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## Freedom Cannot Be One-Sided

I know a woman who tried to win her freedom by obtaining a divorce from a despotic husband and securing a job in a well-established firm. When I met her after a few years' work, she said she was still not happy because her boss was no less despotic than her husband. Though she found compensation in economic independence, she was morally enslaved. The boss did not refrain from exploiting her and overworking her. She was expected to obey him and his assistants blindly, to tolerate their whims, repress her feelings and identify with them. In fact she had gone from one form of slavery to another.

Freedom, it seems, is one and indivisible. To be free from one form of slavery, requires a struggle for liberation from other forms. A woman who has achieved freedom within her family, is apt to suffer from injustice in her place of work or in other social institutions. Her struggle for freedom may have to go on through life.

This principle applies to large communities, to states and nations, as it applies to individuals. A state that has achieved freedom and independence is apt to be attacked by another state which does not believe in or does not practice freedom. Hence free nations are bound to preach and implement freedom outside their borders and help those living under a despotic régime to liberate themselves.

Freedom cannot be one-sided, just as welfare and prosperity cannot and should not be limited to a few. Freedom from oppression implies freedom from want and misery. The article dealing with life among the poor in Cairo, in this issue, will show that poverty is a disease in the body of the nation and, as such, its harmfulness will not be limited to the spot where it originated. The struggle for freedom and the struggle for social justice must go hand in hand. They are two sides of the same coin.

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## Emily Nasrallah, a pioneer journalist and novelist

In the early twentieth century, women's interest in journalism was shown in two ways: contributing articles to papers and magazines and founding women's magazines in the three countries of early Arab Awakening: Lebanon, Egypt and Syria. Between 1890 and 1930, about forty women's magazines saw the light, most however were short-lived. Professional journalism for women began in Lebanon and Egypt around the middle of the century. They were engaged as reporters or as editors of the woman's page in well-known papers and magazines, both French and Arabic, and more recently in English magazines.

Emily Nasrallah started her literary career around 1950 by contributing to *Sawt-el-Mara'a* (Woman's Voice). Then she contributed regularly to the magazine *As-Sayyâd* and was registered as member of the journalists' syndicate. Her talent as story writer was revealed when in 1962 she published her first novel, **Tuyour Ailoul** (September Birds) which was a great success and obtained two prizes: the Said Akl Prize and that of the "Friends of the Book". In a rhythmic, vivid style, she describes from a woman's point of view the effects of ignorance, poverty and emigration on a forgotten Lebanese village. Her novel shows a first-hand knowledge and understanding of the village problems and potential. It attacks the traditions which enslave the villagers, and more particularly the women who are used as sacrifices and scapegoats. Their resistance is fruitless, their struggle ends in compromise or in frustration and suicide. This is the theme of her other two novels, **Shajaratu-d-Difla (The Oleander Tree)** and **Ar-Raheena (The Bonded)**, published in 1968 and 1974 respectively. During that period, Emily gave up journalism to devote herself to fiction. Besides the three novels already referred to, she published an allegorical story for young people, **Al-Bahira (The Resplendent)**, which takes up the classical theme of the search for happiness. She has also published collections of short stories including one novel which depicts war-time scenes and reminiscences, **Tilka-dh-Dhikrayat**. Her latest book, **Al-Iqla'-aks-az-Zaman (Sailing Against Time)**, tells the story of an old Lebanese villager who took a trip to America where he visited his children and their families established there for many years. Though he was dazzled by the comfort and glamor of American life, the hero of the story refused to stay with his children and was quick to return to his country where he was

killed by a sniper's bullet. In her novels and stories, the dramatic element is emphasized, a blending of reality and imagination serves to heighten the effect.

The following interview throws some light on her ideas regarding a few particular questions.

- Q. Why does the village play a central role in your novels and stories?
- A. Because I spent my childhood and adolescence in a village and received there my earliest and most lasting impressions. It seems to me that the village has shaped the character of the Lebanese, their roots are there. In the village our true self is revealed without masks.
- Q. What values do you emphasize in your works?
- A. Our national heritage presents a good many values that are worth keeping: faith in oneself, fortitude, freedom and helpfulness. The war has shaken many values but has not destroyed them completely: otherwise Lebanon would not have survived. It is true, however, that many harmful traditions have to be rejected, such as sexual discrimination, the quarrelsome spirit of villagers, religious fanaticism and clannishness.
- Q. The influence of the village is reflected in your style which draws many images from Lebanese nature, and in your use of colloquial expressions in the dialogue.
- A. I only use the colloquial in dialogues reflecting everyday life. The dialogue should be in harmony with the characters' background and personality. The colloquial is more successful in plays representing contemporary life. However, our classical language is evolving so that there is exchange between the colloquial and the classical.
- Q. Are you a feminist?
- A. I firmly believe that it is high time to stop treating woman as a minor who needs a guardian. Freedom is as necessary for the mental and physical health of women as it is for men. Because of the moderating influences which continue to surround us, there is no danger that our girls will be attracted by extreme forms of freedom.

According to Emily, the modern woman is characterized by a sense of adventure and an awareness of herself as a new independent personality.

## The Arab Woman's Personality

Studies of changes in the life and status of the Arab woman to-day deal with her education, her working conditions, her rights and needs, rarely analyzing the impact of such changes on her psychological make-up, on her personality. The above topic raises the following questions: What traits distinguish the Arab woman of to-day? How different is she from her mother and grandmother? What are her new goals and how far has she gone in her struggle for freedom and self-realization?

No significant studies have dealt with the above questions. However, at the seminar held by the Center for Arab Unity Studies<sup>(1)</sup> on 21-24 September 1981, the subject of the Arab woman's personality was scheduled in the agenda and some of the participants attempted a discussion of it. In his lecture, Dr. Abbas Makki, from the Lebanese University, referred to two studies he had undertaken with another professor from the same university, Dr. Zuhair Hatab, which deal with parental authority and youth. Taking as a sample a group of Lebanese boys and girls whose ages ranged between 18 and 23, the researchers came to the conclusion that girls are subjected to a more repressive system of values than boys. The degree of their submission is twice that of boys. They suffer less than boys from inner conflict, which shows that they have been trained to control themselves and to conform to parental authority. Consequently they are less prone to show a spirit of revolt.

To remedy the situation, Dr. Makki proposed reform in the personal status laws with the aim of giving women equal rights with men, in the family and in society. Such a reform, he said, is also needed in the labor code so that working women might enjoy equal rights with men regarding salary and promotion. The reform should also satisfy certain demands connected with their condition as mothers and housekeepers.

In commenting on Dr. Makki's lecture, Ms. Amira Al-Durra, director of the Family Welfare Planning Project in Syria, said that he had neglected to analyze the causes that made young women more submissive than young men. He had mentioned the values adopted in women's socialization but had failed to

show which of those values are worth keeping and which should be rejected. When recommending the reform of the personal status and labor laws, he had overlooked the fact that legislation should be shared by both men and women. Otherwise, how could we expect men legislators alone to give up their acquired rights and allow women to enjoy the same status that men have monopolized for so long?

Women to-day, she said, are going through a process of awakening. A large number of them are experiencing a state of latent or active revolt, which takes either a positive or a negative aspect. In the positive category are those women pioneers who are working sincerely and diligently to realize their own freedom, to bring about the emancipation of other women, while they are caring for the welfare of their family and of their country as a whole.

In the negative category, she continued, are those women who exploit their freedom and their authority for personal interests, or use them to persecute, to slander or suppress other women.

According to her, men's attitude toward woman's liberation generally takes a negative aspect. On the one hand, professional men with a high income rarely choose an intellectual woman for a mate. They are still dominated by old-fashioned criteria which require a wife to be young, pretty and capable of bearing children but not necessarily intelligent. On the other hand, men with a low income are willing to marry women with a profession or an employment on the ground that they would be a source of financial help. For this class, marriage is a transaction.

Drawing a parallel between educated men and educated women, Ms. Amira Al-Durra tried to prove that, although men have achieved a higher status in education and responsibility, they have less social and psychological freedom. A highly educated woman refuses to marry an ignorant man while the contrary is true of highly educated men. The result is that many emancipated and highly educated women prefer to remain unmarried, while many of those who made inappropriate marriages have resorted to divorce.

She concluded by saying that the question of women's liberation should be entrusted to a group of modern-minded men and women, who would work on an equal basis for the execution of proposed reforms on the legal, social and educational levels.

<sup>(1)</sup> See Al-Raida, Feb. 1, 1982, vol. V, No. 19, p.5  
Lectures and discussion presented at the Seminar were published under the title, "Al-Mara'a wa Dauruha fi Harakat-il-Wahda-l-Arabiyya", by the Center for Arab Unity Studies, P.O. Box: 113-6001, Beirut, Lebanon.

# Life among the Poor in Cairo,

by Unni Wikan<sup>(1)</sup>

The author presents her book as "the story of life in a poor quarter of Cairo as it is experienced by the poor themselves". It relates the experience of one who took part in the daily activities of those she studied, learned to think as they did and to experience the conditions under which they lived. It is the method of the social anthropologist, often called "participant observation."

The purpose of the work is "to open the eyes of as many readers as possible to the humiliating human conditions created by poverty; to show how poverty pervades and vulgarizes all aspects of life, debases social relations and cripples individual potential for development and happiness."

Poverty is defined as a situation "where the better-off and the worse-off agree on a low evaluation and the deprivation is transformed into social defeat and disgrace." (p.27)

About two thirds of the six million inhabitants of Cairo live in areas which both Egyptians and we would characterize as poor.

The author studied 17 families living in 13 houses situated in 5 back streets which are like alleys, 2-3 meters wide, piled high with dirt and refuse.

Two of the families are Coptic Christians, the rest are Moslems. In seventeen families, 100 people have 57 beds at their disposal. The houses are built of brick, mostly 3 storeys high; some have only one floor. The families live in separate flats which have little ventilation, poor lighting, are hot in summer, damp in winter, infested by cockroaches and other vermin.

People live so close to each other that neighbors can easily look into the flat opposite if the curtains are open. Lack of privacy creates friction which will occasionally explode in angry confrontations. Noisy quarrelling is a characteristic part of these people's lives.

The streets are swarming with children playing, screaming and shouting. Outside many front doors are women sitting or standing, observing the life around them. These door sitters come from the darkest, lowest flats; they feel the need to leave their stuffy rooms. They are not tied to continuous housework and have nothing to occupy their free time.

## Husband-Wife Relationship

A man should be authoritative, prefer the company of men, give priority to his own pleasures, look after and protect the women of his household.

A woman should be humble, obedient, loyal. In spite of her attachment to her own family, her duty is first to her husband's family.

A woman should not work outside the home,

except when she is forced to do so by widowhood or divorce. Otherwise her work is a source of shame to the husband as provider.

Men can move freely. They are generally ill at ease in the home where there are noisy children, no fresh air, no space. They like to go to cafés. The flat is a place for women to meet.

## Social Relations

Women do not like to be alone. They usually form friendships which provide them with a forum for obtaining social recognition. In their visits, they talk about money, about food, about the husband who is always criticized or condemned while the wife is always considered superior. Actions and sayings of other women are interpreted and criticized. A woman characterizes others in such a way that, explicitly or implicitly, her description can be turned into an emphasis of her own assets.

Moral values are judged egocentrically as kindness toward one's self rather than to people in general. The standard expression used to emphasize the noble character of a friend is: "She's very good, she loves me!"

Relations among relatives are not usually very successful. Those on the mother's side are the most intimate. Yet, though the members of the same family may support each other and form a united front on certain occasions such as quarrels against the outside world, their relationship is marked by jealousy and friction, cf. the Egyptian proverb, "Relatives never love each other". The proverbial enmity between the wife and the mother-in-law applies here as elsewhere. The wife believes that her in-laws are constantly preoccupied with trying to manipulate her husband against her.

## Children's Social Experiences

Children are taught to obey and respect their father. Their socialization is mainly the mother's responsibility. Since the father has no concern for or understanding of them or their needs, it is the mother who places their needs above her own, e.g. saving from her housekeeping money may give them the chance to go to school.

In the frequent conflicts occurring in the quarter, children especially are exposed to attack or revenge. They may be used as scapegoats or as pawns in the game against family enemies. Experiences gained by the children in this manner must contribute strongly to teaching them mistrust in people.

In the father's absence, the older brother is responsible for the children as provider and protector. The same is true of the older sister who takes care of her younger brothers and sisters in the mother's absence.

Divorce creates for the man several problems which make it a costly and burdensome step in case of

<sup>(1)</sup> Translated by Ann Henning. Tavistock Publications, London, 1980.

remarriage: the problem of providing for two families, and that of the children exposed to the ill-treatment of the stepmother. A widow often gives up the idea of remarriage in order to devote herself to the care of her children.

### **Intrigues and problems surrounding marriage**

While it seems that the conventions surrounding courtship and marriage are changing in the direction of granting a woman greater freedom of choice, traditional practices continue to work to the contrary. According to these practices, the bridegroom acts as an independent individual toward the family of the bride. He obtains exclusive rights regarding his wife, can even refuse to let her see her parents. He can decide about how she should be dressed and how she should wear her hair.

Two days before marriage, a list is made of articles that the bride will bring in her dowry. The list is the bride's proof of her property and a way of preventing the husband from selling it off in her absence.

"One conspicuous feature of courtship and marriage in this community" says the author, "is how it intensifies old conflicts and creates new ones. This happens both because many people have parallel and competing interests in boys and girls as marriage partners, and because the marriage negotiations in themselves create a battleground where other conflicts can also be played out." (p.85) "Envy and gossip are general features of Egyptian culture but are intensified in a poor environment." (p.94)

Married life is apt to be spoiled through the intervention and manipulation of relatives, neighbors and friends.

A woman has to struggle to keep her husband within her power by using the following means:

1. Demands for material items, to satisfy her and the children's needs.
2. Shaping the children as she wants and thus forming their attitude toward their father.
3. Using male relatives to mediate in her favor.
4. Forming alliances with male relatives against a mutual enemy.

An impulsive husband may be driven to the ultimate sanction against his wife: the threat of divorce, sometimes over trifles. However, since divorce entails great expense, he may resort to less drastic sanctions. He can hurt her by emphasizing the beauty and character of other women, ignoring her completely when she is at home, sharing none of his daily experiences with her, never praising her.

In the first years of marriage, adjustment to marital status is a difficult and slow process for both parties. Egyptian national statistics show that about 50% of all divorces take place between spouses who have been married for less than two years. During this period, it is natural for the parties' relatives on each side, above all for mother and older sister, to guide the inexperienced, newly married couples in the art of

maneuvering and manipulation.

The presence of children gives a woman strength and self-confidence. They may serve as a safeguard against divorce. The husband becomes more concerned about money saving for his children; he feels less responsible for his parents and relatives.

It is specially when her children reach their teens that the woman becomes domineering and aggressive. Her husband becomes more dependent on her, in-laws less difficult, and the husband more tolerant of their presence.

### **How do the poor realize themselves in such an environment?**

Self-realization means to them a struggle to think well of themselves, to obtain recognition from others rather than to live up to internalized values and standards. It is not a question of being true to themselves but to make others recognize their superiority, which may be mere words or make-believe.

Hence, they insist on keeping up appearances and on concealing material defects from other people's eyes. They are careful to show off new clothes, to display the trays of cakes which they send to be baked at the bakeries during Ramadan. Their best furniture is displayed in the guest room. They create little circles where they can boast about themselves without being contradicted.

### **Possibilities of Change**

Social scientists are divided into 1) those who blame society for the existence of poverty and attack the uneven distribution of wealth, 2) those who blame the poor themselves, as for example Oscar Lewis who developed the concept of "culture of poverty", and emphasized the necessity for the poor to eliminate this "culture" and adopt the way of life of the middle class.

As a matter of fact, there is evidence of pathology among the poor. Poverty destroys human capacities. According to a Lebanese proverb, it is a main source of contention among people.

On the other hand, we cannot overlook the role played by such wretched conditions in producing what Oscar Lewis calls the "culture of poverty". To effect a change in their lives, it is necessary to devise a strategy for the poor to follow, based on an understanding of the interplay between all the factors that create the miserable situation. The author of the book concludes by saying that the families she studied would be willing to change their "culture" or way of life should they receive adequate help. Here are some of the difficulties that stand in their way:

1. Obstacles faced by poor students. Though education is free, success is not easy for them because of poor hygienic conditions at home and at school, conflict-ridden home environment, overcrowded classes, poor quality of teachers. Instead of spending 12 years in high school, poor students spend 16 years.

*(Continued on page 6)*

## RITUALS OF THE 8th OF MARCH BETWEEN IMPRESSIONS AND PRESSURES<sup>(1)</sup>

The above is the title of a publication containing a critical study of the press of the 8th of March (Woman's Day), 1981, in Algeria. The articles as a whole permit a panoramic and systematic reading, pointing out the lines of strength into which ideas are constituted as an ideology.

The first part of the document condenses a number of informative articles and reports about women, such as the day nurseries project (*crèches*); the exhibit of women painters' works; the presentation of a film on women; a report on Algerian women pilots; another of women in politics (whose role is still insignificant).

The second part, "Women's Voices", gives women the chance to speak. It reproduces and comments on four articles written by women, published in "Algerie Actualités", explaining what the 8th of March means to a deputy, an actress, a journalist and a teacher.

Deputy Baya El-Hashemi reveals a conservative attitude when she emphasizes the female condition and the role for which a woman should be prepared. "She will always depend on a father, a brother and, later, on a husband. It is our duty to help and defend those women who have chosen a double mission, that of housewife and worker. We should also defend the condition of those who stay at home."

This article is violently criticized by the editors of the document because the writer takes for granted the dictates of society to the detriment of women's needs. Rachid Bendib responds by asking: What is a woman's condition? He condemns the fatalist attitude of the Deputy and argues that what people consider to be "Woman's Condition" is rather a product of history and society, not of nature. Hence it can be transcended. He adopts a socialist point of view when he confirms the necessity of change and the belief in the possibility of solving all our problems, but he ignores the problem of women's work and that despite the large number of women working outside their homes.

Nadia Talbi, an actress, tells of the difficulties

encountered by an actress in a hostile environment. Contrary to social norms which impose confinement on women, an actress claims and attracts public attention. The critical comment which follows protests against Talbi's statement that an actress executes her profession in defiance of woman's natural bent to remain unnoticed. Is the desire to remain in the shade a natural or an acquired trait? At the end of her article Nadia Talbi expresses, somewhat timidly, her own revolt against man-made laws for women and against her familial heritage. She states that she is a "plural woman", a description approved by the commentator.

Djazia Tualbi, journalist, says that she was brought up in a world of shadows where she was told that the only thing for her was to keep silent. "For me," she adds, "work has been the only way of imposing my presence". Yet male voices rise from everywhere to attack woman's involvement in outside activities. In order to tolerate her presence, they require her to work in silence. "Journalism, which is my profession, is just the opposite. I have struggled to impose myself as a speaker. I am thankful to my male colleagues who have helped me achieve self-realization. To me, woman's submission belongs to a former stage. Now I am on the right path."

To the writer of "critical note", Djazia Tualbi's article, though daring and optimistic in tone, has its limitations. Individual success in work has little significance when women workers form only 2.5% of the labor force. Its effect is also a matter of doubt when the struggle for success is presented as a male-female relationship. For it is a fact that conservative men are most suspicious of the feminine element, which seems to be the conspicuous revolutionary element in to-day's society.

Anissa Bahloul, a teacher, complains that, as a woman, she is deprived of the opportunity to travel and enjoy the cultural benefits of contacting worlds other than her own. She deplores the fact that her brother has the privilege of enjoying this enriching experience, away from the monotonous life she is leading, far from her narrow environment.

A rhetorical speech, says the critical note, a vehement denunciation of the Algerian law which forbids women to travel unless they are accompanied by a chaperon. It is an attack on the tradition which restricts women's world to the home and place of work, denying them the right to move around by themselves. Her rhetorical article is a genuine cry for liberation.

<sup>(1)</sup> Condensed from a collective document prepared by the "Groupe de Recherche sur les Femmes Algériennes", C.D.S.H. **Document de Travail**, no. 10, University of Wahran, March 1981.

(Continued from page 5)

2. Limited effects of family-planning. Considered to be an aid against poverty, family-planning achieves little success because of ignorance and mistrust on the part of the users.
3. Heavy responsibilities of the husband. In addition to the financial burden represented by his family, a man is also responsible for disabled or minor relatives: a disabled father or mother, a dead brother's children, a divorced sister, etc.

4. Troubles caused by an inefficient bureaucracy affect mainly the poor who have to use bribery or other forms of corruption so as to obtain their rights under a corrupt régime.

Programmes of action must be designed "so that the individual will adopt solutions which will also have a positive effect on society as a whole, in order that one man's success will not spell the other man's failure". No easy solutions should be tried. Cooperation between government, society and the poor themselves is necessary.

## Saudi Women Moving into Banking<sup>(1)</sup>

Saudi women have an estimated 30 to 40% of the hundreds of billions of dollars of private wealth in Saudi Arabia and the Koran guarantees them personal control of it. As a result, banks run by women and catering solely to women have begun to spring up in major cities.

Before women's banks began opening, two years ago, Saudi women asked a family member or a chauffeur to do their banking for them. Now there are four women's banks in Jeddah and nine elsewhere in Saudi Arabia. They are all kept busy with women's transfer accounts, "because women here are more comfortable dealing with women". At the Al-Rajhi Company for Trade and Commerce, they remove their veils to discuss the intricacies of financial deals with trained advisors who are also women.

"The girls are very interested in gold", said Mrs. Hassoun, director of the women's branch of Al-Rajhi bank. Her customers had purchased about 50,000 ounces of gold, — worth \$18.9 million at current prices — at the bank and stored it there.

Women's banks offer the same range of banking services as the men's banks do. Savings' accounts are

less clear-cut. Under Islamic law, making a profit from interest is regarded as sinful. Modern customers are given the choice of whether they prefer to earn 5 percent or nothing on their savings.

To Saudi women, the new banks represent something of a haven away from home. Their economic assertiveness takes forms other than banking investments. Many of them have been putting money into holdings such as real estate. Others are using capital to go into business such as entrepreneurship, ownership & operation of boutiques, tailoring establishments, hair-styling salons, restaurants, etc...

All this forms part of a campaign for women to participate more fully in Saudi society and to contribute to a "Saudiization" drive. Saudi women are being educated, often through the university level. They will gradually be able to replace expatriate women employees.

Saudi Arabia may be demonstrating an ability to accept progress while clinging to tradition. The women bank employees, for instance, unhesitatingly put their veils on before leaving for home after work.

"The debate is not whether women should be educated but what type of education is best — not whether they should work but what kind of work they should do." Almost all Saudis want social as well as economic development.

<sup>(1)</sup> Condensed from an article by Douglas Martin. International Herald Tribune, Feb. 4, 1982, p. 14

## A Training Workshop on organization of, and participation in, Meetings

A training workshop on the organization of and participation in meetings took place at Abu-Dhabi, 18-25 November 1981. It was organized through the joint efforts of the United Arab Emirates Women's Federation and the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA), under the sponsorship of Sheikhha Fatima, wife of the Head of the State and president of the Women's Federation.

A brochure prepared by ECWA was distributed among the participants. It contained first, information regarding the kinds of meetings, the various methods of organizing them, their efficiency and capacities, and second, information regarding participation, its kinds, technical skills, human skills, ways of helping trainees develop their capacities for organization and improvement of skills.

The training staff included Dr. Hamed Ammar,

regional counselor for the development of human resources, ECWA; Mr. Farid Obeid, head of the Conference Services Sector, ECWA; Dr. Oaima Dahan, expert of the Economic Commission for Western Asia and technical director of the workshop; Dr. Thurayya Obeid, program director, ECWA.

There were 40 trainees, representing Bahrain, Iraq, Oman, the two Yemens and the United Arab Emirates.

The method used in training favored the actual participation of the trainees in free discussion and exchange of ideas. Emphasis was placed on the role of organization and participation skills in ensuring the success of meetings. Posters, advertisements and audio-visual methods were used to clarify and implement the concepts presented in the sessions.

(Condensed from "Al-Fajr" magazine, Abu-Dhabi, 23 Nov. 1981)

## World Assembly on Aging (WAA)

"For the first time in human history, this generation has seen the creation of a new age group — the aging... Improved health conditions and control of killing diseases has permitted life expectancy in developing countries to increase at a much more rapid rate than at present anticipated and possibly sooner than anticipated".

The above quotation is taken from a statement made by Mr. William M. Kerrigan, Secretary-General of the World Assembly on Aging (WAA), published in its newsletter no. 1, December 1981.

In the paper "Feature", published by the Division for Economic and Social Information, Department of Public Information no. 124, nov. 1981, we read that "women already form the majority of the aging in industrialized societies and will actually predominate in the Third World".

Since women in all societies are trained for dependency, it will not be easy for them to overcome this condition in old age, even in countries where they have traditionally been a part of economic life. According to the same paper, throughout the world, in industrial or agricultural areas, women over 60 are the **"poorest of the poor"**.

What should be done to handle the emerging

problem of the needy elderly? Our answer is to make it easier for men and women to remain in employment and also to remove impediments to the elderly seeking jobs, particularly women.

It is interesting to note that the participation of older people in the economy is much higher in developing countries, partly because social security in these countries is less available.

The World Assembly on Aging will be held by the United Nations in Vienna, Austria, in July-August 1982. Its Advisory Committee is made up of representatives from 22 member states of the United Nations, half of which belong to the Third World. Lebanon is included in this committee and in compliance with the recommendation of the Assembly, a report is being prepared by the Lebanese Government on the conditions and needs of the elderly.

In a country which has been suffering from war for the last seven years and has lost a large number of its youth as a result of war or emigration, the mobilization of all its potential, including elderly men and women, for the process of reconstruction, appears as a necessary step, which will solve, at least partially, the problems faced by the old.

## PEACE CAMPAIGN

## STAR (Stop The Arms Race)

Star is the abbreviation of the slogan, "Stop the Arms Race". It is also the emblem of the peace campaign organized by WILPF (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom), which aims to register **one million women** who wish to stop the arms race. The campaign starts officially on March 8 (International Women's Day), 1982 and ends on the same day in 1983.

WILPF has special STAR cards for collecting signatures of women pacifists, and a \$1 star button for each signature. Those interested have to fill a form published in the last issue of WILPF, March 1982, and send it to the WILPF publication address.

How will the signatures be used?

On March 8, 1982, all STAR registrants are urged to converge at the White House, where they will deliver the message of at least one million women to President Reagan that they do not want new Cruise and Pershing II missiles deployed in Europe. A delegation of STAR registrants will leave the White House with the one million signatures and travel to Brussels to join their

European sisters in delivering this same message to NATO headquarters.

How will the money be used?

The money raised from the STAR campaign will support **national** and **international** WILPF projects whose goal is to end the arms race through public education and action.

### Al-Raida's Response

While we strongly support the STAR international campaign for peace, we urge that the call be extended to Eastern Europe, to Soviet Russia and to other countries in the Middle and Far East, in Africa and in Latin America.

Our world is so interdependent and its problems so interrelated that it is useless to limit peace efforts to one part of the world while other parts are in an actual or a potential state of war. The hot spots of the world in the Middle East and in Latin America need immediate consideration and help.

# "The Coming of Age"

## Part II - Simone de Beauvoir

How do the old view their age? What are their attitudes towards old age? What is the psychology of the old? These are some of the questions posed in the second part of Simone de Beauvoir's **The Coming of Age**.<sup>(1)</sup> The author has used the examples of the privileged few (writers, artists etc.) who were the only people to record their attitudes, feelings and views of old age. She has used this data in order to make some generalizations about the image the old people have of themselves and to find the reasons for their differing attitudes.

There are two attitudes that old people have towards that "unrealizable" old age. There is a positive and optimistic view of it, and there is a negative and pessimistic attitude that is detected among the old. The first attitude adds wisdom, maturity and joy to the life of the old and makes them enjoyable company for young and old alike. The second attitude makes them bitter, complaining and unhappy and thus undesirable in social and family circles.

These contrasting attitudes are caused by the experiences old people might have had in early childhood and in family relationships. Other factors such as their economic situation and health also influence the way they view old age. In addition, their status in society during the years of retirement, their useful activities whether in creative work or in service to their respective communities, in social, cultural or political life, may have an impact on their attitudes. In case of failure to be accepted by society and given an honorable place in it, old people succumb to isolation, brooding and depression.

### The negative attitudes

Health plays an important role in developing a pessimistic view of old age. The body as a whole, with its organs and functions that do not work properly, is at the heart of the complaints and negative attitudes of old people. Some are indifferent to their health and speak of it in a detached and remote manner. They feel, since they are old, it's not worth going to the

doctor. What can a doctor do for them? Can he bring back their youth? Another factor is that many old people have been brought up in a society that paid less attention to health than is usual today. **Anxiety over health is** exaggerated due to an inferior status in society. The retired man often transfers the attention no longer required by his work to his body. For many, illness acts as an excuse for the inferiority to which they are now doomed. Some people make their infirmities worse out of resentment. Chateaubriand said that it was a torment to preserve one's intellectual being intact, imprisoned in a worn-out physical shell. Chateaubriand had fallen from his pedestal, he was alone in a century that was taking less and less notice of him; and he brooded over his grievances.

### Gribouillisme

This is the psychiatrists' name for the attitude that consists of plunging into old age because of the horror that it inspires. The subject exaggerates; because he is rather lame he goes through the motions of paralysis; because he is rather deaf, he stops listening altogether. The functions that are no longer exercised degenerate, and by playing the cripple, the subject becomes one. This often occurs in institutions. Since they have been abandoned, the old abandon themselves and refuse to make the slightest effort. At the end they end up by being bedridden.

### Lack of medical care and aids

Some old people cannot afford proper medical care or aids like false teeth, good quality spectacles, hearing aids, wheel chairs etc. When illnesses are not properly treated with surgical operations or medical care, they leave the old permanently weakened. Any physical weakness or partial failure brings about a renunciation that is followed by a rapid and general collapse.

### The outsider's view

The revelation of age comes from the outside — from others. It comes as a shock to a man the first time he hears himself called old. When Casanova was sixty-eight a correspondent called him a "venerable old man", and he replied very sharply, "I have not yet reached that wretched age at which one can no longer make any claim to life". We find it very painful to accept the discovery of age of those who are close to us. Whether we like it or not, in the end, we submit to the outsider's point of view however unpleasant.

<sup>(1)</sup> Editions Gallimard 1970, Trans. by Patrick O'Brian 1973. See Al-Raida May 1, 1982, vol. V, no. 20, p.14, for a summary of part 1.

## **"Identification Crisis"**

At the threshold of adolescence, the self-image collapses. Similarly, in old age there is a shattering of the reality of the old person. In both cases the psychiatrists speak of an "Identification Crisis". But there are great differences. The adolescent realizes that he is going through a period of transition; his body is changing, and it torments him. The aged person comes to feel that he is old through others, and without having experienced important changes. His inner being does not accept the label that has been stuck to him. He no longer knows who he is.

## **The Working of the Unconscious Mind**

The psychoanalyst Martin Grotjahn, states that our unconscious mind knows nothing of old age: it clings to the illusion of perpetual youth. When this illusion is shattered, in many cases it causes a narcissistic traumatism that gives rise to a depressive psychosis. Also, the adult associates age with fantasies of castration, weakening or obliterating his sexuality. Among those aspects of old age that are most unrealizable, this is the one that consciously and unconsciously, man is most reluctant to accept.

## **Positive attitudes toward old age**

For a man who is sure of himself, who is contented with his lot and who is on good terms with those around him, age remains theoretical. One who has had a happy childhood, has been brought up in an atmosphere of love and affection, reacts positively to old age. Also if he has spent his youth constructively building up his interests and developing his potential, using his body and physical energy in moderation, similarly his view of old age is positive.

## **Optimistic view in spite of physical infirmities**

Very often the burden of the body counts for less than the attitude that is adopted towards it. Claudel wrote: "Eighty years old! No eyes left, no ears, no

teeth, no legs! And when all is said and done, how astonishingly well one does without them!" Voltaire also had a positive attitude towards his age; he wrote "The heart does not grow old, but it is sad to dwell among ruins. I undergo all the calamities connected with decrepitude". But he was wealthy, famous and revered; he was busier than ever, passionately concerned with what he was writing, and he accepted his condition with serenity.

## **Determination to keep fit and active**

Exercising the muscles in good sports activities and keeping the body in good shape reveals the determination of the old to remain fit and active till the last day of their life. The will to keep up to date in all areas of life motivates the old person to use all his physical, intellectual and social assets for constructive and creative work. The mind and the body are very closely linked. Good health encourages the survival of emotional and intellectual interests. Most of the time the mind and body travel together towards their growth or their decline.

## **Conclusion**

The immense majority of old people live in hunger, cold and disease. Such is the real condition of old people and we cannot be optimistic about old age. Experience is in direct contradiction with the notion that age brings freedom from carnal desire. At the first beginnings of old age the body may retain its former vigour or reach a new state of equilibrium. But in the course of years it deteriorates, grows burdensome and hinders the activities of the mind. The old person is no longer capable of what he desires. He forms a project, and then just when it is to be carried out his body fails him. When this happens, old age is experienced and the sufferer feels the anguish of losing his grasp upon himself.

Age is an inescapable fact of life that we try to avoid as long as we can until it takes hold of us. It is a sad truth which can, however, be made bearable and acceptable if society takes it seriously and responsibly through various ways by extending help, humanity and warmth.

**Azadouhi Kalaidjian  
(Simonian)**

# **Rest House "Oznam", Batroun, Lebanon**

On the occasion of the International Year of the Elderly and the 150th Anniversary of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Lebanon, the Batroun Section of this society has finished the elaboration of the project of a rest house for the elderly, named "Oznam", which will be erected in Batroun, Marje Square, near the old road

to Mseilha Castle. The laying of the first stone of the building took place on April 19, 1982. The ceremony was presided over by Father Richard McCullen, Superior General of the Lazarist Fathers and the Sisters of Charity.

**(L'Orient-Le Jour, 17 April, 1982)**

# Asian Women's Role in Peace and Development<sup>(1)</sup>

Under the auspices of the Asian Women's Institute (AWI)<sup>(2)</sup>, a conference, bringing together a number of Asian women and representatives of a few institutions of higher learning, was held in Manila, the Philippines, July 7-10, 1980. Its aim was to examine and affirm women's role in peace building and development. It was attended by about 45 participants, observers and resource persons from Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, India, Pakistan, Lebanon and the U.S.A.

AWI chairperson, Mrs. Mira Phailbus, stated the purpose of the Conference and introduced the office bearers, AWI executive committee members, the guest speakers, resource persons, presidents and directors of consortium colleges and universities and other participants.

Mrs. Phailbus and other participants gave brief addresses emphasizing the message of AWI and its efforts for the implementation of peace and human values. Reports were given by representatives of women's studies centres. The discussions of the Presidents Consultation and Directors Workparty gave suggestions for possible projects to be implemented by consortium institutions and centres of women's studies in the triennium 1981-1984. The following paragraphs summarize their statements:

1. Peace and development need to be defined by colleges and universities in terms of their own local or regional needs.
2. Justice to women is essential to peace; women's issues must form part of education on university campuses.
3. The importance of relating curriculum to life experiences was emphasized.
4. Information about each other as people (countries, cultural and minority groups) and of issues confronting the world should be part of campus education.
5. The politicizing of students on campuses especially in times of regional conflict, e.g. in Lebanon, was considered a real problem. Administrators and faculty need to know what the students are thinking and guide them to maintain an atmosphere of learning on campus.
6. Dissemination of peace information through the media, children's literature, curricular and co-curricular programmes could be a special contribution of women's education.
7. More information about the changing roles of

women could be shared among faculty, students, parents and the community.

8. The importance of training and helping to develop competent professional women through the university was stressed by conveners.
9. Strengthening of natural and mathematical science education for women with a new approach to science curriculum and teaching was considered a real need and an important service which women's colleges and universities could render.
10. Continuing education and career education should continue to form part of the priorities.

The following pages contain abstracts of the three keynote addresses presented at the conference by women delegates from India, the Philippines and Thailand.

## Preparing Women For Peace Building

In her conference address, Sr. Mary Braganza, president of the Sophia College, Bombay, India, emphasized the following points:

In education, it is not enough to stress academic excellence. To-day we have to see how education can promote the dignity of the human person and work to reform unjust structures.

Peace does not only mean absence of war but also absence of fear and development of a sense of inner freedom. Promoting peace requires the development of "co-responsibility as opposed to self-sufficiency, collaboration as opposed to competition, communion as opposed to isolation, concern as opposed to prejudice and indifference."

Experience has taught us that **competition** is one of the many destructive forces in the modern world. Competition is destructive for the students, frustrating for the teachers and does not do any good for the building of peace.

Steps that are necessary for administrators and those responsible for policy-making:

1. Using crisis as a door to creativity.
2. Creating the non-violent, non-manipulative form of leadership.
3. Identification with the group.
4. Encouraging students to accept themselves and their own gifts.
5. Prompt detection of any vocational preferences; it is not a matter of giving a scholarship to a girl economically poor but with no capacity for higher learning.
6. Cultivation of the dignity of manual labor.
7. Using effective, symbolic gestures, for example, in Scandinavia, women decided not to give their children guns or other weapons as toys.

<sup>(1)</sup> Condensed from *Asian Women*, vol. VI, n°. XX, Sept. 1981, pp. 1-11.

<sup>(2)</sup> About the Asian Women's Institute see Al-Raida, May 1, 1980, vol. III, n°. 12, p. 10 and footnotes.

Handling the topic of women's development in peace from the Philippine perspective, Dr. Loretta Sicat, executive director, Philippine Social Science Council, gave certain ideas briefly stated as follows:

For men and women, equal opportunity for education and work is only partly true.

The labor laws, even when they tend to favor women in terms of benefits, leaves, etc., may act as inhibiting factors towards the hiring of women to higher positions.

It does not necessarily hold true in a general sense that the higher the level of one's education, the higher is the economic return, both for the country as well as for the individual. A woman with a Ph. D. might opt for domestic activity which restricts her productivity. She may prefer to stay at home because she does not want to rear a family of juvenile delinquents. She feels she can contribute more by giving all her efforts to the development of her family.

Now there are social institutions which help working women discharge their family responsibilities. The monetary value of a housewife's work is highly restricted, hence she should be given the opportunity of doing lucrative work outside the home. The sharing of the husband in housekeeping must be encouraged. Sex-role differentiation should not be the rule because a woman may be more fit than a man for certain activities monopolized by him.

Women who are more educated and more aware become more brave to object and to protest but their rebellion is generally interpreted in words and does not lead to violence and war; on the other hand, just as we need a women's liberation movement, we want men to be liberated from shackles which prevent them from understanding and sharing with women the benefits of peace and development.

Dr. Prakai Nontawasee, of the Department of Humanities, Payap College, Thailand, pointed out in her address the danger of nuclear war.

By means of statistics, she showed the increasing economic responsibilities of women, which entitle them to exert a growing influence in their environment. In Bangladesh, for example, 90 per cent of the female population is engaged in agriculture. In Africa, women do 60-80 per cent of all agricultural work. In developing countries as a whole, they perform at least 50 per cent of food production.

Women's sharing in development is enhanced through education, especially at the higher level, which further stimulates their potentialities. But the pressing need is to give them the right sort of education, without which development will dehumanize people. **Education which is motivated by the desire for wealth and position, means a deep desire for manpower and militarism.**

The pursuit of peace and development is a life-long process. Education is a self-renewing task. It is also a process of communication and joint action with others.

## SECOND NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DEMOGRAPHIC POLICIES

Organized by the Lebanon Family Planning Association, this conference was held on 1-3 April, 1982, at the A.U.B. Medical Library and attended by representatives of the Lebanese ministries, delegates of universities, of U.N. agencies, vocational and cultural institutions, research institutes, LFPA officers, observers and journalists.

Twelve lectures were presented, dealing with demographic and family-planning problems. The final report and recommendations were formulated in the last meeting, on April 3, then presented on the same day at a press conference in 24 points, briefly given below:

1. The demographic problems in Lebanon should receive adequate attention from the government because every development plan initiated by the authorities depends on statistics, surveys and demographic censuses regularly carried out.

2. Lebanese demographic laws are now obsolete and need revision.

3. Creation of a council for social research and development of human resources is a necessity in the country.

4. Money received from outside sources should be gradually transferred to important investment projects instead of its being used in immediate consumption projects.

5. Constant flow of displaced people from rural areas to Beirut and other cities leads to serious problems.

6. Demographic concentration in Beirut and other large Lebanese cities creates social and hygienic problems.

7. Development Services Centers established by the Social Welfare Services in a number of Lebanese districts are expected to meet the needs of rural people by means of extended activities in social, educational, vocational and hygienic fields.

8. The plan laid out by the Board of Administrators of Industrial Complexes regarding the execution of industrial projects should be carried out.

9. Conservation of the environment should be a matter of primary concern for both the public and the private sector.

10. An extensive study of Lebanese emigration, its causes and effects, is strongly recommended.

Regarding women's needs, it was recommended that:

- a. A strategic policy be adopted with the aim of increasing women's participation in economic development.

- b. Women with family responsibilities should be

given the opportunity to do part time work if they desire it.

c. The Family Planning Association should receive steady encouragement; its demands in every respect must be fulfilled. In consequence, a special administra-

tive body should be created for the purpose of coordinating the activities of Board, employees and volunteers in the Association. Such a body would be affiliated with the Development and Construction Council or with the Social Welfare Service.

## PROMOTING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN LEBANON AND OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES<sup>(5)</sup>

The changing circumstances in the world to-day are driving women into work outside the home, either because they are the sole providers for their households or because the high cost of living obliges them to share in family expenses.

An evaluation of women's participation in economic development requires the provision of accurate information about it, which is generally defective in the Arab world. **Statistics** regarding this topic show the following defects: 1) They overlook woman's domestic activity and her participation in family productive work, field work, seasonal work, etc. 2) In collecting data about working women, those who do irregular work are often omitted; when the husband answers for his wife he often refuses to recognize her extra work in and outside the home.

### Necessity of revising questionnaires:

They should include women who do irregular work, minimum number of their work hours, number of unemployed, seasonal work, causes of unemployment.

### Analysis of Women's Work

It should indicate its characteristics and the factors influencing it, its distribution, interrelation of characteristics, their relation with demographic agents like age, marital or family status, educational level.

In evaluating women's housework, two obstacles stand in the way of obtaining adequate results: 1) scarcity of studies about the nature of domestic tasks, 2) difficulty of defining and covering them.

### Changing Public Opinion

Those who are against women's employment use the argument that it would result in unemployment for men.

Refutation of this negative attitude:

1. Women's participation will be gradual and within possibility limits.
2. Women's work is necessary in Lebanon and other Arab countries where male emigration to the oil countries and to the West has obliged women to care for themselves and for their families.
3. The present economic policy tends to increase labor opportunities for both men and women so as to meet the need for increased production.
4. From the social point of view, women's participation in outside work seems indispensable for several factors such as their desire to make use of the vocational training they may have had, the tendency to reduce the number of children per family, modern housekeeping facilities and the sharing of the husband and children in domestic tasks.

### Ways of encouraging woman's economic contribution:

1. Redesigning work schedules with the aim of allowing a larger number of women to take part-time or full time jobs.
2. Granting working women certain privileges and advantages in the form of adequate maternity leaves, nursery schools, and the possibility of re-entry after a short absence.
3. Cooperation of social institutions and information media in creating a favorable attitude toward women's work. Women's involvement in political parties would help to promote their involvement in work.

Finally, the effectiveness of national strategic policies regarding woman's work depends on the **preparation of accurate informational data** and the creation of a positive attitude towards it in society as a whole.

1. Abstract of a lecture given by Dr. Huda Zurayk at the Second National Conference for Demographic Policies, organized by the Lebanon Family Planning Association, 1-3 April 1982. See elsewhere in this issue.

## Al-Nashra Al-Dawriyya

nos. 24 and 27

A quarterly published by the State of Bahrain, reporting on social activities carried out through the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

The above numbers, published in 1981, contain reports on training sessions organized for women in adult education, manual skills, child care and training of social pioneers. Other reports deal with units of social aid, child welfare and elimination of begging.

The following paragraphs condense a report on a child welfare conference, attended by Bahraini and other Arab delegates, held at New Delhi, 16-18 november 1981.

Delegates from 20 Asian countries, including 8 Arab and 12 non-Arab countries, met at New Delhi, India, to discuss the basic needs of childhood and lay down strategies for the implementation of recommended policies.

Two sub-committees were formed. The first discussed general problems of childhood, especially in rural districts, and governments' role in handling them. The second concentrated on child health and the disabled child. Reports and work documents were presented by the delegates. Among the topics treated were the following: A report on the aid given to disabled children in Kuwait; treatment of delinquency in Kuwait; protection and rehabilitation of the disabled in Saudi Arabia; general policy of child welfare in Bahrain; status of children in the Democratic Republic of Yemen; child welfare and development in India, Iraq and the Philippines; aid to disabled children in Pakistan; child and family welfare in Bangladesh.

The following are the principal decisions taken by the participants:

1. Creation of an executive commission for child welfare in all countries.
2. Aid to needy families should not take the form of random money gifts but should be restricted to those willing to share in production.
3. Development of work opportunities for women.
4. Creation of an Asian fund for the purpose of fulfilling immediate needs of children.
5. Dissemination and implementation of the recommendations of the International Charter for the rehabilitation of the Disabled during the eighties.
6. The All-India Union for Children's Welfare should be considered as the coordinator of non-government organizations working for the disabled.

## Ban on Female Circumcision

A seminar on Bodily Mutilation of Young Females was held in Cairo in 1980. Organized by the Cairo Family Planning Association and attended by representatives of the Arab League, the UN agencies, local non-government organizations, it was inaugurated by Egypt's minister of Social and Insurance Affairs, Dr. Amal Osman.

The religious scholars who participated in the seminar declared that no religion recommends female circumcision. The medical specialists agreed that there are no medical advantages to be gained from this practice. On the contrary, the operation is harmful from both the physical and the psychological points of view.

The seminar recommended that a national campaign involving religious scholars, women's organizations and the mass media be launched in order to inform both rural and urban people about the health, psychological and social damage resulting from female circumcision.

Among the papers presented at the seminar was one from Professor Marie Bassili Assaad, an Egyptian social scientist of the Social Research Center of the American University in Cairo.

Professor Assaad said that she did not wish to draw generalizations from the limited survey she had carried out with clients at a family planning clinic in Cairo. But other researchers seemed to support her impressions that about 75 percent of women and girls in Egypt practise circumcision, irrespective of their religion.

(Abridged form of an article published in *International Women's News*, vol. 77, No. 1, March 1982 p. 6)

## Courage

An illustrated feminist magazine of 60-67 pages, published in I Berlin, West Germany. Presented as a supporter of women's rights, it tries to bring out their role in society, culture and politics, particularly in the fields of pacifism, support of workers' claims, domestic economy and aid to the suffering. The following are some of its interesting themes: Biographies of militant or outstanding women, women's health and sex problems, reports about women's concerns and achievements in Germany and in other parts of the world. Through the diversity of its topics and interests, this magazine expects to attract a large reading public and to secure a good number of subscribers. Address: **Courage** Frauenverlags. Gmb. H. Bleibtreustr. 48, 1 Berlin 12, West Germany.

# Femmes et Multinationales (Women and Multinationals)

by **Andrée Michel, Hélène Agbessi-Dos Santos,  
and Agnès Fatoumata Diarra<sup>(1)</sup>**

In the first section of this book, entitled "Women and the new international division of work", Andrée Michel discusses the growing divergence in income between developing and developed countries and its influence on women's conditions. The "new" division of work between the industrialized North and the pauperized South is essentially the work of multinational banks and enterprises. The extroverted development imposed on the countries of the South by the Multinationals is expressed in their growing dependence on the countries of the North from the economic, technological, financial, cultural and political points of view.

Foreign firms share the economic control of the African continent by virtue of the colonial heritage. The alimentary dependence of African countries keeps growing. The cereal trade is monopolized by seven families heading five giant enterprises which compete with local producers in order to eliminate them. The same stratagems are used to perpetuate the technological and financial dependence of the Third World.

In their exploitation plans, the countries of the North benefit from the complicity of the administrative, industrial and commercial bourgeoisie of the South who blindly imitate the Western way of life.

On the other hand, revolt against humiliating traditional practices such as excision of women, polygamy, etc., is limited to the women of the educated bourgeois society, while such a revolt is far from reaching the majority of African women, engrossed in the struggle of making a living.

In the categories of unprivileged classes, women constitute the largest numbers because they are most vulnerable. Girls are less nourished, less taken care of than boys, they receive less education and they rarely benefit from vocational training.

The following statistics made by international organisations reveal that:

- Women constitute 50% of the world population and 33.3% of the official labor force.

- They perform about 66% of the totality of work hours (merchant and non-merchant, domestic, craftsmanship, paid, etc.)
- They receive only 10% of the total world income and possess only 1% of the world property.

The second part of the book, "Peasants, multinationals and development", is also introduced by Andrée Michel who says that in Africa, 80% of the feminine population live in the country and cultivate the soil. Yet women are deprived of the right to land ownership. Their salaries are handed over to their husbands. There is a noticeable increase in the number of women who act as household heads because they were abandoned by their husbands.

In this part, Hélène Agbessi-Dos Santos discusses changes in masculine and feminine roles in production, consequent to economic transformation. She says that imported technologies increase the profits of multinational enterprises and do not contribute to women's or family's welfare. In the Benin Gulf, Nigeria, women play an important role as economic agents. Their economic independence is more frequent. On the other hand, more fathers are leaving to their wives the care of children, which imposes on women a double burden. The present imbalance in traditional social structure is detrimental to the condition of the child who is left without any one to take care of his education, because the mother's role is reduced to providing mere subsistence needs.

"We are not here preaching a return to traditionalism", says the author, "but it seems necessary to seek a new equilibrium versus a new model of development."

The new development has resulted in more monetarisation of economy, generalized sale of livelihood production and increased purchase of imported products. The result is a growing alimentary dependence and the rise of more and more serious alimentary and nutritional problems. The equilibrium that is needed is the local industrialization, resulting in a reduced sale of livelihood production and decreased purchase of imported products.

<sup>(1)</sup> Editions Karthala, Paris, 1981 — Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique.

## Women at Work<sup>(1)</sup>

Divorce rates continue to grow everywhere in the industrialized world and so does the number of women-headed families. The largest growing group of poor families in the U.S. is made up of women-headed families. Recent studies of working hours by sex show that, in all industrialized societies, women work much longer hours than men and that housework contributions of men are negligible, while child care by men for the most part does not exist. Yet the man-made labour market rules discriminate against women who do part time work.

Child care is totally inadequate in all Western countries and economies, while men everywhere disregard and shun their parenting and child care obligations. Sweden is perhaps the only Western country where child care is taken seriously, though the community-provided facilities are insufficient. In Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union, organised child care has been given priority though the problem has not been solved there either.

Women who work at home perform thousands of

essential services for their families and society. That this important work is not counted constitutes an injustice that must be done away with, because it is one of the main causes of discrimination against women, especially in industrialized economic systems.

Discrimination against working women is shown at every level: entry, promotion, training for higher skills and management. Women in the U.S. earn 59 cents for every dollar men earn. The gap is similar in European and other countries. Other built-in discriminatory factors that are shared world-wide are the segregation of women to low-paying, dead-end jobs and the failure of labour unions to help them. The segregation of females into the work areas with the least rewards starts often in elementary school by channelling girls away from the essential mathematics and science classes. Socialization teaches girls not to compete, to defer to boys and to regard college as a marriage market instead of a place to acquire the necessary background, learning and skills for independence and economic support. Libby Koontz, a former member of the U.S. Presidential Advisory Committee on Women said: "Young girls must disabuse themselves of the still persistent notion that marriage means permanent support and security."

<sup>(1)</sup> Abridged form of an article by Fran P. Hosken (Editor, WIN NEWS). Published by International Labour Office, Geneva.

## Introducing "Manushi": An Indian Feminist Journal<sup>(1)</sup>

"Indian women.. are among the most brutally oppressed in the world to-day. They are victims not only of sexism, but also of caste divisions, class hatred, poverty, and feudal social relations. In India, we find young brides sprinkled with kerosene by their mothers-in-law and set ablaze if they fail to bring a sufficient amount of money and goods as dowry for the groom's family... In 1975, three hundred and fifty women were burnt to death in Delhi alone. These were reported as suicides to the police, but in reality they were dowry deaths".

Genocide is not restricted to young brides. Among female infants, the mortality rate is higher than for male babies. A greater incidence of malnutrition also occurs among women which in turn contributes to the ill-health of both mother and child.

In middle-class society, the confinement of women

is strict. In women's university hostels, women are literally locked in: they are forbidden to smoke, to drink, or to receive female guests in their rooms. They are even discouraged from whistling or singing. Similar restrictions do not weigh upon the male students nor on working-class women.

"Manushi", the journal about women and society in India is the pioneer publication of its kind in India. It appeared in 1979 and is produced by a group of women feminists committed to break the long silence of Indian women who suffer torture, starvation, infanticide, suicide and murder.

Published in two separate editions, English and Hindi, it is priced at half the cost because the editors want to reach as many people as possible.

Subscriptions for one year (six issues) cost \$3 plus \$8 air mail postage. Single issues may be ordered for \$.50 per copy plus \$1.20 air mail postage. Write Manushi c/o Ms. Madhu Kishwar, A-5 Nizamuddin East, New Delhi 110013 India.

<sup>(1)</sup> Condensed from an article by Tobe Levin, published in Women's Studies Newsletter, winter 1980, vol. VIII, No. 1, p. 30.

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