

# Status of Women in India

A Synopsis of the Report of  
the National Committee

ICSSR

# STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

A Synopsis of the Report of the National Committee  
on the Status of Women  
(1971-74)

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## PRFEACE

The report of the National Committee on the Status of Women in India covers a wide field from basic population trends to an evaluation of official policies designed to improve the status of women. It is a valuable document which deserves to be widely read and studied, especially because we consider it as an important instrument for moulding public opinion.

The Indian Council of Social Science Research therefore has brought out this brief summary of the report which it may not be possible for everyone to peruse in the original. We hope that it will meet a felt need and would be widely used.

I would like to make it clear that the responsibility for compiling this summary rests entirely on myself and my colleagues. We have tried our best to do justice to the original report. If we have failed in any particular respect, we hereby offer our sincere apologies. In case of any doubt, it should be absolutely clear that the authoritative version is, not this summary, but the original report of the Committee.

J. P. Naik  
Member-Secretary

New Delhi  
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THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON THE  
STATUS OF WOMEN

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## INTRODUCTION

While improvement in the status of women was a pledge made by the makers of the Constitution and admitted by the Government from the beginning as one of the major tasks facing the country, no attempt had been made to review and evaluate the changes that had taken place since independence. The Committee on the Status of Women was appointed by the Government of India in 1971 to evaluate the changes that had taken place in the status of women as a result of the constitutional, legal and administrative measures adopted since independence. Another purpose was to examine the impact of the complex processes of social change on various sections of Indian women, particularly in the rural sector. The Committee was also asked to suggest 'measures which would enable women to play their full and proper role in building up the nation'. The composition, terms of reference and programme of work of the Committee are given in the Appendix.

## CHAPTER I

### OUR APPROACH

THE FRAMEWORK of our enquiry was provided, on the one hand, by the Constitutional provisions that have a bearing on the status of women and, on the other, by the clear objectives specified in our last term of reference, *viz.*, to suggest measures which would enable women to play their full and proper role in building up the nation. We have tried to assess existing conditions in the society against these two major criteria.

There is no doubt that the Constitution contemplates a social revolution, brought about through the use of law as an instrument of directed social change. The attainment of equality of status for women was one of the specific objectives which is implicit in the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and the Directive Principles of State Policy. In order to assess the impact of these constitutional provisions and the legal and administrative measures taken thereunder, we had to examine complex social processes, involving various groups of variables such as (1) the heterogeneous nature of Indian society with its basic pattern of economic and social inequalities; (2) the inequalities inherent in the traditional social structure based on caste, community and class with socially accepted rights, and expected roles of women which have a very significant influence on the status of women; and (3) the directions of social, economic, and political change and their impact on the status of women. We found that these processes of social change have not affected the different sections of women in an uniform manner so that it is not easy to generalize on the impact of these changes on the status of women. Social change is a complex process and the direction of that change is not always in tune with the constitutional directives. Educational development, structural changes in the economy, urbanization, and wider opportunities for participation in the social process have accentuated inequalities in some cases and reduced them in others. Changes in the norms of behaviour and value-system

also affect the status of women differently for different groups. A typical example is the traditionalism—modernization process. Traditional values were modelled on the ideal behaviour pattern of the upper classes of society, which restricted women's roles to the homes. Education or prosperity results in socially lower groups adopting these norms with a view to enhancing their status in the social hierarchy. Thus modernization among these sections has an adverse rather than a favourable effect on the status of women. On the other hand, the middle class which has sprung from the old upper castes or classes has abandoned some of these values under social and economic pressures. The co-existence of such divergent forces gives rise to ambiguities.

We also tried to examine: (1) the reforms in social legislation aimed at removing the disabilities of women; (2) the labour laws which try to ensure humane conditions of work; (3) the policies and programmes for social and economic development (including education, vocational training, health services, family planning, welfare and development programmes) which seek to change and improve the opportunities for women; and (4) ideologies or goals for such policies which were shaped by the reform movements that had started as a part of the Freedom Movement or were initiated by organized and individual effort for the uplift of women.

Obviously, the careful study of this large group of variables required a close examination of (1) the attitudes of men and women as well as (2) the institutionalized infrastructure that facilitates the attainment of desired goals. It also involved examining the influence of traditional norms, as well as of the modern values of human rights, equality, and social justice, on women's role and participation in the social process in a culturally differentiated society like ours. The examination revealed certain positive as well as negative factors which influenced the status of women. For instance, while the advance in education, political participation and other welfare measures was broadly in favour of women, it was possible to identify (1) the various centres of resistance to the desired change in women's status and roles as well as (2) the disabilities which prevented many groups of women from enjoying their rights and performing their multiple roles. To our dismay, we found that such disabilities have sometimes been aggravated by the process of development itself. For instance,

while the large masses of our women had been full partners in the productive process in the traditional economy, the advancing trend of development and modernization has eliminated many of their traditional avenues of employment. At the same time, the lack of literacy and vocational training has prevented their absorption in the modern economy which is developing throughout the country.

In the course of our investigations, we used many indicators to study the nature and influence of these broad set of variables. Quantitative indicators were provided by the vital statistics of birth and mortality rates, sex ratio, rates of participation in economic and political life, literacy, and education. None of these could be studied meaningfully without a qualitative appraisal and understanding of the limitation of such data in the context of the tremendous socio-economic and cultural variations that exist in our society. We also found a wide gap between the stated social objectives and achievements, between the legal framework and empirical realities, between symbolism and actuality. The national and State averages indicated rapid improvement in literacy, education, life expectancy, and political participation. These trends, coupled with the success achieved by a very small minority of women, could create an impression that the status of an average Indian woman was very high. Our investigations, however, showed very uneven rates of development between regions, communities and various sections of the population which made it risky to rely exclusively on the quantitative indicators. We therefore used other methods and techniques to supplement these indicators (*i.e.* basic documentary sources and special studies based on literature, both published and unpublished) to get a more realistic picture. We also did our best to acquire first-hand factual information from our tours, planned empirical studies, and discussions with people of diverse categories and socio-economic levels.

We have tried to cover not only the post-independence period, but also the pre-independence modern period where necessary, because a correct evaluation in a transitional society must be in terms of past, present, and future.

The term 'status' denotes relative position of persons in a social system or sub-system which is distinguishable from that of others through its rights and obligations. Each status position

is expressed in terms of a role. Since each individual occupies a number of distinct statuses within a society, he/she performs a variety of roles. It is imperative to make a distinction between the ideal role behaviour, expected role behaviour, and actual role behaviour. The divergence between these leads to a change in the role perception of individuals. Status is realized through roles. This brings into focus the rights and opportunities provided to women by the State and socio-cultural institutions to perform these roles, which may not necessarily reinforce each other. Processes of change are responsible for divergence between the expected and the actual role behaviour.

Our detailed examination of the problem revealed that the status of women in the Indian context cannot be defined simply. The existing inequalities and imbalances had resulted in differences in the impact of the various forces of change on different groups of women. In order to understand the nature of the constraints and disabilities that affect women in the performance of their multiple roles in the society, the economy, and the polity, they have to be seen, not as a homogeneous group, but as members of different sections of the population, according to the differences in their levels of social existence. While Indian society can be categorized by castes, communities, and classes, for our purpose, the most relevant broad categories are only three: (1) women below the subsistence line; (2) women who move continuously between security and subsistence and often descend below the subsistence line with the disappearance of their means of earning a livelihood; and (3) women firmly above the security line.

We adopted the following guiding principles for our task:

- (1) Equality of women is necessary as a basic condition of social, economic and political development of the nation;
- (2) Improvement of employment opportunities and earning power should be given the highest priority in order to release women from their dependent and unequal status;
- (3) Society owes a special responsibility to women as mothers; safe bearing and rearing of children, therefore, is an obligation that must be shared by the mother, the father and the society;
- (4) The contribution made by an active house-wife to the

management of a family should be accepted as economically and socially productive and as essential for national savings and development;

- (5) Marriage and motherhood should not become disabilities, preventing women from fulfilling their full and proper role in the task of national development for which society, including women themselves, must accept their due responsibilities;
- (6) Disabilities and inequalities, of which women are victims, cannot be removed for women only: such action must form part of a *total* movement for removal of *all* inequalities and oppressive social institutions;
- (7) Some special temporary measures will be necessary to move in the direction of the goals set by the Constitution and to transform *de jure* equality into a *de facto* one.



## FEMALE MORTALITY AND SEX RATIO

## CHAPTER II

## DEMOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

IT HAS BEEN long recognized that certain demographic features of the female population of India, *viz.*, the early age of marriage, high rates of mortality and illiteracy, and low rates of participation in the labour force indicate their low status in society. While some improvements have occurred in some of these fields, all available evidence goes to show that inequality of status between men and women still persists.

## CHILD MARRIAGES

According to the Census of 1971, the average age at marriage for males has increased from 20.2 during 1901-1911 to 22.2 during 1961-71. In the case of females, the comparable figures are 13.3 and 17.2. The mean age at marriage for females during 1961-71 was 16.7 in rural areas and 19.2 in the urban areas, while that for males was 21.6 and 24.3 respectively. A detailed analysis reveals that in more than one-third of the total number of districts in India, most of which are in the States of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, the average age at marriage for females was below 15 in 1961. The situation was, however, very different in the State of Kerala, which had no district where the average age at marriage for females was below 15. The picture revealed by the Census data is unsatisfactory enough. But the reality must be even worse because there seems to be no justification for the census assumption that no one is married below the age of 10. Several cases of marriages of female infants came to our notice, and although their incidence, obviously on the decline, cannot be measured, there is no doubt that early marriage and widowhood still persist in rural areas. It is therefore recommended that the present assumption of the census be abandoned and all marriages should be recorded.

While definite improvement has taken place in the expectation of life, there is a distinct differential between the sexes. According to the census, in 1921-31, the expectation of life for both males and females was 26 years. By 1961-71, the expectation of life for males had improved to 47.1 years while that for females was 45.6 years only. What is worse, the gap between male and female expectations of life has actually been increasing. At all ages below 40, the expectation of life for females is lower than that of males. Infant mortality rate is considerably higher for females in the States of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh in rural areas. Estimates for 12 States show that in rural areas, the infant mortality rate for females was 148 per 1,000 live births, as compared to 132 for males. While the neo-natal mortality rate differed only slightly, being 74 per 1,000 for males and 76 for females, the post neo-natal mortality rate showed a wider gap, being 59 for males and 72 for females. In the age group 0-4, while the male death rate in rural India is 58 per thousand, that for females is 70 per thousand. In the age group 5-14 the death rates are 4.5 per thousand males as compared to 5.3 for females. In the 15-34 age group, the female death rate is consistently higher than that of males. The overall position is that, in rural India in 1969, there were 18 deaths per thousand for males and 20 deaths per thousand for females. While the female population of India has increased from 117 millions in 1901 to 264 millions in 1971, the number of females per thousand males has been declining steadily. In 1901, there were 972 females for every 1,000 males, while in 1971, the ratio has declined to 930 females per thousand males. Looking at the sex ratio by age groups, it is found to be even lower than the national average for all ages in the 10-19 age group and again in the 40-59 age group. In the age group 20-29, the number of women is slightly higher than that of men, particularly in the rural areas in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Meghalaya, Karnataka, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, and Tripura. Among all States of India, Kerala is the only State where the females outnumber males in all the decades from 1921. In Orissa and Tamil Nadu, this trend persisted till 1961 but the ratio has become adverse since then. The richest State in India, the Punjab, has the dubi-

ous distinction of having the lowest sex ratio (874). The other States with a sex ratio lower than the national average are Jammu and Kashmir (882), Uttar Pradesh (883), West Bengal (892), Assam (901), and Rajasthan (919).

Demographers have put forward various hypotheses to explain this persistent trend in the Indian population. The only explanation which has received general acceptance is that this is caused by the higher mortality among females, both in infancy and in the child bearing age.\* Improvement of health services in the last few decades have produced a differential impact on the health conditions of men and women, and have aggravated the decline in the sex ratio.

One point deserves mention: the national and even State averages are meaningless in determining the actual conditions and status of women in the context of the gross inequalities and wide variations in socio-economic factors that influence women's lives. For a satisfactory understanding of the problem, it is necessary to identify the actual groups, by socio-economic status, or regional or communal origin, which contribute the main thrust in shaping these averages. For example, investigations of mortality, malnutrition, and other similar factors must examine differences of these trends in different levels of society to ascertain their true impact. Whatever such studies may ultimately establish as the complex of causes that contributes to the adverse sex ratio in India, the mere fact of its existence is the most effective indicator of the lower status of women in our society.

#### LITERACY

The progress of literacy among women still presents a dismal picture, the rate being 18.4% for females and 39.5% for males in 1971. The highest literacy rate for females (37.4%) is in the age group 10-14. The rural female literacy rate is only 13.2% while that in urban areas is 42.3%. Kerala has the highest literacy rate for females, 53.1% in rural areas and 60.6% in the urban areas. The most appalling situation is in Rajasthan where the female literacy rate is 4% in rural areas and 29.7% in urban

\*It is not always possible to relate sex ratio with factors like literacy or educational level because of conflicting data.

areas. In Bihar, the literacy rate for women is 6.4% in rural areas, and 31.9% in urban areas. The situation in the other States, though relatively better, is in no way comparable to that of Kerala. Among the total female literates 40% have no educational level, 7.8% are matriculates, and 1.4% are graduates and above. The image of the Indian woman created by a few women holding high positions or academic qualifications conceals, rather than reflects, the low status and educational level of the average woman of India.

#### WOMEN IN THE LABOUR FORCE

The failure to improve the condition of women is most glaringly seen in the declining participation of women in the labour force. The percentage of women in the total labour force came down from 34.44% in 1911 to 31.53% in 1961 and to 17.35% in 1971. The percentage of female workers to the total female population declined from 33.73% in 1911 to 27.96% in 1961 and 11.86% in 1971.\* According to the 1971 census, there were 31 million women workers, 28 millions in rural areas and only 3 millions in urban areas. As many as 81% of this total group is engaged in agriculture, only 6% is engaged in the organized sector of the economy, and the rest are in unorganized, non-agricultural occupations. In rural areas, 13% of the women were in the labour force, while in urban areas, they formed only 7%. More than 89% of the women workers are illiterate. About 51% of the total non-working women are engaged in household duties. Only 8.9% are full-time students and 0.2% are persons of independent means. Almost all the non-working women are in a state of complete dependence.

#### INTERNAL MIGRATION

The last two censuses reveal a preponderance of women over men in internal migration, the ratio being 2,310 females per thousand males. They constitute the largest number of migrants in

\*While a part of this fall is due to a change in definitions, the fact of the continuance of a declining trend in participation rate, which was already well established, is beyond dispute.

rural to rural and urban to rural migrations, while men constitute the larger number in rural to urban and urban to urban migrations. This large-scale migration of women, mostly within short and medium distances, is due, apart from marriage, to severe under-employment and unemployment. The migration data indicate that the urban environment is hostile to women from the point of view of economic opportunities. Another cause for migration is broken marriages, widowhood, desertion, and abandonment. The main inference to be drawn from the migration data is thus the greater degree of helplessness and insecurity that affect the status of women in India.

#### SOME INDICATORS OF DISPARITY

Table I gives a summary picture of the male-female disparities in regard to a number of demographic characteristics. The figures speak for themselves.

**Table I :** Male-female disparity in regard to selected demographic characteristics, India, 1971

S.No.	Particulars	Females per 1,000 males
1.	<i>Total population</i>	930
	Rural	949
	Urban	858
2.	<i>Religion</i>	
	Hindus	930
	Muslims	922
	Christians	986
	Sikhs	859
	Buddhists	962
	Jains	940
3.	<i>Age groups</i>	
	0-4	969
	5-9	935
	10-14	887
	15-19	883
	20-24	1,008
	25-29	1,027
	30-34	990
	35-39	916
	40-44	882
	45-49	839
	50-54	847
	55-59	867
	60-64	923
	70+	960
4.	<i>Educational Level</i>	
	Illiterate	1,342
	Literate and educated	474
	Middle	371
	Matriculation or Higher Secondary	277
	Non-technical diploma & certificate technical	327
	Diploma or certificate	335
	Graduate and above	246

Table 1 (contd.)

S.No.	Particulars	Females per 1,000 males
5.	<i>Marital status</i>	
	Total population	931
	Never married	762
	Married	1,024
	Widowed	2,772
	Divorced or separated	1,630
	Unspecified status	328
6.	<i>Workers</i>	
	Total	210
	Cultivators	135
	Agricultural labourers	498
	Livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting and plantations, orchards, and allied activity	232
	Mining and quarrying	155
	Manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairs	
	(a) Household industry	265
	(b) Other than household industry	88
	Construction	101
	Trade and Commerce	59
	Transport, storage and communications	34
	Other Services	165
	Non-workers	1,726
7.	<i>Non-workers according to main activity</i>	
	Full-time students	480
	Household	6,745
	Dependants and infants	1,084
	Retired, rentiers and persons with independent means	356
	Beggars, vagrants etc.	587
	Inmates of penal, mental and charitable institutions	254
	Others	190

Source : Census of India, 1971.

## CHAPTER III

## THE SOCIO-CULTURAL SETTING

## INTRODUCTORY

ANY ASSESSMENT of the status of women has to start from the social framework. Social structures, cultural norms, and value systems influence social expectations regarding the behaviour of both men and women, and determine a woman's roles and her position in society to a great extent. The most important of these institutions are the systems of descent, family and kinship, marriage, and religious traditions. They provide the ideology and moral basis, for men's and women's notions about their rights and duties. The normative standards do not change at the same pace as changes in other forms of social organization brought about by such factors as technological and educational advance, urbanization, increasing population, and changing costs and standards of living. This gap explains the frequent failure of law and educational policy to produce the desired impact on social attitudes.

The social status of women in India is a typical example of this gap between the position and roles accorded to them by the Constitution and the laws, and those imposed on them by social traditions. What is possible for women in theory, is seldom within their reach in fact.

## I. RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

The religious traditions have a deep bearing on the role and status of women.

(1) *Hinduism* : In Hinduism, a multitude of derogatory attributes have been ascribed to women. Like the Shudras, she must not study the Vedas or perform any sacrifices. According to Manu, "In childhood a woman must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, and when her lord is dead, to her

sons. A woman must never be independent." She is viewed solely as the mother and the wife, and these roles are idealized. The ideal wife is faithful and uncomplaining, and her virtue lies in the services she renders to her husband. Practices like giving away of girls in marriage and the importance attached to sons for maintaining continuity of the line have strengthened the patrilineal social structure of Hinduism. The impurity associated with menstruation and childbirth, which restricts women from joining religious ceremonies strengthens the view that they are naturally inferior to men. Since marriage and motherhood are considered essential, a Hindu woman is expected to perform special *vratas* (rituals) to obtain long life and special protection for her husband and sons. A widow, on the other hand, is associated with misfortune and is regarded as inauspicious. She cannot participate in socio-religious activities as she may bring misfortune to others. Remarriage was not permitted for high caste widows by the Great Tradition, which continues its influence to this day, in spite of the legal sanction for remarriage provided since 1856. Castes in which remarriage has been traditionally allowed, impose other disabilities on widows, and secondary marriages are not performed with the same pomp and ceremonial. Many of them even adopt a ban on widow remarriage to establish their claim to a higher status in the caste hierarchy. The Hindu male is not subject to such restrictions or conditions. He does not wear any diacritical marks to indicate his married state, does not observe fast for his wife and suffers from no restriction on remarriage. A widower is not considered inauspicious.

Protest movements within the Hindu fold, like Buddhism, Jainism, Vaishnavism, Veerashaivism, and Sikhism contributed to some improvement in the status of women, particularly in religious and spiritual activities. But they also continued to regard women primarily as mothers and wives, and inferior to men in society. In Buddhism, the male monk is given a higher status than the nun. In the religious teachings of Jainism, women are severely condemned even though they are given a legitimate position in congregational life. Veerashaivism permitted divorce and remarriage. The Bhakti movement, by permitting women to seek spiritual solace independently of intermediaries, and throwing open religious pursuits to the languages of the people,

enabled many women to become saints and religious leaders. These movements however failed to rectify in any significant manner the subordinate position attributed to women by both the Great and Little Traditions in Indian society. Later religions like Islam, Christianity and Zoroastrianism which brought with them their distinct images of women, adapted themselves to the Indian context, often drawing on the prevalent customs and practices.

(2) *Islam* : The Koran regards men and women as being equal and does not regard women as an impediment in the path of religion. Though it provided women with a much higher status than was prevalent at the time, various interpretations of Koranic injunctions over the centuries accorded women an inferior position in many respects, reflecting the cultural norms of those periods. Though equal as a believer, a woman cannot be a priest, nor can she lead the prayers. She has no place in the formal religious organization and legal affairs of the community, and cannot be a Kazi. Emphasis on modesty, decorum, and chastity led, through conflicting viewpoints, to the practice of seclusion and veiling. In India, the *burqa* and seclusion were more characteristic of the upper and the middle strata of society, particularly in urban areas. Though declining among these sections, it has now become more of a lower middle class phenomenon, and a status symbol among the working classes, to indicate a rise in their social status. Seclusion imposed many restrictions on women's behaviour and deprived them of the right to participate in communal prayers.

The marriage contract gives very unequal rights to men and women, permitting polygamy and unilateral right of divorce to the husband. The bride's consent to the marriage is a mere formality, and the institution of marriage-guardian places her in a subordinate position. Religion makes the husband the family head, and demands obedience and service from the wife. Widow remarriage and divorce, though permitted for women, are generally frowned upon, specially among the middle classes. Though some security for women against the possibility of divorce is provided by *Mehr* (dower), very few women are able to assert this claim; and while Islam recognizes women's right to inherit property, in practice these rights are not upheld. Women

lose their rights because of ignorance and inability to assert them.

(3) *Christianity* : Like Islam, the basic tenets of Christianity have intermingled with local traditions of the various communities which follow this religion. The Biblical image of woman as the tempter and seducer has strengthened the husband's right to control the wife and her property. However, the emphasis on the mutually dutiful and respectful relationship between the husband and the wife has helped to weaken the authority of the extended family or the patriarch, and thus accorded a relatively higher status to the woman through the nuclear organization of the family. Even among communities which retain the joint family, the daughter-in-law is not relegated to the background as in Hindu families. She is free to move with her husband, and it is recognized that her primary relationship is with her husband.

Emphasis on monogamy is the one enduring factor which has raised women's status in Christianity. However, the concept of permanency of marriage with no place for divorce has affected adversely the status of women among Catholics and some other groups. Though these women enjoy greater security of home and the company of their children, they are more subject to the husband's authority, being deprived of legal rights and an independent existence.

The Bible emphasizes certain qualities of a woman such as her capacity to work, caring for her family, kindness and charity for the needy outside the home, and wisdom. She can participate in all religious ceremonies, though she has not been granted full ecclesiastic responsibility in the church organization (except among Methodists). Christianity does not emphasize marriage as a woman's sole destiny. She has an independent moral entity and responsibility. Because of this tradition, Christian women were the first to enter the field of education and employment as nurses, doctors, or teachers. Though the taboos on women are less in Christianity, the basic concept of their inferiority to man is beyond dispute.

(4) *Zoroastrianism* : This religion, practised by the Parsees in India, gives women a position of honour in the family and society. They are entitled to property, religious as well as secular education, and permitted to divorce and remarry. Traditionally, Zoroastrianism imposed menstrual taboos demanding segregation

and non-participation in religious activities. Polygamy and child marriage, which had crept in under Hindu and Muslim influence, were fought against and removed by the Parsee Panchayat in the nineteenth century. But while a man's marriage to a non-Parsee involves no disgrace, and his children are accepted as Parsees, the same right is not given to the Parsee woman who marries outside the faith. Even her right to enter the Fire Temple is not accepted.

(5) *Tribal Religions* : Women have a role to play in the religious activities of the family and the group, but have no place in the special worship of tribal deities. In matrilineal tribes, women worship ancestral deities. Menstruation is associated with impurity throughout tribal India and leads to the exclusion of women from positions of ritual importance. Their contribution to economic activity results in considerable freedom in social behaviour, but they play no role in the enforcement of community discipline and public morality, which is the function of the Panchayats or Tribal Councils.

The forgoing discussion will show that there is no radical difference in the position attributed to women by any of the religions. The reform movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, like the Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, or Prarthana Samaj among the Hindus and similar movements in other communities, attacked practices like child marriage or ill-treatment of widows and pleaded for women's education and their rights to property. The leaders of these movements realized the difficulty of separating social from religious reform, but their aim to reform all religions together could not be realized as both the ruling power and religious orthodoxy in all communities resisted such attempts. Consequently, the scope of these movements was generally restricted in two ways: (1) they developed within the folds of each religion rather than as a unified movement for a transformation of the whole society; and (2) their objective was to change the position of women within the domestic framework only and to ensure for them a position of dignity and respect within the family. Their impact has, however, been most pronounced on the urban middle class and the goals of the reform movements have become part of the general cultural heritage of this section of Indian society. Being more concerned with the disabilities of women in the higher classes, the refor-

mers did not challenge the universal suppression of all women perpetuated by their subordinate position in society and did not consider the need and problems of their participation in the wider social process. It was left to Mahatma Gandhi and the Freedom Movement to place the movement for women's emancipation in its proper perspective, as part of the larger movement for the removal of inequalities that oppressed all the weaker sections.

## II. DESCENT SYSTEMS

There are two main descent systems in India, matrilineal and patrilineal.

(1) *Matrilineal*: Matrilineal communities are concentrated in the South-Western and North-Eastern regions of the country, among the Nairs, Thiyars and Moplals of Kerala, in Lakshadweep, and among the Khasis and Garos of Meghalaya and Assam. Islam and Christianity, accepted by a large percentage of the population in these regions, did not affect the patterns of kinship and marriage substantially. Since the close of the nineteenth century, however, changes have been brought about by the development of a market economy, education and occupational mobility, which have influenced patterns of marital residence, rules of inheritance, and other related matters.

In a matrilineal system, the lineage is counted through the woman but power rests with the men in the woman's family. Matrilineality is associated with an economic system in which women are not dependent on men (except among the landed Nairs, whose women do not engage in productive work, though they enjoy full property rights). Constraints on women are found in those areas where there is greater concern with the maintenance of group boundaries and retention of family and caste status. The Nairs impose many restrictions on women, but the Garo, Khasi, and Lakshadweep women enjoy greater freedom of movement because of the contribution that they make to the economy.

Matrilineal systems display some inherent conflicts. Authority rests with men, while group placement is determined through women. A husband is not incorporated in the wife's kin group, and has minimum rights over his wife and children. The property is controlled by the wife's brothers, father, or uncles. Occupational mobility, resulting from modernization, increases a man's

control over his wife and children if they move with him, but disrupts the matrilineal system. The Nair Taravads have been disintegrating partly because of political and economic change, and partly because of the new laws of marriage which confer rights on individual members to demand their shares. The Nair women have benefited from educational opportunities and continue to enjoy respect as property-holders and as perpetuators of the line. But the restrictions that bound them to their homes, unlike other matrilineal groups, have coincided with the adoption of Sanskritic rituals of marriage and institutions like dowry which have contributed towards lowering of their status.

(2) *Patrilineal*: The majority of the Indian population follows the patrilineal mode of descent. The male is the perpetuator of the line and of the family name. The girls' contribution is made in another patriline, so the system emphasizes the transferability of the daughter at marriage to the husband's kin group. This affects the position of a woman in society, is reinforced by socialization, and has a bearing on her legal rights. Only the son can perform certain religious duties for the family. The socio-cultural compulsion to get a daughter married has led to a girl being regarded as a burden, especially as she has to be brought up and trained without the parents receiving any economic support from her. Discrimination between the sexes in nutrition, medical care and education is directly related to this attitude.

In tribal and rural areas the girl's rights to property are extremely limited. Men are the possessors and inheritors of land and its resources. A widow's right of usufruct over her husband's land is subject to her not remarrying. In the event of divorce or separation, children may accompany the mother, though they have to return to the father when they grow up. The cultural notion that a woman's role is only supportive has to be traced to patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence.

## III. FAMILY ORGANIZATION

The most common family organization, the joint family, is composed of a group of patrilineally related males who have equal rights to property, sharing a common budget, residence and hearth, though this pattern of living has been considerably affected by modernization, urbanization, and socio-economic change.

The type of joint family depends on such factors as the caste, community, or age of marriage. Joint family living is more characteristic of the land-owning, trading classes and other upper castes. Among tribal groups, the nuclear household is the culturally approved form of the domestic group.

A woman is expected to adjust to her father-in-law's household to which she goes after her marriage. She is placed under severe restrictions and has little or no say in decision-making and is directly subordinate to her mother-in-law. Her status in the family depends greatly on her husband's contribution to the family economy, and in the middle and upper classes, on the amount of dowry brought by herself.

Mothers of long standing in the middle classes enjoy considerable respect and authority in the family and have a say in decision-making. Our survey, however, reveals that women as a whole play a marginal role in decision-making. Their role is slightly higher for decisions affecting the daughters. The mother's authority, which often reduces the position of a daughter-in-law to that of a miserable drudge, may decline with old age, widowhood, and the daughter-in-law's coming into importance as a mother and wife of the principal provider.

Our survey also revealed varying degrees of observance of *purdah* before the husband's kin. The highest percentage of *purdah* before the father-in-law was found in Haryana (72.61%), Rajasthan (62.18%), and Delhi (60.78%). This is low in Southern States, where *purdah* was never so prevalent. Women settled away from the patrilocal villages and in urban areas have greater freedom of association and movement, particularly if they also contribute to the family economy. The woman's role is less restricted in a simple family where she is not subordinate to any other woman and is the mistress of the house.

#### IV. MARRIAGE

In patrilineal societies marriage signifies a transfer of a woman from her natal group to that of her husband. Arranged marriages at a young age are considered most desirable for girls, as these notions are related to the importance of virginity and the restrictions placed on marriage within the same *gotra* or clan lineage. This restriction is absent among Muslims, who prefer marriages

between close relatives, as they help to keep the property within the family. In the South, cross-cousin marriages among Hindus is the accepted mode.

Education and liberalization of ideas in urban areas have led to certain changes in patterns of selection of the marriage partner. Some recent surveys conducted have, however, revealed a greater preference for arranged marriages among the young generation. In the pre-independence period young people preferred self-choice of partners.

Arranged marriages have many features which highlight the unequal status of a woman. She has to present herself before marriageable boys and their relations for acceptance. The ceremony of *Kanyadan*, where the virgin daughter is given to the bridegroom by her father, is another indicator of the inequality of status between bride-givers and bride-takers. This is particularly prevalent in Northern, Central, and Western India. In the North, the son-in-law and his parents are entitled to receive gifts from the girl's parents but the latter are not supposed to accept any food at the son-in-law's house.

The practice of hypergamy, where a marriage is arranged between a man of a higher caste and a woman of a lower caste, is extremely detrimental to the status of women. It is prevalent among Rajputs and Jats of North India, Maithil Brahmins of Bihar and some other groups. Female infanticide among these communities was partly a consequence of hypergamy as it was difficult to find a suitable match for girls of high castes. Consequently, dowry is very high in hypergamous communities.

*Polygamy*: Both variants of polygamy, \* viz., polygyny (plurality of wives) and polyandry (plurality of husbands) are found in India. Polyandry is confined to certain Scheduled Tribes like the Todas in the Nilgiris, the Khasas in the Jaunsar Bawar District of Uttar Pradesh, and the people of Lahaul, Kinnaur, and Spiti in Himachal Pradesh.

Polygyny was much more prevalent in most parts of India. Social reaction against this practice as an indignity offensive to the status of women was one of the most marked features of the nineteenth century Reform Movement. While the acceptance

\*In popular language, polygamy is used to mean plurality of wives. We have used it in that sense elsewhere in the Report.



of monogamy became widely prevalent among the educated classes, reformers differed on the action necessary for the eradication of polygyny. Some wanted legislative prohibition, others believed that it would die out with the spread of education. Partly because of this social reaction and partly due to "declining material prosperity" among the classes which had practised polygyny earlier, its prevalence has declined considerably over the past 100 years. This demand for legislative ban gained momentum under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi and women's organizations, and laws were passed in some provinces and princely states even in the pre-independence period. Finally, the Hindu Marriage Act, 1954, prohibited it for all Hindus.

Under the existing laws, polygyny is permitted only among Muslims. A census study in 1961,\* however, found the practice to be still prevalent among most communities to a certain extent, though its incidence had declined over the decades. The overall incidence of polygyny found by the study was 5.8% among Hindus, 5.7% among Muslims, 6.7% among Jains, 7.8% among Buddhists, and 15.2% among tribal communities. The tribal communities were the only ones where the incidence of polygyny had increased over the years. While most tribal groups permit this practice, we were informed that it is mainly practised by chiefs and headmen. Barrenness of the wife, economic advantages, and gain in prestige are the usual justification for plurality of wives among the tribes. We were informed that such marriages take place even among the Christian tribals and receive customary sanction though they are not performed by the church.

The cultural motivation for plural marriages operates among non-tribal groups also, barrenness or sickness of the wife, the absence of a son, and the custom of marrying a brother's widow (still prevalent in some communities) providing the usual reasons. Another social reason which has become more important in recent years is the cultural and communication gap between an illiterate or uneducated wife and an educated husband whose social aspirations are influenced by modern norms. These are generally cases of child marriage. The women are often not able to seek a divorce because of their economic and social dependence

\*Incidence of Polygynous Marriages in India, Census of India, 1961 (mimeographed).

on their married status. Resistance of their family to a divorce is an added reason.

Economic gain is an important motivation for polygyny among communities where women contribute substantially to the family economy. Some artisan groups, both Muslim and Hindu, find it cheaper to have a number of wives as extra hands than hiring labour. The wide prevalence of polygyny among the middle classes in Manipur has a clear link with the economic independence of Manipuri women who not only support themselves and their children by their earnings but also contribute to the husband's income.

Though the incidence of polygyny among Muslims is not as high as commonly believed, we found widespread resentment among Muslim women against legal sanction of this practice. They observed that any protest against this institution always resulted in acute oppression against which Muslim women received no protection from society. Though law alone cannot eradicate this practice, its existence acts as a norm setter and arouses public conscience. We cannot, therefore, appreciate the denial of this support to Muslim women in their struggle against this social custom.

The continuation of this practice among the Hindus now is mainly due to custom, women's lack of knowledge of their legal rights, and social acceptance of the situation. We were informed that sometimes wives are compelled to sign a document permitting their husbands to remarry, believing that such a document deprived them of their legal right of redress. It is necessary for women's voluntary agencies to launch a campaign against such marriages by ostracizing the men who commit bigamy and mobilizing public opinion against this practice.

*Bride Price and Dowry:* The two major types of transfer of material wealth accompanying marriage are bride price and dowry. The latter is transferred along with the bride whereas the former moves in the opposite direction.

Bride price is customarily prevalent among patrilineal tribes and the middle and lower castes of the non-tribal population. Theoretically this payment in cash and kind is made to the bride's father in exchange for authority over the woman, which passes from her kin group to the bridegroom's kin group, but the idea of compensation for the loss of a productive worker is implicit

in it. In communities which follow this custom, a daughter is not regarded as a burden and parents do not dread the thought of her marriage. She brings wealth to the family both before and as a result of her marriage. However, the flavour of a market transaction (*i.e.*, buying of a bride) is not altogether absent.

There is also a custom that permits a wife to leave a husband who ill-treats her, by paying some compensation. This is welcome as it gives her a chance of freedom from an unwanted partnership. However, this practice is sometimes abused and a woman may be transferred from one man to another even against her wishes in return for some monetary compensation. We found considerable resentment against this custom known as *Reet* (in Himachal Pradesh) and *Natra* (in Madhya Pradesh) among women.

Among some of the poorer communities, the custom of bride price has been responsible for indebtedness resulting in a state of servitude to the money-lenders who are generally landowners. We received reports that, among some Scheduled Castes and Tribes of Uttar Pradesh, wives have been sent for prostitution to clear the debts incurred by the husband at the time of marriage. The custom of bride price needs to be eradicated in order to change the concept of women as someone's possession as well as to improve the conditions of life of these communities.

Changing from bride price to dowry is an attempt to improve the social status of a family or a group, because dowry is associated with the higher social groups. This change has been reported from different regions and indicates a loss of status for the girl in her father's family where she becomes a liability rather than an asset. This is undoubtedly a consequence of the withdrawal of women from productive activities and of the loss of their productive skills.

There are baffling regional variations in people's understanding of dowry. It may be seen as (a) the gift given to the bride and often settled beforehand, which may not be regarded as her property; (b) a gift given to the bridegroom before and at the time of marriage; or (c) a present to the in-laws of the girl. There are a number of social and cultural sanctions for the practice of dowry among both Hindu and Muslim communities. Some see it as a *pre-mortem* inheritance from the bride's natal family; some as an insurance for the bride against any economic

crisis; some as the means to set up a new home. In reality, however, dowry has come to be regarded as essential to obtain a suitable match for a girl with a view to ensuring a high or a higher standard of life for her. The increase of social and economic inequality has been one of the most important inducements for dowry and operates at all levels of the society. The amount of wealth involved may range from a few hundreds to lakhs, from utensils and jewellery to refrigerators, cars, and air-conditioners, but behind each such transaction is the desire for social status for the daughter and indirectly for her parents' family. The desire to obtain security and good status for the daughter places the bride's parents in a vulnerable position where they may face demands which bear no relation to their actual economic capacity and may reduce them to a state of indebtedness. The present reality, therefore, bears no relationship to the traditional sanctions for this practice.

Throughout our tours the increasing incidence of this custom was brought to our notice. Originally an urban practice, it has now penetrated rural areas and to communities which had never practised it before. The increasing demands for gifts and ostentatious expenditure on weddings impose a tremendous strain on the family finances and expose young girls to an extremely unfair competition, in which their own worth is hardly recognized. The aura of a market transaction colours marriage negotiations and inculcates the values of a high consumption society with its false ideas of prestige and ostentation. It encourages the belief that women's work in the home is non-productive and puts a premium on a parasitic existence for women. Black money and unaccounted earnings provide an impetus for the increase of dowry and ostentatious expenditure in weddings and expose families of honest means and moderate income to indebtedness. We received bitter complaints about the high interest rates at which money has to be borrowed for a daughter's wedding. While the groom's family demands dowry as compensation for expenditure on his education, parents of many girls have to sacrifice educating their daughters to avoid the double expenditure. It has also been found that the rates of dowry increase with the education of girls because the higher educated boy expects a larger dowry.

In our view, the spirit of dowry, apart from exposing many

young women to extreme unhappiness and mental breakdowns, goes against the goal of a socialist society and needs to be combated in a multi-pronged manner—by arousing consciousness among men and women; reforming and simplifying marriage customs; increasing opportunities for women's employment and condemning the ideal of a parasitic existence for them; re-assessing the value of house work and home-making as socially and economically productive; enforcing the Anti-Dowry Act; and banning display of gifts and ostentatious expenditure on marriages. Women's organizations and the mass media should play a definite role in organizing active propaganda against these practices and to make women conscious of their demeaning implications.

*Widowhood:* According to our estimates, based on the census of 1931 (the last census which enumerated population by castes), 13.9% of the Hindu population at that date did not customarily practise widow remarriage. In spite of their small proportion in the population, and the role played by leaders from this section in bringing about legal reforms, the remarriage and condition of widows still constitutes a problem which cannot be described as insignificant. The census of 1971 reported 23 million widows as against 22 millions reported by the census of 1951. While the percentage of widows decreased from 15.5% in 1961 to 12.5% in 1971, their ratio of 2,772 per thousand widowers and the fact that they outnumber the latter in all ages indicate that the deterrents to remarriage of widows are still fairly high. The fear of losing the children particularly prevents women from seeking remarriage.

Social attitudes towards widows differ at different socio-economic levels, but a change in the life-style of women after widowhood is characteristic of most sections of Indian society. According to our survey, 59.52% Hindus, 61.49% Muslims, 62.16% Jains, 52.94% Parsees, and 44.2% Christians approved changes in the mode of dress of widows. There seems to have been some improvement in the attitude to widows' participation in auspicious ceremonies. Interestingly enough, the approval of such participation is the highest among upper caste Hindus and the lowest among the Scheduled and other lower castes.

In spite of such marginal changes in attitudes, the condition of widows continues to be a blot on our society. We met a large

group of widows in a state of destitution in Banaras: they had been unashamedly abandoned by their families and were eking out an existence through begging or various petty trades. Most of them were more concerned about the future protection or security for their children rather than their own.

For widows with property, however, the legal reform of securing their right to a share of the husband's property has improved conditions considerably. The decision of the government to provide family pensions to widows of government servants for their life time with additional allowances for children during their minority has also guaranteed a degree of security.

*Age at Marriage:* Though there is a distinct rise in the age of marriage for women in India, in rural areas the marriage of very young girls is still quite prevalent. Rules of endogamy, other norms of restrictions and preferences for marriages between certain groups, and the strong emphasis on the purity and chastity of women encourage early marriages. Significantly, most tribal communities do not have child marriages. We came across some child wives in different parts of the country, but in discussions, practically everyone observed that 14 to 15 was the desirable age for marriage of girls. According to some reports, early marriages are essential for Scheduled Caste women to protect them from the lust of men of upper groups who wield economic power over them. Early marriage and lack of education constitute a vicious circle, affecting population growth and the health of the mother and the child, and the status and education of girls. In urban areas, education and need for employment of boys has raised the marriage age of girls also. Attitude studies among urban middle and upper classes suggest 16 to 24 as the age for marriage of girls.

*Customary Marriages:* While marriages among the dominant higher castes are performed by ritual ceremonies, there have been various forms of customary marriage practised by other castes. They are normally conterminous with easy forms of divorce and secondary marriages. The secondary marriage of a widow or a separated or divorced woman is accompanied by a nominal ceremony varying from region to region. Most tribes prefer marriage by negotiation, but they also provide for unions established by elopement and an emphatic choice by the girl is generally respected.

## V. WOMEN'S ROLE IN A CHANGING SOCIETY

*Role Differentiation:* While the Indian polity recognizes equality of rights between men and women, society implicitly accepts a sharp distinction in their roles and spheres of activity. True parity will be possible only when the implications of the Constitutional equality are accepted in people's minds. Even with regional variations, basic notions about male and female roles display some common features. A woman is primarily associated with the home, is expected to look after domestic chores and her typical roles are those of a housewife and mother. In the cultural understanding of the people, home-making, like child bearing and child rearing, is identified with femininity. Whether women work in the fields, factories or mines, at construction sites, or in white-collar jobs, all of them are expected to be home-makers in the same manner as women who confine themselves exclusively to home-making activities. Their role in the outside world has not yet been accepted in the same manner as men's.

Decision-making for the community and the exercise of political power is still regarded as an exclusive male preserve: this is clear from the entirely male composition of the traditional panchayats, either of villages or of caste groups (including some Muslim castes). Men may engage in manual work outside the home but such work inside the house is considered derogatory and is expected to be done by women. Cooking, tailoring can be taken up by men as a profession but inside the house, these are left to women.

Regional differences in the type and quantum of work expected of women expose the hollowness of the myths attached to these sex-linked roles. In the North-Eastern region, weaving is the monopoly of women but there are parts of India where a woman may not touch the loom. Embroidery work is a male activity in Kashmir and a female one in the Punjab and elsewhere. In agriculture the variations in women's tasks in different regions prove the invalidity of the assumption that men are supposed to do the heavier work. In the Northern hill regions, women carry heavy logs weighing 200 to 300 lbs, slice the timber, and help in wood chopping. What is important is that the tasks assigned to men are considered more prestigious in most com-

munities and regions. Women are generally the unpaid family workers.

In the middle class, however, the spheres of men and women are more sharply demarcated. There is a clear distinction between work done for one's household and that done for others. Women are supposed to do only the former. Where they assist the family business like grocery, tailoring or knitwear, food processing, etc., by preparing things in the home, their contribution is not to be acknowledged, with the result that they are not recorded in the census as workers. It is considered unfortunate for women of these classes who have no other qualifications and skills to engage in these jobs as a means of earning a livelihood because the prestige of the family suffers when their women have to work for others.

This traditional concept is changing with girls taking up white-collar jobs. Parental inhibitions are breaking down where girls have to earn sometimes to provide their dowry and marriage expenses and sometimes to support their parents and younger members of the family. Cases where parents do not want their daughters to marry out of a fear that this would deprive them of her earnings are no longer rare in lower middle class families.

Among the well-to-do, women are spared of much of the drudgery of house work because of domestic help, but they are expected to run the home and bring up the children. Home-making is raised to a fine art, and trifling details assume exaggerated importance. The precise activities may depend upon the locality, educational level, and extent of modernization, but the real differentiation remains.

These distinctions in roles within and outside the family, in decision-making, in management of expenditure and incomes were clearly indicated by our survey in which the number of respondents who claimed that these activities are equally shared by men and women was very small.

These norms of behaviour influence the bringing up of boys and girls. While enlightened families take pride in not discriminating between boys and girls in educational opportunities, the emphasis on feminine tasks and feminine abilities remains and there is distinct difference in the degree of protection considered necessary for boys and girls. Boys are not asked to share in domestic work though they may lend a hand in marketing, running

errands and doing escort duty to their mothers and sisters. Boys with an aptitude for cooking or tailoring are ridiculed and discouraged. Studies and career motivation are emphasized for boys but few parents visualize a career for their daughters. Marriage remains as the goal and education as only a security against unforeseen eventualities. Excellence in studies or any other field does not provide a justification for a girl's lack of interest in household work. This distinction in expectations inevitably affects the allocation of family resources for the education of boys and girls, irrespective of their aptitudes and abilities.

This emphasis on feminine roles has an inevitable effect on girls' personalities and identities. They learn early in life the need for flexibility, adjustment, and submissiveness, and hesitate to develop strong opinions and commitments which they may not be allowed to pursue after marriage. These constrictions and inhibitions affected most women in their later lives, particularly when they have to compete with men in their careers. Among the poorer sections, where girls contribute to the running of the house as well as to the family economy, their education is often sacrificed, while the boys are encouraged to study. We saw many cases of this type during our tours, in both urban and rural areas. Apart from the economic reasons, there is also a lurking fear that education may alienate girls from their conventional roles and make them less submissive to the family.

*Home and Work:* The relationship between earning capacity and status and autonomy within the family for the woman depends, to a great extent, on the status of her earning activity. Since manual labour has a low status in our society, women employed as wage labourers or unskilled and menial workers do not enjoy a better status, while women in high prestige jobs may do so.

Women of the poorer sections whose days are spent on hard labour (in earning and house work) are extremely overworked and can give little attention to the bringing up of children. Among the middle classes, the lot of women who have to cope with both house work and employment outside the home is not much easier. While urban life brings certain aids and makes house work easier (for instance, she may not have to fetch water and fuel from a distance), she is expected to give greater care and

attention to the children and their studies, to keep the home in a better and more attractive manner, provide more varied menus and play hostess to guests and friends of the family more frequently than her counterparts in rural areas. This overwork explains the persistence of the desire for a leisured life for their daughters even among these working women. For this class of women, there has been considerable role expansion since they are called upon to assume many new roles, in addition to their traditional ones. The efficiency that is required of them in full time employment with its consequent professional responsibilities, as well as in running a modern home with its extra familial dimensions, create considerable psychological stress which make their life very difficult. Only few such women have the income as well as understanding and sympathy from the family which can ensure some rest and leisure for their self-improvement, or enable them to adjust the patterns of social interactions demanded by their jobs with the demands of the home.

The change in attitudes to women working outside the home or participating in public life has been slow and uneven, because they are related to deep-rooted prejudices about a woman's inherent aptitudes and capacities, her proper sphere of work and man-woman relationships. Thus, the teaching profession or medicine is considered more respectable for women because it does not conflict with traditional norms of femininity. Nursing, on the other hand, though not in conflict with feminine roles, involves contact with impure objects, male patients and doctors, and odd hours of work and has still not attained the same degree of acceptability among the middle classes, except in a few regions and communities. Prejudices against the performing arts are, however, breaking down rapidly because of the chances of high income associated with them.

The pace of change in these attitudes is even slower in small towns where it is more difficult for women to take up unconventional work because of the social attitudes. Because of the post-independence entry of women in the administrative services, prejudice against this career is breaking down fast. But in smaller towns men still do not relish working under a woman boss. These traditional concepts of a woman's limitations and her proper place were responsible for the well-known episode in Uttar Pradesh when the Chief Minister decided that women

officers should not be entrusted with administrative responsibilities. These views are shared by many, both men and women, and form a current theme in literature, the mass media, and social research.

Society's ambivalence regarding the gainful employment and independence of women is demonstrated in many ways. Her income is appreciated because it raises the standard of living and lessens financial burdens, but the freedom of association and movement needed for outdoor work is not approved by many who continue to put a stigma on working women. Men may come late from work, and may take time off from family responsibilities in the interests of their career, but not so women. We received many complaints that even men who helped with domestic chores when abroad, do not do so after their return to the country. A few who do are criticised and disparaged by neighbours and relatives. A belief that working women are bad mothers and inefficient housewives, is widespread. An improvement in the financial condition of the family often precipitates women having to leave their jobs. Most working women develop a sense of guilt and tend to pamper their children to make up for what they consider to be lack of proper attention on their part.

The problem of role conflict manifests itself in various ways, particularly where there is a difference between the job status of husbands and wives. Husbands who have a lower status job than their wives find adjustment difficult because they consider the situation a reversal from the normal, where the husband is the principal breadwinner and enjoys superior authority in the family. On the other hand, it is also considered demeaning for wives of men in high status occupations to take up low-paid and relatively lower status jobs. An idle wife attuned to the life patterns of the husband is appreciated more. Many women who continue in employment after marriage in order to support their needy parents and siblings have to face tremendous misunderstanding and lack of sympathy from their husbands and in-laws.

These problems of adjustment will remain unless the distinction between men's work and women's work within and outside the families is removed through the socialization process in the home and the school. It is also necessary to provide supportive

institutions in the way of creches, easy transport, labour saving devices, and changes in life style to make home-making an easier and less time-consuming process. If household work and the rearing of children are recognized as socially and economically productive, then sharing such responsibilities need not disgrace a man and they need not become obstacles to a woman's right to play the multiple roles required by a modern society. Recognition of a house-wife's work for purposes of national accounting as a contribution to national savings and stability of the economy would enhance women's status and acknowledge society's debt to them rather than its present attitude where she has to shoulder the drudgery and the sacrifice without any recognition.

#### VI. SPECIAL PROBLEMS

The gap in the perception of women's needs and available opportunities leaves them open to exploitation which cannot be offset by laws or development programmes only: an understanding of the magnitude and intricacies of these problems and institutional support is necessary. In a rapidly changing and culturally differentiated society, the slow process of adjustment in social institutions and values to changing needs gives rise to certain problems and deviant behaviour which can only be removed with structural changes in the socio-economic system. These special problems include prostitution, the problems of women prisoners, suicides, unmarried mothers, and aged and destitute women.

(1) *Prostitution*: The commercialization of this old profession is a recent phenomenon. The emphasis on chastity, child marriage, denial of widow remarriages, dowry, and inadequate employment opportunities for women, have always been the major factors contributing to the spread of this evil. Industrialization and urbanization have helped to transform trafficking in women into a highly profitable industry, and changed its character from the traditional institutions sanctioned by social and religious customs for certain castes, into a widespread industry in vice. Recent studies of prostitutes prove that while a large number are descendants of these traditional groups, there are many new entrants to this profession who are victims of social oppression

and poverty. In the absence of adequate employment opportunities, families in poorer and even the middle classes are compelled to allow prostitution of their women. Wives of bonded and other agricultural labourers take up (and are sometimes forced to) this occupation to free their families from indebtedness. In certain areas girls are encouraged to practise this profession to earn their dowries. Recent additions to this group are from middle class families driven by economic necessity and in a few cases by their desire to keep up an appearance of affluence. Even educated women are found in their ranks because of difficulties in obtaining other types of employment.

While there is no doubt of the historical or traditional origin of this profession in India, it represents in our view the exploitation of the poor by the rich and of women by men. If women are to become equals of men in society, society must ensure economic, social, and psychological security for them and protect them from this worst form of exploitation and inequality. The growing incidence of prostitution in metropolitan cities and urban areas indicates growing demand on the one hand and poverty on the other. The increasing commercialization has resulted in the emergence of a host of intermediaries and allied traders who profit from this traffic. Lure of the high profits from this trade has encouraged the exploitation and seduction of women from tribal communities, and even other sections of the population who never practised this profession.

The Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act, 1956, aimed to suppress this commercialization and did not attempt to penalise individual prostitutes or prostitution itself. The only case where an individual prostitute can be punished is when she carries on her trade in the near vicinity of public places or places of religious worship. According to senior police officials, this lacuna and the necessity of having women witnesses during a raid have severely restricted their powers to suppress this traffic. Social workers and police officers agree that the punishments imposed under the Act are most inadequate. We understand that amendments of the law are under consideration. We also suggest better preventive and rehabilitation measures in the way of homes for abandoned and illegitimate children, special counselling service for women in moral and

social danger and economic rehabilitation of women rescued from this trade.

(2) *Women in Prisons*: The condition of women prisoners has not received adequate attention since they constitute a small segment of the total convict population (4.3% of convicts and 3.2% of undertrials). About 72% of the female convicts are between 21 and 40 years of age and around 10% are between 16 and 20. About 12% are illiterate, 15% are unmarried, and 12% are widows. A large majority are mothers. It has been found that their crimes are mainly caused by poverty or helplessness in certain social matters. Most of them are beginners in crime, for whom prison life is extremely unhealthy. The Law Commission has recommended that convicts on short-term sentences should not be sent to prison.

We were informed that in some prisons, lunatics—both criminal and non-criminal—are housed with women prisoners. This dangerous practice will prevent both reform or rehabilitation of the convicts and the treatment of the insane.

Another problem brought to our notice was that most women prisoners are sent away from their place of residence because of accommodation difficulties in prisons. Their isolation from the family increases difficulties of rehabilitation and readjustment to family life after release. We feel that problems of women prisoners deserve special attention, particularly with regard to their rehabilitation and education, and care of their children. It has been suggested that women's voluntary organizations should be involved in arranging useful educational and recreational work programmes for women in prison.

(3) *Suicides*: Suicide is a 'reaction to problems that apparently cannot be solved in any other way—a final response which a human being makes to inner emotional distress'. Cultural patterns, socio-economic conditions and group activities act as inhibiting or encouraging factors for suicides. In India the earliest institutionalized form of suicide for women was *sati*, which arose out of a social system that degraded widows. It was legally banned in the 19th century.

The overall incidence of suicide by women was reported to be higher than that for men in 1966 and 1969. In 1970, 41.4% of those who committed suicide were women. The highest incidence of suicide among women has been found in the age group 15

to 34, followed by the 35 to 54 age group. The causes of suicide have generally been found to be despair over dreadful diseases, quarrels with parents-in-law, and quarrels with married partners. While there has been no national survey of the causes of suicide, the increasing incidence of female suicides in Gujarat resulted in the appointment of an Enquiry Committee, which found that the number of women committing suicide was larger than men when the causes were physical, mental, social, and domestic, while the proportion of men was higher when the cause was economic. About 62% of women who committed suicide were illiterate and the large majority were married. The Enquiry Committee emphasized child marriage, lack of freedom in the choice of partners, and joint family relationships as the major causes of female suicide. Two earlier surveys of suicides (Bombay State 54-57, and Saurashtra 52-55) had also found the rate of female suicide to be higher in certain districts of Gujarat.

In our view, the increasing burden of economic insecurity and the breakdown of the family economy in the absence of social security and adequate employment opportunities explain the recent cases of women committing suicide along with their children. Suicides thus represent a serious malaise in social organization which may increase if life becomes harsher with increasing poverty and destitution.

(4) *Unmarried Mothers* : One of the causes of a high suicide rate found by the Suicide Enquiry Committee was illegitimate pregnancies. Before the passing of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971, unmarried mothers had either to risk their lives through criminal abortions or become destitutes or prostitutes. While some illegitimate pregnancies are caused by rape, most are due to unhappy or maladjusted family life, broken homes, or sexual ignorance. We met some of these women whose lives had been wrecked completely by the refusal of the family to accept or assist them in any manner. In one case the father had ordered the girl's death and her escape to a women's home was arranged by a village school teacher. The number of such homes are most inadequate, nor are they known to most people.

Since this problem is already on the increase with growing urbanization and the disintegration of traditional social norms, we feel that it requires much greater attention than it has received so far from official agencies and voluntary welfare organizations.

It is important to collect information, provide counselling and assistance to these women to rehabilitate them in their families and society.

(5) *Aged Women* : Traditional Indian society had ensured the care of aged persons through the joint family. But disintegration of this pattern of family organization and values have left a large number of aged women economically helpless. We found many such women in destitute homes because no other homes were available for them. They are seldom visited by the family.

Though a few State Governments are operating schemes for old age pensions, reports indicate that the amounts are very meagre and reach very few persons. Illiteracy and helplessness of the recipients are exploited by intermediaries who charge commissions for help in obtaining the pension. Greater care and attention to this problem by state and voluntary agencies is necessary, because aged women are being increasingly regarded as encumbrances by their families in the changing milieu.

(6) *Destitute Women* : The number of destitute women has been increasing in recent years because of poverty, loss of employment and breakdown of the family. We met many of them in both rural and urban areas. Many of them are widows or deserted wives who swell the ranks of beggars or are exploited for immoral traffic to support themselves and their children. We believe that the government's estimate that about 100,000 women in the age-group 20-44 become destitute every year falls short of the reality. Institutionalized services for them are highly inadequate, in both numbers and types of services provided for rehabilitation.

#### CONCLUSION

Our review indicates that society has failed to frame new norms and institutions to enable women to fulfil the multiple roles expected of them in India today. The majority do not enjoy the rights and the opportunities guaranteed by the Constitution. Increasing dowry and other phenomena, which lower woman's status further, indicate a regression from the norms developed during the Freedom Movement. The content analysis of periodicals in regional languages revealed that concern for women and their problems has suffered a decline in the past two decades.



The new social laws have remained unknown to the large mass of women.

While social attitudes and institutions cannot be changed rapidly, this process can be accelerated by deliberate and planned efforts. Responsibility for this acceleration must be shared by the state, the community, and all who believe in the equality of women. We urge all of them to mobilize public opinion and strengthen social efforts against oppressive institutions like polygamy, dowry, child marriage, ostentatious expenditure on weddings and to mount a campaign to increase women's awareness of their legal rights. The mass media, which we find have contributed little to changing attitudes in the needed direction, or in conveying basic knowledge to women about their rights and responsibilities, should be activated for this purpose. Films and advertising should seriously consider the complaint made to us repeatedly, that they are degrading the image of women by using them as sex symbols, and contributing to the increase in sex crimes and deviant behaviour that threaten women's status in society.

## CHAPTER IV

### WOMEN AND THE LAW

WE EXAMINED the legal status of women from all points of view and especially with reference to marriage, divorce, adoption and guardianship of children, maintenance and inheritance, and certain relevant issues such as matrimonial property, family courts, uniform civil code, and reforms in criminal law and law relating to nationality. Our findings and recommendations are given in the paragraphs that follow.

#### LAW AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE

During the British period, the general policy of non-intervention in social and religious matters perpetuated multiple systems and, by preventing normal adjustment to socio-economic changes, led to stagnation and hardening of differences between the various religious communities and even within the sub-sections of the communities. The nineteenth century social reformers attempted some marginal adjustments arising from humanitarian considerations and social demands, their most significant achievement being the law against the practice of *sati*. Such social legislation however was not attempted after 1857. With the strengthening of the national movement and the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi, a demand began to be put forward for bringing about major changes in law and for removing the legal inferiority of women and ending the discrimination against them in matters like marriage, divorce, inheritance, or guardianship of children which affected their life and personality. Reform of Hindu Law was thus initiated even before independence although, because of conservative resistance, it could only be given effect to during the 1950s in a piece-meal fashion.

Over-dependence on legislation to bring about social change is a characteristic, not only of our country, but of several modern societies, particularly those emerging from foreign rule. There is

no doubt that law does serve some useful purpose in promoting social change. But it must be emphasized that legislation by itself cannot change society. The judiciary has often failed to give effort to the principles underlying legislation, as for example, in cases of bigamy or cases involving the wife's right to work. The executive has also failed to implement these laws or to spread awareness about them through the mass media. If legislation reflects the social value of a country, the degree of women's emancipation is the measure of its general cultural advance.

### I. MARRIAGE

The major issues relating to marriage that need careful attention are polygamy, effective enforcement of the provisions against bigamy under the Hindu law, age of marriage, compulsory registration of marriages and dowry.

#### *Polygamy*

Full equality of the sexes is hardly possible in a legal system which permits polygamy and a social system which tolerates it. Fortunately, the institution of polygamy which prevailed traditionally in India has been declining in the last few decades. Monogamy has been accepted in the laws for Christians, Hindus, Parsees, and Jews, so that 88% of the Indian population is legally governed by this principle. It is only Muslim law which has remained unaffected by this changing trend towards monogamy.

(1) *Muslim Law on Polygamy*: Three different sets of views were expressed by Muslim women interviewed by us: (1) the educated middle classes in U.P. were opposed to any change whatsoever; (2) the poorer women of the same State expressed a desire for monogamous marriages and denounced the inequities of polygamy; and (3) there was a uniform and emphatic demand, from women in Kashmir, for the banning of polygamy.

Muslim Law regards marriage as a contract. Some jurists have advocated the adoption of a standard contract providing, *inter alia*, that the wife shall have the power to divorce her husband if he takes a second wife. Although this remedy is advocated for the prevention of polygamy, it will not obviously provide any substantive relief to the first wife with children, nor seriously

affect the position of the husband because the second marriage would remain valid and the act of bigamy would not be legally wrong. It would also be ineffective to prevent fake conversions to Islam to evade the prohibition of bigamy under other laws.

While the desirability of reform in Muslim Law is generally acknowledged and polygamy has been prohibited in most other Muslim countries, the Government of India has taken no steps in this direction, on the ground that public opinion in the Muslim community does not favour this change. Ignoring the interests of Muslim women is denial of equality and social justice; and therefore there can be no compromise on the basic policy of monogamy being the rule for all communities in India.

(2) *Enforcement of Provision against Bigamy under the Hindu Marriage Act*: While bigamy has been made an offence for the Hindus and the second marriage is void in law, such marriages are still prevalent, as evidenced by a census study in 1961\* and cases brought to the notice of the Committee during its tours in the States of Manipur, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh. Uneducated and economically dependent women find it difficult to go to court and are not always supported by their families in lodging prosecutions. Technical interpretation of the word 'solemnization' of the marriage also poses difficulties. It is therefore necessary to make the following changes in the law to make its enforcement more effective:

(a) With the permission of the court, the right to initiate prosecution for bigamy should be extended to persons other than the girl's family to prevent the current widespread violation of the law.

(b) In Section 17 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, the words 'solemnized' should be replaced by the words 'goes through a form of marriage'. Further, an explanation should also be added to the section to the effect that an omission to perform some of the essential ceremonies by parties shall not be construed to mean that the offence of bigamy was not committed, if such a ceremony of marriage gives rise to a *de facto* relationship of husband and wife.

\**Incidence of Polygamous Marriages in India*—Census of India, 1961 (mimeographed).

(c) A provision should be introduced in Section 6 of the Hindu Marriages Act, 1955, to the effect that nothing contained in the Act shall prevent a court from granting an injunction against a proposed bigamous marriage.

(3) *Laws in the Former French and Portuguese Territory* : Even after the merger of these territories with India, the pre-merger laws have not been abrogated. Hindus in Pondicherry are governed by four systems and Christians by two systems. In Goa, Daman, and Diu, polygamy is permissible among some Hindu communities. The continuation of such laws permitting polygamy is contradictory to our social policy and is totally unjustified. They should therefore be immediately replaced by the Hindu Marriages Act, 1955.

#### *Age of Marriage*

The disastrous effects of child marriages persuaded social reformers to restrain them by legislation. The Civil Marriage Act, 1872, fixed the minimum age of marriage at 14, and attempts to prevent early consummation resulted in various measures which gradually raised the age of consent to 13. Finally the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, fixed the minimum age for marriage for males at 18 and for females at 14 (which was later amended to 15). While the practice of child marriage was made a penal offence for parents or those performing, conducting, or directing it and for the adult bridegroom, the validity of such marriages was left untouched. Apart from this general Act which applies to all communities, the various personal laws also have their minimum age for marriage. There is no uniformity either in the minimum age or in the consequences of violation of the law. Only the Special Marriage Act, 1954, fixes the minimum age at 21 and 18 for males and females respectively. In all the personal laws, a lower age is prescribed for girls and it is below 18 in all of them.

It is hardly necessary to argue the case against child marriages. It may be pointed out however that the Suicide Enquiry Committee appointed by the Government of Gujarat\* reported that

\**Report of the Suicide Enquiry (Pushaben) Committee*, Government of Gujarat, 1964.

child marriage is one of the significant factors leading to the high incidence of suicide among young married women. Increasing the age of marriage to 18 is desirable because, until then, a girl is not physically and mentally mature for the responsibilities of parenthood.

While penalizing the performance of child marriages is necessary, the benefit of such legislation is greatly offset by the fact that the marriage itself is held valid. It should be a long-term objective to amend this aspect of the law and to declare child marriages as legally void. Moreover, as immediate measures to deter the practice and to alleviate their consequences, it is necessary to introduce the 'option of puberty' on lines similar to that in Muslim law. The right to repudiate a child marriage by a girl on attaining majority is provided under Muslim Law if the following facts are established:

- (i) that she was given in marriage by her father or other guardian before she attained the age of 15;
- (ii) that she repudiated the marriage before she attained the age of 18; and
- (iii) that the marriage was not consummated.

This right to repudiate the marriage on attaining majority should be made available to girls in all communities, irrespective of the fact whether or not the marriage was consummated.

Gujarat has made child marriage a cognizable offence and provided for the appointment of a Child Marriage Prevention Officer. This is a good lead; and to ensure better enforcement, it is necessary that all offences under the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, should be made cognizable and Special Officers appointed to enforce its provisions.

The Parsee Marriage and Divorce Act, 1865, provides that 'no suit shall be brought in any court to enforce any marriage between Parsees or any contract connected with or arising out of any such marriage, if, at the date of the institution of the suit the husband shall not have completed the age of 16 years or the wife shall not have completed the age of 14 years'. It is necessary to include a similar provision in the personal laws of all communities.

*Compulsory Registration of Marriages*

Compulsory registration of marriages as recommended by the U.N. will be an effective check on child and bigamous marriage, offer reliable proof of marriages and ensure legitimacy and inheritance rights of children. Registration of marriages is compulsory among Parsees and Christians and for all marriages performed under the Special Marriage Act, 1954. Section 16 of this Act which permits registration of marriages celebrated under other laws has failed to evoke much response. It is therefore necessary to introduce a system of compulsory registration for all marriages.

*Dowry*

The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, has signally failed to achieve its purpose. In spite of the rapid growth of this practice, the cases dealt with under this Act are extremely few. During the debate on the Dowry Bill, it had been claimed that awakening of the social conscience rather than legislation was necessary to solve this problem, and that the evil will be reduced with increasing avenues of employment and other opportunities for women. There is little evidence of either of these developments. Social conscience is still asleep as is evidenced by the many cases of ill-treatment of the girl by her in-laws or her husband for failure to bring adequate dowry which were reported to us and by the fact that none of the persons reporting such cases mentioned the need to call the police or socially censure such families. Education has proved to be ineffective to arrest the evil since the educated youth appear to be unashamedly contributing to its perpetuation. Existing economic conditions also suggest that increasing job opportunities and economic freedom for women will be a long drawn-out process. Under these circumstances, stringent enforcement of the policy and purpose of this law has become absolutely essential. The specific measures suggested are: (1) making the offence cognizable; (2) entrusting its enforcement (as well as of other social laws) to a separate administration which would be associated with social workers and enlightened members of the community in its functioning; (3) including two ancillary provisions in the Act to prohibit gifts made to the bridegroom or his parents in excess of Rs. 500 or which can be

so used as to reduce his own financial liability and to penalize display of dowry which helps to perpetuate and encourage this practice; and (4) penalizing the taking and giving of dowry under the government servants conduct rules as done in the past in respect of bigamous marriages. The impact of the amended Act should be evaluated after five years.

It should be a long-term objective to set a ceiling even on gifts to the bride.

## II. DIVORCE

Monogamous marriage without the right of divorce causes great hardship to both parties. The concept of 'union for life' or the sacramental nature of marriage which renders it indissoluble has been eroded gradually and the right of divorce has been introduced in all legal systems in India. The laws are however characterized by variations and unequal treatment of sexes. According to the census of 1971, there are 870,000 divorced or separated women of whom 743,200 are in the rural areas and 127,500 in urban areas, the ratio being 1,630 women per 1,000 men. The figures for 1961-71 indicate a distinct drop in the percentage of divorced and separated persons over the decade, although the proportion of women was higher than that of men in both rural and urban areas. A census survey in 1961 indicated wide acceptance of divorce by the village community.\* Its incidence was the highest among Muslims followed by Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, and Christians. Adultery, barrenness, and extreme poverty were the most common grounds for divorce.

(1) *Hindu Law*: Contrary to the general notion regarding the indissolubility of Hindu marriages, customary forms of divorce, recognized both socially and judicially, have been widely practised among the lower castes. The most usual forms are: divorce by mutual consent, by the husband, and by deeds. Under customary law, there is no waiting period after divorce for remarriage. The other advantage of these forms is that they save both time and money which is generally lost in litigation; but

\**Position of Divorce in India*—Census of India, 1961 (mimeographed). Also Village Surveys conducted by the same Census.

since some of these forms are against public policy or morality, a divorce under customary law may be rejected by a court. It has been suggested that an exhaustive record of these customs should be prepared and scrutinized by a panel of socio-legal experts to determine which forms should be made invalid. Copies of this record should be made available to the people and to the panchayats.

The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, permits divorce to both parties for (a) living in adultery; (b) conversion; (c) insanity; (d) communicable leprosy; (e) venereal disease; (f) renunciation; (g) disappearance for seven years or more; (h) failure to resume cohabitation for two years after a decree of judicial separation; and (i) failure to comply with a decree for restitution of conjugal rights. A wife has two additional grounds: (a) if the husband has another living life; and (b) if he has been guilty of rape, sodomy, or bestiality. It is recommended that cruelty and desertion should be included as grounds for divorce in this Act, to prevent the circuitous route of obtaining a judicial separation first and then seeking divorce after two years.

The interpretation of 'reasonable cause' for desertion or restitution of conjugal rights as made by the judiciary is not satisfactory; and, in certain cases, the judiciary's attitude to the women's right of equal opportunity in education or employment has been ambiguous. As the court either upheld the authority of the husband to compel his wife to resign her job in a place away from his place of work, or conceded the right to the wife only in cases of genuine economic necessity, it is recommended that difference in the place of work should not be regarded as a ground for desertion or restitution of conjugal rights.

(2) *Muslim Law*: Under Muslim law, a husband has an absolute and unlimited right to repudiate the marriage at his will, but a Muslim wife has no such right. Traditional law permitted her to seek dissolution under three forms: (a) divorce where the husband delegates the right of divorce to the wife in the marriage contract stipulating that she may divorce him on his taking another wife; (b) divorce by agreement on the wife's giving some consideration to the husband; and (c) divorce by mutual consent. Taking advantage of the law enunciated by the Maliki and Shafi schools the dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939, recognizes the wife's right to divorce on the following grounds:

- (a) husband's disappearance for four years;
- (b) neglect and failure to provide maintenance for two years;
- (c) husband's imprisonment for seven years or more;
- (d) failure to perform marital obligations for three years;
- (e) Impotency;
- (f) insanity, leprosy, venereal disease;
- (g) option of puberty; and
- (h) cruelty or any other ground recognized as valid for divorce under Muslim Law.

This Act has benefited many Muslim women. The most frequently used grounds are the option of puberty and failure to provide maintenance. In the latter case, courts have occasionally denied the right to a wife where her conduct was such as to absolve her husband from his duty to provide maintenance. In such cases, however, a more reasonable view is that taken by Justice Krishna Ayyar who has observed that there is no merit in trying to preserve a marriage which has in fact broken down. It is therefore recommended that the right to divorce on the failure of the husband to provide maintenance should be irrespective of the wife's conduct.

In spite of the rights provided by the Act of 1939 and the customary forms, a Muslim wife continues in a position of legal inferiority and insecurity as long as the husband's unilateral right to divorce continues to be recognized. Other Muslim countries have already restricted this right. It is recommended that immediate legislation should be undertaken to eliminate this unilateral right of divorce by the husband and to introduce parity of rights for both partners regarding grounds for seeking divorce.

(3) *Christian Law*: The Indian Divorce Act, 1869, which governs all Christians, discriminates between the husband's and wife's right to seek divorce. The husband can do so if the wife has committed adultery. The wife has to prove a second offence along with adultery (incest, bigamy, cruelty, desertion) in order to obtain a divorce. The Law Commission prepared (in 1960) a draft bill to reform this law on the lines of provisions for divorce under the Special Marriage Act, 1954. The failure of government to give effect to this suggestion is much to be regretted and it is recommended that immediate steps should be taken to re-

form the Indian Divorce Act, 1869, on the lines suggested by the Law Commission.

(4) *Parsee Law*: The Parsee Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936, provides, in addition to the usual grounds, an additional right to the wife to obtain a divorce if she has been compelled by her husband to prostitution. It is recommended that this provision should be included in all other personal laws.

(5) *Jewish Law*: The Jews are not governed by statutory law; but divorce can be obtained through the courts on grounds of adultery or cruelty. Monogamy is generally practised except in certain specified cases. It is necessary to codify and reform the Jewish law on the subject, introducing the principle of monogamy and the normal grounds for divorce provided for in the Special Marriage Act, 1954.

(6) *Special Marriage Act, 1954*: Divorce under this secular form of marriage can be obtained by either party for adultery, desertion for three years, cruelty, unsound mind, leprosy, venereal disease, continuous absence for seven years, non-resumption of co-habitation for one year following a decree of judicial separation or restitution of conjugal rights. In addition, the wife can obtain divorce on the grounds of rape, sodomy, or bestiality. A special feature of the Act is the right to divorce by mutual consent. It is recommended that mutual consent should be recognized as a ground for divorce in all the personal laws so that two adults whose marriage has, in fact, broken down can dissolve it honourably.

Two general principles should be adopted for reform of all divorce laws: (1) there should be parity of rights regarding grounds for divorce for both partners; and (2) conversion to another religion should not be recognized as a ground for divorce as it offers an easy way of avoiding matrimonial obligations.

### III. ADOPTION AND GUARDIANSHIP OF CHILDREN

In India, the only personal law which recognizes adoption in the true sense of the term is Hindu law. It regards adoption as 'taking of a son as a substitute in case there is no male issue'. The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956, made three clear departures from the previous law on the subject:

- (a) it permitted the adoption of either a son or a daughter;
- (b) it insisted on the consent of the wife for giving or taking in adoption; and
- (c) it gave a woman the right to adopt if she is unmarried, widowed, or divorced.

A married woman can adopt only if her husband has renounced the world, become insane, or has ceased to be a Hindu. While this Act has certainly improved the status of women, it is necessary to improve it further and to provide that both husband and wife shall have an equal right to adopt with the consent of the other spouse. From this point of view, we welcome the Adoption of Children Bill, 1972, as a uniform and secular law which would benefit the entire community and recommend its early enactment. While contemporary thought regarding guardianship draws a distinction between parental (earlier seen as synonymous with paternal) rights and the interest and welfare of the child, and subordinates the former to the latter. Our laws do not clearly reflect this trend.

(1) *Hindu Law*: The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956, upholds the superior right of the father and makes him the first (the mother being the second) natural guardian for boys and unmarried girls. The father has however lost his previous right to deprive the mother by appointing a testamentary guardian. The prior right of the mother is 'ordinarily' recognized only to custody of children below five years of age. She has also a better claim than the father in the case of illegitimate children. The Act also directs that, in deciding guardianship, courts must take the 'welfare of the child' as a paramount consideration. A recent decision of the Supreme Court observed that, in special circumstances, the mother could be the natural guardian even when the father was alive. It is hoped that this decision will guide lower courts and prevent them from invariably upholding the father's right even against the child's interest.

(2) *Muslim Law*: A Muslim father's position is dominant and his rights with regard to guardianship are very wide indeed. The mother is not recognized as a natural guardian even after the father's death, though she may be appointed as such under the father's will (Shias do not recognize this where the mother is a non-Muslim). Muslim Law, however, recognizes her prime

right to custody of minor children which cannot be deprived even by the father except for misconduct. There is a difference between the Shia and the Hanafi schools regarding the age when the mother's right of custody terminates. In case of a minor son, the Shia school holds that the mother's right is only during the weaning period, *i.e.*, till the child reaches the age of two years. The Hanafi school extends this period to seven years of age. In case of minor girls, the Shia law upholds the mother's right till the girl reaches the age of seven, and the Hanafi law till she attains puberty. Both schools agree that only the mothers should have custody of a minor married girl till she attains puberty.

(3) *Guardians and Wards Act, 1890*: Under this law which governs all communities other than Hindus and Muslims, the father's right with regard to guardianship is primary and no other person can be appointed unless the father is unfit.

Supporting the recommendations of the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women regarding equality of rights and duties between men and women in respect of guardianship of minor children, the exercise of parental authority over them, and non-discrimination between father and mother regarding custody of children in the event of divorce or separation, we recommend:

- (1) that the control over the person and property of a minor cannot be separated and should vest in the same person;
- (2) that the question of guardianship should be determined entirely from the point of view of the child's interest and not on the basis of prior right of either parent;
- (3) that the parent who does not have guardianship should have access to the child; and
- (4) that whatever the decision taken earlier, the child's choice of guardian should be obtained when he reaches the age of 12.

#### IV. MAINTENANCE

(1) *Criminal Law*: The new Criminal Procedure Code, 1974, continues to reflect the old attitude to women and provides the right to demand maintenance to divorced wives and indigent parents. The obligation has been placed on men only: this is irrational in the changing social situation when many women

are economically independent. With a view to achieving equality of status between husband and wife and son and daughter, we recommend an amendment of the law to oblige the economically independent woman to maintain her dependent husband; to share with him the duty to maintain their children; and, with her brothers, the duty to maintain their indigent parents. We also recommend removal of the ceiling of Rs. 500 p.m. which has now been placed on maintenance. The present exception in the law which denies maintenance to those divorced wives who have received 'some money payable under customary or personal law' excludes Muslim women who are divorced. This unjust exception should be done away with.

(2) *Hindu Law*: Unlike criminal law where the wife's claim for maintenance depends on the husband's having sufficient means, under Hindu law, this right is absolute but is lost if the wife becomes unchaste. In assessing the amount of maintenance the Court takes into account the position and the status of the parties, the reasonable wants of the claimant and the obligations of the husband. It also judges the justification for the wife's living separately. This Act does not also limit the obligations of maintenance to the man only.

(3) *Muslim Law*: While maintenance of the wife is the highest obligation of the husband in Muslim law, the wife must be accessible to the husband and obey his reasonable commands. A divorced Muslim wife has no right to maintenance beyond three months. There is no justification for such a discrimination and we recommend that the right to maintenance should be extended to divorced Muslim wives.

(4) *Parsees and Christians*: The rights of maintenance for Parsees and Christians are very similar: both concede the right only to women. In fixing the quantum of maintenance, the courts bear in mind the husband's ability, the wife's own assets and the conduct of the parties. The Indian Divorce Act, 1869, which governs Christians gives discretion to the court to order the settlement of the wife's property for the benefit of the husband or the children if divorce has been obtained by the husband because of the wife's adultery. If the court has decreed damages to the husband against the adulteror, it may order the settlement of the whole or part of this amount for the benefit of the children or maintenance of the wife.

In order to minimize the hardship caused by non-payment of maintenance and to ensure certainty of payment, we recommend that all maintenance amounts should be deducted at the source by the employer as in the case of income-tax. Where this is not possible, arrears of maintenance should be recovered as arrears of land revenue or by distress as in the case of fines under the Criminal Procedure Code. The best solution lies in entrusting the entire question of maintenance to specialized courts like family courts which could take into consideration the incomes and degrees of financial dependence of both spouses in settling such matters.

#### V. INHERITANCE

The Indian Succession Act, 1925, which governs Christians, Jews, Parsees, and those married under the Special Marriage Act confers no restriction on the power of a person to will away his property; and the protection enjoyed by a Muslim widow to a share of the estate and by the Hindu widow for maintenance is denied to other widows under this law. It is desirable to place some restriction on the right of testation similar to that prevailing under Muslim law to prevent a widow from being left completely destitute.

The amended law provides that, in cases of intestate succession, the widow with no lineal descendant is entitled to the whole property if its value does not exceed Rs. 5,000 or to a charge of Rs. 5,000 in cases where it exceeds this amount. This provision is not extended to Indian Christians and Hindus, Buddhists, or Jains, succession to whose property is also governed by this Act. Since this provision gives rights to childless widows, its denial to these groups cannot be justified.

(2) *Christians in Kerala*: Christians in Kerala are governed by the Travancore Christian Succession Act, 1916, and the Cochin Christian Succession Act, 1921. Apart from multiplicity, these laws give only a life interest terminable on death or remarriage to a widow or mother inheriting immovable property. A daughter's right is limited to *Stridhanam*. Even in cases where she is entitled, she takes a much smaller share. We recommend immediate legislation to bring the Christian women of Kerala under the Indian Succession Act, 1925.

(3) *Christians of Goa and Pondicherry*: In Goa, the widow is relegated to the fourth position and is entitled to only fruits and agricultural commodities. In Pondicherry, the laws relegate a woman to an inferior position and do not regard her as full owner even in the few cases where she can inherit property. We recommend the extension of the Indian Succession Act, 1925, to these territories.

(4) *Parsee Law*: For intestate succession among Parsees, the rules of devolution of property of male and female intestates differ, resulting in discrimination against daughters and mothers. The son is entitled to an equal share in the mother's property along with a daughter but the daughter is not entitled to the same right to the father's property. There is no justification for such discrimination.

(5) *Hindu Law*: Pre-independence India had several systems of succession among Hindus, in most of which the position of women was one of dependence with barely any proprietary rights. Even where they enjoyed some rights, they had only a life interest and not full ownership. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956, made some radical changes, the most important being equal rights of succession between male and female heirs in the same category (brother and sister, son and daughter). It also simplified the law by abolishing the different system prevailing under the *Mitakshara* and *Dayabhaga* schools and extended the reformed law to persons in South India previously governed by the *Marumakkattayam*. Its greatest progressive feature is the recognition of the right of women to inherit and the abolition of the life estate of female heirs. The Class I heirs of a man who take the property in equal shares as absolute owners are the widow, the mother, son, daughter, widow of a predeceased son, and sons and daughters of predeceased sons or daughters.

Unfortunately, traditional resistance led to some compromises in the original intentions. For instance, the one major factor responsible for continuing the inequality between sons and daughters is the retention of the *Mitakshara* coparcenary, whose membership is confined only to males. A number of decisions and laws like the Hindu Women's right to Property Act and the Hindu Succession Act have made inroads in the concept of the coparcenary. The Hindu Code Bill, 1948, as amended by the Select Committee, had in fact suggested abolition of the copar-



cenary, *i.e.*, the male right by birth, but traditional resistance was too strong. The compromise which the law now incorporates ensures that the female heirs of a male member of the coparcenary get a share of his property which is demarcated by a notional partition. In consequence, the sons get a share of the father's property in addition to their own interest as coparceners. Under the Dayabhaga system, the daughters get equal shares with the brothers as there is no right by birth for sons. The right of a coparcener to renounce his share in the coparcenary and to transform his self-acquired property into joint family property is frequently used to negate or to reduce the share of a female heir. We therefore recommend the abolition of the male right by birth and the conversion of the Mitakshara coparcenary into a Dayabhaga one.

Section 4(2) of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, excludes the devolution of tenancy rights on agricultural holdings under State laws from the scope of the Act. This has led to the elimination of the beneficial effects of the Hindu Succession Act under the land legislation in many States. Some States do not have special provisions for succession to tenurial interest. The dominant conservative groups in some States have, however, successfully excluded widows and daughters without giving any particular economic justification for such laws. A typical example is the Uttar Pradesh Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1950, which is likely to apply to all agricultural land in that State in course of time. Similar discriminatory features are seen in some of the recent land ceiling laws adopted in different States, e.g., Karnataka, Punjab, or Madhya Pradesh. In order to achieve the social equality of women as also in the interests of uniformity, we recommend the abolition of Section 4(2) of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956.

Section 23 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, relating to the right of inheritance to a dwelling house has also resulted in some discrimination between unmarried, widowed, and married daughters. While supporting the main object of the section which asserts the primacy of the rights of the family against that of an individual and restricts partition, we are not happy about the invidious distinction between married and other daughters since the right of residence is restricted only to those daughters who are unmarried or widowed and are deserted by or separated from

their husbands. We therefore recommend the removal of this discrimination so that all daughters enjoy the same right.

The unrestricted right of testation often results in depriving female heirs of their rights of inheritance. We therefore recommend the restriction of this right under the Hindu Succession Act, 1956.

(6) *Muslim Law*: Muslim law, while recognizing the rights of women to inherit, discriminates between male and female heirs of the same degree, the share of the latter being half that of the former. We recommend legislation to give an equal share to the widow and the daughter along with sons as has been done in Turkey.

(7) *General*: We find that the medley of laws governing rights of inheritance of female heirs, not only of different communities, but even of female heirs of the same community, require immediate reform based on broad principles like equal rights of sons and daughters and widows, and restriction on the right of testation. We came across large numbers of women who were ignorant about their rights of inheritance and so conditioned that they opposed the idea of sisters depriving brothers of the property. The purpose of the consolidated and general law would therefore be defeated unless adequate publicity is given to its provisions and women are educated about their rights. In the absence of social security, and adequate opportunities for employment, rights of inheritance in property provide financial security and prevent destitution to women. While it is true that property rights will benefit only a limited section, there is no doubt that they will make women independent and help them to improve their status, effectively checking the feeling that women are a burden to the family.

#### VI. MATRIMONIAL PROPERTY

In the socio-economic situation prevailing in the country, the contribution of the wife to the family's economy is not recognized. A large number of them participate in the family's effort to earn a livelihood; and even when they do not do so, the economic value of their effort in running the house, assuming all domestic responsibilities, and thus freeing the husband for his avocation is not accepted in law, either directly or indirectly. Married women

who do not have an independent source of income or give up employment after marriage to devote all their time to family obligations are economically dependent on their husbands. In the majority of cases, movable and immovable property acquired during marriage is legally owned by the husband, since it is paid for out of his earnings. In case of divorce or separation, women without any earnings or savings of their own are deprived of all property which they acquire jointly. Even property received by them at the time of marriage from the husband or his family is denied to the women in some communities. The principle of determining ownership on the basis of financial contribution thus works inequitably against women; and the fear of financial and social insecurity prevents them from resorting to separation or divorce even when the marriages are unhappy. It is therefore necessary to give legal recognition to the economic value of the contribution made by the wife through house work for purposes of determining ownership of matrimonial property, instead of continuing the archaic test of actual financial contribution. We, therefore, recommend that, on divorce or separation, the wife should be entitled to at least one-third of the assets acquired at the time of and during the marriage.

#### VII. FAMILY COURTS

The statutory law in all matrimonial matters follows the adversary principle for giving relief, *i.e.*, the petitioner seeking relief alleges certain facts and the respondent refutes them. In addition, most of the grounds in these statutes are based on the 'fault principle' instead of on the breakdown theory. As a result, strong advocacy rather than family welfare is often the determining factor in these cases. The absence of distinction between matrimonial cases and other civil suits leads to inordinate delay which stands in the way of conciliation and further embitters the relationship of the parties. Conciliation, which ought to be the main consideration in all family matters, is not the guiding principle in the statutes dealing with them. We therefore strongly recommend the abandonment of the established adversary system for settlement of family problems, and the establishment of family courts which will adopt conciliatory methods and informal procedure in order to achieve socially desirable results.

#### VIII. UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

The absence of a uniform civil code even 27 years after independence is an incongruity which cannot be justified, especially in view of all the emphasis that is placed on secularism, science, and modernization. The continuance of various personal laws which discriminate between men and women violates the Fundamental Rights and the Preamble to the Constitution which promises equality of status to all citizens. It is also against the spirit of national integration and secularism.

Our recommendations regarding amendments of existing laws are only indicators of the direction in which uniformity has to be achieved. We also recommend expeditious implementation of the constitutional directive of Article 44 by the adoption of a uniform Civil Code.

#### IX. REFORM IN CRIMINAL LAW

(1) *Consent to Sexual Intercourse*: Consent to sexual intercourse is strictly interpreted and excludes consent given by the woman under duress or fraud. It should also exclude consent obtained by threatening someone else in the presence of the woman, as recommended by the Law Commission. In our view, consent to have sexual intercourse requires more maturity than to have an abortion. The same age limit should therefore be applied in both cases. We recommend that the age of consent (below which a girl's consent to sexual intercourse is not legal) should be 18, permitting some degree of flexibility to the court in border-line cases to decide whether or not the girl is mature enough.

(2) *Bigamy*: The present law restricts jurisdiction of the court to the place where the bigamous marriage was performed or where the husband and wife last resided. This causes difficulties to the wife who may have to move away after being abandoned by her husband. We recommend that, in addition to the two jurisdictions under the Criminal Procedure Code, provision should be made for inquiry and trial for bigamy in a court within whose jurisdiction the wife is residing.

(3) *Adultery*: Adultery, in our opinion, should be regarded only as a matrimonial offence, the remedy for which may be sought in divorce or separation. Retention of this as a criminal

offence brings out clearly the values of the last century which regarded the wife as the husband's property. It also prevents lawyers and others from giving necessary help to an oppressed wife. We recommend that continuing to regard adultery as a criminal offence is against the dignity of an individual and should be removed from the Penal Code.

#### X. NATIONALITY

In the absence of any provision in the Citizenship Act, 1955, for dealing with the case of Indian women marrying foreigners, many of them have become stateless. We recommend that the Act be amended to provide a special rule for Indian women marrying aliens to the effect that she will in no case lose her Indian nationality as a result of her marriage to a foreigner.

The present rule prevents the children of Indian women who have married aliens from being considered as Indian citizens. Where the father and mother are separated and the mother is the guardian, there is no justification for the rule that the child's nationality will be transmitted through the father. We, therefore, recommend the amendment of section 4(1) of the Citizenship Act, 1955, to read as follows: 'A person born outside India on or after the 26th of January, 1950, shall be a citizen of India by descent if his father or mother is a citizen of India at the time of his birth.'

## CHAPTER V

### ROLES, RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

#### INTRODUCTORY

ANY APPRAISAL of women's economic roles and their opportunities for participation in economic activities cannot be done in isolation of the society's stage of development, the socio-cultural attitudes towards women's role in the family and in the wider society, and the social ideology concerning basic components of status. At certain stages of development, capacity for work may provide the highest claim to status. But when society becomes inegalitarian, leisure may substitute work as the indicator of status.

The debate regarding women's economic role and the need for equality of rights and opportunities for economic participation centres round three arguments:

(1) That women's economic subjugation or dependence leads to exploitation and is a denial of social justice and human rights. Both Karl Marx and Mahatma Gandhi opposed the rigid distinction between men's and women's roles from this standpoint.

(2) That the development of a society requires full participation by all sections of the population, and opportunities for full development of the potentialities of women. This is the keynote of the U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

(3) That modern trends in demographic and social changes, e.g., rising age of marriage, smaller families, urbanization, migration, rising costs, and standards of living and calls for greater participation in decision-making are introducing major changes in women's roles and responsibilities. A social crisis would result if women are unable to meet these challenges because of social handicaps.

The opposition to increasing women's economic activities springs from (1) the conservative view that women's roles must be confined within rigidly defined limits (patterns of this division of labour between sexes have varied, not only between but even within societies) and (2) the fear that chronic unemployment may result if women enter the labour market on a large scale. This results in theories of women's 'marginal' role in the economy. The theory is, however, inapplicable to agrarian societies where the family is the unit of production, and men, women, and children, all participate in the production process. Transition from traditional agricultural and household industry to modern organized industry and services, and from rural to urban areas, destroys the traditional division of labour, and substitutes the competitive relationship between individuals as units of labour for the complementary one of the family. Technological changes in production methods call for new skills. Women, handicapped by lack of opportunities to acquire these new skills, find themselves unwanted by the new economy.

This is the situation that the large masses of Indian women face today. Among cultivators, the artisans and those performing menial services in the traditional village economy, women played a distinctive and accepted role in both production and marketing, and continue to do so wherever the traditional economic forms prevail, particularly among marginal and landless agriculturists, most scheduled castes and tribal communities, and traditional industries and crafts like weaving, basket-making, and food processing (by hand). Though there are regional variations in the norms governing women's work, a traditional upper class norm—that of excluding women from labour outside the family—still remains a status symbol, and is often emulated by many who want to enhance their social status.

#### DECLINING ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE INDIAN ECONOMY

The forces which have most affected the role of women in the Indian economy are: the general decline of handicrafts; increasing pressure of population on agriculture; increase of poverty in the rural sector resulting in migration; development of modern industry with its increasing technological advance; the spread of education; and the increasing cost of living, particularly in

urban areas. In the initial phase of industrial development, textiles and jute (the earliest industries) as well as plantations and mines continued the traditional pattern of family participation and employed large number of women and children, confining them to certain unskilled and semi-skilled types of work at lower rates of wages. Technological changes have since affected the employment of women in these industries adversely. At the same time, the decay of village industries has thrown more and more women on agriculture for their livelihood, increasing their numbers and percentage but reducing their levels of employment. On the other hand, rising costs of living, education, and social change in the urban areas have led to the withdrawal of taboos that earlier affected women of the higher classes and have enabled some of them to enter new professions or occupations in the tertiary sector which were closed to them earlier.

Because of this differential impact of development, a macro-analysis of women's economic participation purely in quantitative terms cannot tell the whole story. Any appraisal of women's economic roles has to be separated for specific segments, differentiated by socio-economic and locational characteristics as well as by their degree to adjustment to the economic process. The greatest difficulty in understanding the problems of women's participation has thus been caused by looking at women workers as a homogeneous group. This assumption has influenced the collection of data, the laws and the policies adopted to improve conditions of women workers, and also the popularly held notions about women's participation in the economy.

A macro-analysis reveals that women's economic participation has been declining since 1921, both in percentage of workers to total female population and in their percentage to the total labour force. While the total number of women workers declined from 41.8 million in 1911 to 31.2 million in 1971, their percentage in the total labour force declined from 34.44% in 1911 to 17.35% in 1971. The percentage of women workers to the total female population declined from 33.73% in 1911 to 11.86% in 1971. This decline has been even more precipitous in recent years. During 1961-71, while the male and female populations increased by 25% and 24% respectively (20% and 21% in the working age group) and the number of men workers increased by 15.2%, women workers declined by 41.4%.

It is often argued that this decline is the result of changes in the definition of workers adopted by these two censuses. It is a fact that the census basically measures the level of employment of men and tends to ignore the interchangeable roles of women as house-wives and gainful workers. Since many of them are unpaid family workers, exclusion of secondary activity from the definition of workers affects the recording of female employment adversely. As many as 2.3 million such women were recorded as non-workers in the Census of 1971, which does not really make a substantial difference. On the other hand, the generally held view that the 1961 definition was very liberal has been found to have not made much difference in the collection of data except in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Besides, the female activity rate of 27.5% reported by the 1961 Census agrees with the rate of 27.72% reported by the comparable round of the National Sample Survey of the same year. We therefore think that the impact of changing definitions is only marginal and that the declining participation trend of women has been a continuous one.

The ratio of female to male workers has declined in all categories in the rural and in most categories in the urban areas. The participation rates of men and women differ widely in all age groups except the youngest (0 to 14), the difference in urban areas being much higher than in rural areas. The decline from 1961 is clear in all the age groups. This overall decline in the percentage of women workers is visible in all States for both rural and urban areas but is sharper in the urban areas. The distribution of women workers in the nine industrial categories adopted by the census shows their increasing dependence on agriculture and a decline in both the industrial and the service sectors.

#### CATEGORIES OF WOMEN WORKERS

Our investigations showed that the Census categories are not really useful for a proper assessment either of the nature and extent of women's participation in the economy or of their problems and disabilities. We, therefore, classified women workers into two broad categories according to the degree of 'organization' and nature of problems of their sectors of employment,

viz., the unorganized and the organized sectors. The difference between these two is not functional, as between agriculture, industry, and services, because these functions may be found in both the sectors. The real difference between them lies in the organization of productive relations, the degree of penetration of public control and regulation, and recognition by data-collecting agencies and scientific investigators.

The organized sector is characterized by modern relations of production and is regulated by laws that seek to protect the security and working conditions of labour as well as by labour organizations that can engage in collective bargaining. This includes the entire public sector of services and industry, as well as that part of the private sector which is regulated. The unorganized sector, which includes agriculture as well as various industries and services, is characterized by the absence of all these protective measures and machinery. Information about socio-economic conditions and work opportunities in this sector is also exceedingly scanty. The status of women workers in India is obvious from the fact that 94% of them are found in the unorganized sector leaving only 6% in the organized sector.

#### I. WOMEN IN THE UNORGANIZED SECTOR

##### *General*

The gradual commercialization and modernization of the economy and the efforts made by government to replace traditional by modern institutions of credit and marketing, to stabilize ownership of land and to maintain minimum wages have by no means succeeded in organizing the production relations or in controlling the degree of exploitation of the weaker sections, either in agriculture or in non-agricultural occupations in this sector. Nor have they solved the problems of low productivity, poverty, unemployment, and under-employment. The impact of this intermixture has been greater on women whose wages are uniformly lower than those of men, even within the lower wage structure in this sector. A large number of them are unpaid family workers whose contribution to the family's earnings is not always recognized. Various estimates indicate that they form 15-17% of the male labour force and 41-49% of the female labour force. While relatively more information is available on agricultural

workers, there is practically no reliable information on non-agricultural occupations. The census classification of workers by primary activity ignores the overlapping nature of agricultural and non-agricultural occupations and the seasonal and fluctuating nature of these occupations.

In spite of the difficulties in estimating employment, unemployment, and under-employment in this sector, the Committee on Unemployment found women to be a greater victim of both unemployment and under-employment. The number of unemployed women in rural areas was estimated to be 4.5 million as against 3.2 million males in 1971. Women constitute nearly 60% of the rural and 56% of the total unemployed in the country. As this estimate takes into account only persons recorded as 'seeking work', the actual number of unemployed women will be much higher, since there is a large number who need employment, but do not seek it in the absence of employment opportunities, information, and training. Similarly, the number of under-employed women becomes higher than that of men when the hours of work available to them during a week is 22 to 28 hours—in both rural and urban areas. When the hours of work are less, their proportion is less than men.

The basic problems that affect women's roles and opportunities for employment in this sector spring from their helplessness, dependence, caused by lack of adequate employment opportunities, limited skills and illiteracy, restricted mobility, and lack of autonomous status. The occupational status of the woman worker is linked to that of her husband or father, particularly in rural areas. The lack of control over productive resources and a persistent gap between consumption and expenditure, leading to perpetual indebtedness, deprive them of all bargaining power and occupational mobility.

No reliable data are available for estimating the number and proportion of women below the poverty line. But the higher level of unemployment and under-employment has led us to conclude that their proportion is likely to be higher than that of men. Components of this vast group are the unskilled workers, landless agricultural labourers, members of households with uneconomic holdings, and those in traditional menial jobs. A large number of them are engaged in traditional village and cottage industries. We received reports of increasing destitution

among women from various quarters though no reliable data are available.

The special disabilities that characterize the rights and opportunities for women's economic participation are more predominant in the unorganized sector and will require special attention and remedial measures, since structural changes in the economy which may reduce the share of this sector can at best be regarded as a very distant objective.

#### *Agriculture*

According to the Census of 1971, 80.1% of women workers are in agriculture, constituting 87% of the female work force in rural areas and 17.5% in urban areas.

(1) *Decline in Employment Opportunities:* The system of land relations and labour utilization is closely inter-connected with the hierarchic structure of the village community where status is linked with land, caste, and economic power. The census classifies agricultural workers into only two categories, ignoring the various intermediate categories of both cultivators and labourers, viz., absentee land-owners; lease holders; tenants of different categories including share-croppers and marginal farmers; casual, daily wage labourers; and attached workers—both contracted and bonded. It is difficult to clearly demarcate these categories because of a process of movement from one to the other through changes in their income position, land values, rates of return, and degrees of indebtedness. While there is a certain degree of upward mobility among a very small minority, caused by improved productivity, rising land values and ownership, increasing pressure of growing families on small holdings, and indebtedness leading to loss of land, makes the general pattern of change a downward one for the majority.

The impact of this process is visible from the sharp decline in women cultivators from 18.3 millions in 1951 to 9.2 millions in 1971. This can be attributed to increasing pauperisation leading to loss of land, and inadequate growth of productive employment opportunities on family farms leading to withdrawal of women from active cultivation. The increase in the number of women agricultural labourers from 12.6 millions in 1951 to 15.7 millions in 1971, a shift from less than one-third to more than

half of the total women work force, is the greatest indicator of increasing poverty and decline in the level of employment, and not of increasing opportunities. The First (1950-51) and the Second (1956-57) Agricultural Labour Enquiry and Rural Labour Enquiry (1964-65) and some intensive studies of rural households (1967-70) show that the level of female unemployment is considerably higher than that of males.

(2) *Wage Discrimination*: The low rates of wage for the women farm labour are due to the unorganized nature of employment, the ease with which hired labour can be substituted by family labour, the seasonal nature of the demand for labour, and the traditional classification of certain jobs as the monopoly of women. The machinery for wage fixation, and enforcement of minimum wages fixed under the Minimum Wages Act, is not uniform; and many areas have still not been brought within the ambit of the Act. Farm labourers, particularly women who are handicapped by poverty, illiteracy, ignorance of the law, and the casual nature of employment, are not able to employ methods now common to industrial labour. The wage fixing machinery in some States maintains wage differentials between men and women for the same operations, and prescribes lower rates for the jobs traditionally done by women. Another factor contributing to low wages for women is the practice of identifying a workday as equivalent of 7-9 hours. Women reporting even half an hour late because of domestic responsibilities are paid wages for half a day only.

Though its enforcement is inadequate, the Minimum Wages Act has helped to reduce wage discrimination and some State Governments, e.g. Bihar, have recently stopped prescribing different rates for some jobs.

(3) *Disabilities and Exploitation*: The decline of village and cottage industries and the consequent loss of alternative employment as well as skills, has resulted in occupational immobility—a disability for women. The rural works programmes may meet short-term needs, but their impact is not continuous, either in maintaining a steady level of employment or in generating new skills.

Women agricultural workers prefer to seek employment in their own village or within a short distance from home. Apart from the voluntary reasons for this restricted mobility which is due to socio-psychological reasons and family responsibilities,

the decision is involuntary for many of them, because of the status of their husband or sons as attached labour.

The vulnerability of a woman becomes still greater when her husband is reduced to the status of bonded labour. The National Commission on Labour admitted that this system grew out of acute indigence and helplessness of tribal and semi-tribal communities in the grip of a precarious subsistence economy. There was a combination of reasons for the depression of this class like uneconomic holdings, tenurial insecurity, high incidence of rent, inadequacy of loans from institutional sources, coupled with the problem of wide gap between consumption and income. It was brought to our notice that the system of bonded labour sometimes led to various forms of exploitation of women. Some recent studies in the hill regions of U.P. revealed a close relationship between the incidence of bonded labour and trafficking in women from such families.

Although it is difficult to establish a quantified relationship between social status and economic position in the agricultural system, there are indicators to show that a large proportion of women agricultural labourers are drawn from the socially depressed communities of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. In 1961, 42.9% of women workers of the former and 21.33% of the latter were agricultural labourers.

Another problem that affects women's participation in agriculture is the introduction of modern methods of cultivation which is resulting in a gradual displacement of women and shrinking of their activities. This is due to the biased approach of agricultural extension workers, who teach new methods to men only, thus precipitating changes which will have an adverse effect on women.

The basic solution for the exploitation of agricultural workers lies in redistribution of land, but legislation for this purpose has been grossly ineffective so far. What is worse, some of the land ceiling laws discriminate against women. In the ceiling laws of Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, and Karnataka, while a major son is entitled to a unit of land outside the family ceiling, no such provision is made for a major daughter, married or unmarried. Side by side, agricultural labour needs to be organized to improve its bargaining power and to prevent exploitation and low wages.

*Non-Agricultural Occupations*

Except for some rough estimates based on the 1961 census, no reliable information is available regarding the volume of employment and characteristics of this amorphous group, employed in the unregulated industries and services. These widely scattered and small establishments, with low capital investment, include the traditional village and cottage industries, household and small-scale industries, and unregulated services like sweepers, scavengers or domestic servants. The industries suffer from poor techniques, low productivity, and inadequacy of institutional credit. The decline of domestic and small-scale industries as a consequence of unequal competition from factory production started much earlier, but data regarding women's participation in household industries are available only for the 1961 and 1971 censuses. During this decade, the number of women in household industry declined from 4.6 millions to 1.3 millions. In the absence of any reliable data about employment in other small-scale enterprises and unorganized services, our estimate of the number of women engaged in this sector is only deductive. Out of 31 million women returned as workers by the 1971 census, 25 millions were in agriculture and about two millions in the organized sector. We have, therefore, estimated that the remaining four millions were in non-agricultural occupations in the unorganised sector and suffered from insecurity of employment, lack of standard minimum wages, excessive hours of work, and absence of any welfare amenities. Their helplessness stems from their lack of organization and failure of the public regulatory services to protect them. The women who work at home for various industries are even more vulnerable to various forms of exploitation. The minimum wages formulated for certain scheduled employments in these industries remain unenforced. Recent attempts by government to regulate working conditions in this sector through the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970, or the Bidi and Cigarette (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966, and the various State Acts to regulate conditions of employment in shops and commercial establishments, can only be effective with strong labour organizations and a vigilant enforcement machinery.

The disabilities of women in these industries are manifest in the illiteracy, helpless dependence on intermediaries to obtain

employment and ignorance of agencies or laws which can give them protection and a fair deal. The variety in the pattern of organization of these industries (which range from workshops to individuals working in their homes with short duration of employment and a high rate of turnover) present difficulties in organizing or even identifying the different types of labour. Their subsistence level of living and indebtedness to the employers or contractors make them vulnerable to all forms of exploitation.

In the absence of any systematic or comprehensive study, we could only attempt an analysis of some of the special problems of the wage-paid and self-employed women in this sector through a few illustrations given in the paragraphs that follow.

(1) *Construction Industry*: The construction industry which employs a large number of women as contract labour provides a typical illustration of the conditions of these workers, mostly employed as unskilled manual labour. Two studies initiated by us in Bihar and Delhi reported wage discrimination, deferred payment, unexplained fines and deductions generally made by the contractors or sub-contractors as well as a high degree of indebtedness of the workers to these persons. The women are mostly drawn from the rural poor and their earnings constitute the major share of the families' income. Nearly 80% of the sample were young women below 35 who began their working life as wage labourers early in childhood, and 98% were illiterate. Most of them were married in childhood. Infant mortality is very high and in the absence of maternity relief or minimal health facilities, coupled with continuous malnutrition, the life expectancy of these workers remains low. The study has discovered that, in spite of commitments made by the contractors to government regarding fair wages, housing, and sanitary services as well as welfare facilities like creches, little attempt is made to provide these. Government, which insisted on these conditions in the contract, has not also provided any enforcing agency.

(2) *Bidi Industry*: The bidi industry is notorious among the most sweated industries in the country. The Committee was appalled by the conditions of women and children working both in workshops and in their homes. Their wages are frequently cut through various devices. While welcoming the recent judgement of the Supreme Court making the provisions of the Bidi and Cigarette Act and provision of maternity relief applicable to



the home workers, we feel that a special machinery has to be created for the purpose because, without it, it will be impossible to implement this decision effectively.

(3) *The Chikan Industry:* About 97% of these workers are women and they include contract workers (95.8%), self-employed-cum-contract workers (3.6%), and a handful of direct employees (0.5%), mainly recruited through intermediaries. The workers are mainly illiterate Muslim women, whose seclusion provides a reason for their dependence on intermediaries. The majority of these workers live below the poverty line. A large number are widowed or deserted women supporting their families. The intermediaries who control both production and marketing are traditional money-lenders. The wholesalers' margin of profits ranges between 60 and 70%. The difference between wages paid by government agencies and those by wholesalers ranges from 20 to 30%. The women interviewed by us complained of frequent cuts in their wages, not only by the ordinary intermediaries, but even by cooperatives and voluntary organizations which marketed their products. Their desire to become self-employed is defeated by lack of capital, education and the inaccessibility of the market which is now highly commercialized.\*

(4) *Self-employment:* The commercialization of production and marketing and the rise of intermediaries have caused hardships to a large number of women who were self-employed earlier either as producers or as retailers. The rapid increase in unemployment has recently led to emphasis on the need to promote self-employment and government is providing assistance through training and credit facilities. In our experience, self-employment is successful only where women are in a position to market their own products as in Manipur where this is institutionalized through the women's market. Whenever they get dependent on intermediaries for this purpose, their returns are very meagre. The efforts of welfare organizations to develop self-employment in the production of processed food, handicrafts, garments, etc., frequently fail through lack of control over the marketing system. Handicapped by illiteracy, lack of resources and ignorance of

\*The full Report of the Committee gives similar illustrations regarding sweepers and scavengers, domestic servants, workers in readymade garment industry, casual or daily wage earners, etc. They have not, however, been reproduced here for reasons of space.

modern marketing methods and techniques of sales promotion, women's efforts at self-employment cannot produce good results. Credit agencies like banks often discriminate against women as they are considered poor risks. In our opinion, a programme for generating self-employment among women has to be based on an integrated network of training, production, and marketing and should be designed in relation to local resources and marketing potential. The present programmes tend to display an urban bias and cannot meet the employment needs of the large masses of women in villages and small towns.

## II. WOMEN IN THE ORGANIZED SECTOR

### *General*

This sector includes all public sector establishments and non-agricultural private sector establishments employing 10 or more persons. It is governed by various laws and regulations and detailed information regarding workers is collected regularly by the Ministry of Labour. The number of women employed in this sector has increased from 1.37 millions in 1962 to 2.14 millions in 1973, *i.e.*, an increase of 56.2%. While this increase was faster than the total increase of employment in this sector, women's proportion in the total employment has remained practically constant at 11% during this period. The size of this sector has been steadily growing. Women employed formed only 6% of the total women workers in 1971, 2.7% being in industry and 3.3% in the services and professions. The number of women employed in the public sector increased by 110.4%, but in the private sector this increase was only of 26.9%. Women's proportion in the public sector has increased from 35% to 47% while their share in the private sector has declined from 65% to 52.8% during this period. The share of public sector employment is provided by State Governments, local bodies, and public undertakings. Their position in the Central Government is not very satisfactory.

### *Industry*

Though total employment in factories has been increasing steadily, women's employment in this sector has decreased since

1964, their share being reduced from 11.43% in 1951 to 9.1% in 1971, *i.e.*, a decline of 21.7%. In mines, the number of women declined from 109,000 to 75,000 during 1951 and 1971 whereas total employment increased from 549,000 to 630,000. The women's share of employment declined from 21.1% to 11.9%, *i.e.*, a decline of 47.4%, the heaviest decline being in coal mines, from 55,000 to 2,000. Plantations, which require female labour for specific purposes, provide the only sector where women's employment has remained steady or has increased slightly during this period (in tea plantations, their numbers increased from 250,000 to 270,000 between 1954 and 1962, representing an increase from 46.1% to 49.2% of the labour force in these plantations. Similar marginal increases have taken place in coffee and rubber plantations also.

The declining trend of women's employment in industries and mines is generally attributed to the adverse effects of protective labour laws for women, the policy of equalizing wages and structural changes in the economy leading to modernization and rationalization of production methods. We have examined the validity of these assumptions in considerable detail with actual cases of specific industries. In our view, the first two assumptions are invalid and stem from an attempt to justify non-employment of women. It has been found that the provision of maternity benefits or welfare amenities like creches and separate sanitary facilities required by the law for women permanent workers constitutes a negligible expenditure in the budget of an establishment. Besides, in areas covered by the Employees' State Insurance Scheme, maternity benefits are no longer a burden on employers. A study done by the ILO as well as the National Commission on Labour dismissed the argument that the reason for retrenchment of women in industries was due to the cost of maternity benefits. Similarly, the argument that the ban on night work has adversely affected women's employment can apply only to a few industries which have adopted a multiple shift system. We came across two distinct views in this regard. Some employers and a few representatives of trade unions suggested that permission to extend the period up to 10 P.M., if made available to all industries, would enable women's employment on two shifts and remove the present excuse for retrenching them. The other point of view, expressed by trade unions, labour officials, and

experts, stated that most operations in which women are engaged, even in industries like textiles, are performed during the day. Since permission to extend the period of work up to 10 P.M. is provided by State Governments to specific industries on request, there is little doubt that this legal restriction does not constitute a serious obstacle to women's employment. While the ban on hazardous occupations, particularly the lifting of weights, has, to a certain extent, affected the employment of women in the jute industry, the view that the ban on underground work is the primary factor responsible for decline in women's employment in mines cannot be accepted, since the reduction in the number of women workers in mines began long before this law was enacted.

Official agencies admit that no assessment has been done as to the extent to which the equal pay principle has resulted in the displacement of women workers. After examination of different industries we however came to the conclusion that the principle of equalization has not been seriously applied in most industries which continue to maintain wage differentials by direct or indirect methods. Evidence for this is available in the Occupational Wage Surveys conducted by the Ministry of Labour, indicating differences in the minimum, maximum, and average earnings of women in most industries. Though the Survey reported that employers evade this principle by not employing men and women for the same jobs in the same establishment, we found such differentials even within the same establishments in some cases. A more successful method for evading this principle is by restricting women to certain jobs and prescribing lower wage rates for them. A study initiated by us covering a sample of 200 undertakings in the public and the private sectors revealed the concentration of women at the lower levels of the production process in mostly unskilled and semi-skilled work. They were found at the skilled level only in some engineering, pharmaceutical, electronics, and textile industries. In the public sector, women are found at supervisory level in some of the highly technical industries like electricals, telecommunications, etc. But in the private sector, they are conspicuous by their absence at the supervisory level. Restricting women to a few limited types of occupations is the manifestation of (1) prevailing social attitudes regarding their aptitudes; (2) resistance of employers; (3) denial

of training opportunities in higher skills to women; and (4) the ignorance of most women regarding opportunities open to them. There is no definite policy or criteria for determining jobs as suitable or unsuitable for women. Wage discrimination is maintained on grounds of the low productivity of women without any scientific appraisal of their capacity. Only in a few industries, mainly in the public sector, did we come across any system of scientific assessment of women's aptitude and productivity in particular jobs.

After examining the situation in the particular industries where the decline in women's employment has been most substantial, viz., the textiles, jute, and mines, we find that the most important factor contributing towards this decline is the extent and nature of modernization methods. Industries which have adopted a higher capital intensive technology resulting in displacement of labour have found it easier to displace women rather than men. They have justified this on the ground that women lack skills and are illiterate and unwilling to learn new processes. While a chance for on-the-job training is generally denied to women, there is evidence to show that wherever such training has been provided, women have proved themselves capable of acquiring new skills and a few have even proved to have greater aptitude than men (e.g., in some of the new industries). In the more labour-intensive industries like plantations, there has been no displacement of women though wage differentials are still maintained, due purely to social prejudices. We can not also accept the common argument about the traditionalism of women in matters of dress and occupations, as it is non-applicable to modern industrial workers whose exposure to urban influence and the mass media have made them much less traditional than the industrial workers at the beginning of the century.

Apart from illiteracy, ignorance regarding alternative job opportunities and absence of training opportunities, the decline in women's employment is also due to the rising level of general unemployment in the country. Their restricted mobility has also affected women's competitiveness. These problems will require special attention and consideration from government, employers, and trade unions.

### *Services and Professions*

The immediate factors responsible for the emergence of women in non-traditional services and professions in the post-independence period are:

- (1) Constitutional guarantee of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity in matters of employment;
- (2) Development of women's education and their subsequent entry into areas of education and employment hitherto monopolized by men;
- (3) A gradual change in social values relating to women's paid employment among the urban middle class, due to growing economic pressure; and
- (4) Expansion of the tertiary sector as a direct consequence of development in the post-independence period.

In the public sector, the number of women employees in the categories of professional, technical, and related workers including teachers, has been continuously rising since 1960, although their proportion to total employees has remained more or less constant. The number of women as administrative, executive, and managerial workers, which increased from 10,000 in 1960 to 12,000 in 1966, showed a downward trend in 1968. In the category of clerical and related workers, the number of women has gone up from 37,000 in 1960 to 79,000 in 1968. Their proportion to total workers in the same period has gone up from 4.2 to 7.6%. The number of women workers in transport, storage, and communications has remained steady. But in services, sports, and recreation, their number has gone up from 5,000 to 13,000 during 1960-68 (from 1.1% to 2.4%). In this category, however, the majority of women were working as maids, cooks, house-keepers, cleaners, and sweepers. The number of women unskilled office workers has declined from 25,000 to 16,000.

In the private sector, the categories where both the number and proportion of women workers has shown a steady increase are: clerical and related workers, service, sports and recreation workers and primary and middle school teachers. There was a general slump in the employment of women in all categories in 1963. This decline was more marked among administrative, executive and managerial workers (from 5,000 to 1,000), and

professional, technical and related workers (from 55,000 to 31,000). Some of the new industries, like advertising, market research, hotel management, and cottage industries are employing women in the management cadre. The traditional industries have not yet accepted women at this level.

While it is difficult to give a correct statistical profile of women in services and professions, a review of the available data does indicate a change in the occupational pattern and two trends are clearly visible: (a) The concentration of women in the professions of teaching and medicine; and (b) recognition of certain low prestige jobs in the clerical services as particularly suited to women.

(1) *Teachers*: In 1970, only 17% of the professional, technical, and related workers were women, of which three-fourths were teachers. Among the scientists, social scientists formed the major section, as research and social work are emerging as new occupations suitable for women. The ratios of women to men in selected professions are: physicians and surgeons 7.1%; lawyers 1.2%; teachers 30.3%; nursing and other health technicians 72.2%; and scientists 10.9%.

Primary schools account for 71% of women teachers, followed by secondary (21%). This concentration of women in teaching represents both opportunity and preferences. In the prevailing social ethos, a long-term professional training for women needed for professions like engineering, medicine, etc., is still accessible to a small minority in the upper middle class. Teaching is approved by society for women as they can easily combine their home roles with it.

(2) *Doctors*: In 1967-68, the medical work force of 120,000 doctors included 12,000 women. While the number of qualified women doctors is 25 per hundred men, according to the 1971 census (1% sample data), the ratio of women physicians and surgeons employed is only 6.1 per 100 men. This indicates under-utilization of women doctors and also their migration to other countries for employment. Since the majority of their clients are women, most women doctors specialize in obstetrics and gynaecology, though they have recently entered other fields like paediatrics, surgery, pathology, or radiology. About 20-40% of them are concentrated in urban areas.

(3) *Nurses*: There has been great expansion in the number

of nurses, midwives, and health visitors during the past two decades. In spite of government's assurances, the discrimination against married women in this profession still continues, particularly in the army, which neither recruits them nor provides maternity benefits to married nurses and doctors.

(4) *Lawyers*: While the number of women lawyers has increased, only one has been appointed a High Court Judge. Women lawyers complain of lack of opportunities in the judiciary.

(5) *Social Workers*: This new profession has emerged after independence. The majority of professionally trained social workers are employed in institutions and departments engaged in social welfare—both public and voluntary. According to a study in 1968, there were 3,153 social work graduates whose number is estimated to have increased to 6,000 by 1971. In the sample covered by the study, 30% were women. Women find employment in this profession with greater ease than men, because their personal inclination for this profession makes them less selective about the type of employment and because more of them specialize in primary social work and community organization. Men in this profession tend to concentrate on labour and industrial relations, job opportunities in which are not adequate. In spite of the large number of women in this profession only a few of them hold key posts.

(6) *Clerical and Related Jobs*: All available data indicate that jobs as receptionists, clerks, stenographers, and typists are absorbing more and more educated women. Data collected from various Ministries and other agencies of the Central Government showed the largest concentration of women at the level of Class III, i.e., ministerial and related staff. The increase in the number of women at this level has been much faster than at any other level of the public services. One interesting trend visible from the replies from the Ministries is that the scientific Ministries, e.g., Atomic Energy, Department of Science, and Culture and Education and Social Welfare have employed more women at different levels, while the older Ministries like Home Affairs, Finance, Railways, or the economic Ministries have engaged very few women. The replies received from 200 undertakings from the public and the private sectors also indicate a concentration of women in clerical work. In the public sector, the proportion of women in clerical work outstrips their proportion at the production level.

While their presence at the managerial level is negligible in the private sector, a few women have achieved these positions in the public sector.

(7) *Central Services*: In the Central Services which give equal opportunity to women candidates to compete, there is a steady increase. In the IAS/IPS/IFS examinations, the ratio of women to men, recommended for appointment, has improved from 1:81.6 in 1960 to 1: 7.6 in 1972. But in the other services, *viz.*, the Indian Economic Service, Statistical Service, and the Engineering Service, their proportion remains very low. We were unofficially informed that of the ten Class I Services of the Railway Ministry, women are accepted only in Accounts and Medical Services and have been denied the opportunity to enter the traffic or other services.

An important issue concerning women in Central Services came up in regard to the constitutional validity of Rule 5(3) of the IAS Recruitment Rules which empowered government to demand the resignation of a married woman officer on grounds of efficiency. This rule was cited by a pharmaceutical concern before the Supreme Court in 1967 in defence of its own service rule which terminated the services of women employees automatically on marriage. The Court, while striking down the rule in the said concern, upheld the IAS rule, which was, however, deleted in 1972 in response to representations from some women officers.

Disparities in the proportion of women at higher levels of responsibility are due to both prejudices and discriminatory recruitment policies, as well as to lack of career-orientation and commitment on the part of women. Many private concerns and even a few in the public sector, in response to our questionnaire, admitted that they do not recruit women at the managerial level as a matter of policy.

While there is no doubt that opportunities for women have widened in the tertiary sector it has to be remembered that part of this is the reflection of the rapid growth of the tertiary sector in general and the public sector in particular because of the expanded role of government at all levels of the development process in recent years. With increasing constraints of resources, the growth of this non-productive sector will inevitably slow down considerably in the near future. Since most of the increase in opportunities for women's employment has taken place in this

sector, there is a possibility that the slowing down of its growth will result in the reduction of women's employment. Unless opportunities for women develop in the productive sectors it will not be possible either to arrest the declining trends or to reduce the present imbalance, in women's employment.

#### IV. INFRA-STRUCTURE

The sector-wise examination of women's employment trend indicates that the major forces affecting women's employment stem from structural changes within the economy as a whole (from a traditional to a modern market economy, from a *laissez-faire* to deliberate planned development, from unorganized to organized production, from unregulated to regulated relations of production, or from labour to capital intensive technology), and from the intensification of socio-economic inequalities. As women are a vulnerable group with fewer opportunities, they have been affected more adversely than men. Whether this situation improves or is aggravated further depends upon the level and extent of the infra-structure provided. This will include education, vocational, and technical training, and several important special measures to adjust women's employment to their special needs as housewives and mothers and to prevent discrimination and exploitation. The more important of these have been discussed in the paragraphs that follow:

##### *Education*

The complexity of modern methods of production, investment, marketing, and planning call for a higher level of knowledge and skills and increases the importance of education. The post-independence expansion of educational opportunities, as already pointed out, was relatively lower among women, particularly at the primary and secondary level. Secondary and higher education was practically confined to the urban middle class. The number of illiterate women outnumbered the men greatly and increased in absolute numbers. This pattern of educational development inevitably affected their economic opportunities. While employment opportunities for educated women increased, there was a negative trend in the participation rate of illiterate

and semi-literate women whose share in employment declined. Between 1961 and 1971, work participation rate of illiterate women dropped from 81.1% to 65.8% in urban areas and from 95.6% to 92.1% in rural areas. This is not an indication of the rising level of education among workers, because education has failed to penetrate in any significant manner the large mass of illiterate adult women who come from the poorest section of the population where employment is a dire necessity. On the other hand, this change in the educational composition of the women work force indicates the displacement of this section of women mainly from unorganized and organized industries and other non-agricultural occupations. At the same time, the growing demand for modern technical skills is reflected in the increased participation rate of technical diploma holders from 0.6% to 2.3%. The majority of technically qualified women are, however, found to be employed, only 2.1% being self-employed. Among degree holders and technical personnel, only 5.4% are self-employed, 58% are employed in the public sector, and 36.6% in the private sector.

Women with qualifications in medicine and teaching generally pursue a career and the differential in the participation rate between such women and their male counterparts is not more than 20%. Women employed in the occupations of school teaching, labour and social welfare, librarians and archivists, village officials, and physicians and surgeons are found to be better qualified than men.

The employment exchange statistics show that, between 1964 and 1968 the number of women job seekers increased by 81% while that of men increased by only 14%. For job seekers with matriculation and higher education, the increases were 116% for women and 72% for men. The average duration of unemployment is higher for women than for men for all categories of educated work seekers, with the exception of medicine and nursing where the average waiting period for men with post-graduate qualifications is higher than that of women. A study done by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research\* in 1971 revealed that, out of 400,000 women degree-holders, only 150,000 were employed representing only 4% of the total work-

\*Cited in the Report of the Committee on Unemployment

ing women in the country. About 62% of this group earned less than Rs. 500 p.m. and 17% between Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000 p.m. Of the total number of unemployed women graduates, only 110,000 were seeking jobs. Among those who were not seeking jobs, 55% were arts graduates, 50% science, 18% technical or engineering and 9% from other vocational courses.

This represents a paradox in the relationship between education and employment of women. While illiteracy drives many needy women out of employment, education does not necessarily lead to their employment. An economy whose capacity to absorb men of working age is strained does not encourage the elimination of traditional forms of discrimination against economic activity by women. In the absence of adequate opportunities for full, productive and freely chosen employment as well as of supportive institutions, many women prefer to avoid the competitive pressures and reinforce the current discriminatory attitudes to economic activity by women. Since the majority of educated women come from middle class families, among whom the attitude to women's employment was the most restrictive, a large section of educated women have continued to accept these attitudes, though increasing economic pressure has brought about a change in the thinking of many persons in the economically less secure section of this class. The absence of supportive institutions that take note of women's roles as housewives and mothers has imposed disabilities on women which education alone cannot remove.

#### *Vocational & Technical Training*

Expert bodies such as the ILO, the National Commission on Labour, the All India Council for Technical Education, and the Education Commission have repeatedly emphasized the need to relate education, and particularly vocational training, to actual employment opportunities and man-power requirements. The need to emphasize vocational training for women to arrest their large-scale displacement through structural and technical changes in the economy is obvious and has been pointed out by various expert bodies. It is regrettable, however, that training facilities developed for women in the past few years display the existing social biases regarding suitability of women for parti-

cular occupations and lead to their over-concentration in a limited group of courses.

(1) *On-the-Job Training*: Some of the new industries such as electronics, simple engineering, and telecommunications provide in-service training to women with comparatively higher educational qualifications. In spite of all this, the overall disparity in the training opportunities for men and women is glaring. Out of 52,500 apprentices being trained under the Apprentices Act 1961, only 104 are women and they are confined to 11 trades, the majority being concentrated in book-binding, hand-composition, and general clerical work. Trade union representatives observe that the training provided to workers for handling new machinery in different industries is seldom extended to women.

(2) *Pre-employment Training*: Women constitute 44.97% of trainees in non-engineering trades, with heavy concentration in tailoring and cutting, embroidery and needle work, knitting, and stenography. The first two are completely monopolized by women even in co-educational institutions. In the engineering trades, they form only 0.27% of the total trainees. In the 24 women's polytechnics established by the Ministry of Education to promote awareness of new opportunities and to train women for the developing needs of the national economy, it has been found that, in courses in commercial practice, stenography, catering, and food technology, the admissions exceed the sanctioned capacity while they fall short of the available seats in other trades. The outturn for all the courses is considerably lower than the admissions. Absence of adequate placement assistance leaves many products of these institutions unemployed. The courses are not always designed in relation to the employment potential of the locality. Excessive concentration on courses such as tailoring or needle work minimises job opportunities. The recommendations of the All India Council for Technical Education to develop production centres and employment advisory service for the students have not been implemented. Finally, the stoppage of Central assistance for these institutions in the Fourth Plan has resulted in the neglect of their maintenance by State Governments. Inadequate teaching and other facilities explain the decline in admissions. Some private institutions, which provide similar types of training with a placement service, have observed that relating courses to the actual employment

potential of the area has proved highly successful in the large cities. The activities of such institutions have expanded rapidly in the past few years, attracting students with even university degrees.

In the present socio-economic set-up, self-employment of women requires much more than training in a particular vocation or trade. Without knowledge of market mechanism and access to capital resources, training alone cannot help women to face competition. Difficulties in procuring capital and raw material, intensified by the reluctance of banks to advance credit to women, and problems of marketing are some of the major obstacles to their self-employment.

(3) *Training Programmes Undertaken by Development Agencies*: Agencies in charge of women's welfare, both governmental and voluntary, have emphasized informal training to improve women's earning capacity, especially in the lower income groups. The Central Social Welfare Board has been assisting training-cum-production centres in small-scale industries, handicrafts and ancillary units for larger industrial undertakings. Various cadres of women for development work, particularly in villages, have been trained by the Board, the Ministry of Agriculture and Community Development, and the Ministry of Health. Many Ministries have also developed welfare centres to improve women's earning capacity through training mainly in sewing, embroidery, tailoring and handicrafts. We visited many of these centres and observed that, without a planned link with production and marketing, much of this training ends in futility. The market for traditional or home crafts is limited in scope and since marketing is in the hands of middlemen, the training does not result in much productive employment. The multiplicity of schemes and wastage of resources in administrative duplication limit the scope of these programmes which make only a marginal impact on the employment needs of women. Lastly, the classification of these programmes under welfare rather than under economic development prevents their receiving adequate resources from public funds. A greater degree of planning and co-ordination between different agencies and redistribution of responsibilities would improve their ability to increase women's earning power.

*Special Problems*

In addition to education and vocational training, the adjustment of women's employment needs to the changing pattern of the economy calls for solution of their special problems as housewives and mothers. The following deserve notice from this point of view:

- (1) Provision of opportunities for part-time employment: this will call for investigation of possible opportunities, all existing models of part-time employment prevalent in the unorganized sector, and legal and social support against exploitation;
- (2) Permitting re-entry of women in employment after withdrawal for family reasons;
- (3) Assistance and counselling for women who seek work at a later age;
- (4) Provision of child care services for all working women;
- (5) Supportive measures to solve the problems of accommodation and security of working women; and
- (6) Improvement of service conditions, particularly in providing transport and avoiding unnecessary transfers.

In our opinion, the national objective of integrating women into the process of development at all levels and the constitutional guarantees given to them require social acceptance of the multiple roles of women as home-makers, mothers, and socially and economically productive individuals. It is therefore imperative that society in general and the state in particular provide the necessary conditions and support to enable women to perform their various roles successfully. Marriage and motherhood which contribute to the continuation of the nation should not become disabilities in the gainful participation of women in the economic process. Without the type of supportive services and institutionalized aids suggested here, these dual roles will continue to impose tremendous strain on the physical and mental resources of women and affect the welfare and development of children. We therefore recommend the adoption of a well-defined policy, through a Government Resolution, to fulfil the Constitutional directives and government's long-term objective of total involvement of women in national development. The policy will have to be implemented carefully so that women are not

excluded from any occupation except those from which they are debarred by law, without specifying clearly the basis of unsuitability. It is also necessary to create a cell in the Ministry of Labour and Employment, at both the Central and State levels, to deal with problems of women.

We also recommend the following important measures:

(1) *Maternity Benefits Act, 1961*: (a) The Act should be extended to all industries and the provision of maternity relief should be ensured by the creation of a Central Fund by levying contributions from employers. The administration of the fund should follow the pattern of Employees' State Insurance Scheme.

(b) The Act should cover agricultural labourers also. To facilitate its implementation, the Central Fund should include a levy on farms with suitable reductions for smaller holdings as recommended for the Agricultural Holdings Tax by the Committee on Taxation of Agricultural Wealth and Income.

(c) An anti-retrenchment clause should be included in the Act.

(d) Women retrenched for short periods and re-employed on the same jobs should be treated as eligible for maternity benefit. A service of three months should qualify casual labour for this benefit.

(e) The provision of maternity benefits should be extended to home workers in all industries.

(f) The scrutiny of applications for maternity benefits should be made by a committee of the management and trade union representatives. The latter should preferably include a woman.

(g) There should be more stringent penalties for evasion of this law.

(h) Payment of maternity benefits should be made periodically instead of in a lump sum.

(i) There should be effective implementation of the Act in all States.

(2) *Provision of Creches*: (a) A limit of 20 women workers should be accepted for this provision.

(b) Casual women workers should be entitled to share this benefit.

(c) On demand from other groups of women workers, a room should be provided for keeping very young children.



(d) As far as possible, neighbourhood creches should be established.

(3) *Working Time:* Permission to work up to 10 P.M. should be granted provided arrangements for transport and security are made.

(4) *Insurance:* The Employees' State Insurance Scheme should be extended to all areas.

(5) *Equalization of Wages:* Article 39(d) of the Constitution—equal pay for equal work—is only a policy at present. It should receive legislative sanction, and also be incorporated in the Minimum Wages Act.

(6) *Integrated Development of Training and Employment:*

(a) A definite quota for women should be reserved for training within the industry.

(b) There should be a similar reservation under the national Apprentices Act.

(c) Programmes for vocational training should be developed in close relationship with industries and resources located in the area with a link to possible employing agencies.

(d) Polytechnics for women should include a production centre with assistance from the Small-Scale Industries Departments of States.

(e) Training programmes in production and market organization should be developed to encourage self-employment.

(f) Vocational training should be developed for illiterate and semi-literate women workers.

(g) Training-cum-production centres in small-scale cottage industries should be developed in rural and urban areas.

(7) *Part-time Employment:* We recommend specific provisions for part-time employment of women by suitable revisions in recruitment rules and service conditions. Detailed investigation should be made by both government and semi-governmental agencies regarding existing avenues and areas where part-time employment could be generated.

(8) *Employment Information:* The National Employment Service should be expanded to cover rural areas and a women's cadre should be developed in the service to provide employment information and assistance to women.

(9) *Provision for Re-entry:* A provision for special leave up

to five years (without pay) should be made. The lien should be protected during such leave.

(10) *Enforcement of Laws Protecting Women Workers:* The number of women on the inspectorate of different labour departments and women welfare officers should be increased.

(11) We further recommend that effective steps should be taken to organize labour unions in the field of agriculture and other unorganized sectors and women's wings should be formed in all trade unions to look after their problems and to improve women's participation in trade union activities.

## CHAPTER VI

## EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

EDUCATION has been regarded both as an end in itself and as a means of realizing other desirable ends. It develops the personality and rationality of individuals, qualifies them to fulfil certain economic, political, and cultural functions and thereby improves their socio-economic status. It has been recognized as a major instrument which societies can use to direct the process of change and development towards desired goals. It provides for vertical mobility and can thereby help to equalize status between individuals coming from different social strata. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights regards it as one of the basic rights of every human being.

The movement for improving women's status all over the world has always emphasized education as the most significant instrument for changing women's subjugated position in society. The Indian social reformers of the nineteenth century also accepted this view. Their aim, however, was to use education to make women more capable of fulfilling their traditional roles as wives and mothers and not to make them more efficient and active units in the process of socio-economic or political development. The colonial authorities generally supported this limited view of women's education. The expansion of education and health services in the twentieth century, however, precipitated a need for women 'teachers' and doctors and resulted in the incorporation of these two non-familial vocations in the programmes for women's education.

The attainment of independence and the constitutional guarantee of equality introduced new dimensions with the call on women to play multiple roles in the polity, the economy, and the society. In the years after the second world war, international agencies also emphasized the role of education as an instrument that can equip women to build the new social order. In spite of this new emphasis, however, attitudes to women's education in

India have displayed an ambivalence between the traditional, limited view on the one hand and this broad new concept on the other and it is this ambivalence which has influenced academic planning, allocation of resources and development of values in society, both for men and women.

PROGRESS OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION : QUANTITATIVE  
ASPECTS

We have examined women's educational development (1) by quantitative indicators like enrolment, outturn, educational facilities, literacy rates, and total stock of educated women, and (2) in the light of the stated national objective of integration of women as equals of men in all aspects of national development.

(1) *Enrolments*: The constitutional directive to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years has remained unfulfilled till now. Educational experts admit that this failure is mainly due to the slow progress of education among girls. Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes. In the age group 6-11, only 66% of the girls were in schools at the end of the Fourth Plan period. In the age group 11-14, this figure was only 22%. The comparative figures for boys were 100% and 48% respectively.

When compared to the progress of women's education in the pre-independence period, however, the development of women's education in the post-independence period has been phenomenal. The expansion of women's education, which began at the primary stage, was also mostly confined to that stage only in the earlier period. In 1947, the number of girls enrolled in primary schools (3,475,165) represented 83% of all the girls in the educational system. The middle schools had an enrolment of only 321,000 and represented 9% of the total enrolment. The secondary schools with their enrolment of 281,000 represented only 7% of the total enrolment; and even though the Indian universities had proved to be more liberal than their western counterparts in admitting women, their enrolment in higher education (23,000) was only less than one-half of 1% of the total enrolment. The number of girls per 100 boys at different levels in 1947 was 36 at the primary level, 22 at the middle level, 14 at the

secondary level, and 19 at the university level. By 1973-74, the number of girls enrolled at different stages as well as their proportion to boys had increased tremendously. At the primary level, girls enrolled numbered over 24.4 million (ratio 62 per 100 boys), at the middle level, over 4.5 million (ratio 43), at the secondary level, over 2.3 million (ratio 36) and in colleges and universities, about 0.9 million (ratio 31). The distribution of all girls enrolled between different stages of the educational system also changed during this period. By 1970-71, 73% were in primary schools, 14% in middle schools, 7.3% in secondary schools, 2.4% in universities and colleges, and 3.3% in professional schools.

In spite of this unprecedented advance, the overall situation left a good deal to be desired. Some of the major weaknesses of the position were the following:

(1) In classes I to V, one girl out of three is out of school. The drop-out rate is also high — of every 100 girls enrolled in class I, only about 30 reach class V.

(2) In classes V to VIII, only one girl out of five is at school. The steep fall from an enrolment of 66% of the population in the age group 6-11 to 22% in the age group 11-14 indicates the tremendous drop-out rate between the primary and the middle stages.

(3) At the secondary stage, the proportion of girls enrolled drops to only 12% of the population in the age group 14-17 which implies that only one girl out of eight is in school. Secondary education, even now, is largely confined to the upper and the middle classes in urban areas. In the rural areas, it is mainly utilized by well-to-do families, particularly from the middle classes. According to the Educational Survey of 1965, less than 17% of rural children in secondary schools were girls.

(4) At the university stage, the proportion of girls is higher at the post-graduate than at the under-graduate level. In professional education, women have substantial enrolments in teaching, medicine, and fine arts but meagre ones in commerce, law, agriculture, or engineering. Higher education of women is even more confined to the urban upper and middle classes.

(5) The National Committee on Women's Education (1958-59) had been perturbed by the widening gap in the education of boys and girls and recommended special programmes and efforts

to close this gap in as short a time as possible. As a result of special efforts, girls' enrolment was stepped up from 1960. We regret to observe, however, that these efforts were slackened after 1966. The quinquennial growth rate in enrolment of girls declined at the primary stage from 56.1% in 1961-66 to 30.7% in 1966-71. At the secondary stage, the decline was from 70.6% to 30.5%. At the university stage, however, the decline was relatively less, from 109.4% to 78.4%. In professional and special schools the decline was from 74.6% to 34.6%. This is a matter of deep concern.

(6) While enrolment is generally regarded as the main indicator for measuring educational progress, the problems of wastage and stagnation impose certain limitations. The all-India average of drop-outs at different stages of the school system has always been higher for girls than for boys. The Education Commission had found this to be 62% at the lower primary stage as against 56% for boys. At the higher primary stage, it was 34% as against 24% for boys. A later study\* found the rate of wastage and stagnation to be 62.3% for boys and 71.3% for girls in primary and middle schools, the maximum difference being in grades I and II.

(2) *Outturn*: In the outturn of students from schools and the university system the most significant features are the slower rate of increase in number of girls per thousand boys who pass the matriculation and higher secondary examinations and the much faster rate of increase at the university stage, particularly at the first degree level. The gap between qualified men and women is declining more rapidly in higher education than at the school level. Since higher education in India is still confined to a small minority, the impact of this trend on the educational development of women as a whole is marginal. During 1947-48 to 1965-66, the number of girls per thousand boys passing the matriculation examination increased from 12 to 31. At the first degree level, the increase has been from 18 to 43, at the second degree from 14 to 37 and for doctorates from 4 to 19. For professional degrees the increase was from 9 in 1950-51 to 16 in 1965-66.

In professional education, the only courses open to women

\*Sharma and Sapra, *Wastage and Stagnation in Primary and Middle Schools*, NCERT, 1971.

before independence were medicine, education, nursing, and law. Admission to engineering and technology became possible only after 1948. Considering this late start, women's success in these courses has been significant, though their representation in other professional fields still remains very low. Similarly, women's entry into research was mainly a post-independence development and their progress at this level is satisfactory. The earlier widespread beliefs that girls have less aptitude and intelligence than boys for higher studies, particularly in subjects like mathematics or science, has been disproved by their success, which often outstrips that of boys, in various examinations.

(3) *Growth of Institutions:* The National Committee on Women's Education had advocated provision of separate institutions for girls to break down the prejudice against their education. In the period after 1960-61, exclusive institutions for girls multiplied rapidly. In 1947-48, these represented only 10.3% of the total number of educational institutions. By 1967-68, they formed 29% of the total, the number increasing from 16,951 to 230,032.

While welcoming the growth of institutional facilities for spread of education among women, we have to point out some adverse features of this rapid growth. The large number of single-teacher primary schools suffer from frequent closures because of absence of teachers, which has discouraged many parents from sending girls to school. Many girls' schools at the middle and secondary level suffer from inadequate teaching facilities and low standards, particularly for subjects such as science and mathematics, limiting the students' choice of subjects. The extremely rapid expansion of women's colleges (from 81 in 1953-54 to 435 in 1971-72) has introduced a number of institutions with very low enrolments (250 have less than 500, 55 less than 100), which are financially non-viable and provide very low standards of teaching. This has been possible because of the policy to encourage women's colleges by reducing eligibility conditions for recognition and provision of special financial assistance by universities and government. In our view, the spread of sub-standard or limited education will not help the achievement of equality of opportunities and may even damage the cause of women's education. Vigilance regarding standards is imperative

and must form a part of the policy of encouragement and assistance.

(4) *Women Teachers:* It has always been recognized that increasing the number of women teachers is an essential condition for development of women education. In 1947, only 14.4% of school teachers were women. In 1973-74, their proportion had increased to 26% in primary schools, 37% in middle schools, and 30% in secondary schools. In the universities and colleges their proportion increased from 8.5% in 1950-51 to 15% in 1970-71, the highest representation being in education (23.9%), arts (19.7%), and medicine (19.2%). They constituted 13.6% of the university teaching staff in sciences and 10.8% in law, their position in other faculties being negligible. The low proportion of women among primary school teachers is mainly due to difficulties that women have to face in serving in rural areas, caused by resistance from their families, the fear of insecurity in villages, and the lack of physical amenities such as accommodation, schooling, transport, and medical facilities. In our view these need to be solved on a priority basis to reduce the present imbalance in the development of women's education between urban and rural areas and to prevent increasing unemployment among trained and qualified women teachers. We were also informed that the inadequacy of women inspectors creates certain difficulties for women teachers, particularly in single teacher schools. In some States which do not have a women's cadre of inspectors, women teachers complained of misbehaviour, blackmail, or exploitation by male inspectors.

#### LITERACY

In spite of all the expansion that has taken place in the formal educational system, the vast majority of Indian women have remained outside the reach of all education and are illiterate. While the female literacy rate has increased from 0.69% in 1901 to 18.4% in 1971, and the number of literate females per thousand males from 68 to 435, the number of illiterate women has also increased from 161.9 million in 1950-51 to 215.3 million in 1970-71. The comparable figures for illiterate males are 139.9 million and 172 million. In the 15-24 age group, 29.8 million or 67.5% of the women are illiterate. In the 25 and above age

group, this number increases to 94.5 million or 88.6%. Of the small proportion of literate women in these two age groups, the large majority have only primary and middle level education.

The challenge of this widening illiteracy gap will have to be borne in mind in determining priorities in educational development in the years to come. The claims of the formal educational system which can cater to the needs of only a minority, and mainly the younger generation, will have to be balanced against the educational needs of this group of adult women who constitute the workers and the mothers of the society.

#### ATTITUDES TO WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Social attitudes to girls' education vary from acceptance to absolute indifference. According to our survey, only 16.8% of the respondents felt that girls should not be given any education, but 64.5% observed that girls should not go in for higher education even if they are very intelligent. About 77.5%, both male and female, supported compulsory education for girls up to the 8th class. Educationists and administrators were generally in favour of compulsion for this purpose. We found the acceptance of girls' education to be far wider in urban areas, being the highest among the middle classes. A small group of affluent families still oppose it for traditional reasons, but others regard it as an accomplishment and a symbol of modernization. Among the lower middle class, an increasingly large section is now ready to make substantial sacrifices for girls' education because of economic need, but a very large section still finds itself unable to do so for economic and social difficulties. For the majority of the people below subsistence level, poverty is the predominant factor that governs their attitude to girls' education.

A large majority of girls have to undertake domestic chores, including looking after the siblings, by the time they reach the age of 8 years. A very large number are also engaged in earning for the family. We found girls from the age of five working with their parents in bidi factories and other industries in the unorganized sector for 12 hours a day and also as helpers of their mothers in domestic service. Some teenagers were supporting entire families of sick and unemployed parents and young siblings on their sole earnings. It should be noted that girls constitute a

higher proportion of the unpaid family workers throughout the country and that is a major reason for their exclusion from schools. Other social reasons for this adverse attitude to girls' education are early marriages or betrothal, though these are on the decline, except in the admittedly educationally backward States of Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. The social restriction on girls pursuing their studies after marriage is, however, considerably less now. The other reasons mentioned to us, which stand in the way of girls' education, are inadequacy of facilities, particularly distance of schools; irrelevance of the content of education; and fear of the alienation of girls from their environment as a result of education.

The strongest social support for girls' education comes from its increasing demand in the marriage market. About 64.5% of our respondents stated that education helped to improve the girls' marriage prospects. This relationship between marriage prospects and education, however, operates in different ways. Since it is considered necessary to find bridegrooms with still higher education, education of girls contributes to an increase of dowry, and the double expenditure acts as a deterrent to girls' education. We were told by many parents that this was the reason for their withdrawing their girls from schools after the primary stage.

#### OTHER IMBALANCES IN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Education is a double-edged instrument which can eliminate the effects of socio-economic inequalities, but can also introduce a new kind of inequality between those who have it and those who do not. Apart from the sharp increase in the number of illiterate women and the disparity in educational development between rural and urban areas, there are severe imbalances in educational development between advanced and backward classes and between regions. Imbalances in women's education and literacy are the consequences of these regional disparities, which reflect, to a great extent, variations in regional attitudes to women. A detailed analysis of State-wise progress in women's education at different levels revealed that while all of them have made rapid progress, the rate of progress has been uneven between different States. While Bihar and Rajasthan show uni-

formly lowest performance at all levels, States such as Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, and Tripura have achieved a higher rate of progress at the primary level. The only States where progress of enrolment at both primary and middle levels have been equally high are Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Nagaland, Delhi, and Tamil Nadu. The case of West Bengal is rather unique, as it has merely maintained its position at the primary level and lost ground at the middle level during this period. At the secondary level only Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Delhi registered definite progress. At the university level, the majority of the States registered a distinct improvement, but progress in vocational and technical courses at the school level has been slow and even static in many States, with the exception of Assam, Maharashtra, and Delhi. Progress in professional and technical education at the university level is marginal in all States. This is not conducive to the diversification of women's education or to the employment of educated women.

While we found a significant correlation between the growth of girls' education and the female literacy rate, no such significant relationship could be established between girls' education and (1) per capita income of the State; (2) density of population; and (3) sex ratio. Female literacy rate, in turn, is influenced greatly by population composition. Cities and regions with a high proportion of Muslim or Scheduled Castes and Tribes are marked by low literacy rates, while those with a relatively high percentages of Christians have a high literacy rate. While there is a big gap in urban and rural literacy rates, broadly speaking, the southern States have always maintained a higher rate of female literacy.

Apart from the lower literacy rate among Muslim women, our survey of minority communities definitely revealed that the number of Muslim women with no formal education continues to be very high even in those States which have otherwise progressed considerably in the development of women's education (e.g. Kerala). Similarly, women of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes continue to lag behind other women and the men in their own communities very greatly in both literacy and education. According to the census of 1961, the proportion of illiterate Scheduled Caste women was 975 per thousand of their female population in rural areas and 900 in urban areas

(the comparable figures for males being 866 and 696). The large majority of the small literate group are literates without educational level.

The influence of these sociological factors on women's education reduces the value of national or State averages in assessing educational progress. Female literacy rates in different districts of the same State vary sometimes from 6.4 to 29.5% (Andhra Pradesh); 4.8 to 33.8% (Uttar Pradesh); 4% to 31.4% (Madhya Pradesh). In our opinion, plans for educational development which do not take these social and regional imbalances into account, will intensify inequalities between different sections of the population. It is necessary to identify factors responsible for them and seek their removal with the aid of special programmes.

#### CO-EDUCATION

Co-education represents a controversy of longstanding in Indian education. While arguments in its defence from the point of view of fuller utilization of resources and economy are gradually gaining ground, it has been generally objected to by the defenders of women's education out of an apprehension that social prejudices against women's education can be removed more easily if girls are taught in separate institutions. We found continued evidence of this divergence of view during our investigation. Communities which observe *purdah* naturally demand separate schools. (There was, however, no such demand in Kashmir.) In some areas this resistance to co-education is higher among Hindus than Muslims. We also found this resistance to be more of an urban middle class phenomenon, explained by the increasing indiscipline and rowdyism in institutions for secondary and higher education. The under-privileged classes, whether in urban or rural areas, do not have such objections to co-education. A new argument in favour of co-education coming even from an educationally and socially backward State like Bihar is that co-educational institutions provide better teaching standards and show better performance of students. An opinion poll among officials, from Directors of Public Instruction to field staff working in rural areas, elicited a strong support for co-education at the primary and middle levels.

In our opinion, the considerations of efficiency, economy

and equal opportunities require the acceptance of co-education as a long-term policy. However, in view of the divergent social attitudes, we recommend:

- (1) its adoption as the general policy at the primary level;
- (2) provision of separate schools at middle and secondary levels in areas where there is a great demand, along with an effort to persuade public opinion in favour of co-education;
- (3) its adoption as a general policy at the university level, discouraging opening of new colleges exclusively for girls;
- (4) removal of ban on admission of girls to all-boys' institutions;
- (5) vigilance regarding required standards in all exclusive institutions for girls;
- (6) acceptance of the principle of mixed staff as the condition of recognition for all mixed schools—to be reviewed a few years after implementation; and
- (7) provision of separate toilets and retiring rooms for girls in all mixed institutions.

#### CURRICULA

The traditional view regarding women's education had resulted in an emphasis on different curricula for girls, with accent on subjects which were considered specially suitable for them such as domestic science, needle-work, or fine arts. This also resulted in failure to provide subjects such as sciences and mathematics in most girls' institutions. This practice was challenged by the Committee on Differentiation of Curricula for boys and girls (1964) which recommended a common course at all levels to counteract the influence of traditional attitudes which regard certain tasks as 'manly' and others as 'womanly'. The Education Commission (1966) endorsed these recommendations. We found wide acceptance of this new trend of thought, but some States continue to prescribe different curricula for boys and girls.

We recommend a common course of general education till the end of class X with all optional courses open to boys and girls. Simple needle craft, music and dancing should be taught to all children at the primary stage. From the middle stage, variations

may be permitted under work experience with no compulsion or exclusion for students of either sex. Vocational and technical courses in class XI and XII should be open to girls.

#### PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Good pre-school education helps children to overcome their environmental disadvantages and to develop egalitarian values as they are unaware of differences of caste, class, creed, or sex at this age. We were greatly impressed by the achievement of the rural Balwadis in this respect. These pre-primary schools also help to relieve mothers of small children and increase the chances of schooling for older girls. We recommend the provision of three-year's pre-school education for all children and special efforts to increase the number of Balwadis in rural areas and in urban slums. They should be located as near as possible to the primary and middle schools of the locality.

#### PRIMARY AND MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION

We recommend (1) provision of primary schools within walking distance from the home of every child within the next five years; (2) establishment of Ashram or residential schools to serve clusters of villages scattered in difficult terrains; (3) mobile schools for children of nomadic tribes, migrant labour, and construction workers; (4) sustained propaganda by officials and non-officials to bring every girl into school; and (5) provision of incentives (including mid-day meals, free uniforms, scholarships and stipends, free supply of books and special awards or recognition to the community, teachers, students) in order to prevent drop-outs; (6) provision of at least two teachers in every school and raising the proportion of women primary teachers to 50 or more; (7) adoption of the multiple-entry system and a system of part-time education for girls who cannot attend school continuously on a full-time basis; (8) provision of some space in every school for the care of younger siblings who are the charges of school-going girls; and (9) provision of sex education from the middle stage in schools. (An expert group should be appointed to prepare graded teaching material for this purpose.)

## SECONDARY EDUCATION

We recommend (1) free education for all girls up to the end of the secondary stage; (2) improving teaching facilities in science, mathematics, and commerce; (3) introduction of job-oriented work-experience relating it to the needs, resources, and employment potential of the region; (4) adequate arrangements for co-curricular activities; and (5) greater provision of need-cum-merit scholarships and hostel facilities for girls.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

While progress of women in this sector has not been as unsatisfactory as at the school stage, we disagree with the view which considers higher education of girls as a waste because many of them do not use their knowledge for any social purpose. It is for the society to provide greater opportunities for such educated women to be of social use by utilizing their talents for social and national development. We therefore recommend (1) development of more employment opportunities, particularly of a part-time nature; and (2) improvement in employment information and guidance services for women entering higher education.

## NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

The greatest problem in women's education in India today is the provision of some basic education to the overwhelming majority who have remained outside the reach of the formal system because of their age, social disabilities on the literacy gap. In order to integrate women in the process of national development, it is imperative to provide some education to the vast mass of illiterate and semi-literate women in the 15-25 age group. The government's efforts in the field of adult literacy and education have been rather ineffective so far; and even the non-formal training programmes such as functional literacy for women and non-student youth, show surprising biases by drawing distinction in educational content for men and women and emphasizing family life, health, nutrition, and child care for the latter. In our view, these distinctions have now become meaningless,

since a proper management of family life requires joint efforts of men and women. At the same time, women's needs for vocational and occupational skills have become even greater than those of men. The greatest handicap of these programmes, however, is their *ad hoc* approach and the lack of co-ordination between different agencies that take up such programmes. There is considerable wastage of resources on duplication of administrative machinery. What is necessary, now, is to design a non-formal system of education using all available educational resources in the community (e.g. teachers, health service personnel, agricultural extension, workers, successful farmers, mechanics, welfare workers, and other educated persons). The system should be continuous and emphasize learning useful things in spare time, the object being to provide women with easy access to information and use of information for better participation in social life. Functional literacy would certainly have to form the core of the package.

In our view, the organization and management of this programme for women could be entrusted to the women's panchayats that we have recommended. Government's role should be limited to providing technical guidance and advice, permitting government functionaries at the local level to participate in the programme and supportive assistance in the form of literature and reading material, and development of basic libraries in villages and slum areas. We recommend concentration of government efforts on providing this infra-structure.

EQUALITY OF SEXES AS A MAJOR VALUE TO BE INCULCATED  
THROUGH THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

The educational system is the only institution which can counteract the deep foundations of the inequality of the sexes that are built in the minds of men and women through the socialization process. It must make a deliberate, planned, and sustained effort to replace the traditional value system, based on inequality, by the new value system which accepts equality of the sexes. Unfortunately, the educational system, instead of accepting this responsibility, has helped to perpetuate traditional prejudices through its curricula, classification of subjects on the basis of sex and the unwritten code of conduct enforced on the pupils.



This is one area where a major change is needed in the content and organization of education.

## CHAPTER VII

### POLITICAL STATUS

THE POLITICAL STATUS of women can be defined as the degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by women in the shaping and sharing of power and in the value given by society to this role of women. The recognition of women's political equality in the Indian Constitution was a radical departure, not only from the inherited norms of traditional Indian society, but also from the political norms of most advanced countries at that time.\* The two major forces which acted as catalysts in the achievements of political equality of women were the national movement and the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

The nineteenth century reform movements had limited their efforts to improving the position of women within the traditional family structure. The turn of the century, however, saw a minority of women participating voluntarily in social welfare activities outside their homes, particularly in the cause of women's education, welfare of the weaker sections in society and relief to distressed persons. A still smaller group participated in the revolutionary movement. The early twentieth century saw the birth of women's organizations and the beginnings of the demand for political rights. In 1917, a deputation of Indian women led by Shrimati Sarojini Naidu presented to the British Parliament a demand for the enfranchisement of women on the basis of equality with men. The Reforms Act of 1921 extended the franchise only to wives who had property and education. The foreign rulers could not believe that Indian society would ever regard women as equal partners of men. Nor did they regard women as a separate political force.

In sharp contrast to such attitudes was that of Mahatma Gandhi. He had declared himself to be 'uncompromising in the

\*With the exception of socialist countries, no other state in the world had accepted women's equality as a matter of course.

matter of women's rights'. He believed that women had a positive role to play in the reconstruction of society, and that the recognition of their equality was an essential step to bring about social justice. He had also extended his continued and unqualified support to the enfranchisement of women. This, added to the massive participation by the women in the Freedom Movement, had a direct impact on the political and social elite, including women of these classes. In 1930, a meeting of representative women's organizations demanded immediate acceptance of adult franchise without sex discrimination. Though rejected by government, the Karachi Session of the Indian National Congress in 1931 accepted the demand and committed itself to women's political equality, regardless of their status and qualifications. This promise was redeemed after independence, when the Constitution pledged the nation to the principles of equality and dignity of the individual, and proclaimed the fundamental right of women to political and legal equality and guaranteed non-discrimination in employment and office under the state.

In examining the impact of these rights in the years since independence, our basic position is the same as that of Mahatma Gandhi who looked upon them as instruments for achieving general equality of status and opportunities and social, economic and political justice. We also propose to use three main indicators to assess the political status of women, *viz.*, (1) participation in the political process as voters and candidates in elections; (2) political attitudes such as awareness, commitment and involvement in politics and autonomy in political action and behaviour; and (3) their impact on the political process.

#### I. PARTICIPATION AS VOTERS AND CANDIDATES IN ELECTIONS

Election statistics indicate a general trend of increase in the turnout of women voters. Their percentage increased from 46.6% in 1962 to 55.4% in 1967 and 49.1% in 1971, when there was a general decline in participation of all voters. The difference between percentage turnout of men and women voters declines from 15.4% to 11.8% during this nineyear period. The States of Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh which are generally known for the educa-

tional and social backwardness of their women have had persistently low mobilization of women voters during elections. While States with a high literacy rate show a higher mobilization of women, it is not possible to establish a similar correlation between education or economic development and exercise of franchise by women. Patterns of political behaviour from different regions indicate influences of various inter-related factors such as the social status of women, their economic position, the cultural norms, and the overall regional outlook towards women's participation in the wider society.

In the case of candidates, the difference between men and women is much sharper. For the Lok Sabha, only 17% of the total seats were contested by women in 1971, the highest so far. As compared to the total number of candidates, women have never exceeded 4%. Interestingly enough, the maximum number of candidates are found in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh, where the general mobilization of women voters has been consistently low. This indicates that there is no correlation between the level of women's participation and the selection of women candidates. Punjab, where women voters have outstripped the men in the urban areas, had an extremely poor number of candidates. Kerala and Maharashtra, with high level participation, show a slow increase in the number of candidates over the years, and West Bengal a sudden one in 1971. But the most visible trend is of stagnation or even decline in their number in most States. Karnataka, which is not a backward State, did not put up a single woman candidate in three of the general elections, and only one in the other two. Women in Manipur, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Orissa were extremely vocal in criticizing the political parties for not sponsoring women candidates. In their view, the small number of candidates represented not the aspirations of women, but the indifference of political parties.

Apart from election data, our discussion with different groups of women lead to certain general conclusions:

(1) The steady increase of women voters at each election shows that the response of women to the political rights conferred on them by the Constitution is improving. Keeping other things equal, development of literacy, and mass communication may

help to draw an even larger number of women into the political mainstream.

(2) While there has been a substantial number of new entrants among women candidates, a large number of the older ones have also dropped out from active participation in politics. Where these come from families with long political traditions, such drop-out indicates a degree of disillusionment with the political process.

(3) Muslims and tribal women show a lower level of participation, both as voters and as candidates, although there are exceptions to this rule. Our survey of Muslim women indicates that a large number of the respondents had also voted in the previous election. We also met tribal women in Tripura, Meghalaya, and Bastar (M.P.) who, though not formally educated, took a keen interest in politics and participated regularly.

(4) Women of the intermediate and scheduled castes have a higher participation rate. We met many women from these communities in villages in different States and found them determined to participate in elections.

(5) Rural-urban difference in voting participation of women is narrowing down, though the belief in the lower participation of rural women still remains widespread. Our investigations indicate that urbanization does not have much influence on women's participation in politics. On the other hand, urban women, particularly those from the middle classes, plead that domestic duties prevent their participation.

(6) Awareness of the power that the right of franchise gives to them is far more widespread among women than is generally believed. We found evidence of this even among Muslim, tribal and Scheduled Caste women in villages of Madhya Pradesh, U.P., and Tripura. Most of these women were also aware of the reasons for the secrecy of the ballot and observed that this permitted them to exercise their independent judgement in voting.

(7) There is a general feeling that political parties have neglected their task of politically educating and mobilizing women adequately.

(8) The majority of women candidates come from relatively well-to-do families, with a sprinkling of members of old princely houses. Most of them are educated though the levels of their education vary. A smaller group comes from families with fairly

long traditions of political activity. Consequently they are more articulate and have continued in the struggle for power for a longer period. The larger group are new entrants, with no previous political experience; and their entry into the political arena has been through elections only.

(9) Factors which deter women from active participation in politics are: the increasing expense of elections (this constitutes the biggest handicap, as the majority of women do not command any independent means); threats of violence; and character assassination. The two latter factors have increased recently and have also prevented many women from contesting elections.

## II. POLITICAL ATTITUDES

Levels of political awareness of women vary from region to region, class to class, and community to community. They are conditioned greatly by the political culture of the area, the approach of political parties to women, and the quality of the local leadership. We found that the influence of education, urbanization, and exposure to mass media is not always uniform. While literacy seems to have a direct influence on both awareness and participation, the relationship between education and awareness does not always extend to participation. Political awareness of women also does not differ significantly between urban and rural areas.

On the whole, working women, including professionals, have greater awareness but this is not always reflected in participation. Nor is there any positive relationship between higher socio-economic status and political awareness. Some of the studies initiated by us revealed that political awareness is less among women in the higher income groups, who have a negligible interest in politics, though many of the women legislators come from well-to-do families.

The influence of husbands on women exercising their right of franchise seems to be on the decline. In rural areas, the influence of village elders is still strong, but there are significant exceptions to this rule. In spite of such changes, the differences in the level of political information and understanding between men and women still continue, mainly due to the indifference of political parties to women. Women's organizations and pressure groups

have also failed to provide political education to women.

There is some evidence of disillusionment among women with the political process, partly because of the prevalence of corruption and inefficiency in political circles, and also because women feel that politics has not solved the problems which affect their daily lives. About 42% of women interviewed in a study supported revolution for social progress as opposed to the 'ritual' of election. The majority felt that the greatest problems before the country were unemployment and poverty, rising prices, corruption, and breakdown of law and order.

Our investigation in different States indicates one common trend, that women are more concerned with problems that affect their day-to-day lives. They have shown themselves ready to protest against rising prices, adulteration of food, unemployment, and poverty. The unity between political, economic, and social issues that characterized the freedom movement was one of the causes for the high degree of women's participation. The absence of a similar movement in the period after independence and the divorce between social problems that affect women directly and the political process has been one of the major Causes for lower participation of women in politics in recent years.

### III. IMPACT OF WOMEN ON THE POLITICAL PROCESS

Women's participation in politics has not been reflected in their record of success at elections. The number and percentage of successful women candidates for the Lok Sabha has been declining steadily from 33 (50.6%) in 1962 to 21 (25.9%) in 1971. The sharp decline in 1971 is due to the increase in the number of independent women candidates most of whom were defeated. The increase in independent candidates was mainly due to the failure of the parties to sponsor an adequate number of women. It has generally been found that the success of women candidates depends upon party backing, the campaign strategy adopted and the personality including the family background of candidates. Since 1952, 212 women have served in the Indian Parliament—129 in the Lok Sabha, and 83 in the Rajya Sabha. In the State legislatures, the most significant trend is either a decline or stagnation in the percentage of successful candidates.

### *Role of Women Elite*

Women leaders in the period immediately after independence were mostly veterans from the freedom struggle. They had also worked in the movement for women's welfare and development, were spokesmen of the women's cause in the representative bodies, and played an important role in mobilizing public opinion in support of the social legislation that changed the legal status of women within the first few years after independence. Some of them also helped to shape the policies and the programmes for women's development that were taken up by Government at that time. Most of these leaders, who had attained a national stature during the freedom struggle, became members of the Central Government or Parliament. In States, a new generation entered politics. Our investigations suggest that while experience of social work among women is still considered a qualification for candidates to local bodies, it has ceased to be so for entry to the legislature. We were informed by political workers that politics at the State level seldom reflects social differences at present. The women involved in State politics mostly come from the economic and political elite of States and enter the representative process, more because of support within a party, rather than through work among the people.

Women form the minority among the party workers. When elected to the legislature, they see their role as representatives of the people with no special responsibility to women. In earlier years, their championship of women's causes was concerted, cutting across party lines. In recent years, however, women legislators have not shown such concern or interest in problems that affect women specifically. This criticism was voiced by many women outside the circle of active politicians. Debates and discussions in the legislative bodies have given very meagre attention to women's problems.

We are of the view that the political elite of the country, of both sexes, has perhaps come to believe that the problems of women had practically been solved with the legal and administrative measures adopted in the first few years after independence. The very articulate debates of earlier years on women's problems, in which women members played a major role, have not been repeated since. The absence of an active women's movement and

the failure of political organizations to mobilize women for the solution of their problems have prevented women from exerting adequate pressure on political institutions. The small number of women in the legislatures and their lack of position in the decision-making bodies within the parties have limited their capacity to voice women's problems in these institutions.

#### *Political Parties and Women*

The election manifestoes of the political parties agree that women constitute a backward section of the society to whom special privileges have to be granted to bring them at par with men.

(1) The *Indian National Congress* whose recent manifestoes have emphasized development of education and employment opportunities for women has been sponsoring the largest number of women candidates at all elections, but has still failed to reach its repeatedly stipulated target of 15%. In spite of a woman being the undisputed leader of this party, women's position in the party hierarchy is not particularly impressive. Though the Working Committee contains three women out of a total of twenty-one and two out of four General Secretaries are women, it is evident that, without pressure from the Working Committee, party committees in many States would exclude women. Women workers in the party complain of denial of opportunities to develop or demonstrate their organizing ability and of neglect of women's demands by the leadership.

(2) The *Communist Party of India* believes that women can be fully liberated only in a socialist system. They must play a role in bringing about the social revolution. It has, therefore, been demanding equal pay for equal work and removal of all restrictions and discriminations against women in employment, inheritance of property, education and social laws. The party claims that 5% of its members are women. The National Council of the Party with a membership of 110 has four women members. Their representation on State bodies of the party is, however, uneven. The party's representatives emphasized the removal of economic dependence and poverty to enable women to enjoy their legal rights, and argued that, without fuller participation in the process of social production, reservation of jobs in selected industries, free legal aid, and greater educational opportunities,

it will be difficult for women to achieve the equality to which they are entitled by law.

(3) The *Communist Party of India (M)* holds similar views regarding women and is critical of the poor progress in the field of women's welfare since independence. The nation cannot progress if its women remain in their present condition as victims of obscurantist customs and prejudices and with limited opportunities for development. Women constitute about 1% of the party's membership with one woman out of a total of thirty-one members in the Central Committee. Their representation on State Committees varies according to regions. The representatives of the party emphasized the need for economic independence without which women were as good as private property of men. The growing problem of rural unemployment with increasing landlessness and decay of village industries threatened the security and status of women in these areas, and made them unable to enjoy their constitutional and legal rights, even more than urban women. The party suggests mass employment and mass education (including the education of women about their emancipation), inclusion of the principle of equal pay for equal work in the Fundamental Rights, and equal shares of land and job facilities for peasant women, as necessary steps to achieve genuine equality for women.

(4) The *Bharatiya Jana Sangh* supports advancement of women and special steps to remove their social and educational disabilities, without any change in the traditionally established principles of social organization. The Central Executive of the party has five women and the All India Council eighty-three. The constitution of the various committees of the party provides for inclusion of one or more women though it has been found difficult to meet this target at the level of local committees. The party's representatives emphasized the need to increase political participation and consciousness of women since the conservation of women presents an obstacle to their development. They criticized the use of female figures in advertising and the image of women projected by other mass media as derogatory to women's status.

(5) The *Indian National Congress (O)* promises to implement the constitutional guarantees and Directive Principles of State Policy regarding women. Out of a total membership of twenty-

eight in the Working Committee, two are women (one of them is the General Secretary). The 20% quota reserved by the party for women candidates has not been filled due to decline in political interest among women and in members seeking nomination. In the opinion of the party's representative, economic backwardness and competition in obtaining nominations at different levels deter women candidates.

(6) The *Socialist Party* believes that women still suffer from social inequalities. The party's representative emphasized the ignorance and indifference of women regarding their legal and constitutional rights. A determined effort has to be made by social workers to remove this difficulty. Government and other institutions should educate men and women against outmoded traditions and superstitions. The women's front of the party has adopted a charter of Women's Rights, demanding free education, vocational and technical training, part-time employment, uniform Civil Code, social mobilization against dowry and greater scope for women in elections and party organizations.

#### *Positions in Government*

Though only a few women reached the highest level of power and authority, those who did so have been recognized for their administrative skills and capacity to manage their own affairs. Since 1952, thirteen women have served the Union Government as Ministers and several have served as Chairmen of both Houses of Parliament. Many have been members of Standing and *ad hoc* Committees. In States, two women have been Governors, two Chief Ministers, one Speaker, and one Deputy Speaker. Though few have held Cabinet rank, women have held office in most of the States. Compared to their overall number in the legislature, the number of women holding offices was not low.

#### *Effectiveness of campaigns to mobilize women*

Though women constitute nearly 50% of the electorate, the experience of all the general elections proves that they are not aware of their strength nor has this source been adequately tapped by any political party. There has not been any bargaining on the part of organized women with political parties for their

support, except in Jammu. The parties generally tend to seek the support of the male active heads of families expecting that their wishes would prevail with the women, particularly in rural areas. In larger cities, some attempt has been made to activate women voters, making specific promises to them and using a house-to-house approach.

Among the non-political organizations, the most important are the All India Women's Conference, the National Council of Women in India, the Bharatiya Grameen Mahila Sangh, and the National Federation of Indian women. The first two are mainly deliberative bodies and have concentrated more on welfare and relief activities. The Bharatiya Grameen Mahila Sangh works among rural women and has been active in rural development. The National Federation aims to raise the political and social awareness of women and has been mobilizing women's protest against such issues as rising prices, hoarding, and adulteration. All these organizations admit that they have not been fully successful in carrying the message of their new rights to all women in the country.

While women leaders in the trade union movement have played a major role in bringing about changes in labour laws to provide protection to women, most trade unions admit that they have not made many efforts to mobilize women to assert their legal and constitutional rights. Whenever these organizations have worked together to defend the rights of women, however, their influence as pressure groups has been fairly effective. They played an important role in the enactment of social laws after independence.

We find that, in spite of increase in participation, women's ability to produce an impact on the political process has been negligible. Parties have tended to see women as appendages of the males. Among women, the leadership has become diffused and diverse, with sharp contradictions in their regard and concern for the inequalities that affect the status of women in every sphere—social, economic, and political. The revolution in status of women for which constitutional equality was to be only the instrument, still remains a very distant objective. While the position of some groups has changed for the better, the large masses of women continue to lack spokesmen in the representative bodies of the State. Though women do not constitute a minority

numerically, they are acquiring the features of one by the inequality of class, status, and political power. The chasm between the values of the new social order proclaimed by the Constitution and the realities of contemporary Indian society as far as women's rights are concerned remains as great as at the time of Independence.

The right to political equality has not enabled women to play their role as partners and constituents in the political process, because Gandhiji's message to treat political rights, not as an end, but only as a means, has been forgotten. Instead, these rights have helped to build an illusion of equality and power which is frequently used as an argument to resist special protective and ameliorative measures to enable women to achieve a just and equal position in society. In spite of special powers provided by Article 15(3) of the Constitution, almost no efforts have been made to redress the unequal status of women in different spheres. The fact that the country has been ruled by a woman for the past nine years is not an indicator of the real status of women in this country. Though men recognize and advocate the desirability of giving equal opportunities to women in economic and political spheres, the norms and attitudes regarding a woman's role in society remain traditional. In this sense, the new rights provided to them seem to be only concessional.

#### *Women in Local Bodies*

In order to provide greater opportunities to women to actively participate in the decision-making process, it is imperative to recognize the true nature of the social inequalities and disabilities that hamper them. This can best be achieved by providing them with special opportunities for participation in the representative structure of local government. The present form of associating women in these bodies, through co-option or nomination, has become a kind of tokenism. The time has come to move out of this token provision to a more meaningful association of women in local administration, and to counteract the general apathy and indifference of the local bodies to women's development and change of status. We therefore recommend the establishment of statutory women's Panchayats at the village level with

autonomy and resources of their own for the management and administration of welfare and development programmes for women and children, as a transitional measure, to break through the attitudes that inhibit most women from articulating their problems and participating actively in the existing local bodies. They should be directly elected by the women of the village and have the right to send representatives to the Panchayat Samitis and/or Zila Parishads. A viable relationship with the Gram Panchayats should be maintained by making the Chairman and Secretary of both bodies *ex-officio* members of the other.

At the level of municipalities, the principle of reservation of seats for women is already prevalent in certain States. This should be adopted by all States as a transitional measure.\* In addition, permanent committees should be constituted in municipalities to initiate and supervise programmes for women's welfare and development.

#### *Reservation of Seats in Legislatures*

Political parties should adopt a definite policy regarding the percentage of women candidates to be sponsored by them for elections to Parliament and State Assemblies. While they may initially start with 15%, this should be gradually increased so that, over time, the representation of women in legislative bodies has some relationship to their position in the total population of the country or the State. We also received a demand for reservation of seats for women in State Assemblies and Parliament, but rejected the suggestion after examination, with two members dissenting.

#### *Association in Important Bodies*

Women should be included in all important committees, commissions, or delegations that are appointed to examine socio-economic problems.

\*This was a majority decision, two members dissenting,

## CHAPTER VIII

**POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES FOR WOMEN'S WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT**

DEVELOPMENT in its wider perspective covers all aspects of community life. The accepted goals of national development such as maximum production, full employment, and attainment of economic equality and social justice apply equally to men and women. Their realization in an inegalitarian society is not, however, possible, unless special efforts are made to assist the underprivileged groups. Our Constitution therefore stresses the urgent need for promoting the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people; and as women are handicapped by social customs and traditions, they need special attention to help them to play their full and proper role in national life.

## PLANS AND WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT

The Planning Commission has defined three major areas for women's development: education, health, and welfare. Among the programmes specially designed in these areas, the priorities have been the same till the end of the Fourth Plan. There has been a continued emphasis on women's education in all the plans. The other programmes for women mainly concentrated on maternal and child welfare services, health, nutrition, and family planning. As regards social welfare, the voluntary sector operated the bulk of the programmes, the efforts of the Government being confined to provide institutional services. The Second Plan emphasized the need for special attention to the problems of women workers who suffered from certain handicaps, *e.g.* unequal pay, lack of adequate training facilities to enable them to compete for higher jobs, and lack of opportunities for part-time employment; and the Draft Fifth Plan gives priority to the training of needy women from low-income families, a programme

of functional literacy for the age-group 15-45 (which includes child care, nutrition, health care, and home economics), placement and follow-up of successful candidates under the present scheme of condensed courses of education, and socio-economic programmes. In addition to production-cum-training units, managerial and sales training will also be introduced to promote marketing of goods. Under health programmes the primary objective is to provide minimum public health facilities and integrated family planning and maternal and child care programmes.

In spite of this policy of emphasis on welfare or development of human resources, the proportional allocation for these programmes has been steadily declining in successive plans and the total allocation for education, health, and welfare has come down from 24.1% in the First Plan to only 11.17% in the Fifth Plan.

Programmes for women's welfare and development may be broadly classified as follows:

(1) Programmes under statutory obligations such as the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act, 1956, or the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961.

(2) Development programmes which provide essential services and opportunities such as education, health, maternity and child welfare, family planning, nutrition, and training.

(3) Programmes for special groups of women such as assistance to widows, aged and destitute women, hostels for working women in urban areas, scholarships for girls of Scheduled Castes and Tribes, and free residential schooling in Ashram Schools.

Since the administrative system under the colonial regime was not geared for these tasks, and most welfare services were in the hands of voluntary agencies, a central official agency was created in 1953 to promote welfare and development services for women, children, and other under-privileged groups. The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) provides assistance to voluntary agencies, improves and develops welfare programmes, and sponsors them in areas where they do not exist. At the State level, State Social Welfare (Advisory) Boards were created with the same objectives.

There is a three-tier structure for planning and administering women's welfare and development programmes with agencies at



the Central, State, and local level. However, the major responsibility for implementing these programmes lies on various departments and other agencies of Government. At the Centre, the main agencies for planning and implementation are the Planning Commission, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare with its two specialized agencies—Central Social Welfare Board and National Council of Women's Education, Ministry of Health and Family Planning, Ministry of Home Affairs, and Ministry of Labour and Employment. At the State level, there is no uniform pattern and the programmes for women are administered by a large number of departments.

We tried to collect information from all the Central and State Departments regarding their special programmes for women. The replies were not comprehensive; but from the information supplied by 12 Ministries of Central Government, 19 States and one Union Territory, two points seem to emerge: (1) Despite their common objectives, these programmes are implemented by a large number of departments without any effective machinery to co-ordinate their functions; and (2) Government departments do not always seem to be clear in their understanding of what constitutes welfare or development. A few adopt a rather limited approach to welfare and equate it with giving assistance to distressed women.

With the exception of the Second Five Year Plan, no Plan has shown concern for generating and improving employment opportunities for women. However, it is interesting to note that all the agencies engaged in implementing women's programmes attach the highest priority to increasing women's earning power. Even the Fifth Plan which accepts the 'utilization of idle manpower as a tremendous force to speed up the process of development,' visualizes no change in the present low representation of women in the labour force.\*

#### HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING

The health status of women, which includes their physical,

\*Its labour force projections up to 1986 indicate a constant sex ratio with women constituting only 16% of the total. This is even lower than the 17.35% recorded by the census of 1971.

mental, and social condition, is affected, in addition to their biological and physiological problems, by the prevailing norms and attitudes of society regarding their needs and capacities. These attitudes influence the provision and utilization of preventive and curative health care facilities, including maternal care services. Several studies have shown a definite correlation between the low status of women and deficiencies in the knowledge and utilization of preventive health services.

The cultural norms that particularly affect women's health are attitudes to marriage, age of marriage, fertility rate and sex of the child, the pattern of family organization, the place of the woman in the family, and the expected role of the woman as defined by social conventions. All these factors have important demographic implications. Cultural insistence on early marriage, high fertility, idealization of the roles of mother and house-wife affect her physical and mental health. According to our Survey, 48.53% respondents stated that women serve the family first and eat last. In poor families, this results in still greater malnutrition of women. This process of subservience starting at a young age, taboos and restrictions which start with menstruation, and reluctance to consult a doctor, particularly a male doctor, result in a general neglect of women's health.

Various studies, particularly from developing countries, indicate that the main health problems of women are: higher maternal and infant mortality, maternal morbidity; lower expectation of life at birth; malnutrition; mental disorders; high suicide rate; and certain sex-selective diseases. As child-bearing and rearing is still the dominant role assigned to women, maternity becomes a special problem in the context of the socio-economic status of the bulk of the population with inadequate housing, sanitation, and poor medical facilities.

The indications of women's health in India are drawn from two sources: demographic trends and access to health service.

(1) *Demographic Trends*: The census studies drew attention to the declining sex ratio and higher female mortality (specially in the age-groups 15-44). Neglect, rather than under enumeration, is the explanation of the adverse sex ratio. The census of 1931 drew pointed attention to the higher female mortality in the age-group 5-10 and 'at the reproductive age'. According to Vital Statistics of India, the incidence of female mortality in the

age-group 15-29 is high, both in rural areas and in the whole country. Female mortality in the age-group 1-4 has increased during 1960-68. Some scholars observe that vital statistics regarding infant deaths and births are under-estimates, particularly in the case of females, the difference between estimated and reported deaths being as high as 75.69% for rural and 59.07% for urban areas. The recent SRS data for 1968-69 also indicate that female mortality continues to be higher in the age-groups 0-4 and 15-34. It is also observed that the reason for the low sex ratio is the high maternal mortality which is reported to be 252 per 1,00,000 live births in 1964 for the whole country and as high as 573 for 1,00,000 live births in rural areas in 1968.

Recent medical research, while trying to identify the contributory factors for higher female mortality, has concentrated more on maternal mortality and has identified different factors such as pregnancy wastage (abortions and still births) which have remained constant over the period 1957-68 and mostly prevail in low-income groups. One study reported that pregnancy wastage of malnourished mothers was as high as 30% in 1972.\* Still births constituted 11 per 1,000 live births. Perinatal mortality was the result of maternal malnutrition, iron deficiency, and anaemia. Another cause of infant and maternal mortality was related to higher birth orders and frequent pregnancy, causing protein malnutrition. 10-20% deaths are known to be due to nutritional anaemias and 16.44% to pregnancy complications and morbidity. Besides, a WHO report indicates that psychiatric morbidity is more prevalent among women than men.\*\*

(2) *Access to Health Services:* The broad objectives of the health programmes have been to provide both curative and preventive health services in rural areas through the Primary Health Centres, and to train medical and para-medical personnel. The Fifth Plan, while realizing the shortfalls and inadequacy of staff, medical supplies and equipment, and trained personnel, envisages an integrated programme of family planning and maternity and Child Health Services. The lowest unit of the Health Services structure is the P.H.C. The Bhore Com-

\*Gopalan, C. and Naidu, A.N., "Nutrition, and Fertility", *The Lancet*, No. 18, 1972.

\*\*WHO, *Vital Statistics of South East Asia Region*, 1966.

mittee (1946) had recommended that each centre should cater to a population of 40,000, with a 30-bed hospital, two medical officers, four mid-wives, and four trained 'dais' as the 'irreducible minimum'. The Mudaliar Committee (1964), while reiterating these recommendations, suggested the additional provision of three specialists in medicine, surgery, obstetrics, and gynaecology and 75 maternity and 50 paediatric beds for each district hospital. When PHCs were established they had to serve a population of 60,000-70,000. Their number has increased from 67 in the First Plan to 5,195 in 1972 and the sub-centres have increased from 17,522 in 1967 to 32,218 in 1972. From 1963, family planning services were initiated with one medical officer, one extension doctor, one ANM and two family workers to supervise four sub-centres. Each sub-centre was expected to cater to a population of approximately ten thousand.

An expert committee appointed by the Ministry of Health and Family Planning in 1973 to examine the full utilization of the existing beds in PHCs observed that, apart from West Bengal and Kerala where utilization was 50%, in States such as Bihar, Rajasthan, U.P., Orissa, M.P., and Jammu and Kashmir it was hardly between 5 and 15%. The reasons were the apathy of the staff, the status barriers between the doctor and the people of a low socio-economic group and the absence of a lady doctor in many centres. Emphasizing the need to improve maternity and child welfare services, this Committee recommended the provision of domiciliary maternity services.

The present pattern of health services puts more emphasis on curative services on which the expenditure is three times more than on preventive services, and most of it is urban-centred. Only 10% of the hospital beds are meant for four-fifths of the population living in rural areas.

Maternity services show wide regional variations. The report of the Study Group on Hospitals (1968) estimated that maternity beds (45,000) constituted less than 17% of total hospital facilities.

The health statistics for the States reveal that Kerala, which stands out for provision of maternity services also, has the highest expectancy of life for women which is 60.7 as compared to Uttar Pradesh where it is 53.7, nearly the lowest in India. Kerala also has the lowest infant mortality rate. Other States such as

Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Assam, Karnataka, and West Bengal which have paid some attention to these services have helped to improve the expectations of life for women.

The impact of these services have not been uniform because factors such as education employment, and cultural norms are important variables influencing the utilization of these services. Apart from regional variations in both attitudes and norms, the accessibility of health services is also affected by rural-urban and socio-economic differentials, including a broad pattern of sex differentials. Sex differentials are deep-rooted in attitudes regarding the needs of women for care and assistance during ailments. The studies in nutritional deficiencies of women indicate that though the incidence of diseases caused by malnutrition is higher not only among adult women but also among female infants, the hospital records reveal that more male children are treated for such diseases.

Two-thirds of the total number of doctors and nurses and most hospitals are concentrated in urban areas (which have only one-fifth of the total population) and the rural population get a much smaller share. The National Sample Survey (19th Round) found that 46% of all births in urban India are attended by trained medical personnel as compared to 9% in rural areas and that the average per capita private monthly expenditure on medicine and medical services is Rs. 1.01 in urban areas and about half of that in rural areas. A recent study on rural health services pointed to the inadequacy of medical personnel, especially ANMs in the villages. Consequent upon the small number of ANMs the area covered by one ANM is too large, with consequent difficulties of transport and accommodation, and night halts and problems of security which effect their functioning. Second, for an outsider like the average ANM, a degree of acceptance and security by influential members of the village community is essential. But as they very often monopolize her services, the gap between the ANM and the masses of women who need her services is widened.

#### FAMILY PLANNING : RELATIONSHIP WITH WOMEN'S STATUS

In our opinion, the neglect of maternity and child health services and over-concentration of efforts on family planning have contri-

buted to the trends discussed above and have defeated the ultimate objective of the family planning programme itself. Propagators of the family planning movement in India have been keen to emphasize improvement in the status of women as one of the direct consequences of family planning. Recent researches in this field, however, seem to agree more on the obverse of the relationship, viz., improved status of women, with a rise in the age of marriage, better education, employment, better living conditions, and greater general awareness, has a direct impact on the acceptance of family planning methods. There is no doubt that knowledge of family planning releases women from the bondage of repeated and frequent child birth, gives them a greater control over their life and future, and prevents excessive drain on their physical resources. A third consequence which is sometimes emphasized is the possible change in husband-wife relationship and improved position in decision-making within the family. Each of these developments is integrally connected with a complex set of variables—social, economic, demographic, and political, among which the woman's ability to control the size of her family could be a contributory factor for improving her status.

An enormous volume of research has developed out of the need to evaluate the progress of family planning in India. The results of a national survey\* indicate that the percentage of couples using family planning methods increases with the age of wife, number of living children, education of wife, family income, size of city or village. Some studies reported a reluctance for family planning among Muslims, but others, and our own evidence, do not indicate any disapproval on religious grounds as such. Most studies found a direct relationship between education and employment status of women and their readiness to accept family planning. Other associational factors include:

- (i) rise in the age of marriage;
- (ii) standard of living and socio-economic status of the couple;
- (iii) mobility; and
- (iv) exposure to mass-media and knowledge of diverse methods of contraception.

\*Conducted by the Operations Research Group, Ministry of Health and Family Planning during 1970-71.

The IUCD\* which was introduced in 1965 was initially successful, but showed a reverse trend. During our tours we were informed that careless handling of IUCD insertions by the paramedical staff and inadequate follow-up treatment had caused this loss of popularity.

Tubectomies accounted for two-thirds of all sterilizations during 1956-58, and up to 1959, they exceeded the number of vasectomies. After 1960, the number of vasectomies increased more rapidly and in 1965 and 1972, accounted for more than 80% of all sterilizations. Since this is a terminal method, women are reluctant to adopt tubectomy because of the uncertainty regarding the survival of their children. We were told by women doctors of two specific arguments against tubectomy: (1) cases of 'post-ligation syndrome' where women developed psychological disturbances; and (2) cases where the operation is dangerous because of extremely anaemic conditions of a large number of women.

Another measure adopted by Government, *viz.*, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971, aims to reduce the incidence of criminal abortions. The Act allows termination of pregnancy on therapeutic grounds, eugenic grounds, humanitarian grounds, and social grounds. Hospital records indicate that 15% to 20% of maternal deaths arise from abortions. The vital statistics, 1966-67, indicate that abortions form a high percentage of causes of all deaths due to child birth. Two studies of the National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad, show that pregnancy wastage from miscarriage and abortions ranges from 16-19% to 28-32% among low-income groups.

While the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act emphasizes its importance as a health measure, the permission given under section 3(2)(b) for termination of pregnancies for married women in cases of contraceptive failure, emphasizes its importance as an instrument of population control. The available evidence shows that it is used more for birth control than as a health measure.

All the studies indicate that most of these women who go in for induced abortions are in favour of small families, if not

\*Intra-uterine contraceptive device.

planned parenthood, and can be persuaded through counselling, to adopt safer methods of birth control. Medical practitioners are convinced of the serious psychological hazards of both unwanted pregnancies and sterilization. Systematic research in this field is imperative. Several medical practitioners are reluctant to perform this operation because of ethical considerations, long recording procedures and paper work, and lack of proper medical facilities especially in rural areas. We were informed that some hospitals insist on sterilization or the husband's consent before performing abortion. We feel that while the doctors should have the authority to discourage an abortion when it poses a definite risk to the health, the imposition of such conditions will only drive women to unqualified persons and defeat the main purpose of the Act.

#### CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT POLICY

During the First and the Second Five Year plans, Government regarded the problem of population control as a long-term objective which depended as much on 'improvement in living standards and more widespread education, especially among women' as on making the people adopt methods for family planning. In the Third Plan, the programme received greater emphasis and priority, with time-bound targets for reduction of the birth rate, a large administrative network, and adoption of such methods as mass camps or monetary incentives for sterilization. Legalization of abortion was another step in that direction. Some State Governments even restricted the right to maternity benefits of women government servants to three children only.

This change in emphasis indicates excessive reliance on the clinical rather than on the welfare approach to family planning. While the Plan allocation for all other health programmes went up from Rs. 98 crores in the First Plan to Rs. 226 crores in the Fourth Plan, that on family planning went up from Rs. 6.50 crores in the First Plan to Rs. 315 crores in the Fourth Plan. Thus other health services did not develop adequately because of the excessive emphasis on population control. It has been now realized that a purely clinical and target-oriented approach cannot overcome the socio-psychological resistance caused by

poverty, ignorance, and low survival rate of children among the poorer sections. The Fifth Plan visualizes integration of family planning into the general health services such as maternity, child care, and nutrition programmes. The proposed integrated health services will provide a far greater incentive to the adoption of family planning measures than the earlier reliance on 'motivation' and 'incentives' which have come in for severe criticism. In our opinion the inadequacy of qualified medical personnel, specially in rural area, and absence of mature counselling are the greatest drawbacks to the success of family planning.

#### WELFARE PROGRAMMES

The programmes to promote women's welfare and development have been evolved separately for rural and urban areas. Apart from certain general programmes there are others meant for specific groups of women.

(1) *Programmes in Rural Areas* aim to train and mobilize women in villages for their development and are modelled on Gandhian ideas for women's progress to which the Kasturba Memorial Trust gave a concrete shape. Education, health services, and socio-economic programmes (in the form of khadi and village industries) to relieve economic distress formed the three prongs of this composite programme. In 1954, when the Central Social Welfare Board decided to launch the Welfare Extension Projects (WEP), this three-fold approach was adopted as the basic framework and their activities included Balwadis, maternity services and general medical aid, social education, and craft training for women. Since the objectives and methodology of this programme was similar to the community development programmes, initiated in 1952, similar projects were started in CD Blocks on a co-ordinated basis and the budget was shared by the CSWB, the State Government, and the CD Block in the ratio of 12:6:5 for the first five years and in the ratio of 24:12:5 thereafter.

In 1966, 1,629 centres of WEP were handed over to Mahila Mandals run by voluntary agencies. On the recommendation of the CSWB and an Evaluation Committee of the WEP, it was decided to develop a countrywide programme of integrated

welfare services for children and thus the scheme of Family and Child Welfare Projects (F & CWP) was initiated in 1967 and funded by the Central and the State Governments in a 75:25 ratio and aided by UNICEF. The services provided by F & CWP are: integrated services to the pre-school child, training to young mothers including home management, health education, nutrition education and child care, assistance to women through Mahila Mandals and existing welfare agencies, and cultural education and recreational activities.

In the First Plan, Maternity and Child Welfare Services were taken up by the Ministry of Health as part of the overall development programme in health. At the same time, the Community Projects Administration also undertook these services in the CD and NES Blocks. Other Ministries such as Railways, Defence, and Labour also promoted maternity and child welfare programmes. Since it was realized from the beginning that the objectives of these programmes could not be achieved without the active participation of the members and leaders of the local community, it was decided to constitute committees of local women to guide or run these programmes. Mahila Mandals were organized in villages and blocks for promoting women's programmes. Various village functionaries needed for these development schemes were trained by Government agencies and non-governmental organizations such as the Kasturba Memorial Trust, Visva Bharati, and Jamia Milia with assistance from the CSWB.

(2) *Programmes in Urban Areas*: Apart from some WEPS, most programmes in urban areas have been left to voluntary organizations receiving grants from the CSWB. The best known is the scheme for Working Women's Hostels.

(3) *Other Programmes*: These include condensed courses of education for adult women and socio-economic programmes (e.g. training-cum-production centres in simple crafts), which were initially started for the rehabilitation of refugee women and were later on taken up by the CSWB to provide an extra source of income to needy women. The CSWB also provides financial assistance to voluntary welfare institutions and cooperative societies for small production units. A number of Ministries such as Railways, Labour, Agriculture, and Community Development have schemes for providing craft training for women.

While most welfare programmes attempt to improve earning power, they do not have the desired impact. Difficulties in getting raw material, credit and marketing finished products make many of them commercially non-viable. The training imparted is only in production skills, not in organization and marketing. Handicapped by their lack of command over modern markets, sales promotion methods, and regular organized production, these programmes often fail to achieve their objective. Strangely enough, the government agencies responsible for promoting industrial development completely ignored them.

The nutrition programmes which were emphasized in the plans as a major need of lower income groups, are being operated by the Department of Social Welfare and CSWB, the Ministry of Health and Family Planning, the Department of Community Development of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Education. The Fourth Plan Special Nutrition Programme for pre-school children and expectant and nursing mothers has been redesignated as the Integrated Child Development Programme (ICDP) in the Fifth Plan and is proposed to be implemented by co-ordination between the Ministry of Health, State Health departments, Community Development Department, and the Department of Social Welfare. The entire expenditure for the ICDP during the Fifth Plan will be met by the Centre.

Social Defence Programmes for the correction and rehabilitation of women, (*i.e.*, suppression of immoral traffic, after-care services, and welfare services in prisons), are provided by the Department of Social Welfare and the Rehabilitation Directorate at the Central level. State Governments are assisted to set up protective homes. At present, there are 33 protective homes and 68 reception centres and district shelters in the country. The inmates of these homes are given training in sewing and embroidery to help them become self-employed when they are discharged. There are no formal arrangements for marketing these products nor are the inmates given any training to organize production and marketing. Various reports by social workers indicate that these women find it difficult to earn a living from this occupation. Without economic rehabilitation, much of this effort is wasted as many of them are compelled to return to their old professions. The homes which are provided for the

aged and destitute women are highly inadequate in terms of the population to be covered.

#### ROLE OF VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

The grants given to registered voluntary institutions during the four Plans indicate that Government's dependence on these bodies has registered a decline during the Third and Fourth Plans. Voluntary welfare programmes co-exist with governmental programmes and provide a supportive base to them since it is not possible for Government to look after all the welfare needs of the people. Voluntary organizations, whose basic assets are flexibility, and greater capacity for experimentation, nearness to the people, and sensitivity to new problems could be of great assistance. We met representatives of women's voluntary organizations in every State. Most of these are confined to the urban areas and their membership is drawn mainly from the educated middle class women. Few organizations have worked among rural women. In some cases, the grant was given for administration and maintenance while, in other cases, for programmes only. Apart from the CSWB's grants-in-aid programme, there is no machinery to co-ordinate the efforts of these agencies and ensure even distribution. The resources of majority of these organizations are inadequate to maintain trained staff. The relative importance of the role of the state and the role of voluntary agencies has been engaging attention of the planners, policy-makers, administrators and social workers, but this is hardly an either-or issue. What is needed is a well-coordinated effort on both fronts.

#### GOVERNMENTAL ADMINISTRATION OF WELFARE PROGRAMMES

Welfare, which is a non-productive item, gets a low priority in financial allocations in comparison to other sectors. A major part of the allocations made for these programmes is spent on maintenance and establishment charges, leaving little for actual services. The administration and handling of welfare programmes has become increasingly technical.

The administrative tradition in India, which emphasized maintenance of law and order and economic development, has

been slow in accepting the need for technical competence and difference in orientation necessary for social welfare administration. Limited resources and lack of emphasis on technical competence have had an adverse impact on the quality of the programmes.

There are other factors which impede the adoption of a rational organization and flexible approach in operation :

(1) In the federal structure of our polity, the responsibility for implementing social policies and programmes rests with States and local authorities while the resources and the planning agencies are at the Centre.

(2) The State Governments give still lower priority\* to social welfare programmes. The policy for women's welfare and development is limited to education or welfare of special groups such as handicapped or destitute women. The interests of the weaker sections who are less vocal and powerful than the dominant sections, generally suffer in State and local administrations.

(3) Most State Governments do not have any machinery for collection of data or planning welfare services. The State Boards which might have undertaken this role, serve mainly as link organizations to supervise, implement, and report on the working of voluntary agencies getting aid and as agents of the CSWB.

(4) The relationship between the CSWB and the State Boards is not clearly defined and the status of the State Boards differs from State to State.

(5) Local administrations show even more apathy to women's welfare programmes. We were informed that the rural elite are not favourably disposed towards changing the position of women and that the co-opted women members of Panchayats have not been very effective. Women's programmes have generally been starved of funds.

All these have led to an increasing burden on the Centre. The Centre provides assistance for the development programmes

\*All programmes for women in the State of Uttar Pradesh once described as a model for co-ordination, efficiency, and achievement, were closed down by Shri Charan Singh as Chief Minister, presumably on grounds of economy.

during the Plan period and at the end, the full responsibility for their maintenance devolves on the States which are not always willing to assume it. In some cases, the programmes have been redesignated so as to get continued Central assistance.

This centralization has overshadowed the concept of local need-based approach to social welfare. The programmes and policies initiated at the Centre also widen the gap between the levels of policy-making and the levels of implementation and defeat the very objective of social welfare. It has further prevented the State Governments from assuming their due responsibility in the field of welfare. The authority and initiative of the field staff is greatly impaired since they are not consulted in framing programmes. The State Boards have little authority to either initiate or review the programmes of the CSWB. Bureaucratization also hampers the progress of the programmes through delays in sanction and release of grants, standardization of programmes without reference to local needs, and multiplicity of programmes, agencies and functionaries leading to a waste of resources. There is very little co-ordination at the State level also. The CSWB's efforts to co-ordinate its activities with the local bodies have evoked little response.

#### THE CENTRAL SOCIAL WELFARE BOARD

As the most important central agency for the implementation of welfare activities, the CSWB enjoyed, in its initial years, some autonomy, although it had no legal, independent existence.\* In fact the only justification for its creation lay in the nature of welfare work which cannot be easily administered within the procedural framework of a Government department. But this autonomy has been considerably eroded since then. When the CSWB was created as a specialized agency, there was no Central department of Social Welfare. With the establishment of the Department of Social Welfare in 1966 and its increasing role in planning and execution of welfare programmes, the position of the Board has become anomalous, with an adverse effect on its functioning.

\*I. was created in 1953 by a Resolution of the Ministry of Education to promote welfare and development services for women, children, and other underprivileged groups.

At the Conference of State Ministers of Social Welfare in 1972 and 1974, recommendations were made for the reorganization of the Central Social Welfare Board, giving representation on it to all the State Governments and Union Territory Administrations. No action has, so far, been taken to give effect to these recommendations.

For a satisfactory implementation of welfare programmes, it is essential that the relationship of the voluntary and the government sector should be complementary. The voluntary sector should provide services and the financial contribution should come from Government. At present, however, voluntary organizations are totally excluded from the decision-making process and are reduced to a status of grant-receiving agencies. They also lack technical and organizational competence and trained staff, and are unable to utilize the available resources in a fruitful manner. The Conference of State Ministers and Secretaries of Social Welfare held in 1974 agreed that procedures and rules for making grants should be liberalized and that due provision should be made for training voluntary workers. The need for greater co-ordination between governmental and non-governmental sectors at all levels, and particularly at district level, has also been emphasized.

The staff of the CSWB and State Boards is also not on par with government employees. The field staff is temporary, depending on allocations and the continuity of the Project.

Progress in the development of welfare programmes for women and children has been hampered by several factors such as the *ad hoc* nature of the programmes, procedural difficulties faced by field agencies because of the variations in status and functions of these agencies, delay in release of grants, inadequacy of trained staff due to paucity of funds, and the reluctance of State Governments to take over the responsibility. For example, 13 States and 3 Union Territories agreed to accept the responsibility for Family and Child Welfare Projects at the end of the Fourth Plan Period; and in the six States which have not so agreed, the continuation of ongoing projects is uncertain and it is proposed to absorb them in the new programme for Integrated Child Development. The CSWB feels that these changes in the nomenclature and the contents of the programmes and their transfer to State Governments without ensuring their continuity,

only tends to confuse the rural population, and affects results.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

We will now conclude this chapter with a brief enumeration of our major recommendations.

*Health and Family Planning:* In our opinion, over-concentration on efforts for family planning has led not only to the neglect of maternity and child health services and general public health services, but also defeated the ultimate objective of the family planning programme itself. We therefore welcome the proposed integration of family planning with other health services and recommend that:

(1) The rank of the Chief Executive for the integrated maternity and child health services, including family planning, should be upgraded to at least Additional Commissioner, so that this service does not again become subordinate to family planning. This procedure should be adopted at all levels of the administration at the Centre and in the States.

(2) A separate budget head for maternity and child health services should be created, drawing on the provisions now made for family planning and the general health services. Since programmes for immunization and nutrition of infants yields better results when they form a part of general maternity and child health services, we see no difficulty in increasing the allocation for these services.

(3) At the level of the primary health centres, the maternity and child health services should be separated, for purposes of administrative provision, medical personnel, and budget as this will ensure greater priority of treatment. Facilities in the way of maternity beds, equipment for immunization of children, and family planning for women could be allocated to the MCH Unit. The PHC could be made responsible for sterilization operations for men along with other general health services. The MCH Unit could co-ordinate the nutrition and immunization measures which form a basic component of the integrated child development programme.

(4) Each MCH centre should collect and maintain fertility and morbidity data which should be studied and evaluated at



the district level by persons with the necessary competence. This will call for a health statistics Section at the district level.

(5) The present practice of providing financial incentives to promoters of family planning should be abolished. Incentives to women who accept family planning should be in the shape of a token or certificate to ensure them greater priority in health care facilities for both the mothers and their children. Compensation for loss of wages during sterilization operations should, however, be paid to daily wage labourers. Others should be given paid leave for this purpose.

(6) The qualifications prescribed for recruitment of personnel for these services in rural areas need to be gradually raised. Attempts should also be made to obtain the services of older and mature women for these services in the rural areas.

(7) Research in the field of female disorders; e.g., puerperal psychosis and effects of family planning methods, should be promoted.

(8) The denial of maternity benefits to women in Government service after three children (as adopted by some State Governments\*) should be rescinded.

(9) Mass campaigns for family planning should also aim to correct prevailing social attitudes regarding fertility and metabolic hereditary disorders and the sex of the child for which the woman is generally blamed. Correct information in these matters would go a long way to improve the status of women.

*Changes Needed in the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act:*

(1) According to Section 4(a) of the Act, consent of a minor girl is not required for this operation while in other surgical operations of children above 12, such consent is necessary. In our view this distinction is uncalled for and may lead to guardians compelling young girls to undergo this operation even when they do not want it. The consent of the patient should be essential. In the case of a minor girl nearing majority, if the doctor and the patient are in agreement, the consent of the guardian may be dispensed with. In all such cases, greater discretion should be permitted to the doctor.

(2) Section 8 of the Act provides an overriding precaution

\*e.g. Maharashtra and Kerala.

to the doctor for any damage caused by the operation. This seems unnecessary and may lead to negligence. It should be deleted.

(3) While we appreciate the ethical considerations which make many doctors reluctant to perform this operation, we feel that it is a woman's right to have control over the size of her family. At the same time it is important that doctors should have the authority to discourage such operations when they pose definite risk to the health of a patient. The condition being imposed in many hospitals that abortion will only be performed if the patient agrees to sterilization, should not be compulsive. It would be far better to adopt methods of persuasion through expert counselling.

(4) The procedure and paper work involved in these operations need to be simplified. It is also necessary to extend facilities for authorized termination of pregnancies, particularly in the rural areas.

(5) Many hospitals continue to insist on the husband's consent before performing these operations though this is not required by the law. A special effort needs to be made to convince the medical profession of the social value of this law from the point of view of both individuals and society.

(6) Most doctors are reluctant to perform these operations in the case of unmarried girls. It is necessary to clarify the point that rape is not the only ground to justify termination in cases of unmarried girls, nor is there any legal obligation on the doctor to inform the Police of an operation done in a rape case.

*Welfare and Development:* (1) In order to prevent any ambiguity in the understanding of what constitutes women's welfare and to prevent the development of policies that sometimes go against the basic objectives, Government of India should evolve a national policy on women's development in the light of the constitutional directives and pledges made to the women of this country and to the international community from time to time.

(2) The Central and State Social Welfare Boards should be reorganized as a statutory and autonomous specialized agency for planning, coordination, and management of welfare and development programmes for women and children.

*Constitution of Special Commissions at the Centre and in the States:* One important reason for the failure of various laws

and administrative programmes to make the desired impact, is the absence of any single agency, which could co-ordinate and examine these measures and provide expert advice on methods of implementation. We therefore recommend the constitution of statutory, autonomous Commissions at the Centre and the States with the following functions:

(1) *Collection of Information:* For this function, these Commissions should be empowered to call for information on different matters from the concerned agencies of Government and suggest improved methods of data collection.

(2) *Evaluation of Existing Policies, Programmes, and Laws* that have a bearing on the status of women with powers (1) to censure non-implementation of these measures and (2) to point out lacunae or deficiencies and to suggest amendments or improvements. The comments and suggestions of the Commission, made in consultation with the concerned Government Department, should be placed before Parliament or State legislature in the form of a report and should be answered by the Government concerned within a stipulated period.

(3) *Authority to recommend*, to Parliament or to the State legislatures, new laws, policies, or programmes with a view to implementing the stated objectives and policies. The Government concerned should be responsible to consider such recommendations for action or to explain their non-acceptance.

(4) *Redress of grievances* in cases of actual violation of existing laws.

In view of the functions visualized for the Commissions, their composition has to be broadbased and representative. One group of members may be drawn from representatives of leading women's organizations, trade unions, legislative and local bodies, and employers from both public and private sectors. The second group should be drawn from experts in the fields of law, health, education, social research, and administration. The Commissions should be empowered to co-opt one or two members from sectors which are unrepresented.

The Chairman should be a full-time non-official woman. The majority of the members should be women and the Commissions should be empowered to appoint their secretariat.

We also recommend the establishment of Special Tribunals for all violations of human rights, discrimination against women, violation or evasion of the existing laws and policies for the protection of women's rights in society.

## APPENDIX

## THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

THE COMMITTEE was appointed on 22nd September, 1971 and submitted its Report to Government on 31st December, 1974.

## COMPOSITION

The Committee consisted of the following:

1. Dr. (Smt.) Phulrenu Guha	Chairman
2. Kumari Mani Ben Kara	Member
3. Smt. Neera Dogra	"
4. Smt. Savitri Shyam	"
5. Smt. Sakina Hasan	"
6. Smt. K. Lakshmi Raghuramaiah	"
7. Smt. Urmila Haksar	"
8. Dr. (Smt.) Leela Dube	"
9. Dr. (Smt.) Lotika Sarkar	"
10. Sri Vikram Mahajan	"
11. Dr. (Smt.) Vina Mazumdar	Member-Secretary*

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference to the Committee were

- (i) to examine the Constitutional, legal and administrative provisions that have a bearing on the social status of women, their education and employment;
- (ii) to assess the impact of these provisions during the last two decades on the status of women in the country, particularly in the rural sector, and to suggest more effective programmes;

\*Dr. (Smt.) Vina Mazumdar became Member-Secretary, *Vice* Smt. Shakuntala Masani on 1-10-1973 when the Committee was reconstituted.

- (iii) to consider the development of education among women and determine the factors responsible for the slow progress in some areas and suggest remedial measures;
- (iv) to survey the problems of the working women including discrimination in employment and remuneration;
- (v) to examine the status of women as house-wives and mothers in the changing social pattern and their problems in the sphere of further education and employment;
- (vi) to undertake surveys of case studies on the implications of the population policies and family planning programmes on the status of women; and
- (vii) to suggest any other measures which would enable women to play their full and proper role in building up the nation.

## PROGRAMME OF WORK

The Committee set up six small Task Forces and two Study Groups to examine the changes in the field of law, employment, education, other aspects of economic life, political participation, social life in general, and health problems. It carried out four surveys to measure the changes in the social status of women and their employment position, both in the public and the private sector. Information regarding Government programmes for women's welfare and development was obtained from various Ministries, Departments, and other agencies of the Union and State Governments. The Committee also toured all States and met, in each state, about 500 women who formed a cross section from different walks of life, both in urban and rural areas. The Committee also met representatives of national women's organizations, voluntary agencies working in the field of welfare, trade union organizations, political parties and official and non-official experts in different fields. The Committee also had the benefit of 75 papers and studies on specific matters relating to its work (some of these were based on documentary research and others on empirical field study), prepared by scholars from different disciplines whose assistance was commissioned by the Indian Council of Social Science Research. The Report of the Committee is thus based on the collective effort of the Committee's members, its small research staff, and scholars from different disciplines.

## STATISTICAL TABLES

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1.	Growth of female population in India, 1901-71 (in millions)
2.	Sex ratio by age-groups, India, 1971
3.	Sex ratio in States, 1921-71
4.	Expectation of life at birth, 1921-71
5.	Projected values of expectation of life at birth, all India and States, 1951-85
6.	Age-specific death rates, rural India, 1969
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Table 1 : Growth of female population in India 1901-71 (in millions)

Year	Total population	Male population	Female population	Females per 1000 males
1901	238	121	117	972
1911	252	128	124	964
1921	251	128	123	955
1931	279	143	136	950
1941	319	164	155	945
1951	361	186	175	946
1961	439	226	213	941
1971	548	284	264	930

Table 2 : Sex ratio by age-groups, India, 1971\*

Age group	Females per 1000 males		
	Total	Rural	Urban
All ages	931	951	857
0-4	969	972	953
5-9	935	935	931
10-14	887	885	895
15-19	883	896	839
20-24	1,008	1,074	830
25-29	1,027	1,078	863
30-34	990	1,045	811
35-39	916	949	802
40-44	882	922	737
45-49	839	876	705
50-54	848	868	761
55-59	867	882	801
60-64	923	926	908
65-69	916	921	895
70*	961	957	978
Age not stated	1,050	1,068	972

\*Figures are provisional. Estimated from 1 per cent sample data.

Table 3 : Sex ratio in States, 1921-71

State	Females per 1000 males					
	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971
Andhra Pradesh	993	987	980	986	981	977
Assam	908	886	886	877	876	901
Bihar	1,016	994	996	990	994	956
Gujarat	944	945	941	952	940	936
Jammu & Kashmir	870	865	869	873	878	882
Kerala	1,011	1,022	1,027	1,028	1,022	1,019
Madhya Pradesh	974	973	970	967	953	943
Maharashtra	950	947	949	941	936	932
Mysore	969	965	960	966	959	959
Orissa	1,086	1,067	1,053	1,022	1,001	989
Punjab	821	830	850	858	864	874
Rajasthan	896	907	906	921	908	919
Tamil Nadu	1,029	1,027	1,012	1,007	992	979
Uttar Pradesh	909	904	907	910	909	883
West Bengal	905	890	852	865	878	892

Table 4 : Expectation of Life at Birth, 1921-71

Decade	Years	
	Male	Female
1921-31	26.9	26.6
1931-41	32.1	31.4
1941-51	32.4	31.7
1951-61	41.9	40.6
1961-71	47.1	45.6

Table 5 : Projected values of expectation of life at birth, all India and States, 1951-85

States		1951-60	1961-65	1966-70	1971-75	1976-80	1981-85
All India	M	41.9	48.7	53.2	57.3	61.1	63.1
	F	40.6	47.4	51.9	56.0	59.0	61.8
Kerala	M	49.5	55.5	59.5	63.1	66.4	66.9
	F	47.1	53.1	57.1	60.7	64.0	64.5
Punjab	M	49.9	55.9	59.9	63.5	66.8	67.3
	F	44.0	51.0	55.0	58.6	61.9	62.4
Rajasthan	M	49.2	55.2	59.2	62.8	66.1	66.6
	F	44.3	50.3	54.3	57.9	61.2	61.7
Maharashtra	M	40.1	52.1	56.1	59.7	63.0	63.5
	F	44.3	50.3	54.3	57.9	61.2	61.7
West Bengal	M	44.1	50.1	54.1	57.7	61.0	61.5
	F	44.5	50.5	54.5	58.1	61.4	61.9
Orissa	M	40.7	47.5	52.0	56.1	59.9	60.9
	F	41.1	47.9	52.4	56.5	60.3	61.3
Madhya Pradesh	M	41.2	48.0	52.5	56.6	60.4	61.4
	F	40.0	46.8	51.3	55.4	59.2	60.2
Karnataka	M	41.2	48.0	52.5	56.6	60.4	61.4
	F	39.2	46.0	50.5	54.6	58.4	59.4
Gujarāt	M	40.8	47.6	52.1	56.2	60.0	61.0
	F	39.2	46.0	50.5	54.6	58.4	59.4
Uttar Pradesh	M	39.4	46.2	50.7	54.8	58.6	59.6
	F	38.3	45.1	49.6	53.7	57.5	58.5
Bihar	M	37.4	44.9	49.9	54.5	58.8	60.8
	F	37.8	45.3	50.3	54.9	59.2	61.2
Andhra Pradesh	M	37.8	45.3	50.3	54.9	59.2	61.2
	F	36.0	43.5	48.5	53.1	57.4	59.4
Assam	M	36.6	44.1	48.1	53.7	59.0	60.0
	F	37.0	44.5	49.5	54.1	58.4	60.4

Source : Family Planning Programme, Gujarat, Fact Book, p. 9, Published by State Family Planning Bureau, Demographic and Evaluation Cell, Gujarat, 1972.

Table 6 : Age-specific death rates, rural India, 1969

Age-group	Males	Females
0-4	58.3	70.2
5-9	5.8	7.4
10-14	3.0	2.7
5-14	4.5	5.3
15-19	2.1	4.2
20-24	3.9	5.5
25-29	3.7	5.5
30-34	4.1	6.4
35-39	6.5	6.1
40-44	8.5	7.6
45-49	13.2	9.4
15-49	5.3	6.1
50-54	18.7	16.2
55-59	28.3	20.2
60-64	44.0	38.7
65-69	59.9	52.2
70*	123.0	119.5
Total	18.2	20.1

\*Age-specific death rate: Number of deaths in a year in any specified age-group per 1,000 persons in that age-group.

Table 7 : Infant mortality rates for selected States (SRS) 1969

State	Rural		Urban	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Andhra Pradesh	131.7	126.0	—	—
Assam	154.2	104.4	110.7	92.4
Gujarat	153.2	177.8	—	—
Haryana	82.9	76.1	—	—
Jammu & Kashmir	106.3	98.9	79.1	40.5
Kerala	64.8	48.5	—	—
Maharashtra	101.0	113.4	—	—
Mysore	114.5	104.4	60.1	54.4
Punjab	80.9	115.9	70.3	86.7
Rajasthan	167.6	170.2	97.0	84.2
Tamil Nadu	115.0	109.8	—	—
Uttar Pradesh	153.9	205.9	119.0	99.7
Estimates for all the 12 States	132.3	148.1	—	—

**Table 8 :** Percentage distribution of female population aged 10 years and above by marital status, India, 1961 and 1971

Marital Status	Year	Rural	Urban	Total
Unmarried	1961	15.8	24.2	17.2
	1971	20.2	29.2	22.0
Married	1961	67.5	61.1	66.5
Widowed	1961	15.8	14.0	15.5
	1971	12.9	11.0	12.5
Divorced/Separated	1961	0.8	0.6	0.7
	1971	0.5	0.4	0.5
Unspecified Status	1961	0.1	0.1	0.1
	1971	0.1	0.1	0.1

**Table 9 :** (a) Mean age at marriage, India, 1901-71

Decade	Males	Females
1901-11	20.2	13.2
1911-21	20.5	13.6
1921-31	18.4	12.6
1931-41	20.2	15.0
1941-51	19.8	15.4
1951-61	21.4	16.1
1961-71	22.2	17.2

**(b) Mean age at marriage, India, 1961-71\***

	Males	Females
Rural	21.6	16.7
Urban	24.3	19.2
Total	22.2	17.2

\*Based on 1% Sample data.

**Table 10 :** (a) Migration streams, 1971

Migration type	Total	Males	Females	Females per 1,000 males
Rural to rural	70.8	52.7	78.6	3447
Urban to rural	5.5	7.6	4.6	1398
Rural to urban	13.9	23.4	9.8	963
Urban to urban	9.8	16.3	7.0	990
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	2310

**(b) Distance and migration, 1971**

Migration type	Total	Males	Females	Females per 1,000 males
Short distance	67.4	54.9	72.8	3063
Medium distance	21.5	26.6	19.4	1682
Long distance	11.1	18.5	7.8	980
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	2310

**Table 11 :** Enrolment in primary education as percentage of the population in the corresponding age-groups

Year	Primary stage (classes I-IV)			Middle stage (classes V to VII)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1950-51	55.0	20.1	37.8	20.8	4.6	13.0
1955-56	59.5	25.0	42.6	25.6	6.9	16.5
1960-61	74.0	35.0	54.8	35.5	12.5	24.3
1965-66	90.2	47.6	69.2	49.9	20.7	35.6
1970-71	109.8	68.6	89.7	66.7	33.0	50.7
1975-76 (Estimated)	109.7	97.2	106.4	81.9	55.7	69.2

(Contd.)

Source : Ministry of Education, Government of India.

Table 11 (Contd.)

(b) Secondary stage

Year	(Classes VII to X)			(Classes IX to XI)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1950-51	10.9	1.8	6.5	3.3	0.5	1.9
1955-56	14.9	3.3	9.3	5.2	0.9	3.1
1960-61	20.8	5.4	13.1	8.0	1.6	4.9
1965-66	28.7	9.1	19.1	11.5	2.3	7.0
1970-71	34.2	12.2	23.4	14.6	3.5	9.2
1975-76	40.8	16.9	29.1	17.0	4.8	11.0

Source : Ministry of Education, Government of India.

Table 12 : Total enrolment in the educational System—all levels

Year	Boys	Girls	Excess of boys over girls
1950-51	1,91,42,009	64,00,763 (33)	1,27,41,246
1960-61	3,37,04,897	1,42,59,505 (42)	1,94,45,392
1970-71	5,57,12,623	3,00,30,484 (54)	2,56,82,139

Figures within parentheses indicate the number of girls enrolled per 100 boys.

Table 13 : Enrolment of women in university education (all levels included)—(faculty-wise)  
(U.P. Board included)

Faculty	1950-51			1960-61			1970-71		
	Total	Women	No. of women per 100 men	Total (T)	Women (W)	No. of women per 100 men	Total	Women	No. of women per 100 men
Arts	1,82,005	29,262	16.1	4,86,228	1,19,687	24.6	13,29,626	4,21,850	31.7
Science	1,27,168	9,046	7.1	3,02,700	31,696	10.5	9,48,069	1,68,540	17.8
Commerce	34,067	189	0.6	90,214	831	0.9	3,44,108	12,675	3.7
Education	4,135	1,339	32.4	19,005	6,230	32.8	56,922	20,799	36.5
Engg./Tech.	12,094	19	0.16	45,389	403	0.89	90,034	910	1.0
Medicine	15,260	2,493	16.3	35,215	7,714	21.9	97,601	22,296	22.8
Agriculture	4,744	8	0.17	27,584	124	0.45	43,352	169	0.4
Veterinary Science	1,101	5	0.45	5,385	38	0.71	6,222	44	0.7
Law	13,649	290	2.01	27,251	815	3.0	70,618	2,626	3.7
Others	2,522	475	18.8	10,893	2,917	26.8	14,800	5,913	40.0
All faculties	3,96,745	43,126	10.9	10,49,864	1,70,455	16.2	30,01,292	6,55,822	21.9

Source : 1950-51 and 1960-61, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, U.G.C.



Table 14 : Enrolment for university education (all faculties inclusive) stage-wise  
(U.P. Board included)

Year	Stage											
	Undergraduate*			Postgraduate			Research			All levels		
	Total (T)	Women (W)	W+100 T	Total (T)	Women (W)	W+100 T	Total (T)	Women (W)	W+100 T	Total (T)	Women (W)	W+100 T
1950-51	3,75,319	40,499	10.8	19,992	2,425	12.1	1,434	202	14.1	3,96,745	33,126	10.9
1960-61	9,85,872	1,59,491	16.2	58,909	10,170	17.3	5,083	794	15.6	1,049,864	170,455	16.2
1970-71	2,826,799	611,553	21.6	161,182	41,516	25.8	13,311	2,753	20.7	3,001,292	655,822	21.9

\* includes P, UC, PP, C

£ Including the Research enrolment in Commerce, Education, Engineering/Technology and Medicine.

Sources : (1) 1950-51 and 1960-61, *Education in Universities in India*, Annual publication of the Union Ministry of Education and Social Welfare.

(2) 1970-71, *University Development in India—Basic Facts and Figures*, U.G.C., Annual publication.

Table 15 : Quinquennial growth in enrolment by stage of education—  
1960-61 to 1970-71

Stage	1960-61 to 1965-66 Quinquennial growth rate			1965-66 to 1970-71 (75) Quinquennial growth rate		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
	Pre-primary	45%	43.9%	47.0%	29.9%	19.0%
Primary	34.9%	56.1%	41.8%	20.6%	30.7%	24.2%
Secondary	49.7%	70.6%	54.7%	18.2%	30.5%	31.5%
University	76.3%	119.4%	83.5%	57.3%	78.4%	61.5%
Professional & special schools	16.5%	74.6%	1.6%	3.9%	34.6%	9.3%
All Stages	37.1%	60.1%	44.0%	20.5%	31.5%	24.2%

Table 16 : Out-turn of students at different stages of the educational system

Year	Examination											
	Matriculation & Equivalent			Higher Secondary & Equivalent			Pre-University			Intermediate		
	Boys	Girls	No. of Girls/100 boys	Boys	Girls	No. of Girls/100 boys	Boys	Girls	No. of Girls/100 boys	Boys	Girls	No. of Girls/100 boys
1947-48	126,885	15,391	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	30,898	4,680	15
1950-51	210,995	30,148	14	—	—	—	—	—	—	63,168	9,517	15
1955-56	357,166	72,328	20	—	—	—	—	—	—	111,818	19,921	18
1960-61	452,153	113,966	25	46,707	10,290	22	71,824	20,650	29	92,838	22,893	25
1965-66	645,552	202,711	31	167,852	39,318	23	113,094	39,783	35	52,306	16,255	31

(Contd.)

Table 16 (Contd.)

Year	Examination											
	B.A./B.Sc. (Pass & Hons.)			M.A./M.Sc.			Doctorates (genl. and professional subjects)			Professional degrees and equivalent (Diploma only)		
	Boys	Girls	No. of girls/100 boys	Boys	Girls	No. of girls/100 boys	Boys	Girls	No. of girls/100 boys	Boys	Girls	No. of girls/100 boys
1947-48	15,719	2,867	18	3,190	444	14	102	4	4	10,173	—	—
1950-51	27,357	4,881	18	6,262	876	14	136	10	7	17,892	1,553	9
1955-56	44,041	9,948	23	9,603	2,166	23	321	29	9	31,951	3,821	12
1960-61	70,757	22,295	32	18,570	5,115	28	959	283	3	53,045	7,179	14
1965-66	89,865	38,589	43	25,959	9,628	37	808	99	16	67,546	10,721	16

(Break up is not available)

Table 17 : Educational level of women by age-group  
(in lakhs)

Educational level	No. of Women in		Total
	Urban Areas	Rural Areas	
Age-group 15-24			
Illiterate	36	262	298 (67.5% of the total number of women in this age-group)
Literate	7	21	28
Primary and Middle Level	35	52	87
Matriculates and above	20	7	27 (6.2% of the total number of women in this age-group)
Total of literate and educated	62	81	143
Age-group 25- and above			
Illiterate	129	816	945 (88.6% of the total number of women in this age-group)
Literate	17	29	46
Primary and Middle level	41	41	82
Matriculate and above	14	3	17 (1.6% of the total number of women in this age-group)
Total of literate and educated	72	74	146

N.B. The percentages of different age-groups and different educational levels (for women) were derived, in the first instance, from the one per cent Sample Data of the 1971 Census. These percentages were then applied to the total female population as given by the 1971 Census in order to arrive at the approximate figures presented above.

Table 18 : Progress of literacy—1901-1971, number of literate females  
(per 1,000 males)

Year	Total literate males	%age of literate males to total male population	Total literate females	%age of literate female total population	No. of literate females per 1000 males
1901	14,690,080	9.83	996,341	0.69	68
1911	16,938,815	10.56	1,600,763	1.05	94
1921	19,841,438	12.21	2,782,213	1.81	140
1931	23,969,751	15.59	4,169,105	2.93	132
1951	45,610,431	24.95	13,650,683	7.93	299
1961	77,939,833	34.44	27,578,928	12.95	354
1971*	111,911,000	39.51	48,699,191	18.44	435

\*Provisional population totals, Paper I for 1971 supplement, Census of India. Source: Census of India 1961, Vol. I Part-II A, General Population Tables p. 181. *Some Quantitative indices of Social Change in India*, Census publication, p. 22.

Table 19 : Number of illiterates, by sex, 1951-71

Census Year	Males	Females
1950-51	139,918,031	161,908,945
1960-61	148,206,268	185,211,889
1970-71	172,025,614	215,314,004

Table 20: Educational imbalance at the district level literates as per cent of total population

	Persons	Females
1. <i>Andhra Pradesh</i>	24.56	15.65
Hyderabad	39.91	29.57
Adilabad	14.14	6.48
2. <i>Uttar Pradesh</i>	21.64	10.18
Dehradun	45.06	33.85
Basti	15.57	4.85
3. <i>Madhya Pradesh</i>	22.12	10.84
Indore	44.35	31.42
Bastar*	9.64	4.09
Rural	8.11	<i>Males</i> 13.31
Urban	49.21	59.55
4. <i>Orissa</i>	26.12	13.75
Cuttack	36.37	22.49
Koraput*	10.57	4.71
5. <i>Rajasthan</i>	18.79	8.26
Ajmer	30.19	18.18
Barmer	10.02	2.70
6. <i>Bihar</i>	19.79	8.49
Patna	29.77	15.04
Champaran	14.06	5.44

\*Predominantly inhabited by Scheduled Tribes.

Table 21 : Distribution of 1,000 Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe males and females by educational levels, India, 1961

Educational Level	Scheduled Caste				Scheduled Tribe			
	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Total	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Illiterates	849	678	975	900	866	696	971	865
Total literates	151	322	25	100	134	304	29	135
Literates without educational levels	113	206	20	67	99	166	23	78
Primary or Junior Basic	35	98	5	31	34	117	6	49
Matriculation or above	3	18	N	2	1	21	N	8

Source : *Ibid.*, pp. 298-299.

Table 22 (a): Number of Women teachers employed at different stages

Year	(a) No. of Women teachers employed in					
	Primary schools	% Trained	Middle Schools	% Trained	Secondary schools	% Trained
50-51	8,281 (18)	69.1	12,887 (18)	58.1	19,982 (19)	66.2
55-56	117,067 (20)	73.7	23,844 (19)	63.2	35,085 (23)	72.9
60-61	126,788 (21)	73.4	83,532 (32)	73.4	62,347 (22)	73.9
65-66	180,315 (24)	73.1	138,539 (36)	79.0	1,10,703 (30)	76.3
68-69	209,504 (26)	76.9	153,034 (36)	82.4	1,20,678 (30)	80.3
73-74	250,000 (26)	77.0	199,000 (37)	83.0	1,50,000 (30)	81.0

Source : Ministry of Education, Form A, except for 1973-74 which are estimates. Figures in parentheses represent percentage of total teaching staff.

(Contd.)

Table 22 (b): Number of women teachers employed of different stages.  
(Contd.)

Faculty	No. of women teachers in colleges and universities		
	1950-51	1960-61	1970-71
Arts	1,091 (11.4)	5,624 (14.9)	10,136 (19.7)
Science	379 (6.3)	Included in Arts	5,381 (13.6)
Commerce	4 (0.4)	57 (2.1)	227 (3.2)
Education	130 (24.3)	448 (22.8)	924 (23.9)
Engg./Technology	1 (neg.)	12 (0.3)	92 (1.2)
Medicine	173 (9.8)	731 (12.8)	2,236 (19.2)
Agriculture	1 (0.2)	21 (1.4)	49 (1.5)
Veterinary Science	12 (8.2)	11 (1.7)	18 (1.6)
Law	Nil	9 (1.2)	173 (10.8)
Others	24 (16.1)	10 (4.2)	154 (15.7)
All Faculties	1,815 (8.5)	6,923 (12.5)	19,390 (15.0)

Source : Ministry of Education and Social Welfare for 1950-51 and 1960-61 and University Grants Commission for 1970-71. Figures in parentheses represent percentage of total teaching staff.

Table 23 : Distribution of female workers by broad industrial categories 1911-1971 in thousands

Year	Total F. Pop.	Total No. of F. Workers	Cat. I Cultivators	Cat. II Agricultural labourers	Cat. III mining, quarrying, live stock, forestry, fishing, hunting, plantations	Cat. IV household industry
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1911	123,898	41,802	18,090	12,808	1,452	
1921	122,749	60,085	20,276	10,003	1,431	
1931	136,075	37,600	12,180	14,997	1,575	
1951*	173,549	40,539	18,368	12,694	1,357	
1961	212,467	59,402	33,103	14,171	1,187	4,665
1971(P)	263,900	31,298	9,266	15,794	907	1,331

Table 23 (Contd.)

Cat. V manufacturing other than household industry	Cat. VI construction	Cat. VII trade & commerce	Cat. VIII transport storage and communication	Cat. IX other services	Total of Cat. I & II (agr. sec.)	Total of Cat. III to IX (Agr. Sec.)
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
4,391	294	2,266	79	2,422	30,898 (73.9)	10,904 (26.1)
3,689	289	2,189	67	2,151	30,279 (75.5)	9,816 (24.5)
3,281	291	1,914	49	3,313	27,177 (72.3)	10,423 (27.7)
2,906	291	1,153	123	3,647	31,062 (76.8)	9,377 (23.2)
789	243	815	65	4,364	47,274 (79.6)	12,128 (20.4)
865	204	656	146	2,229	25,060 (80.1)	6,238 (19.9)

\*Figures do not include Jammu & Kashmir.

P=Provisional. The figures are based on one percent sampling.

Sources: (1) Census of India 1961—Paper No. 1 of 1962—Final Population Totals.

(2) Pocket Book of Population—Statistics—Census Centenary 1972.

Table 24 : Age specific working Force—participation rates, 1961 &amp; 1971

(a) 1961

Age Group	Males			Females		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Total	57.1	58.2	52.4	28.0	31.4	11.1
0-14	9.4	10.6	3.5	6.6	7.6	1.6
15-34	88.1	91.1	76.9	43.6	49.8	15.8
35-59	96.7	97.5	93.3	47.6	49.6	22.9
60 plus	76.6	79.9	58.4	22.4	24.3	11.4

(b) 1971

Age Group	Male			Female		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Total	52.5	53.4	48.7	11.8	13.1	6.6
0-14	6.6	7.5	2.8	2.6	3.0	0.8
15-39	82.9	86.1	72.8	18.9	21.3	10.1
40-59	95.8	96.7	92.5	21.2	22.8	13.8
60 plus	73.8	77.4	55.4	10.5	11.3	6.4

Source: Census of India, 1971, Paper of 1972.

Table 25 : Percentage of unpaid family workers in the labour force in rural and urban India by sex and age

Age	Rural India		Urban India	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
1	2	3	4	5
10-14	47.5	55.5	34.5	52.5
15-19	36.0	49.7	22.0	41.5
20-24	26.0	45.5	13.5	31.7
25-29	17.0	42.5	8.4	26.1
30-34	10.7	40.3	4.3	22.1
35-39	6.3	38.6	2.5	18.8
40-44	3.7	37.0	1.6	16.4
45-49	2.5	35.6	1.1	15.4
50-54	2.2	34.5	1.2	15.0
55-59	2.4	33.6	1.5	15.1
60-64	2.7	33.0	2.1	15.3
65-69	3.3	32.6	3.5	15.5
70-74	4.2	32.4	5.5	16.0
75+	5.6	32.2	8.8	18.0

Source: Report of the Expert Committee on the UN.

Table 26 : Non-working women classified by main activity, 1971 (figures in thousands)

Main activity	No. of females	% of total females
Full time students	20,664	8.9
Household duties	118,404	51.0
Dependents and infants	91,722	39.5
Retired, rentiers and persons of independent means	477	0.2
Beggars, vagrants etc.	275	0.1
Inmates of penal, mental and charitable institutions	37	N
Others	526	0.2
Total	232,075	100.0

N=Negligible

Table 27: Estimated number of unemployed persons, 1971

Area	Sex	Percentage of unemployed persons	Total population in (1971) (million)	Number of unemployed persons (million)
1	2	3	4	5
Rural	Males	1.42	225.2	3.2
	Females	2.10	213.6	4.5
	Total	..	438.8	7.7
Urban	Males	1.35	58.7	0.8
	Females	0.98	50.4	0.5
	Total	..	109.1	1.3
All India	Males	..	283.9	4.0
	Females	..	264.0	5.0
	Total	..	547.9	9.0

Table 28: Distribution of women employees in the organized (Public and private sector)

Year	Total	(figures in lakhs)	
		Public	Private
1962	13.7	4.8 (35%)	8.9 (65%)
1963	14.9	5.5 (37%)	9.4 (63%)
1964	15.2	5.8 (38.2%)	9.4 (61.8%)
1965	16.8	6.4 (38.1%)	10.4 (61.9%)
1966	17.4	7.2 (41.4%)	10.3 (58.6%)
1967	18.2	7.2 (39.6%)	11.0 (60.4%)
1968	18.3	7.5 (40.7%)	10.8 (59.3%)
1969	18.4	7.7 (41.8%)	10.7 (58.2%)
1970	18.9	8.1 (42.8%)	10.8 (57.2%)
1971	19.3	8.6 (44.6%)	10.7 (55.4%)
1972	20.3	9.2 (45.3%)	11.1 (54.7%)
1973	21.4	10.1 (47.2%)	11.3 (52.8%)

Source: D.G.E. &amp; T.

Note: Figures in parantheses indicate percentage of the total employees.

Table 29: Employment of women in factories

Year	Total Employees (1000)	No. of women employees (1000)	Percentage of women to total employees
1951	25,365.0	290.0	11.43
1955	2,690.4	295.1	10.96
1958	3,102.2	343.9	11.08
1960	3,367.8	367.3	10.91
1961	3,497.0	372.3	10.65
1962	3,648.6	394.1	10.80
1963	3,860.0	400.4	10.37
1964	4,024.0	409.1	10.16
1965	4,118.0	394.5	9.57
1966	4,069.0	364.7	9.96
1967	4,071.0	394.6	9.5
1968	4,067.0	346.1	9.0
1969	4,137.0	382.0	9.0
1970	4,264.0	394.0	9.0
1971	4,285.0	392.5	9.1

Source: Indian Labour Statistics and National Commission on Labour Report.

Table 31: Percentage of women workers to total labour force in plantations

	Tea	Coffee	Rubber
1961	44	45.3	21.4
1970	47.0	44.0	35.0



Table 30 : Employment of women in mines

Mines	1951	1956	1961	1966	1968	1969	1970	1971	
	(Figures in thousands)								
Coal	T W	352.4 46.0 (13.0)	411.3 38.1 (17.0)	425.5 30.7 (7.2)	395.4 24.7 (6.2)	396.4 23.0 (5.8)	391.5 21.5 (5.5)	382.2 20.1 (5.2)	
Iron	T W	20.2 7.7 (38.2)	37.3 10.7 (28.8)	54.5 15.3 (28.8)	60.3 15.7 (25.9)	52.2 13.0 (24.9)	48.6 11.4 (23.4)	51.8 12.4 (23.9)	52.8 12.9 (24.4)
Mica	T W	52.2 7.2 (13.8)	34.0 2.7 (7.8)	29.6 2.4 (8.1)	19.8 1.2 (6.1)	16.9 1.7 (10.1)	16.0 1.5 (9.4)	13.9 1.3 (9.3)	12.1 1.1 (9.1)
Manganese	T W	55.5 24.4 (43.9)	110.0 44.3 (40.3)	46.9 17.7 (37.7)	47.0 19.1 (40.6)	37.2 15.0 (40.3)	31.0 12.3 (39.6)	29.3 11.6 (39.6)	30.4 12.2 (40.1)
Others	T W	69.1 15.1 (21.8)	94.9 22.0 (22.1)	128.7 32.8 (25.5)	146.7 33.9 (22.9)	142.6 29.9 (20.9)	146.5 29.9 (20.3)	151.7 30.4 (20.0)	153.0 28.9 (18.8)
Total	T W	549.0 109.6 (20.1)	628.6 125.8 (20.0)	671.0 106.3 (15.8)	699.3 100.7 (14.4)	644.3 83.3 (13.1)	638.5 78.0 (12.2)	638.2 77.2 (12.1)	630.7 75.2 (11.9)

T = Total average daily employment

W = Women's employment

Source : Indian Labour Statistics

Table 32 : Educational status of workers, Urban, 1961 and 1971

Educational level	1961		1971	
	Total Workers		Total Workers	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Total	22,419,892	4,010,042	28,554,300	3,285,700
Illiterate	7,895,414	32,532,337	35.2	81.81
Literate without educational level	6,792,861	321,460	30.2	8.0
Primary or junior basic	4,449,714	209,167	19.8	5.2
Matriculation or Higher	2,330,992	143,113	10.4	3.5
Technical diploma not equal to degree	67,116	6,914	0.3	0.1
Non-technical diploma not equal to degree	110,385	11,957	0.4	0.2
Graduate or post graduate	599,707	36,370	2.6	0.8
Technical degree or diploma equal to degree or post graduate degree	173,703	27,824	0.7	0.6
Engineering	42,831	116	0.1	0.0
Medicine	36,849	5,713	0.1	0.1
			983,300	87,300
			305,800	49,800
			278,700	56,100
			0.9	1.3

(Contd.)

Table 32 (Contd.)

Educational level	1961				1971*			
	Total Workers		Total Workers		Total Workers		Total Workers	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Agriculture	4,992	28	0.0	0.0	132,600	1,400	0.4	0.0
Veterinary and dairying	2,170	10	0.0	0.0	67,900	15,100	0.2	0.3
Technology	2,744	30	0.0	0.0	11,900	200	0.0	0.0
Teaching	42,487	114,470	0.1	0.4	57,000	38,100	0.1	1.1
Others	41,610	2,457	0.1	0.0	9,300	1,300	0.0	0.0
			100.0	100.0			100.0	100.0

Table 33 : Educational Status of Workers, Rural, 1961 and 1971

Educational levels	1961				1971			
	Total Workers		% Workers to total M & F for each educational level		Total Workers		% Workers to total M & F for each educational level	
	Male	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
1. Total	106,750,873	55,494,693	69.5	95.6	119,791,400	27,712,600	65.1	92.1
2. Illiterate	73,244,022	53,078,059	69.5	95.6	77,887,100	25,527,400	65.1	92.1
3. Literate (without educational level)	23,403,673	1,772,430	21.0	3.2	14,857,100	893,300	12.4	3.3
4. Primary	8,512,723	578,515	8.1	1.1	15,382,000	842,000	12.9	3.0
5. **Middle	—	—	—	—	7,286,900	241,300	6.1	0.8
6. **Matriculation and above	1,590,185	65,689	1.4	0.1	4,378,300	208,600	3.7	0.7
7. Matriculation or Higher Secondary	—	—	—	—	3,645,400	138,100	3.1	0.4
8. Non-Tech. diploma or certificate not equal to degree	—	—	—	—	55,300	7,400	0.0	0.0
9. Technical diploma or certificate not equal to degree	—	—	—	—	109,900	36,700	0.0	0.1
10. Graduate and above	—	—	—	—	567,700	26,400	0.4	0.0

\* The educational category as 'middle' given separately is applicable only to 1971 figures whereas for 1961 it is included in the category of 'primary'.

\*\* Classification of educational level in 1961 is made only upto 'Matriculation and above' whereas that of 1971 is upto Graduate and above and is in the table. The figures in the 1971 column against the educational category of Matriculation and above are given to facilitate comparison. These figures represent the total sum of all educational categories commencing from Serial No. 7 to 10.

Source : 1961 figures : Part II B (i) General Economic Tables; and 1971 figures: Paper 3 of 1972 Economic characteristics of population.

**Table 34 :** Estimated total stock of educated persons by sex & educational levels

(figures in Hundreds)

Educational Level	Males	Percentage of total male population	Females	Percentage of Total female population
Primary	334,989	11.9	165,115	6.3
Middle	207,089	7.3	76,930	2.9
Matriculation or Higher Secondary	134,733	4.8	37,365	1.4
Non-technical Diploma or Certificate	1,388	0.04	455	0.01
Technical diploma or certificate	3,048	0.1	1,020	0.0003
Graduates	28,212	1.0	6,931	0.3

Source : Census of India 1971, Part-II Special—estimated from 1% sample data, p. 121.

Note : Percentages calculated.

**Table 36:** Turnout of women voters—Lok Sabha elections

Year	Total voting percentage	Percentage turnout of female voters	Difference between percentage turnout of male & female voters
1962	54.76	46.63	15.42
1967	61.33	55.48	11.25
1971	55.35	49.15	11.85

**Table 35 :** Distribution of degree-holders and technical female personnel by status and level of education 1971 (selected categories)

Labour force status	Doctorate		Master / Post-graduate		Bachelor		Equivalent		Diploma Certificate		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
A. 1. Employee	1,373	70.8	40,302	48.1	99,344	32.0	6,599	55.0	147,618	(36.1)	8,683	(2.1)
2. Self-employed	51	2.6	1,700	2.0	5,982	1.9	950	7.9	79,804	(19.5)	3,913	(1.0)
3. Unemployed trying for jobs	243	12.5	15,376	18.4	62,126	20.0	2,061	17.2	492	(0.1)	1,107	(2.1)
B. 4. Student trainees	84	0.2	326	0.4	3,424	1.1	159	1.3	65	0.5	1,107	(2.1)
5. Apprentice	—	—	33	Neg.	394	0.2	65	0.5	1,107	(2.1)	1,107	(2.1)
C. 6. Unemployed and not trying for job	135	7.1	15,192	18.2	73,721	23.7	1,107	9.3	90,133	(22.1)	90,133	(22.1)

Compiled from Census of India 1971, G. Series Tables (National level) Degree holders and Technical Personnel (P) office of the R.G., India.

Table 37 : Female contestants and their political parties—Lok Sabha elections  
(Figures below the italicized indicate successful contestants)

Year of the Election	Political Parties										
	Cong.	Swat.	BJS	CPI	CPM	PSP	SSP	Ind.	Others	Total	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1962	33	9	3	3	—	1	3	8	5	65	
1967	28	4	N	1	—	1	N	N	N	33	
1971	21*	3	3	3	2	1	1	31	7	86	
	15(N)	1	2	1	1	N	N	1	N	21	

\*Figures in brackets indicate "Congress (O)".

N = Nil

Cong = Congress, Swat = Swatantra, BJS = Bharatiya Jana Sangh, CPI = Communist Party of India, CPM = Communist Party (Marxist), PSP = Praja Socialist Party, SSP = Samyukta Socialist Party, Ind. = Independent.

Table 39 : Allocation for health & family planning in various Plans

	I Plan II Plan III Plan IV Plan V Plan				
	(Rupees in crores)				
(a) Allocation for other Health Programme	98	216	226	226	816
(b) Allocation for Family Planning	6.50	49.70	269.70	315	516
Ratio of allocation for Family Planning to other Health Programmes	6.63	23	114.91	139.38	63.23

Table 38 : Allocations and expenditure on social services in various plans (Rs. in crores)

Head of Development	First Plan		Second Plan			Third Plan		Fourth Plan		Fifth Plan	
	Allocation	Expenditure	Allocation	Expenditure	Allocation	Expenditure	Allocation	Expenditure	Allocation	Expenditure	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
1. Education and Scientific Research	149	—	273	—	660	—	98.22	—	1826.	—	
	(7.6)	—	(5.8)	—	(7.7)	—	(8.50)	—	(3.46)	—	
2. Health	98	—	216	—	226	—	226	—	816	—	
	(5.0)	—	(4.6)	—	(2.6)	—	(2.6)	—	(1.53)	—	
3. Family Planning	0.65	0.15	4.97	2.16	26.98	24.85	315	—	516	—	
	(1% approx.)	0.15	19.70	13.44	32.00	19.40	(1.9)	—	(0.97)	—	
4. Social Welfare	4.0	1.60	(2.2)	(2.2)	(2.3 approx.)	19.40	88.94	48.24*	229	—	
	(24.1)	(23)	(18.3)	(18)	(17.4)	(17.4)	(1969-73)	(1969-73)	(0.43)	—	
Social Services & Miscellaneous	472	459	855	830	1492	1493	2771	—	5910	—	
	(24.1)	(23)	(18.3)	(18)	(17.4)	(17.4)	(17.4)	—	(11.17)	—	
(Women's Welfare under Social Welfare Sector)	**	—	**	—	**	—	**	—	**	—	
	4.00	—	1900	—	21.70	—	73.06	—	62.91	—	

Sources : (a) Planning Commission Government of India (Allocations on Women's Welfare Under Social Welfare Sector of Five Years Plans).

(b) India—A Reference Annual 1974—pp. 159 (Allocation and % of the First three Plans).

(c) Draft Fifth Five Year Plan—1974-79 Vol. I (Allocation and % of the Fourth & Fifth Plans) Govt. of India pp. 83-85.

(Contd.)

Table 38 (Contd.)

(d) Indian Economy—Datta R. and Sunderam K.P.M.—pp 228 (Expdr. & % on Social Services of First three Plans.  
 (e) Year Book—Family Welfare Planning in India—1972-73 (Allocation & Expdr. of First three Plans) Govt. of India—pp. 6, 7, & 8.

\* 1972-73 (Expenditure on Fourth Plan) is anticipated.

\*\*Includes provision for other categories e.g. Children, Physically handicapped etc.

Note: Figures in parentheses indicates percentages on total allocation and expenditure.

Table 40 : Some health statistics for the States

State	Per Capita Government Expenditure on medical & Public Health Measures in 1963-64 (Rs.)	Number of Beds in Hospitals & Dispensaries per 1,000 Population in 1964	Percentage of Total Births in Rural Households Attended by Trained Dai-Midwife Physician or Qualified Nurse in 1964-65
1	2	3	4
Andhra Pradesh	2.88	0.53	12.24
Assam	3.28	0.45	12.88
Bihar	1.72	0.24	2.78
Gujarat	2.24	0.53	9.69
Haryana	—	—	15.32
Jammu & Kashmir	4.13	1.01	6.10
Karnataka	2.58	0.75	15.89
Kerala	3.70	0.94	25.72
Madhya Pradesh	2.27	0.41	5.14
Maharashtra	2.95	0.81	7.52
Orissa	3.21	0.43	6.79
Punjab	2.57	0.67	14.27
Rajasthan	3.80	0.52	4.07
Tamil Nadu	3.03	0.48	21.92
Uttar Pradesh	1.49	0.38	2.51
West Bengal	3.32	0.85	12.68
India	2.58	0.57	8.81

Notes : Columns (2) and (3) are taken from "Health Statistics in India", Ministry of Health, Government of India, Column (4) is calculated from estimates given in NSS Report No. 177 for the 19th Round (1964-65). For Columns (2) Punjab includes Haryana.

Source : Bardhan P.K., 'On Life and Death Question', *Economic & Political Weekly*, Special Number, August, 1974, p. 1297.

Proportion of School Population in Relative Age-groups covered by the school System Sexwise—1971

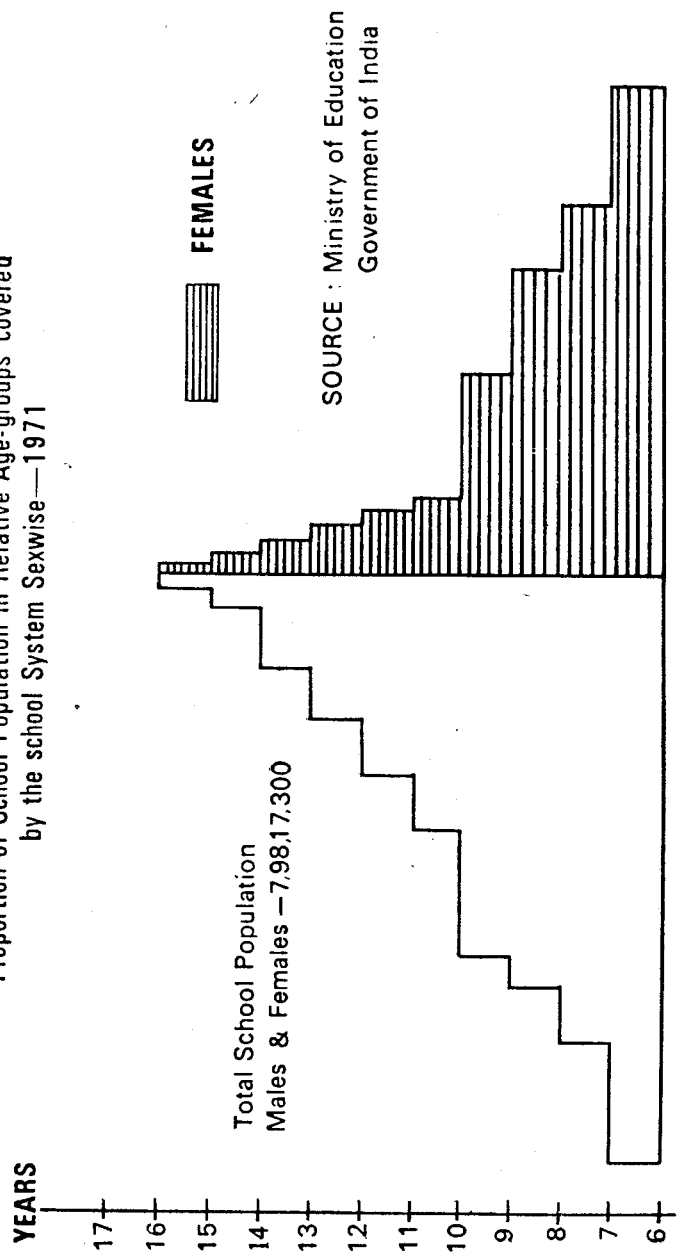
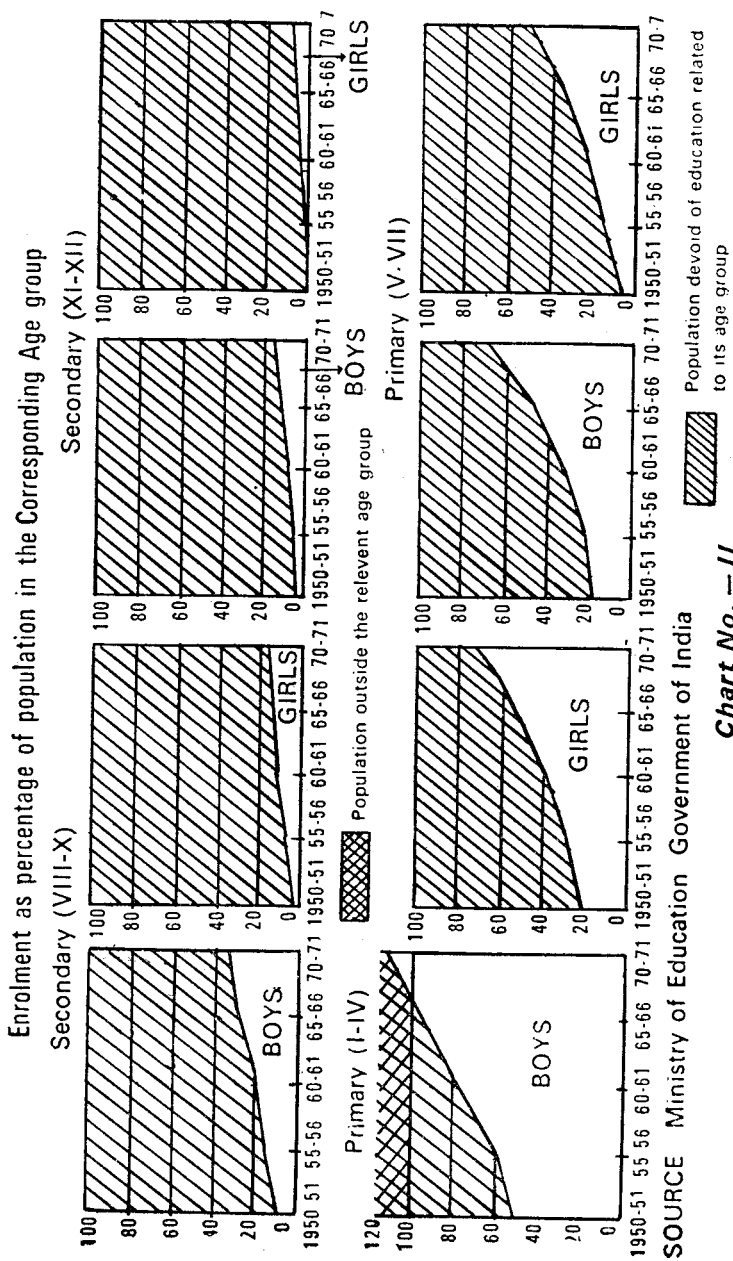
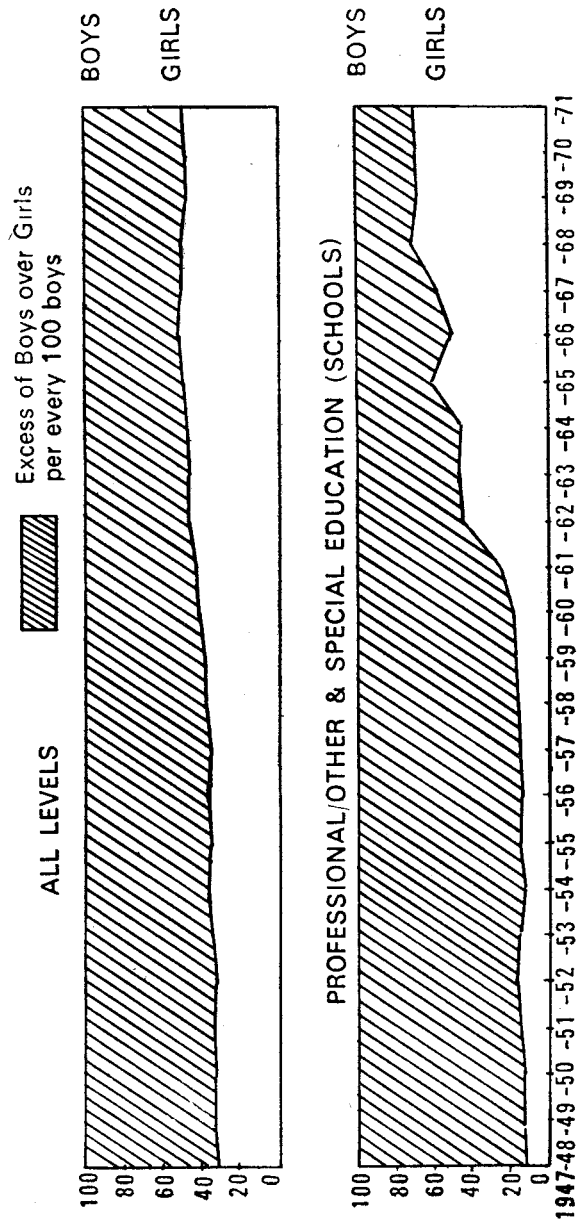


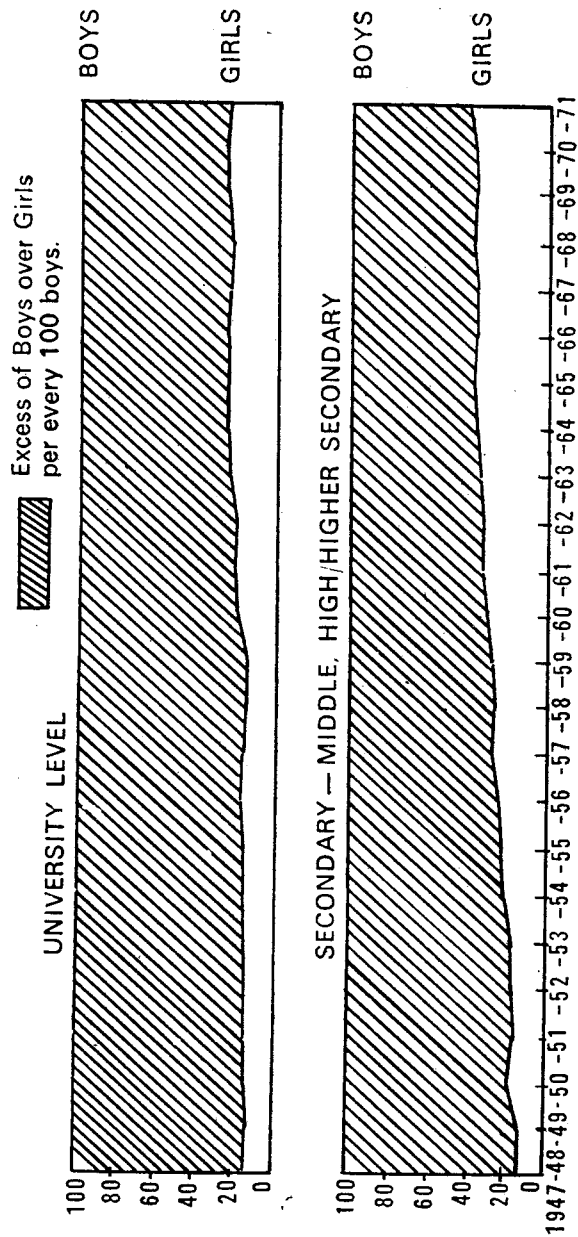
Chart No. — 1



A Graphic representation of the relative rate of growth of female education as compared to male education at different Levels — Variation in number of girls per hundred boys — during 1947-48 to 1970-71



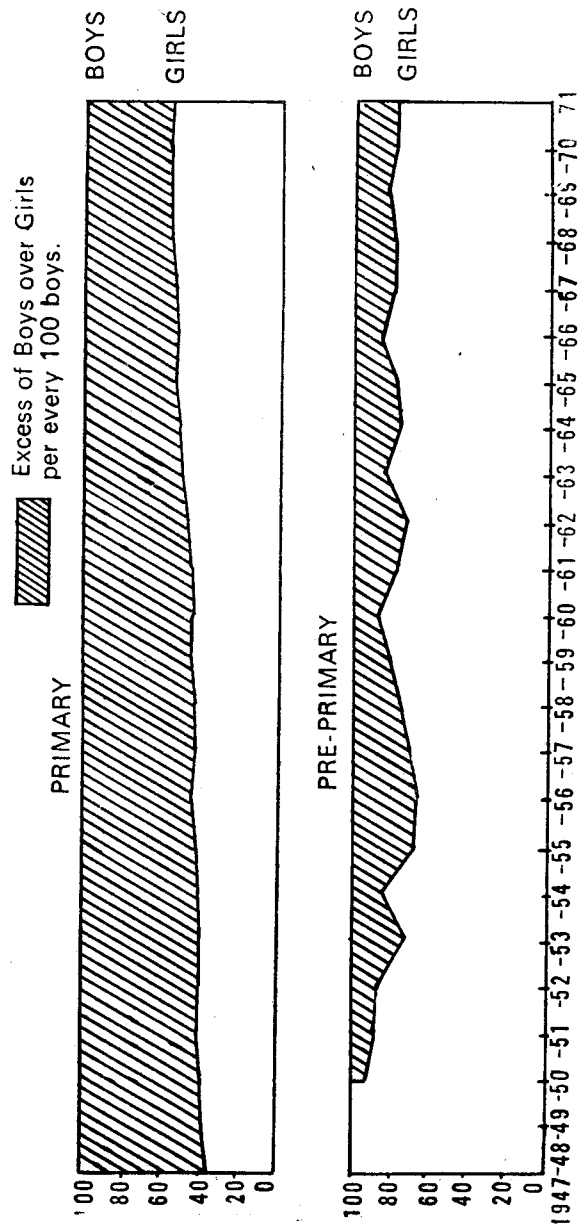
A Graphic representation of the relative rate of growth of female education as compared to male education at different Levels — Variation in number of girls per hundred boys —during 1947-48 to 1970-71



SOURCE : Ministry of Education, Government of India

Chart No. — III (a)

A Graphic representation of the relative rate of growth of female education as compared to male education at different Levels — Variation in number of girls per hundred boys — during 1947-48 to 1970-71



SOURCE : Ministry of Education, Government of India

Chart No. — III (b)



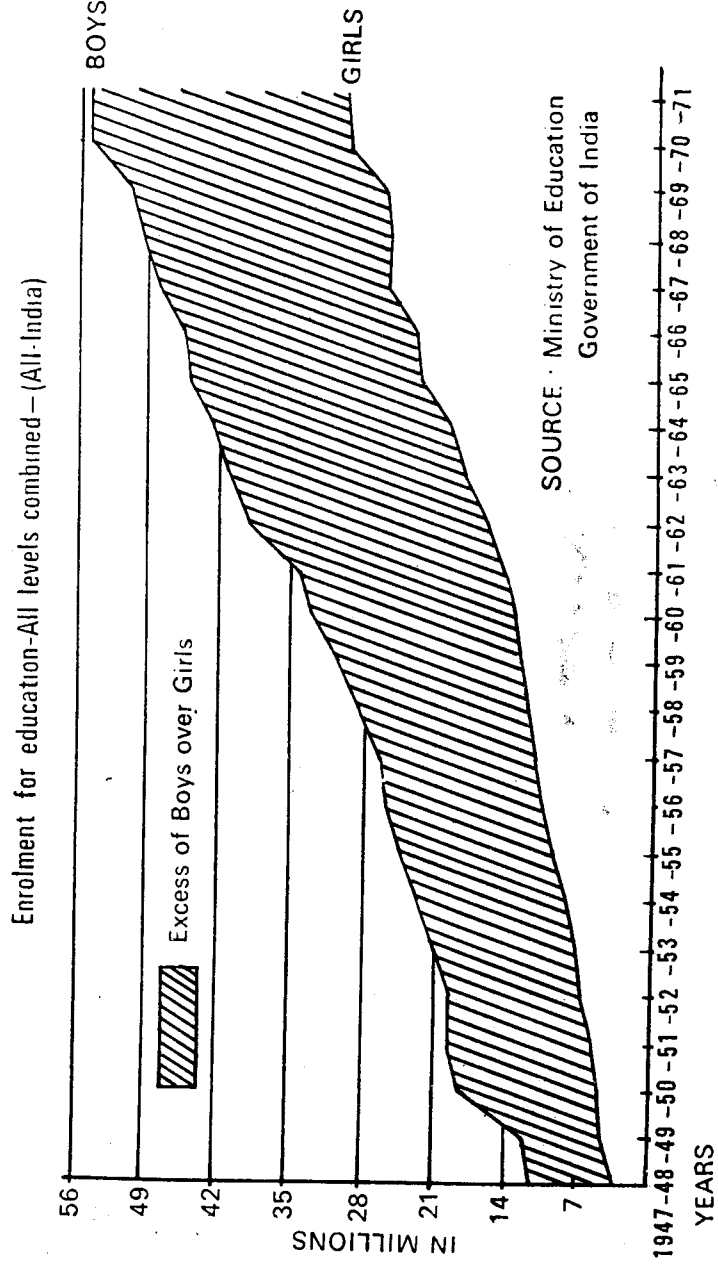


Chart No.-IV

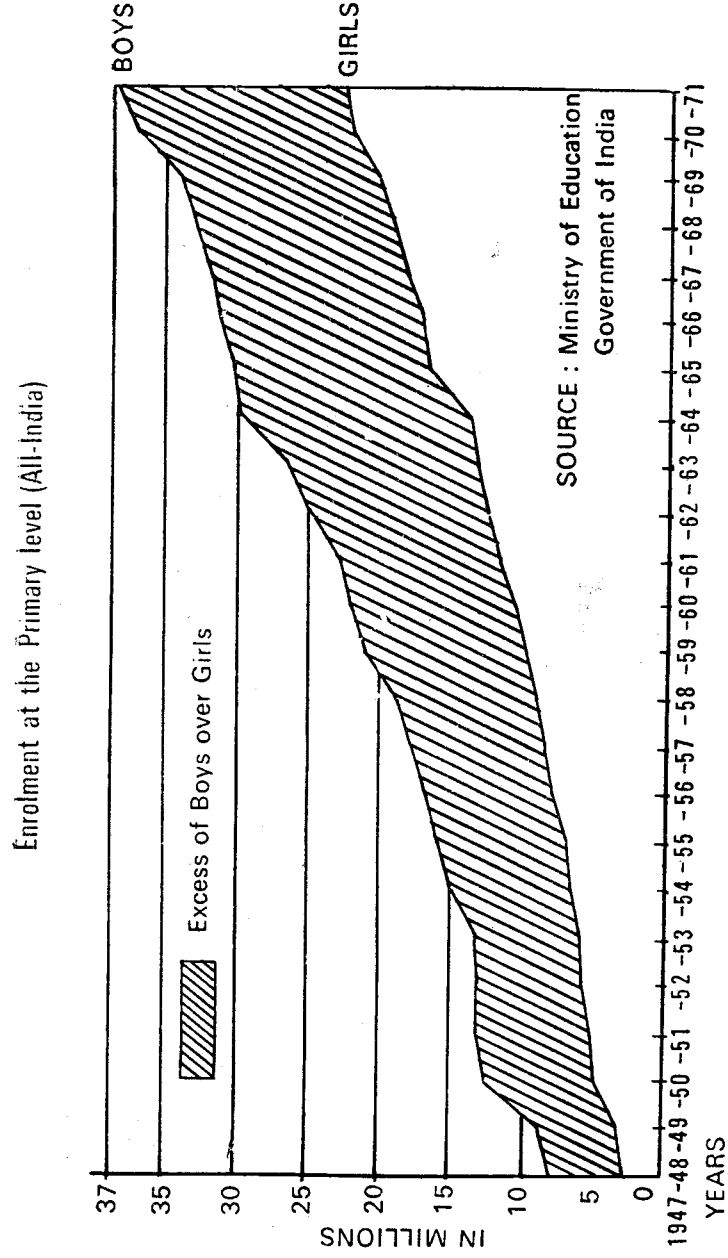


Chart No.-V

Enrolment at the Secondary including middle level (All India)

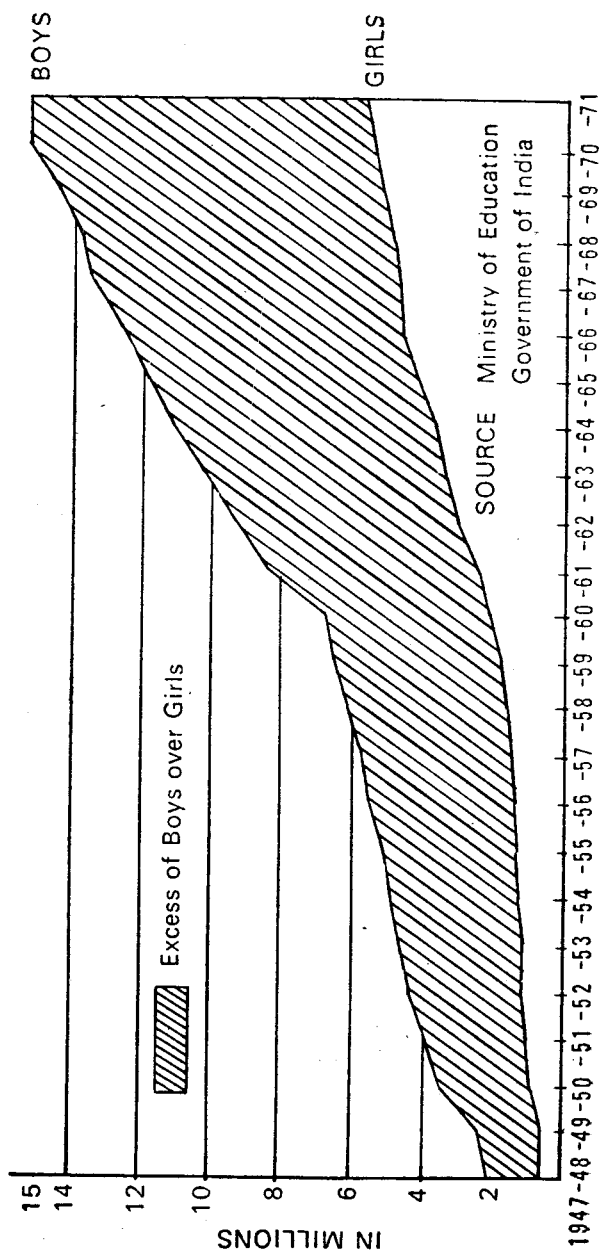


Chart No.-VI

Enrolment at the university stage (All-India)

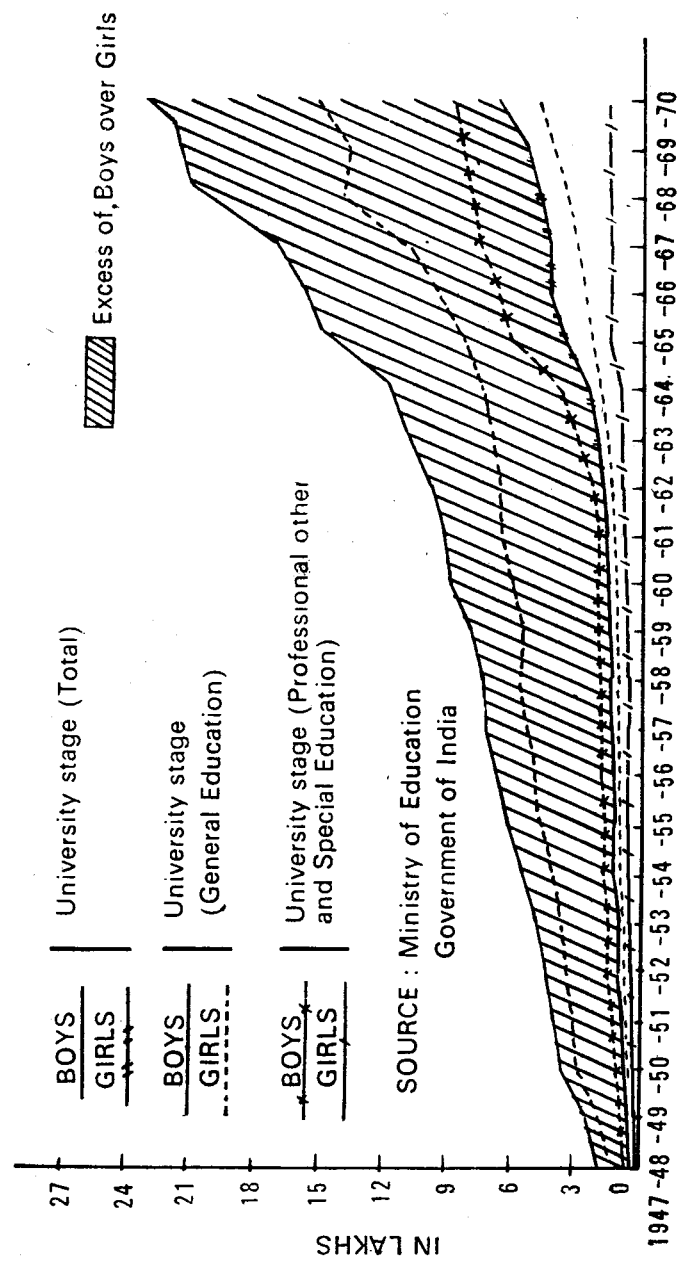


Chart No.-VII

Growth of educational Institutions (1947-48 to 1967-68)

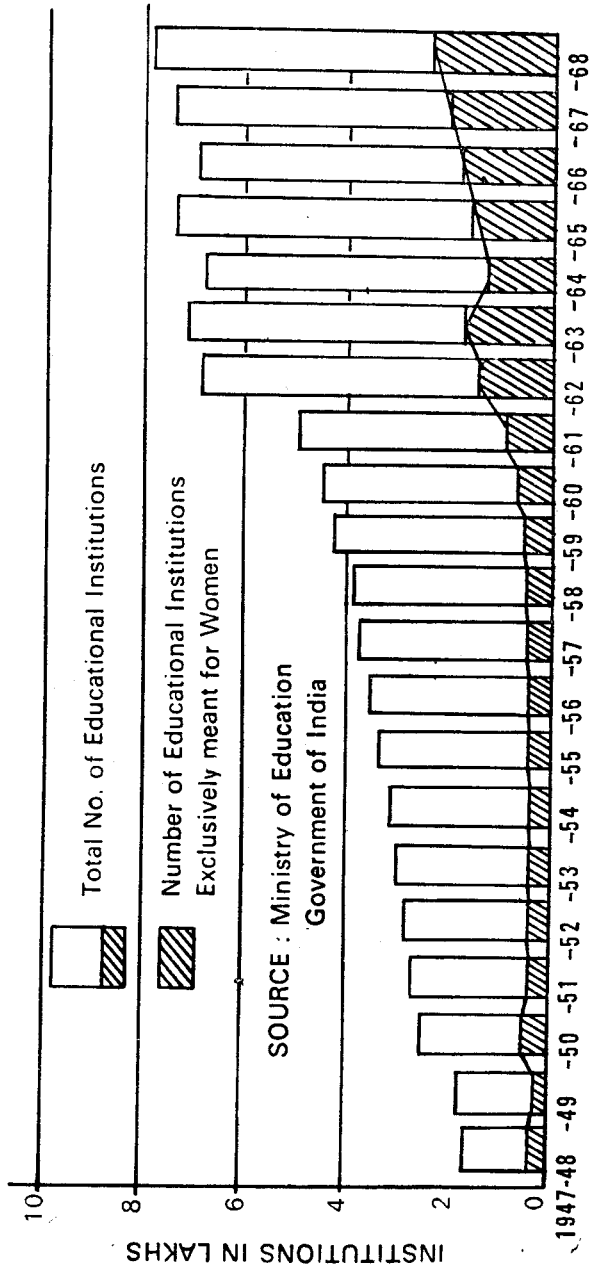
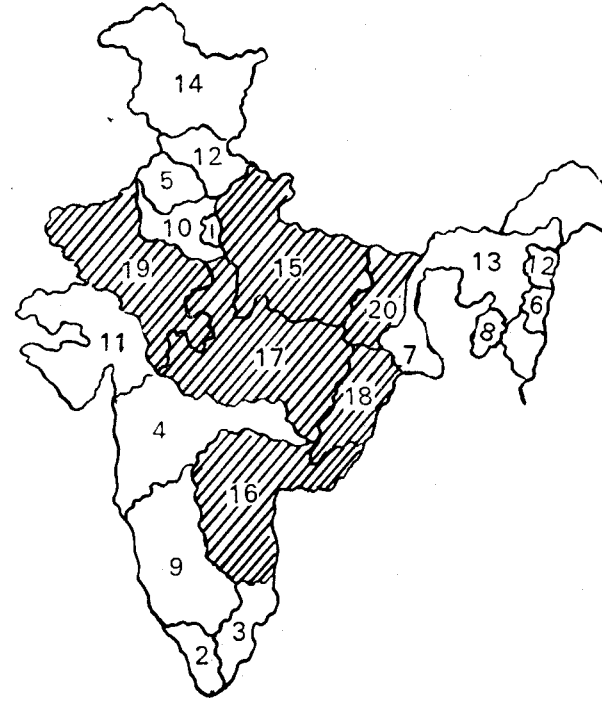


Chart No.-VIII

SIX BACKWARD STATES IN WOMEN EDUCATION

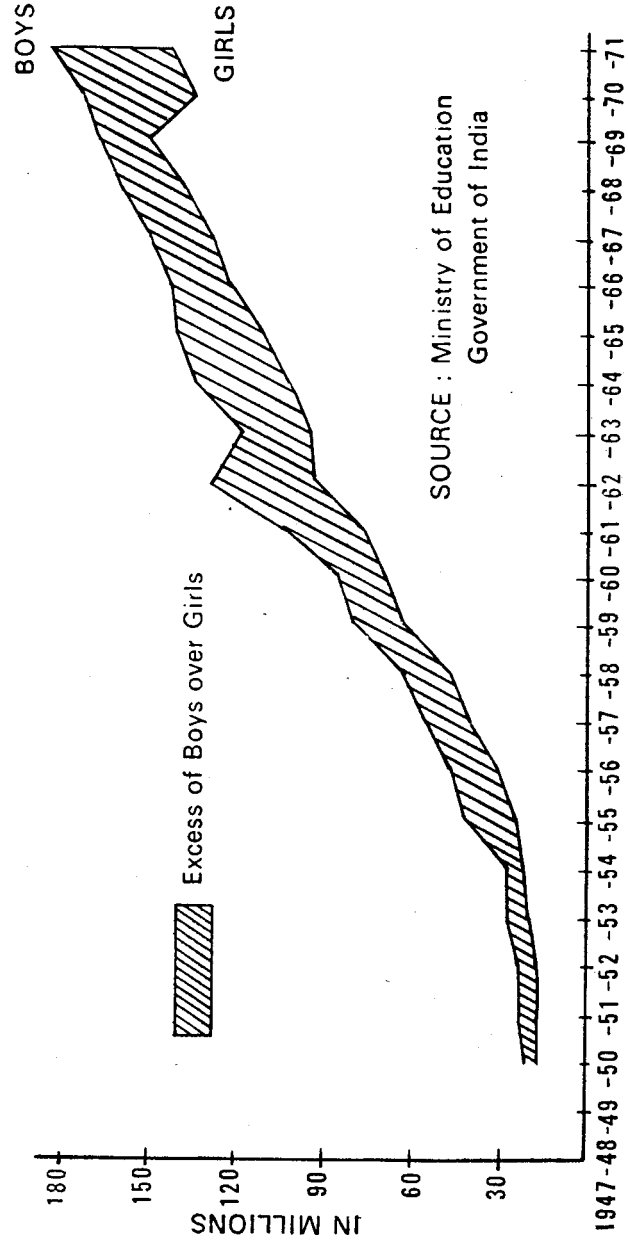


Figures are of consolidated rank orders of states.

Note :—The map is based on data for 1968-69 Arunachal Pradesh (NEFA) is not indicated in this map as it was not in existence at that date It would also have to be included among the backward states

Chart No IX

Enrolment at the Pre-Primary level (All-India)



SOURCE : Ministry of Education  
Government of India

Chart No.-X