functions of the Commission were :

to examine the existing legal and conventional disabilities of women with respect to political, social and economic rights and their educational opportunities; to make recommendations to

²U.N. Newsletter, Women 1980 (New York) No. 3. p. 4.

the Economic and Social Council on problems affecting women's rights; to implement the principle of equal rights of men and women and, to develop proposals to make such recommendations effective.

In its very first session in 1946, the General Assembly noted that certain member States had not yet granted equal political rights to women as had been granted to men. So the Assembly passed a resolution [Resolution 56(I)] on December 11, 1946 recommending that all member States which had not yet done so should adopt the necessary measures to grant equal political rights to women and, it was also decided that each year the General Assembly and the Commission on the Status of Women would consider the progress of women's political rights under the national laws. The Commission on the Status of Women also soon started to take up women's issues concerning all spheres of life and made numerous recommendations to the Economic and Social Council. At the request of the Council, the Commission reviewed the draft International Declaration of Human Rights and made some suggestions for amendments to Arts. 1 and 13, so as to specifically mention that women too had equal rights in the matter concerned.³ When the the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was passed on December 10, 1948 the suggestions of the

³The Commission on the Status of Women suggested that the two articles (art. 1 and 13) of the Declaration be amended to be read as : Art 1 "All people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed by nature with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in spirit of brotherhood". Art. 13 "Men and women should have equal rights to contract or dissolve marriage in accordance with the law".

Commission was accepted. This was a great and important step in the upliftment of women's status. Due to the efforts of the Commission, the Economic and Social Council also passed a number of resolutions in 1948 regarding equality of women in the public services, equal pay to men and women for work of equal value and also equal rights of men and women.⁴

Throughout the next decade, i.e. the 1950s, the Commission along with the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and other specialised agencies of the United Nations, such as the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation, the International Labour Organisation etc. not only contributed a lot in enhancing the international legal status of women, but also dealt with various other issues of women such as, their political rights, their status in public and private law, nationality of married women, equal pay for both men and women for work of equal value, technical assistance programmes for women, participation of women in the United Nations work, etc. These efforts of the United Nations led to the adoption of several conventions by the specialised agencies, which helped in alleviating the status of women by setting

⁴Resolution 121 (VI), reaffirming the principle of equal rights of men and women laid down by the Preamble of the U.N. charter, and calling upon the member states to implement the principle of equal pay for work of equal value for both men and women. Resolution 154 (VII)B, recommending the member states to "grant women access to equal terms with men to posts in the public services at all levels and also to consider women equally with men when appointing their delegation to organs and agencies of the U.N. and other international bodies and conferences.

international standards on the rights of women to be applied at the national levels. Some of these conventions passed in this decade were the Convention on Equal Remuneration for men and women, the Convention on the political rights of women, Convention on the Nationality of Married Women, the Discrimination Convention regarding employment and occupation, and the Convention Against Discrimination in Education.

The Convention on Equal Renumeration for men and women was passed by the International Labour Organisation in 1951 for providing women workers with some sort of protection regarding their wages. The Convention on the Political Rights of women was adopted by the General Assembly on December 20, 1952 but it came into force from July 1954. This convention was passed in order to promote full equality for women in the field of political rights, particularly in countries where women had not yet been granted the rights to vote, and it also provided for the right of women to be appointed to all public offices and functions. The Convention on the Nationality of Married Women was adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women in 1957. This convention provided that neither the celebration on the dissolution of marriage between one of its own nationals and an alien, nor the change of nationality by the husband during marriage, shall automatically affect the nationality of the wife. Thus this convention gave women the right to choose and keep their own nationality even if they married an alien. The Discrimination Convention regarding employment and occupation was adopted in 1958 by the International Labour Organisation to

bring about non-discrimination against women in matters regarding access to vocational training, employment and to particular occupations and, terms and conditions of employment. Then in 1960 the UNESCO adopted the Convention and Recommendation Against Discrimination in Education so that women would get equal educational opportunities and would not face a disadvantage, in any sphere of life, due to their lack of education.

By the end of the decade quite a lot had been achieved in all these fields, specially in the field of political rights, as most of the countries had by now given equal political rights to women.⁵

It was now felt that it was essential to enable women to make use of their rights, so it was necessary for the United Nations to investigate and find the ways and means by which women could be helped in this field. Accordingly, the United Nations made a number of suggestions for this. These suggestions were: setting up of community services to introduce political activities at the local level; development of personal contacts between women active in the economic and political life of their countries by means of seminars, exchange visits of delegations and individuals; and fellowships.⁶

⁵By the end of 1959 the Convention on Political Rights of Women had been signed by 42 countries and ratified or acceded to by 33 countries.

⁶Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the U.N. Decade for Women : Equality, Development and Peace Nairobi, 15-26 July, 1985 (New York : United Nation - 1986), p.5. (cited as RWC after this)

When the First United Nations Development Decade began in 1961, it introduced a developmental perspective to international peace efforts, leading to the realisation that developmental efforts without the full and active participation of women would not be effective. As a result, the role of women in development became the major concern of the United Nations and other international organisations, both at the national and regional levels. Thus the attitude of tackling women's issues changed. Previously, women's issues were dealt only with a view of achieving equality with men, but now there arose the need to integrate women in the development process.⁷ As a result, the various agencies of the United Nations sought to improve the role of women in development and, in particular, to achieve their effective mobilisation and integration in development programmes. This led to the initiation of numerous development and assistance programmes which would not only lead to the development of women but, more importantly, also make them take part in the development programmes and the whole development process. In this, besides the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women, the roles of the WHO, UNESCO, ILO, UNDO, FAO, UNDP, etc. has been significant.

During this period the General Assembly also initiated a study of the question of a unified long-term UN programme for the advancement of women and it was agreed to, by all, that women should be made able to participate fully in the development of society.

⁷ Ibid. p.4.

It was during this period, that the United Nations began to make specific efforts to draw up a declaration regarding the question of equal rights for women, although the United Nations had been concerned with this question from the very beginning.⁸ This type of declaration was felt necessary because the Human Rights Declaration had not inspired or brought about any appreciable change for the better in the status of women and there was still many evidences of discrimination against women in parts of the world. Therefore, the General Assembly felt that a more specific declaration had to be adopted in order to eliminate discrimination against women. So, in 1963 the General Assembly requested the Commission on the Status of Women to prepare a draft declaration on the elimination of discrimination against women, and invited the member governments, the specialised agencies and the appropriate Non-governmental Organisations to submit any proposals they had, for inclusion in the draft. The Commission soon drafted the Declaration on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, stating that discrimination against women should cease because no country could attain full and complete development without the maximum participation of women. Then on November 7, 1967 the General Assembly adopted this Declaration, which declares that any discrimination against women on the basis of sex is fundamentally unjust and constitutes an offence against human dignity.⁹ This Declaration marked the culmination of the

⁸U.N. Monthly Chronicle, Vol. IV, No. 11, December 1967. p.113.

⁹Before this, in December 1966 the General Assembly had adopted the Covenant on the Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

efforts of the United Nations and of the other organs, including the non-governmental organisations, to formulate the principle of equal rights for women. It was mainly due to this Declaration that the principle of non-discrimination was once and for all firmly established as a universally accepted principle, to be followed by all. Thus this Declaration was the greatest achievement of the United Nations. Another major step and achievement of this period was the proclamation of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development by the General Assembly on December 11, 1969.¹⁰ Since then the effective mobilisation and integration of women in development has been the major concern of the United Nations system of organisation.

This same view was expressed in the International Development Strategy of the Second United Nations Development Decade, beginning from 1970, and was also reiterated in the Declaration Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (May 1, 1974), the Charter of the Rights and Duties of the states and other resolutions passed in the decade.

In 1970 the General Assembly adopted a programme of concentrated international action for the advancement of women. This programme outlined the general objectives and minimum targets in the field of education, training and employment,

¹⁰This Declaration provides that "social progress and development shall aim at the continuous raising of material and spiritual standards of living of all members of society, with respect for and in compliance with human rights and fundamental freedoms".

health and maternity protection and, public life, to be achieved during the Decade. In the early 1970s the efforts to end discrimination against women and to ensure their equal participation in society provided the impetus for most of the initiatives taken by the United Nations. These efforts were also inspired by the awareness of two important facts. Firstly, the women's reproduction and production roles were closely linked to the political, economic, social, cultural, legal, educational and religious conditions that hampered the advancement of women; and secondly, that the factors intensifying the economic exploitation, marginalisation and oppression of women stemmed from chronic inequalities, injustices and exploitative conditions at the family, community, nation, sub-region, region and international levels.¹¹

The General Assembly in 1972 passed a resolution (Resolution 3010 (XXVII)), proclaiming the year 1975 as the International Women's Year, with "Equality, Development and Peace" as the central theme.¹² This was a great significant step as it was the first time that a year had been marked exclusively for women. This brought women's issues at the fore-

¹¹R.W.C. n. 6 p.5.

¹²The suggestion of the UN to declare a Women's Year had a mixed response. A Women's Liberation Movement from Mexico was against it and denounced it as it believed that the creation of the International Women's Year was a direct result of a patronising attitude and some others also believed this. On the other hand all governments and many women's organisations welcomed it and celebrated it - Lotika Sarkar, "Status of Women and the UN" in J.N. Saxena, et.al. eds., United Nations for a Better World, (New Delhi : Lancer Books, 1986), p. 216.

front in the international level, thus also at the national and regional levels. The International Women's Year was expected to usher in a new era, to raise the consciousness of women and change the attitude of men towards them. The year was to be devoted to intensified action for promoting equality between men and women, for ensuring the full integration of women in the total development effort and for increasing women's role and contribution in strengthening world peace. For this purpose the General Assembly called upon the United Nations system of organisation "to provide increased assistance to those programmes, projects and activities which will encourage and promote the further integration of women into national, regional, and inter-regional economic development activities".

The secretariat formulated the draft Plan of Action to be adopted at the World Conference which was to be held in 1975. The General Assembly also established the Consultative Committee for the World Conference of the International Women's Year, in December 1974, and this Committee revised the draft plan made by the Secretariat. The Committee, after reviewing the status of women and the advancement made so far, concluded that the progress in implementing international instruments and declaration on equality had been "slow and uneven" and that in all countries there still persisted a de facto gap between the economic and social status of women and that of men. Therefore, keeping this in mind, the Committee stated that the main aim of the revised Plan of Action would be to stimulate national and international action in solving the problems of under-

development and of the socio-economic structure which places women in an inferior position, and to ensure "complete assimilation of men and women in the social order".¹³

The World Conference of the International Women's Year was held in Mexico City from June 19 to July 2, 1975, with the major focus on the integration of women in the development process. This Conference was the first major inter-governmental conference devoted to women. The Conference recommended that the decade 1975-85 be declared the Decade for Women and Development. Besides this, the Conference also adopted the Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and their contribution to Development and Peace, The World Programme of Action for Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year, the Regional Programme of Action and thirty-four resolutions on the status of women and other issues.

The Declaration of Mexico urged all governments and peoples to dedicate themselves in achieving the goals of the year with a view to "realising a human society where women and men can live in dignity, freedom, justice and prosperity", and it set forth thirty principles stating the need for measures to advance women's rights and linking those goals with economic and political objectives. The Declaration also states that the issues of inequalities affecting the vast majority of women is "closely linked with the problem of under-development which exists as a result, not only of unsuitable internal structures, but

¹³U.N. Monthly Chronicle, Vol. XII, No. 4, April 1975. p. 37.

also of a profoundly unjust world economic system". Therefore, it states that there is a great need to "establish and implement with urgency" the New International Economic Order, which had been envisaged in the General Assembly's Declaration of May 1974.

The World Plan of Action, as drafted by the Secretariat and revised by the Consultative Committee, was adopted without a vote by the Conference on July 1, 1975. The Plan of Action aims at ensuring the equality of women and reassessing their role in society. Just like the Declaration of Mexico, the Plan of Action also, in its introduction, reasserted the necessity of establishing the New International Economic Order, stating that the benefits of technological progress were not equitably shared and that the developing countries, although representing 70 per cent of the world population, received only 30 per cent of the world income. The plan further asserted that the "integral development of the personality of women as human beings is directly connected with her participation in the development process as a mother, worker and citizen" and as such policies should be developed to promote the co-ordination of those different roles. For this, the Plan established nine areas for national action - international cooperation and peace, political participation, education and training, employment, health and nutrition, family, population, housing and other social questions relevant to the status and role of women in

society - and called for global action as well as action at regional levels.¹⁴

The Conference also considered various other subjects connected with the main theme of women and development, such as, the objectives and goals of the year; involvement of women in strengthening international peace and eliminating racism, apartheid, racial discrimination, alien domination and acquisition of territory by force, trends and changes in the status and roles of women and men, and major obstacles to be overcome in the achievement of equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities, and integration of women in the development process as equal partners with men. After such consideration the Conference passed a number of resolutions for improving the rights and opportunities of women and expanding the development process to involve women. Besides these, the Conference also adopted several resolutions on some specific issues such as, the prosecution in Chile, continued aid to Viet-Nam, a new Panama Canal Treaty, assistance to the Palestinians, establishment of the New International Economic Order, the strengthening of detente, and effective measures for disarmament.¹⁵

Thus the world conference was a major and significant event which ushered a new era in which the integration of women in development, as agents as well as beneficiaries, was to be the main concern of national, regional and international development programmes. Then on December 15, 1975, after taking

¹⁴U. N. Monthly Chronicle, Vol. XII, No. 7, July 1975, pp. 45-46

¹⁵ibid.

note of the report of the World Conference of International Women's Year and endorsing the action proposals made by it, the General Assembly proclaimed the period 1976-1985 as the United Nations Decade for Women with "Equality, Development and Peace" as the central theme. These three terms, in relation to women, were defined clearly. 'Equality' meant not only legal equality but also equality of rights, responsibilities and opportunities for the participation of women in development, both as beneficiaries and as active agents. 'Development' meant total development, including development in the political, economic, social, cultural and also the physical, moral, intellectual and cultural growth of the individual. It was further laid down that women's development should not only be viewed as an issue in social development but should be seen as an essential part of the total development process which includes all dimensions. Peace was made one of the themes because it was clear that without peace and stability there can be no development. Thus peace is a pre-requisite of development and, at the same time, there can be no lasting peace without development and elimination of inequalities and discrimination at all levels.¹⁶

The International Women's Year, 1975, also gave the needed impetus to research on the status of women in many countries, and the year's activities also increased the awareness of the effect of the status of women on a broad range of national and international issues, including population, food, nutrition,

¹⁶Report of the World Conference on the UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (New York: United Nations, 1986), p.

health, literacy, and employment.¹⁷

Between 1975 and 1981, the General Assembly and other specialised agencies of the United Nations adopted a number of resolutions and declarations on various aspects of the role of women in development and their status in society. In 1976 the General Assembly set up the Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women, which was later in 1985, named the United Nations Development Fund for women. This was to work in autonomous association with the UNDP, providing direct financial and technical support to women involved in cooperative activities, food production, fuel and water supply, health services, small business, management and planning. The Fund also ensures that the needs of both women and men are considered when large-scale assistance is given to developing countries.

In 1977 the General Assembly passed a resolution inviting each country to proclaim, according to their historical and national traditions and customs, any day of the year as the United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace.¹⁸ In the same year, in December, a draft convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women was adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women, the work on which had

¹⁷ Many non-governmental organisations also undertook studies within their fields of interest and competence. One of these, the International Advisory Committee on Law and Population, which has a consultative status in the ECOSOC of the U.N. focussed on the legal status of women. Law and Status of Women - An International Symposium, (United Nations: Columbia University School of Law- 1977.) p. 7.

¹⁸ The U.N. observes this day on March 8, it is also celebrated as the International Women Workers' Day.

begun from 1974 when a working group of the Commission had been set up for it. The draft convention defined discrimination against women "as any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect of or the purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, on a basis of equality with men, of human rights and fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life". The convention was intended to be a legally binding instrument designed to eliminate discrimination against women. The Economic and Social Council recommended the General Assembly to consider the draft conventions and, at the same time the Council adopted five resolutions on the status of women.

Although the General Assembly could not adopt the convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women either that year or the next, it did discuss it and also adopted seven other resolutions on December 16, 1977 on the question of the United Nations Decade for Women. These resolutions concerned the draft convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, an International Research Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, Voluntary Fund for the Decade and Women's participation in strengthening of international peace and security. The General Assembly also requested for the constant and increasing efforts at the national, regional and international levels by the countries in order to attain the objectives of the Decade.

CHAPTER - III

PROBLEMS OF WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOUTH

The world is divided into two groups -- the rich, developed and industrialised North, comprising of the Western countries and Japan, and the poor and developing South, comprising of the Asian, African and Latin American countries. This division started from the 18th century when the Industrial Revolution began, ushering in the colonial era during which the Western countries began to colonise the countries which are today known as the South or the developing countries. The colonial powers exploited these colonies politically as well as economically, leaving them poor and industrially backward when they finally got independence in the 1940s and 1950s. The gap between the North and the South is not merely a gap between the rich and the poor but between the developed, industrialised, urbanised, mechanised, modernised countries having distinctive economic institutions, democratic processes, political characteristics and ideological patterns on the one hand, and the largely rural, agricultural, traditional countries in the early stages of development, having only a small nuclei of modern industries, modern firms, modern governments, modern views on the other.¹

¹Simon Kuznets, "The Gap: Concept, Measurement, Trends" in Gustav Rains, ed. The Gap Between the Rich and Poor Nations (London: MacMillan, St. Martin's Press, 1972), p. 4.

The central and first question here is: "What is meant by development?" Development covers such a vast meaning that it cannot be precisely defined to universal satisfaction. Broadly speaking, development refers to the achievement of a desirable social and economic progress.² Although there will always be different views about what is desirable, development in this context must certainly mean improvement in living conditions, for which economic growth and industrialisation are essential. But along with these, attention must be paid to the quality of growth and to social change. Development requires an advance on all fronts. It includes matters of public health and housing, education and production, industry and commerce, agriculture and mining; it also involves the necessary changes in the structure and attitudes of the society regarding the application of modern science and technology for raising the standard of living conditions of the people; and also in the better use of the existing resources, both physical and natural. Development should result in a better and more fruitful life, and in higher standard in nutrition, health and education. Thus, the improvement in the quality of human life is the main aim of development. Therefore, development cannot be an isolated phenomenon, rather it is a product of simultaneous changes in various related fields and spheres of life and society.

Development has been defined by the World Conference of the U.N. Decade for Women held at Copenhagen in July 1980 as

²"North-South: A Progressive for Survival", Report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues (Massachusetts: The MIT, Cambridge, 1980), p.48.

"...total development, including development in the political, economic, social, cultural and other dimensions of human life, as also development of economic and other material resources and also the physical, moral, intellectual and cultural growth of the human person".³ The recent Declaration on the Right to Development, 1986, defines development as "a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting therefrom".⁴

Development is a process as well as an end product. As a process, development is not synonymous with growth, but also includes changes in the fundamental attitude of life and work, in social, political and cultural institutions. Thus development is qualitative and quantitative growth plus change in the social, cultural, psychological and economic spheres. The true test of development is the extent to which it has helped the people to attain the goals agreeable to all members, in other words, to the extent it has benefitted all the members.

In the context of the North-South divide, development means transforming both the economies and societies in such a

³Report of the World Conference on the U.N. Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Copenhagen, 14-30 July 1980 (New York: United Nations, 1980), p.5.

⁴Theo Van Boven, "Human Rights and Development" in David P. Forsythe, ed., Human Rights and Development: International Views (London: Macmillan, 1984).p. 126.

way so as to diminish the differences existing between these two groups of countries.⁵

One of the most prominent gap or difference between the North and the South is the status of women in these countries. It is true that women in the countries of the North are still discriminated against and exploited, not openly but covertly and in subtle ways. But otherwise, in general, their position and status is much better than their counterparts in the developing countries of the South. The status of women has improved greatly in the developed and industrialised countries of the North, especially in the past thirty years, women in these countries have gained equal rights and status with men. Due to depletion of the young male labour force and shifts in these economies from goods to services has made the demand for female labour force very strong, thus changing the female labour market dramatically, in favour of women.⁶ Technological innovation has further helped the process of emancipation of women from household chores giving them more free time to involve themselves in other work. Thus, they are represented almost equally in all types of employment, and this too, on the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. The proportion of women enrolling in higher institutions of learning has also

⁵E.S. Simpson, The Developing World: An Introduction (U.K.: Longman Scientific and Technical, 1987), p.55.

⁶Baker, et al., Women Today: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach to Women's Studies. (California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1980), p. 193.

grown. As a result, women are found in large numbers in all types of professional jobs. Legal barriers to women's participation in social affairs have also been lowered. Besides, women's perceptions of themselves has also changed. So the women of the countries of the North have attained a stage where they are not dependent on men either economically or socially, and have a large degree of autonomy.

In contrast of this situation, the status of women in the countries of the South has not improved. Although it is true that the awareness of the status of women has improved, the actual status of women has not improved, in fact it seems to have declined. Innumeral steps have been taken to improve the status of women, numerous women's groups, organisations and research centres have been established, plans and strategies have been developed, resolutions have been passed, legislation to abolish discrimination against women been made, programmes have been launched, but inspite of all this women's status regarding their access to education, income, employment and economic resources has worsened.

It is true that the developing countries are developing and modernising at quite a steady pace, but where the development of women are concerned, there is not much progress. In fact development seems to have adverse effect on them, due to several reasons.

First is the impact of colonisation. Almost all these countries were once colonies. Prior to colonisation, these

countries were entirely dependent on simple agriculture where both men and women shared the work, thus giving women equal role in production, which in turn led to their equal status in society. But once colonisation took place, the Europeans introduced new tools and methods for agriculture and they taught the use of these new tools and new techniques only to the men. This was because the Europeans believed that cultivation is a job for men and that men were better farmers than women. Therefore, for the development of agriculture male farming ought to be promoted. So women began to be relegated to the background in agriculture, performing only simple manual tasks. Thus in the course of agricultural development men's labour productivity increased while that of women's remained more or less static or even declined.⁷ This decline in the role in production naturally led to the decline of their relative status in society.

Secondly, even after independence, the planners, who were almost invariably men, made and still make developmental programmes and policies with men in mind and neglecting women. Besides, the technical advisors who advise and teach the farmers also neglect women. They teach the new techniques and methods of agriculture and use of new machines only to men, although in many of these countries most men have migrated to industrial towns and it is mostly the women who do the cultivation. But women are only given training in home economics, food processing and nutrition. Thus, as women are

⁷ Esther Boserup, Women's Role in Economic Development (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), p.54.

not included in the new developmental programmes, the women cultivators still have to depend on the traditional tools and methods of agriculture, which results in their low production as compared to the production of the men involved in the same occupation. This enhances the prestige and status of men giving them more important role in agriculture, while women's status decline.

Third, land reforms and settlement policies, started by the development planners, have often reduced women's control over land by denying women's traditional rights to land and giving land titles only to male head sub-households.

Fourth, is the impact of industrialisation and development towards women's small home-industries. Most of the women of the developing countries are engaged in small home-industries, as, due to the social ban on other activities, this is the only activity by which they can earn money without loss of social esteem within their community. But once industrialisation set in, women lost this job of theirs because the products they were making were replaced by products made in the factories, where the labour force consisted of more men than women. Since the women had no choice they have to sell the goods they produce in their home-industries at a very cheap price, so their income is very little, not enough to make them economically independent and most of the times they have to abandon the whole project. This leads to their unemployment and they become dependent on men, thus lowering their status in society.

Finally, with industrialisation more women become unemployed as they were not taken in industries also. Most employers prefer male labour in industries. One important reason for this is the rules about obligatory benefits for women workers, such as, equal pay and other special privileges and benefits.⁸ Besides, as in agriculture, even in modern industry work, only men are given the training so naturally they are preferred for the industrial jobs.

Thus development and modernisation process has actually worsened the plight of women in the developing countries in many instances. This is so because the development policies, in many cases, have bypassed the needs of the women and also eroded their existing positions without providing adequate alternatives. The women have to carry new burdens and suffer new indignities and inequalities as their economies develop. Lack of adequate access to the new kinds of skills has left them at home while men migrate to the cities. Moreover, this male migration has added to all their duties as women have to now do all the tasks which were earlier performed by men.

Even where modernisation has led to more women seeking jobs outside their homes, their work in the non-agricultural labour force follows the lives of their traditional household occupations. The main reason for women's lower status due to development is that in the development process women are considered only as beneficiaries of welfare programmes and not as participates of the economic progress, thus making them

⁸ Ibid., p. 37.

dependent on men.

Tradition, customs and deep-rooted belief of the people also hamper the development in the status of women in these countries. Due to the deep-rooted fear of marriage where a wife is more educated than the husband, only a very small minority of girls get higher education. The girls or their families prefer to get education only till higher-secondary at the most, because the men and their families do not want their wives to be more educated than themselves.

The tradition of the countries do not allow free movement and participation of girls and women in most of the activities outside the house. As a result girls are not encouraged, if not debarred, to take up education and training in technical and other vocational programmes. Therefore although literacy is now becoming the rule among urban girls in almost all developing countries, due to the enduring prejudice against female employment, girls are rarely given the type of education which would qualify them for employment in the modern sector. This is left for the boys and men only who have the freedom and the 'right' to pursue any vocation or profession they want.⁹ The society still frowns upon women going to work in the factories and large enterprises.

Another tradition or culture of these countries which poses one of the greatest barriers to women's freedom is the patriachal tendencies of the families. Men are still the

⁹ Ibid., p. 212.

supreme heads of the families and the women are regarded as their subordinates who have to obey the men of their families -- the father, the husband after marriage; and later, the son.

These traditions and customs limit the effectiveness of the laws that have been passed in these countries to develop and raise the status of women in the society.

Besides all this, another important factor impeding the raise in the status of women in the developing countries is the invisibility of their contribution to the society and the country. Statistical methods still, even today, largely ignore the contribution of women when it takes place within the household rather than in the labour market. They also tend to ignore the economic contributions of women because their employment is often mostly in the informal sector or is seasonal and thus making it difficult to measure. Another important reason for ignoring women's income-generating activities is that women's work is defined as supplementary work, as an additional income to the income of the husband who is the primary earner.¹⁰ This attitude is taken for granted although in many developing countries there is an increasing number of households which are headed by women and more and more women are the primary income earners.¹¹

¹⁰ Proceedings, Asahi International Symposium. "Women in a Changing World". Oct 23-25, 1985 (Tokyo: Japan), p. 17. (cited as Proceedings, A. I. S. after this)

¹¹ It is only now being realised that contrary to traditional false concepts of male being the breadwinner, anything between 25% to 35% households are defacto female headed -- Rami Chhabra and Alka Basu "Third World Women" in Laeeq Futehally, Ed. Women in the Third World (Bangalore: Jaico Publishing House, 1980), p. 34.

Thus, women remain statistically invisible, although their contribution is indispensable and basic, and many of them play an unqualifiable but important role in safeguarding the health and capacities of coming generations. As women's contributions are invisible, this naturally does nothing to help in raising their status, rather it hampers it as it shows that women depend on men.

Thus, due to all these reasons women in the developing countries face a great disadvantage. Even if some women manage to overcome all these handicaps and gain access to the new sectors of the economy they tend to be heavily concentrated in occupations that are similar to traditional household tasks, and are accorded a low status. They work as nursery, primary and middle-school teachers, nurses, social and welfare workers, clerks and secretaries. In industries they are concentrated in the textile, pharmaceutical and food processing factories and other occupations that are particularly monotonous and tedious. Such occupational segregation is visible not only among occupations but also within the occupations. Fewer women occupy the higher positions in the occupation they are found in, for example, women many predominate among elementary school teachers but not among university professors.¹² Moreover, they are often paid less than men for equal work and they are discriminated against in matters of responsible supervisory positions. Their exploitation is facilitated by the fact that they are poorly

12. Ibid., p. 35 and also from Proceedings, A.I.S n.10, p. 26.

organised to assert their rights as employees and as workers. The efforts of bodies like the International Labour Organisation that reach out to protect their rights and interests are defeated because the whole set up is made up in favour of men and the regulations and requirements aimed at protecting women are easily neglected. Besides this, the largest majority of women are employed in the informal sector of the economy, therefore, they are out of the reach of most of the labour laws and policies which seek to protect and regulate working conditions.

But even after being confined mainly to lower paying jobs and receiving less pay for the same work as men, the employment levels of women have been declining in many of the Third World Countries because due to the growth of the working-age population, women workers are often replaced by men. Due to the general problem of unemployment the female workers suffer more than the male workers. This is in spite of the fact that female literacy has been rising with development, possibly because (a) most of the increase in literacy is accounted for by the higher class women (b) even when female literacy increases among the lower classes, it does not confer on them any special job skills.¹³

In the educational field also women are much worse off than men in the developing countries. Although the percentage of female enrolment in both primary and secondary schools is -----

¹³Futehally, n. 11, p. 37.

rising slowly, the disparities between boys and girls are growing, especially in countries having a high rate of population growth. As the level of education rises the percentage of women declines and there are only very few women found in the higher levels of education. Education in the field of specialised training programmes also have a high male bias. The stress, regarding the education of women, is more on 'home economics'. Although such education is invaluable in changing attitudes and practices in important areas like health, nutrition and sanitation, it does not help much in improving the status of women through increasing their potential independence. The social value of giving priority to male education reinforces discrimination against women by depriving them of skills necessary for fuller participation in socio-economic activities.

Regarding the political status of women, it is seen that political equality of the sexes forms part of the larger commitment to freedom and equality that inspired the developing countries to liberate themselves from colonial rule, and which subsequently guided them in framing their constitutions as independent nations. Consequently, unlike the women in the developed countries, the women of the developing countries got political equality as a constitutional right, without having to fight for it. But inspite of this, the political participation of women in these countries is very poor as compared to that of men. The main reason for this lies in the fact that the upbringing of girls does not equip them for political roles and responsibilities. They are raised to be compliant and dependent

wives and home-makers, so it is difficult for women to go out and take active part in politics. This naturally does nothing in raising the status of women; their status is unlikely to improve unless they use the political machinery to gain and assert their rights and equality.

Thus inspite of the innumerable legislative reforms introduced in these countries in order to equalise the personal status of men and women, there still exists a great gap between the newly instituted rights and freedoms legally available to women and their actual situation. Women suffer from low wage structure, low productivity, poverty, unemployment, low education and various other forms of exploitation.

It is true that even in the industrialised and developed countries of the north, women are even today prejudiced and discriminated against, although it is not so blatant as in the developing countries. The domination of, and discrimination against women is a universal phenomenon, but it is more so in the developing countries. The women of these countries face not only a great gap between their condition and that of their counterparts in the developed world, but in addition they also face another more insidious and drastic disparity with their own men-folk. They share all the drawbacks of a poor and primarily rural economy, and in addition they have a whole series of burdens which they have to bear alone. The secondary status accorded to women all over the world becomes a battle for survival in the developing countries as discrimination against them reaches more higher levels. Women in the developing

countries have been and continue to be the victims of poverty and under-development on the one hand and socio-economic inequality, domination and exploitation on the other.¹⁴ Since these developing countries has been, and still is, exploited and controlled by the richer countries of the north, these countries and their people, especially the women, whether staying at home or at work, have long been reduced to the status of 'colonies' of the north and of men. Thus the women of the developing countries are doubly oppressed by the advanced economies and countries and also their men-folk.

The major source of all the problems of women in the developing countries can be summarised in a few words : "complete social and economic dependence on men and a stress on their reproduction role that is limited to their own interest".¹⁵ This means that in most of these countries women on an average still marry very early, sometimes into polygamous households, bear children in rapid succession, are illiterate, and most of them are not engaged in what is recognised as 'gainful economic activity'. The women in developing countries have been identified as a disadvantageous group.¹⁶ They form a

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 21-22.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁶ As of 1982, 800 million people in the developing world lived in absolute poverty, and the majority of them were women; around 500 million people suffer from hunger and malnutrition and the worst afflicted are the women and children; around 20 million people die every year of hunger-related causes and the majority of them are women and children; women and children constitute more than 90% of all the world population.

weaker section, and being subjected under excessive male domination they seldom get a chance to develop their health, personality and participation in development actions within and outside their home environment. The women have been considered backward.

This miserable and depressing plight of women of the developing countries is self-perpetuating, and there cannot be any change in the status of women only through the normal process of time or through the developmental efforts that all these countries are now involved in. Although various economic development programmes have been formulated and adopted by these countries for women's development there has been no concentrated effort to mobilise or organise the women in such a way that they can come up to make use of the benefits of those economic development programmes to the most of their advantage. The situation of women, particularly regarding their familial, societal and cultural existence, has not been properly analysed and as a result, the introduction of stray economic development programmes cannot solve the problems of women's development. What is needed is strategies specifically directed towards improving the status of women, both at the micro-level in the home, and in the larger national context. Since health and nutrition, fertility, employment, education and political and legal status are the factors which influence the overall status of women in society, there must be programmes affecting these factors. It is not enough merely to provide better and elaborate services, but more importantly, women should be induced to use these services and at the same time men, too

should be induced to permit the women to avail of these services. Wherever programmes specifically aimed at improving the status of women have been introduced both at the micro level and at the national level, women have immediately gained, irrespective of the general level of poverty. Examples of this are Sri Lanka and Kerala in India - in both these places, despite limited resources and continuing poverty, there has been low birth, death and mortality rates and the programmes for women's education, better integrated health and social service and better income distribution have led to substantive gains.¹⁷

Another important step to be taken in order to change the status of women is to change the institutions and values of the society. There has to be a reconfiguration of roles, rewards and cultural values, otherwise, given the present system, women will continue to be regarded as lower status persons in society. The present division of roles between men and women that arose historically from the separation of the work-place from the house is not the "normal" or "traditional" pattern, it is a recent trend that arose in a particular stage of development. That is why this trend occurs in the countries of the south which have not as yet reached the stage of development achieved by the countries of the North.¹⁸ In the advanced countries of the North, the dichotomy between home and work has been, to a

¹⁷Futehally, n. 11, p. 24.

¹⁸Kingsley Davis, "Wives and Work : The Sex Role Revolution and the Consequences", Population and Development Review Vol. 10, No. 3, September 1984.p. 404.

great extent, broken down, leading to a larger variety of options for both women and men. A new degree of structural complexity is in the process of being achieved both in the economic system and the governmental sphere. On the economic side, more women are taking to paid work as well as doing household chores. On the governmental side, public services in all these countries have greatly expanded. they have health care protection, pension plan, child care and social security services, which partly relieve the family of its function leaving both wives and husbands more free to take up jobs. In this way, women's primary role inside the family has been diminished along with men's major role of being the only breadwinner. At the same time women's options outside the home - in education, employment and political and cultural expression - are widening even further. This process should be followed in the developing countries also, breaking down the traditional tasks of women and men into components that become more easily exchanged across sex boundaries.¹⁹

Oppression of women, in one form or another, is a universal phenomena, the difference being only in degrees. One common form of oppression of women all over the world, both in the countries of the South as well as in those of the North, is the subtle form of oppression. This subtle form of oppression and cruelty, discrimination and inequality in the 'normal' social life of people in the day-to-day interaction poses the

¹⁹Janet Z. Giele, Women and the Future, (New York : Free Press - 1978), pp. 304-313.

most formidable and intricate problem in the emancipation of women. This is so because this type of oppression is not visible at once and most of the times even the women themselves are unconscious of what is being done to them. In order to fight such forms of oppression and emancipate women, the women themselves have to be conscious and fight for their rights, because emancipation will not come to them as a gift from the privileged and dominant group. The development programmes will not be automatically oriented and structured in favour of women on the basis of new insights and ideas. Therefore, women themselves, with the support of active allies from other social strata, must come out and fight for their emancipation.

Thus, it is clear that oppression of women is a global phenomena but the women of the developing countries suffer more. They are subordinate to their own menfolk as well as to the women of the countries of the North. In countries where the whole nation and the people are subordinate and exploited by the advanced and developed countries, the women of these countries are doubly oppressed, they are exploited by their men-folk and also by the advanced and developed nations. In spite of development and modernisation taking place in these countries, the lot of the women has not improved. Infact, modernisation and development has adversely affected them and unless some positive steps are taken, the plight of these women will not improve, but rather, it may become worse.

CHAPTER - IV

ROLE OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT AND MEASURES TO BE TAKEN TO ENHANCE
THIS ROLE (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE THIRD WORLD)

As has been clear from the previous chapters, women all over the world have been identified as a disadvantageous group and given secondary status in society. But women can make active participation in development if they are given proper opportunities, encouragement and resource support.¹ People are both the means and end of development, and since women constitute half of the total population of the world it is vitally important that they be included in the development process -- not only as beneficiaries but also as agents; there cannot be development if one half of the population remains oppressed and under-developed.

Through centuries women have played a vital role in ensuring the survival system through basic activities like food-production, reproduction and child rearing and also by producing incomes for the household through work of economic value and, in the performance of survival activities such as fetching fuel, fodder, drinking water etc. Women have always, from the very beginning, worked shoulder - to - shoulder with men in food-production, about half the work in the agricultural sector is done by women. In some cases where men have migrated to the

¹K. L. Bhowmik, "Introduction" in K. L. Bhowmik, ed., Development of Women and Children, (New Delhi : Inter-India Publications, 1988), p.3.

cities, it is the women who carry on the work by themselves. Besides this, women even in rural areas, do some sort of other work of economic value, such as, small industries, thus contributing to the income of the family. Along with all this, women do a hundred and one household chores which are of great necessity. At the same time, by doing the household chores, women give men the free time they require to do other work which help in the development process.

Women's contribution to social life provides the essential under-pinning of the whole society. As wives and mothers they are the first suppliers of health care and education. It is the mother who is totally responsible for the up-bringing of her children. She is the one to instill the first ideas, principles and values in the child; through her the child develops his or her own ideas and principles later when they become responsible citizens. Besides, in stable societies women are the arbiters of cultural values ; where social systems are under stress, they help the evolutions of new values.² In this way women play a vital role in the development of the society and the nation.

Thus both men and women make equal contribution to development and both are equally efficient although they do not have the same type of ability or abilities, for it is true that they differ in verbal and spatial-visual abilities as well as character and the more obvious physiological features. Due to

²Nafis Sadik, "Women, the Centre of Development", Development - Journal for the Society for International Development, 1988 : 1, p. 30.

their basic equality in potential and efficiency, it is only expected that women also make equal contribution to the output of the final public good, which includes children.³ The contribution of women to national development of every country is of great significance. Women's involvement in the national progress at all levels - social, economic, political is an undisputable fact, though the degrees of involvement varies from time to time and society to society. A realistic vision for national and international action, a structural adjustment which will secure development and bring an end to poverty, must therefore, acknowledge the contribution of women. So it is necessary that women be integrated into the whole development process if there is to be all round development of the society and the nation. Participation of women, not only of developed and advanced countries and societies but also of rural women, is required for the grass-root initiatives to succeed. Rural women have heavy, multiple and vital roles as house-wives, mothers, food-producers and food-providers. To leave them out of participation in decision-making and in the fruits of development is to miss the point of what effective participation is about. So, development must include the rural poor also.

Although in the international development strategy focus on human as the end and means of development started only from the last decade, actually it was already realised early in the 1960s when the First United Nations Development Decade was launched in 1961, that there could be no full development

³Jacob Moreh "Women, Men and Society", Kyklos, vol. 39, no. 2, 1986, pp. 209-229.

without the full and active participation of women. As a result, the role of women in development became the major concern of the United Nations and other international organisations both at the national and regional levels, leading to a change in the attitude of tackling women's issues. Since then, in the programmes of each United Nations Development Decade, it has been made clear that women must be integrated into the main-stream of the development process.

Therefore, any definition of development is incomplete if it fails to comprehend the contribution of women to development and the consequences of development for the lives of women. Every development policy, plan or project has an impact on women and cannot succeed without the work of women. Infact, women need to be involved in all stages and at all levels of the projects and programmes. At the same time, development with justice calls urgently for measures that will give women access to better jobs, that will diminish their arduous tasks that almost all women, specially in the Third World, face in their daily domestic and agricultural work. At the same time this will also lead to a more fair distribution of opportunities for creative work and economic advancement, between the sexes.⁴

⁴North-South: A Programme for Survival. Report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues (Massachusetts: MIT Press, Cambridge, 1980), p. 59.

As the need to integrate women in the development process became vital and important, numerous development and assistance programmes were launched by the national governments, the United Nations and its specialised agencies and also by other regional and international organisations, not only for the development of women but, more importantly, for integrating them into the programmes as agents of development. It is now generally recognised that women are an essential component of the development process which can take place if both men and women are included. The inclusion is not a question of equality but simply the necessity of the case, as otherwise the development programmes would become a waste. Getting resources into women's hands, integrating them into wage-labour force, and securing female rights to enable and empower women for other actions were regarded as worthy in themselves.⁵ It is clear today that equality for women must be a positive concept, rather than simply the absence of overt concepts that formerly were there.⁶

Accordingly, in all the Third World countries, innumerable development and assistant programmes for women started from the 1960s. These included efforts to enhance educational opportunities and training, emphasizing equality of opportunity; health and sanitary services; proper nutrition and child-care;

⁵Kathleen Staudt, "Women, Development and the State", Development and Change, vol. 17 no.(2); April 1986: pp.325-333.

⁶Daphne Greenwood, "Economic Significance of Women's Place in Society", Journal of Economic Issues, vol. 18, no. 3; September, 1984, p.678.

and other social and welfare services. Due to all these women did gain, enhancing and widening their role in development. Expansion of higher education and training for women opened opportunities for an increasing number of women for higher education and to enter and hold jobs and professions from which they were formerly barred due to lack of qualification. Women's labour force also grew greatly in the organised sector. Women's health and mortality rate improved. Besides this, those women who were self-employed, such as vendors, petty traders, crafts-workers, small shop-keepers, and other cottage-industries, etc., who lacked financial support, marketing facilities and training to improve skills, were given training and also provided officially with loan facilities and also marketing facilities. The institution of adult suffrage and democratic elections, followed in these countries after gaining independence, brought in women as important voters. Expansion in the offices of dignity and power also opened up chances for many women to hold offices of position and authority, thus giving them a decisive role in decision-making. Studies also showed that despite illiteracy economic backwardness and lower social status, women's participation increased more than men's and there was greater awareness of political issues. All this led to women's greater role in development. ✓

But despite all this, women's gains have been partial because the pattern of development has relied heavily on economic transformation without any concerted attempt at ideological and institutional change. The policies and

programmes at the national level, and particularly the commitment and effectiveness of their implementation has not been adequate. The educational and training programmes, and the health, nutrition and other welfare service programmes did not actually give women the required role in, or make them agents of developments. These programmes only tried to reshape their personality to fit the available slots,⁷ so women were still bound to their stereo-typed role as they were previously. The emphasis was on a training which fits them only for subsistence production in their own households by teaching them better working, better child-care, sewing and such other traditional women's work. Such subjects take up much of the time in many rural and urban primary schools, and the courses offered to girls and women under programmes of community development are also mostly devoted to similar things. Besides this, the official provision of loan facilities to the self-employed women did not work in practice because the financial and banking institutions discriminated against women loan-seekers, as generally women do not own assets than can be offered as loan security. Regarding the provisions of marketing facilities also, women did not get much help because as they could not compete with the factory-goods and also as these market-owners monopolised the market the women were forced to sell their goods at low rates, giving them very less or no profit at all.

⁷J.Z. Giele, Women and the Future-Changing Sex Roles in Modern America" (New York: Free Press, 1978), p.18.

The contribution of women in economic development is underestimated in national and international statistics. In agriculture, active women are counted as inactive, and even when they are counted as active they are often included in the category of unpaid labour even though they are performing managerial tasks that should assign them to the category of independent farmers. In the industrial sector women are involved more often than men in the informal economy so neither their work nor their production is fully recorded in the national statistics.⁸

In spite of all this, the fact remains that the contribution of women is very significant. As the principle suppliers of water and fuel, cultivation and livestock managers, women have a lot of say in the rural environment and the subsistence economy. In the urban economy also, their work is of great importance to the informal sector and also in the formal sector as their numbers are increasing in the factories and workshops. They also form the backbone of the medical and teaching professions and the service sector.

Measures to be taken to increase Women's Role in Development in the Third World:

Earlier it was believed that in order to develop the countries of the Third World, with a view to bridge the North-South gap, industrialisation and development of the urban sector were the main requirements. But experience soon showed that

⁸World Survey on the Role of Women in Development (Dept. of International Economic and Social Affairs) (New York: United Nations, 1986), p.33.

this was not so. What was more important, was to develop and give more attention to the micro-level economics and to the elements of social development. This new perspective put women firmly at the centre of development. As they formed the backbone of the social fabric and also played a significant role in the economic sector, it was vital that their role in development, both as agents and beneficiaries, be maximised and made visible. Although the national governments and other international, regional and national organisations did take up many steps and programmes for this, more effort and new methods are required to make this a reality.

The first step is to recognise women's present contribution. Most of the contribution made by women are 'invisible' - not represented in the national statistics. The implications of women's arduous and wide ranging contributions not being counted as productive work are serious for women at all points of economic spectrum. At the personal level, this accounts considerably for the lower status accorded to women in the family and community life. At the national level, it presents a distorted picture of the GNP with concomitant distortions of investment and development policies. Since the productive economic activities of women are not taken into account in the census and world tables, the developmental policies whose goal is to raise the standard of living of the poor have not utilised women's economic resources. Policy makers have lagged behind in appreciating that women's under-remunerated activities add to the given overall economic picture

of under-development, nor have they become aware that increasing women's productivity is crucial to improving this economic picture.⁹ Therefore, it is important that women's present contribution be acknowledged. This will be very important in assigning economic value to women's work so that their contribution to national income can be given full weight in the development planning process. Besides, when their economic role is fully recognised, women are more likely to be given access to credit, extension services and other means of assisting their economic function, thus helping in maximising their participation in the development process.

Secondly, women themselves should come out to play active role. The desired role of women in development should be defined largely, in the first place, by women themselves, both through their more intensive general social and political involvement and through their proper organisation. Governments do not act of their own volition; they respond to pressure from people and interest groups. Even in the welfare state, legislative measures to improve the socio-economic conditions of the people are generally responses to pressures by interest groups. This applies to women's problems as well. Women's action groups have a major role in educating women about their rights, coercing governments into action and enabling women to gain their rights so that they can come out and play

⁹Rami Chhabra and Alka Basu, "Third World Women" in Laeeq Futehally, ed., Women in the Third World, (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1980), p.34.

active role in the development programmes. In this, women's groups and the women's movement have helped a lot. The women's movement of today, which started in the 1960s in the United States of America and soon spread all over the world, made women and men too, aware of women's rights in society and their role and contributions in development. It has also spread, throughout the world, the common message that sex need not be a barrier to either freedom or opportunity, and has encouraged women to come out and take active participation in all spheres of life. So, unless women themselves come out and mobilise themselves and take active role, their contributions and role in society and the development process will never be acknowledged or maximised.

Thirdly, the development programmes should be well-✓ planned and channelled out properly. For example, regarding educational programmes, priority should be given to functional education where literacy is related to the daily necessities of life -- health, nutrition, earning a living, food-production -- and to any other subject which the learners themselves consider to be priorities. Such functional education, related to women's economically productive activities, would inculcate a sense of personal autonomy, responsibility, rising expectations and economic and psychological independence. This would also make their income visible. Such successful functional literacy programmes have been introduced in Thailand jointly by the World Education and Adult Education Division of the their Ministry of

Education, and in India by the Literacy House".¹⁰

Besides this, the programmes must have a solid commitment, definite quantifiable targets and a time factor for their achievement.

Other than this, as long as the tendency to devalue traditional "woman's work" is there women's role in development can never be truly felt. As long as the traditional female work of "home-making", which includes work of caring, feeding and actual reproduction of the physical, mental and emotional characteristics of the future population, is regarded as part-time job requiring no training or competence and having little value, then all other pre-dominantly female occupations, specially those such as teaching and nursing will be accorded little value. So the whole attitude of both men and women to the 'traditional' role of women must change. Thus the fourth step is to change the attitude of the people. Attitudes are slower and harder to change than laws, especially when laws that directly benefit women's effort for equality are changed, there is often a corresponding hardening of attitudes in reaction to those enlightened laws, in reaction against them. Similar is the case with regard to the development programmes. For instance, in 1972, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women noted that in all its efforts to promote the advancement of women, it had encountered a serious obstacle in -

¹⁰Futehally, ed., n.9, pp.41.

the deep-rooted attitudes of men and women which tended to perpetuate the status quo. The Commission also observed that those at cultural pattern which to a great extent determined the thoughts and feelings about women and men.¹¹

Therefore, there is a great need to change the attitude of the people. Ofcourse this cannot be done all at once, it has to be a gradual process. For this, one of the basic needs is to educate the people and make them aware of the changes and needs of time. Such education can be given to them in various methods, such as schools and other educational institutions, through the mass media like television, cinema, papers, magazines, etc. Unless their attitude is changed, people will never accept women as equal to men or acknowledge that their role and contribution in development and the society is vital and equally important.

This leads on to the fifth measure, i.e. a change in the structure of the society and its culture. The whole structure of the society, along with its values and institutions, should be changed. There should be a reconfiguration of roles, rewards and cultural values. A thorough-going change in sex roles implies altering the structure of family and work, plus a far more radical re-ordering of social priorities than is usually suggested by efforts to uproot discrimination against women or to give women equal protection under the law. This means that nothing less than a new social contract is at issue. This could

¹¹Maitreyi Krishna Raj, Women and Development: The Indian Experience (Pune: Shubhada Sarasat Prakashan, 1988), p.125.

mean that some elements of the society's past heritage can be lost, but inspite of this the change is a necessity due to the present population pressures, shortage of resources and the fact that people now live in a human social system of global proportions.¹² Therefore, what is required is that there should be more interchanging on "cross-over" between what is traditionally women's work and men's work. The cross-over should be made possible not only between men's work and women's work but also between work and leisure. If women and men could each have some work and some liesure, sometime outside the house and a comfortable amount of time in it, the tasks of reproduction, production and consumption would still get done and at the same time each sex would have a chance to share in the best of both worlds. Besides, if each sex is allowed to "cross over some of the duties of the other sex, the crisis of overproduction and ovoer-population could also possibly be averted.¹³

The "cross-over" principle represents a formula for achieving equity among unlike persons. It provides a mechanism by which to balance the repetitions tasks of recycling and saving with the excitement of growth and investment. It legitimates caring of children as well as engaging in exciting careers. By this principle the pioneering and innovative tasks are no longer allocated to one sex or one class only, and the maintenance and repetitive tasks to another. Instead it makes

¹²Giele, n.7, p.2.

¹³ Ibid., p.12.

it possible for almost everyone to do something of both.¹⁴ All this would naturally lead to a more active and visible participation and contribution of women in development of the nation and the society.

Finally, women should be given a chance in decision-making. It is not enough to take a few initiatives to improve the position and maximise the role of women in development and in the society, and leave power, authority and status firmly in the control of men. The women themselves should be empowered to take control of their own lives, economically and culturally. At present women are disproportionately found in the less important and peripheral positions that society has undervalued, while men, on the other hand, are more frequently found in the important core positions that draw attention, commands power, authority and greater social rewards.¹⁵ This sort of division of labour must be changed. There must be a greater effort to redistribute persons, both men and women, between the core and periphery. For this, there should be a redistribution of rewards between the core and periphery jobs, replacing the present hierarchical relation between them with an egalitarian perspective that recognises functional inter-dependence. In this way, women too would get the core jobs or at least have the same power and authority in decision-making, and social rewards. Women are essential components of the social sector and the economic sector and they must, therefore, be involved in

¹⁴ Ibid., p.21.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. x.

decision-making of both.

Thus although a lot of programmes and policies have been implemented in the Third World countries by the national governments, the United Nations system and other regional and international organisations concerned, these have not been enough. Women's role in development is still not given due significance. That is why the measures laid down above are advocated. These measures cannot be viewed or put into practice in isolation from each other because they are inter-related; one cannot be put into practice while ignoring the other measures. For instance, unless the social structure is changed attitudes cannot change, and vice-versa; unless development programmes are well-planned and introduced there cannot be any change and this means social structure will be the same and the attitudes too cannot change; and unless attitudes change the development programmes, however well-planned, will not succeed. Thus all these measures have to be well-integrated and put into practice in an integrated and well-planned manner.

In the developed countries of the North, the society has changed and the attitudes of people, both men and women, too have changed. The roles, values and institutions are no longer rigid there. Both men and women share the work in the home and caring the children and so both are free to pursue other careers outside the home. This had led to women gaining more confidence and awareness. As a result they are found in many high positions and professions, giving them a say in decision-making. This has naturally led to an increase in their contribution in

development.

All this should be followed in the Third World countries too. Once the barriers are broken down the changes will soon flood the societies and countries, resulting in women's development and also an increase in their contribution to development.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing analysis one conclusion is inevitable, that the emphasis on the role of women in the socio-economic development of a country has received due attention. It is clear today that development just does not mean a larger quantum of Gross Domestic Product and availability of more consumer goods, but that the objective is, or at least ought to be, improvement of the quality of life. This means better education, higher standard of living, equitable distribution of wealth and improvement of human resources. It is also obvious that such objectives cannot be achieved if health, education and equal status of women in society is not assured. Indeed, the socio-economic upliftment and welfare of the people is not possible unless participation of women, both as means and the end, is given adequate attention. Women constitute half the total population of the world; and if one half of the population is lagging behind and under-developed, the other half too can never develop and advance. As a result, the country can never develop and advance. Very often women are referred to as the "better-half"; it is not known whether the phrase got currency to appease women or as a by-product of male chauvinism but, the phrase does indicate the reality of the relative situation. This is so because women as mothers play a major role in the development of chil-

dren, who are the citizens of tomorrow. Besides this, as wives and mothers, they are the first suppliers of health-care and education. Therefore, in a way it is not too wrong to say that the whole development of mankind depends on women. Thus without the support and active participation of women, no strategy for development can meet its goals. But inspite of this fact, women have been accorded a secondary class in society; men have had far greater power than women to name, classify and order the worlds in which they both live. Therefore the economic and social progress all through has been involved in cotradictions and have not been complete.

The United Nations Organization, from the inception of its operational activities in 1946, gave due attention to the upliftment of women laying down norms and standards of human rights, which should accrue to both men and women without any discrimination. It is also true that over the period comprehensive studies have been prepared, propagandas have been launched, exhortation for elimination of discrimination against women have been campaigned about, and many conventions and multilateral treaties have been adopted and signed by the member states. Besides all these, the United Nations, for the first time, introduced the need to integrate women in the development process, not only as beneficiaries but more importantly, also as agents of development. All these led to the launching of innume-

rable development and assistance programmes and policies by the United Nations and its specialised agencies and also by the national governments and other regional and international organisations. But these measures were not enough. Although they did help in the development and advancement of women, they did not help in integrating women into the development process.

Even today things still have not improved much and women all over the world are still discriminated against. But the status of women in the developing countries remains much more pathetic than what it is in the advanced countries. In most of the developing countries women fare less well than men. Discrimination against females start early from their childhood. Young girls do not get the health-care and nutrition as young boys. For example, in Bangladesh malnutrition was found among 14 percent of young girls compared to 5 percent of the boys; in India, families spent more than twice as much on the medical care of male infants than on that of female infants. This is the same pattern prevalent in almost all developing countries. As a result of this neglect, in most of these countries more girls than boys die between the ages of one and four. This is a stark contrast with the industrialised and developed countries, where the death of boys is more than 20 percent higher than those of girls.

The same neglect is evident regarding the maternal

mortality rate. The 1987 report showed that the maternal mortality rate in the developing countries is 290 per 1,00,000 live births, whereas in the developed countries it is only 24 or sometimes even less than 10 per 1,00,000 live births. Thus the maternal mortality rate in the developing countries is twelve times higher than developing countries. This gap in the maternal mortality rate between the developed and developing countries is the widest gap among all the North-South gaps in human development, symbolising the neglect of women's health in the Third World.

Gender inequality is reinforced in education. There are still sixteen developing countries where female primary school enrolment is less than two-thirds than that of male, and in seventeen developing countries the female secondary enrolment is less than half of that of male. For the developing countries as a whole the female literacy rate is now three quarters that of males. In contrast to this, in the advanced countries there is no gap in the male-female literacy ratio. Each girl-child enjoys the right in theory and in practice to the same educational opportunity. In fact in some cases there are more female graduates than male. Thus the female literacy rate in the North is at least fifteen times higher than in the South.

Discrimination against women is found in work and pay as well. The female labour force in the developing countries is much less than in the developed countries.

The 1985 survey shows that the female labour force in the developing countries is 32.1 percent to that of 41.1 percent in the developed countries. Besides, women in the developing countries work about 25 percent longer hours than men, but their total remuneration is less because of their lower wage-rate and their preponderance in agriculture and the urban informal sector where pay tends to be less than in the rest of the economy.

Apart from all this, regarding the sex ratio of the population, it is found that the female population is much less than the male population in the developing countries, which is a direct contrast to the situation in the advanced countries. The figures of the 1985 survey show that the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America have a female population of 1865 million and male population of 1930 million, whereas in the developed countries of North America, Europe and the USSR the female population is 534 million and male population is only 499 millions. This figure clearly shows the neglect faced by the females in the developing countries.

Thus females in the developing countries face a lot of discrimination and humiliation - as children they have less access to education, food and health-care, as adults they receive less education and training, work longer hours for lower incomes and have few or no property rights. This has led to more poverty, hunger and

illiteracy among women, aggravating traffic in women. The element of option for these women to this profession is very little. Since they have no education or training and have to face hunger and poverty and, as at the same time, the societies place a lot of social taboos for women hampering their mobility, which could have helped them to some extent in getting some sort of a job, these women are forced to take up prostitution for survival.

One of the reasons for such discrimination and humiliation of women in the developing countries could be the absence of any organised and strong women's organisation and movement in these countries. This absence is partly due to the lack of education and other privileges which tend to make poverty a common feature for women. Due to poverty the majority of the women are confined to attending to family chores and meeting the bare necessities of life, thus giving them no time for anything else. Another reason is that most of these countries have authoritarian regimes which do not allow any sort of movement, particularly those trying to bring about changes, to get much hold. Even in the democratic countries where there are women's organisations, these are not well organised or strong enough to fight for their rights.

The disparity between the status of women in the developed countries and the developing countries partly emanates from the the great divide between the North and

the South. The North is far more advanced and developed, in all spheres, than the South. The countries of the North have a high per capita income, high level of literacy and educational attainment, larger proportion of urban population, better means of transport and communication, better facilities for medical and health-care, high consumption of energy, etc. The North also has lower birth rate of less than 20 per 1000 population, low growth rate of below 1.5 percent per year and also a higher life expectancy.

Just opposite to this is the situation of the countries of the South which have a low per capita income, low level of literacy and educational attainment, small proportion of urban population, no good and proper means of transport and communication, and poor medical and health-care facilities. These countries also have a high birth rate of above 37 per 1000 population, high growth rate of more than 2 percent per year and a low life expectancy. Almost three-fourths of the world population is concentrated in these less developed countries of the South. Apart from this, the world trade and economy is dominated and controlled by the North, particularly by the Group of Seven, who have the superior technical knowledge and more financial resources.

But despite this North-South gap the two blocs are inter-dependent. It is true that the South depends on

the North for many things for their development - on technical knowledge, financial aid, food products, etc. But at the same time there is also a reversible flow from the South to the North because the North depends quite a lot on the South for raw materials for the industries, which they import at a cheaper price. Later these countries export the finished products to the very same countries of the South at a higher cost. Thus although the South depends a lot on the North, the North too depends on the South to quite an extent.

Today the development in science and technology is bringing the people of the earth to an unprecedented degree of intimacy of contact, interdependence of welfare and mutuality of vulnerability. It is not possible for any country to remain in isolation; each and every country is affected by the goings-on of another country. Therefore, in such an interlinked and interdependent world, efforts at the global level are required to overcome obstacles and to bring about development in every field. It is unfortunate that when resources and knowledge has brought the world closer together, the glaring North-South gap still remains. Therefore, the first step is to tackle and bridge this gap in order to bring about equitable sharing in managing the world economy.

One of the most important steps in bridging this North-South gap is to raise the status of women of the developing countries. It is true that the developing

countries have made significant progress towards human development in the last three decades. They increased life expectancy at birth, they halved the mortality rate for children under five, made primary health-care facilities accessible to 61 percent of the people, increased the per calory supply and increased the adult literacy rate. But this has not been enough, and tremendous human deprivation still remains and the worst affected are the women. So it is very important to improve the status of women in these countries. Unless women in the Third World are given their rightful position and role in society the countries can never attain full development.

The technical breakthrough of the past two decades - particularly in informatics - has transformed traditional services. Human skill is now the most important input into modern banking, finance, advertising, communications, business management and public administration. Services today are the dominant part of the world economy, they generate nearly 70 percent of the GNP and employment opportunities in the industrial North. But they still lag behind in the developing countries and most of these countries are still net importers of services. But this rapid expansion of trade in skill-intensive services offers a tremendous opportunity to the developing countries because it shifts comparative advantage more in favour of people than in natural

resources. Since the developing countries have the majority of the world's population, they can gain a lot if they can import the new knowledge and skill to their people. In this connection women can play a vital role as they form 50 percent of not only the total population but also of the great untapped and unlimited reservoir of human energy and resources. Besides, since the natural and material resources of these countries are quite limited, they have to depend a lot on the maximum utilization of the human resources. So looking at it from all angles these countries cannot afford to keep the women-folk aside, from making their participation in the development process. Moreover, the condition of women will not improve unless they get opportunities and make use of such occasion to earn experience, increase skill and efficiency, and responsibilities.

Although women in the Third World countries are more oppressed and discriminated against, than their counterparts in the advanced countries of the North, oppression of women, in one form or the other, is a universal phenomena, the difference being only in degrees. In every country without exception the social position of women is inferior to that of men; they work longer hours, have less educational opportunities, poorer health-care and less control over their lives. As Mrs. Helvi Sipila, Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations, stated in a recently published report on the

status of world's women:

"Women and girls who constitute one half of world's population and one-third of the official labour force, performed nearly two-third of work hours but according to some estimates received only one-tenth of the world's income and owned less than one-hundredth of world's property."

Thus although women participate in development everywhere their contribution is not fully acknowledged or given credit. To achieve this, women in both the developed and the developing countries must first achieve equal status, equal opportunities and equal pay for work of equal value. This can happen only when the attitudes of the people and the whole social structure is changed. Therefore, the fight has to be against the beliefs and values, property and power structure which create social situations that lead to less co-operation between men and women and to a more bitter encounter and silent hostility between men and women and also between women themselves. It is not just women who are degraded by these systems and the beliefs; it is men also who are spiritually impoverished and morally degraded by keeping women ignorant, uninformed and unassertive. If enlightened and emancipated, women become a source of strength and enrichment to men and society, whereas ignorant and enslaved women are only a drag on human progress and a source of human degradation because such women will not be able to fulfil their responsibilities,

especially as mothers and builders of the personalities of the citizens of tomorrow.

Today there has been great shifts in the concepts of marriage, family and sexual roles, giving women more opportunities and equality. One of the factors leading to this change has been the women's movement which started in the 1960s in the United States of America and soon spread all over the world. The present women's movement differs from that of the past, in that it rejects equalitarianism with men as a goal and is largely indifferent to civic reforms; the emphasis is now placed on basic revolutionary social change and upon a philosophic re-examination of the entire social structure and its goals. The movement awakened the conscience of millions of women and men, paving the way for the necessary change in people's attitudes and change in the whole social structure.

Women's development should not only be seen as an essential component in every dimension of development, but at the same time in order to improve the status of women and their role in the development process, such development should also be an integral part of the global project for the establishment of a New International Economic Order based on equity, sovereign equality, interdependence, common interest and co-operation among all states. This is so because women's status and position can never be discussed in isolation of the economic and political situation, not only within the

country but at the international level also.

In conclusion, it must be remembered that women play a vital and important role in development, and they should be given credit for it if their contribution is to be maximised and the society and nation is to really develop. Therefore, while carrying out development programmes and policies it should be made sure that women are included in there, not only as beneficiaries, but, more importantly, as agents of development. The fact that today all peoples, governments, and all regional and international organisations are taking active interest in women's issues and carrying-out programmes for their development and equality raises hope for the future - a future where no distinction is made between women and men regarding their role and contribution to society.

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