

Nivedini

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NEXT MILLENNIUM ?

Editor - Selvy Thiruchandran

WOMEN'S EDUCATION & RESEARCH CENTRE

Our Objectives

To study and research the various aspects of women's subordination in Sri Lanka in order to sensitize men and women on gender issues.

To disseminate information relating to women and create awareness and increase consciousness on feminist issues.

To strengthen the women's network locally and internationally.

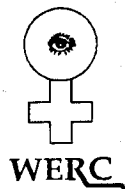
To extend co-operation to and solidarity with other oppressed and marginalised groups in Sri Lanka (such as refugees, unemployed and slum dwellers) with projects for rehabilitation and general upgrading of their lives.

To serve as a resource and documentation centre in Sri Lanka that will become part of the network of research and study centres on Women's Studies in the Third World.

What does 'Nivedini' mean?

Nivedini derives from a Sanskrit verb. It could mean either, that which is placed before you ritually and reverentially, or a carrier of knowledge with a female gender suffix 'ni' (derived from the verb vid, to know.) We use it with the second meaning.

Women's Education and Research Centre



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FROM THE EDITOR.....

Conceptions of time have for long been a pre-occupation of humanity. History had always to start with periodisation. According to such historical conceptions of time this issue of *Nivedini* will be considered by many, as is done fashionably now, as the last issue of this century in fact – for the millennium. A note of discord however has emerged. Whether, the millennium commences on January 1st 2000, or on the 1st of January 2001 has not been resolved. Two schools of thought persist adamantly even in Sri Lanka, Arthur C. Clarke and Professor D. Arulpragasam subscribing to the latter.

However, ideas ideologies, theories and structures do not cease suddenly when time moves on or falls within (wo)man made calendar dates. We will continue to live over ideas – sometimes reshaping them, reconstructing them expanding, diminishing or partially abandoning them. What is important is to take note of, is the changes slow or fast, continuities and discontinuities. Liberal to radical, modern to post-modern are processes of continuity and are also process of discontinuities with the possibility of a total re-emergence similar to the recurring trends in fashions. What about the women's movement? There has been a shift from a liberal rights discourse to post-modern feminism though, radically divergent ideas co-exist within the various theoretical paradigms.

Women's studies to gender studies is an example of a terminological shift of a radical political movement with shifting

ideological emphasis. The women's movement like any other movement has a theory which highlights problem and suggests possible solutions. The solutions then become the implementation strategies of a reformulation of the infrastructure. If we look at the process of continuity and discontinuity we see fragmentations with arguments for recognising differences and a clamour and growing assertion for identities, separate and unique, a culture of pluralism. This has focused problems still not resolved for the feminist women's movement. India is still grappling with the issues of a uniform civil code for all Indians. Ethnic and religious mores are sometimes found to be stronger and binding than a secular uniform human rights model. In Sri Lanka we have the Muslims organising separately calling themselves the Muslim Women's Research And Action Forum and the Sinhala Kantha Abhivrudhi Sangamaya working with only the Sinhala women and the Tamil Women's Union working with only Tamil women. The former identity is religious and the latter, two ethnic – but both have claimed, identities on a communal – based strength. The Dalit Women Movement in India – a caste based movement speaks the same rhetoric as of the black women's marginalisation in the Western White Women's Movement. Divisions and differences are further legitimised by the post modern rhetoric of fragmented knowledge system and the negation of totalising truths. There are others who feel that these are unhealthy signs and that women should organize as women transcending ethnic, religious, caste and other identities.

The collective editorial board of feminist review of Spring 99 has used the metaphor of snakes and ladders to describe the ambivalent and complex situation facing the contemporary feminist movements. It is an apt description. In our view feminist theorising has gone through the ladders many times but when you scrutinise the implementations and the new problems that have arisen we are going down through the snake's mouth - but only to rise up on the ladder to reach the desired goal. Eruption of racism, casteism, classism, ethnocentric chauvinism among women can be seen as the ways descending down the snake's mouth. Women of particular race, caste, class, and ethnicity being subjected to specific and gender based oppression by the males is a major problem. But women themselves marginalising other women on the basis of caste, class, ethnicity and race belonging is another problem which has weakened the women's movement. Construction of exclusion

on the above categories haunts and divides the movement.

To the many new emerging problems which affect women one can hold the market as creating and contributing to a worsening situation. The politics of identity, it may seem are strengthened by the demands of market but what is unfortunate is that both are coexisting. The state has become weak giving in to the demands of the market and to the demand of identity politics. This is a continuing process from the eighties and has become a more vibrant process in the nineties. The multinationals penetrating with their capital into the many so called third world countries have created specific patterns of exploitative labour for women. The state is forced not only to give special privileges to multinationals at the expense of its workers by codifying a new and different set of labour laws for the factories but also forced to turn a blind eye to the multitudes of problems that have arisen. The migrant women's labour industry has acquired oppressives and violent proportions of sexual abuse, rape, under-payment, delayed payment and over work. The state connives with the receiving countrys, most of the time while pretending to be involved in inadequate corrective measures. The arrival of paedophiles as tourists who indulge in abuse of children, sex tourism, trafficking in women, in which more than one countries indulge with or without the state assistance, connivance or indifference are more examples of gender specific detrimental practices where the state has abdicated its powers of governance to the market. The "sex industry" as it is now referred to has transnational commercial dimensions involving various people and institutions. They have in essence commodified the female body and women's sexuality. That this whole process is operationalised on the gender ideology is attested to by the terminologies used such as providing sexual "services". The globalisation of the economy has developed a global market which has commodified women.

This issue of Nivedini has articles which are not only indicators but also symptomatic of this process.

Suveendran's and Ms. Shanmugam papers are part of a broad research on the effects of war on women. This research was funded by OXFAM. They both speak of the disastrous consequences of the war on women in the way the women have been traumatised. Both papers are

psychological detour into the emotional expressive sides of their experiences. The war that has been going on in Sri Lanka for over a decade is a war of the politics of identity. Those who kill, the combatants – on both sides of the ethnic divide (of the militants and of state) have orphaned women and children and have made them destitute, depressed and traumatised. Suveendran and Ms. Shanmugam highlight the impact of these women's suffering in the eastern province, through their narratives in two respective papers. There are 18757 war widows in Jaffna according to Weekend Express (Aug 28th). The southern statistics are unknown.

Chandrika Ismail and Gameela Samarasinghe have documented more methodologically from a clinical psychological perspective the same scenario of trauma of the women workers at the Free Trade Zone factories. Women as a result of continuous and constant exploitation have developed signs of depression. That the research Assistants "talked to" a thousand women vouch for the empirical reality of the situation. The same kind of trauma, hysteria and depression were reported by the activists who are working with the trafficked women survivors.

Not surprisingly, that Dr. Jody Miller, an Assistant Professor in Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Missouri, a Full Bright Scholar, presently in Sri Lanka has concluded that, increasing impoverishment is forcing more women on to the streets and in to the commercial sex industry. These women are generally single parents who are destitute, and surprisingly into this category she has also found the garment factory workers. In Anuradhapura the women are servicing, and catering to, the security personnel and the soldiers. Anuradhapura has become a centre for "rest and recreation" for the armed forces.

Very appropriately this issue of Nivedini is carrying a paper, on the Communist Manifesto. It would appear that Marx has made very prophetic statements about the moving capital, market dynamics, globalisation and also of women's labour.

Into the next millenium we will have to continue with our struggle by promoting, women's studies or gender studies to be more precise, which is the intellectual arm of the women's movement.

So what is exciting about the next millenium?

Trauma in Female Headed Households in Amparai: An Empathetic Analysis

*BY GETSY SHANMUGAM**

Sufferings of women and children awaken a response of instant empathy. When the men are taken during cordon and search operations the women become the sole breadwinners. It was important to be very sensitive and alert to all the nuances of human pain. At certain moments it looked as though I was being invited in to a space in their world of pain not yet healed, so together supportively I had to explore their helplessness. There were occasions that revealed that they knew more than I will ever know about this thing called 'Trauma'. They had it all in perspective not according to books and rules but at the level at which they had faced tragedy and genuinely shared that perspective in their own way, with me.

In their deepest moments of pain and sorrow some of the women seemed to have awakened to some kind of new knowledge towards and about life, attitudes, emotions, abilities and skills of value to themselves and necessary for their survival in a society that has its own social constraints. Stigma and cultural norms are different among the Tamil and Muslim communities in Amparai. This situation was to me a

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light in the darkness. This paper is presented in all humility and gratitude to the mothers whose lives have touched mine. This is what unfolded before me. It seems to me to be only a 'search' and not a research as the indicators and yardsticks to measure pain in suffering persons seems fluid. To identify through observation, the types of symptoms and the behaviour patterns of the women with a view to comprehend the distinguishable phases of grief reaction within the phenomenon of separation anxiety, becomes the additional focus.

One hundred women whose husbands had been killed in the internal war, as well as a few of those whose husbands have deserted them, were chosen at random out of about 8000 widows from Amparai district. Out of the twenty women from female-headed households were selected for this study. They were all interviewed by a selected team of trained assistants. All except two, of their husbands were victims of war and violence. They were killed, taken away or had mysteriously disappeared. The conversation were tape recorded with the understanding that their identities would remain anonymous.

A simple questionnaire to draw out the present emotional state of the hundred women selected was used to collect information. A team of female research assistants were selected and trained before they went into the field. They were instructed to listen and observe the women's behaviour, to talk to them and to record their observations and write their own reflections. The interviews covered the general emotional state of the members living in the household. This was followed by eliciting from them a description of the traumatic incident and how they managed to cope with that situation. This gave them time to build up trust and confidence in the researchers, which helped them to speak freely and with an open mind.

The twenty women who were selected were met again. It then became important to find out the emotional status of their children. Therefore, a short listed questionnaire (on Barbara Izzard's observation) was used. However, only four children could be observed closely as many of the children were not at home during the time of the visit and others had passed the stage of childhood. The acute symptoms that could be traced through observation are dealt with in short paragraphs under the following headings: psychological, emotional effects of guilt, sexual, socio-cultural and inability to grieve properly.

Grief as a distinct kind of separation anxiety runs into the lives of many. For this study one case is presented in detail. Besides the two mothers who could not manage their lives and became mentally ill, there were six distinguishable phases of grim reaction that were observed clearly: numbness and disbelief, panic and distress, longing for the dead person, remembering happy memories, crying and anger, restlessness and over activity. Finally, observation of the degree of symptoms is presented through simple bar charts which reveal the status of suicidal tendencies, frequent headaches, blaming self and loss of sexual interest.

Trauma can be explained as an injury violently produced or an outcome of unmet psychological and social needs. The focus here is on the cause or the manifestation of psychological distress produced by violent death or loss of the husband during internal wars. These traumatised women have all been exposed to severe stressful situations. The following is an observation on the events that were experienced, the reactions, response, and distress as meaning the emotional and cognitive results of these stresses. It was difficult to pin point symptoms in a participatory effort. Though an in-depth observation on ten women based on a few questions was taken up I felt the complex psychological reaction occurring in violent situations was present. The reactions of the victims change over time and one cannot ignore the meaning of the experience to that particular person. The main problem was to observe and to understand the depth of their reactions through listening to their verbal response and observing non-verbal communication. This way the meanings can be deciphered to a certain extent.

The focus was on the painful psychological and social process to which the lone mothers and their children are exposed in normal life. The level of trauma was varied. Each individual was trying to cope in her own way, with a severely stressful experience – the death or loss of the husband. A few of them somehow or other were able to help themselves to cope well in several situations but poorly in others. Special needs and voids created by trauma were some times visible but not always. To further assess this, very attentive listening and alert observation of every detail during the meeting was necessary.

Malar's experience, response and reactions to the severe stress of losing her husband was typical of a woman who did not know whether

he is still alive or dead. Thirty year old Malar is a very quiet person. Her husband was taken away a day before her first child was born. No one has told her anything directly at that time and until now she has not grieved openly. She continues to be in a state of denial. She blames God for what has happened, and she has a feeling deep down inside her that she knows but cannot accept his fate. She revealed a state of confusion at times. "What do I tell my child? Is he alive, or is he dead? He was only lost, who knows, he might come back." As soon as someone told her that the others who had been taken into custody have come back except her husband, she could not believe that, she said. In the delicate state of health just a day after the birth of her child, when she really needed her husband, it was too much of a for her. I took time to comprehend the reality of the situation. In her conversation she revealed that she was unable to feed the child – there was no secretion of milk. She felt that her close intimate environment was shattered and that there will be no one for her and the child.

She felt her body shrivelling up and no amount of advice from people to improve her milk secretion worked, because her physiological balance was altered, due to the shock. The shock of not being able to see the body of her husband nor grieve properly for him upset her body balance. To add more distress to this, her brother too was taken away. Her mother was also taken away and released after a year and a half. The mother seems to have got back her balance now and is more or less the pivot of the family.

Looking closely at the verbal and non-verbal communication in Malar's range of involvement the characteristics identified are:

- ◆ lack of interest in any thing except her daughter
- ◆ inconsistency in her normal activities
- ◆ looked rigid and withdrawn at times
- ◆ depended on the mother and father too much
- ◆ did not do any kind of systematic work either in or outside the home.

Malar's situation reveals the complications caused by the wounding of physical as well as mental well being. No one has been able to identify or get to know or help her to share her grief. It had been buried within her heart, mind and body. If she was able to feed the

baby, it may have helped her as well as the child.

Inhibitions due to Cultural Values and Barriers in Understanding self

Jeya, a thin attractive lady of thirty years was not at home at the time of the visit. Her sister who was there revealed that Jeya over works and always says,

"Oh! I can't do this or that", but is able to carry through. It is very difficult to understand her.

Jeya's eleven year old daughter was quite open and willing to talk. She revealed that she suffers from breathing difficulties. She also feels very sad because her mother over works.

"She is always working and has no time to sit, relax, or talk to me. She says she is doing all that hard work for my sake. I feel bad about it. At least in the evenings I wish we could talk".

I could sense the guilt feeling created in the child by the behaviour of the mother, though with all good intentions.

Jeya comes out with a complaint against men, "these men" who do not cooperate or help her to carry on her little business. She owns a small boutique. By keeping herself too busy she hides her real self, a lonely self that wants to reach out for companionship. In her conversation she spoke of two men who give her trouble by trying to attract her attention, she said she has no feelings for them at all. She spoke of gossip by the people when she travelled in tractors or on bicycles driven by men. People coupled her name with them and this hurt her. She categorically said "I have no interest, no sexual interest". I had to deal with this issue in a subtle and gentle way knowing as I did the taboos in society regarding sexuality. "My daughter is everything to me, I live only for her welfare". Her non verbal communication conveyed something more than her superficial answers. Her interest needing and developing a relationship is squashed due to cultural norms and barriers. "A good widow will not marry again". So Jeya hides under a blanket of work and sickness.

The trauma of seeing her husband being killed is one level of distress. Another level was not having someone to share the deep misery of her loss. So she blamed herself, felt lonely and thought of ending her life. To begin with she revealed strong feelings on the loss of several interests or pleasures. After a chat in confidence, she realised that being a woman and feeling the way she feels and men showing interest in her does not mean that she is a bad woman, this made her feel at ease. She and all other women in similar situations, should be helped by an understanding, non-judgemental person, to assist them be themselves and choose the life they need to live to achieve fulfillment and happiness.

Although Jeya is working hard to see that her child grows up well and happy in life, her life style and behaviour make the child feel sad.

Both mother and daughter need help to learn to relate to each other at a different level which includes fun and pleasure. The attitude of society towards a widowed woman or a women deserted by her husband is harsh. If they continue to be single and 'good' they are praised and accepted. Those who start or attract relationships with males are not treated well. Instead of giving them a sensitive hearing, they have to face confrontation and condemnation. This in turn creates resistance, defensiveness and some times anger in the younger females. This also leads to suicide and mental stress. Discussion of sexual topics is still taboo in the community. This creates trauma at various levels in many single women who like Jeya, have lost their husbands in difficult situations such as an internal war.

Victims of Mental Trauma

Two out of the twenty women, (Gnanamma a Tamil and Fatima a Muslim), revealed that they were on heavy drugs prescribed by special doctors. One was so sick they had to bring her down to Colombo for medication. A closer focus might reveal many more people who are depressed and have become victims of mental trauma leading to mental illness. Symptoms of this kind may not be seen or even noticed at the very beginning.

The Tamil lady, Gnanamma, lives with her sister and her aged father. She was deserted by her husband as soon as the fifth girl child

was born. Being a mother of only girls in a society that looks forward to the birth of a boy, even in these days, is traumatic. After the husband had left her she had fallen sick and she was diagnosed with a mental illness she is now on medical treatment. She has been hospitalised twice. The elder child has left her and live elsewhere and says she is ashamed to say that her mother is a mentally sick person.

The stigma of being a mentally sick person breaks family ties and creates more trauma. On meeting Gnanamma she smiled and was able to converse, she said that she takes her tablets regularly. Suddenly she faints, becomes unconscious and has to be taken to the hospital. She has now joined a Christian group and believes that healing comes from God and her faith keeps her going. Her second daughter has been blessed with twins and Gnanamma is busy with the babies. She was smiling and talking to the babies and helping the daughter. It appears that gives some meaning to her life. The daughter's babies looked under weight and malnourished. There is a pastor who is helpful. It is good that he does his part but I feel that this support is limited. Immediate relief alone may not be helpful. A systematic way of helping such women in goal-setting, getting about a task that could be of therapeutic value and follow up, are necessary in this situation. Here the culture tends to make matters worse because she is looked down on as a mother of girls only. The husband leaving had disturbed her basic human balance. She could not find any solutions. Tension built up to a peak and when she had to face the world alone with five small children her balance was lost. She suffered and then became disorganised.

A Muslim mother, Fatima, is in a very traumatic and difficult situation, she is unable to find any help or solace from anywhere except from her neighbours, especially one kind woman who supports her in times of dire need. The traumatic death of her husband who was killed while he was working in his field by the armed forces reduced her to this level. She is a mother of ten (10) children. Some have grown up and have left her.

She was brought up in a very, conservative Muslim family, so she is now unable to go out and fend for herself. She is a patient now. Symptoms of trembling of the body were visible. A neighbour said she became highly tensed and was scared for no reason. She panics so much

that she becomes unconscious and gets into a kind of fit. She said she cannot think clearly. She feels very restless and cannot sit still, chews betel, feels terribly low in energy and has become slow in her movements. She was crying and blaming herself often repeating "he did not even eat the cooked meal I gave him". They had taken him away.

She does not reveal any interest in doing anything now, except to talk about ending her life and then saying "but for the children". She does not continue proper medication. A female child was seated in a crouched position and looked very distant she did not show any sign of communicating with me. She was mostly looking down and was very passive, untidily dressed, hair not combed and looked and malnourished. The child needs some one to understand and to listen to her. She too needs help from some one who can reach out to her at her level.

The Muslim community being a close knit group is supportive to Fatima. They give her food and help her out. However, there is another kind of support required in this situation - emotional support. One strong leader acting like her mother came into the scene later and spoke of how they all know what is going on with Fatima. A well planned village level community based system, needs to be worked out by mothers as well as persons like the Research Assistants. People could be trained to give psychological support to help with the long term well being of persons in distress.

Unable to grieve as there is no clear information about her husband

Prema is a young mother with two children. Her husband was taken away from home. At that time, her son was seated on the father's lap. The son cried and hung on to the father. The child was forcibly pushed away. She went in search of her husband from place to place, there was a threat of rape on one occasion and with that she gave up her search.

The day of my visit was her son's first day in school. She was excitedly waiting for him. Some one brought him on a bicycle. According to Prema the son suffers from fits and it is terrible when he gets the seizure. He now knows when he is about to have a fit and he calls out for help. The daughter who is older is alright and is in the fifth grade.

She said that the son was waiting for the father to come back. This is a case of denial. The mother says

I know he is no more, but still how can I believe that fully. I cannot accept it because I never saw his body. So who knows if he is dead or not.

This kind of uncertainty and inability to grieve has caused this family severe trauma. As time has passed at a superficial level they seem all right. Prema seems an active hardworking mother. An organisation has helped her build a small house and a well. The place is well kept and she continues to live this way.

The scars of trauma are very visible. She informed the International Red Cross, of his disappearance but was told that there was no person by his name. After a year passed she felt he may not come back.

Collective Psychological trauma at Communal Killings and the dilemma of the Research assistants

A young Research Assistant had gone into a Muslim village to collect the initial information for this study. In that particular area fifty five (55) men from the Muslim community had been murdered by the Tamils on the same occasion and this Muslim woman had become very angry at the Research Assistant trying to gather information with a tape recorder. When the situation was getting bad the girl had revealed that her father was shot by Muslims. On that day, he had been just standing near the hedge in the garden and in anger and in retaliation he was shot. So they together and decided discussed that there was no point getting angry with each other and they had then cooperated. As soon as I entered the house and started to introduce myself, the women in the house started crying together loud for a while, and then calmed down and started to talk.

The mother concerned was very young, with two children. The environment looked stable with a secure house and relatives including her mother. The son at that moment looked confused. Many questions were fired at me.

Fifty five (55) people were killed, why do you all choose only one or two to talk? What can you do for all of us?

Their feelings seemed mixed. Friendly as well as not. They were also keen to know more about me. They were still in the throes of a collective psychological trauma. Each one is connected to the other and the shock of mass murder has affected them deeply. The painful wound and mass helplessness could become a deposited representation which could be passed from one generation to the next, its meaning goes through transformations (Hartmann: 1939). A very recent study by Kestenberg and Brenner (1996) of the families of Jewish children who survived Nazi concentration camps, show that the deposited self representations of the survivors are very much 'alive' in their grand children. All indications are that these deposited representations, in new forms, will be dealt with by multiple generations (Vanik D. Volkan – "Ancient fuel of a Modern inferno" 1991)

Further research on large group psychology reveals that victims while individually different, possess similar traumatised self representation associated with helplessness, shame and humiliation pertaining to the traumatic event, the mental representation of the shared deposited traumatised self representations. This legacy then links the group members of future generations and influences their group identity. He also calls this shared trauma "chosen trauma" (Vulken, 1991) Since a group does not choose to be victimised the word "chosen" fittingly reflects a large group's unconscious choice to have their group identity defined by the trans-generational transmission of the shared trauma. Personal and individual loss and grief, as well as group trauma within villages, have to be worked out in groups for the future well being of women and children in any situation of this nature.

Mixing of Cultures and the Trauma in its Wake

Kanmaney is a Tamil mother of five children. Her married daughter and her third son live with her. At the time of my visit all her previous problems of losing her husband, financial problems and all other details and symptoms had been reduced to nothing. She had entered into another level of trauma. The situation had pushed her to the level of serious contemplation of suicide.

Due to the war situation her husband was unable to cultivate the field and had got into heavy debt. When things were unbearable he committed suicide. Her son had disappeared soon after the death of the father. Her daughter had a baby, and her husband was taken away and imprisoned in Batticaloa.

In the meantime a married Muslim male started visiting the home. According to the initial findings the mother liked and encouraged his visits. He had been very supportive and helpful in every way. The neighbours had gossiped coupling the girl with the Muslim man but she too did not mind the relationship. She had encouraged this visitor who came to the house. What the neighbours saw she did not see. At a critical point now the trauma is manifesting itself through the effects of guilt. Her first reaction was defensive, using this to avoid anxiety, by blaming the man who was good then, as a bad fellow now and the daughter also as bad. Through this argument she avoids facing her own responsibility of guilt. She gets angry with others and with society in order to justify the situation. She is also experiencing self condemnation. She has strong bottled up anger. This seems to lead her to depression and thoughts of suicide. Because of the social reaction she is becoming lonely and alienated from people and this makes her criticise other people more.

Physical symptoms and reactions revealed were head aches, body pain, fear and thoughts of suicide. There is no one to understand and accept her as she is. There is no group formed at grass roots level to be supportive to people in need. Therefore, she finds life is difficult and she lives with negative feelings which are leading to her depression.

Tracing the Traumatic situation of an Anonymous Person

According to the first investigations, this particular person was the only educated person. She was a teacher by profession and reading through the researcher's account it was revealed that she had to some extent come to terms with her trauma. This mother was selected for the purpose of finding out what helped her to get on with her life. In keeping with her request for confidentiality. I did not want to meet her directly. I gave her name and address to the research assistant to find out about her well being and how she had coped with trauma successfully. The

objective was to compare her situation with the status of the others who did not seem to be doing so well.

What the research assistant revealed was different from the earlier information recorded. I could understand her trauma in trying to manage matters by herself to the best of her ability. She is Ms. X, 31 years old and has a daughter of ten(10) years. Her father, mother and sister in law are, all dependent on her monthly salary. Her husband was killed. The body was buried according to religious rites. She found it difficult to forget him and due to her grieving. She was not able to get on with normal life. Though she continued teaching, she had stated that she was like a 'mad woman'. Then she says

"As my life is now over, I have decided to start living again for the sake of my daughter. Her statement was, "Now I have to earn and save money to build a house for my daughter, educate her and collect a dowry to make a good life for her. She is very good and I am bringing her up in a disciplined way. I give her gifts if she gets good marks and I tell her that my only wish is that she should do well in her studies. Only then my soul will rest in peace."

Her whole life revolves round her daughter. She expects quite a lot from her daughter and seems to do everything for her well being. She appears over protective.

She says a second marriage will be detrimental to her daughter. According to her understanding she feels that a step father would never accept the child.

In her answers she revealed her feelings regarding her life and her child's future. However, when I met the Research Assistant, she told me something different but very revealing. This woman had a lover, who visited her often. Some people advised her to get married but she had refused very vehemently. It so happened that she became pregnant. The lover was very keen to have his child by this lady, but she had refused to carry the baby till the end and to everybody's shocked surprise she aborted the child. The lover in his anger at the murder of his child has now left her. As I had this information from the Research Assistant

it is difficult to come to any conclusion. What she had stated earlier was that she had fears that her first child would not be looked after by a step father. It is very difficult to lay the finger on any particular feeling, but the feeling of anger at her self would be there. There may be a feeling of guilt after destroying the child, may be not. As this was an unplanned pregnancy out of wedlock she would have gone through feelings of anxiety, anger, fear and despair. Later she would have got out of these feelings quickly. Not having any kind of support system in her area to discuss these matters confidentially, she has gone through some kind of trauma.

Grief as a Special Kind of Separation Anxiety

Reactions to the death of a loved person vary. Generally it takes many months for separation anxiety reactions to fade away. As a visible reaction, all except one mother cried during the visits. As they were all untimely deaths, the bereaved persons wished the dead people would return. In this war situation some have not seen the body of the husband. Even though evidence is given of their death they still search for them and cry.

All of them, except the two who were deserted by their husbands, continually think about the dead person. They attend to things in the world around them which were associated with the dead husband. Gradually the intensity of the attachment to the lost person should die down, but here when you meet them they feel free to think of the dead husband and cry aloud.

It was clearly seen in the mother of 10 children, for whom the world was her husband, spending all her time for the family with no other pleasures. She was so depressed that within a short space of time she became a mentally sick patient.

The interview revealed clearly distinguishable phase of grief reaction as follows:

1. Numbness and Disbelief

Quite a number of whom were not able to accept that their husbands were dead. In some cases after the body was brought and

shown the wives' reaction had been numbness or some times great distress and then numbness. A few others said "I know he is dead but I cannot accept it, I find it very difficult. How can I? I never saw his body". All the widows had trouble at first accepting that their husbands had died. "There must be some mistake", was their expression. An internal war situation is a man-made disaster not a natural disaster and therefore these conditions arise.

2. Panic and Distress

Six out of ten women said that they were scared for no reason, they just felt afraid. Some felt nervous and were trembling within. In one case study a woman had panic attacks for one full year after the death. She is still in acute distress. In some others grief has not come out openly, they have not shown, nor revealed it to the children and here the distress is more intense.

3. Longing for the Dead Person and Being Pre-occupied with Thoughts of the Person

After a year and some times a few years there are some who bereaved and are preoccupied intensely with thoughts about the husband. They say, "thoughts keep recurring how can we forget? People tell me to forget him, I will never ever forget him".

4. Happy Memories are Repeatedly Remembered

They go to places where they had been together and sit quietly, just to be near him and to feel as though he is there. They treasure things that belonged to him. Photographs are framed and kept with pictures of Gods and Deities and are garlanded. Only one widow spoke about seeing him in her dreams. Others may have, but the same question was not asked from every one.

5. Crying and Anger

Except for one widow every one of them cried during the interview. Anger towards the killers, anger towards the younger woman who took away her husband, and anger towards the alcoholic husband were evident. Generally they all felt that the world had become more insecure and dangerous.

6. Guilt

Eight out of ten widows blamed themselves severely. One blamed herself very much. Only one did not answer the question. They will keep on blaming themselves. (Guilt/Shame has been described a little more in detail in the widow struggling with the mixed cultural problems).

7. Restlessness and Over Activity

Many of the widows had become tense. They feel uptight with great turmoil inside. They cannot settle down to anything. Little things upset them and make them lose concentration. A daughter of one widow said "my mother is over working all the time". In her over active behaviour she met her needs and tried to live a different kind of life.

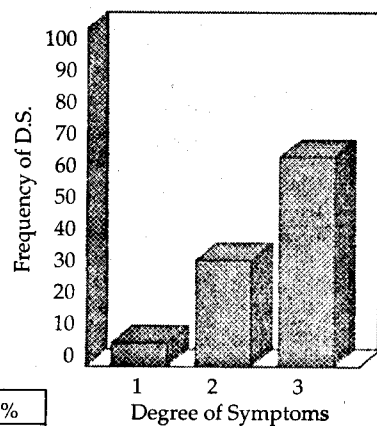
8. Lack of attention, difficulty in sleeping and over eating

At night they felt most lonely. Evenings also brought memories and some of the women are still struggling with sleeping problems.

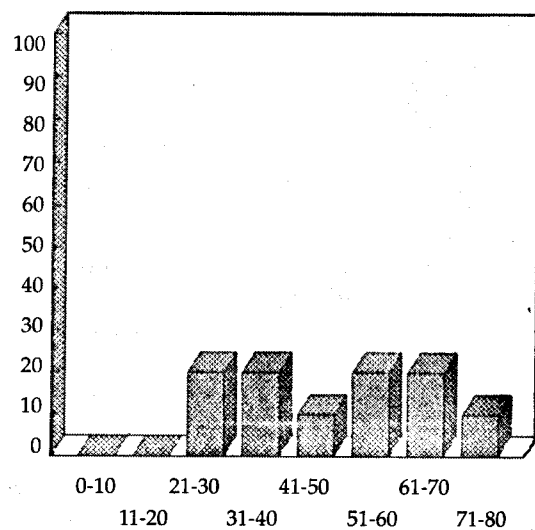
The basic human balance has been disturbed and these women are rendered vulnerable. In two of the ten (10) women under focus the sudden and unexpected death of their husbands, was too much of a shock. They had no solution and tension has built up to a peak in which their mental equilibrium was upset and they have suffered disorganisation. These women are now mentally sick.

**Degree of Symptoms
D.S.**

D.S.	1	2	3
Total	13	60	118
%	6.8	31.4	61.8

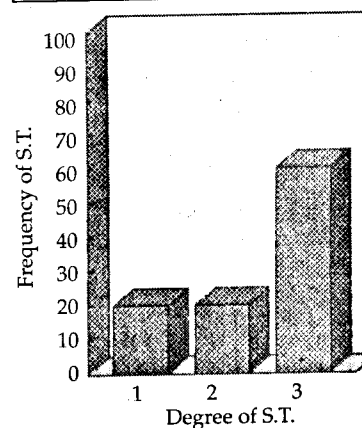


Class Interval	Tally	F	%
0-10		0	0
11-20		0	0
21-30	11	2	20
31-40	11	2	20
41-50	11	1	10
51-60	11	2	20
61-70	11	2	20
71-80	1	1	10
Total		10	100



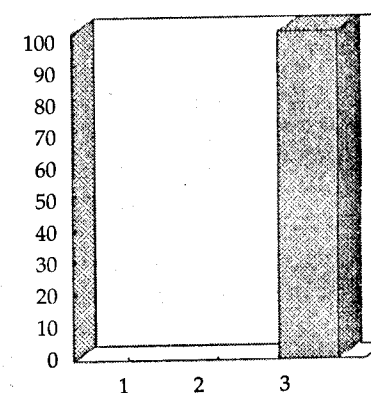
**Suicidal Tendencies
S.T.**

S.T.	1	2	3
Total	2	2	6
%	20	20	60



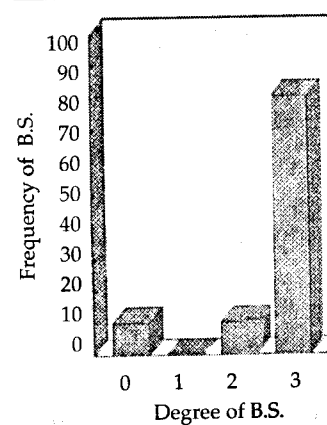
**Head aches
H.A.**

H.A.	1	2	3
Total	-	-	10
%	-	-	100



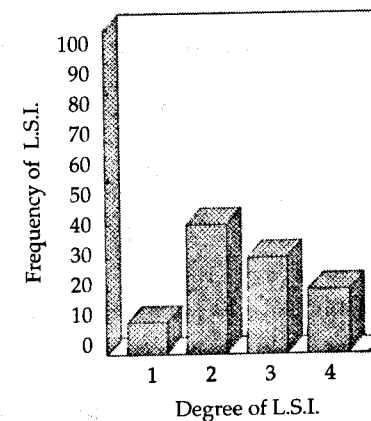
**Blaming self
B.S.**

S.T.	0	1	2	3
Total	1	0	1	8
%	10	0	10	80



**Lts of sexil interest
L.S.I.**

L.S.I.	1	2	3	4
Total	1	4	3	2
%	10	40	30	20



A Reconstruction of the Trauma and the Post War Syndrome of Women in Trincomalee

*By T. SUVEENDRAN**

This paper makes an attempt to capture the emotional disturbances that affect women and children during times of war. These people had to undergo peculiar and specific problems, emotional and structural, due to displacement and dispossession of their material things in life. The research identified the findings mostly from the women's narration.

This research will mainly focus on

- ❖ the trauma experienced by the widows in Trincomalee district,
- ❖ the post-traumatic symptoms of the widows.

In addition the investigation intends to identify the functioning level of the widows and their children. The research team was able to select a random sample of one hundred (100) female – headed families in Trincomalee district.

* Mr. Suveendran is a Counsellor, with training in Psychology.

We have excluded from our research widows who have lost their husbands because of prolonged disease, the widows who have very good economic and social support and the widows who are preparing themselves for remarriage. Altogether 100 women were interviewed in Trincomalee. From this initial interview we have selected twenty-three (23) widows. Of these twenty-three, three had gone overseas for employment, of the remaining number two had re-married and another admitted to the Colombo Cancer hospital, for treatment. The women selected had been widowed as a result of their husbands being killed by the State armed forces, the LTTE and as a result of cross fire, or due to disappearances of the husbands. Both questionnaires and interviews were used to identify the symptoms and psychological effects. The data that was collected was more qualitative than quantitative. The first phase of the questionnaire was related to general questions on the family members in the household, the second on incidents of loss, the third dealt with the coping, and fourth on the symptoms. The questionnaire was open ended and allowed the women to speak as freely as they wanted to. The respondents were allowed to express their fears and anxieties. Sufficient time was given to the women to gain confidence in the interviewer, before she conveyed her emotions.

Case Studies

A widow of thirty-four years of age has four dependents two of whom are her own children and the other two her parents. Her primary source of income is from temporary manual labour. She has been in this situation since 1994 and is in receipt of compensation on a monthly basis from her husband's employer. She showed her willingness to participate in the interview, but became emotional when the investigator probed for further information. She narrated her fate later on in the interview.

Apparently her husband had been taken away by persons whom she believes to be members of the security forces. This incident took place in mid 1990 and to date she is still unaware of her husband's whereabouts. She has had no news of him whatsoever since that time. Inquiries were made by her, to all Army camps and Police Stations but her efforts were not fruitful. Proof of him being taken by any such group was not available from the state offices in Trincomalee.

Since the possibility of the return of her husband was bleak, she approached the parish priest of the area to seek employment. She was offered temporary manual work and she earned sufficient money to cover her basic needs. Shortly afterwards an elderly man volunteered to help her locate her husband. He accompanied her and the two children to Colombo where they stayed for one month. This was not successful and she was taken to Batticaloa on false pretexts and had been sexually abused. She was unable to make an escape since she was kept locked up in a house there. She had attempted suicide on two occasions. She finally made her way back to Trincomalee with the assistance of the Police and a Member of Parliament.

With the help of her immediate family she has rebuilt her house and is trying to live a normal life. She has not got over the bad experience she has had and at present is unable to come to terms with it.

Case Study 2

She is forty years old and has five children, still dependent on her. Her three daughters and two sons are studying. Her primary source of income is temporary manual work. As her husband works as a skilled labourer in a factory, she is not able to receive any compensation.

During the early 1990's she went to her mother's place for her last confinement. She had gone there with her other children because the school was closed for the vacation. During this time the war started, so she could not send the other children to her husband's place. This problem continued for a long time, as there was no transport or communication facilities. In the mid 1990's her husband disappeared after being in the custody of the security forces and was assumed murdered. She does not know for what reason. She could not go back to her home for nearly one year. When she did return to her place after one year, she made a complaint to the police about her husband's disappearance. This incident took place in mid 1990 and to date she is still unaware of her husband's whereabouts. She has had no news of him whatsoever since that time. Inquiries

were made by her to all army camps and police stations but her efforts were in vain.

In the middle of 1996 she received medical treatment for a stress related psychiatric disorder. She still has symptoms for instance, easily getting angry with her children, loss of interest in day-to-day activities, poor personal care, loss of religious beliefs, frequent crying, headaches, hypertension, poor interpersonal relationships, easily tired, withdrawal, difficulty in concentration, frequently worried about her survival, poor appetite and poor social mixing.

The positive side is that her children are doing well in their studies except the last two, and the children's teachers are quite supportive. The children were aware of the details of the loss and have discussed it with their mother. Until the beginning of this year they still had hope that their father may come back to them. However at the beginning of 1997 her parents came to live with her. It was then that they decided to perform the last rites for her husband.

Case Study 3

The interviewee is a forty-seven year old mother of three children. The eldest daughter and youngest son are not dependent on her. The dependent daughter who stays at home is sick. Her primary source of income is from unskilled temporary manual work. Since 1988, her husband has been missing, she cannot recall the month and date. One evening he went marketing and never returned home. She informed all the police stations and camps. Since her husband had worked as a temporary manual worker, there was no steady income and no compensation after his disappearance. She receives assistance from her neighbours and other known people. Her greatest concern is finding money for medical treatment for her daughter, who has an injured leg and walks with the help of a stick. Her son migrated to a neighbouring country and stayed in a refugee camp, where he had an affair with a Sri Lankan girl. After their return to Sri Lanka they got married without informing his mother and was separated from the family. The eldest daughter also left her

mother after completing her studies. These two children are not helping their mother and do not visit her, because she lives in a small hut with her sick daughter. The hut was provided by the neighbours but it is not a permanent place. They are living under very poor conditions and they find it hard to satisfy their basic needs.

Results and Discussion

This section will deal with the analysis and interpretations of the interviews and a discussion of the results. The age, income and occupation of the eighteen respondents are important factors for consideration in the discussion and the analysis of the problems. The age profile is as follows:

Below 30 years	-	5.5%
31 – 40 years	-	50%
41 – 50 years	-	39%
51 and above	-	5.5%

These statistics show that most of the widows fall into the age group of 31 –40 years.

Nearly 28% of the sample was engaged in NGO's self-employment project work like agriculture, chicken farming and tailoring. While a further 28% fell into the temporary manual labour category. The remaining 44% were unemployed. Of these widows, 17% are dependent on their children. In the selected sample the 28% engaged in NGO's project work earn enough money to satisfy their basic needs, while a further 28% fell into the temporary manual labour category. Eleven percent of widows were getting a monthly allowance from their late husband's office, but it is inadequate to run their family. The remaining 44% of the sample were below the poverty line. Of this group 17% depend on their children and the remaining 27% are engaged in unskilled labour activities to satisfy their families' basic needs.

The loss of husbands caused a wide range of reactions. The following are some of the main issues that surfaced from the interviews.

- Material difficulties
- Emotional problems
- Cognitive and Behavioural problems
- Stress related physical problems
- The impact of the loss on the children.

All these factors are linked with each other. If the woman is not able to come to terms with the loss of her spouse, she cannot overcome psychological stresses and this leads to economic instability. This in turn leads to difficulties such as bringing up if the children. So it is clear that these factors are to some extent inter-connected with each other.

Material Difficulties

The sudden loss of a husband caused a complete change in the financial status of his family. In these families the husband was the only income earner, and in 72% of the families his daily wage supported the entire family. The other 28% of the families received a monthly income. In both groups there were no savings.

Their occupations are classified as follows:

Agriculture	22%
Fisherman	17%
Manual Labour	22%
Driver	5.5%
Small Businessman	17%
Clerical	17%

After the traumatic event the majority of the women faced sudden financial difficulties and they found no way to over come them. The majority of the women in this sample said that they suddenly became the head of the household and experienced a lot of economic and psychological problems. Their main concern was to bring up their children and to find the necessary resources to educate them.

In this sample 61% of the families were geographically displaced and are now living in huts and small houses. Only 39%

of them returned to their own places after moving out from refugee camps. Most of them stayed in refugee camps for some period of time. In this sample nearly 83% of them did not receive any compensation from the government, only the remaining 17% received compensation. The majority of women interviewed in Trincomalee sought income-generating activities. These 18 widows were classified according to their income generating activities.

NGO's Project work	28%
Temporary Manual work	17%
Temporary manual work with husband's salary	11%
Unemployed (dependent on their children)	17%
Domestic employment	27%

Immediately after the traumatic event women became the head of the household thus, unexpected changes took place in family relationships. The attention that young children previously received from their mothers was reduced to a certain extent, because of their mothers full time employment to earn money for the family. The children have to wait for the return of their mothers from work. In some families the elder child takes care of the younger ones during the absence of their mother. After the loss of the father, the elder children showed more responsibility in family management. In most of the families the mother had to take total responsibility for the children. In some families the parents also depend on them. If their children or dependents suffer from illness, it is difficult for the household to look after them because if they take leave their income is affected. In some families children also earn money to help their mothers.

At present 27% of households are engaged in NGO's - Women's Education and Research Centre (WERC) self-employment project work. These women suffered less economic stress compared to other respondents. Very few women received assistance from relatives. Most of the interviewers said that neighbours are very helpful to them and they give psychological support and frequently material help. Only 5.5% of the women think about remarriage while another 5.5% are still in confusion.

The remaining 89% were not interested in remarriage. They were only concerned with their children's education and their future.

Emotional, Cognitive, Behavioral and Physical Problems

The majority of women still experience various psychological problems. When compared to the earlier situation psychological problems have been reduced to a certain extent because most of the mothers concentrate on their children. The following tables show the various psychological problems experienced by mothers.

S. No.	Emotional Reactions	% of Individual Experiencing		
		Most of time	Some time	total
1	Feeling of nervousness & worry	94.5	05.5	100
2	Fearfulness	83	-	83
3	Unhappyness/Sorrowfulness	72	17	89
4	Difficulty in enjoying day to day activities	77	11	88
5	Loss of interest in things	27	55	82
6	Become easily Irritable	55.5	5.5	61
7	Frequent crying (without the knowledge of her children	72	17	89
8	Feeling of alienation from others	39	22	61
9	Fear of the future	67	28	95
10	Feeling that somebody is trying to harm her	11	0	11
11	Guilt	17	5.5	22.5
12	Anger/Aggression towards perpetrators	11	33.5	44.5
13	Mood swing	11	17	28
14	Feeling of depression	44	56	100
15	Suicidal ideas (17% attempted	-	44	44
16	Unconcerned about herself	22	55.5	77.5

The above data shows that the majority of the women experienced emotional problems and nervousness (worry about their survival). They fear unhappiness, have difficulty in enjoying day to day activities, fear the future, easily irritable and frequently crying. Emotional feelings such as suicidal ideas, anger towards perpetrators, and depression were reduced to a certain extent.

Table 2 shows the Cognitive and behavior Problems of the women

S. No	Cognitive and Behavioural Reactions	% of Individual Experiencing		
		Most of Time	Some time	Total
1	Difficulty in concentration	44	22	66
2	Poor memories	61	11	73
3	Difficulty of making decisions	39	22	61
4	Trouble in thinking clearly	33	5.5	38.5
5	Withdrawal	39	11	50
6	Unexpected Reaction	-	11	11
7	Absentism	11	-	11
8	Uneven performance	11	-	11
9	Disorganization	5.5	17	22.5
10	Reluctance to begin project	17	5.5	22.5
11	Prone to accidents	5.5	17	22.5
12	Feeling Upset in situations that reminded her of the disaster	72	17	89
13	Flashback of what had happened	66	17	83
14	Poor Social mixing	39	-	39
15	Poor physical activities	17	-	17

The above data shows that the majority of women experienced the cognitive and behavioral reactions like poor memory, difficulty in concentration and clear thinking, difficulty in making proper decisions, flash backs of what had happened and feeling bad about it.

S. No	Physical symptoms	% of individual Experiencing		
		Most of Time	Some Time	Total
1	Sleep Disorder	77	23	100
	a) Insomnia	72	28	100
	b) Waking up many times	55.5	-	55.5
	c) Waking up early	22	-	22
	d) Nightmare	11	-	11
2	Poor appetite	50	11	61
3	Uncomfortable feeling in stomach or poor digestion	17	5.5	22.5
4	Headache	66	5.5	71.5
5	Tension in muscular skeletal system	50	11	61
6	Poor bowel and bladder control	-	-	-
7	Nausea or vomiting	-	-	-
8	Difficulty in breathing	22	5.5	27.5
9	Palpitation	39	11	50
10	Excessive sweating	17	11	28
11	Tiredness	61	22	83
12	Dizziness	28	17	45
13	Tremors	-	-	-

The majority of women interviewed said that they had problems like sleeping disorders (insomnia and waking up many times), poor appetite, headaches, tension in muscular and skeletal system, palpitations and tiredness. The above results show that most of the women are

still seriously worrying about their loss without sharing it with their children or others. This was the reason why they were experiencing a lot of physical problems. Presently the majority of the women are concentrating fully on bringing up their children. For their children's sake they continue to live, find employment, and seek help from others. In some families children also helped their mother to cope with feelings of loneliness, sorrow, hopelessness and frequent crying. Some children assist their mothers financially. The majority of the women keep themselves busy with their usual chores and their children in order to control their emotions.

The impact of the loss on the children

In this investigation mothers were interviewed regarding their views about their children. The data collected was analysed.

The data (table given below) shows that there were less problems with children. Children's educational performance was reduced due to poverty and more responsibilities in home activities. Students voluntarily dropped out from school to earn money to help with the economic difficulties of the family. The mothers said that teachers had been extremely supportive and understanding. They helped the children emotionally and materially. Most of the mothers explained the loss or disappearance of the husband to their children's teachers. The majority of the mothers noticed that their elder children's behaviour matured after the loss of their father, and they were much more responsible. Most of mothers who were interviewed said that they did not discuss the loss with their children. Most of the time she showed them the positive side and they frequently cried when the children were not at home. Most of the younger children do not know about the loss of their father. They were told that their father would return from abroad. However, the older children knew about the loss and helped their mother and younger children in several ways. For example, discussing the loss with their mother, helping in home activities and looking after younger children when the mother goes to work.

S. No	Emotional, Physical and Behavioral Problems	View of Mothers (%)		
		Most of Time	Some Time	Total
1	Sleep Disorder	5.5	5.5	11
	a) Nightmare	17	-	17
2	Poor Appetite	5.5	11	16.5
3	Headache	11	5.5	16.5
4	Poor Bowel and Bladder control	-	5.5	5.5
5	Difficulty in breathing	-	-	-
6	Uncomfortable feeling in stomach or poor digestion	-	-	-
7	Nausea or vomiting	-	-	-
8	Tension in muscular skeletal system	-	-	-
9	Hyperventilation	-	-	-
10	Tiredness	-	-	-
11	Fear	28	-	28
12	Sadness	61	-	61
13	Anger	17	11	28
14	Fear of being alone	33	11	44
15	Depression	11	-	11
16	Afraid of the Dark	39	-	39
17	Withdrawal	-	-	-
18	Problems at school	5.5	-	5.5
19	Poor performance at studies	5.5	-	5.5
20	Attention seeking behaviour	5.5	-	5.5
21	Guilty	-	-	-
22	Poor interpersonal relationship	-	5.5	5.5
23	Stealing	-	-	-
24	Hyperactive	-	5.5	5.5

The outcome of this research reveals that the majority of the women attempt to treat their life as a challenge as their primary concern is to bring up their children and find the necessary resources to educate them. Feeding dependents was one of their main concerns. Their earnings were sufficient only to satisfy their very basic needs and they continue to have problems of economic instability. The relatives and in-laws are

not very helpful but the neighbours are helpful to a certain extent. At the same time, neighbours and elder children talking to them gives them emotional relief. Five women in this sample are engaged in NGO's self-employment project work. This NGO organizes monthly discussions and get togethers intended to reduce economic and emotional stress.

Limitations

The present investigation has been carried out subject to the following limitations.

1. The interview session to evaluate the changes in real life situations lasted for 2 to 3 hours, The investigator should have had more time.
2. A few interviews were carried out without informing the respondent beforehand so they found it difficult to spend more time, as they were employed in a daily wage job.
3. The loss or disappearance of a husband varied from 1981 to 1995 so their level of trauma also varied.
4. The sample was small.

Implications of the Study

Findings in this study suggest that the loss of a husband has had negative effects on the normal day-to-day life of the wife and their families. Recently a women's Organization (Women's Education & Research Centre) has helped a few women to engage themselves in self-employment. This work helped the women to stand on their own feet. This organization also helped women and mothers to organise themselves into groups within their communities, to share their grief and experiences, so that they could strengthen their ability to cope with their problems. These mothers had less economic and emotional problems. Future studies should be conducted bearing in mind the limitations. A greater number of widows should be interviewed considering the enormous problems they face and the presence of a large number of widows in the war zones. There is a need for different kinds

of widows to be interviewed in order to do a comparative study of their psychological problems. There is also a need for cognitive-oriented therapeutic programmes for the needy widows to change their negative outlook and we suggest that the children need to be interviewed separately to clearly identify their problems.

Towards a Discourse for a New Manifesto: A Post Communist Version

SELVY THIRUCHANDRAN*

This paper makes an attempt to decipher the Communist Manifesto without the jargon of post modernism such as deconstruction de-centering or engaging in a counter memorializing analysis. By counter memorialising analysis I mean an analysis that denies a referent reality, which rejects foundations, and ignores originals (Ashley and Walker 1990:400). However, I have no hesitation in assuming that the post-modern concept of inter-textuality has reference to my analysis. The Communist Manifesto is related textually to other texts, written by both Marx and Engels and others. There is a complex interrelationship. The deciphering process may give fresh insights, to comprehend the social economic and political trends and the phenomena of the contemporary world. These insights, we propose, will lead to evolving a new manifesto, on expanding on some concepts, neutralizing a few and re-constructing the rest of the Communist Manifesto towards creating creative new paradigms.

The paper is divided into four parts. The first part tries to

*This paper was presented at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 5th December 1998 on the workshop held to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the publication of the Communist Manifesto.

identify the relevance of Communist Manifesto today. My analysis is both complimentary and critical. The second part raises a few questions, about the terminological and narrative mannerisms that betray inadequacies. The third part is engaged in the discussion of the expansion project, and the fourth concludes my discourse drawing creatively from both the Communist Manifesto and other Manifestos, that are relevant and that have arisen since.

The Communist Manifesto is not a scholarly treatise but only a short public declaration of a political programme. Its worth is either exaggerated or down graded. Besides being a programme it is also a document full of history, and indulges in a socio-economic analysis and is sometimes treated as prophetic with regard to the development and the penetration of capitalism and its contradictions, which are more extensively dealt with in capital. The seminal insights in the Manifesto however is prophetic.

What is the argument in the Communist Manifesto? In short it speaks of the specter of communism and proclaims that the nursery tale of the specter of communism should be met with a manifesto, "with views aims and tendencies of the communists". The Manifesto gives a political programme towards the creation of communism. In the process it identifies the complex socio-economic conditions through the class factor, private property and the division of labour. It speaks about the new conditions of oppressions, the sentimental family, market dynamics, production and its centralization. The resultant over production or the magic of the modern consumption patterns, the development of the proletariat, the modern working class, a class of laborers are forcefully brought into the agenda of how capital should be comprehended? To this spectrum of the various conditions are linked the bourgeois community and the bourgeois state and its complicity in creating conditions of oppression. The contents are delineated in a forceful formula pattern driving home incisively the "truths" of the facets of the oppression of the working class. While stressing on the concept of internationalism of the workers the Manifesto briefly gives the modus operandi of how to defeat capitalism and a programme of action concluding the argument with a bold statement.

In place of old bourgeois society with its classes and class antagonisms we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all.

The third part of the Communist Manifesto which deals with socialist and communist literature dismisses rather eloquently other socialisms, the Revolutionary Socialism and Feudal Socialism, which is identified with Christian Socialism, and is desecrated as the "holy water with which the priest consecrates the heart-burning of the aristocrat." The petty bourgeois socialism intends to restore the old property relations and the old society and therefore it is reactionary and utopian. German "true" socialism consists of literature that belong to the domain of this foul and elevating literature"- the conservative or bourgeois socialism cannot survive with a mere political reform, and without envisioning a change in the material conditions of existence in economic relations- and lastly the Manifesto subjects the Utopian Socialists to a scrutiny. Their views, it asserts, have no practical value and lack theoretical justification. Their efforts to overlook class struggle and reconcile class antagonisms spell social utopias and build castles in the air.

It is this third part which has to be critically analysed and will become the site for evaluation. One is compelled to question the anathema, hurled at concepts such as "bourgeois" freedom of the press, liberalism, representative government, bourgeois liberty and equality. Whether the significations of these concepts, necessarily go to the extreme length of having "brutally destructive" tendencies towards communism is the question that has gained political currency and need to be answered in the new manifesto. In fact one has to draw clear distinctions in the Manifesto between political and ideological culture at one level and the economic material analysis at another level. The second point of our critical analysis briefly looks at the patriarchal bias, while the third point is to develop an inclusive agenda for the new emerging tales of oppressions i.e. in other words to question the class reductionism of the Manifesto which ignores major problems of other oppressions such as gender, caste, ethnic majoritarianism which cannot be explained away only by economic factors. These omissions in the

Manifesto were taken up for elaborate discussions elsewhere by both Marx and Engels -in Capital, The origin of the family private property and the state. Euro-centrism is another kind of bias hurled at Marx in his theoretical digression.

The Arguments for a New Manifesto

It is indeed very unfortunate that the socialist movement both in the West and in the East has lost many of its female comrades to another movement, the feminist movement.

A history and a trajectory of this movement has revealed conflicts, and contradictions on definitions, on the politics of personal and on conceptualising priorities as subject of political process. To strike a personal note, my own ambivalence was characterized with a mischievous misrepresentation by calling myself a Marxist among feminists and taking up issues of caste and class along with gender and as a feminist in Marxist circles arguing for issues of gender. This tension continued among many feminists who are also Marxists, and the feminists resolved the tension calling themselves though unhappily Marxist feminists, Socialist feminists and Material feminists- the distinctions though blurred had political connotations. Gender was taken up as a subsidiary note, as woman's question by Engels. In a classless society, when private property is abolished and women are brought into social production, women like the working class will be liberated is the simplistic thesis on the woman question put forward by Engels. In Engel's opinion the concept of the property owning family was static and ahistorical. As explained by Engels men did not own women merely to produce heirs to private property and is not the only facet of gender oppression and it is not class specific. That Rita, an upper class woman was brutally gang raped and murdered, by perhaps lower class men does not explain gender, violence on class terms, and within class locations. In fact Marxist feminism originated with a critique of orthodox Marxism. There was in fact a demand to marry patriarchy to capitalism, and this metaphor of marriage was later proved to be an unhappy marriage (Einstein 1979). Beech has argued (1977:45) that, a correct analysis of the subordination of women cannot be provided by Marxists unless Marxism itself is transferred. Marxism with its

emphasis on militancy relied only on male action. It glorified militancy and therefore masculinity as part of the revolutionary doctrine and has failed to accommodate the rights of women within the current practice of Marxism. This has also something to do with down playing the concept of democracy within the Marxist discourse.

Besides, the language which Marx uses somehow or other, removes the female worker, from his analysis. The average labourer is used interchangeably with the average male. That capital decides to have differential wages for men and women for the same type of work has been somehow neglected in Marxist analysis. It works on a patriarchal ideology of the man as the breadwinner and that the woman's/wife's earnings are supplementary to the main wages earned by men. That the factories assign repetitive monotonous uncreative jobs in the assembly line for women, works on another, patriarchal ideology of the less valued female who is fit for insignificant lesser, levels of labour. The feminist argue rightly that capitalism has merged with patriarchy to create a particular type of exploitation. Both capitalism and patriarchy have both to be challenged is the new feminist epistemology. There are two aspects within the Marxism feminism combat and conceptual conflict. At one level the gender component, the differentials and particularities of the gender dimensions are overlooked- it is simply treated as a non-issue. At another level there is a conscious trivialization. When Clara Zetkin the German leader, of the International Socialist movement interviewed Lenin in 1920, Lenin was categorical that:

The first proletarian revolution dictatorship is truly paving the way for complete social equality of women. It eradicates more prejudice than volumes of feminist literature. "the first proletarian dictatorship is truly paving the way for complete social equality of women. It eradicates more prejudice than volumes of feminist literature". Hence socialist revolution and not feminism is needed to liberate women. Socialist revolution makes feminism irrelevant.

That this trend continues even today is the unfortunate history of the movement for liberation and emancipation. Feminists

have questioned the master narrative of Marxism. And the academic left is becoming increasingly aware of how patriarchal and capitalists relations have become imbricate.

However, the woman is not problematized as a homogenous entity but rather is seen within the gender category as historically constructed and has a variety of dimensions and has to be posited within a range of central structures. Whereas patriarchy is the organising concept for theorising and investigating women's secondary position within the various facets of subordination, discrimination, exploitation and oppression. However, the discourse is extended to other variables, such as the dichotomy of the private /public gender division of labour, women's sexuality and its subjection to violence of various types. Many feminists while quarrelling with Marxism have found Utopian Socialism accommodative to their visions.

The feminist discourse questions again the class reductionism and economic materialistic understanding of exploitation. This brings us to question whether there is only one type of exploitation or oppression, that of the working class by capital. Women are one category there are others as well.

Marx is often castigated as being Euro-centric. Various people for various reasons have leveled harsh criticism at him. Dependency theorists have also criticised him. They explain underdevelopment in terms of relations of domination, in exchange totally excluding an analysis of the forces and relations of production and mode of production. They argue that capitalism has not developed on the basis of the exploitation of the proletariat but by the exploitation of the dominant of countries, the metropolitan countries, exploit other countries on the periphery by extracting and appropriating the surplus of these countries. This debate is not so relevant for us-as long as we know and admit there is exploitation. Our concern here is not agreeing with the manner, in which this exploitation takes place, but rather taking up categories which cannot be conflated into "class reading". Gunder Frank is unduly critical of Marx for his Euro-centric view. Frank is perhaps right when he is charging Marx with Euro-centric view of the superiority of the European civilisation.

However, my point in bringing this debate is to link the caste system with the Asiatic Mode of Production and the Asiatic society - Marx's understanding of this has raised major conceptual and political significance. The signification of the vocabulary used to explain Asiatic society and the AMP endorses a privileged position to the occidental over the oriental - the oriental is stationary and regressive and stagnant - arbitrary and despotic - the caste system is also seen within this ambit. This paper, while stating that caste cannot be understood within the class analysis, wants to insist that caste as a category of exploitation has to be brought in to the agenda of the movement for the emancipation in our manifesto. The theory advanced in Communist Manifesto that in the earlier epoch of history we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various order, a manifold gradation of social rank acknowledges other categories of marginalised groups. However, his statement that "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles". Freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes has to be expanded to explain the specificity of the caste system. Social scientists have seen a class/caste equation. Even non-Marxist Anthropologist M. N. Srinivasan has seen class demands in the caste system. While a Marxist historian, Kosambi, argues for the specification of the caste and class system and does not want too many details which are useful to be obliterated." (Kosambi, 1944: 243) in a class caste conflation. However, the close interconnection seen by scholars between class and caste both by Marxist and non-Marxist cannot however lead us to see caste totally within the class category. The recent developments have shown us that new and extra strategies are needed to eradicate caste oppression. That upper caste man/woman can oppress and degrade man/woman of the high class even in an urban setting is not a strange phenomenon for those who live amidst a rigid caste system.

While discussing the context specific levels of the varied patterns of the oppressive social behaviour, I want to bring into focus

the terminological ambivalence between the words Socialism and Communism employed in Communist Manifesto. Communist Manifesto starts with a sentence that spoke of the specter of communism that is haunting Europe. Both Marx and Engels cautiously avoid the usage of the word socialism to denote the project of emancipation. This betrays a dislike to the world socialism/socialist. Wherever the word is mentioned it is in connection with non-revolutionary backwardness. "Reactionary Socialism", "Feudal Socialism", "Petty Bourgeois Socialism", "German Socialisms", "school boy task", "Utopian Socialism" are terms referred to in the communist manifesto to connote of backwardness. They are also branded as bourgeois-non-political, non-revolutionary, fantastic reactionary, and by implication non-scientific. Under the circumstances one is compelled to ask, is there really a difference between socialism and communism? Theoretical and historical origins of socialism go back to 200 years before the publication of the Communist Manifesto in 1848. The Diggers, a radical movement produced during the period of the English civil war. (1642-52), Babeuf and his "Conspiracy the Equals during the French revolution, the English and French "Utopians" (Utopian Socialism.), the English Chartist of the 1830-40's were the fore-runners of socialism as an ideology. Democracy equality and collectivism were incorporated into the working class movement. Perhaps by implication the discourse of capitalism, the class struggle as the driving force of history, the dictatorship of the proletariat are the distinguishing markers of communism. Though communism and socialism are used interchangeably the terms carried connotative terminological differences. This is further attested to by Engels. After Marx's death Engels wrote the preface for the English edition of the Communist Manifesto in 1888 alone. There he makes a confession.

By Socialists, in 1847, were understood, on the one hand the adherents of the various Utopian systems: Owenites in England, Fourierists in France, both of them already reduced to the position of mere sects, and gradually dying out; on the other hand, the most multifarious social quacks who, by all manner of tinkering, professed to redress, without any danger to capital and profit, all sorts of social

grievances, in both cases men outside the working-class movement, and looking rather to the "educated" classes for support. Thus, in 1847, socialism was a middle-class movement, communism a working-class movement. Socialism was, on the Continent at least, "respectable"; communism was the very opposite. And as our notion, from the very beginning, was that "the emancipation of the workers must be the act of the working class itself," there could be no doubt as to which of the two names we must take.

It was Lenin who in 1917, in his *The state and Revolution* made a further clarification. What is usually called socialism was termed by Marx the "first" or the lower phase of communist society, perhaps subsequent to this, Communism and Socialism was used inter-changeably or to refer to the party as Communist and the governance as socialist. But there is still a paradox, while theorising Marxists, refer to socialism as essentially a transitional stage to communism.

The New Manifesto should consider, revoking the term socialism, with all its historical significations, enlisting gender and caste also, as the driving force of history along with class. A classless society does not necessarily mean it eradicates, eliminates, or neutralises the categories of gender and caste towards a status of equality.

The second point of departure is the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat to which Lenin in *State and Revolution* gave a fresh impetus by stating that Marxism should not be confined to the class struggle without the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e. without extending the class struggle to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Marxism is distorted. Marx himself, it has to be emphasised, reiterated the significance of the dictatorship of the proletariat in a letter he wrote to Weydemer on the 5th of March 1852. He has said that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat and that the dictatorship constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society (Ranadive 1977

Publisher's note). The concept, of social democracy has been viewed negatively as having petit bourgeois connotations. However, a judgement was passed by Engels, on the German and Australian Social Democratic parties, as acceptable in Volkstraat (1894) "the word will pass muster" were his exact words. While one needs to re-look at the class reductionism with the Communist Manifesto, totalitarianism, which might well lead to fascism, has also to be weighed in the context of contemporary history. Extending the concept of political democracy to socialism which aims at general social emancipation of the working class has connections with what Marx has called human emancipation. The shift of emphasis of social democracy from working class orientation and commitment to revolutionary aims to people's parties has even lead to the concept of social democracy being labeled a non-socialist, centrist and as following "reformed capitalism for a mixed economy."

Euro communism evolved from this with a slightly different orientation moving towards an emphasis on democracy and representative institution abandoning conceptions like dictatorship of proletariat and a centralised vanguard party. Value of democracy and emphasis on its need have been ambiguously and variously incorporated in the Marxist discourse by Engels and others. The 2nd international Marxist, have clearly reiterated a commitment to democracy not only as a process by which the working class would come to power, but as the substance of a socialist party. Rosa Luxemburg, Kautsky and the Austro Marxist, have eloquently argued for it. And in fact in a historical process the working class movement and the Marxist thought have had clear, ideological divisions between social democracy and communism-a division seen as, between democratic socialism and authoritative socialism. While opting for democratic socialism as the contents of a new manifesto, one needs to recognise the fact that, a real socialist transformation through democracy is a slow process through raising consciousness. One could speculate that such a social transformation may become a lasting transformation. Democracy and liberty should combine with revolutionary Marxism. While opting for a socialist agenda within the broad spectrum of democratic principles one has to be specific on the variables of such a proposition. Equality, (caste class and gender) freedom and liberty, pluri-culture, emancipatory goals, an

active and a critical citizenry of the civil society where the state acts with selected partnership and with radical agencies in the civil society should become the pre-conditions. A total concept of inclusion-)inclusion' may be broadly defined in relation to full citizenship) - At a political level the idea of consociation, which means incorporation of groups, ethnic caste, class, gender and into the political administrative structure of the state should be broadly accepted as a pre-requisite. Until such time that caste-less and class-less and gender neutral societies come into force - one needs to be cautiously adopting these as an interim strategy. The inclusion of the marginalised has to be brought within the principle of affirmative action shelving temporarily the principle of meritocracy. Consociation should accompany de-centralisation without necessarily weakening the state.

While elaborating on the above we are equally mindful not to abandon the brilliant Marxist analysis of capitalism. Marx has been proved right, in the way capitalist expansion has broken down national wealth, What is now fashionably called Globalisation which has made use of the capitalist imperatives of accumulation and competition, to maximise profit has been predicted by Marx. What we are arguing for is to use the same insights to analyse, the new social conditions- not to abandon them and float without aims and goals, in the post modern fury, which it argues attempts to define, the multifaceted new development of post- modernity. Disappointed and frustrated in the post modern developments the post modernists have been leading us to frustrating theories to evolve theories of an ambiguous nature which it asserts throws away all theories into the dustbin of history.

As claimed by Douglas Kellner, (1998):

"what is required is a rethinking such enterprises as Enlightenment, Marxism, critical theory, structuralism, feminism, and so on in terms of the new issues posed and the new challenges advanced by the current configurations of the media, consumer, and information societies, by cybenetics and design; by the restructuring of

labour and production; by the new configurations of class; and by the new modes of the colonization of everyday life."

An ideal example to the rethinking process is the linking of the gender, division of labour, into Marx's category of the social division of labour. How the multi national companies exploit women, in the FTZ has to be viewed as the penetration of capitalism into gender ideology for maximising profit. We certainly cannot join with post- modernist Baudrillard who claims:

"the end of labour, the end of production the end of political economy— the end simultaneously of the dialectic of exchange-value/use value which alone previously made possible capital accumulation and social production"(1988:127-128, translation modified)

We are still left with one problematique - which has historical significations - i.e. the problem of linking democracy with capitalism. Marxists and critical theorists of fame have de-linked democracy from Communism Socialism and Marxism. In fact democracy has also been referred to capitalist democracy. A democratic state it is claimed, by Engels and Marx, acts in the interest of the Capitalist class. It is even argued that the development of capitalism needed or brought into being the best of enlightenment principles (Ellen Meiksin Wood 1998:21-22) and that capitalism can tolerate democracy. Indeed there is now an urgent need to revitalise the concept of democracy with expanded meanings at both the political and cultural levels. This is where the active participation of a critical civil society is incorporated, Where the interests of one dominant class group-or gender do not necessarily become the activating force of politico, cultural and social activities. This is why consociation and de-centralisation at the political level are instituted, to de-centre capitalists interests and to create new grounds for socialist ventures with freedom and liberty.

One needs to steer clear of certain other misconceptions in opting for democratic socialism (and not social democracy). The col-

lapse of socialism has not rendered Marxism as obsolete or irrelevant. It is validity as a social theory and revolutionary praxis its vitality and utility cannot be questioned. Despite the 'silences', empty spaces inadequacies such as gender blindness and ambiguities Marxism has as a social theory, it still has its validity - if we see it as a theory- the theoretician being the child of his time,- and that he too carried the share of the mind of his times. (Randirsingh 1998:25). Throwing away the claims of being scientific and the mechanical determinism Marxism has to be creatively used but not as revelations but should be interpreted with a dynamism for contemporary needs. Marxism has to grow and develop to contemporary and future needs. The concept of class ie centrally relevant but it is not the motive force of history. While cherishing and making use of the dynamism of Marxism and its basic framework and structure we need to go beyond Marxism and become Post Marxists not abandoning Marxism but revitalising Marxism.

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A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF BLUE COLLAR FEMALE WORKERS

BY GAMEELA SAMARASINGHE AND CHANDRIKA ISMAIL*

Man is a thinking being; inner experience linked to interpersonal group experience – in other words, mental life – is what makes people's lives valuable. To be human is to think, feel, aspire, strive and achieve, and to be social. Promoting health therefore must not only be concerned with preserving the biological element of the human organism: it must also be concerned with enhancing mental life.

Social Dimensions of Mental Health, WHO, Geneva, 1981.

Exploring psychological distress of women working in the Free Trade Zone (FTZ) and the factories in the Ratmalana area necessarily calls for the scrutiny of the working and living conditions of the women and an investigation of their psychological well-being. It is also necessary to examine whether, when working in the Zone, being female causes women to be more at risk for psychological disorders.

Since 1977 with the open economic policy, Sri Lanka has been marked by the expansion of the manufacturing industry and the establishment of Free Trade Zones. The garment industry which employs a majority of women as workers, has become most prominent. Whether such employment has enabled them to financially assist their

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families or not, and other concerns with regards to women in particular have been associated with the growth of the industry becoming the largest foreign exchange earner for the country. Apart from having to live in often putrid conditions of overcrowded boarding houses and work long hours, women have often experienced terrible situations. It has been proclaimed that some are suffering from the consequences of these (Sunday Observer, January 22nd, 1995). The common articulation of this, whether by the media, researchers or activists from Women's Organisations, is that these workers are 'over-worked', suffer from 'rapid exhaustion', 'chest pains' (Wickremasinghe, 1990), 'headaches', 'colds', or 'limb aches' (Perera, 1995).

The way in which psychological suffering of women working in the garment industry are touched upon, in terms of consequences of stressful working conditions or physical ailments, is problematic. It would be necessary to prescribe to a wide framework of psycho-social distress for the acknowledgement of the harm suffered by these women and for a better understanding of their situation. The descriptions of the suffering in terms of physical reactions to difficult work situations are inappropriate expressions of women's experiences, transforming them into a medical condition.

Stress and Psychological Distress

Although the definition of stress remains controversial, most research in the health field refer to stress as a response that arises when demands exceed the personal and social resources that an individual is able to mobilise (Avery & Baker, 1990). It is noted that almost any distressing event may produce different responses in two individuals, or even in the same individual on different occasions. The response to stress involves physiological adjustments (aches, pains, high blood pressure etc.), reduction in emotional well-being (anxiety, depression, guilt, loneliness etc.), adjustment at the cognitive level (difficulty concentrating, making decisions, forgetfulness etc.), and a range of behavioural responses (poor sleep, inactivity, substance use, suicide).

The work environment contributes to the physical and psychological well-being of workers (Cooper & Smith, 1985). In addition to the physical work conditions (loud noise, repetitive actions, toxic

substances, temperature extremes etc.), there are nonphysical work conditions (i.e. work overload, lack of autonomy, role ambiguity, and job involvement) that might affect physical and psychological well-being of the workers. High work pressure and physical conditions under which blue-collar workers have to work, among other things, can be stressful in a work environment. Since blue-collar workers work a fixed schedule, are given a specific task to do and are told exactly how to do that task, they have little or no control over decisions involving their work (Fisher, 1985). The stress that arise through isolation, and the lack of recognition for using one's initiative may lead to difficulties in which they are able to cope with the demands of work and the challenges of life.

Stress can also arise from an individual's life outside work—family, community and quality of life. Everyday sources of stress can be both positive and negative (losing a job or promotion, divorce or marriage). When people are exposed to more than one of the negative stressors simultaneously, an individual will find coping much more difficult.

Women Workers and Vulnerability

Working in garment factories in Sri Lanka could be considered potentially harmful psychologically to women workers. The long hours of work, with very short breaks for meals that are well documented (The Women's Centre, 1993; The Sunday Times, 2nd October 1994; Wickremasinghe, 1990; Hettiarachchi, 1994), though enabling the increase of financial assistance brought to their families, augment the vulnerability of women. Many women, owing to the pressures of the quota system, are forced to work till late where public transport is not easily accessible, exposing them to harassment and abuse. Even within the workplace, often they are victimized. They are not always informed about their leave and legal entitlements and so, much to their dismay, are severely penalized for absenteeism or late arrival. The unequal and meager employment opportunities available to them as women, as well as frequently being the main source of income to their families, often make the job in the FTZ and other garment factories all the more difficult, pressurizing them to continue working in spite of unpleasant conditions.

The changed status within the patriarchal Sinhala culture has no doubt, caused hardship in their struggle to overcome adversity. Families, neighbours and host villages harshly censure these employees, who generally arrive from rural areas, and attempt to adjust to the status of working women in a new and intimidating environment. When they go out to work, the community would accuse these women of carrying out secret affairs, allegations that seriously compromise their social status (Hettiarachchi, 1994). Stories about problems of pregnancy, illegal abortions, suicide, drugs and even alcoholism have also contributed towards alienating these women from society. Since it is a risk for them to speak about their difficulties at work, women frequently refer to exorbitant rents they have to pay for crowded and communal living conditions with little or no facility for personal hygiene. Whether in or outside the workplace, choosing to live without male 'protection' has often meant living with sexual harassment and the very real threat of rape. Women working in the Free Trade Zone and Ratmalana do not necessarily make a strong distinction between the experiences in their new work and living environments and the physical ailments they complain about. However, they are unable to consider that the stress resulting from the powerless situation they find themselves in and their physical complaints might be inextricably linked.

Powerlessness and Psychological Distress

Though it is not possible to explain in depth the specific psychosocial consequences of the difficult and often extreme circumstances faced by these women it is apparent that many women have experienced great distress. Some women, speak of physical hardships, such as staying in a standing position throughout the day. Others speak of persisting fatigue, pain in the chest and knee joints aches. While these exploitative working conditions result in high turnover, firms also attempt to limit women's employment to the early stage of their adult life. This strategy ensures them of fresh labour capable of sustained, intensive work at low wages. The rapid exhaustion of women, often due to heat, noise and dust, and having to stand for long periods of time, also results in most of them leaving on their own accord after a period of three or four years (Wickremasinghe, 1990). It is revealed that laryngitis and dermatitis are common consequences of the unhealthy working conditions in the textile industry. Many women have

also sought to contain their suffering by consulting preferably a private practitioner to the free medical service often available at the workplace. Although doctors insist that nothing is physically wrong with them, these may well be somatic expressions of their psychological state.

For women working for the garment industry, the lack of security of tenure and direct or indirect forms of control keep them from organising themselves to improve their situation. They experience and endure being controlled and molded into the well disciplined workforce required by these factories. Certainly, the access to an income gives the women the possibility for some degree of independence, gaining for instance, the ability to resist arranged marriage and opt for free choice marriage, but this serves to describe only a portion of what in fact the women experience. These difficulties in establishing control over their own body, and an inability to be fully recognised as a member of society in their own right, might explain the somatic expressions of women's psychological states.

Wage work may indeed liberate women from gender-subordination to some extent, and it is, as Nimalka Fernando, an activist, says a "good beginning towards what all of us women want - equality and emancipation in the fullest sense of the word" (Sunday Observer, 22nd January 1995). However, as developed further, "improved psychological state" does not necessarily mean adjustment to expectations of what one thinks all women want or must have, but essentially the development of one's desires and potentials; the fulfillment of one's own felt needs."

Maria Root's work suggests that the notion of 'insidious trauma' could be useful to describe women's lives in uncertain and potentially harmful situations. She locates its effects in the acute self-awareness of women that "one's safety is very tentative" (Root, 1996). This is created by experiences that show that a fundamental, unchangeable aspect of one's identity (i.e. *being female, being of a particular ethnicity*) increases the risks of personal danger. In Sri Lanka's garment industries, this is manifested in a fear of being sexually harassed, raped, fear of losing a job, and so on. Just as many women are acutely aware of being female and the personal risk this status entails, others are daily conscious of their ethnic or social status and know that this status is

unsafe. This awareness aids survival, and should be recognized as signaling a form of significant and legitimate psychological hardship.

It was to focus attention on the psychological reactions faced by the female blue collar workers, that this study is conceived. The underlying objective is two fold:

1. To provide insight into the potential stressful conditions and their psychological manifestations experienced by the women workers; and
2. To make suggestions on the course of action to help minimize and cope with their difficulties.

METHODOLOGY

Respondents in this study were 1000 female blue collar workers in the Ratmalana(110) and FTZ (Katunayake[607], Biyagama[270], Pallekalle[22], Koggala[51]) industrial areas. The number of respondents from each area were identified on probability sampling to yield approximately equal representation of the population. The questionnaire contained items relating to general information, job stressors, job involvement, psychological distress and behavioural outcome.

The structured interviewer-administered schedule (I) included items relating to demographic factors, present employment, living arrangements, community living, reasons for and consequences of employment, living conditions and life events. Twenty items comprising of 3 scales (work pressure, lack of autonomy, and role ambiguity) were adapted from previously published measures of job stressors (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1995). Work pressure items (8) reflect the frequency with which individuals perceive high job-related demands resulting from heavy workloads and responsibilities. Lack of autonomy items (6) reflect the frequency with which individuals perceive constraints on their ability to function independently and influence important job parameters. Role ambiguity items (6) reflect the frequency of being confused or unclear about job-related goals and day-to-day tasks and expectations. Each item used a four-point frequency-based response scale (never-sometimes-very often-always). The 3 scales were each

created by averaging the items, with high scores representing higher levels of the construct.

Five items which assess job involvement were also adapted from Frone et al., (1995). Each item used a six-point agree/disagree response scale. Job involvement was assessed by averaging the five items, with high scores representing high levels of the construct.

The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28) includes 28 items that pertain to both somatic and emotional symptoms of distress. The GHQ-28 is a screening instrument devised for use with the general population. The GHQ-28 has been validated by linking scores on this screening approach with clinical ratings carried out by independent assessors and have been shown to have good psychometric properties. In addition to a total scale score, the GHQ-28 describes four specific sub-scales, each consisting of seven items. The four sub-scales are as follows:

The Somatic scale includes items relating to people's feelings of health and fatigue and provides a measure of bodily sensations, which often accompany emotional distress.

The Anxiety scale includes items relating to anxiety and sleeplessness.

The Social Dysfunction scale includes items relating to the extent to which a respondent is able to cope with the demands of work and the usual challenges of life.

The Depression scale includes items relating to depression and suicide.

For each item respondents were asked to indicate on a four-point scale the extent to which the items described how they felt over the previous six weeks.

An additional item was included following the 28 items on the GHQ to assess active suicidal ideations ("Are you planning on ending your life?"). The respondents were asked to indicate "Yes", "No", or "Not decided". Substance abuse was assessed by three items.

distress that employment, relocation from home and community living has had on female blue collar workers in the FTZ and Ratmalana industrial areas. The psychological distress of the female blue-collar workers are explained by the relation between the psychological distress measure (GHQ sub-scale scores) and their employment, living circumstances and behavioural outcomes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall, the results of the study demonstrate that workers report more somatic strain, greater psychosocial and behavioural reactions to stressors of employment and their life circumstances.

Much recognition has been placed to the link between exposure to too much stress and physical and psychosocial health problems (Avery & Baker, 1990). For example, the work environment makes constant demands on the individuals and that may often give rise to stress reactions physically, psychologically or socially. The present results indicated that work pressure is related to psychological distress accounted for by somatic strain and signs of depression. This poor psychological well-being may be precipitated by nonstandard work schedules involving longer work shifts, night and weekend shifts which are apparent for these women workers. The women reported that they worked on average 9-12 hours six days a week, with alternate morning or evening shifts. Evidently, a prominent difficulty with long work days is fatigue, while night shift work leads to both sleep problems and digestive system problems which in turn may have physical (stomach distress, headaches) and psychological (anxiety, depression) consequences (Spector, 1996). Furthermore, research on workload has found significant associations with psychological strains of anxiety, frustration, dissatisfaction, depression, exhaustion, and health symptoms (Avery & Baker, 1990). Thus, demanding work, shift work, excessive overtime, and having to meet deadlines may be contributing factors to the psychosomatic and depressive reactions reported by these women workers.

The first item indicated the presence of substance use, followed by indication of the substance and the reason for use.

Since items on schedules II were adapted from a study conducted on predominantly western respondents, the items with culture-specific content were re-worded to fit the Sri Lankan context. The items were translated into Sinhalese, back-translated to English by translators (4) who had not seen the original English version, and checked by a bilingual speaker and principal research officers in order to resolve any discrepancies.

Initially, the sites were selected and locations of hostels identified. A gender awareness workshops was conducted to sensitise the 20 female field researchers on various issues concerning the female workers. Following the formulation of the draft questionnaire, a pilot study was carried out with ten independent respondents, from Ratmalana and Katunayake. On the basis of the pilot study, some items were reformulated or deleted to ensure the research officers of its utility.

The field researchers were allocated to visit one or more of the five areas. Each field researcher forwarded a letter explaining the project and obtained consent from the respondent and/or the boarding mistress to administer the questionnaires and interview. This was in order to enable the prospective respondents to make a free and informed decision about whether or not to enter the study. Consent was also obtained for tape recording the interviews. If and when the respondent(s) disagreed or requested parts of the interview deleted, the field researchers obliged. On commencing the interviews, the respondents were assured privacy and confidentiality of all information obtained during the interviews. Following introduction, the structured interviewer-administered schedule and the self-administered schedules were administered. On average, it took approximately 3 hours to complete the interviews. Once the interviews were completed the field researcher compiled a case study on each respondent.

The research focused mainly on the level of psychological

Table 1 Correlation matrix of job stressors, job involvement and indicators of psychological distress

	Somatic	Anxiety	Social Dysfunction	Depression
Work pressure	.125**	.056	.020	.087**
Lack of autonomy	-.058	-.002	-.106**	-.011
Role ambiguity	-.066*	-.116**	-.099**	-.086**
Job involvement	.066*	.117**	-.089**	.113**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

N=999

Contrary to previous suggestions (Fisher, 1985; Spector, 1996), it is interesting to note that the results indicate that on both, lack of autonomy and role ambiguity, the women reported less signs of somatic and psychosocial ill health. (Table 1) It is possible that the women perceive their jobs as nothing more than a source of income and not a means of pursuing a career. Thus, they may be less affected or buffered from such sources of stress as lack of autonomy and role ambiguity than individuals whose occupational roles are highly individualized with strong commitment, responsibilities and achievement orientation.

Job involvement was associated with an increase in somatic, anxiety and depression, and a decrease in social dysfunction symptom levels. (Table 1) In most cases the women perceived their involvement at work as part of their hope of earning enough money for a successful life, which may contribute to the somatic strain and tension resulting in reactions of anxiety. In addition, the frustration of expectations may explain the low mood and signs of depression experienced by the women workers. However, high job involvement may contribute to building a sense of self-esteem and confidence which in turn moderate coping abilities to work pressure and other challenges of life ((Avery & Baker, 1990). This may explain the low social dysfunction symptom levels.

Table 2 Relationship between living conditions and indicators of psychological distress

	N	Mean Symptom Levels			
		Somatic	Anxiety	Social Dysfunction	Depression
Relocated					
Yes	919	9.19	7.18	6.43	4.01
No	76	8.34	6.45	6.93	2.41
P*		NS	NS	NS	S
Shared accommodation					
Yes	891	9.22	7.21	6.43	3.99
No	96	8.44	6.46	6.90	2.99
P*		NS	NS	NS	S
Lack of privacy					
Yes	489	10.04	7.79	6.78	4.50
No	497	8.23	6.45	6.17	3.28
P**		S	S	S	S

*Based on t-test, $\alpha = .01$ ** Based on t-test, $\alpha = .05$

It is asserted that it is impossible to separate a person's private life completely from his/her work life, and thus external life events will affect an individual's psychosocial well-being (Avery & Baker, 1990). In the present study, women who had relocated due to employment and share accommodation appear to have higher depression symptom levels. (Table 2) The study also indicated that due to the strict work regulations these women were rarely in contact with their families. Previous epidemiological studies suggest that one of the most prominent features regarding the women workers are their heavy concentration and restricted living conditions (Hettiarachchi, 1994). Poor living conditions, discrimination and alienation by their surrounding community may compound their feelings of loneliness and difficulties of adjustment to a new environment leading to the manifestation of symptoms of depression.

The results further revealed that women who experienced a lack of privacy due to overcrowded living arrangements, reported

higher levels of somatic and psychosocial symptoms. (Table 2) This may be a result of stress arising through interpersonal conflicts and tension among the women living in overcrowded conditions.

Although much of the women reported that they spent their out-of-work time on activities such as washing clothes, and cooking the lack of time out-of-work appears to manifest itself in higher symptom levels of somatic, anxiety and depression, while involvement in community activities leading to a lower somatic symptom level. (Table 3) This was further supported by examining the trend between duration of time out-of-work and psychological symptomatology. The greater the number of days of time out-of-work, the lower the psychological symptom levels.

Table 3 Relationship between community living and indicators of psychological Distress

	N	Mean Symptom Levels			
		Somatic	Anxiety	Social Dysfunction	Depression
Time out-of-work					
Yes	775	8.57	6.72	6.42	3.59
No	209	11.09	8.50	6.72	5.02
P*		S	S	NS	S
Involvement in community activity					
Yes	435	8.74	6.73	6.43	3.87
No	535	9.39	7.36	6.45	3.81
P**		S	NS	NS	NS

*Based on t-test, $\alpha = .01$ **Based on t-test, $\alpha = .05$

Table 4 Correlation of duration of time out-of-work and indicators of psychological distress

	Somatic	Anxiety	Social Dysfunction	Depression
Duration of time out-of-work (days)	-.124**	-.058*	-.064*	-.104**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

N=877

Evidently, leisure/community activities may ameliorate depression and anxiety at work (Broadbent, 1982, in Cooper & Smith, 1985). According to the cognitive-behavioral model inactivity or avoidant behavior may lead to depression or anxiety, respectively (Figure 1) (Powell, 1992). Becoming more active is one way of breaking the vicious cycle by making the individual less tired, distracted from worries, aggravating a sense of control of one's life, and leaving one motivated and social.

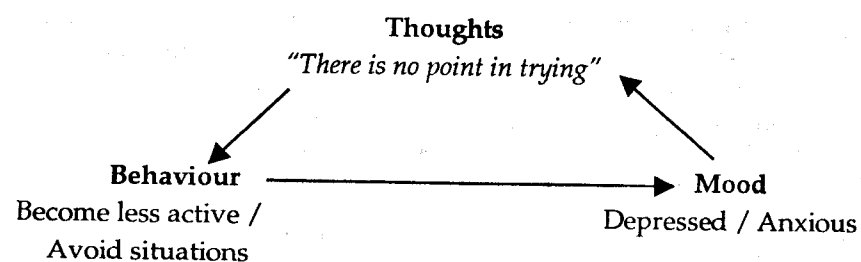


Figure 1 Vicious spiral of Depression & Anxiety

Interestingly, whether or not one had leisure time and was not involved in community activities did not affect their symptom level on the social dysfunction sub-scale. (Table 3) It is possible that the women had little or no choice in carrying out their personal and social day-to-day activities and decision making.

Most of the women reported that their reason for employment was financial difficulties at home. The greater need to send remittance back home and reliance on excessive overtime may explain the somatic and psychological symptom levels reported by the women who were the main family income earners. Similar symptom levels were reported by women who had experienced disruption to work. Clearly, the knowledge of the heavy penalties imposed on the women for absenteeism may explain their experience of high somatic and psychological symptom levels.

Table 5 Relationship between disruption to work and indicators of psychological distress

	N	Mean Symptom Levels			
		Somatic	Anxiety	Social Dysfunction	Depression
Main family income					
Yes	240	9.97	8.13	6.70	4.57
No	740	8.86	6.80	6.39	3.69
p*		S	S	NS	S
Disruption to work					
Yes	244	10.20	8.37	6.82	4.68
No	743	8.79	6.69	6.36	3.61
p*		S	S	NS	S

*Based on t-test, $\alpha = .01$

Most often increased somatic strain and psychosocial reactions may heighten feelings of powerlessness, lack of independence, and a sense of worthlessness. This may lead to maladaptive behaviors such as attempted or completed suicide and/or substance use (Avery & Baker, 1990). These maladaptive behaviours may often represent coping behaviours to relieve psychological reactions brought about by stressful life circumstances, over which the women have little or no control. Clearly, the present results showed that higher somatic and/or psychological symptom levels were indicated on the suicide intention and substance use study variables. (Table 6)

Table 6 Relationship between suicide intent, alcohol/drug use and indicators of psychological distress

	N	Mean Symptom Levels			
		Somatic	Anxiety	Social Dysfunction	Depression
Suicide intent					
Yes	97	12.99	12.33	8.32	11.66
No	890	8.70	6.54	6.30	3.05
p*		S	S	S	S
Alcohol/drug use					
Yes	37	10.08	8.68	7.54	5.86
No	936	9.09	7.06	6.46	3.82
p* *		NS	S	S	S

*Based on t-test, $\alpha = .01$

**Based on t-test, $\alpha = .05$

In general, women workers in the FTZ areas indicated higher somatic and depressive symptom levels than the women workers in the Ratmalana industrial area. Examining the data further reveal that women workers in the Biyagama area reporting the highest somatic and psychosocial symptom levels, with women in the Pallekalle area reporting the least. (Table 7)

Table 7 Relationship between area and indicators of psychological distress

	N	Mean Symptom Levels			
		Somatic	Anxiety	Social Dysfunction	Depression
Area					
Ratmalana	110	8.21	6.55	6.75	2.89
FTZ	889	9.25	7.20	6.46	4.02
P	NS	S**	NS	NS	S*

*Based on t-test, $\alpha = .01$ **Based on t-test, $\alpha = .05$

Together, it is suggested that the present study supports the proposition that employment, and their circumstances are potentially stressful, and can for certain individual's threaten the quality of their psychological well-being.

In closing, several limitations of the present study should be noted in the light of advancing future research. First, it should be noted that correlations do not mean that job stressors and involvement necessarily cause somatic strain and/or psychosocial reactions, although they may be contributing factors. Thus, although the causal relationship remains unclear, it is important to note that work pressures and involvement may have profound influences on these female workers psychosocial well-being.

Second, the negative findings on lack of autonomy and role ambiguity should be interpreted with caution, since in some cases respondents may not have answered questions truthfully. However, additional research will be necessary to confirm this assertion and why the lack of autonomy and role ambiguity effects have been elusive.

Third, the present data was based on a cross-sectional design in which the women workers were evaluated on one occasion for suggested stressors that lead to psychological distress. Thus, we cannot attribute cause to stressors since they demonstrate merely an association between the stressors and the outcome measure. A longitudinal study, in contrast to a cross-sectional one, can examine, for example, whether a variable has a potential causal influence on psychological distress. However, the present study opted to provide empirical evidence supporting the association between suggested stressors and psychological distress.

Fourth, the present data is based on self-reported measurements. Therefore, the magnitude of the relationships between the job stressors and involvement and outcome might be inflated because of confounding influence of personality dispositions – locus of control – which was not assessed or controlled for in the present study. Locus of control refers to the perceived source of control – external or internal – over one's behaviour. The individual difference variable of locus of control has been found to confound psychological outcomes (Fisher, 1985).

Five, the psychological outcome measure – GHQ-28 – has not been standardised to the Sri Lankan setting. The total score represents a probability estimate of 'caseness'. Since the GHQ-28 has not been validated in the Sri Lankan context, it was assumed that the instrument is probably not sensitive enough to be used as a case identifier, but is useful as a measure of psychological distress. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, only the sub-scale scores were obtained instead of the total score.

Six, on a statistical note, the correlation coefficients obtained by the data result in small R^2 figures. That is, the amount of outcome explained by a predictor variable is small (i.e. the amount of psychological distress explained by work pressure is small, leaving a greater percentage unexplained). However, most health-related outcomes are multi-determined and it is suggested that these outcomes may be caused by many predictors that are often correlated (Frone et al., 1995). This may reduce the total unique influence of any given predictor variable. That is, for example, apart from work overload, other predictors such

as work experience, age, marital status or frequent abuse, and assaults from male workers and supervisors etc., may influence their psychological well-being.

Finally, far too little is known about the less than obvious sources of satisfaction possible from employment. It is important to give attention to the types of protective factors that may buffer some of the women, to utilize in preventive measures.

Case Studies

The case studies revealed several difficulties and coping strategies experienced by the women workers in the Ratmalana and FTZ industrial areas.

Collectively the feelings and emotions typically experienced by the female workers may explain the linkage between various stressors faced by them and their psychological reactions.

★ Psychosomatic complaints

In most cases a straightforward experience of strain was tiredness or fatigue due to overwork, lack of sleep which lead to difficulties in concentrating, feeling of dullness, stiffness in muscles and joints, aches and pains.

★ Anxiety

This was reflected in that fear that there will not be enough money to make ends meet, and general worry about one's life. Most often the feelings of tension that accompanied anxiety affected various areas of their life, leading to further tension and worry. For example, they reported tendency to avoid people and social situations due to fear of discrimination, harassment and criticism.

★ Depression

In most cases the women felt isolated from society and distant from their families. This may have given rise to their feelings of loneliness, hopelessness, frustration, lack of motivation, and personal inadequacies typical of symptoms of depression.

★ Social Dysfunction

Excessive workload and long hours restricted social interactions and leisure activities with no time for rest. Much of their out-of-work time was spent on taking care of personal needs. It appears that in many cases, the fatigue, anxiety, and depression may have resulted in difficulties of coping with demands at work and challenges of life.

★ Suicidal Ideations and Substance Use

A selected few did not see a way out of their stressful situations and felt entirely hopeless and helpless, and feelings of oneself as worthless leading to thoughts of life as not worth living. Clearly, the use of alcohol was attributed to reduce tension, cope with anger or sadness to socialize or build confidence, and relieve the pain of loneliness.

Although for most women workers the overall impact of potential stressors discussed is probably a negative one, for a selected few it may be the one way they can cope with their problem of unemployment and other hardships. On the other hand, as a buffer against the vulnerability, women may often have little choice and so accept their situation. Thus, the case studies, together with the present results, indicate that being a blue collar female worker and living under various stressful life circumstances is no 'emotional picnic'.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SUPPORTIVE PROGRAMMES

From the preceding discussions, it is clear that employment and its circumstances on the women workers represent major sources of psychological distress. The government, employers, work organizations and health authorities need to recognize that these potential psychosocial health hazards do exist and that it is likely to increase rather than diminish if appropriate remedial and preventive action is not taken. Following are recommendations directed at improving and preserving the psychosocial environment of the female blue collar workers in the Ratmalana and FTZ areas.

Awareness Raising Programmes

- Sensitize the employers, public and health care workers on the issues faced by these women to reduce stigma and avoid labeling.

Training Programs

- Educate and train appropriate health care persons to identify and provide support and advice for a range of personal problems. In case of a chronic psychological case, persons should be informed of appropriate referral sources.

Provision Of Crisis Intervention Services

- Increase the number of counsellors within the industries around the FTZ and Ratmalana industrial areas. This will further reduce stigmatism (within the community) of women visiting counseling centers situated outside their place of work. It will also be necessary to ensure regular visits by a multidisciplinary team of professionals—medical officer, psychologist, psychiatrist, social workers.
- To ensure satisfactory standards of care, individuals seeking support need appropriate follow-up interventions, rather than being left to struggle on in a vulnerable state. This will require systematic assessment and monitoring, of individuals seeking care, by the social workers.

Providing Training And Education For The Female Workers

- Psychoeducation – educate the female workers to identify and recognize signs of psychological distress in themselves and others, so immediate intervention can take place.
- Forming Self-help Groups and Assertive Skills Training – self-help group participation has advantages in providing an individual to share experiences with others in similar situations, ventilate thoughts and emotions, and learn coping strategies. Assertiveness training can improve their sense of identity, confidence and self-

esteem, and facilitate coping strategies. These activities can be carried out within their place of work or the welfare centers.

Provision Of Women's Welfare Centers

- Increase Community Activities and Social Support Networks – establishing social support networks, providing out-of-work time for leisure activities, enabling the maintenance of family contact etc., will have an ameliorating effect on their psychosocial well-being, by developing healthy and comfortable relationships with surrounding peers and community.

Suicide & Substance Abuse Prevention Programmes

- Raise awareness regarding, suicide and substance abuse, identification, and accessibility to crisis help service for persons to approach in times of need. Specialised training of persons to help and counsel coping techniques.

Enhancing Social Support Within The Organisation

Creating a supportive environment within the organisation is likely not only to reduce or buffer stress and improve psychosocial health but is also likely to improve organisational performance. The following recommendations are made

- Creating structural arrangements that foster social interaction among workers.
- Employment-based health promotion programmes dealing with the management of stress.
- Employee assistance programmes with a trained counsellor within the place of work.
- Improving social support within the work force by enhancing supportive skills of supervisors or managers to provide social support toward workers.

Although the immediate benefactors of supportive and preventive programs would be the female workers, the whole of the Sri Lankan community will benefit because these women are a part of society who will mother our next generation.

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Prostitution and Trafficking in Woman

*Aurora J. De Dios**

The sexual exploitation of women and children by local and global sex industries violates the human rights of women and children whose bodies are reduced to sexual commodities in this brutal and dehumanizing marketplace. While experienced as pleasure by the prostitution consumers and as lucrative sources of income by sex industry entrepreneurs, prostitution, sex trafficking and related practices are in fact forms of sexual violence that leave women and children physically and psychologically devastated.

Sexually exploited women and children are the sex industry's primary casualties but they are not its only victims. Commercial sexual exploitation diminishes the lives of all women and girls by inculcating in men and boys profoundly misogynistic beliefs and attitudes. By teaching males that female bodies are sexual merchandise to be traded, used, and discarded,

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prostitution bolsters gender inequality in all areas of society. However, its effects are most readily apparent in acts of sexual violence against women, in the sexual harassment of women in the workplace, and violence against women by their intimate partners.

The global sex industry merchandises women and children in a variety of ways-encompassing prostitution, sex trafficking, sex tourism the mail-order bride trade, and pornography. These practices of sexual exploitation are interconnected and inextricable from each other, and most sexually exploited women and children are subjected to multiple forms of sexual exploitation. For example, women and children are often recruited or sold into domestic prostitution and then trafficked into brothels overseas. While being prostituted, women and children are often pressured or coerced into posing for pornography, which is increasingly trafficked internationally. Exploitation in "sexual entertainment" (strip clubs, topless bars etc.) often precedes or accompanies exploitation in sex trafficking or prostitution. Customers of sexually exploited women and children often buy access to them in a variety of sexually exploitative contexts, while pimps, procurers, and traffickers profit from the diverse practices of sexual exploitation interchangeably. Indeed, one of the motivating forces for trafficking is the demand from prostitution customers for more "exotic" and compliant sexual playthings.

Just as women and children in situations of sexual exploitation are ill-treated in many different ways, they are systematically subjected to a wide range of abusive and violent practices. Women in prostitution describe the sex they must endure from customers as unwanted bodily invasions - painful, disgusting, humiliating, dangerous and rape-like. They also report that male customers often subject them to abusive and dehumanizing sexual practices that nonprostituted women refuse to engage in. Research demonstrates that many sexually exploited women and girls anesthetize themselves with alcohol and drugs or enter dissociated mental states in order to endure the sex of prostitution. The consequences of both sexual exploitation and the "survival techniques" that prostituted women and children

adopt to inure themselves, damaging to their physical and mental health.

Sexual exploitation severely compromises the physical well being of prostituted women and children. A 1994 study of prostituted women in the United States found that only 15 percent had never contracted a sexually transmitted disease. The gynecological problems that prostituted women and girls suffer include chronic pelvic pain, pelvic inflammatory disease, unwanted pregnancy, miscarriages, high infertility rates, and the increased risk of reproductive systems and cancer. The solution of "safe sex" (condom usage) for prostituted women belies the inherent power dynamics of sexual exploitation. As the commodity in a transaction between buyer and seller, the sexually exploited woman or child must usually acquiesce to the customer's demands. The price of resistance is often violence. Because of the inherent power inequities of commercial sexual exploitation, the prostituted woman or child is simply not in a position to demand 'safe sex' practices.

As a result, exploitation of women and children in the commercial sex industry is increasingly becoming a death sentence. A 1998 study published in the International Journal of STDs and AIDS revealed that prostituted women and girls in many parts of the world are more likely than not to contract HIV

Some statistics from this study are as follows:

- ❖ 58 percent of the prostituted women in Burkina Faso;
- ❖ 52 percent of the prostituted women in Kenya;
- ❖ nearly half the prostituted women in Cambodia;
- ❖ 34 percent of the prostituted women in Northern Thailand; and
- ❖ 50 percent of the prostituted women in Bombay

Fifty to 70 percent of trafficked Burmese women were infected with HIV/AIDS and of 218 girls rescued from a Bombay brothel, 65 percent were HIV positive. Prostituted women in the West and North, where AIDS education is widespread, also show a far higher incidence of AIDS than women who have not been

subjected to commercial sexual exploitation. For example, in Italy, the incidence of HIV/AIDS among prostituted women grew from 2 percent to 16 percent from 1988 to 1998.

Research also shows that women and girls in situations of sexual exploitation are subjected to shockingly high levels of violence – beatings, rapes, torture and homicides. "Prostitution in Five Countries," a 1998 study of 475 prostitutes in South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, the United States, and Zambia, revealed that, across countries, 73% of the subjects reported physical assault in prostitution and 62% reported having been raped in prostitution, 46% at least five times. A 1985 Canadian report on the sex industry in that country reported that women in prostitution suffer a mortality rate forty times the national average. The violence directed against sexually exploited women and children is neither accidental nor incidental it is endemic to the sex industry and fueled by the dehumanization and devaluation of women.

The physical harm of sexual exploitation is equaled by the psychological harm it wreaks ~ suicidal feelings, clinical depression, disassociative disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder. In "Prostitution in Five Countries," 67 percent of the 475 prostitutes studied met the criteria for a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder, 58 percent reported sexual abuse as children with an average of four perpetrators; and 72 percent reported past or current homelessness. When asked what they needed 92 percent wanted to leave prostitution; 72 percent wanted refuge; and 70 percent wanted job training.

Some people have argued that prostitution, sex trafficking, and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation are not human rights concerns when adults enter these situations consensually and voluntarily. The reality is that many women and girls do enter prostitution voluntarily but whether that is of any significance is questionable when one examines the powerful social conditions that facilitate this process. Vast numbers of women and girls enter prostitution to feed their children, to support their impoverished families, and to survive economically after escaping domestic violence. Young girls continue in

prostitution into adulthood because they were sexually abused or exploited as children. Most adults involved in prostitution entered the industry as children, and studies show that approximately two-thirds have histories of sexual abuse in childhood. For whatever reason women and children enter conditions of sexual exploitation, getting out is often impossible until they are too diseased and traumatised, to continue to attract customers. Sadly the only options for most women who have managed to survive prostitution is destitution or to work as madams or mamasens, controlling and exploiting the younger women who are still marketable commodities.

It is not mere coincidence that the people who are sexually exploited in local and global sex industries are overwhelmingly female, young, and poor. In addition in the global North and the West, the victims of the commercial sex trade are, with few exceptions, members of groups with histories of slavery and discrimination, women and children traumatised by sexual abuse, women who have immigrated from poor countries or have been sexually trafficked, woman who are addicted to drugs, and/or women who are mentally ill. In the global south and East, victims of the sex trade are often young women and girls who are desperately poor and living within cultures where females are expected to sacrifice themselves for the well being of their families and communities. The "good girls and bad girls," "victims and whores". Ironically, in the name of prostitutes' rights, the promoters of such definitions turn their backs on vast numbers of prostituted women-especially those who consent to sexual exploitation and those unable to prove that they were forced.

The solution is not to supplant the 1949 Convention but to strengthen it with a protocol that establishes a monitoring committee and provides a process that enables complaints to be brought before that body. The 1949 Convention must be reevaluated and amended to ensure that it -addresses contemporary practices of sexual exploitation, and all states parties must be urged to ratify it or withdraw their reservations. However, the human rights norms at the core of the 1949 Convention are timeless, especially the recognition that

"prostitution and the accompanying evil of the traffic in persons for the purposes of prostitution are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person....."

We must revolutionize the approach of the criminal justice system to address prostitution, trafficking, and other related practices. Most criminal justice systems throughout the world either tolerate sexual exploitation often as the result of bribes paid by the exploiters, or punish the victims while ignoring the perpetrators. Rarely does the criminal justice system acknowledge the role of customer in the exploitation of victims and the growth of the industry. This approach to justice is misguided and must be redirected more appropriately. An alternative approach was modeled after the criminal justice response which was promoted by advocates for victims of domestic violence.

A redirected approach justice requires that women and children exploited by the sex industry be protected not persecuted. Moreover, change is essential to successful prosecutions of pimps and traffickers. Laws and enforcement strategies that target the sex industry's victims must be eliminated and victims must be accorded the highest degree of protection-through witness protection programmes, grants of asylum and refugee status if they are immigrants, should they choose to testify against abusers.

Existing criminal and civil penalties against pimps, traffickers and other sex industry profiteers must be enforced, and new legislation must be passed if such penalties do not exist or are inadequate. Such laws must define sexual exploitation broadly, so that they address the full spectrum of sexually exploitative practices, including prostitution and the bride trade, and they must be fully implemented. Sufficient resources must be allocated for investigations and enquiries must not be confined within the borders of countries but must be global in scope. Criminal justice efforts against sex exploiters must be international, regional, national and local and must be given priority within each criminal justice system. Cooperation of governments across local, national, and regional boundaries is

essential to ensure the successful prosecution of perpetrators and profiteers.

Criminal justice efforts against sexual exploitation must acknowledge the responsibility of the prostitution customer. Men who buy the bodies of women and children for purposes of prostitution are sex exploiters, as are pimps and traffickers. Their demand fuels the growth and expansion of the sex industry. While they may not be as culpable as sex industry profiteers, they must be held accountable, criminally and civilly. Governments must enforce existing laws against sex industry customers, adopt laws that penalize their acts of exploitation, and conduct prevention campaigns educating the public about the harm of sexual exploitation.

Finally, we must demand that government and the private sector develop and expand the same kind of services for sex industry victims and survivors that in many places are offered to victims of domestic violence. In order to leave conditions of sexual exploitation, prostituted women and children need refuge counseling, free and confidential medical care, lawyers to fight for legal protections and rights, substance abuse programmes, income assistance, child care, education and job training programmes and permanent housing. Survivors of the sex industry need the financial support and technical assistance to build organizations to fight for their rights and to assist others. Existing non-governmental organizations providing services to victims of violence must adopt their programmes and open their doors to sexually exploited women and children. All over the world there are model programmes functioning that, offer women and children freedom from sexual exploitation. Global sex industry preys on sexual, racial, and socioeconomic inequality, profits from it, and reinforces and exacerbates the problems. It eroticises inequality as it makes inequality immensely profitable.

The notion that prostitution is acceptable employment, as insinuated by the term 'sex work' is dangerously misleading. This terminology ignores powerful social forces of poverty, violence, and inequality that propel women and children into sexual exploitation and the harm that women and children sustain

as a direct consequence of sexual exploitation. For some, the 'sex work' model is a misguided attempt to bestow dignity on a stigmatised and marginalised population. However, what in fact it does, is legitimise the systems of sexual exploitation that devastate the lives of prostituted women and children.

It is not an accident that the organised commercial sex industry is one of the biggest promoters of the notion that prostitution is "sex work"... "a job like any other job," the notion that commercial sexual exploitation is viable work has been embraced by some governments, with catastrophic implications for poor women and girls. For example, the government of Belize proudly asserted in a report to a United Nations conference following the Fourth World Conference on women in Beijing: "Recognized prostitution in Belize is a gender - specific form of migrant labour that serves the same economic function for women as agriculture work offers to men and often for better pay".

The appropriate model for understanding commercial sexual exploitation is not the labour model but the violence against women model. Like domestic violence, exploitation in the sex industry is carried out by powerful males intent on wielding domination over comparatively powerless women and children. The dynamics and tactics of power and control employed by abusive husbands include -intimidation, threats, isolation, emotional abuse, financial abuse, minimizing, denying, blaming and employing male privilege. Threats based on immigration status - are employed by pimps, procurers and traffickers. Both battered women and prostituted women have been known to enter abusive situations voluntarily, to choose to stay in or return to abusive situations, to deny that they are being subjected to abuse, and to defend their abusers. Abused women's advocates understand that extricating oneself from an abusive relationship is a process that often requires substantial social and material support and that the psychological effects of trauma can impede women from leaving abusive situations. Just as poverty is a powerful force propelling women into situations of sexual exploitation, it is a significant factor in inducing women to stay in situations of domestic violence. However, in the case of domestic violence, it is not argued that voluntarily entering

or staying in an abusive domestic relationship for economic reasons makes that situation "work". Why then do some people argue that the fact that some women voluntarily enter into, or stay in conditions of sexual exploitation proves that prostitution is "work"?

The reasons behind the legitimization of sexual exploitation as "sex work" are obvious. Unlike domestic abuse, sexual exploitation makes billions of dollars that lines the pockets of pimps, traffickers, brothel owners, legitimate businessmen and sometimes, government officials. Conservatively estimated, the sex industry earns twenty billion dollars a year annually. Viewing sexual exploitation as work rather than abuse shields the industry from criticism that could lead to legislative and policy changes that would impinge on the industry's profits.

Many have a sexual stake in the perpetuation of the sex industry. Millions of men all over the world, in every strata of society, are sex industry consumers who get physical and psychological gratification from buying the bodies of women and children. Last year a contingent of Latin American heads of state paid a recreational visit to a notorious strip club in Venezuela. United Nations peacekeeping forces were prominent prostitution customers while stationed in Mozambique, Cambodia, and former Yugoslavia. It is uncomfortable for men to face the reality of what they are inflicting on the woman and children whose bodies they purchase. Perceiving sexually exploited women and children as "sex workers" helps absolve prostitution customers of any feelings of responsibility.

There are those who romanticize the sex industry as a glamorous "outlaw" profession and believe that but for acts of coercion or deceit it is beneficial to women. Supporters of prostitution believe that organizing "sex workers" to fight for the "right to prostitute" and to improve "working conditions" in the sex industry is the solution. What is curious about this position is not only the gross denial of the magnitude of harm suffered by sexually exploited women and children and of the overwhelming misogyny that pervades the sex industry, but the obvious fact that even when assessed as a labour practice "sex work" is destructive to "sex workers".

What other form of labor requires that the worker be physically invaded by those who view him or her with contempt, subjects the worker to tremendous risk of fatal disease, leaves the worker psychologically traumatised, renders the worker employable for only a short period of his/her life span, and offers the worker no job skills with which to survive after she/he is no longer employable in the trade. When evaluated this way, it becomes clear that "sex work" is akin to other forms of gross exploitation never dignified by the term "work". For example, exploitation as a "mule" in drug trafficking, exploitation by organ traffickers; and for women, reproductive exploitation for the benefit of traffickers in infants.

Is there any hope of addressing this deeply rooted and escalating human rights crisis? Is there any way to begin to halt the massive devastation caused by the global sex industry? The answer lies not in the labour model but in the strategies and approaches developed by advocates fighting violence against women. Like responses to other practices of racial and sexual domination and abuse, strategies against sexual exploitation must include the expansion of human rights norms, the development and implementation of legislative and policy reforms, and programs at the grassroots level.

To start, we must recognise that trafficking, prostitution, and other practices of sexual exploitation are interrelated practices of gender, race, and socio-economic-based domination that reinforce gender, race, and socio-economic-based hierarchies. We must recognise that everyone has a fundamental right to be free from sexual exploitation. At the same time, we must repudiate all attempts to legitimise prostitution as "work".

We must strengthen and enforce the two international human rights instruments that address this human rights crisis, the 1949 Convention on "Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others" and the "Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women". The 1949 Convention establishes vitally important human rights norms and remains a potential wedge against pimps, procurers and traffickers. But it is under attack. Some would like to see the 1949 Convention supplanted by a convention that addresses only

forced trafficking. The critics of the 1949 Convention are correct when they point out that it has no enforcement mechanisms and has been ratified by a relatively few countries. But their motivation is not to strengthen the attack against the sex industry but to limit it so that organised commercial sexual exploitation is off limits unless carried out by deception and force.

There are many problems with this approach. First, as discussed above, some women and children who are horribly exploited by the sex industry enter it voluntarily and consensually and as a result of powerful social inequalities like poverty, discrimination and violence. Those who pimp, traffic, procure and profit from the exploitation of these women would be shielded from prosecution and accountability while their victims would be denied protection and relief. Secondly, even women who are forced and deceived would not be protected and their abusers would not be held accountable unless force and deceit could be proven. Anyone who has worked with sex trade victims knows how difficult it is to meet such a proof requirement, as traffickers and pimps control the evidence as well as the women. Sex industry profiteers can easily conceal evidence of coercion and manufacture evidence of consent, e.g. by making their victims pose smilingly for pornography. Moreover, the unfortunate reality is that the credibility of sexually exploited women is likely to be suspect in any legal forum. Why then should the prosecutions of their pimps and traffickers hinge on such discriminations as they undoubtedly would if proof of coercion, were a legal requirement. Thirdly, basing legal definitions on distinctions between sex industry survivors who are forced and those who volunteer reinforces deeply rooted misogynistic stereotypes of the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center, which equally serves women who have escaped from brothel owners and battering husbands; the Buklod Center, which offers hope to sexually exploited Philippines; CERSO, which offers homes and education to girls from the streets of Chile; and S.A.G.E., where prostitution survivors educate first offender "Johns" about the reality of the sex trade.

The sex industry and its defenders have succeeded in persuading many that the global sex trade cannot be eliminated

and that it can only be regulated. They insist that the sexual exploitation of new generations and populations of women and children is something to be accepted and valorized. They are wrong. The sexual exploitation of women and children is no more inevitable than the race-based slavery it resembles. The global sex industry can be challenged and the decimation of the human rights of women and children stopped-but only if there is the political will. Advocates for battered women have campaigned for zero tolerance of domestic violence, and while domestic violence has not been stopped, there has been remarkable progress. It is time for a campaign of zero tolerance of sexual exploitation if the promise of universal human rights is to be realised.

The Other Question of Women and Gender in "Western Historiography"

BY NARMADHA THIRANAGAMA*

*But for Adam no suitable helper was found.
So the Lord God caused the man to falling to a deep
sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the
man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then
the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had
taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.*

*"This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called 'woman',
for she was taken out of man" Gen 2:20-23*

The creation of the first man and woman as defined by Genesis was an earth-shattering event that echoed throughout the history of Europe and to the present day. It was crucial in creating and disseminating ideas about men and takes part in a long running debate about the nature of man and woman, their relationship to each other, and their positions in society. It also forms a part of an

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authoritative canon of thinking which has been seen as key factor in subordinating women, not only in practical terms, within society, but also within historical narratives. Just as woman's derivation from man's thirteenth rib subordinated her to his command, her historical presence was ignored or not seen as relevant to the story of 'mankind', of 'Adam'. This exclusion from historical narratives was both a tool and a form of oppression. The feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s sought, through political activity to change and improve women's lives, and their rights within society, and sought to re-introduce women to history and to society and reclaim their place as agents, not victims. These early attempts to change the basis of traditional history did not remain static; they changed and evolved, grew more sophisticated and matured with experience. As more research and activity in this field was conducted, the variety of women's experiences, and the highly variable nature of the patriarchal system has been acknowledged. But most importantly, assumptions about the nature of 'woman' have been broken down. The search for 'women's history' unearthed the lack of a universal category of 'woman' and of a universal female experience. Instead of accepting essentialist notions of what constituted men and women, women's historians are turning to 'gender' as sharp analytical tool, to unpack their own assumptions and those of the historical periods under scrutiny. Gender is used as a term that describes the social and cultural construction of the sexes, as opposed to a biological definition. Thus, the 'creation' of man and woman takes on different, more complex overtones. The identities and natures of both 'woman' and 'man' become unstable, contested and inextricably linked together. Using gender as a primary concept enables the historian examining "women's history" to look at the role men had. This leads to searching questions about the assumptions made in all areas of historical study. How much can male identity and notions of masculinity be taken at face value? Examining these questions have been seen by historians like Joan Scott as enabling a radical overhaul of the practice of history itself. This essay will argue that the categories 'women's history' and 'gender history' are not mutually exclusive. An awareness of gender enables the critique of the idea of one form of 'womanhood' or women's struggles or women's social history. It makes a multiplicity of women's histories possible.

The debates and concerns surrounding women's history and gender history are not purely historical. They are intimately connected with wider philosophical and political controversies. Moreover, this interest is not a recent phenomenon. From the earliest point of western philosophical thinking, the issues surrounding sex and gender, the relations of men and women were thought about, debated and ascribed importance. Philosophers and thinkers from Plato, Aristotle, and St. Augustine through to men like Luther and Calvin, and more recent contributors such as Mill, Rousseau, Wollestonecraft and de Beavoir all had their opinion. This ranged from what constituted man and woman, how they should behave, and the problem of women's subordination in society. For those interested in the history of women, and the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s, this dialogue was highly important, in either helping to confirm women's low position or challenging it. The attempt to define 'woman' and 'man' and to prescribe appropriate behaviour is an activity that can be identified as significant for what takes place in society, whether this was in support or resistance. Women's history in all its permutations was part of this process of defining gender and sexuality, while always looking critically at it.

Until the 20th century, when a concerted attempt was made to change the status of women, the dialogue concerning man and woman in Europe was generally to the disadvantage of women. Women were not allowed many of the same rights as men before the law, and her everyday life was often circumscribed by both official and unofficial customs and beliefs. For example, women who committed adultery, would incur harsher penalties almost everywhere in early modern Europe. Even if a rare separation was allowed on account of the husband's behaviour, the wife would still lose custody (Hufton, Olwen 1995: 54-55). This system has often been called patriarchy, which literally means 'rule by father' (Rowbotham, S 1981), but which has been stretched to describe the 'institutionalised male dominance over women and children in the family and the subordination of women in society in general (Fletcher, A. 1995: xv). It was identified as being founded on religious, political and social activity. This ranged from St. Paul in Ephesians who told wives to obey their husbands as the church obeyed and respected Jesus Christ, to St. Augustine, who having

defended and justified the leadership of the household by 'true fathers' went on to see this as a microcosm of order throughout society (St. Augustine, 1993: 695).

The Christian church and its teachings had seen women as inferior because she was the descendent of Eve, who had brought about man's fall when she had succumbed to the temptations of Satan. However, Enlightenment thinking which was critical of much Christian thinking hardly reinstated women on an equal par with men. While men's rights and liberties were proclaimed, women were still denied theirs. In Jean Jacques Rousseau's opinion, women's needs were subordinate to men's needs. Like many other thinkers, Rousseau saw this situation as one brought about by natural differences of sex. In effect what these differences meant for Rousseau was that 'men should be strong and active; women should be weak and passive' and women should offer no resistance to this situation (Rousseau, 1997: 335). Moreover,

"Women do wrongly complain of the inequality of man made laws; this inequality is not of man's making or at any rate it is not the result of mere prejudice" (Ibid p. 335).

Mary Wollestonecraft, who asserted that women's reason was stifled by society, rather than educated and encouraged, challenged this view (Wollestonecraft, M. 1997: 351-352). Such views as Rousseau's have always found their challengers, from men such as John Stuart Mill and Shelley as well as women like Mary Astell and Chirstine de Pisan. However it could be argued that only in the 20th century has there been a concerted movement to create real, radical and lasting change for women in Europe and America.

When such a challenge was being demanded in contemporary life, and such a challenge being made to existing social and political structures of thought, the omission of women from the historical narrative looked glaring. Just as women were not present in institutions of power and influence, they were excluded from the historical past. Only rarely were women's activities accorded real interest. This was compounded by the areas of historical study that

were accorded the most interest: high politics, diplomacy and military history. The workings of power and politics were assumed to have little to do with women, unless they had been raised up to influence and power through birth, wealth or exceptional talent.

Questioning the patriarchal subordination of women meant that traditional philosophical and historical models had to be challenged. Above all, history had to be written about all human beings; women had to be reinstated to their full importance as half of humankind. Olwen Hufton indicates the importance attached to finding a woman's perspective in history, based on her actual experience. The early 'feminist historiography' wanted to 'seek out a specifically female experience in the past'(Olwen Hufton, 1995 :1).

Early work illustrative of this approach discussed women in different contexts; their working life, as members of families, of religious movements, as survivors or the oppressed. Fundamental to this viewpoint was a sense that the historical narrative itself played a part in the imprisoning of women's voices and experiences, and propagating current inequalities. It could thus play a part in liberating women. This gave rise to a consciously political approach to historical activities. An example of historical studies of women arising from this agenda is seen in the work of Sally Alexander, who in her introduction to a collection of her essays says:

'the first essays have a firm location and origin in the political curiosity of the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and early '70s – when to use the word 'woman' in intellectual work was radical in itself: what did it mean to be a woman, and what do women want?'(Alexander, 1997 xii)

This attitude is fundamental when trying to understand why the field of women's history has kept on changing and evolving, and why it turned to 'gender' as an important analytical tool. It wanted to achieve real change in historical practice, and it was receptive to new ideas and debates both in historiography and other fields such as the social sciences and philosophy. Bock sees it as demanding a 'new vision of history'. The attempt to achieve this

has been a catalyst for change. While the political aims of many of its proponents have been criticized, it has not prevented 'women's history' as a whole from being open to change.

Women's history was not alone in challenging traditional historical narratives. The field of history was beginning to be subject to many different pressures for change, facing accusations of ignoring large areas of historical experience, either deliberately or through carelessness. The influence of women's history converged with that of the social history movement, which asked similar questions of the traditions historical framework and found in wanting. It questioned the absence of those who were outside the elite: the poor, the illiterate, the peasantry, and women. It ascribed equal importance to areas such as family, daily life, marriage and sexuality, a perspective of history that came from 'below' rather than top down'(Jim Sharpe, 1991: 25-41). Social historians saw these as intrinsically important and interesting, as necessary to the knowledge of past periods as what happened in Parliament and the actions of great men, kings and queens. An example of this kind of works is Keith Thomas's 'Religion and the Decline of Magic' which it self was influenced by anthropological work on Magic and witchcraft belief among tribes in Africa. The field of history was therefore subject to many different pressures to change. Though their call for the inclusion or integration of many different peoples into the historical narrative may seem simple, it actually produced a radical questioning of historical thinking which continued to question the parameters within which the debate was conducted. Post-colonial histories made similar demands on Western historical narratives; it challenged the emphasis placed on Western culture and progress, and highlighted glaring silences in its portrayal of the past(Southgate B. 1996 :101-103). It pointed to the traditional historical narrative as part of colonialisation, as enterprise that attempted to cover up exploitation as a kind of civilising process. Moreover, post-structuralist and post-modern theories also had an impact, when it disputed notions of linear progressivist history and the emphasis on the Enlightenment notion of subject, self and historical agency. It offered by contrast a more fragmented view of historical experience.

Thus it can be seen that the fundamental basis of historical work and experience were live issues, which provided the ground for fruitful questioning and discussion. Women's history played a key part in this process, both in challenging and being challenged in turn. There can be observed an ongoing critical process conducted among women's historians themselves. In the 'Second Sex', Simone de Beauvoir had posed a critical question: 'What is a woman?' and goes on to say:

"All agree in recognising the fact that females exist in the human species; today as always they make up about one half of humanity. And yet we are told that femininity is in danger; we are exhorted to be women, become women. It would appear, then, that every female human being is not necessarily a woman to be so considered she must share in that mysterious and threatened reality known as femininity." (Wollstonecraft: 542)

When the project of women's history was first undertaken, its subject was a given. To put it crudely, a woman was defined by her biology and her nature, which then had important implications for the kind of life she would have, her relations with the community she lived in, the work she did and what she thought and felt. This assumption was being increasingly criticised.

As detailed work was conducted into women's lives in different countries, cultures and time periods, questions were raised into the differing ways women were regarded in different societies, and how they interacted with their surroundings. It brought home the realisation that a universalised notion of woman whether consciously or unconsciously held would not stand up to rigorous examination. For some commentators, the emphasis on women's solidarity in the political field has caused some women historians to bring misconceptions to the past. However, as Bock points out, this view was also held by traditional historians who assumed that women live uniform lives, and that their importance could be covered in one chapter (Bock, G. 1987:5). Women's history has emphasized the variety and complexity of the experiences of women. The definition of womanhood varied according to different social, cultural and economic contexts. It was obvious that women who

were separated by class and wealth would lead very different lives. How far could queen Elizabeth and a peasant woman from her own kingdom be said to lead comparable lives, or how usefully examined through the same paradigms?

Moreover, a powerful voice of criticism rose from black feminists who saw a definition of 'woman' that was a white middle class conception, and which was then universalised to include all women. Sojourner Truth's powerful indictment of racist and sexist America made in 1851 was only now being fully recognised. Sojourner asked why she, as a black woman was not accorded real femininity, and why white men would not allow women, or black people a place in the world.

"Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted.... and no man could head me. And ain't I a woman? (Bock, G, 1987: 5)"

Bell Hooks, who takes the title of her book from Sojourner Truth's question, asks why black women were never considered as both black and women. For Hooks, black women were marginalised, their real existence and experience forgotten or ignored when commentators and activists addressed women (white women) and racism (black men). Bell Hook's criticism applies equally both to history writing, political activism and literature. These was an element of thinking that perpetuated-

"the image of black women as masculinised, domineering amazonic creatures. The black female was depicted by whites as an Amazon because they saw her ability to endure hardships no 'lady' was supposedly capable of enduring as a sign that she possessed an animalistic sub-human strength." (Hooks, B. 1981:81)

Black women did not fit into accepted stereotypes of femininity, and suffer consequently in the present day, as well as in the historical record. Their highly sexualised portrayal hides the brutal

truth of their experience during slavery and after, by covering up rape as prostitution, or consensual sex. For Hooks this hides a system whereby

"American white men idealized white womanhood [while] they sexually assaulted and brutalized black women". (Hooks, B. 1981:81)

Many white women during this time defined their sexual purity in opposition to sensual black slave women, seeing black women as a sinful temptation for white men (ibid pp 15 – 49). Thus, relations between different groups of women are as important as those between men and women.

Many historians such as Natalie Zemon Davis, Joan Scott and Gisela Bock found the old models and assumptions unsatisfactory. Bock especially has argued for a more subtle view of historical woman, pointing to the "otherness, the differences and inequalities among women themselves" and saying "the history of women can only be grasped in the plural, not in the singular" (Bock, G. 1987:5).¹⁸ In other words, histories of women must be sensitive to context and culture. Transplanting the same notions of 'freedom' or liberation would lead to highly misleading readings of a situation. Colley has emphasized the way that women in Britain played a part in the conservative response to the French revolution, and their support for an assertion of British national identity (Colley L.1992:).¹⁹ Simply because women were treated unfairly or unequally does not mean that they would not collaborate, or that they would always be opposing patriarchal structures. Drawing from my own experience, of the civil war in Sri Lanka I would point out that simply because women fight alongside men in the fight for a separate Tamil state, a more equal position for women does not necessarily follow. In fact, the opposite has been the case. When the 'Tigers' use imagery of women, the emphasis is on purity and chastity. Moreover, winning an equal right to die in battle could be characterised as an unhelpful victory. Similarly, Ann Hughes's examination of women's roles in the Leveller movement in England in the 1640's has stressed the way that male Leveller leaders like John Lilburne and Richard Overton

used their wives voices to reinforce an entirely traditional message about their own masculine virtues as good citizens and husbands. (Hughes, Ann 1995: 162-188)²⁰

Hand in hand with a sense of the variety of womanhood was a concern for the importance of the social construction of womanhood. It is in its attempt to define what 'femininity' was and how women's experiences can be identified that women's historians absorbed the influence of theories about gender, and the work of thinkers like Foucault. 'Gender' was used as a term to describe a process whereby differences between the sexes, and their behaviour were constructed by society, as opposed to sex, which has been taken to signify a description of biological differences between men and women. As Scott puts it, "Sexual difference is not, then, the originary cause from which social organization ultimately can be derived. It is instead a variable social organization that itself must be explained." (Scott, J. 1988:): Gender allowed for the accommodation of the new picture of women's histories which was being constructed, as well as opening up new avenues of inquiry.

However, 'gender history' took on a new emphasis when it interacted with the work of thinkers like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, whose work has been variously labelled 'post-structuralist' and 'post-modern' (Barker, H. and Chalus, E. 1007: 6). Gender became a major concern for those thinkers who were interested in the basis of knowledge, and the way this is produced, accepted or resisted.

For Michel Foucault, the boundaries and definitions that society drew up are immensely significant, whether it was the line between madness and sanity, or how sexuality and the body were characterised. Foucault perceives the supposed objectivity of science and medicine as only one part of a cultural attempt to comprehend, label and categorise an activity which is shaped by power and power relations. Foucault argues that the operation of power is different to how this has been traditionally portrayed. Rather than power being exercised from the top down, it circulates within society, and it is

exercised and expressed through language and relationships between human beings, not just through the apparatus of the law, or the state (M. Foucault 1980: 98). For Hobbes, defining the meaning of words was so important that only the sovereign should have it. (Hobbes, T. 1991: cap.:26) Foucault argues :

“rather than ask ourselves how the sovereign appears to us in lofty isolation, we should ask ourselves how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces energies ... desires”(Houcault, M. 1980: 97).

This enlarged view of what constitutes power and powerful activity has obvious relevance when looking at the construction of sexuality. The construction of sex and gender in this view occurs locally, rather descending top down. The capacity for resistance and individual agency is vastly increased. This offers many insights and implications for male and female gender relations, as well as for patriarchy. Rather than there being two opposed, fixed identities, ‘man’ and ‘woman’, there are multiple male and female identities, shaped as they are by local discourses of gender, and intersecting with dialogues of politics and culture. While post-structuralist contributions to ‘women’s history’ and ‘gender history’ are very controversial, their impact on the whole has been very valuable.

This view has been taken up by Joan Scott, one of the most influential proponents of the importance of gender as a category of analysis. What appears most valuable from the work of post-structuralist thinkers to Scott is the challenge to ‘meaning’. (Scott, J. 1988:5) ²⁶

“Precisely because it addresses questions of epistemology, relativizes the status of all knowledge, links knowledge and power, and theorizes these in terms of the operations of difference. I think post-structuralism (or at least some of the approaches generally associated with Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida) can offer feminism a powerful analytic perspective”(ibid :4).

The connection of gender with political discourse is crucial

for Scott, because it increases the relevance of women’s history or women’s experiences to the male stronghold of power and politics. National identity, high politics, wider political culture, military history are all intensely gendered.

Both Scott and other historians(Newman, G.) have seized upon this connection to discuss such areas as national identity and political culture in terms of gender construction. This approach necessarily involves the discussion of both male and female construction of sexuality, a development that is immensely significant, and will be discussed below. Kathleen Wilson’s examination of political culture in Britain between 1715 – 1785 highlights the importance of the language of ‘effeminacy’ and ‘masculine virility’ for English political dialogue of this time(Wilson, K. 1995). Wilson cites the Reverend John Brown of Newcastle who condemned Britain’s aristocratic classes for losses in foreign policy and war, blaming it on their ‘luxurious and effeminate Manners’, leaving Britain ‘a Nation which resembles Women’(ibid :187).

However, some women’s historians have hesitated in applying ‘gender’ in more than a limited sense. Sally Alexander, commenting that ‘For me however, sexual difference has been unavoidable’, goes on to say;

“I want to draw attention to the unconscious dimension of subjectivity. Subjectivity and sexual difference have life breathed into them by the unconscious. Gender may be an adequate shorthand for the social forms that sexual difference sometimes takes through its uneven articulations in kinship, property relations, labour and law but gender obscures the difficulties .. that sexual difference foregrounds.” (S. Alexander ,1997: xix-xx)

This view misses the important and fundamental contribution that ‘gender’ makes; rather than describing social forms, it helps create them. However, with her appeal to ‘subjectivity’, Alexander is joined by historians such as Joan Hoff, who characterised post-modern theories as paralyzing the field of women’s history.

In this view, post-structuralist theories, and in particular, deconstruction, has made away with the category of 'woman' altogether. Taken to the extreme 'woman' could be seen entirely as a social category, an identity which had little concrete meaning. Women as a historical subject can therefore no longer exist, and their experiences are rendered meaningless; as Robert Shoemaker and Mary Vincent put it, 'the implicit danger was that, once again, women would be rendered invisible to history' (Shoemaker R. and Vincent, M. 1998: 9-10). Mary Poovey, who favours adopting many of the implications of deconstruction, acknowledges the problem:

"The challenge for those of us who are convinced both that real historical women do exist and share certain experiences and that deconstruction's demystification of presence makes theoretical sense to work out some way to think both women and "woman"" (Poovey, Mary 1988: 52-53).

As Poovey suggests, the social construction of 'woman' should not blind historians to the fact that this construction still has concrete implications for the way that women live their lives, and the forces that shape them (ibid: 62). This is where historical studies, at once 'women's history' and 'gender history', will illuminate, examining real lives lived out against a background of social and self-definition (Tosh, John 1998: 65-85).

The impact of the debates surrounding women's history and gender history is evident in the changing attitudes to 'patriarchy'. When feminist historians first used this model, it was characterised by a monolithic and universal quality (Fletcher, A. 1994: 61-81). This is hardly surprising when the domination of men and masculine institutions in society was such an obvious presence all over the world, in diverse cultures and societies. Foot binding in China, suti in India, the veil in Islamic societies all expressed the oppression of women to male patriarchal ideals. However, a real understanding of these different emblems of a woman's suffering can only be gained when they are set within a particular cultural and political context. It is this version of 'patriarchy', a model that is adaptable, shifting and highly sensitive to context that is now increasingly adopted.

Sheila Rowbotham was one of the foremost critics of the old feminist model. In her famous article 'The Trouble with Patriarchy', Rowbotham criticised the assumptions of a monolithic model of patriarchy. The problems it presented was the implicit strain biological essentialism involved, portraying men and women forever opposed, and leaving women very little agency.

"Patriarchy' suggests a fatalistic submission which allows no space for the complexities of women's defiance." (Botham, S. 1981: 365)

While Rowbotham argues that 'patriarchy' would never be able to accommodate the complexity of men and women's relationships this opinion has been contested. Bennett has argued that 'patriarchy' is intrinsic to women's experience throughout history. Even though "oppression has been taken for granted" (Bennet, J.M. 1989: ..), Bennett criticises historians who are unwilling to use what is considered a politically loaded concept. This view has been supported by Fletcher in his latest study of gender relations in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Fletcher believes that while 'patriarchy' should be understood as a process which is continuously re-made, articulating changing notions and circumstances surrounding gender and ordinary men and women's lives.

"The structures of domination which sustain patriarchy have never been inert, they have always been adaptable; they were never entirely solid, they always were and still are adjustable (Fletcher, A. 1985: xv)."

Fletcher's study, along with others such as 'The Gentleman's Daughter' by Amanda Vickery, illustrate the possibilities open to women to survive and negotiate patriarchal societies while nevertheless highlighting the difficulties involved. Observing how Elizabeth Parker manages to persuade her father to allow her marriage to the man she loves, Vickery notes that,

"The darling daughter was patriarchy's Achilles heel." (Vickery, A. 1998: 49)

Negotiation between husband and wives are particularly evident in the case studies of marriages that both Fletcher and Vickery cite. Reverend Ramsden and his wife Betty had a lively and loving relationship, and Ramsden's letters reveal his ease with his wife's strong and forceful personality (ibid :66-68). Elizabeth Parker enjoyed a happy first marriage with Robert Parker, yet her late second marriage, and the marriage of Ellen Weeton to Aaron Stock emphasise the prison that unhappy marriages could become for women who had the law and the church against them (ibid :76-86).

Fundamental to 'patriarchy' is the domination of masculine values and institutions within society. This becomes a problematic notion, assuming the uncontested existence of one masculinity. If there is a multiplicity of women's identities, the same must be true of men's identities too. Terrell Carver has highlighted the way that women's historians use 'masculinity' as an unproblematic notion. Discussing the interpretation of great (male) thinkers and 'great books' Carver argues that masculinity needs to be investigated, and when this is done it,

"becomes plural and complex, and the feminist reading of classic texts in political theory as generically masculine becomes problematic. These texts must now be seen as normative constructs against a background of suppressed and varied behaviour – other masculinities" (Carver, T. 1996: 4)

'Gender history' is meaningless of the concept of masculinity goes unexplored and taken for granted. Natalie Zemon Davis has already underlined this point in 1976, when she said.

"it seems to me that we should be interested in the history of both women and men, that we should not be working only on the subjected sex any more than an historian of class can focus entirely on peasants. Our goal is to understand the significance of the sexes, of gender groups in the historical past!" (Davis N.Z. 1976: 90)"

Despite this, work of male identity has been slow to develop, and Alexandra Shepherd has pointed out that this has 'skewed' gen-

der histories which have dealt with women (Shepherd, A.J. 1997 :2). It is increasingly clear that when historians have looked at gender construction, male and female identities are intertwined. Perry's study of early modern Seville stresses the way that male and female notions of honour are linked, and impact on each other. Perry (Perry, M. 1990:7) cites a local proverb which juxtaposed two symbols of disorder; a broken sword representing a dishonoured man, and the wandering woman, representing female shame. (Shepherd, A. 1997 :217-231)

Regarding masculinity as an uncomplicated phenomenon creates problems when trying to gain real insight into 'patriarchy' and for relations between men and women. It gives 'masculinity' a strength and coherence that it does not have (though the full implication of the relationship between patriarchy and constructions of masculinity are yet to be fully investigated). Shepherd has found that prescriptive literature's definition of ideal masculine behaviour emphasized the difficulty of achieving true 'manliness'. Men may be naturally superior, but few could manage to achieve the ideal. Men were in danger from within themselves – in danger from immoderate and passionate love, from uncontrolled sexual behaviour and excessive drinking (ibid). This view of virtuous masculinity is illustrated in Philip Sidney's 'The Old Arcadia'. The two heroes, Pyrocles and Musidorus slowly wander away from the path of true masculine virtue, when they encounter the lures of Arcadia, and erotic love. When Pyrocles decides to dress as a woman in order to get close to the woman he has fallen in love with, Musidorus admonishes him, saying:

"this effeminate love of a woman doth so womanise a man that, if you yield to it, it will not only make you a famous Amazon, but a launder, a distaff spinner (Sidney, P. Sir 1994:18)"

They neglect to rescue the Princess Erona from imprisonment, because passionate love causes their conscience to dull. 'The Old Arcadia' both illustrates the values of the prescriptive literature that Shepherd cites, and the unresolved failure of the two princes to act according to the values they were brought up by, highlights the insecure nature of masculinity.

The growing importance of 'gender history' has received a mixed reception from women's historians. Some see it as an invaluable aid in unpacking social constructions of sexuality, femininity and masculinity in order to really achieve a very different kind of history. Olwen Hufton comments that 'to write history without reference to gender is to distort the vision', (Hufton, O. 1988:82) Sally Humphreys agrees, saying

"There are now signs of increasing awareness that history written exclusively about, by and for women can never achieve more than ghetto significance." (Humphrey, S. : 87)

Gender History has allowed deeper questions to be asked of the historical narrative, which historians such as Humphreys and Scott saw women's history as failing to achieve. As Joan Scott observes, "it opens to critical scrutiny the very nature of history as a subject-centered epistemology" (Scott, J. 1991; 51-52). At every step of the way, this attempt at critical scrutiny encountered opposition, controversy and criticism, as well as providing fruitful ground for historical research and ideas. Oakley, who introduced the term 'gender' into the debate has now expressed concern about its limitations in expressing inequalities of power between men and women (Oakley, A. 1997:29-55).

The transition from women's history to the history of gender is a problematic and uneven process. The history of women is a large and growing field of which gender history is only one aspect. Imposing a structure on the dialogue between gender theories and women's history would be misleading; notions of essential differences between the sexes are still flourishing in the work of thinkers such as Carol Gilligan. Anti-essentialist notions which stress the social construction of male and female have also been around since the very beginning of the women's movement. The debate concerning the relationship between biological and cultural sexuality says as much about contemporary fears and moral dilemmas about men, women and the family as it does about the historical past. The demand for women's history was intimately connected to contemporary political demands, and the absence of women from the

historical narrative was an indictment both of Western European societies' attitudes to women and their conceptions of history. The writing of history is vitally important for the self-definition of any society. The most valuable thing about the growing importance of gender history is that it has allowed women's history to step outside its need to simply replace, or supplement male history. Instead it has allowed a more balanced portrayal of the past while its interaction with post-structuralist theories demands the questioning of all grand narratives and supposedly universal statements.

Gender history is thus not a model which claims to explain every aspect of the construction of sexuality or the relationship between men and women but one which seeks to question wider historical models and the assumptions of women's historians. The merits of this approach can be seen in the variety of women's histories now available – from biographies such as Foreman's "Georgina, Duchess of Devonshire", to histories of gender relations, such as "The Gentleman's Daughter by Vickery and Gender Sex and Subordination" Fletcher, to studies of women as a group; Olwen Hufton, and Merry Wiesner's work are good examples. Gender history has opened up women's history, rather than stifle it, increasing the possibility for variety. A greater spectrum of women's voices are now being heard. This open-endedness of the project of gender investigations and its potential is apparent in the fact that the supposed transition of women's history into gender history has given birth to a whole new category, that of men's history which is only now beginning to be fully explored.

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