

BEIRUT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

November, 1988 Vol. VIII, No.46

CONTENTS

Editorial

Women and Liberation

Articles:

- Arab Women Solidarity
- Toufiq el-Hakim: a supporter of an Arab Women's Party
- Becoming Liberated in Beirut
- A Contemporary Algerian Girl Tells her Story
- Tunisian Women: Their Rights in Public Opinion
- A Western Feminist Speaks on the Need for a **Feminine Culture**

Conference:

- Asian Women's Institute Conference "Together for Justice and Peace through Education and Development"
- Keynote Address by Pat Magdamo
- Discrimination Against Women in Japan
- Legal and Political Aspects — Pakistan
- Position of Women in Korea
- Report from Indonesia

Book Reviews:

- Shedding Light on the Contemporary Women's Movement
- Women of the Mediterranean

Bibliography

Books Acquired by IWSAW

Join Hands/LNS



Women and Liberation.

Women and Liberation

When we turn over the pages of the numerous feminist publications received by IWSAW from various parts of the world, we immediately notice the scarcity of materials published by or about women of the Middle East, particularly women of Arab countries.

Turmoil, internal dissensions and reactionary movements, following the recently won independence in Arab and other Eastern countries, have greatly impeded interest in women's problems. Yet, the struggle for women's liberation has not subsided. It has taken new forms such as women organizing into groups and societies which formulate claims and protests against unjust laws and traditions. As an example, Algerian women's protests were able to prevent the promulgation of the regressive family code proposed in 1982. In Egypt, Nawal Saadawi continues to play a leading role in the process of women's liberation from old traditions and the new fundamentalist wave. Recently, she has succeeded, jointly with a group of men and women feminists, in founding the "Arab Women Solidarity" which is expected to bring together all Arab women.

In Lebanon, IWSAW continues to function in spite of difficulties. If Al-Raida does not appear regularly, other publications by the Institute continue to increase. Social taboos and political unrest in Lebanon and other Third World countries have induced many young women to emigrate into Europe, Australia, U.S.A. and Canada where they have the opportunity to develop their talents and participate in Western and international feminist projects. When they keep contact with their homelands, they show interest in the Palestinian problem or seem to be disturbed by the reactionary movement which has swept over the Arab and Moslem countries during the last ten years and which is being fought by emancipated women in Pakistan, Iran, Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world.

All these problems are handled more or less briefly in the contents of this number of Al-Raida, particularly in the report given about the Asian Women's Institute Conference of June 28-30, 1988.

Rose Ghurayyib

The problems that occupy Western feminists are of a different nature. While enrollments in women's studies courses continue to increase in American universities, some educators predict a decline in the next half decade. If this occurs, we should remember that women's history in America and perhaps everywhere else, tends to follow a cyclical rather than an evolutionary pattern. Periods of zeal are followed by periods of coolness. In the latter case, new stratagems must be found to revive the movement.

Another problem that occupies Western feminists is that of establishing closer communication and more cooperation between them and the feminists of developing countries. To reach this end, they have developed the publication of international bulletins such as WIN (Women's International News), INSTRAW News, published by the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. Other publications are ISIS, Women of Europe, Women of the Whole World, journal of the WIDF (Women's International Democratic Federation), Women Studies Forum, IWRAW (International Women's Rights Action Watch), etc.

We may here add a third question which occupies a number of them: that of discovering and establishing their own identity: "Who am I?" "Should we as women create our own culture or should we adopt male culture?"

On the other hand feminists of the Middle East and of Third World countries in general, have to handle other questions and fight on several fronts. Besides the struggle they have to wage for their own liberation and that of their enslaved sisters, they are faced with the duty to participate in the liberation of their countries from despotic rulers and opportunist leaders, from the threat of internal dissension, poverty and war.

Arab Women Solidarity

Founded in Egypt in 1982, under the name of "Arab Women Solidarity" (AWS), this association obtained, in 1985, a consultative status, category 2, with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The founder is the well-known Egyptian feminist, Dr. Nawal Saadawi, whose experience as neurologist and clinical researcher induced her to write several studies and novels about the problems of the Egyptian and Arab women. This association is presented as an international, non-governmental organization whose aim is to serve as a means of contact and cooperation between the women of the Arab world in the fields of culture, economy, politics and social activities. Members include both men and women. Since 1982, the association has been able to hold a general conference for Arab women, to participate in several international conferences, to hold weekly discussions, to present films and recitals in its own recently acquired hall. It has also published six books dealing with women's problems and activities. It published a monthly paper containing news of the Arab women and, in 1988, started a non-periodical magazine of eight large sized pages, distributed in the whole Arab world and produced by a group of women and men, who believe that the liberation of men cannot take place without the liberation of women. The AWS is planning to organize in Cairo, in November 1988, its second Arab Women Conference, dealing with the general topic of "Modern Arab Thought and Women". It is in the process of collecting money to finance this conference which will be attended by Noura al-Falah (Kuwait), Ferial Ghazzul (Iraq), Marlene Waring (New Zealand), Dalal Bizri (Lebanon), Robin Morgan (U.S.A.), Alexandra Mikokie (Italy), and other outstanding feminists. In the editorial of the first number of AWS magazine, Nawal Saadawi insists on the idea that the large number of women's organizations in the Arab world is evidence of their general awareness of their oppressive condition and of their right to challenge it. The women's movement in Egypt and other Arab countries was not created by a government decree. It sprouted here and there in a variety of forms, with the hope that mutual contact and cooperation might finally lead to a large international union, including men and women, from all Arab countries, who believe that women's liberation is a necessary condition for the liberation of society as a whole. The ambitious plans adopted by AWS impose on it the request for financial help from every part of the Arab world but the continuous growth it expects to achieve requires the establishment of a permanent fund which would guarantee its expansion and stability.

While the staff of Al-Raida welcomes the newly founded sister magazine, it extends to the Arab Women Solidarity Association warm wishes for its growth and success, acknowledging its belief in women's liberation as the cornerstone of national liberation and social justice.

(Arab Women Solidarity, No.1, May 1988).

Toufiq el-Hakim: a supporter of an Arab Women's Party

Generally considered as a confirmed misogynist, Toufiq el-Hakim, the famous Egyptian writer, was one of the first supporters of the organization: "Arab Women Solidarity." Just before he died — while he was on his deathbed — he wrote a letter, addressed to the Women of Egypt, in which he urged them to organize a party whose object would be to defend their interests. To reach this end, they should elaborate a plan of action leading to the improvement of their status and the protection of their rights and those of men in general. The government must be ready to participate in the formation of this party because women's interests are an intrinsic part of those of society.

"Though I have always refused to join in any party" Toufiq el-Hakim adds, "I am ready to become a member of the women's party because I recognize its importance in our present circumstances, which impose on our women new responsibilities and raise before them intricate problems, without providing them with the necessary help in their homes and outside."

"It is the duty of the government to provide women with work, to create nurseries for the children of working women, to adopt the principle of equal pay for equal work in evaluating their work. It is the duty of men to help women secure suitable positions and enjoy the same rights that men have to promotion and development. A women's party is the only guarantee and the chief factor of women's liberation and evolution. Men have no other care but their own interests. Only women can defend and save women."

"Just Published"

The OECD Development Center has just published two volumes in collaboration with AICARDES (Association of Arab Research Institutes and Centers for Economic and Social Development):

— **DIRECTORY OF DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTES: ARAB COUNTRIES**, 180 pages: Paris, DECD 1988, ISBN 92 64 03081-6. FF145 L17 132 DM 63

— **REGISTER OF DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH PROJECTS: ARAB COUNTRIES**, 354 pages: Paris, DECD 1988, ISBN 92 64 03082-4. FF310 L36.50 \$68.50 DM 134

The above publications can be ordered from:

OECD Development Center
External Co-operation (Office 808)
94, rue Chardon-Lagache
75016 Paris France

Becoming Liberated in Beirut⁽¹⁾

Khaoula Mokhtar, assisted by Marie-Christine Aulas and Monique Gadant.

By the middle of the twentieth century, modernism was gaining ground in Lebanon through the influence of foreign schools including French, American, British and other missionary ones. It meant for Lebanese women a growing interest in education and in work. During the first quarter of the century, the baccalaureat system, borrowed from the French, was established. The same program of study, the same examinations were required of boys and girls. Private and public modern schools increased in number and tried to emulate the firmly established foreign schools, reputed for their good standard.

This article summarizes the story of a young Lebanese girl, Khaoula Mokhtar, who came from the Bekaa, a relatively less developed district of Lebanon, and, in spite of hardships, was able to liberate herself through study and work and join the militant women of her country. Her father owned a house and a piece of land but he had eleven children to take care of. Though she was a Moslem, she was sent to a Nun's school at Mount Lebanon. Her brother went to that of the French Marist Brothers. After obtaining a "brevet", a government diploma ending the intermediate stage of education, she wanted to go on with her studies in order to obtain the baccalaureat degree but her father could not afford it. With her brevet in hand, she and one of her cousins who had received the same diploma, were allowed to teach in a State school, located in the North-east of Lebanon. They were in charge of two hundred pupils who were all at the elementary stage. The two girls worked all day long and, in the evenings, studied for their baccalaureat. They lodged with relatives who were closed and conservative, yet they accepted them because they understood the reasons behind their decision and approved their behavior and sense of responsibility.

Having successfully passed the baccalaureat in 1958-59, Khaoula moved to the Lebanese University where she read law and political economy. Her father agreed to let her take this step because as soon as she started working she sent him almost all her earnings, so that he could continue to send her brothers to school or to university. He was proud of her and was ready to declare to his friends and acquaintances that she deserved his admiration.

At the time, Moslem students were generally sympathizers of the Baath party which had as a slogan the unity of the Arabs, freedom, democracy and socialism.

At the Lebanese University Khaoula met and married her husband, who was like her, a student and a member of the Baath party. For her now began a new form of struggle. Joining in political activity for the liberation of Palestine and the rest of the Arab world was to the girls the way to free themselves and win dignity. Young men and women, who were for the new ideas, challenged everybody and everything from parents to the State.

Some women claimed civil marriage. All university people were reading Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir and discussing existentialism. Soon after that, they got acquainted with Nawal Saadawi whose writings influenced most ordinary women.

Those who were brought up in conservative homes, and were trained to practice their religion, now started questioning religion, the role of foreigners and their relationship with Israel. When the civil war started in Lebanon, Khaoula's three children, three boys, were about seven or eight years old. They all lived in Beirut and had to go through the horrors of bombardment and constant fear. They saw the buildings reduced to ashes, people in the street killed by rockets and mortar shells. While the mother worked in a ministry, the children went to school but she carefully looked after them because her husband was working abroad. She also tried to help the Palestinian women who were her neighbors, worked as a member of the Relief Committee of the Executive Council of the Lebanese National Movement. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1987 was the worst thing she had ever lived through. Her eldest son, now fifteen, joined the fighters against Israel in spite of his mother's disagreement. She was terribly worried because, like many other fighters, he was not sufficiently trained in handling modern arms. All the people of Beirut old and young, joined in the battle and fought bravely.

Khaoula Mokhtar's story shows clearly that political ideology and revolutionary propaganda in the Arab world have contributed to the emancipation of Lebanese women. However, one cannot help noticing that women's role in the struggle has been that of followers who scarcely have the chance to question plans arranged by men leaders. This attitude led them to accept the regressive measures imposed on women by the recent fundamentalist wave which swept over all religious communities of the Arab world. Only in rare cases have they been able to organize an opposition movement against it.

(1) Condensed from "Women of the Mediterranean", edited by Monique Gadant, translated from the French by A.M. Berrett, Zed Books Ltd., London and New Jersey.

A contemporary Algerian Girl Tells her Story⁽¹⁾

A French colony in the 19th century, Algeria was awakened to the ideas of independence in the early 20th century, particularly after the organization of the FLN (National Liberation Front) in 1930. Women were encouraged to participate in the political struggle but the era of independence did not bring them the liberation they expected. The spread of modern schools and contact with French culture helped the educated women to organize and claim their basic rights as did their sisters of the other North African countries and of the Middle East. Their claims were everywhere identical: Equality with men in the fields of education, work and pay, equality in civil and criminal laws, including personal status laws. Algerian feminists fought for the elimination of dowry traditions, polygyny and unjust divorce laws. In 1982, massive women's demonstrations rejected a proposed family code which did not meet their demands.

In telling her story, Malika, a contemporary Algerian young girl, says that she was privileged because she came from a family of educated people. Her maternal grandfather was a postman with a wide culture and also deeply involved in politics. Her father's family was of Turkish origin, the grandfather was in the antique business but was also a music-lover. Malika's mother passed the school certificate and took the entrance exam for the Women's Teacher Training College. Her father went to the Medersa, a school equivalent to the Lycée, then enrolled in the Law Faculty. He founded a theatre group and played a musical instrument.

Her parents were married according to traditions: they did not know each other before marriage. It was a simple marriage because they belonged to a Moslem sect which required no dowry. "They refused to sell women like cattle." In her early childhood, the girl lived with her parents. Their neighbours were a poor family whose women worked very hard to earn the family's living. They were supporters of a party that struggled for the liberation of Algeria. Their activities made a great impression on the young girl. They took part in the maquis or guerrilla warfare and joined Malika's father in organizing theatrical shows with a nationalist message.

Malika's parents went out together to take part in cultural activities at the Grand Maghreb circle. It was unusual at that time to see couples going out together.

The Algiers artistic circles included liberated women singers and dancers who took part in the nationalist struggle for liberation. Some of them were arrested and tortured.

After 1962, Independence Year, Malika who was then twelve years old, was sent to a French Lycée where she had for classmates daughters of French settlers, a few Arabs and more Kabyles (original inhabitants of Algeria) who, unlike Arab girls, did not seem to have a strong sense of identity and were perhaps more influenc-

ed by the French girls. Malika felt like a stranger in this environment where she was bothered by the weight of social differences. She accepted the constraints which prevented girls from walking alone in the street and from mixing with boys. Their only recreation was going to the cinema. She longed to go to the newly opened Algerian University where she expected to have more freedom but when she did go, it was a big shock. Boys and girls went together to the same classes but there was no communication between them. Though they studied together Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Malraux, Neruda and Nazim Hikmet, though they came in contact with the most liberal, revolutionary ideas, yet they all behaved traditionally. Boys seemed to prefer girls who came from good social backgrounds, who impressed them by their femininity. For most male students, the main attraction of a girl was her physical beauty. Intelligence did not matter much or rather it was disturbing. The brightest female students were the ones who were most put down.

Liberation for girls meant being able to do what their mothers had not been able to do, that is going out with boys on occasions; holding together intellectual debates, discussions and research. Yet in spite of the grim atmosphere which prevented normal relations between them, some progress was achieved, tension was gradually reduced. "My parents used to say to me" says Malika, "that I was no longer the same. It is true. I had begun to think seriously. The limited chance I had for outside amusement made me concentrate on work. I closeted myself in the library and devoured books that I tried to understand. I discovered Marx and psychoanalysis. Then I was invaded with ideas of going away. I can't go on living here! Either I leave or kill myself! Beirut or Paris! When I told my parents about my decision, my father was against, my mother for. They held a family meeting and found me a husband, young and good-looking, who had been studying in the USSR. I said no. After him there came a doctor, then an architect but I refused both. Finally I applied for a scholarship and, after a few confrontations, went to Paris for higher studies."

Malika's story acquaints us with a girl, who, since her early childhood, was exposed to progressive cultural influences because she came from an educated family and had contacts with modern-minded neighbors. Her contacts and her readings at school gave her an ideal picture of the university in her country. Instead, she was disappointed to find that boys and girls "play the sad comedy of seduction and the most progressive male students demonstrate the most reactionary attitudes toward women."

Higher education did not succeed in freeing the students' minds from entrenched stereotypes.

(1)Abridged from: *Women of the Mediterranean*, op. cit. pp.36-43.

Tunisian Women, Their Right in Public Opinion⁽¹⁾

The Tunisian code of personal status, promulgated by President Bourguiba in 1956, is considered as the most progressive among the codes of Moslem countries. In fact, it is the only code that abolishes polygyny, gives women the same rights to divorce as men, raises the age of marriage to 20 for men and 17 for women, allows a Tunisian woman who marries a foreigner to confer her nationality on her children and, contrary to Islamic law or Sahri'a, legitimates the adoption of children. However, studies regarding public opinion and the influence of progressive laws on people's ideology show a wide gap between the spirit of the code and the psychological mechanisms that block the improvement of women's condition in Tunisia.

A survey carried out in 1981 on behalf of UNFT (Union Nationale des Femmes Tunisiennes) or National Union of Tunisian Women, on a sample of 400 adult persons of both sexes, shows a large variety of opinions according to the sex, age, urban or rural origin and level of education of the respondents. The replies range from very liberal, especially among the younger generation of educated women, to highly conservative, especially among men.

Women in the Family

Nearly all the respondents agree that a woman's place is in the family: 45% stated that, in the family, boys are more favoured than girls; 84% of women said they participated in domestic chores from their earliest childhood. More than 50% of men questioned said they ate their meals separately from their wives. A quarter of the sample continues to carry on this tradition today. Women had to seek their parents' permission for the shortest trip and, unlike men, they had no control over their earnings. Opposition to sending girls to school comes mainly from men. Concerning the level of education, 81% of men think that girls should go as far as the university, because this would prepare them to be better housewives and mothers. Women favoured education for their daughters so that they may be in tune with the times. 60% of men were against vocational education for girls. Those in favour consider vocational training as a guarantee for the future, as economic liberation, self-assertion, escape from the role of minor, keeping up with the times. Men dream of their daughters becoming directors in trade, industry or agriculture. Women prefer for their daughters prestigious occupations such as medicine, law, etc.

Women in the Couple

58% of men and women do not accept the idea that the main responsibility for supporting the family should fall on the man's shoulders. Men show strong attachment to their traditional privilege as decision makers. 50% of men and women said that decisions should be taken jointly.

Household Chores

There is a general agreement that household chores belong to women. If men are obliged to participate, they may be given the lighter tasks such as laying the table or clearing it. The majority agree that, for a woman, the maternal and domestic duties come before professional work. A married woman who practices a profession has to manage by asking a mother or a sister to help her or by hiring a housemaid. No mention is made of daily nurseries for the children of working mothers.

Conflict between Male and Female Models

58% of Tunisians surveyed believe that the guarantee of agreement within the couple was for husband and wife to have the same level of education. 15% of women adhere to the model of the man enjoying a higher level of education than that of the wife, while 58% of men remain faithful to the image of the husband dominating his wife, even intellectually.

Capacity for Professional Success

The majority believe that, given an equal level of education, women are capable of achieving equal success professionally. The percentage of those who take this view is higher among women. 45% of men declare that they prefer not to work under the orders of a woman.

Women Unsited to Political Responsibilities

Few people believe in woman's ability in the political field. Reserving politics to men reflects the dominant ideology of the country.

Attitude toward contraceptive methods reveals tolerance on the part of men provided they take the decision. This attitude comes from their fear of losing their ascendancy over women in case they allow them to take the lead in family planning.

Conclusion

The differential analysis shows a lack of congruence. A gap exists between men and women in the deeper motivations. The most progressive and coherent answers come from women with a relatively high level of education, which means that women are beginning to fight against traditional constraints and economic exploitation.

(1) Abridged from an article by Malika Zamiti-Horchani. *Women of the Mediterranean*, op. cit. (pp.110-119).

A Western Feminist Speaks on the need for a Feminine Culture(1)

"The new feminism says that culture was male, that it did not express women but denied them." Women were excluded from culture until compulsory education was established at the beginning of the 20th century. Up till now, men alone monopolize power, the knowledge that they offer to the world is neither neutral nor innocent, it lacks objectivity because it is one-sided.

What do the feminist critics of culture propose? Among them there are the radicals who practice separatism. There are those who accept the two cultures, male and female, as complementary. Still others, perhaps a minority, would like to make of the historical experience of women a principle with which to attack the whole culture of the dominant class and sex.

We shall try to examine these varied points of view. First, what do we mean by separatism?

Women, though they form half of the world, are dominated by the other half and reduced into a subordinate group, hence they are treated as a minority. If they rebel against the ruling culture they tend to close in on themselves, hating the other culture without trying to subvert it. This attitude usually leads them to a slow extinction because their own offspring will choose to drown their culture in the dominant one rather than keeping an isolation which kills them.

Is it possible to speak of a feminine culture? Does it exist? According to the author of the article on feminine culture, this culture exists as an experience. It is neither spoken nor written, nor formulated as thought. Women's fear of the "logos", their rebellion against the Greek rational which forms the basis of male authority, made them choose silence or resort to mysticism instead of reason. Their realm is one of feeling, of affectivity, which they oppose to man's realm of reason and inactivity. The critique of reason as rationalism is not peculiar to feminism alone. It is a characteristic trend of recent years and may not be considered as part of the feminine heritage.

In the Middle Ages, the practice of witchcraft by women constituted a form of rebellion against reason and an instrument of power manipulated by women, but witches were feared and burned without leaving any worthwhile legacy.

In our time, woman's faith in feeling has become obsolete. Her true power lies in passion, not in feeling. As a reproducer, a keeper of the race, she holds power which is feared by men, as it symbolizes Ishtar, the powerful and mysterious goddess of fertility. Her theoretical ownership of home, husband, children, represents to her a compensation for the authentic ownership enjoyed by men. What is considered by men as inherited diversity in women has become in itself a

value: the value of the difference. While men's power lies in reason, women's power lies in guile and cunning. Men have created for her an identity derived from their own fantasy. This identity consists in being seductive, sentimental, emotive, timid, delicate, narcissistic and retrograde, negative and fleeting, attentive above all to her own body. Women are now conscious that their present identity has been codified by men, so they are seeking an identity of their own. Where is that identity to be found? In the remains of an experience that has neither been taught nor spoken? "The life of a woman is too limited or too secret", says Marguerite Yourcenar, member of the French Academy. Women disappear without leaving a trace of their existence or of their thoughts concerning the world. What they think or write depends entirely on rules, ideas and methods created by men. There is no women culture, there are women, without space, without rights, save their unknown past. Do they have to be forever followers and transmitters?

Profile of a feminine culture

Women, though they have no culture of their own, still exist, just as other natural creatures like trees and flowers. But they differ in the fact that they have become conscious of their dispossession and they refuse to exist in silence, weariness and resentment. Emancipation as imitation of male mode is rejected, feminine culture as codified by men is equally unacceptable.

Rossana Rossanda proposes the creation of a feminine culture based on a new relationship of woman with nature, with her body, with society and language: a profile of culture which is not complementary to the existing culture but deriving from an empirical knowledge first with nature through cooking, chemistry and botany, a kind of knowledge which non-empirical knowledge is ready to accept without waste. Second, with the body, organ of reproduction, seduction and commodity, a specific knowledge of psychotherapy and female subconscious. Third, with service works like faithfulness, love, piety, the wisdom of suffering, tolerance for what is poor in the oppressor. Fourth, with language which has been taken from women, now used to denounce the limitations and defects of the patriarchal world.

Starting from a deeper understanding of their own dispossession, and affirmation of the "I am I" as a potential identity, which is demanding and yet uncertain in its direction, women are nearing a sort of new emancipation without illusions. The experience of women by making itself total will also be made a culture.

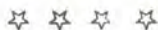
Rome 1981

Source: *Women of the Mediterranean*. op. cit, pp.182-196.

(1) Abstract of an article by Rossana Rossanda who was a PCI member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies and is now a columnist for the Daily Newspaper "II Manifesto".

“Together for Justice Through Education & Development Asian Women’s Institute Indonesia Conference”

The Asian women’s Institute (AWI), which groups nine institutes for women’s studies in Asia, held in Satya Wacana Christian University Salatiga, Indonesia, a conference whose 58 participants came from the following countries: India, Pakistan, Lebanon, South Korea, Japan, Philippines, U.S.A., the Netherlands and Indonesia. They included men and women principals, presidents of colleges and universities, program directors, researchers, lecturers, professors, lawyers and other intellectuals involved in women’s activities and problems in Asian countries. The conference lasted from June 28 to June 30, 1988; it had seven sessions, four of which were plenary, the others, in groups. The general topic discussed was: “Together for justice through education and development.” The addresses given, the topics discussed, revolved around a common problem: the discrimination done against women in the family, in society, in the fields of labor, economy, civil and criminal laws. While the constitutions of Asian countries agree on proclaiming their adherence to the principles of democracy, freedom, equality and justice for all citizens without discrimination regarding sex, race or class, there is a general complaint that those principles are not applied in actual life. Sex discrimination in basic human rights exists everywhere but owing to divergences in the nature and amount of discrimination, this report will present a few **representative** addresses and lectures, in the form of summaries, which will throw some light on the negative and the positive aspects of the women’s movement.



Abstract of the Keynote address by Patricia Magdamo staff member of International Ministries, the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A.



Dr. Patricia Magdamo.

“For all the consciousness-raising and the shared recognition of the needs of women in our own contexts, great social disparities continue to exist in much of Asia. Social instability and conflict have made our task, so much more difficult”.

While we acknowledge the benefits of awareness and self-study, we admit the difficulty of changing deep-rooted attitudes. It seems that the more things change the more they remain unchanged.

What does the Asian Women’s Institute want to be?

We have been producing an educational elite, i.e. opportunities for equal education in gender segregated societies. Many of our graduates are doctors, lawyers, politicians, educators, etc. Education is supposed to change people, to give them a greater sense of having a stake in the welfare of their community and nation. What values are inculcated in our graduates?

It seems that modern values of secularism, democracy, socialism, and professional ethics are coming under increasing strains.

The call for values education for the 5200 institutions of higher learning in **India** is a serious matter because these institutions prepare future leaders. Our youth are impatient with social disparities and hypocrisies. There is confusion and disillusionment. Our challenge is to use what we have to build a community of equality for men and women, to overcome the polarization of the elites and the marginalized persons of our lands.

The answer to the above question lies in the application of universal values, i.e. equality before God in participation and in value: care for the world’s resources, care for other people, reconciliation and renewal, a shared vision of God’s justice and power. Our duty is to fight ignorance, poverty, homelessness, superstition, hunger, tyranny, instability — evils which are more oppressive to women than to men.

Challenge of Authority

Technology can be a double-edged sword. It can be used to build up or to destroy. The same is true of authority which may take the form of domination or even tyranny.

Authority has its **value** in the form of influence in the political and social sphere; also when it takes the form of knowledge, experience, charisma and ability to help. But authority should be challenged and fought when it is patriarchal or hierarchical, when it is exercised through domination. Only the paradigm of authority as **partnership** offers a possibility of a community of men and women who live and work with the knowledge of justice as wholeness, when all people are of equal value before God.

The Key to a Brighter Future in India

Abstract of a lecture by: Father Mathias,
Professor of Communication
in Xavier Labour Relations
Institute

Asia, the largest continent in the world: 3.5 billion inhabitants, contained a total of 850 million illiterates in 1985. In Asia lies Japan, the world's biggest creditor nation, and in that continent we find the largest number of people bordering on destitution and poverty.

It is Asia's glory to be the birthplace of the world's great religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. These religions have brought cultures along with them but they have often contributed to the continent's social and economic problems. Asia is known for its ambivalent attitude to women. On the one hand, they are cherished and protected, even worshipped as goddesses; on the other hand, they suffer infamous forms of oppression.

Asia is the home of many contradictions.

Economic Conditions of Women in India

In the mass of wretched and deprived humanity, women form the biggest group; they have the longest work day: 14-17 hours. On construction projects, they replace animals and carry endless headloads of cement, bricks, etc. The woman's earnings belong to the husband, in the home she eats the leftovers.

Women and Self-Identity

The feminist movement in India has realized that women are deprived of identity. The female is assimilated to the male, she has no leadership role in society, she is exploited in the labor sector. She is evaluated on the basis of youth and beauty alone as physical requirements. In character, she is required to be submissive, self-denying and chaste. Her honor reflects that of the whole family, so she has to keep it intact, above suspicion. The ideal woman is ready to go through the ordeal of fire in order to prove her chastity. Child marriage is used to help a woman suppress her sexual desire, just as circumcision or sexual mutilation in Africa and some Asian countries is used for the same purpose.

Women as Property

In history books, the wealth of a king is measured by the number of horses, camels, servants and wives he possesses. When defeated in war, he is dispossessed of his land, of his slaves and of his wives who are publicly raped.

The constitution of India and of other Asian countries insist on sexual equality but nowadays we witness a set-back in ideological concepts and a recrudescence of abuses against women. One example is the revival of "Sati", the forcible immolation of a widow on the funeral pyre of her husband. This tradition may be explained by the fear of female sexuality. The widow, particularly if she is young, might bring dishonor on her late husband by licentious living.

After independence, ideas of sexual equality spread in India. Female education was encouraged, yet recent statistics show a rising proportion of female illiteracy. Causes: negligence, high rate of dropouts, poverty of parents who prefer to spend the little money they have on the education of boys and keep the girls for housework.

Education has reduced the gender gap at the higher levels of education but, at the lower levels the gap has widened. Dowry demands have escalated with the educational level of the groom who insists on an increase in the bride's dowry in order to meet the expenses of a modernized standard of living. Girls' upbringing continues to be influenced by the ideas of the older generation of women who inculcate in their daughters an attitude of male worship and an idealization of a male dominated society. On the other hand, they are led to believe in their own inferiority.

How can education reduce inequality?

The following suggestions are given by Father Mathias:

1. Encouraging women to study science and mathematics instead of limiting themselves to the traditional home arts and literary fields.

2. Development of women's studies which give an objective view of reality, prevent generalizations and sweeping statements, encourage the creation of women's groups and movements with the aim of claiming women's rights and undertaking projects for the study of women's issues by the academic community of various Asian countries. The result would be an exchange of experiences and broadening of perspective.

3. Adult education. It is a recent movement which has spread everywhere, particularly in developing countries where the rate of illiteracy is high among both men and women. In India, the Indian Working Group on Adult Education Programmes has been successful in creating 1 million adult education centers in the country. Their success depends on two factors: organizational work among women and concentration on income generating projects.

4. Developing primary education for girls. This requires a study and treatment of the causes that prevent parents from sending their daughters to school: poverty, traditionalism, shortage of elementary teachers, specially women teachers interested in women's problems.

5. Need for a better organization of women. "Unity gives strength" an old saying which still holds true. The Chipko movement among women in India has contributed to the protection of forests.

Discrimination Against Women in Japan

In Japan there are two centers for Women's studies: one is Kobe College Center and another is Tokyo Women's Christian University. Both were represented at the AWI Indonesia Conference. The speeches given by the Japanese participants were brief but they contained interesting points regarding the problems of Japanese women.

From a paper presented by Kobe Jogakuin (Kobe College Inst. for Women's Studies), the following points are worthy of consideration:

1. Although Japanese culture is oriented towards Europe and the U.S.A., Japanese women realize that what they can do for the solidarity of the Asian Women is to think deeply of the problems involving Asian countries such as the increase of the Japanese defense budgets, multinational corporations, sex tours and dumping the nuclear waste into the Pacific ocean.

2. In Japan, wife and husband are more likely to be secluded, each one of them has a separate role. We should work for a change in the paradigm of the male-dominated society and try to create a new proper discourse for women.

3. The reforms recently initiated in Japan promote the new sexual division of labor and strengthen wives prerogatives. As an example, the Pension Law provides pensions automatically to the wives who are dependent on husbands. Other women are granted benefits under specific conditions.

Lawyer Tetsuko Kawai presents in her lecture the following complaints:

1. Sex discrimination in work. One example is the field of law where it is harder for women than for men to find a job, even though they passed the state examinations and got well trained in law.

2. At the institution for the mentally handicapped, boys and girls are trained to work at the factory in town, but women get only half the men's earnings.

3. The wife's house labor is not considered equivalent to a full time job, therefore the indemnification claim for the death of a full-time house-wife in a traffic accident could not be accepted. After 1974 the claim was legally recognized but it was only half of the sum paid to indemnify a full-time worker. Discrimination in this case is unacceptable because a housewife's work is very valuable since it insures the reproduction of life; it is at least equal to a man's job in value and quantity.

Dr. Fumika Takase, director of Kobe College Institute for Women's Studies, gives the following statistics quoted from a report published in the Christian Science Monitor, Jan., 1985.

Although the number of professional women increased from 760,000 in 1965 to 1.87 million in 1981, most women workers are teachers or clerical assistants. Women constitute only 6.4% of Japan's scientists, 2.4% of its engineers, 9% of its lawyers, despite the fact that 33% of them go to college, as opposed to 40% of men. Women form only 5.5% of the total number of those in charge of executive posts.

In 1985, women's salaries averaged 51.8% of men's salaries.

It remains to be seen whether the newly passed law of "Equal Opportunity for Employment" will succeed in eliminating all discrimination against women with regard to employment, promotion, retirement and dismissal.

Legal and Political Justice

by Mrs. Asma Jahangir
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In order to achieve legal and political rights for women, I would like to highlight four basic guidelines for the women's rights movement. **Firstly**, women's rights movement has to walk hand in hand with the civil rights and human rights movements. Women's rights cannot exist in isolation and can only be obtained and preserved in a genuinely free society. The debacle of women's rights in the Soviet Union is ample evidence of the above. This applies specially to Third World countries where many women activists think that they can achieve rights for themselves when these rights are denied to all others.

The **next** and foremost objective has to be equality in the fountain head of all power, i.e. in the **pinnacle of power**. There are always plenty of women engaged in the drudgery of menial work, there are few in the upper echelons of power structure. The penetration of women into the power structure has to be on a wide scale, so that genuine equality may be achieved. Today, those few women who sit at the top are exceptions to the rule. Their position is precarious because of their sex and their **insignificant number**.

The **third** bastion to be attacked is the disparity within the family. Even where societies have allowed equal civic and political rights for women, personal status laws remain discriminatory. This disparity has remained a millstone around our necks. Even as we struggle up the surface of equal opportunity, this **deadweight** drags us down again and again. Unless women are given equal status in this nucleus of all societies, the foundation of women's equality will remain shaky.

Fourthly, religious interference in temporal matters must be dismissed. Religion as practiced today has bred intolerance for many of the basic human rights. It is important for us not only to diffuse and minimise religion in affairs temporal, but also clearly demonstrate the dichotomies of current religious thought.

Position of Women in Korea

Abstract of a paper prepared by the Korean Women's Institute, Ewha Women's University, Seoul, Korea, May 1988.

Political Status of Women

The Korean constitution recognizes the equality of men and women in political rights since 1948, year of the independence. Women have the right to participate in the elections and to be elected to all public offices, but their participation in political leadership and policy making is highly limited. From 1948 to 1985, only five women were appointed as ministers taking part in the administrative body of national politics and their tenures of offices were relatively short.

In the National Assembly, women members were in all 46 holding office between 1948 and 1981. At the general election of April 1988, 13 women applicants for the National Assembly membership failed to be elected by their regional constituencies.

In public offices, women officials count 132,429 (21.4%) out of a total of 619,227 persons. In the lower grades, the rates of women employees range between 6.2% and 21.2% but in the high ranking offices, nos. 1, 2 and 3, there are three women in all. Among local public officials above 5th grade, the number of women is 177 out of 16,623 (1.1%) according to statistics 1983.

Legal Status of Women

In 1960, the modern Civil Law was promulgated; it contained male-centered factors such as: 1) the head of the family should be a man. 2) A woman should put her name in her husband's family register when she gets married. 3) The husband's children, legitimate or not, can be recognized as his children but those of the wife may be recognized only when they are born by the present husband. 4) The paternal relatives have certain privileges over maternal relatives. Since 1945, women's organizations and other aid-centers for family relations have been sending petitions and suggestions regarding a just enactment of the new Civil Law. The family law was partially revised (1977). In 1983 the Korean Government signed the U.N. agreement for the Abolition of Discrimination against Women. Since then a campaign has been started by women's organizations in Korea, claiming the establishment of complete sexual equality in civil and family laws. In 1987, the Equal Employment Act for Male and Female was passed.

Economic Status of Women

The industrial growth of Korea since 1960 has favored the increased integration of women in the labor force but the majority of them are employed as unskilled laborers marked by low wages, low age and low education, while women in professional and administrative jobs are few. Statistical tables show that women in agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and factory labor, form about 50% of employed women. Their hours of work are more than those of men and

their wages are much lower. Women professionals, administrators, technicians constitute 5.4% of the female labor force, while clericals are 10%.

Women's Organizations

Official statistics of 1983 show that there are about 60 women's organizations in Korea, with over 10 million members (South Korea has a population of more than 38 million). There are also many other organizations which are not registered with the government. The largest women's groups in the country are: 1) "The Korean National Council of Women" which has 24 women's associations registered as members in it. 2) "The Korean Association of Women's Organizations", established in 1987 and aiming at the integration of women's organizations into a more radical women's movement. The activities of women's organizations are varied, assertive and all embracing.

Women's Studies

Since 1977, more than 30 colleges/universities are offering women's studies courses covering various aspects of women's history, problems and concerns. Research work is conducted in many institutions, an M.A. degree program in Women's Studies was established at Ewha Women's University in 1982.

Family Planning

The family planning policy adopted in Korea since 1961 has received strong support from the government. Financial aid is provided by the government to both the middle and the lower class for the use of voluntary contraceptive aids. Emphasis is placed on men's contraception operation rather than women's. There is a subsistence support for the poor who have already taken the contraceptive operation: free medical treatment to the children of under-school age of parents who have only two children and expect to have no more because one of them has been operated. Other forms of encouragement to family planning are used by the government.

Violence and Women

Violence against women includes rape, prostitution, traffic of women etc. All these evils are being strongly fought by women's organizations, particularly a form of prostitution which has spread in Korea under the name of "Tourist Industry". Women are demanding a procedure to test foreign visitors with the aim of protecting Korean people from AIDS which threatens women's health and has caused world-wide tension in recent years.

Report from Indonesia

The PKK, a Family Welfare Development Movement.

From Indonesia, the host country where the AWI Conference was held, we have no general report about women's activities or about their integration in higher education as represented by Satyr Wacana Christian University where the Conference members met. We have, on the other hand, an interesting report about a recent movement launched there in 1970 and sponsored by the Minister of Home Affairs. It is the "Family Welfare Development", which aims "to support the nation building scheme by means of establishing healthy and prosperous families." Both men and women have to participate in the project but women's role needs to be strengthened and encouraged through the improvement of their knowledge and skills in various fields in accordance with their needs and abilities. The Indonesian name of the movement is "Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga" or "PKK", for short.

In the guideline prepared for program implementation, women's activities were defined as follows:

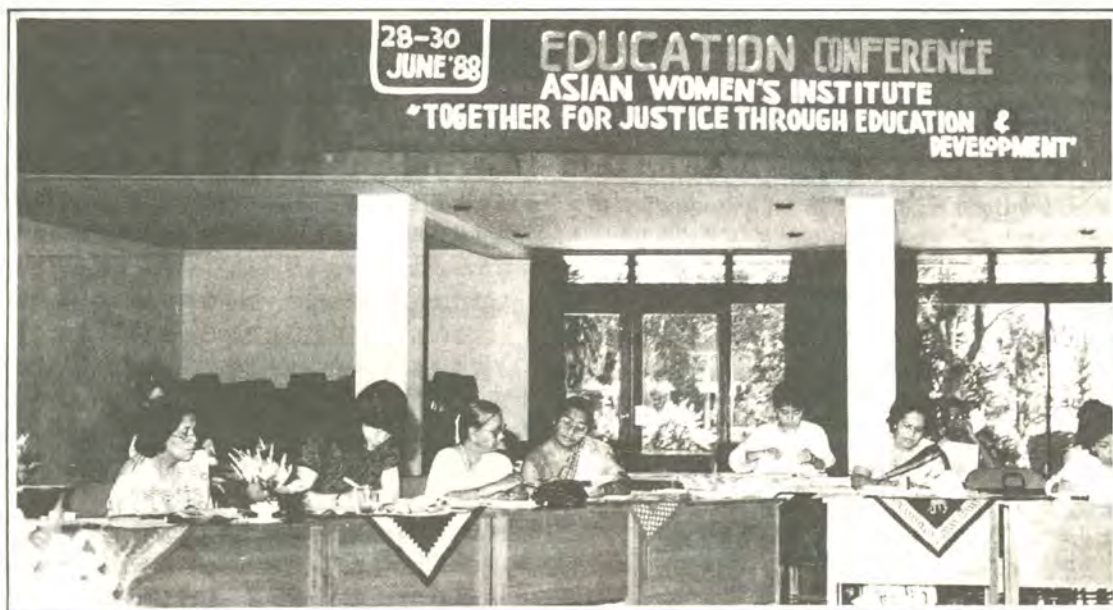
1. Mutual cooperation: help should be given to women encouraging them to implement cooperation in the family and in society.
2. Food: women should learn how to prepare healthy and nutritious food for the family.
3. Clothing: women will be helped to evaluate proper clothing, they will be taught how to dress properly and how to make clothes for themselves and for others.
4. Housing and household management are included in the program.

5. Education and skill training, increasing their knowledge in child care and character education.
6. Health: learning how to take care of their health and that of the family and how to improve health conditions in the environment.
7. Developing cooperative life, applying democracy within the family.
8. Planning for the family's future. Learning methods of budgeting or effecting balanced income and expenditure.

The PKK has succeeded in attracting a good number of women participants particularly in rural areas. It has not only helped to increase family welfare but it has also allowed women to receive training in money-earning jobs like dress-making, embroidery, food production, hair-dressing, cosmetic art and other home industries. In the rural areas, women who have become active members of the PKK are more responsive to new ideas such as selling crops through cooperatives instead of taking them directly to the market. Their participation in the movement has had positive effects on their personalities. They are eager to learn, daring to take risks, more independent and self-confident.

PKK's type of organization makes it difficult to give an exact evaluation of the results, but we know that the number of rural women participating in the work force has increased as a result of their joining the movement.

Every year, the Indonesian Government gives awards to women who have been successful in preserving, developing or creating positive changes in their environment. Many of the prize winners belong to the PKK group.



Shedding Light Upon the Contemporary Women's Movement⁽¹⁾

In 420 large sized pages, this book tries to introduce the contemporary women's movement, its origin and its expansion in the world and in the Arab East. It points out the claims of feminist leaders, which consist in allowing women to enjoy equal rights with men, according to the principles of the United Nations Charter, proclaimed in 1945 and again at the Mexico Conference in 1975 and ratified by the General Assembly in 1979. The contents are divided into two main sections. The first comprises four parts: Part one contains a brief history of the movement as presented by leading feminist writers like Adrée Michel, Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Elise Boulding and others. In part two, there is emphasis on the following: Femininity as an ideal imposed by tradition, traditional socialization which restricts a woman's role to that of wife and mother and condemns every other ambition she may develop; definition of the new personality which a liberated woman should acquire through education and continuous culture. Parts three and four discuss the spread of the movement, its universality and the role of women's international organizations, women's studies' centers and international conferences, in pushing it forward.

Section two has a more local scope. In the first part, it discusses certain educational and social problems in Lebanon between 1940 and 1980. It voices the claims of the women's associations regarding urgent reforms in the educational and social fields: in schools, personal status laws, public health, etc. Part two in this section deals with the problems facing the emancipated woman who divides her time between education, home and outside work. Finally, in the last part, the main articles concentrate on the family in its traditional aspect, defines the role of this institution in building a democratic state and its failure to perform this role in Lebanon and the other Arab countries.

Readers of this collection of articles and studies will not fail to conclude that women are everywhere victims of entrenched traditions which deform their personalities and impede their normal growth: physically as in China, where their feet are bound; in African and Asian countries where their sexual organs are mutilated; intellectually because they are relegated to menial tasks which deprive them of promotion and of the opportunity for cultural development; morally because poverty and injustice may lead them to prostitution; socially because, as individuals, they have no social status and have to depend on a husband or another male relative to give them an identity. In developing countries, personal status laws do not give them the same rights as men to divorce and inheritance. This book is recommended to all those interested in women's problems which form an intrinsic part of the world's problems. The enslavement of women reflects the universal injustice which is being fought by the United Nations Organization as well as by all people who believe in humanitarian principles, whose neglect has resulted in catastrophic wars and ultimate misery.



(1) In Arabic *Adhwa' ala-i-Harakat-in-Nisa'iyya-i-Mu'asira* by Rose Ghurayyib, Publisher Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World. Beirut, 1988.

Women of the Mediterranean⁽¹⁾

The editor of this book, Monique Gadant, a lecturer at the University of Paris, a researcher at the National Center for Scientific Research, in charge of CNRS-CRESM programme on Women, Time and Money. She has published many articles on the political and cultural life of Algeria in "Les Temps Modernes" and "Peuples Méditerranéens."

The book is made up of 15 essays presented in the format of testimonials and interviews, rendering the collection intimate and easily accessible. The essays as such throw some light on women's condition in each of the countries included in the book. These countries are part of the Third World or developing countries lying on the southern or on the eastern edge of the Mediterranean sea. Some of them had been colonies and, as a whole have not gone through the process of industrialization which, according to the editor, contributed to women's emancipation in the countries lying along the northern edge of the Mediterranean, because industrialization brought them wealth and ability to establish compulsory education, to provide work for both men and women and allowed liberal ideas to flourish.

In her introduction, Monique Gadant emphasizes the power of the extended family over the inhabitants and the role of the mother who, though unfairly treated from the economic point of view because, as a housekeeper, she receives no wages and, except in rare cases, does not have the same right to inheritance as the males of the family, is nevertheless socially recognized as reproducer of the lineage and of the patriarchal ideology. Women's emancipation is supposed to disturb the image of motherhood or to diminish its sacredness. In Mediterranean countries, the nuclear family has been gradually replacing the extended one, but family ties remain powerful, the traditions of the clan continue to weigh over the individual. In the absence of a strong or democratic government, the family or clan becomes a refuge, a protection against loneliness and injury. In war time, family associations in Lebanon multiplied because they provided help to displaced and distressed members. This recrudescence of family power and traditional behavior was paralleled by a progressive activity imposed by war which favored women's participation in the struggle and their increased interest in vocational training, higher education, benevolent action and paid work outside the home. They were led to unite in groups and associations claiming equality with men in salaries, in the right to promotion, in political and civil status. Some progress was achieved along this line but feminists everywhere complain that, in spite of women's growing number in higher education and in vocational training, patriarchal ideology continues to dominate, feminization of particular issues reduces interest in them. Women are advised to join men's associations where their problems and their claims might receive more attention. Women's participation in nationalist struggle did not mean liberation in Algeria or in Yugoslavia.

Palestinian women who fought bravely alongside of PLO fighters rarely received any recognition from the male leaderships. Secularization in Turkey did not change the lives of Turkish women. Women's success in Spain seems to be an exception. The anarchist and proletarian women's movement there is considered ahead of its time. It was a daring challenge of male predominance and of family ideology.

Nationalism, while it created a feeling of solidarity and a desire for complete independence, favored the rise of conservatism, the resurgence of fundamentalism in Iran and other Mediterranean countries. The veil was reestablished as a protection against the evil effects of westernization. Single party states repress any initiative that they do not control and ambitious rulers use religion in its regressive form as a shield preventing change and a means of confirming their authority.

Despite the many negative forces, women in the undeveloped Mediterranean countries continue their struggle for liberation. They continue to look to the North for models of behavior. While the rulers may remain deaf to their claims, they create their own means of struggle or join men's organizations where they try to influence them toward committed politicization and radical change in the society at its most fundamental roots.

(1) Quoted in previous articles of this issue.

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Al-Raida Reader

Unsigned articles were prepared
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Coordinator: **Lella Fawaz**
Layout: **Rima Khallfeh**

YEARLY CONTRIBUTION

Lebanon: L.L. 500 per year
Other Countries: \$ 15 per year
plus \$3 to cover postage