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Krishna Ahooja-Pate1*

"Income is more likely to be spent on human development when women control the cash" ***Human Development Report 1996.***

Introduction

In development literature of the I990s it is being slowly recognised that there is a great historical shift of economic predominance from the countries of the North towards the Asian and the Pacific Rim region. The major achievement of this vast region of a population of about 1.7 billion could be several .factors which are not purely "economic" in origin. The distinction between "economic and non-economic" factors in social sciences has not been very clear, particularly when different variables are taken into account in the construction of general development indicators. According to one school of thought, what is measurable or quantifiable falls within the parameters of 'economics' as a science. Other writers who have moved on to the analysis of development issues from 'pure economics' have generally classified social and cultural factors as "non-economics." The significant point that emerges in the history of measurement methodologies is that the socio-cultural aspects of development have been usually given lower priority and frequently allocated a secondary place in the hierarchy of social sciences.

The totality of development indicators (for definitions see Annex I) that measure or qualify the rates of economic growth among countries globally are referred to as "socio-economic" by various disciplines and macro-measurement surveys. Among these, the only development indicator that has pride of place and which is considered to be purely economics the gross national product (GNP). In its computation also, selected 'socio-economic' variables are taken into account without any distinction about different disciplines. Recently, gross national product (GNP) has been replaced by another indicator called Purchasing Power Parity (PPP); regarded as more realistic in measuring 'quality of life' or comparing standard of living among different regions and countries. For example, its use is becoming more prevalent since UNDP constructed the new Human Development Index (HID) on the following three pillars in 1990: adult literacy, life expectancy and purchasing power parity (PPP). The major problem of constructing purely social indicators in developing countries has been linked to the diversity of methods used for data collection and compilation. For example, in order to analyze the national performance gaps in the areas of child survival, nutrition and education, UNICEF has constructed specific social indicators in relation to GNP: under five mortality rate, percentage of children reaching grade 5 and underweight children (UNICEF, *Progress of Nations* 1993, p. 51). The confusion created by diverse concepts is of such seriousness today that "it calls for an international reconsideration of current assumption and practices" according to UNRISD. The unfortunate fact is that reliable, observation-based statistical data for a large number of the more important social indicators simply do not exist in many

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developing countries and have little prospect of becoming available in the near future by current methods of data collection (UNRISD, 1988).

The current methodologies of data collection and data tabulation are relevant to the analysis in this paper. This becomes even more significant when analyzing gender inequalities, where bias in collection and compilation of information has been and continues to be a normal feature. Some countries of Asia are currently undertaking more comprehensive household surveys and censuses "in which some of the missing variables, such as multiple activities of women" in the rural areas and the "method of counting the numbers of days per year of economic activity", were included. This was an excellent example of a new trend. The latest census conducted in February 1991 in India incorporated two new questions in order to fully capture the socioeconomic reality of women's work. The two questions related to the number of hours worked in the 'past year' (rather than past weeks) and considered the multiplicity of economic activities performed by women. By including a wide variety of unpaid productive work, women became economically more visible. India is one of the few countries in Asia which has made a concerted policy effort to remove gender bias in the definitions of women's work and their employment status. The national census analysis in 1991 showed that when multiple tasks of rural women were brought under the rubric of "economic activity", the number of "annual work hours reported or recorded" increased considerably. For example, the proportion of economically active women went up from 13 to 88 per cent in 1991. It was also noted that in those states in India where women's organizations have been working to empower rural women, and the responses to the census investigators were given by women themselves and not by male members of their family (for instance in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu) women's performance improved and was not underestimated in data compilation compared to earlier censuses. Despite earlier under-numeration, it is now becoming clear that there are large numbers of women-headed households in India which were hidden in the biased techniques of data collection.[1] This phenomenon is also emerging in other Asian countries which are applying new techniques in data collection.[2] The shift took place in 1982, when the definition of 'productive work' and 'economic activity' was revised by the ILO Conference of Labour Statisticians in Geneva.

Does Social Change Precede Economic Change?

It is important to keep in mind the above problems of data collection and the limitations of comparative country and regional analysis before discussing the gender dimensions of the rapidly changing economics of Asia, which have shifted the economic power zones of the world economy and the parameters of development. The countries of Asia basically rely upon the existing international standards and methodologies adopted by various UN statistical conferences resulting in the adoption of uniform techniques and tools during the last two decades. Discrepancies in statistics on economically active women could be cited from a variety of sources for many countries, especially those in which large proportions of the population live in rural areas or are engaged in unpaid family labour or small-scale self-employment. "Properly applying improved statistical definitions on women's work is a slow process, however."[3] The old economic values and traditional approaches are the real problems in statistical definitions and the techniques of computing women's work.

The main objective of this paper is to investigate how different countries within Asia and the Pacific region have progressed toward the 'advancement of women' since the 1980s. The main issue addressed here is how the advancement of women fared in the spectacular political, social, and economic development of these countries, or in other words, has the rate of economic growth increased or decreased inequalities between women and men in the labour market. Is the "advancement of women" proceeding on a broad front of social change or is it limited to only a few sectors such as health and education? What role did the resource endowment, cultural and religious traditions and different sets of economic and social policies play in the divergent outcomes in different countries? There are complex issues to which only partial answers have been provided in current development literature and by feminist scholarship. The modest aim of this author is to search for the causes which have pushed some countries towards a greater degree of success than others, measured by current development indicators. Using the available data based on international sources, closer analysis of India and China is then undertaken to illustrate the emerging gender inequalities in these two economies: does social change precede economic change? This is a broad multi disciplinary question to which only preliminary answers can be provided at this stage.

According to different international and national sources, the Asian continent generally and West Asia specifically outperformed economically every other region of the world in the 1980s. In 1990, the developing economies of the region achieved an average growth rate of 5.4 per cent. Thailand achieved the highest rate of economic growth (9.5 per cent), followed by Malaysia (9.2 per cent), the Republic of Korea (8.8 per cent) and Singapore (8.3 per cent). The lowest growth rate was observed in the Philippines (2.7 per cent) and Hong Kong (2.5 per cent). Other countries making a slight recovery in 1990 were Bangladesh and Sri Landa; starting from a very low base, moving from around 2.5 per cent in 1989 and doubling the growth rate in 1990. The statistical analysis shows that despite the fact that the Asian economies has to adjust to the 'hostile economic climate' of the l980s, they adapted more successfully to the world economy than most other countries, by "creating jobs and improving real incomes". Another international source estimates that real output in Asia grew by 5.75 per cent in 1991 as a result of inter-regional trade, especially from exports to China and Japan (IMF, 1992). The seven fast-growing economies (Hong Kong, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Guangdong Province of China and Thailand) (which absorbed half of $ 60 billion of direct investment) continued to outperform the rest of the Asian region and accounted for much of the expansion of regional trade. Their volume of exports grew by almost 13 per cent in 1991, nearly four times faster than the growth of world trade in 1993, China ranked second in Asia with 3 per cent of world exports, India, on the other hand had disbursed only $ I billion in 1994. Since 1965, Japan, the so- called four tigers (Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan) and the NICs, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand have grown at an annual rate of 5.5 per cent more than twice as fast as the rest of East Asia and three times as fast as Latin America.

These extraordinary rates have been achieved despite the fact that this region was the so-called "theatre of the conflicts of the cold war", the recession in the industrial world, the consequences of the Middle- East crisis following the Gulf War (1990-1991) and the natural disasters in Bangladesh, China, India and the Philippines. In all these countries, the ethnic and religious conflict has further exacerbated gender

inequalities in education, employment and health; the three cross roads of development. Apart from the external economic climate, which influenced the higher rates of growth, the political institutions within countries, particularly the varying role of the state basically determined the pace and speed of Social progress. For example, each of the five countries, South Korea, the southwest coastal region of China, Malaysia and Thailand have completely different political and socio-cultural profiles. Malaysia has followed the strategy of globalization and structural adjustment for an expanding world market by maintaining racial and ethnic harmony. In Malaysia, the dominant religion is Islam mixed with influences from China (mainly Buddhist) and India (mostly Hindu), a model Muslim state was created. South Korea, a newly industrializing country (NIC) set another cultural example that has experienced a dramatic social transformation resulting from land reforms, which destroyed the feudal power structures. Thailand, the only monarchy among this group, has not yet carried out the basic social reform program in terms of land and literacy implemented in other countries of the region as a starting point of development. No single set of policies is adequate to cover the diverse situations and the differences in the pace of economic growth, patterns of social development and issues of gender-equity prevailing in the countries of the Asian and Pacific region. The NICs, especially Korea and Taiwan, have enjoyed a rapid rate of growth, while other South Asian countries have remained at a lower pace. China, Vietnam and Sri Lanka, despite low rates of economic growth, provided their people with larger benefits of human and social development China, for example, has an emerging middle class with a stake in stability-economic opportunities, particularly 'equality' of opportunity and equality of treatment' between men and women in all spheres has long remained on the political agenda and was recognised and was recognised by the constitution as early as 1950.

Within the Asian and the pacific region, the cultural barriers to equity and justice for women also vary considerably-the common thread being and justice for women also vary considerably-the common thread being that all communities irrespective of culture control women's mobility. How do such diverse socio-cultural patterns respond to the stimulation of economic growth? Have higher incomes in East Asia eliminated gender inequalities? What is the correlation between economic growth, social advanced and gender gap? There are several interesting explanations offered by experts of the prerequisites of higher rate of economic growth in some countries of Asia variously called "tigers" or "dragons." Some economists have analyzed the "speed and spread of the explosive economic growth in East Asia" in an historical perspective focusing on their technological dimensions. Other have visualized the "geese pattern" of development on the assumption that the economic model of Japan has been followed by other small countries such as South Korea. Some social scientists have suggested that the spectacular growth owes much to ethnic and religious commonalties of the people of the region, who are mainly of Chinese origin and share a common cultural heritage No single explanation appears to the patterns of industrialization of East Asia and most of the current research has not proceeded beyond economic parameters. And yet "the issues of widespread social concern in a large number of countries are non-economic-"institutional discrimination, status of women, participation, personal security and environment."[7] On these basic human development issues there has been little research and analysis.

As mentioned earlier, this paper can only examine the proximate causes of the new phenomenon of rapid economic growth in order and gender gap. These complex

questions will continue to be of strategic importance for a long time in drawing conclusions for policy formulation, legislative initiatives and research programs in different countries of the world and further multi disciplinary research would be needed. These, conclusion also have considerable theoretical and operational importance which link three different streams in social science: economics, sociology and women's studies. In addition, there are several problems in designing and analyzing methodologies. The first commendable policy effort was made by the World Bank which consolidated standard economic and social indicators in its world Development Report 1998 under the rubric "women in development" based on two decades of work of the UN agencies and bodies. This was an important first step towards elevating national-level data on gender desegregation to macro-level development indicators[4]. in order to gain a better understanding and insight into the advancement of women within the Asia pacific region, a brief glance (see Tables I and II on Selected Indicators on Women's Advancement) focusing on the gender inequalities among selected countries might be useful. The redefinitions of 'economic activity', 'employment' and 'work-force' signify that the economic value of women's work needs to be recognized, recounted and reviewed at various levels of economic analysis. Current research on new stream of feminist economics is still at a very early stage. Its main theme is to place women in the center stage in the processes of development and then examine the parameters of different social disciplines.

Problems of Counting and Discounting

In 1993, analyzing the new economic shift form the countries of the north to the South, the ILO *World Labour Report* came to a dramatic conclusion: it gave a one sentence summary by describing the phenomenal growth in the Asian region not as 'export led' but also 'female-led.' The significance of this sharp conclusion has been missed in economic writing. As analyzed above, the Asian and pacific countries do not lend themselves to any neat classification of political structures and economic and social systems or labour markets. There is a diversity of ownership of the mode of production in which the state has played a variety of role, and is often the leader or the predominant entrepreneur or the supporter of the direction of economic and social changes. This also signifies that in most of the NICs, it is the main employer in the state and the non-state sector promoting employment opportunities. In the process of creating occupational hierarchy, these state interventions, lead to occupational segregation by gender in the labour market. For example, when the Town and Village industry sector in southern China ordains one job per family, the question of gender preference becomes relevant as the younger males are given preference and are likely to get more jobs. Similarly in the state of Maharashtra in India, one job per family rule in 1995, led to higher male employment. In foreign Economic Processing Zones (EPZs), younger and single women seem to get priority, as described later in this paper. This diversity of economic approaches is reflected in official statistical tabulation which almost always contain conceptual bias in computing techniques. The female share of total employment shown in Table I provides support for the view that a large part of the economic contribution of women is technically excluded and, therefore, socially undervalued. Data during the last decade indicates that while the official female share in total employment of all countries has substantively increased, the percentages are considerably higher in the East Asian Countries where high rates of economic growth have been registered, for example, in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Guandong Province in China. In South Asia, for example, in India from

1981 to 1989, the increase was relatively smaller. Figures for Sri Lanka show a decline from 1990, which may have resulted from the economic slow down created by political upheavals in the l980s.

Another flaw in interpreting the figures in Table 1 is related to the fact that they are based on the organized sector of the economy, where women are employed in various industries which are included in regular data for national level planning. Any analysis of the economic participation of women must be prefaced with a warning, particularly in the Asian region, where various omissions and oversights are prevalent in official statistics in labour force participation rates. Apart from the built-in bias in compilation, some studies have suggested that measurement of labour force participation in the developing countries is based on concepts developed on the experiences of western industrialized economies where the typical worker is a wage earner, engaged in a year-round employment, and more likely to be unemployed than under-employed. This concept, it is suggested among several others, is responsible for the inherent bias in constructing the employment profile of women at different stages of industrialization in the countries of the Asian and Pacific region as a whole and East and South Asia in particular. The statistical profiles of women in China are also emerging in international comparative data showing earlier bias in collating women's economic activity and transferring it to labour force participation rates. As elsewhere in other countries of the region, women are as a general rule, undercounted in the labour force, underestimated in their work performance, and undervalued in their economic rewards in China. In the rural areas of most Asian countries, irrespective of higher growth rates, the resistance of male farmers to recognize the multiple activities of women, and the women's own low self-esteem has resulted in non- valuation of their work activities within and outside the household. Non-recognition of economic activity has led to non-evaluation. The main problem in the rural areas is the difficulty in making a distinction between agricultural tasks and household work which is the sum total of multi skilled occupations of women.

Table 1. Growth Indices of Male and Female Total Employment (1980-100) Countries in Asia

Country	1981	1985	1989	1990	1991	1992
Hong Kong						
Male	105.9	110.5	119.9	119.5	117.9	118.7
Female	111.1	119.3	128.4	127.9	132.0	129.1
India						
Male	102.5	109.2	114.5			
Female	106.5	117.0	131.2			
Indonesia*						
Male	110.7**	119.3	131.7	138.6	141.0	142.2
Female	118.4**	128.5	167.4	168.0	166.7	173.9
Japan						
Male	106.7	103.2	107.7	109.4	111.3	112.5
Female	100.9	111.7	136.4	140.6	143.8	145.7
Korea Rep. of						
Male	102.6	108.0	122.8	126.4	130.3	133.7
Female	102.4	111.7	136.4	140.6	143.8	145.7
Malaysia						
Male	105.7	116.2	130.4	135.3		
Female	106.1	121.9	139.9	148.2		
Pakistan						
Male		100.3	108.4	111.8	107.0	110.3
Female		100.0	133.9	138.1	144.5	149.0
Philippines						
Male	103.7	115.1	125.6	129.4	132.1	136.7
Female	104.1	124.7	130.6	134.8	137.3	144.5
Singapore						
Male	103.3	105.7	111.4	116.2	132.1	
Female	105.6	112.3	134.6	138.3	162.2	
Sri Lanka						
Male		100.0		111.0	95.4	96.2
Female		100.0		128.2	111.0	99.5
Thailand						
Male	95.4	113.6	137.2	138.7		
Female	89.7	100.9	136.6	135.0		

1979=100
** figure for 1982
Source: Computed from International Labour Office, Year book of Labour Statistic, Table 3A, various years.

An overview of women and their rights to land in Asia and the Pacific shows that land remains the most important productive resource in which women are involved. Labour force surveys in several countries have automatically, classified women as "economically inactive", simply by considering women's relationship to other household members and without analysing their activities or land relationships. Behind this bias is a bigger question: women's existing relationships within the economy and the family continue to be unequal and inequitable and these differences continue to be reflected in official statistics.

An assessment of the magnitude, structure and trends of employment of women in rapidly changing societies like those of the newly industrialising countries (NICs) is beset with complex and often controversial concepts and serious measurement problems. First, women are mostly engaged in household activities which are not considered as "economic" and do not get included in conventional measures of employment. Second, a large part of women's economic activities consist of

production of goods and services for the use of their own household, and as a result do not get captured in the market-oriented concepts of income and employment. Third, women's work, even in the production of goods and services for the market, is often ignored due to its being intermittent and subsidiary to their non-market and non-economic household work, and only supplementary to the male provider. Over the years, statistical surveys and censuses in several countries have tried to devise ways to reduce the degree of underestimation of women's work arising out of some of these problems (UN, 1995).

An examination of any basic economics text or labour statistics of any country would lead to the conclusion that subsistence production, housework, child care, and many other non-market activities are valueless in economic accounting. This absurdity has been recognized for more than two decades, but policies do not always change on the basis of absurdities. Conceptually, there is still much ambiguity concerning the definition and measurement of economic and non-economic activity, as the invisible line between "economic" and "non-economic" becomes more and more transparent. This ambiguity is complicated by sociopolitical factors emanating from differing views, and government sectors with well-defined norms, rules, regulations, and data available for statistical analysis. There is a broad category of activities which have become difficult to enumerate (ILO, 1987). For example, current concepts of economic activity, expressed by the 1968 and 1993 version of the UN System of National Accounts (SNA), exclude "production of certain goods and all services for one's own consumption.[5]

Most of these fall into what has been loosely called the "informal sector" (micro enterprise and subsistence agriculture, the production of goods and services within the households, and unpaid community services generally classified as household work that fall outside the formal sector). Thus, women's work is used as a sponge to clean the mess created by economic historians who neglected it as on area of analysis for computing. The role of statisticians in this process is equally questionable. Anecdotal evidence suggests that, in the early '50s, when standardization of statistics was evolving internationally, 'agricultural work' of women in industrially advanced countries was excluded from calculations because it was considered to be too complicated and heterogeneous to compute. Once omitted, it became an unwritten rule. Recently, it was suggested in a UN meeting during discussion on methodologies that the computers might break down with the heavy weight of gender data during the computation exercise! Never mind the technological advancement according to which the latest chip has a phenomenal memory to read several encyclopedias at a point of time! Again, quantification of 'household work', for example, is meeting a strange type of resistance from international experts. Despite political and technical resistance of the male hierarchy and international experts several methodologies have evolved which accord 'economic value' to housework and which have been further refined. (ILO 1988). But for most women, 'housework' continues to be an invisible stone that they have to carry all their lives without recompense, gratitude or reward seriously affecting their careers at the work place and continually subordinating them to lower status in the family!

Built-in-Inequalities in the Labour Markets

The most outstanding aspect of the pattern of industrialization in East and South Asia more particularly in the countries that adopted export- oriented strategies and created Economic Processing Zones (EPZs) was the exploitation of women's labour to increase productivity, output, and foreign exchange in their economies. The supply side of labour and the changing pattern of work in the labour market had an impact on the composition of labour. More and more women sought part- time employment, precarious employment contracts, and uncertain incomes. The nature of part-time employment does not take into account the perpetual conflict between family responsibilities and heavy demands of the work place. Women continue to work longer hours than men everywhere, more particularly in the rural areas of the developing countries in the Asian and Pacific regions, where higher rates of economic growth have been registered. If women and men's total work time including housework is calculated, it appears that women worked longer hours (Italics added) than men everywhere in Asia and the Pacific between 1970 and 1990 (UN World Women 1991). The number of hours varied: but everywhere they were higher than men. In the countries of the Asian region, women worked 62 hours per week compared to men whose average work hours totaled 48, including household work.

Within the formal sector, women's monthly wages were also unequal; for example in 1987, women in Japan earned 57.6 per cent of men's wages. This is the situation despite the fact that equal pay legislation has been adopted in the country. It was in the 1980s that women's employment in Asia and Pacific increased more rapidly than men's, and the participation rates of most countries showed narrowing of the gender gap in employment. But the increasing employment of women in the manufacturing sector has been confined to a limited range of export oriented, labour intensive industries and within these industries women have been channeled into dead end jobs that are "ill paid, repetitive and have poor career prospects." In the service sector, women have been concentrated in community services; their participation rates are higher in the professional and occupational category as nurses, teachers and social workers—or what has been segregated as 'feminized' occupations in most economies.

The 1980s witnessed another significant shift in the world economy which had an adverse impact on the social infrastructure of several countries. While in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa, the total public expenditure on health and education decreased substantially, in the Asian and the Pacific region, the decline was minimal. In some countries, for example in Indonesia and the Philippines, health expenditure as a percentage of GDP was only 2 per cent in 1990[6]. The countries in which higher rate of economic growth was noted are also the countries which invested a higher percentage of GDP in health and education sectors (UNDP 1990, 1991, 1995). For example, India invested 6 per cent and China only three and a half per cent in 1990 in these sectors. According to UNESCO, many girls and women worldwide do not have equal access to education and training resources and that this has critical consequences for women both on their productive and reproductive roles (*World Education Report,* 1995). Despite the continuation of this historical imbalance, there is a broad general trend toward increasing rates of literacy of women, particularly in countries of South Asia where illiteracy rates have fallen faster for men than for women. While the total number of literate women has increased, the gender gap has also increased due to the inequality of women's access to education at secondary and

post-secondary levels. At the same time, statistically more and more girls are completing primary and secondary levels of education in Asia and the Pacific. Still, over 40 per cent of young women remain illiterate in southern and western Asia. The most significant point in the education profiles of women is that in several countries including the Philippines and Sri Lanka more women than men are enrolled in higher education and have achieved parity with men in arts and humanities (UNESCO, 1991). Better education opportunities, reduction in poverty and income inequalities, have increased women's share in total employment. But there has been little or no change in their position in the labour market as regards occupational segregation and equality of remuneration. The bridge between education structure and labour market has not been easy to cross, particularly for women! In l990s, there was a slight change in the occupational structure as indicated in a new index constructed by the UNDP called the Gender Employment Measure or GEM (*Human Development Report*, 1996).

The Southeast Asian countries stand apart both in lower rates of economic growth and the largest number of illiterate women. In fact, most of the statistical aggregates of this region pull the region downwards in international comparisons when the countries of South Asia are compared with other regions. In fact, most of the statistical aggregates of this region are provided by development indicators since 1980s; the differential characteristics are amply illustrated by relating employment situations of women in South Asian countries to varying degrees of life expectancy at birth, maternal mortality rates, access to educational (Primary, secondary, tertiary) and limitations in employment opportunities earlier. Data from the WID table in the World Development Report, 1988 showed that Bhutan, with a low literacy rate among women had 96 per cent of its women workers in agriculture, only 11 per cent working out of the home as employees, again mostly in agriculture and as casual workers, and only 3 per cent in any kind of public employment. Women's employment in Nepal showed some what similar occupations of distribution. In Maldives, on the other hand, 56 per cent of women workers are in non-agricultural activities, most of them in out-of-home jobs as employees, with over one-fourth in higher level occupational, professional, technical, administrative, and supervisory categories. About 9 per cent of women workers are in government employment, making about 30 per cent of the total in that category. Sri Lanka had about 48 per cent of its women workers in non-agricultural activities, a lower proportion than in Maldives, but a significantly higher proportion than in other countries of the region. The majority of women workers in Sri Lanka worked outside their homes as employees in 1987, while over one quarter of government employees in that country were females. The UNDP *Human Development Report*, 1995, which has updated these data, shows only a minor change during the last few years in most countries of the region in the non-agricultural employment of women.

ILO data based on national surveys in 1990 showed that India and Pakistan represent a category apart in terms of the number of women in employment. In both countries about one fourth of women workers are in non-agricultural activities; but only a small proportion, 4 to 6 per cent have the status of 'employees' with a measure of stability and job security. In India, the estimates indicate that majority of women work in the informal sector and are self-employed; a large proportion of whom work as casual wage earners. In Pakistan, on the other hand, the self employed are a small proportion of the total of women workers, majority of whom form another category, the "unpaid

family labour". In both countries, women have a lower share than men in government employment. In professional, technical, administrative, and supervisory occupations, women accounted for 24 per cent in India and 12 per cent in Pakistan in 1993. In Bangladesh, the statistics show a large majority of women workers in the non-agricultural sector, but this is probably a result of the gross under-enumeration of women workers, whose labour force participation rates are lower than their Indian and Pakistan counterparts. The larger picture in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh shows that they are crowded into agriculture and have lower representation in industry, trade, commerce and services[7].

In some countries of East Asia, particularly where the rate of economic growth has been faster during 1985-1995, such as Thailand, Malaysia, South Korea and Singapore, subcontracting in industry has also been steadily growing. There are specific industries in which components are contracted out by larger firms to smaller ones, such as, garments, footwear and woodworking. In the garment industry, where the majority of workers are women, employers often subcontract different types of piecework to women who work at home (technically called home workers or outworkers). In countries, where the employment and wage regulations are strictly enforced under the labour legislation, a higher proportion of output is produced by subcontracting or casual labour. There have been cases in Malaysia where regular workers, have been sacked and re-hired as casual workers at much lower wage rates. According to labour unions, this trend is extremely dangerous and they have campaigned for stricter legal restrictions on subcontracting (see also ILO Convention and Recommendation on Homework, 1996).

Introducing Gender-Sensitivity in Policy

Recent Data from various International Studies including the UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank show that there is a correlation between education, infant mortality and fertility. Raising women's educational level can improve the health and life expectancy of children and automatically reduce family size (World Bank 1991, UNFPA 1993 and UNICEF 1995). Table 2 provides some data on the "situation of women in several countries of Asia and the Pacific" by ranking in the Human Development Index (HDI) which linked their education and occupational profile to percentages in the total labour force. If the economic cost of enrollment for girls in schools increases in a country (as has happended in some Asian countries), then it would seem to be more cost-effective to spend additional financial resources on girls future than on boys. Contrary to traditional beliefs, the rate of return of this expenditure is higher in saving public health costs at the national level. The paradox is that the low income families in several countries of Asia, given the choice, spend more personal disposable income on

Table 2. Situation of Women in Asia and the Pacific
(Female as percentage of Males)

Country	Females as Percentage of Males					
Human Development Index Rank	Labour Force 1990	Literacy 1970	Literacy 1990	Mean Years of Schooling 1990	Secondary Enrolment 1988-90	Tertiary Enrolment 1988-90
Japan	68			98	104	
Hong Kong	57	71		63	106	56
Korea	51	86	94	61	97	53
Singapore	64	60		66	104	
Brunei				83		
Malaysia	45	68	81	91	105	95
Fiji				83	104	
Thailand	88	84	96	76	97	
Srilanka	59	81	89	80	107	71
Philippines	59	96	99	89	104	
Mongolia	83	85		95	110	
China	76		73	60	77	50
Indonesia	66	64	85	58	84	
Maldives	25		77			
Vietnam	88		91	59	93	28
Meaner	60	67	81	72	92	
Papua New Guinea	64	62	58	50	63	38
Pakistan	13	37	45	25	45	41
India	34	43	55	34	61	47
Lacs	81	76		59	68	50
Bangladesh	7	33	47	30	50	22
Cambodia	64		46	71		
Nepal	51	13	35	32	40	
Bhutan	48			32	29	
Afghanistan	9	15	32	12	45	18

Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report 1993*, pp. 150-153.

boys rather than on girls. The social mythology pushes parents towards the traditional belief that boys are a better investment for the financial support they are expected to provide for parents' old age. Social reality however shows that daughters in many families are more likely to look after their elderly parents than sons, whether or not they are wage earners. This practice that women are 'care givers' of the sick, the old and the children in families has had an impact on health services in reducing public expenditure. In many cases this has added to the physical and financial burden of women at home. This is another area where women's work in the family has been undervalued: The economic cost is transferred from the resources of the state to the disposable income of the family.

Throughout their life-and work-cycles, women face different challenges than men in daily life, specially in health care and health facilities. Despite this differential impact on women, and it is only recently that these medical establishment, health-care programs, and drug companies have understood that scientifically the differences

need separate gender research and analysis. In practical terms, this means that female-specific tests have to be carried out for drugs before marketing them for their use. As a general rule, women live longer than men everywhere, largely due to their inherent biological strength within their bodies set for reproductive purposes. In addition, it has been shown that nutrition plays an important role in this biological preference. The higher life expectancy of women is not only connected to biology, but also to social and health care systems within society and family. Hormonal differences between men and women are now being taken seriously by the medical profession. A woman's life expectancy is about 6.5 years longer than a man's, except in a few countries where nutrition levels are extremely low and traditional beliefs neglect the health of women, particularly during their reproductive years, for example, in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. In most of Asia and the Pacific the average life expectancy of women in 1990 was 64 years, while in South Asia as a whole, it remained below. 50.

In half the population in South East Asia as a whole and two-thirds in the Asia and Pacific region. Women are not properly nourished. Their lack of physical development contributes to a higher rate of infant mortality (WHO. 1991, UNICEF 1995). Physical and mental stress of women and the cycle of poor health and nutrition also leads to higher rates of maternal mortality. In the Indian Subcontinent as a whole, highest maternal mortality rates have been recorded-650 maternal deaths per 100,000 births, particularly in some regions, where literacy rates are lower and most children are born without the aid of trained midwives. In Eastern Asia, about 18-20 per cent of women aged 15-49 are estimated to be undernourished and anaemic with the result that the new borns are mostly underweight and unhealthy.

Most Societies seem to practice various forms of discrimination against women and each community needs to be studied separately. The forms of control and subjection vary widely: they are multi-dimensional in the labour market, in schools and universities and within the narrow confines of the family. But in no other aspect of life are women more humiliated and brutalized than in their sexuality—violence in all forms is the norm. As more and more data is compiled from many industrial and developing countries, a very dismal picture is emerging on violence against women. Rape and sexual abuse severely damage women's physical and mental health, and are widespread in almost all regions, classes, and cultures worldwide. Between one-fifth and one half of women surveyed in the Asian and Pacific region responded that they have been beaten by their partners (ADPC-WID Team unpublished papers 1993). This research shows that battered women run twice the risk of having a miscarriage and having a baby below average weight; they are also prone to drug dependence, chronic pain, and depression. These facts should normally lead to the conclusion that the designing and operation of health services should be gender-sensitive. This type of sensitivity on the part of governments in allocating expenditure for women's health and pro-active policy of the medical establishment is relatively new (see report UNCPD 1994). In any economy, if more than half the women are constantly suffering from disease and depression, their productivity in the work place and their ability to carry the burden of family responsibilities will be naturally at greater risk. The intensity and frequency of violence against women is increasing and resulting in higher morbidity, which ultimately spells a higher economic cost for the enterprise, the family, and national budgets. It is cheaper to allocate slightly higher resources in an economy for improving women's education and health to obtain higher rates of return in the production process. But this economic rationale has not yet made a dent

at the national policy level. Recent estimates show a slight decrease in health expense as a ratio of GDP in Asia and the Pacific (*Human Development Report*, 1995).

There are several other aspects of gender inequality, such as lower participation of women in political life. The participation of women has increased steadily since 1950 in almost all countries with improved access to higher education. Women have acquired the right to vote almost universally barring a few examples. The remarkable fact is that throughout various elections in India, even in rural areas, where most women are illiterate, they voted in large numbers through a system devised by the Election Commission with thumb impressions by indelible ink or a tick where there we multiple pictorial choices. For example, in 1980 the female turnout was 51.1 per cent, only slightly lower than the males at 62.1 per cent. In 1996, the percentage share of women voting was about 50 per cent. Since 1952 there has been a steady increase in the number of women candidates in the lower house of parliament. In 1990, the number of women in parliament was 42 in the lower house and 24 in the upper house. On 1996, there was a marked decrease which alerted most political parties. There is a marginal increase in the number of women in parliament, in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In order to encourage women to participate in parliament, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal have reserved a quota for women in the legislature. In China in 198.7, the percentage of parliamentary seats occupied by women was about 22 per cent of the total in 1995. The year of the UN Conference on women in Beijing the numbers almost doubled. In Asia and the Pacific as a whole, the percentages of women in both houses of parliaments were about 13.1 in 1997 compared to 36.4 per cent in Nordic countries.

As for political participation in the highest public office, the Asian region and the Pacific leads the world in making a breakthrough in electing women as heads of state, a majority of 7 among 23 heads of states in the world in 1996. The original innovation of having a first woman prime minister in 1972 occurred in Sri Lanka. Subsequently, India, Pakistan the Philippines and Bangladesh followed the lead by eliminating political barriers against women in attaining the highest office in the country by electing them Prime Ministers and Presidents. Several countries such as Australia, China, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia and Vietnam have appointed more women at the ministerial level, but there are as yet no female heads of state in these countries.

Women are 'Deprived' of Resources

The survey of women's share in total employment shows that higher rates of economic growth within an economy per se do not eliminate inherent discrimination against women in the labour market. It is also evident that occupational segregation and inequalities in income have also resulted in relative poverty of women compared to men in all countries and regions and particularly South East Asia. Recent international studies provide empirical evidence for the view that while the absolute condition of women might have improved, their relative situation compared to men has not fundamentally changed and might have even deteriorated. Information from various national and international sources collated for the Fourth UN World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995) has further proved this point. During the last 30 years, economists have constructed several development models, raised a host of controversies on how to measure "poverty lines" within countries, and theorized on how to reduce the development gap between rich and poor countries. It needs to be

emphasized that while the extent of poverty differs among regions, countries, and social groups, poverty is now not only a problem of developing countries, but has appeared on the political agenda of developed countries. During the l980s, more and more enclaves of poverty have appeared in the rich industrialized countries, the increasing rate of economic growth in a country does not guarantee anywhere the satisfaction of minimum needs of the majority of its people in the service sector of most economies. Women even on their lower incomes provide for the basic needs of the family. Most importantly, more and more women are being classified in the official "poverty line" of most countries. Poverty lines, profiles, and indicators are building-blocks for poverty analysis and policy design. The "poverty line" is a measure that separates the poor from the non-poor (those whose income and consumption fall below the line are poor; those above are non-poor. World Bank, 1992). Frequently, and as a rule of thumb one can say that most of these models, conceptual frameworks, and development strategies have not properly taken into account the gender dimension of poverty or even referred to the contribution of women in the economy. Country-specific data on rates of economic growth, poverty, and gender equity point to wide differences among countries in Asia and the Pacific. There are countries with high rates of economic growth and a lower pace of social development, and still other where high rates of economic growth have not seeped through to various social groups. Finally, there are countries with lower rates of economic growth and high levels of social development. Reduction of poverty at the national level in general does not imply reduction of inequalities in income. It does not necessarily improve equality of access to credit or financial resources. Nor does it necessarily enhance the status of women.

The methodology of measurement of poverty is not new and has been on the economic scene for more than four decades. On this point substantive research has been undertaken by various UN agencies, particularly on social indicators by UNRISD in 1991. In 1990, when the UNDP constructed a Human Development Index (HDI) on the basis of three development indicators: life expectancy, adult literacy and purchasing power parity. This index, full of controversy and complex technical problems, is of some interest from the point of view of measuring the advancement of women among various regions and countries. For example, the definitions of Human Development subsume women's development. UNDP defines "human development" as a process of "enlarging peoples choices" adding that "income is clearly only one option". According to its 1991 report, all poor rural women, whose number is estimated to be between five hundred million and one billion (of the world population of over five billion) suffer the "greatest deprivation". The majority of these 'deprived' women live in Asia and the Pacific, mainly in India and China. Some 800 millions of them are still illiterate, more in India, less in China. There real incomes have not increased and in some countries they have even fallen. In some of these countries, births are still attended by untrained health personnel, and women continue to face a high risk of death during childbirth. Many women and their children have almost no access to health care. In some countries of East Asia such as Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore, the condition of women has considerably improved with higher education; they have obtained higher incomes and enjoyed better health.

Despite some of the world's highest levels of human development, there are marked differences between levels of achievement between men and women (see Table 3 on "Human Development Index: Female- Male Gaps"). Refining further its gender

sensitivity index in 1993, the UNDP Report concluded that Japan ranks first in the world having achieved the highest levels of human development according to its HDI index. But, it dropped to number seventeen when the index was adjusted for gender disparity. In 1992, according to the same index, Canada topped the list, but dropped to seventh place, when the gender sensitivity analysis was applied. Some of the reasons for this drop in rank relate to education and employment in both Japan and Canada. In education in Japan, the post-secondary enrollment ratio for females is only two- thirds that of males. Similarly, in employment in that country, women's average earnings are only 59 per cent that of men's. Women in Japan are also excluded from decision-making positions, where they hold 4.6 per cent of parliamentary seats and only 9 per cent of administrative and managerial posts. Compared to other countries in Asia, Japan does not have any woman at the ministerial level. In contrast, in Canada in 1993, women occupied 47 out of 295 seats in the House of Commons, and several women held ministerial posts.

New Index on the Advancement of Women: (IWA)
Methodological Problems

The above discussion shows the complexities of linking economic and social advance with gender inequalities. The question still remains what are the criteria to compare countries within Asia and the Pacific with regards to the advancement of women? This author has attempted to evolve another alternative index based on a combination of development indicators and data based on a various methodologies of the UN system as whole. The development indicators selected here are based on the available data published in the World Development Report 1988 and subsequently used in the Human Development Report (1990) when it constructed its new index. The UN Decade for Women generated a global data base from 1976 to 1985 from different contents and countries. (Ahooja-Patel 1993). The four world conferences of the United Nations: Mexico (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995) created the proper scientific basis for a systematic compilation and analysis of data supplied by governments, academic research and individual experts. Despite these surveys and studies, the crucial question of measuring the gender distance or gender gap among countries has not been seriously addressed until recently. As mentioned earlier, in the World Development Report of 1988, pioneering presentation made it possible also to undertake inter-country comparisons of changes over time for various regions and countries.

It is evident that no single indicator readily provides comparable information on the status of women in different Asian and Pacific Countries. For income, wages and salary levels, data are used which exclude what has been described as social support or benefits in kind. In this way, the available data does not present a satisfactory basis of comparison. The results are always tied to levels of per capita income.

Table 3. Human Development Index: Female-Male Gaps

	Female/Male Gap (Male=100) Life Expectancy 1986	Female/Male Gap (Male=100) Literacy Rate 1985	Female/Male Gap (Mal=100) Primary Enrolment 1986-88	Female/Mal Gap (Male=100) Secondary Enrolment 1986-88	Female/Male Gap (Male=100) Parliament
Low HD					
Afghanistan	102.4	21	52	50	--
Bhutan	97.1	--	.65	.39	--
Nepal	97.6	.31	.45	.31	.5.7
Bangladesh	98.6	.51	.84	.46	.9.1
Pakistan	100.0	.48	.55	.42	.8.8
India	100.3	.51	.72	.54	.7.9
PNG	103.0	.64	.85	.56	.0.0
Combodia	106.2	.76	--	.44	--
Medium HD					
Laos	106.2	.76	--	.44	--
Mayanmar	106.0	.67('70)	.85('70)	--	--
Indonesia	105.1	.78	.96	--	11.4
Vietnam	107.4	.91	.88	.93	17.4
Iran	102.0	.63	.86	.68	.1.5
Philippines	106.0	.99	102	100	.7.8
China	104.3	.68	.89	.74	21.2
Mongolia	106.7	.95	103	109	24.8
Thailand	106.5	.94	.90('60)	--	.3.4
Korea, Den.	109.7	--	--	--	21.1
Sri Lanka	106.1	.91	.97	110	.4.7
High HD					
Malaysia	106.1	.81	100	100	.5.1
Singapore	107.9	.85	.96	104	.3.8
Korea Rep.	109.4	.92	100	.95	.2.9
Hong Kong	107.8	.85	.99	107	--
New Zealand	108.4	--	.99	102	14.4
Australia	109.1	--	.99	103	.6.1
Japan	107.6	100	100	102	.1.4

Source : *Human Development Report* 1990, UNDP, New York, 1990

Note; Table 3 presents the female and male gap for various indicators. For all indicators. Except for life expectancy, where the female rate is higher, the differential follow the Human Development

The problem becomes even more complicated when different development indicators are given different "values' and 'weights". As mentioned earlier studies have generally used the method of ranking the countries by each indicator and then adding together separate rank values for each country. An average is then derived from this total. Earlier studies on Quality of Life Index (QLI) and the recent UNDP study on the Human Development Index (HDI 1996) have followed the same methodology, although the number of observations included in the QLI was much larger than the three indicators which formed the basis of HDI. These attempts at analysis are either too wide or too narrow for at analysis gender equality.

If the main objective is to compare the degree of women's advancement in different Asian and Pacific Countries and thereby show which countries are more advanced, it is not possible to rely exclusively on the studies in current development or feminist literature. A new methodology needs to be evolved which is not based solely on real

per capita income and life expectancy of women. A much more broad-based and innovative approach involving several indicators is necessary to reflect the intensity and degree of women's advancement in different countries. It must include all dimensions of women's lives: women as producers, women as reproducers, women as consumers, and women as citizens. For this new alternative index, seven indicators have been selected: Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Life Expectancy at Birth (LEB), Post-Secondary Education (PSE), Labour Force Participation (LEP), and Participation in Parliamentary Assemblies (PPA). These seven indicators are basically self-explanatory and some of them correlate to the traditional seven roles of women in the family, economy, and society. They are maternal, occupational, conjugal, domestic, kinship, community and individual (oppong, 1980). Same of these don't lend themselves to quantification exercise. This does not mean that they are sufficient to portray the multi faceted and multi skilled images of women critical to determining which country is more advanced than the other. Of the seven development indicators on women's advancement, only one, purchasing power parity (PPP), has not been desegregated by sex. This indicator underscores all the other because women have less income and therefore less purchasing power then men. In fact, it is the single most important indicator which determines the status and empowerment of women. No money—no power is the axiom in modern life.

Table 4. Selected Indicators for Women's Advancement (IWA): Asia and the Pacific

Country	Real GDP per capita (PPPS) 1987 (1)	Maternal Mortality rate (per 100,000 live births) 1980-87 (2)	Infant Mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) 1988 (3)	Female Life Expectancy at birth (years) 1986 (4)	Average Female Post-Sec. Enrolm. as % of P-S enrolm. 1985/87 (5)	Average Female Share of Labour Force (%) 1980/90 (6)	Average Female Particip. in Parlism. Assembly as % of Total 1985/87 (7)
Afghanistan	1,000	690	171	--	14.0	9	--
Bangladesh	883	600	118	50	19.3	7	9.1
Bhutan	700	1,710	127	45	0.0	31	1.3
China	2,124	44	31	70	29.5	43	21.2
Hong Kong	13,906	5	8	79	35.1	33	--
India	1,053	300	98	56	26.1	25	5.3
Indonesia	1,660	450	84	58	32.2	31	--
Iran, Islamic Rp.	3,300	--	61	59	27.9	18	1.5
Iraq	2,400	50	68	65	32.3	21	13.2
Israel	9,182	5	11	77	45.7	34	8.3
Japan	13,135	16	5	81	35.9	38	1.4
Jordan	3,161	--	43	67	44.4	10	0.0
Kaspuches	1,000	--	127	--	--	--	--
Korea, Dem. Rep.	2,000	41	24	71	--	46	21.1
Korea, Rep. of	4,832	26	24	73	30.1	34	2.9
Kuwait	13,843	6	19	73	54.2	14	--
Lao PDR	1,000	--	109	51	35.2	44	--
Lebanon	2,250	--	39	--	38.6	28	0.0
Malaysia	3,849	59	24	71	44.1	35	5.1
Mongolia	2,000	100	44	66	59.0	46	24.9
Myanmar	752	140	69	--	--	36	--
Nepal	722	830	127	47	20.4	32	5.8
Oman	7,750	--	40	56	42.9	9	--
Pakistan	1,585	500	108	51	14.3	12	8.9
Papus N. Guinea	1,843	900	57	54	25.0	38	0.0
Philippines	1,878	93	44	65	54.4	31	--
Saudi Arabia	8,320	--	70	65	39.5	7	--
Singapore	12,790	5	9	75	42.9	32	3.8
Sri Lanka	2,053	60	32	72	40.7	27	4.8
Syrian Arab Rep.	3,350	280	47	66	34.3	16	9.2
Thailand	2,576	--	38	66	--	45	3.5
Turkey	3,781	210	74	65	33.5	34	3.0
United Arab Em.	12,191	--	25	71	57.9	6	0.0
Vietnam	1,000	140	63	68	23.5	47	17.7
Yeman Arab Rep.	1,250	--	115	47	11.1	13	0.0
Yeman PDR	1,000	--	118	51	--	--	--

Note : *See* Appendix for methodological notes and sources of data.
Source : UNDP. *Human Development Report 1990*, for columns 1, 2 & 3, United Nations. *The Situation of Women 1990*, for columns 5, 6 & 7, and World Bank, *Development Report 1988*, for column 4.
Use of Symbols : not available; 0 not significant.

Table 4a. Ranking by Index of Women's Advancement (IWA) : Asia and the Pacific

Country	Real GDP per capita (PPPs) 1987 (1)	Maternal Mortality rate (per 100,000 live births) 1980-87 (2)	Infant Mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) 1988 (3)	Female Life Expectancy at birth (years) 1986 (4)	Average Female Post-Sec. Enrolm. as % of P-S enrolm. 1985/87 (5)	Average Female Share of Labour Force (%) 1980/90 (6)	Average Female Particip. in Parlism. Assembly as % of Total 1985/87 (7)	IWA	IWA Rank
Hong Kong	1	1	2	2	15	14	--	5.8	1
Israel	6	2	4	3	5	11	10	5.9	2
Japan	3	5	1	1	13	7	19	7.0	3
Kuwait	2	4	5	4	4	26	--	7.5	4
Korea, Dem. Rep.	20	7	6	8	--	2	3	7.7	5
Singapore	4	3	3	5	9	16	14	7.7	6
Malaysia	10	10	8	9	7	10	12	9.4	7
Mongolia	21	13	16	14	1	3	1	9.9	8
China	18	8	10	11	21	6	2	10.9	9
Korea, Rep. of	9	6	7	6	20	12	17	11.0	10
Thailand	15	--	12	16	--	4	15	12.4	11
Sri Lanka	19	11	11	7	10	21	13	13.1	12
United Arab Em.	5	--	9	10	2	34	24	14.0	13
Philippines	22	12	17	18	3	19	--	15.2	14
Syrian Arab Rep.	12	17	18	15	16	25	6	15.6	15
Vietnam	31	15	21	12	25	1	4	15.6	16
Iraq	16	9	22	17	18	23	5	15.7	17
Jordan	14	--	15	13	6	29	21	16.3	18
Lebanon	17	--	13	--	12	20	22	16.8	19
Turkey	11	16	25	20	17	13	16	16.9	20
Oman	8	--	14	24	8	31	--	17.0	21
Saudi Arabia	7	--	24	19	11	33	--	15.5	22
Iran Islamic Rp.	13	--	20	21	22	24	18	19.7	23
Myanmar	34	14	23	--	--	9	--	20.0	24
Lao PDR	30	--	29	26	14	5	--	20.8	25
Papua N. Guines	23	24	19	25	24	8	23	20.9	26
India	27	18	27	23	23	22	9	21.3	27
Indonesia	24	19	26	22	19	18	--	21.3	28
Pakistan	25	20	28	27	28	28	8	23.4	29
Nepal	35	23	35	30	26	15	11	25.0	30
Bangladesh	33	21	31	29	27	32	7	25.7	31
Bhutan	36	25	33	32	31	17	20	27.7	32
Yeman Arab Rep.	26	--	30	31	30	27	25	28.2	33
Afghanistan	28	22	36	--	29	30	--	29.0	34
Yeman PDR	32	--	32	28	--	--	--	30.7	35
Kaspuches	29	--	34	--	--	--	--	31.5	36

Note : Columns 1, 4, 5, 6 & 7 are ranked in a descending order and column 2 & 3 are ranked in a ascending order. See Appendix for methodological notes and sources of data.
Sources : Sumo as in Table 1.
Use of Symbols : not available: 0 not significant.

The details of the limitations of these data, coverage, analytical significance, implications and methodologies of ranking hundred countries are presented in a research article published in the *Economic and Political Weekly* (Ahooja-Patel February 1993). Using the Index on Women's Advancement, this article also included India's rank among selected Asian and Pacific Countries. It is striking that if the Asian region is separated from the global list of countries, India would rank 98th in a total of 130 countries, just two places short of the hundredth place. Obviously, several of the newly industrialized of Asia (NICs) have better rankings: China (41), Malaysia (45), The Republic of Korea (47), Thailand (51), Sri Lanka (59), Iraq (62), Syria (63), and Indonesia (96). Some countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, such as Brazil and the Dominican Republic, and Tanzania and Burundi in Africa also rank higher than India. What does this show?

What does this statistical ranking signify? India's position is lower among all development indicators except for the indicator on woman's participation in parliament in terms of the number of seats. This reflects the involvement of woman in political life despite their lower status in the economy and lack of equal opportunities in education and the labour market. Without the indicator of participation in parliament, India's ranking will fall below several other countries including some countries in Africa, for example Uganda, Zaire, Pakistan, Somalis, Sudan and Nepal. However, Woman's improved access to political life does point in a positive direction. This means that in the future, if woman use the parliament as an instrument of social change, they could influence policy and legislation in their favour. It is not surprising therefore, that India's rank is almost equally low (93^{rd}) in a composite index which summarizes the placement of each country in accordance with the three major indicators constructed for ranking of countries: UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI), UNICEF's Under 5 Mortality Rates (UMR), and UN Purchasing Power Parity Index (PPP). But is equal participation in parliament and politics more important than earning higher incomes? Is higher education and better health more satisfactory to the family and the community than higher rates of participation in the labour market? These questions will lead the reader to different conclusion.

Gender Equity in China and India: A Comparison

The comparison between China and India has considerable operational significance. Both countries regained control over their destinies in the late 1940s. Since then, both have pursued active policies of rapid economic and social transformation. Both have, in principle, at the formal policy and legislative level, attached central importance to the advancement of women. Both have indeed been considered as models for development for different political ideologies. How different are they in eliminating the gender gap and moving towards equality? It is therefore important to examine the comparative progress that each has made in the advancement of women.

The foundation of almost any regional supra-national entity involves political, economic, and social imperatives. Within the countries of the third world, the Asian region can be distinguished by several unique features which are historical and geopolitical in nature. It is in this continent that the two larger continuing civilizations, that of India and China, evolved and developed technological innovations and sciences, including astronomy and astrology. This region also gave birth to the majority of the religions of the world and founded schools of thought, belief and value systems which continue to guide the daily life of its citizens. Several of these beliefs and traditions keep women subjugated and discriminate against them at the work place, in the family and prevent them from equal participation in public life.

India and China historically have been patriarchal societies which have contributed in a negative way by refining techniques of oppression of women through long-standing traditional practices such as foot- binding, systematic seclusion from social life and perpetuating practices which suppress creativity of women in a myriad of ways. At the economic level, India and China formulated their industrialization policies approximately in the early l950s and today have the largest number of women workers both in the formal and informal sectors of the economy. In both countries, there has been a steady increase in the labour force participation rates of women from

1950 to 1990 figures. These two countries combined, also carry the burden of the largest number of illiterate women, which together totaled 800 million in 1990. Other social negatives include highest rates of infanticide of girls; as boys continue to be the preferred sex in social life. For this and other reasons, the sex ratios in India continue to be in favour of boys and men in different age cohorts of the demographic pyramid. These two countries combined also have the largest number of women in the industrial sector of the economy; estimated to be over 100 million, approximately double the number of women industrial workers in all OED countries. In 1990, it should be noted that fewer women worldwide were employed in industry than in agriculture and services. The range was from a high of 24 per cent of "economically active" women in the developed regions to 16 to 17 per cent in the Asian and Pacific Countries. Again, within China in different provinces and within India in different states, the percentages of the rate of participation of women vary considerably as they enter different stages of industrialization and cultural practices restrain their mobility. Family responsibilities often keep them out of the labour market.

We may conclude this discussion by briefly comparing the advancement of women in two most populated countries in Asia: China and India. They account for nearly 40 per cent of the world population and some two-thirds of Asia and might well emerge one day as the largest world economies, equal to the output of seven most industrially powerful countries today (G-7). Their development paths are different and unique in providing an interesting historical comparison between economic growth and gender equity. The conceptual relationship between economic growth and gender equity can be tested in these two countries by taking a different set of development indicators which involves, in the first instance, the changes in the structure of distribution of income and elimination of poverty, particularly affecting women.

In order to analyze gender disparities in China and India, it is essential that some orders of magnitude are clearly stated. Both India and China introduced the gender dimension in their planning process. For example, in China in the l980s, the Sixth Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Economy (198 1-85) specified that both men and women middle school graduates will receive training to become skilled workers. In India, the Eighth Development Plan (1981-85) assumes that development will benefit women as members of the community along with men, youth, and children. Projects identified as directly meeting women's concerns are included in the Development Plan as part of the programme on social and cultural development.

The latest census conducted in China shows that out of the total population of over 1 billion, 5500 million persons, 40 per cent were women. Since 1950, the participation rates of women in the labour force have steadily increased as the labour shortages appeared within agricultural production brigades and teams. During the sixties and seventies, the number of work hours performed by women almost doubled. Throughout the country, since 1985 the majority of women have been assigned work in the labour intensive sectors of the economy. Any analysis of the Chinese economy must proceed with the economic and social reality that 80 per cent of women in China, live and work in the countryside. The status of rural women has enhanced with the growth in their income. In a survey in 1987, when 102 households were asked "Who is the head of the family?" 22 per cent indicated the wife, compared with only

14 per cent in 1979. When asked whether women have control over their income, 51 per cent of the answers were positive (Research Institute of China, 1991).

As a consequence of the shift from the collective development strategy to socialist modernization in 1982, and now more recently in 1994 to the "socialist market economy", the number of women working in industry has also grown to 22 per cent of the population. The economically active female population engaged in agricultural activities is higher than that of men. At present, the interprovincial composition of labour force in China indicates that the largest number of women, approximately 15 million (as opposed to 17 million men), in the modem sector are working in Guandong province. Guandong is often cited as the fastest growing region in China, in Asia, and perhaps in the world. It covers an area of 180 thousand square kilometers and has a population of 63 million. From 1978 to 1991 the per capita income of this province jumped from Y3 13 to Y2, 134. The province ranks consistently high in the various indices of economic growth. Basically it is not the whole province, but the Pearl River Delta, that has been growing fast. It has been used as a laboratory for various reforms and it has consistently been more aggressive in opening its economy than other provinces. Three of the original Special Economic Zones. (SEZs) were established in Guandong in the mid-1980s. The reforms include financial and fiscal matters and removing mandatory planning. In 1991, Guandong received 68 per cent of all investment in China through Hong Kong and Macao. Many domestic enterprises exported products through corporations in Hong Kong and it is estimated that over three million people in Guandong were working directly and indirectly for Hong Kong businesses in 1995.

Since 1979, despite the economic reforms, 92 per cent of female workers are engaged in primary industry in the agricultural sector. In 1990, industries which had women as the preponderant majority were: manufacturing, wholesale/retail trade and services, mainly educational and cultural. As far as male-female differentials in occupational distribution are concerned, it is important to note that the number of women in administrative and managerial professions is much smaller than that of men. Women are always the last to be hired and the first to be fired, as in other parts of the world. Some enterprises have reduced their workforce by 30 to 50 per cent; laid-off workers, women get 50 to 75 per cent of their normal pay, but no bonuses. Families which once totally depended upon two pay checks have seen living standards go down in 1993. Factories are also cutting back on what are considered to be "non-productive expenditures" including kindergartens and child care facilities to cut down their costs, which make it even harder for women to compete with men in the labour market. Reconciling work with family responsibilities is the most powerful program that has been introduced for women in China. Though the programmes and policies in this area are not effective, as traditional attitudes continue to hold women responsible for family work.

The censuses in India in 1971 and 1981 have raised a host of controversies on the definition of women workers, mainly due to the fact that a large part of their labour was excluded from official statistics. This exclusion from statistics applied to three main areas, namely agriculture, household, and the informal sectors of the economy. In 1991, there was a weak attempt to redress the imbalance of the last two decades by introducing in the census new questions relating to the multiple tasks of rural women not included in the statistics before. The rationale being that the large part of unpaid

work is considered to fall in the category of non-economic activity. There was an attempt to bring this into the orbit of 'economic activity'. Despite this attempt, the results show a series of 'imbalances and distortions' in statistics. But the status of the women workers has been considerably enhanced by creating awareness at the policy level—if not in statistics.

The 1991 data showed another important point that women are crowded into agriculture and have lower percentages in industry, trade, commerce, and the services. The distribution of the male and female workforce over the nine categories in terms of employment is described in the census. The percentage of the female workforce is 80. 19 as compared to only 67.46 per cent in agriculture. Whereas cultivators constitute the larger share (46.26 per cent) of the male agricultural workforce and agricultural labourers constitute the smaller share (21.25 per cent), the situation is the reverse with respect to women. The percentage of females working as agricultural labourers (50.4 per cent) is much larger than the percentage of those who are cultivators (29.69 per cent). Thus, not only is a larger portion of the female workforce crowded in agriculture but most of it is working at a lower level of hierarchy and wages.

Women are poorly represented in manufacturing (2.76 per cent) as compared to men (6.61 per cent). They are even more poorly represented in trade and commerce (females: 1.78 per cent vs. males: 6.36 per cent), and in transport, communication and other services (females: 2.25 per cent vs. males 9.21 per cent). Mining, quarrying, fishing, forestry etc. constitute the only occupational category in which the percentage representation of the female workforce (2.89 per cent) is identical to that of the males (2.89 per cent). And household industry is the only category other than agriculture where women's participation (4.5 per cent) is larger than that of the males (3.37 per cent).

In India, in addition to the latest population census held in February 1991, an alternative source of data is the Indian National Sample Survey. Based on these two official sources, different profiles of women emerge in different states of India. At an all-India level, the percentage of women working in agriculture is over 80 per cent, the largest numbers being found in. Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The number of women working in the manufacturing sector has shown a steady decline since 1981. The latest statistics reveal that on an all- India basis, less than 10 per cent of women work in industry. The occupational patterns also indicates that in urban areas the largest number of women are to be found in the occupation group entitled "production and related workers". There has also been a steady decrease in female- male wage ratios in textiles, clothing, metal, machinery, and transport industries. A study undertaken in 1994 showed that the female wage rates were around 70 per cent of those paid to males. Generally, women workers are more likely to be employed in industrial occupations with a typical female orientation. In the context of traditional societies, there is also a demand for women in low-skilled or unskilled operations using labour-intensive techniques.

As can be seen from the Table (4a) China ranks ninth out of a total of 36 countries in the new index of Indicators for women's advancement (TWA) in Asia and the Pacific. In comparison, India's IWA rank is twenty-seventh, significantly lower than that of China. Indeed, of all the seven indicators for which data have been shown in the table, China leads India in all of them except for one—female participation in national

assemblies. It is notable that except for the share of average female post-secondary enrollment, China's TWA ranking for all other indicators is higher than that for its real GDP per capita, expressed in purchasing power parity (PPP). This suggests something extraordinary, a much greater advance for women even when a given country does not have a higher per capita output or income. Before 1980 in Sri Lanka and in 1990 in India (Kerala and Tamil Nadu) for example, higher education profile of women had a direct impact on reducing fertility and increasing employment: the sum total of which was to enhance their economic and social status. It also underscores the fact that there is sufficient policy space for concentration on several sectors dealing with women's advancement. Even with relatively low financial resources being devoted to a few economic sectors, it is possible to attain comparatively greater advancement for women. In a certain sense, women's advancement is a cost-effective method for policy concentration. This also means that the introduction of affirmative action in selected economic sectors which favour women's equality could be introduced for a specific period of time for a given objective. Here is an important lesson for other countries which may, by concentrating policies in favour of women's advancement, enable them to attain striking results in rapidly reducing gender disparities.

It is quite evident form the above analysis of the situation of women in Asia that economic growth is a prerequisite for eliminating poverty and increasing incomes. At the same time, it is imperative that the pattern of development maintains social structures which ensure equity among various groups on the basis of a social consensus. The nondiscriminatory formal policy, equality legislation and affirmative action are important instruments to bring about changes in social perceptions about women. This means that the state itself plays a variety of roles in different phases of growth to determine that social inequalities do not become an organic part of society. There is no escape from the fact that economic growth and social equity must proceed on parallel lines to reduce gender inequalities to achieve democratic development for women.

END NOTES

[1] Women's time in economic activity is comparable to men's in developing regions when non-market economic activity is taken into account. See Government of India. Ministry of Planning. Department of Statistics, National Sample Survey Organization: *Survey on Employment and Unemployment*, Result of ASS 43rd Round, Sarvekshana, Special Number, September, 1990.

[2] For example, Thailand and the Philippines.

[3] UN, *The World's Women: Trends and Statistics*, New York 1991. p. 85 and 1995 p.

4. *World Labour Report*, Geneva 1991

[5] World Bank, *The East Asia Miracle*, Oxford University Press, 1994.

[6] Asian and Pacific Development Centre (APDC), Issues in Women and Development, Kaula Lumpur, Malaysia, March 1990.

[7] UNRISD, *Some Reflections on Human and Social Indicators for Development* (Ghai Dharam, Hopkins Michael and McGrahan, Donald), Geneva, October 1988, Discussion paper No. 6, pp. 23-27.

[8] See Table 33, World Bank, *World Development Report*, New York, 1998. For subsequent International efforts, See UNDP, Human Development Report, New York, 1995.

[9] Recent methodology designed by the UN Bureau of Statistics on the National System of Accounts (SNA) has modified the original concept of noneconomic activity into a new category called quasi-economic activity. It is in this category, at the international level, that a mild effort is made to accommodate the unpaid work of women which amounts to two-thirds of their labour input to total work hours. Also see Kurshreshtha, A.C. and Singh Gulab, "Domestic Product by Gender in the Frame work of 1993 SNA" *Economic and Political Weekly*, 21 December, 1996.

[10] For data on other Countries see World Bank, World Development Report, 1993, Table A-9 on Health expenditure and total flows from external assistance.

[11] For percentage distribution of workers in each sex by industrial categories, see "Distribution of economically active population by occupation" in UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Achievement of the United Nations Decade for Women in Asia and the Pacific*, Bangkok, Table 8, 1987 p. 24.

Annex I

Definitions of Development Indicators

1. Purchasing Power Parity (PPP): adjusted estimates of GDP levels to exclude exchange rate and price distortions, reflecting thereby the real (as opposed to nominal) per capital income of the countries concerned.
2. Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR): refers to the number of female deaths that occur during childbirth per 100,000 live births. MMR figures are relevant because they reflect the ability of a country to care for the special health needs of women during pregnancy and childbirth.
3. Infant Mortality Rate (IMR): is the number of infants who dies before reaching one year of age per 1,000 live births. IMR reflects the quality of nutrition and care of infants and pregnant women, as well as achievements in female literacy and education.
4. Life Expectancy at Birth (LEB): Figures on women indicate the number of years a new-born female infant would live if the patterns of mortality at the time of birth remain the same throughout its life. The LEB reflects the quality of health care delivery and nutrition levels available to women, as well as possibly the biological resiliency of women to live longer, as is the general case, than men.
5. Post-secondary Education PSE): Figures show the extent to which girls advance in education beyond the secondary level, compared with boys. This indicator portrays the extent to which women are given equal opportunities to acquire formal education.
6. Labour Force Participation (LFP): comprises the percentage of “economically active” women aged ten years and over, including so-called “economically inactive” groups. The concept of economically active is restrictive and does not, for example, include activities of home-makers or care-givers who are mainly women. Labour force figures in developing countries, therefore, significantly underestimate female participation rates.
7. Participation in Parliamentary Assemblies (PPA): is the percentage distribution of seats between men and women in national parliaments. This figure is taken as a proxy indicator of the extent by which women participate directly in the political life, and thereby exercise a certain degree of decision-making and bargaining power for determining the direction of state policie