

GENDER ISSUES AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AN OVERVIEW FROM ASIA

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(Note : This paper is based primarily on the perception of the relationship between education and women's status by the authors of papers prepared for the Mount Holyoke college, International Conference on Worldwide Education for Women : Progress, Prospects and Agenda for the Future; November 1987. References to statistical data are made only to substantiate an argument. The statistics appended at the end are from United Nations or governmental sources, and an unpublished paper by Prof. Swarna Jayaveera of the Centre for Women's Research, Colombo, on Class and Gender in Education and Employment in South and South-East Asia, prepared for a comparative, collaborative research project on Women's Work and Family Strategies in South and South-East Asia. The study was sponsored by the United Nations University and coordinated by Hanna Papanek (Boston University, Asian Studies Centre) and the author. The basic argument of the paper and comments on the country specific perceptions, however, represent the views of the author).

I

Analytical Framework

Education and social change, education and national development, education and human rights, education and cultural progress, education and social justice, education and international understanding, education and equality - the list could be prolonged indefinitely. Behind each such statement lies an ideology - about the role that education must play in building minds for the future.¹

Women's movements all over the world have always given primacy to the role of education in achieving women's equality. But attempts to operationalise the relationship most often focussed only on the issue of women's access to education. Even at the international level, most reviews on women and education has suffered from this narrow focus. While developing countries perceived education as one of the fruits of development from which the large majority of women were being deprived, the focus in developed countries has so far been on poor or non-representation of women in the newly emerging more prestigious sectors of education like technology and the sciences.

The approach is coloured by the 'integration in development theory', the assumption being that if only education, or access to these areas of education could be brought within women's reach, all would be well. Some of the reviews also take up the 'participation in decision-making' issues. If more women become teachers, the knowledge establishment such as technology, management or "non-traditional" fields like agriculture, forestry and environmental sciences etc., the problem of gender inequality, they believed, would be resolved.

Those who project agriculture, forestry or animal husbandry as 'non-traditional' fields for women seem to be unaware that these had been the most 'traditional' sectors of activity in most parts of the world.² Why did the *discovery* of women's actual contribution to economic, social and political processes by the intelligentsia have to wait till the last quarter of the 20th century? Very few question the contribution of the educational process or systems in making the majority of women's lives, roles, needs and aspirations *invisible* to educated men and women alike. It is the contention of this paper that *the critical issue in analysing the inter-relationship between education and women's status is not only the question of access but that of content, values and structures of educational systems.*³

In the case of Asia, this trinity has had to encounter several pressures. The resulting infrastructure, with its content, value orientation and structural mechanisms to regulate access, performance in the generation, transmission, and utilisation of knowledge - represents a compromise between indigenous social systems with their embedded cultural values and the forces emanating from the cultural encounter with the western world, the economic revolution spear-headed by industrialisation and the

spread of science and technology, population dynamics and the rise of anti-imperialist popular movements. The last of these range from liberal-democratic, secular nationalism and international socialism at one end, to religio-cultural revivalist movements on the other.

The race for rapid economic growth and resource constraints in choice of priorities in educational development have been responsible for further complexities and promises. The compulsions of economic development very often pushed aside the issues and needs of social development, or the tensions being experienced by the societies from these varied encounters.

Two of the major victims of such compromises were the analyses and projection of gender roles in terms of the social reality and the changes that they were being subjected to by the forces of economic and political transformation, along with the role of the new structures of knowledge. An understanding of these conflicts is fundamental for any analysis of the relationship between educational processes that evolved in different parts of Asia during the last two centuries and the issues of gender equality that was accepted in principle by most of the political systems that emerged in the 20th century after their encounters with western imperialism in varying degrees.

Gender roles, social organisation and value systems in traditional Asian societies - prior to the encounter with western imperialism - shared some uniform features within diversities in specific aspects. Women played a major role in agriculture and other sectors, especially of the rural economy. Forms of social stratification had already emerged and patriarchal norms were deeply entrenched among the elites. In some cases, they had begun to affect even other sections of society. Religious ideologies (as represented by Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Islam and Christianity) - whatever their philosophic heritage - imposed stricter control and norms on women, thereby strengthening the power of patriarchy.⁴

The subordination of women was relatively less amongst many communities in South-East Asia and some of the tribal communities on the Indian sub-continent. Women in these communities were subjected to fewer restrictions mainly because of the major roles that they played in economic activities for the subsistence of their families and patterns of kinship systems and/or marriage practices which ensured relatively greater options for the women.⁵

There was also a close relationship between these kinship structures, degree of women's subordination and the system of control over basic productive resources.⁶ In communities which retained forms of communal or collective ownership of land or other basic resources, women enjoyed better rights to such resources. In societies where privatisation of land ownership was more advanced, patriarchy was much more entrenched. A social hierarchy characterises the dominant form of social organisation, placing communities which provided greater freedom and rights to women at the bottom of the ladder.⁷

The evolution or super imposition of organised religion and authoritarian state structures accelerated this process, though their impact on gender roles varied according to levels of economic compulsion, differences in degrees of stratification and the persistence of kinship systems and other socio-cultural characteristics.⁸

II

This kind of historical analysis, relating shifts in women's status to : (a) evolution of a class hierarchy and variations in women's economic role by class; (b) the role of socio-religious and political ideology in redefining gender roles and thus strengthening and extending the hold of patriarchal values; and (c) demographic and economic transformation within the societies is still relatively recent. *Still more neglected is the interconnection between these processes and patterns in educational development, which affect women, not only through their access to the system, but even more, by the perceptions of gender roles that the intelligentsia and others acquire through the educational process.*

Earlier analyses of women's education tended to attribute too much weightage to cultural attitudes in determining women's access to education. Research during the last two decades, on the other hand, has tended to emphasise labour market changes as *the* determining factor. Very few analysts have examined the issue of relation to the processes that have affected women's subordination as a whole or patterns and compulsions in educational and political development.

From this perspective, the papers prepared for the Mount Holyoke Conference present a refreshing advance in approaches to women and education. Most of them examine the historical context of modern educational development. Some highlight the impact of colonial rule and the encounter with western cultures and knowledge systems, while a few go back to an earlier past to search for religious, cultural or other influences that determined the perception of gender roles by the dominant section of their societies which eventually flowed into the modern systems of education.

The country situations reviewed by these papers can be classified by patterns and stages of political-economic development (as done by the United Nations) or by cultural/religious/kinship patterns. For convenience's sake, the first is preferred here, since not many of the papers discuss the role of kinship systems.

JAPAN

Japan is the only developed country in the region. Sumio Iwao's paper emphasises the important role of the educational system in enabling Japan's rapid progress from "poverty to affluence in the post-war period". However, the system now faces serious challenges, which include (a) problems of affluence; and (b) impact of women's education on Japanese men.

The pursuit of affluence encouraged materialism and imitative consumerism, which is now being affected by greater individualism and a search for "spiritual and humanist values", with consequent changes in education. The demographic transformation, extending the average life-span of women to 81.4 years (five years more than men's), has "stimulated women to prepare themselves for a financially and spiritually fulfilling old age".

One of the earliest countries to introduce compulsory elementary education for both boys and girls (1886) - "in an effort to catch up with the West", women's education in Japan received additional policy support from the post-war Constitution, which increased the duration of compulsory education to nine years, and made public schools co-educational. The result is fairly unique in the Asian context. In 1986, 94.7% of all girls were going beyond the compulsory schooling level, while fewer boys (92.8%) were doing so.

This remarkable development has not, however, changed perceptions of gender roles, manifested in society's discrimination against women, both in educational and economic opportunities. Employment continues to be regarded as an option rather than the rule, though most women "join the labour force for economic reasons" to support the family, educate their children, and raise the standard of living. Discrimination is manifested in vocational training and poor representation of women in mathematics and science courses.

Japan's case, in fact, represents the classic type of a 'developed' society, in which the pattern of educational development itself is instrumental for extending a perception of gender roles which is far removed from the reality. The fact that the paper's identification of problems ignores the class factor and the current share of women in the agricultural workforce (See Chart 8) indicates the perception gap caused by her own education.

Agriculture is certainly not a 'non-traditional' activity for women. Japanese agriculture is highly modernised. Yet the absence of women either as participants or as decision-makers in the system of agricultural education or the non-reflection of this very traditional productive role of women in the whole system of general education find no mention in the paper. Educated women are blamed for their lack of interest in "pressing social problems, such as care for the elderly, the anti-war movement,

and the movement for greater women's rights" it is significant that there is no direct reference to internal political activity.

CHINA

Tao Feng-Jnan's brief note is the only paper from the socialist part of Asia. As in other socialist countries, China guarantees women equal access to education and employment opportunities. Since 1986, the period of compulsory education has been extended to 9 years. "However, women are still struggling through a difficult transition period, as they move away from their families and into society, and out of low level jobs and into management positions". However, the problem of illiteracy is by no means over and the majority among illiterates are women.

Continuation of the treatment of girls as inferior to boys in peasant families is explained by "traditional feudal beliefs - that men, who are superior, do the farm work and participate in social activities, while women look after the house 0 are deeply rooted in rural areas. However the situation in rural areas is changing. Women are emerging as the primary workers in production (See Chart C) and even as the leaders of some local enterprises. They need an education to perform these tasks, and as a result, educational opportunities for girls are better than they were".

The paper projects a clear hierarchy in family attitudes. 'Intellectual families' accept gender equality, though some of them "continue to hold to the traditional idea that education is more important for boys than girls, and while they expect their sons to attend the university, they may expect their daughters to work for senior high school".

At the higher level of education, women constitute only about a fourth of the graduates. These graduates receive job assignments from their institutions. As late as 1985, i.e. 36 years after the establishment of the People's Republic, "200 Chinese companies said that they would not hire women. Some companies that were assigned women, actually sent them back to the schools".

It is obvious that the perception gap regarding the history of Chinese women's productive roles continues to dominate the educational process. The paper states that developments in industry and agriculture have increased opportunities for women, but the share of women in the sectorwise labour force from 1960-80 (See Chart C) tells a different story. Increase was registered only in mining, quarrying, manufacturing and services, while in agriculture there was an actual sharp drop in 1970 (possibly an impact of the great famine of the 60s), and then a rise in the following decade.

Neither does the paper make any reference to the impact of changes in land rights,¹⁰ the formation of work brigades in the communes, the abandoned experiment of providing work-points for housework, the single child population policy (which has led to rising female infanticide and consequent modification of the policy on demand from the All-Chine Women's Federation) and the new agricultural policy which may affect peasant women's recognition as independent workers negatively.¹¹

Apart from the missing history, including that of revolutionary China in which, according to research studies, the major movements, conflicts and compromises to bring about gender equality took place in rural areas,¹² the paper presents an unquestioned acceptance of a hierarchy between urban and rural cultures, and intellectual and manual labour. It is difficult to say whether this is due to the failure of the cultural revolution and the consequent triumph of socialist modernisation, or the sustenance of patriarchal values through the educational process despite the directive from the political systems.

SOUTH AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA

The papers from the non-socialist developing countries cover South-East and South Asia. Not all countries are represented. However, drawing on Jayaveera's¹³ analysis, the countries in these two regions can be classified into three distinct groups :

- (i) Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand where access to education is determined, with exceptions in a few communities, by socio-economic factors rather than by gender. These countries have not reached the target of universal primary education; but gender disparities are minimal;
- (ii) Malaysia and Indonesia, where expansion in education has accelerated in recent years without gender differentiation so that gender disparities have rapidly diminished;
- (iii) Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, where urban participation is relatively high but where overall enrolment rates are low, gender disparities are wide and the pace of change slow.

In all these countries disparities continue in fields of study linked to remunerative areas of employment such as technology and areas of traditional employment like agriculture. In spite of that, agriculture remains the dominant sector of women's employment throughout Asia (See Chart C), as with other developing countries (See Chart A). The marked difference between the developed and the developing countries is the substantially lower participation of women in the services sector in the case of the latter (See Chart A). Another difference that marks the developed countries that follow a free market economy e.g. North America and Western Europe, from their Asian counterpart, Japan and Socialist Europe, is the high participation of women in agriculture in the latter.

This aspect of development is significant in examining the dynamics of educational development in South and South-East Asia. All of them experienced the cultural encounter with Western Europe and North America, not only during the period of colonial rule, but also in the development of their educational systems in the post-colonial period.

The colonial experience was not merely a meeting of different cultures, but was also the chief instrument of the 'modernisation' process in these traditional societies. The colonial education systems introduced by the respective imperial powers as agents of political and cultural colonisation were the precursors of the present systems of education in these countries.¹⁴

In the post-colonial period, the development of these educational systems have been greatly influenced by the choice of growth strategies and the models of educational transformation adopted by these countries. Here too, the influence of the western developed countries have been predominant, despite references of socialism in some of the Constitutions (e.g. India and Bangladesh). In all the countries, education has been viewed primarily as an instrument for upward socio-economic mobility of individuals and families, rather than one of developing new values or achieving social liberation.

As in the case of Japan and China (with the exception of the brief period of 'cultural revolution' in the latter), educational systems have failed to challenge prevalent social hierarchies and the gender norms that reflect the traditional beliefs of the *elites* rather than the life experiences of the majority of women. The gender role stereotypes projected by the educational systems, therefore, reflect the value systems of the elites, modified or re-shaped as they were by the colonial ideology of the family and helped to extend and strengthen the power of patriarchal values.¹⁵

Another factor which had a marked influence in educational development in these countries is resource constraint. With the exception of Malaysia, educational expenditure as a percentage of GNP and the national budget has declined in all the countries in recent years.¹⁶ The distribution of this reduced allocation has also been influenced - by growing demand for scientific and technical manpower and higher education, which represent entry points for the economic and political power of a minority.¹⁷ The majority of women in some South Asian countries, as a result, have remained excluded from any access to education.

PHILIPPINES

Both the papers on Philippines bring out some of these contradictions. Torres notes that to the average Filipino education represents the key to possible movement from poverty to prosperity, and

from menial drudgery to better employment, while to the average Filipina education represents “the key to a better life”. The transition from the Spanish to the North American model of colonial policies brought about extension of educational opportunities to men and women at all levels was “supposed to have been liberating for Filipinas”.

Although, higher education did enable some women “to break out of the roles imposed on them by 400 years of Spanish colonialism”, differential patterns by gender in professional courses remained, with concentration of women in teaching, nursing and pharmacology. Literacy rates rose from 72% in 1960 to 83.3% in 1980, but with a bias in favour of men. The gap between rural and urban also remained, though in the younger generation, there is an emerging pattern similar to that of Japan - “girls tend to be more literate than boys”. The drop out rate of boys is higher than girls in high school and elementary school. Of less than 10% of the age group which enter higher education, the majority is women (54% in '77-78 - 64% in graduate school and 65% in post-graduate studies). In contrast, more men enrolled in vocational schools and agriculture, fisheries and trade (approximately 60% across these courses).

Thus, both within the formal and non-formal educational programmes, stereotyping of gender roles is evident. The paper links women’s educational attainments to differences in their labour force participation and finds the usual U-curve-with women with low education and the highest education dominating the employment market.

The analysis, however, suffers from the failure to relate the participation of women in different sectors and a statement that women are missing in occupations in agriculture and production. Such a statement is obviously based on the rigid definitions followed by official censuses and other survey which exclude family labour in these sectors.

However, the paper also notes that the demands of the labour market are often independent of educational attainments, since the Philippines economy is virtually a subsidiary of the United States - as “producers for American controlled firms” and “consumers of their products”, gearing its industrial and agricultural development to the interests of the United States.

Thus it is not surprising that the development of the Philippines educational system was dictated, in part, by these political and economic circumstances... Education was correctly perceived (by the American government) to be the most effective way to pacify the nation, and the cultural, intellectual and economic assimilation of the Filipino people was used to undermine the nationalist aspirations of its patriots. As a result, the United States and its instrumentalities came to be perceived as saviours of the people, and as institutions from which nothing evil or wrong could emanate. Under the martial law government of Ferdinand Marcos, education was expected to serve industrialisation and export programmes. These, in turn, followed the blue print of the World Bank.

Amongst the social and cultural factors affecting women’s education, the paper lists the following: (i) feudalism in agriculture; (ii) continued influence of Spanish colonial values, which confined women’s roles to wives, mother and home-makers, which was maintained by the Americanised educational system; (iii) the mass media’s projection of women as “passive, empty-headed creatures mainly concerned with their appearance and marital fidelity”; and (iv) internalisation of patriarchal values by the majority of women.

The last part of the paper pleads for an alternative educational strategy, in which education should become a force to propagate national aspirations, scientific thinking and popular participation, responding to the needs of the people and the values of democracy and gender equality. Curricula should project the reality of lives of the majority of the poverty-stricken Filipines, rather than that of the privileged minority.

Throughout history, the poverty-stricken Filipina has actually been hard-working and enterprising. She has managed affairs at home along with producing food and income

Furthermore, shw has always been a critical force in household economics expected to make ends meet.

The paper also pleads that the educational system must reflect the pluralism of Philippines society, composed of various class, regional, occupational and ethnic differences, and ensure the participation of 'women in varying circumstances' in the restructuring process. The results of some initial efforts by the National Commission on Women in this direction are reported briefly, which have helped to strengthen the women's movement, identify strategies for women's development and the appearance of women's studies programmes in many women's colleges.

Rasul's paper presents a case study of a successful literacy project to improve the educational status of Muslim women in Philippines. They continue to be burdened by illiteracy, resulting from poverty, lack of adult education programmes in rural areas and the reluctance of the community to acknowledge their women's illiteracy in public.

INDONESIA

Dey-Gardiner's paper notes that education was not a priority for the Dutch rulers. While independent Indonesia has made great strides in extension of elementary and lower secondary education, the gender differential in the upper secondary and the tertiary level continues to be high. She traces the root of this difference to the educational policy of the Dutch government which wanted only lower level male administrators for its bureaucracy, virtually excluding women from the public education system. Thus expanding educational opportunities created a wider gender gap at the upper secondary levels. At the tertiary level, where neither families nor government differentiate between the sexes, this gap was smaller and remained fairly constant. Schooling is free only at the primary level.

Gardiner also finds the inverse relationship between employment and education of women at the middle level and draws the conclusion that there is little or no difference in wages received by women with lower secondary education and no education. However, in rural areas, these women constitute the social elite, whose "earnings do not compensate for the loss of their domestic services and for the added prestige they can bring their families if they do not work".

Women with upper secondary and tertiary education belong to the elite of Indonesian society. They have enough domestic help and family support to be able to work easily. However, the paper predicts that if present trends continue, women in the middle and the upper middle classes will find it more profitable to stay at home.

The paper does not examine the role and value orientation of the educational system. An interesting fact reported by two Indonesian scholars in the second Regional Workshop in South and South-East Asia,¹⁸ however, throws some light on this. Indonesia is perhaps the only country in today's world, where institutions for medical education have ruled that obstetrics and gynaecology are "unsuitable" disciplines for women, because the professions call for greater physical strength!

THAILAND

Pongoapich traces the history of gender roles in Thailand from available knowledge regarding family structures. There is clear evidence that the predominant form of the Thai family was matri-local in most rural areas, and of matrilineal groups in the northern communities.¹⁹ Women were undoubtedly the key members of the household and enjoyed a certain degree of power in the distant past, but as everywhere else, jural authority moved away from women and even in the north-east succession took the form of father-in-law to son-in-law, thus differing from the 'classical matrilineal mode' where jural authority and land passes from mother's brother to sister's son and also from the 'classical patrilineal mode' where they pass from father to son.

In urban areas, family pattern were affected more by the cultural contacts with China and India, accepting the gender hierarchy of these two classical traditions. Polygamy and male authority characterised upper class society, whose women were “conditioned to enjoy their roles as wives whose main duties were to serve their husbands”, thus establishing patterns of male domination that were less prevalent in rural areas.

Women’s participation in political activities began with the process as of westernisation, women’s education and the promotion of democratic concepts. The democratic constitution of 1932 began with the growth of the women’s movement and the free press became a channel for both men and women to demand freedom. This was suppressed under the military government which captured power after the Second World War, but the Student’s Revolution in 1973, which brought about a ‘half-democratic’ political system and the International Women’s Decade have helped to revive the women’s movement.

Around the turn of the century, women agitated for equal rights in education and end to polygamy. Formal education for girls began from 1901 but the expression of educated women’s views recorded in *Kulasatri*, a women’s magazine, indicates their preoccupations with getting along better with educated husbands and being good wives, though there was an occasional complaint about the biased division of labour between men and women. Other demands expressed by women’s groups and magazines included monogamy and equal opportunity and pay in government employment, neither of which received much social support. Polygamy continues to this day, in spite of a law promulgating monogamy since 1935.

While a small section of educated women argued that women’s liberation can only come with other political-social changes, elite women organised themselves to promote cultural and welfare activities. Professional groups emerged only after the First World War.

The paper argues that the right to vote and to run for public offices, conceded after the 1932 revolution, began rapid changes in gender positions, but social values and cultural environment that had oppressed women remained in place, effectively discouraging women for running for political office until the 70s, with a few exceptions. Thailand’s political office until the 70’s, with a few exceptions. Thailand’s political history in recent years indicates that women are more likely to be elected than nominated and the prospects of election are higher at the municipal level than the national and the provincial level.

Liberalisation of the political system after 1973 resulted in a confrontation between left and right wing forces, with the triumph of the right. This was reflected in the birth of status quoist women’s organisations. During the 1980s, however, women’s groups became active in college campuses, and began to pick up issues of civil liberties, child rights and women’s right to head village councils. The revision of laws and regulations which discriminated against women, dictated by Article 236 of the 1974 Constitution, which had been abandoned after 1976, under dictatorship, have been resumed in the last few years.

The paper concluded that despite the gap in theoretical legal equality and the actual social practice, in which gender inequality and exploitation remains the reality for many, the traditional quasi-matrilineal nature of Thai society has enabled Thai women never to be fully dominated by men. “The situation for women is not too bad in Thailand, when compared to other Asian countries, and the women’s movement has not been too strong for this reason”.

While the excellent historical account provides a lot of insight into the economic and political activism of Thai women, the paper does not provide any explanation for the contemporary discrimination against women in the labour market and increase in sexual exploitation of poor women who can obtain higher earnings only in the flesh trade in cities like Bangkok.²⁰ Nor does it examine the role of the educational system in transforming the major workers of the Thai economy into a class of subordinate and exploited citizens. While educational expansion has virtually eradicated female illiteracy, the growth strategies pursued by Thailand do not rule out the possibility of increasing hold of patriarchy as class differences increase. The fact that neither matrilineal nor matrilocal family

structures have been able to prevent the passing of jural authority into the hands of men indicate that the situation of women is not quite as strong as the paper contends.

Kabilising's paper, on the other hand, looks at the negative attitudes against women in Buddhist societies that "are translated into strong social forces, which undermine women's capabilities and destroy their creativity". Contradictions within Buddhist scriptures and derogatory opinions about women expressed by Buddhist monks in Thailand are cited. In spite of a brave attempt to describe such views as 'nonbuddhistic', the paper provides ample evidence that the religion did not, in fact, uphold gender equality. It is argued that ideas like the "uncleanness" of women, because of menstruation, came from India, where patriarchy was firmly established. Secondly, the recording of the Buddha's teachings was done by men who put in their own biases, absolving the Founder of the religion from any gender bias.

In fact Buddhist history records that the Buddha was totally averse to admitting women to the monastic order and had to be persuaded by his disciple, Ananda. Even after formation of the women's orders, the lower status of nuns to monks was clearly prescribed. The paper interprets these discriminatory rules (the Gurudhammas) as evidence of the Buddha's anxiety for the nuns' protection and appeals against 'biased interpretations', which are often accepted by women.

What the paper fails to explain is why such patriarchal ideas should have found such "unquestioning" acceptance in a society in which the majority of women were involved deeply in sustaining the economy and marriage and descent systems guaranteed for greater rights to women than in Buddhist India. Does it indicate the existence of a ruling class among whom the subordination of women had already found acceptance and the entry of the new religion into Thai society via that class? Was it a case of 'cujus regio ejus religio'? And now much influence have such attitudes exerted on the modern educational system, whose shaping was so heavily influenced by western models?

Both the papers ignore the fact that western 'modernisation', when it entered Asian countries, did not have any concept of gender equality. Even the traditional economic roles of women had been undermined in the West by the agrarian and industrial revolution. European women lost their rights to learning and serve as professionals between the 16th and the 17th centuries. In providing women access to formal education, education-based employment, and political rights, Asian countries were not really far behind Europe. On the other hand, there is little doubt that the Victorian model of the family, with prescribed differentiated gender roles, exerted a considerable influence on the upper classes of Asian societies promoting a model of education for women that strengthened patriarchal values - by holding up the wife-mother role of service as the most ideal and desirable²¹ and by extending them to classes whose life experiences prescribed different role divisions. Surely, such a process would accelerate the alienating character of the educational establishment, weaning people away from manual labour of all kinds and traditional economic activities like agriculture or related occupations. Such alienation affected both men and women and prevented fuller utilisation of education for economic, social and political development.

In contrast, most of the papers from South Asia focus on their critique of the educational systems and their failure to contribute to the social acceptance of gender equality.

PAKISTAN

Mumtaz and Shaheed's paper begins with the economic and educational profile of Pakistani women, pointing out the class and rural-urban differences in their actual roles, practices and access to education. Despite these sharp differences, the prevalent dominant social attitude devalues women and turns them into appendages of male relatives. Citing the Government appointed Commission on the Status of Women's Report (1985) which rounds up the actual status of women as 'dehumanised possessions with little control over their lives, over dispossessed and disinherited in spite of legal safeguard over-worked and unrewarded and 'mute spectators of the changes taking place around them' - the authors pose the question why this has happened after forty years of planned development and what education can do to change it? Has education contributed to raise women's

confidence and control over their environment, multiplying their options, or has it stunted their initiative and participation, serving more as an “instrument of control than of liberation.”

The colonial education system was designed to “produce a pool of competent clerks and administrators who were adequately acculturated and suitably impressed by the Empire.. to oppose indigenous educational system and thus.. diametrically opposed to the values of the society”. It provided a channel for a minority to gain power or a job in government, developing an anglo-educated elite, alienated from their own environment, which assumed a derisive attitude to ‘vernacular and indigenous education’. The common perception that colonialism only dislocated the economic order is not correct. The disruption of social and cultural patterns is more significant. It is the latter dislocation in which education played an important role that has influenced Pakistan society even till today.

Pakistan’s educational policies have perpetuated a hierarchy within the system - with status difference by language (English vs, the vernacular) and by ‘modernity and traditionality’. Not only has this widened class inequality, it has reduced education to a certification process with no training in understanding one’s own environment and the ‘informed inability to act’.

The initial resistance of the Muslim population in the northern part of the sub-continent to English education gave way by the beginning of the 20th century. Even women’s education began to receive some support but with a sharp division of objective. One group sought to promote women’s awareness and potential while another tried to counter what they saw as the insidious under-mining of values and morals, by setting up special schools for women. “This conflict has never been resolved and women’s education in Pakistan remains the victim of contradictory policies”.

The pattern of development strategies has also intensified inequality and the methods of evaluation demonstrate the relationship between knowledge and power monopolies. Both on the macro and the micro levels, there is a fragmented approach to development, with unequal emphasis on different sectors - social vs. economic, agricultural vs. industrial, rural vs. urban and male vs. female. Such choices have also been supported and emphasised by institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

While need for women’s education was accepted by 1955, it was only the current Sixth Five Year Plan that endorsed the need to develop an integrated approach to alleviate women’s deprived status. In operational terms, the Plan proposed increased health facilities, additional vocational training and educational programmes to increase women’s employment opportunities through various types of skill training and more positions for women in government. The results are so far not visible. Female literacy rate (16%) remains one of the lowest in the world and there is a consistent bias against women’s institutions. At the primary level, girls constitute 31% of all students. At higher levels, they form 24%. In professional colleges, they are only 18%. Gender disparities in education have, in fact, widened.

Apart from educational policies, societal perception of gender roles have affected this sorry state of affairs. Isolation from social realities reinforces social attitudes that regard education as irrelevant to women’s lives. Dominant ideology continues to perceive women as ‘economically non-productive child bearers’. Policies for Islamization imposed further restrictions on women’s already constrained lives and access to education. Segregated schools promote difference in curricula by gender and resource constraints tilt the balance further against women. Textbooks reflect and reinforce negative stereotyping of women. History as well as Pakistan studies ignore women.

Patriotism, religiosity and creativity, qualities depicted as desirable by male, are not associated with gender. Instead, obedience and docility are presented as desired attributes. Similarly, bravery, rationality, respectability and humaneness are depicted as male attributes, while women are portrayed as cunning, careless, non-cooperative and repentent.

Yet economic changes keep pulling women into the modern labour market with a consequent demand for some minimum education and skills. So far the education system has been incapable of responding to such needs because of its rigidity.

The paper also presents the failure of certain official initiatives in favour of women and the success of a self-help community development project in resolving the problem of school drop-outs and non-enrolled girls. Another voluntary organisation's experiments in developing alternative curriculum - which includes an emphasis on gender issues or women's studies from a Pakistani perspective - is also cited, to substantiate the paper's main argument, that transformation of the educational system requires a two pronged approach - by mainstream educationalists and by mobilised communities, to extend successful alternative models to the macro level.

Market finds Pakistan's literacy position to be lower than other Muslim countries, but clarifies that the Islamic practice of segregation of women through *purdah*, is inoperative in rural areas because of women's involvement in agriculture. But the "ideology of *purdah* is deeply imbedded in Muslim culture and identify and defines the parameters of women's activity". Further,

"In Islamic ideology the family is the central unit, a reference point for the individual in both the private and public spheres. The supremacy of the family is a tenet of the Quran, whose directives sustain and perpetuate its patriarchal structure. This image of the family appeals to notions of what is 'natural'. Its biological functions are evoked to legitimize this analogy to nature; the division of labour is made according to the 'natural' functions of men and women. Rearing children is 'naturally' women's work; supporting the family is 'naturally' men's work this way of thinking is embodied in Islamic directives in the Quran, and it governs the family's ethic.

The paper argues that efforts of women in Islamic countries to fight for their educational rights from within their roles as mothers have helped to strengthen patriarchy and the Islamisation movement, destroying much of the earlier progress made by women. There is thus an essential contradiction between women's education and the social structure. Segregated schools are the only way to improve access, but "they reinforce *purdah* and bind women even more strongly to patriarchy and tradition."

Non-inclusion of agriculture, animal husbandry, nutrition, health-care, sanitation etc. in the formal curriculum makes schools less attractive or useful for rural women, as the absence of practical courses and marketable skills prevent urban women from building an "economic base for themselves and gain independence from others".

While the use of traditional institutions like mosque and mohalla schools to promote literacy and adult education among women prove acceptable to the community, they reinforce patriarchal norms of behaviour. On the other hand, some community development experiments by non-governmental organisations helped the women in the project to redefine their roles and change the community's perception. Partial economic independence through incomes that they earn also increase their independence.

Mustafa's paper attributes Pakistan's failure to educate its women to social attitudes, the cost of education, insufficient government intervention, Islamisation and recent over-emphasis on skill promotion, in the context of women's need to qualify for income generating work.

If education is to have any meaning for women, it must be instrumental in raising their consciousness about the oppressive structure that keeps them in positions of helplessness... Over the years female education in Pakistan has perpetuated the social, economic and cultural status quo It has been reduced to the technical process of learning, to teaching women skills with which they can assimilate themselves unquestioningly in the existing value system, however unjust it might be.

It is obvious that all the three papers raise basic questions regarding the role of education in bringing about transformation of value systems. These questions are relevant not only for women but for the

future of education itself. The rural-urban dichotomy and the convergence of an occupational hierarchy with social and power hierarchies lie at the root of the malady. The system was not designed for mass education but is being expected to perform that role.

Two significant issues raised by these papers, however, require greater analysis. Marker's criticism of the current emphasis on saleable skills is not reflected in the other two papers, rather there is an implicit acceptance of this necessity to make women's education more acceptable and relevant to the community. The question goes beyond the issue of improving women's access and reflects the current global trend to reduce the educational process to one of skill transfer rather than of value generation. At the heart of this conflict lies the suspicion that the spread of education will destabilise the existing power relations and social systems, not only within the country but within the world order.

The role of religious ideology in perpetuating an reinforcing the gender hierarchy is mentioned in all the papers. What is not discussed is its political role, in attempting to promote a new national identity to the multi-lingual, multi-ethnic population of Pakistan. The community based educational experiments praised by all the three papers ignore this issue of diversity of political identities. Unless these experiments deliberately adopt certain political objectives, of expanding the women's sense of identity beyond their immediate community, it is doubtful if they can bring about the kind of transformation in values that the papers are looking for. Unfortunately, the political significance of gender equality as an instrument of nation building has received little recognition across the subcontinent. Pakistan, by the history of its birth, has been forced into adopting religion and economic growth as the primary instruments of nation building, thus laying itself open to fundamentalist, revivalist forces that are opposed to any notion of women's rights. The extent to which the new government headed by a woman pledged to defend women's rights can resolve this dilemma remains to be seen.

As a footnote to this discussion, I would like to report a recent personal experience. I was invited to a National Workshop²² designed to explore the possibilities of incorporating women's studies within the Pakistan school curriculum. Four Chairmen of provincial textbook boards who began by observing emphatically that they could not accept any suggestion that went against the national Islamic ideology, ended up by accepting all suggestions to remove derogatory and unreal references to women in the textbooks, to substitute them by alternative formulations which projected the contemporary productive and other contribution by women to Pakistan's economy and society, and to seek greater autonomy from the federal government to redesign the two components of Islamic and Pakistan Studies, to include much greater emphasis on the role played by women. This extraordinary conversion during the course of four days was achieved by two main methods of emphasising (a) the actual disintegration of indigenous cultural values through the powerful forces of consumerism and the media which projected women as sex and consumption objects; and (b) the greatest educational challenge - of relating the curriculum to contemporary problems in the natural and social environment.

The most hostile of the educators was the first to state that rural women in Pakistan were carrying the major burden of agricultural production today, because of heavy male migration to the cities and the middle-east. He also agreed that the negative consequences of deforestation were being felt mainly by women as it had diminished their access to fuel, fodder, and food. He offered to re-write the entire section on the people and the economy within the social studies curriculum to bring out women's major contributions.

INDIA

Desai's paper begins by reviewing the debate on women's education within the 19th century social reform movements in India. While they challenged religious orthodoxy, which sought to keep women out of education, the reformers did not project any view of gender equality. On the other hand, they expected education to make women better in fulfilling the traditional roles of wives and

mothers. The appeal of the movements remained confined to a few upper class, mainly urban sections in some of the region.

Women's participation in the mass movements against imperialism and the acceptance of gender equality as a basic principle of the new political system provided an impetus to expand women's educational opportunities. However, post-Independence educational development continued to function as a channel for social mobility, and failed to become an instrument of equality. Gender inequality is "just part of a more pervasive inequality among the various sections of the population ... the task of redressing inequality is enormous, and the job of establishing gender equality is formidable".

So far education has not generated social change "Indian women continue to be the victims of a process of marginalisation - economic, social, political and intellectual - that has accelerated during the post-Independence period". Social oppression of women has, in fact, been increasing among the educated classes.

After reviewing government's policies and action to promote women's education and the expansion achieved in this regard, as well as the failure of policies to achieve universalisation of elementary education (of which girls are the major victims), the paper identifies poverty, early marriage, continuation of gender bias in social attitudes and the absence of supportive services to ease the entry of girls to schools as major reasons for this failure. Educational institutions also display a gender bias in confining girls to limited general and vocational courses, despite a national policy against differentiation of curricula by gender.

The picture is different at the level of higher education. With only 4.8% of the population in the relevant age group in these institutions, higher education has remained virtually the monopoly of the middle class. Within this minority, women's progress in the post-Independence period is striking. The representation of women in some professional sectors (agriculture, technology etc.) is still marginal but there are significant strides in other sectors : "Nonetheless, the basic traditional role definitions continue to determine a woman's priorities and aspirations - a factor that has implications for attaining position of more power or higher status".

A major issue raised by the paper is that policy commitments to non-discrimination in access, non-differentiation of curricula and, lately, removing gender biases from text books - are not, by themselves, educational process can perpetuate inequality. Women's studies, that knowledge about Indian society and its transformation has finally received policy support in the National Policy on Education (1986). But the extent to which this will succeed in restructuring and reorganising the educational process (which was the objective of the women's studies movement) remains uncertain. The University Grants Commission's policy of establishing Centres for Women's Studies in selected universities takes a 'top down' approach, which is unlikely to bring about the needed educational revolution.

"The history of Indian women's movement indicates that even to ensure implementation of the limited reforms initiated by the Education Policy, women will have to press constantly, and to spread knowledge and information to the vast majority of women... ultimately women's liberation is an act of women themselves".

Jain's paper opens by stating that distortion introduced by 'development' and the educational system have made the task of building equity a painful process. Both these systems have betrayed the poor in general and women in particular. Rejecting the present international model of development, which ranks different regions within a global hierarchy by using primarily indicators of economic growth, the paper offers other options :

Can we come out of poverty without damaging our eco-system, our values or our identity?
Can we structure our economics so that the majority of our workers remain self-employed,
which is their historical and traditional form of employment?

Pleading for better understanding of traditional cultural concepts which helped the majority of people to participate in decisions that affect them, and the need for a more 'organised' growth rooted in the culture of the people, the paper suggests a feminist approach for educational development. After citing some examples of Gandhian experiments in education of girls and women, and the questioning of the entire process of development; including the contribution of education to social development, by men and women within academic institutions the paper suggests that

Building self-confidence and increasing self-worth are the page on which our knowledge is to hang. From the individual woman to the nation we need to legitimise ourselves economically, politically, socially and culturally. Before we can do this at the individual level, we must clean the lenses at the macro level.

Blaming the rise of revivalist movements, and violent conflicts reflecting ethnic and linguistic differences to the destabilisation of those foundations of society which had been giving self-confidence and pride to people, and the role of education in abetting this process of uprootment, the paper acknowledges that 'roots' and 'heritages' like 'tradition' and 'cultures' are "full of trouble zones for women". The social scientists' search for a heritage often remain confined to the social elites, since only this class has any recorded history.

This perspective was also greatly influenced by the colonial encounter, and the invention of oriental civilization by western orientalist. As a result, development - be it on capitalist or socialist lines - represents something borrowed from the west. This influence is evident on women's activism too.

So many opinions and values impinge on us - to be active, to take the initiative, to learn to function in the public domain, to be articulate, to seek and keep power, to aspire to belong to all the institutions that men have built over the centuries They are all played out, and are impediments to the survival of the poor. Can we reconsider some of these values? Can we suggest that another mode - the mode of privacy and quietness, the mode of strengthening - is wiser?

Arguing that women's strength is derived from the range of responsibilities and skills that they have to manage, which are often learnt from their mothers and grandmothers, and the 'inner space' that they have to build, Jain observes that the Gandhian ideology is most "consistent with the issues, concerns and characteristics of the women's experience in India". Women respond to its emphasis on personal morality and unity built woman ethnical base, rather than on class, gender, religion, race or political ideology. Gandhi saw women as caring, moral and courageous beings", and his approach to 'equalising social and economic patterns' tried to adopt less aggressive moral, cultural and economic processes.

His perspective was to prevent any concentration of power in any one area - state, corporation, trade union, patriarch, temple or church - by building a basis for autonomy inside the household. Grasp or manipulate some of it on behalf of women or the poor, and the growth of power is pre-empted by the very nature of the process - the means of the end.

The paper concludes that the Gandhian philosophy of education, like the Gandhian concept of *sartodaya* - a method of transforming class and caste bearers into a relationship of harmony depends on the central role of 'godly men and women'²³, who became godly through their consciousness of self, integrated to the collective.

Without rethinking and specifying the philosophy, the vision and the specific vocabularies of education, it is not useful to draw women into education. The stance that poor women are forced to adopt today is one of resistance and struggle. To re-cycle that into more enriching 'building' roles required going back, or down, and not going forward.

Mazumdar's paper takes up the relationship between education and rural women, and raises the question whether it can be a one way process? Since the process of education and other developments

in their global forms have been responsible, greatly, for the invisibility and marginalisation of rural women, the paper argues :

If education is to become an active agent for ending gender inequality it requires a new perspective, new methods and tools and new knowledge - (a) about the centrality of women's role, to correct the present iniquitous and destructive path of development; and (b) about the origin of women's subordination in society. The key to these two critical issues lie in the past and contemporary histories of rural women to a far greater extent than in the experience of their counterparts in urban areas because one finds far clearer gender differentials, in the assessment of problems, priorities, values and demands in rural than in urban areas in developing countries.

After describing various methods and strategies of development that have marginalised the majority of rural women workers, and the occupational and class differences that characterise their present status, that differentiates the impact of macro changes on these groups, the paper focuses on the marked difference that characterises the approaches of peasant men and peasant women to some major development strategies, especially those affecting the use of natural resources. Organised groups of peasant women in India have opposed large scale deforestation as destructive of their environment, or large scale planting of species like *Eucalyptus* (a) because *Eucalyptus* does not meet their need for fuel, food and fodder; and (b) because it destroys the nutrients in the soil and draws off too much moisture. They are critical of some new crop varieties which require excessive use of chemical fertilisers or pesticides, as damaging to the soil and water.

Pointing out the 'questionable' role of many agricultural and forest scientists, (like that of some members of the medical profession), in promoting the types of development strategy which now threaten an environmental disaster because of their negative impact on the rural productive base, the paper concludes that educators all over the world need to learn many things from poor peasant women,

in order to correct our own errors and remove our blinkers by first learning from them - of the reality of their lives, their store of skills and knowledge, their extra-ordinary capacity to survive on so little, and keep up their courage in the face of their problems, that would drive most of us to lunatic asylums or suicide.

This reversal of the normal learning processes, where the more educated teach and the less educated (in rural women's case, mostly illiterate) are expected to learn; produces a transformation of perspectives, values and involvement, even the sense of identity of scholars, and results in a process of 'organic knowledge'.

Since everyone involved in the educational process cannot become a researcher focusing on rural women's experiences, a critical need is to introduce the history of peasant women's contribution to human civilisation through the discovery of agriculture, textile production and pottery, the beginnings of all productive activity or civilised living in the Indian sub-continent.

If women were the initiators of these in a sub-continent the size of India, what was the story elsewhere? Surely it was the same in most parts of Africa? Who is going to restore this lost heritage to rural women, and thereby change the attitudes of educate women and men all over the world? What freedoms gave them such creative energy, which has been kept curbed by generations of subordination and powerlessness? Why and how did this subordination takes place? Why and how did this subordination takes place? Who is to find the answers to these questions and use them to build new minds, who think differently about women? Only educational institutions can play this role through research and teaching. We do not need new agencies to educate rural women. We need a new perspective for educational institutions all over the world to play a new role.

While all the three papers from India share a critical view of the present educational system, there are some differences in perspectives. All of them draw inspiration from women's struggles at the

grassroots. But while Jain's disillusionment with the present role of education makes her want to keep such women away from its corrosive influence, until the system adopts a new philosophy and vision. Desai finds hope in some of the alternative methods of education developed for such women in restructuring educational methodology within the system. Mazumdar carries this argument still further, and pleads that a reversal of the learning process is necessary for educational systems to reform themselves, especially their methods and content of teaching, the value orientation and the organisation of the learning process. The theory of value neutrality of educational institutions developed during the post Second World War period, plays into the hands of these forces that are trying to reduce education to a mere skill transferring role, and educators to a powerless, non-participatory passive status in human and social development. Academic objectivity and scientific rationality, or honesty to one's data are not value-neutral. They are values in themselves. Educational systems should thank the international women's movement for 'placing value and attitudinal transformation squarely as a central task of educational agencies'.

III

CONCLUSION

This analysis of the interrelationship between educational development and the achievement of gender equality, as perceived from seven countries in Asia, raises more questions than it answers.

While criticising the study of the relationship only through a focus on women's access, one can not ignore the fact that exclusion from the educational process - actual or effective - *is* one of the major cause for gender inequality and women's powerlessness. The fact that they share this characteristic with some other sections of the population underlines the truth that women's inequality is rooted in general inequality in all societies. The subordination of women can not be eliminated unless human inequality as a basic feature of social organisation is replaced by meaningful and effective institutions that promote equality and democratic values that incorporate the concept of human rights - including dignity, justice and right to participate in all areas of human development.

Despite the massive changes which they have experienced, Asian societies appear to have retained some of the hierarchical structures and norms inherited from their past. Such hierarchies used three instruments to perpetuate themselves - viz. monopolies of economic, political and knowledge power. These monopolies also strengthened patriarchal values and normative controls on gender roles.

The cultural encounter with the West was greatly influenced by the political and economic dominance of colonialism, turning what might have been mainly an enriching experience into yet another instrument strengthening the hierarchical structures, social relations and prescriptions of gender roles among the elites. It also brought Asian societies within a global hierarchy, determined by common over new forms of economic, political and knowledge power.

The educational systems that grew out of these changes reflected many of these characteristics and compromises, rooted in the complex relationship that developed between the indigenous and the external but dominant cultures. On the one hand they widened opportunities for a minority drawn mainly from the elites to pursue the new kind of education and opened up their mental horizons as well as socio-economic prospects. Ideas of democracy, liberalism, socialism and the unlimited search for knowledge and power over nature opened up by science and technology introduced new challenges within these traditions societies, even though the outreach of such knowledge was, by and large, restricted. The traditional systems were confronted by a search for mobility which had to be accommodated through compromises by the social system, introducing subtle processes of change within the patterns of hierarchy, shifting the bases of economic, social and political power. The emergence of international peer groups in scholarship and academic achievement gave an outward look to the educational systems, which drew heavily on the models of scholarship and educational structures developed in countries outside Asia. The West had conquered the East because of its advance in certain areas of knowledge. Desire to overcome the humiliation of colonial domination, restoring the pride of the Orient, as well as new impulses to reorganise and restructure their societies -

searching for new political identities of nationhood in the process - abetted this process. Most nationalist movements began with a demand for the spread of education to the masses, seeing in education the most valuable instrument for mobilising people. Despite their limited facilities and human resources, most educational institutions played a dynamic role in the development of nationalist and other revolutionary movements.

Present critics of Asian educational systems tend to forget this recent history of educational institutions, or the extent to which leaders of national struggles for freedom from colonial rule utilised the captive audiences of formal educational institutions to train their armies of freedom fighters or revolutionaries.

At the same time, some of the cultural aspects of nationalist struggles tried to promote a rejection of ideas and values that emanated from the West presenting a romantic, glamourised image of traditional cultures which were often very far removed from both historical and contemporary realities. The search for their cultural heritages was not only a product of the 'invention of the Orient' by the occident, but also by defenders of the cultural monopolies of the traditional systems. Again critics of the present systems often ignore the extent of influence exerted by cultural nationalism (which manifested itself very greatly in nationalist historiography of the ancient past) on the educational system. The continued reflection of such romanticism about 'traditional cultural concepts' divorced from historical reality of cultural, social, economic and political diversity that characterised these plural societies in the past still continue to haunt the perception of some of the authors of the papers reviewed in the last section.

This complex process of change was accelerated by the economic and demographic revolutions that affected all these societies during the last two centuries, accelerating the growth of socio-economic inequalities within the countries, and increasing their dependence on the colonial or the global economy. Political freedom from colonial rule did not end such dependence. Japan, China or Thailand, which did not experience colonial rule directly, still shared in some of these processes.

The impact of these complex processes on the perception of gender roles, mediated as it was by existing socio-political hierarchies, was equally contradictory. On the one hand, it resulted in movements propagating the education of women, opposing religious and other cultural orthodoxies. On the other, the patriarchal norms and values of the elites, controlling gender roles, were strengthened by the model of the family of the upper and middle classes of the industrialised societies of the West.

Educational systems originally designed to cater to the elites found nothing wrong or unreal in the unquestioned acceptance of the rigid division of labour between men and women as the world of work and public affairs and the world of the home and the family. This dichotomy, reflecting the hierarchical social organisations which undervalued manual labour, and erected women's non-participation in labour as the criterion and indicator of a family's social status, had a major impact on the expansion of opportunities for women's education. Resource constraints as well as cultural nationalism reduced priorities and restricted the content of women's education. The consequences of these can be felt even today, though in differing degrees.

The best indicator of gender discrimination in access to education is comparable literacy among women and men. Table 1 indicates the position in 1970 and 1980 by regions. While in the developed countries, this has reached near parity, in developing countries, with the exception of Latin America, the situation is far from satisfactory. For the Asia and Pacific region, this ratio changed from 69 in 1970 to 73 in 1980. Table 1(a) indicates the rate of illiteracy in the post school age population in 9 selected countries of Asia. Table 2 provides data on per cent literacy among women and men in selected age groups for Asian countries in three regions. Table 3 indicates the per cent of population enrolled in school by age and sex, and Table 3(a) the sex ratio among the school population by age groups for the same Asian countries. Table 4 provides data on percentage of women in technical institutes for selected Asian countries.

Since the participation of women in different areas of higher education is regarded as an indicator of women's advance, Tables 5, 5(a), (b) and (c) provide data on four countries - India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Philippines. The data from India, Sri Lanka and Philippines demonstrate the invalidity of the apprehension regarding non-representation of women in science and management studies, though women are certainly far behind in the technology sector in all the four countries. Their position in agriculture is much better in Philippines and Sri Lanka, but not in India and Nepal. Another significant low participation is in law (India, Nepal and Philippines). Since law has been projected as *the* instrument for bringing about gender equality, the time has perhaps come to reorganise our priorities to assess women's advance in higher education.

The last two decades have witnessed increasing articulation of women's issues and concerns within the context of developed, and various socio-political ideologies that battled for supremacy in different Asian countries. The political significance of redefining women's role had escaped the attention of most analysts and commentators till the explosion of research and policy debates began during the women's decade, calling for a fresh look at the history of the anti-imperialist struggles as well as the social upheavals that provided the backdrop for such struggles and critical appraisal of strategies for national development adopted in the post-colonial period. Women's movements and organisations were reborn, articulating old or new concerns with renewed vigour. The movements did not necessarily acquire a common perspective, divided as they were by their class base and ideological differences. Secular-democratic ideologies of nationalist or socialist hue and a variety of off-shoots of the earlier cultural nationalism sought to adopt the women's cause from radically different perspectives and motives. Religion and ethnicity-based revivalist movements appeared on the scene, projecting a fundamentalist view of women's roles, which ignored both historical and contemporary diversities. The political appeal of these movements did win some support from a section of women, however oppressive and restrictive were their definitions of gender roles.

This battle of ideologies basically represents a struggle for defining boundaries of a person's social identity. Whether individuals are to remain confined to a narrow identity, defined by religion, language, the inherited culture and a redefined ethnicity, or acquire a broader identity reflecting their life experiences and widening horizons - is the basic issue. The crucial role of women in this struggle for redefining a political identity and in the confrontation between human and group rights, gender vs. sectional justice and universalist vs. culturist perspectives is just beginning to be realised.

Educated women and men have played critical roles in these debates on different sides. Many of them have scaled their class, religious, communal or cultural boundaries in trying to articulate universal issues of women's concerns. The international framework of scholarship and the women's movement have played a major role in bringing such women together, in search of a new vision, new identity and new allies. While accepting the reality of their cultural roots and differences in priorities according to the needs of their specific societies, these frameworks have provided an opportunity for a genuine enrichment of ideas. To reject the positive contribution of the global educational process to this coming together would be both ahistorical and unrealistic.

With all their limitations, Asian educational systems have enabled women from Asia to contribute, on equal terms, to this global debate. The issue now at stake is the needed restructuring and renovation of the educational process, to correct its present distortions, omissions, and exclusive, fragmented approaches - that alienates the process from the live reality and priorities of the majority of people, especially the majority of women. Such restructuring can not really succeed if it is confined to a single country or even a region. The global community of intellectuals, scholars and educators is a greater reality today than the comity of nations. Suggestions for alternative paths to educational development articulated in some of these papers from Asian women scholars, we hope, will fall on fertilised soil beyond the boundaries of our countries or continent.

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 22. Organised by Aurat Foundation for Information and Publication Services, Lahore, June 1988.
 23. Many of us would not agree that this interpretation of Gandhian Philosophy or the ideas on the role of women; for a comprehensive collection of Mahatma Gandhi's writings on women; see Gandhi on Women; CWDS and Navjivan Trust, 1988. Also Vina Mazumdar; *Khadi and Village Industries Commission* in the series *National Specialized Agencies on Women's Equality*, CWDS, 1988.

Table 1

**Literacy among Women Compared to Men
1970-1980 (Literacy - Men = 100)**

	1970	1980
World Total	84	85
More Developed Countries	99	99
Developing Countries	65	71
Africa	35	47
Asia and Pacific	69	73
Latin America	91	94

Source : The Role of Women in Developing Countries : International Centre for Public Enterprises in Developing Countries, Yugoslavia.

Table 1(a)

Rate of Illiteracy (%) (+15 Years)

Country	Year	Male/Female	Male	Female
Bangladesh	1981	70.8	60.3	82.0
India	1981	63.7	53.1	75.2
Indonesia	1980	32.7	22.5	42.3
Malaysia	1980	28.0	20.0	36.0
Nepal	1981	79.4	68.3	90.8
Pakistan	1981	73.8	64.0	84.8
Philippines	1980	16.7	16.1	17.2
Sri Lanka	1981	13.9	9.2	18.8
Thailand	1980	12.0	7.7	16.0

Source : Class and Gender in Education and Employment - **Swarna Jayaweera.**

Table II
Percent Literature Among Women and Men in
Selected Age Groups, for (Asian Countries)

Region and Country	Year	Women			Men		
		10 to 24 years	25 to 34 years	35 years and over	10 to 24 years	25 to 34 years	35 years and over
MIDDLE SOUTH ASIA							
Bangladesh	1974	25.1	13.6	7.0	44.0	37.8	31.3
India	1981	46.1	34.5	14.4	68.1	62.6	44.6
Nepal	1976	9.6	3.5	1.5	42.9	32.4	23.1
Pakistan	1972	17.4	10.7	5.8	36.8	33.6	21.6
Sri Lanka	1981	89.4	89.0	69.9	90.3	93.8	88.8
SRI LANKA							
China							
Mainland	1982	83.0	62.0	24.6	95.1	88.8	63.2
Taiwan	1979	98.7	94.5	56.2	99.5	99.3	87.0
South Korea	1970	98.9	94.7	62.7	99.3	98.7	88.3
EASTERN SOUTH ASIA							
Indonesia	1976	81.9	63.7	30.0	88.6	83.3	61.6
Malaysia	1970	69.2	45.7	15.8	78.3	75.5	53.2
Philippines	1970	91.1	87.5	67.4	89.5	88.8	75.5
Thailand	1970	92.9	83.2	46.7	95.7	91.9	78.3

Estimated rate : refers to age 10 to 14 years

Estimated rate : refers to age 15 to 34 years

Refers to age 12 to 24 years

Source : Women of the World Asia and Pacific : U.S. Agency for International Development, Office of Women in Development.

Table III

**Percent of Population Enrolled in School by Age,
Sex for Asian Countries**

Residence, Region and Country	Year	Female				Male			
		5 to 9 years	10 to 14 years	15 to 19 years	20 to 24 years	5 to 9 years	10 to 14 years	15 to 19 years	20 to 24 years
Total Country									
MIDDLE SOUTH ASIA									
Bangladesh	1974	15.5	25.8	7.1	1.1	22.0	40.6	29.1	14.3
India	1981	32.2	37.5	(N.A.)	(N.A.)	44.3	62.1	(N.A.)	(N.A.)
Nepal	1971	14.7	8.5	3.9	0.9	14.4	32.7	22.0	7.5
Pakistan	1973	11.8	20.5	9.3	3.3	23.3	45.8	24.6	8.7
Sri Lanka	1981	84.0	81.7	41.8	6.9	84.3	82.7	39.9	6.5
EAST ASIA									
China									
Taiwan	1980	(N.A.)	(N.A.)	² 79.8	³ 9.1	(N.A.)	(N.A.)	² 80.9	³ 11.9
Hong Kong	1976	94.8	86.3	39.2	3.5	95.2	90.6	44.7	5.5
South Korean	1980	¹ 84.1	¹ 96.2	54.7	5.7	¹ 84.8	97.5	63.6	12.2
EASTERN SOUTH ASIA									
Indonesia	1976	51.4	64.9	17.5	2.8	52.0	72.5	28.3	7.4
Malaysia	1970	⁴ 61.0	(N.A.)	(N.A.)	(N.A.)	⁴ 71.0	(N.A.)	(N.A.)	(N.A.)
Philippines	1970	¹ 48.3	78.6	39.1	13.5	¹ 45.7	77.2	40.2	15.1
Thailand	1970	64.8	47.3	9.9	2.5	¹ 65.8	55.8	15.2	3.7

1. Refers to age 12 to 17 years

2. Refers to age 18 to 24 years

3. Refers to age 6 to 9 years

4. Refers to age 7 to 19 years

Source: Women of the World Asia and Pacific : U.S. Agency for International Development, Office of Women in Development.

Table III(a)

**Female/Male Ratio of Percent Enrolled in School
by Age for Asian Countries (Male = 1.00)**

Region and Country	Year	5 to 9 years	10 to 14 years	15 to 19 years	20 to 24 years
MIDDLE SOUTH ASIA					
Bangladesh	1974	0.70	0.64	0.24	0.08
India	1981	0.73	0.60	(N.A.)	(N.A.)
Nepal	1971	0.33	0.26	0.18	0.12
Pakistan	1973	0.51	0.45	0.38	0.38
Sri Lanka	1981	1.00	0.99	1.05	1.06
EAST ASIA					
China					
Taiwan	1980	(N.A.)	(N.A.)	¹ 0.99	² 0.76
Hong Kong	1976	1.00	0.95	0.88	0.64
South Korea	1980	³ 0.99	0.99	0.86	0.47
EASTERN SOUTH ASIA					
Indonesia	1976	0.99	0.90	0.62	0.38
Malaysia	1970	⁴ 0.86	(N.A.)	(N.A.)	(N.A.)
Philippines	1970	³ 1.06	1.02	0.97	0.89
Thailand	1970	³ 0.98	0.85	0.65	0.68

¹ Refers to age 12 to 17 years

² Refers to age 18 to 24 years

³ Refers to age 6 to 9 years

⁴ Refers to age 7 to 19 years

Source : Women of the World Asia and Pacific : U.S. Agency for
International Development, Office of Women in Development.

Table IV**Percentage of Women in Technical Institutes**

Country	Year	% F	Year	%F
Bangladesh	1980	2	1984	5
India	1975	41	-	-
Indonesia	1975	29	1985	34
Malaysia	-	-	1983	30
Nepal	1984	8.7	1987	8.6
Pakistan	1973	28.5	1983	15.1
Philippines	-	-	1984	45.2
Sri Lanka	1973	14.9	1984	37.2
Thailand	1975	45.0	-	-

Source : Class and Gender in Education and Employment - **Swarna Jayaweera**.

Table V

Distribution of Male and Female Students in Higher Education by Area of Study India - (1970-81)

	Arts		Science		Commerce		Education		Eng. Tech.		Medicine		Agr.		Va./Sc.		Law		Total	
	Sex Ratio	%	Sex Ratio	%	Sex Ratio	%	Sex Ratio	%	Sex Ratio	%	Sex Ratio	%	Sex Ratio	%	Sex Ratio	%	Sex Ratio	%	Sex Ratio	%
1970-71	497	33.20	229	18.60	31	3.10	575	36.50	10	1.00	296	22.90	5	0.50	7	0.70	38	3.70	282	22.10
1971-72	502	33.40	250	20.00	37	3.60	605	37.70	11	1.20	284	22.20	10	1.10	9	1.00	56	5.30	293	22.10
1972-73	-	NA	-	NA	-	NA	-	NA	-	NA	-	NA	-	NA	-	NA	-	NA	-	NA
1973-74	515	34.00	279	21.40	49	4.70	561	39.00	12	1.20	263	20.80	8	0.80	7	0.80	53	5.10	303	23.30
1974-75	524	34.40	297	22.90	82	5.60	604	37.60	15	1.50	245	19.70	10	0.90	12	0.90	45	4.40	304	23.50
1975-76	528	36.40	317	24.10	71	6.60	647	39.30	22	2.10	223	18.30	14	1.40	14	1.40	52	5.00	325	24.50
1976-77	-	NA	-	NA	-	NA	-	NA	-	NA	-	NA	-	NA	-	NA	-	NA	-	NA
1979-80	586	37.00	380	27.50	151	13.20	896	47.50	38	3.70	278	21.80	27	2.80	27	2.80	65	6.20	351	26.0
1980-81	605	37.70	404	28.70	190	15.90	899	47.30	40	3.80	325	24.40	34	3.30	34	3.30	73	6.90	373	27.20
1981-82	619	38.20	401	28.60	200	16.70	934	48.30	47	4.50	354	26.20	36	3.50	36	3.50	75	7.10	382	27.70

Source: Class and Gender in Education and Employment - Swarna Jayaweera

Table V(a)

**Distribution of Male and Female Students in Higher
Education by Area of Study
Sri Lanka - 1975 and '84**

Faculties	1975			1984		
	Total	Female	%Female	Total	Female	%Female
Medicine	1239	584	47.1	2135	938	43.9
Dentistry	193	108	55.9	258	115	44.6
Vet Science	108	53	49.1	127	53	41.7
Agriculture	390	100	25.6	693	247	35.6
Engineering	1210	126	10.4	1814	268	14.8
Architecture	73	21	28.8	94	21	22.3
Science	1797	660	36.7	3105	1165	37.5
Management Studies	889	263	29.6	1399	631	45.1
Education	971	613	63.1	216	112	51.9
Law	44	61	42.4	321	145	45.0
Social Science and Hum.	5634	2563	45.5	8800	4578	52.0
Total	12648	5152	40.7	18962	8273	43.6
Total Prof. Sc.	3213	992	30.9	5121	1165	32.1
Science	1797	660	36.7	3105	1642	37.5
Arts based	7638	3500	45.8	10736	5466	50.9

Source : Class and Gender in Education and Employment - Swarna Jayaweera.

Table V(b)

**Distribution of Male and Female Students
in Higher Education by Area of Study
Nepal (1986-87)**

Areas of Study	Total No.	No. of Females	%
1. Engineering	2180	120	5.5
2. Agriculture	1176	7	0.6
3. Medicine	1385	683	49.3
4. Forestry	489	29	5.9
5. Science & Technology	7308	1082	14.8
6. Law	4907	326	6.6
7. Management	12067	1688	13.9
8. Education	3630	949	26.1
9. Humanities	20880	7727	37.0
Sanskrit	333	18	5.4
Sub Total 5-9 General	49125	11790	24.0
Sub Total 1-4 Technical	5230	839	16.04
Total	54355	126291	23.2

Source : Class and Gender in Education and Employment - **Swarna Jayaweera.**

Table V(c)
Distribution of Male and Female Students in
Higher Education by Area of Study
Philippines (1983-84)

Field of Study	Total No.	No. of Female	%Female
Agriculture/Forestry	45107	21285	47.18
Architecture	20917	4012	19.18
Commerce and Business Admn.	493263	348068	70.56
Engineering	258235	40097	15.52
Fine Arts	6027	2980	49.44
General Programme	65714	38822	59.07
Home Economics	11009	9680	87.92
Humanities	14519	9230	63.57
Law and Jurisprudence	22711	5379	23.68
Mass Communication	9231	6623	71.74
Mathematics	37003	21290	57.53
Natural Science	18477	11423	61.82
Religion-Theory	2127	386	18.14
Service Trade	9591	6123	63.84
Social and Behavioural	25880	16311	63.02
Education	160967	128852	80.04
Trade Craft and Industry	160886	27694	17.21
Transport and Communication	32490	2134	6.56
Others	19756	8909	45.09
Total	1391616	741427	53.27

Source : Class and Gender in Education and Employment - Swarna Jayaweera.