



WOMEN *in Action*

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THE GIRL CHILD
LIVING GODDESS

BEIJING BREAKS GROUND

TEENS SPEAK

LESBIAN ORGANIZING
IN THE PHILIPPINES

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A Child of Us All

The newspaper report carried this photo of a naked girl: head bowed, short black hair dishevelled, back to the camera, thin arms twisted at the back tied by a nylon cord that also wound around her neck. Beside the photo ran this story: Philippine judge acquits a Japanese accused of pedophilia for lack of evidence. The girl's lawyers failed to present in court this photo, which the Japanese himself took.

This case is just one of thousands of child sexual abuse cases that have been reported. Many are awaiting or are on trial. In the Philippines alone, there were 2,636 reported cases in 1995 of child physical and sexual abuse and elsewhere, governments say they are alarmed at the rise of sex abuse cases.

The plight of the girl child has been an invisible one for a long time. In many cultures, the unjust treatment of girl children is a perfectly natural part of life. Only recently did the impenetrable and invisible wall that for so long kept the girl child's cries silent crack open, and the voices that came out spoke sad tales of physical and emotional violence.

Indeed, the very fact that sexual abuse and all the other problems besetting the girl child are now being documented is already a major breakthrough in itself. Whereas before people simply were blind to the ways that wronged the girl child, now they acknowledge that something evil is in fact going on.

The greatest proof of this acknowledgement is Section L of the Platform for Action that issued out of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995. For the first time, the women's conference, which has been meeting since 1975, paid attention to the plight of the girl child. Prior to Beijing, other international gatherings—the 1989 United Nations General Assembly that unanimously adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, the 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development and the 1995 Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development—all included children in their agenda. But only in Beijing was it recognized that not all children are equal, and that it is the girl child who is most often brutalized.

But the most important development is this: Girl children themselves beginning to speak up and organize. At the Beijing conference, 400 girls attended and the

most organized was perhaps the Girls International Forum, an initiative born in the United States.

We are not certain if there is an equivalent organized force of girls in Asia. But even if there is none, this only makes girls who have the grit to stand up alone even more admirable—girls like the one we have here, who perhaps found the courage to do so precisely because she trusted adults to do her justice. This why it is just plain tragic that some of these people—figures all of authority, bigger, stronger, richer—in the end, trashed everything she said, pushed aside her wounded spirit and body and declared innocent her enemy. This brave little girl may now be wondering: Who then is guilty?

This little girl's ordeal, apart from making us seethe, pushes us to act and ensure that governments deliver on the promises they made in Beijing. Even now, some have already started picking up the issue of the girl child with greater force, committing and launching campaigns to protect the rights of the girl child, to raise the rate of enrollment for girls, to reduce infant mortality, to increase child care and many others. All these are good things that, to a very large extent, are fruits of the feminist movement.

Now we are forging on to knock down obstacles that prevent the realization and furtherance of these gains. Foremost among these obstacles are laws and judicial systems, culture and, most especially, poverty. Because where poverty stalks families, there the girl child is most in jeopardy. The coping strategies of families in economic crisis are usually gender-biased and in many instances, families would hang on to possessions—the radio, the television—but would sell their daughters first off.

Which brings us to the question of family. Maybe, it is time we begin to understand family to mean entire communities watching out for children, communities unafraid and ready to intervene and break the cycle of violence against the girl child if and whenever necessary.

This issue of *Women in Action* is dedicated to the girl child. Let every single one be the child of us all.

Ann McCarthy Carreon

C Contents

THE PROBLEMS ARE MEDIA & EDUCATION **15** by Luz Maria Martinez
Fearless words from 12-year-old Reshma Pattni.

THE GIRL CHILD AT RISK **16** by Noeleen Heyzer *We borrow the world
from our children. But what kind of a world are we giving back?*

BEIJING BREAKS GROUND **22** by Mavic Cabrera-Balleza
Finally, things are changing.

FEMINIST IN THE MAKING **25** by Luz Maria Martinez
The daughter follows her mother's footsteps.

COVER STORY: THE KUMARI **26** by Nancy Pearson Arcellana
The girl child as living goddess in Nepal.

IT'S ALL IN THE MESSAGE **32** by Meena M. Shivdas
*Media projects young women's bodies to titillate;
young males are used to convey authority.*

SHE SAID, HE SAID **52** by Ma. Christine Bantug
*An informal poll of teenagers in Fiji and the Philippines
on gender relations yields interesting answers.*

GOING BEYOND THE PERSONAL **58** by Malu S. Marin
Here's looking closely at lesbian activism.

THE DYING ROOMS **68** by Tom Hilditch *The story on brutal
neglect in China's orphanages, back-to-back with . . .*

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY **72**
by the Amity Foundation

CHILD PROSTITUTION: THE ASIAN REALITY **75**
by Aaron Sacks *Can the child sex trade really
be reduced to supply and demand?*

THE LAST TEN YEARS **77** *The women's
movement in Sri Lanka looks back.*

DEPARTMENTS

- Editorial **1**
Feedback **4**
What do you think? **7**
Clips **8**
Action Alert **12**
Isis Collections **35**
 From the Shelves of Isis **35**
 Book Reviews **42**
 Growing Up in the Philippines **46**
 by K.L. Soto Sol Cruz
 Poetry **49**
Woman in Action: Speaking Out Against
 Violence **63**
One on One: Not Quite A Chip Off the Old
 Block **64** by Irene R. Chia
Health Updates **79**

*On the cover: The Kumari-the living Goddess by Salome S. Russell
from Women Artists Diary 1995.*

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Feedback on: CAN MEN BE FEMINISTS?

The women of Isis International-Manila ask if men can be feminists.

For me, encountering that question raises more questions than answers.

One. What is a feminist? Are there any minimum requirements to becoming a feminist before one can enjoy sporting the label? Who judges these things?

Two. Do men need to be feminists? Do feminists want to have feminist men around?

Three. Do I want to be a feminist? Will anyone believe me if I do decide to become a feminist?

Romel Lalata

Policy Review and Editorial Services, Inc., Quezon City, Philippines

Dear Romel,

We are not from Isis International-Manila but let us share some thoughts:

There are many perspectives to this question. People from the "mainstream" fear the feminist label. Many times when we have forums with so-called "mainstream" people, they say, "Oh, you do very good work" when referring to our Women's Action Hotline service. Then they would add, "It's a good thing that you're all feminine unlike many feminists who look like..." (???)

They say feminist have tight assholes who need to loosen up.

Yet, it is true that many feminists lack a sense of humor. But hey, is rape funny?

Then there are those who ask: What does a feminist look like? We say: Who cares, as long as she gets an equal say. And to those who say "You don't look like a feminist," we respond: "Watch out—we disguise ourselves as **human beings.**"

So, do men need to be feminists? Do feminists want to have feminist men around? We do. Especially if in addition to being feminists they're handsome too. We also say "Your boyfriend bakes

cookies? Marry him..."

*Anonymous
Arugaan ang Kalakasan, Inc.
Quezon City, Philippines*

Yes, I believe that a man can be a feminist. The philosophy one chooses to adapt is not necessarily limited to one's gender. It is the person's state of mind, the way he or she perceives things, that matters. One need not be a woman to be a feminist.

*JC Mendoza
University of the Philippines*

I think the word feminist is quite sexist. If we are striving for the equality of men and women then gender should not be an issue itself. The important thing is we regard and treat people based on their merits, character and capabilities and not because of their color, race, religion or gender for that matter.

*Anonymous
Philippines*

A feminist is someone who upholds the rights of women. Being a feminist doesn't require one to be a woman. A man can also be a feminist just as long as he believes that women should be treated equally with men and are regarded with dignity and respect instead of discriminating them and treating them as second-class citizens.

*Anonymous
Philippines*

No, the macho image of men will always be a hindrance. Men still doubt the capabilities of women.

*Regi Reyes
Statistical Coordination Officer of
the National Statistical
Coordination Board
(NSCB) Philippines*

Can't be, because if men become feminists then that's an outright admission that women are superior. But men can respect the

thinking of women. Men will always believe they are on top of the situation. It is a weak man who agrees to feminist views.

*Ruben Litan
Information Researcher
NSCB*

OPPOSING VIEW ON IRAN

Contrary to reports in western media that Iranian women are abused, treated as appendages to men and are useless, we found them to be the opposite, as we toured Iran recently at the invitation of Fatemeh Hashemi, president of the Iranian Women's Solidarity Association, and daughter of President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

Half of university students in science and medicine are women. At the large Blood Transfusion Service of the Blood Research and Fractionation Center, half of the doctors in a team of 140 are women. A woman, Dr. Huri Rezvan, is the manager.

If the Philippines has the National Commission on Women, Iran has its Women's Affairs Office headed by a brilliant lawyer, Shahla Habibi, who is also the President's Adviser on Women's Affairs. The Women's Affairs Office prepared the agenda for the women's participation in the Global Forum in Beijing where Iran sent 100 women headed by Fatemeh Hashemi. From all accounts, the Iranian women made a hit with their 20 position papers.

Iran has 42 women's national organizations. Among the more prominent ones are the Women's Solidarity Association, Women's Society Against Environmental Pollution, Association for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development.

We noted that rural women, about 21 percent or 11.5 million of the population, are major players in the economy of the country. They are well-educated and literate and not only do they produce food for the people but that they contribute substantially

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to the export earnings through the carpet industry. Next to oil, carpets are the second biggest dollar earner.

The government has set up 2,000 family planning centers all over the country that give away free contraceptive pills and gadgets. Some 16,500 health workers (58 percent of which are women) see to the health of the people.

Women's sports are fantastic. Faezeye, President Rafsanjani's second daughter, is the moving spirit behind sports. Iranian women athletes have won in international tournaments such as in the world championship of 1992 in Germany; in the 1993 First Islamic Countries Games; in the 1993 women's shooting games in Germany and Korea; in the 1994 chess tournament in Moscow, Hungary and India; and in the 1994 shooting games in Japan and Beijing. Besides these sports, they are also engaged in skiing, mountaineering, fencing, judo, karate, taekwondo, hockey, squash, rowing and cycling. What do you say to that?

In politics, Iranian women play major roles. In the last session of the Parliament, the nine women members introduced 20 bills and succeeded in having 10 of them approved. In last March's national election, of the 30,000 candidates, 30 were women with Faezeye leading the pack. The sister of Imam Khomeini, Faridah, is also very active in politics. She heads the Women's Population Foundation and fielded some 10 women in the last elections. She is highly educated and very patriotic, too. The two members of Parliament we met, Madame Salchi and Vahid Nasijerdi, were very vocal about women's rights in the home and society. Both introduced 20 bills, including nursing mothers' right to feed her baby while at work and providing women nurses with pension after their mandatory retirement. The two women also won four months of paid leave for

women pregnant for the first child. Not a bad performance for two of the nine women in Parliament.

We also observed that sexual harassment is unheard of. We like to think that Iranian women's clothes have something to do with this. By tradition, women wear scarves and the Hijab outside the home. They are fully covered from head to toe. Which does not seem to bother them. Girls of nine years start wearing the *hijab* and scarf. But do not think that their clothes are all boring. Because they can discard the scarves and hijab when there are no men around, the women take to fashionable clothes, made locally or in European fashion houses. Madame Effat Hashemi, the First Lady, was very elegant in her suit when she received us at the Presidential House. However, Iranian women are not allowed to be photographed without the scarf and hijab.

Moreover, drug addiction, drunkenness and gambling and womanizing are nowhere in sight. We were told that to discourage the habit, drug offenders are heavily penalized. Drinking and gambling are not allowed in public but one may drink and gamble to death in one's house.

Islam allows four wives under certain conditions. But because these conditions are almost impossible to meet, very, very few men have four wives. Besides, we were told by both men and women, when one truly loves another, it is not possible to be unfaithful. Love, as in all religions whether Islam or Christian, is sacred, sublime.

*Leonarda N. Camacho
Metro Manila Council of Women
Balikatan Movement, Inc. Quezon
City, Philippines*

I want to give you an update on the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*. We have made many accomplishments *this year*. We found a grandchild that was born in captivity and he now knows his true identity. Another significant contribution was a reunion

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between a son and his father whose mother had disappeared.

The French magazine *Marie Clair* conducted a survey of the most important women in the world. "I was one of the women mentioned in this list. The entry in the magazine stated "Rosa Tarlovsky de Roisinblit, Vice President of the Abuelas de Mayo in Argentina. This dean of the Abuelas de Mayo who continues to pressure authorities..."

Well, as you can see our struggle continues to be arduous and long. I hope you are doing well. Thank you for your solidarity.

*Rosita Roisinblit
Argentina*

(Rosita was featured in WIA's first issue in 1995. We appreciate her continuing communications with us.-Ed.)

From the E-mail

ISRAEL: STAGNATION RATHER THAN CRACKDOWNS

From Israeli feminists, forwarded FYI.

Robin Morgan

"The election of right-wing Benjamin Netanyahu as the next prime minister of Israel is bad enough. The enormous gains of three religious fundamentalist parties (increasing their electoral strength by 50 percent in the Knesset) is much worse. Since Netanyahu's Likud party won only 32 seats, and the religious now collectively hold 23, the Likud will require the approval of the religious in every coalition move they make. For gays, this does not bode well.

"Gay rights in Israel had greatly improved in the last four years: In 1992, discrimination at work based on sexual orientation was made illegal. The next year, the army formally ended most discrimination against gay men and lesbians. In 1994, the Supreme Court recognized benefits to same-sex spouses

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employed by El-Al Airlines and Tel-Aviv University. And in 1995, the law was amended to grant pensions to same-sex partners of deceased civil servants. Even a number of public institutions have made concessions to same-sex spouses (blood banks, the census bureau, the names registry, etc.). And our nightlife was just beginning to get off the ground.

"In general, I do not believe that these achievements will be rolled back or even come under all-out attack by the new government. What is clear, however, is that the ascendancy of the religious spells the end of further gains during the lifetime of this government.

"Modern Israel had only

opposed to the Jewish-religious or Arab schools, which educate about half the children in Israel). In the secular system, the booklet had not yet gained wide exposure, but there was hope. Now that hope is gone.

"Where gays will feel the hot breath of the religious on our necks is the stigma, the delegitimization, and the demonization of our style of life. This will get worse, and fewer gays will feel comfortable coming out. The already-existing fear of losing jobs or clients—especially for teachers, medical personnel, social workers, psychologists, and the like—will get worse, despite the law that prohibits this. The vast majority of gays in Israel are still deep inside the closet, and the closet will become even deeper.

"I do not believe that our two active organizations will be outlawed: CLAF, the Community of Feminist Lesbians, or SPPR, the Society for the Protection of Personal Rights. But both will be handicapped in legislative lobbying and advocacy. And although the courts are ostensibly inde-

pendent of the legislature, they too are influenced by the *Zeitgeist*.

"Yes, some religious political leaders are renewing the language of "the abomination of homosexuality" and have threatened to enact legislation that would undermine previous gains. But I don't think they would be successful in persuading the secular component of the new government (Likud) to go along with it.

"Right now, there's a lot of posturing going on.

"You know what? I think the fundamentalists will be so busy introducing religious studies into the secular school system;

Netanyahu's
election does not
bode well for gays
in Israel.

recently begun to squeeze out of the vice-grip of the ultra-Orthodox, who still have a monopoly on life-cycle rituals (marriage, divorce, and burial) and dominate other key areas of family life (child custody). Progress in these areas will be hopeless-to-nil as long as the religious are running these shows.

"One glimmer of hope will certainly die out. In 1995, the Ministry of Education issued a booklet that describes homosexual and lesbian partnerships as an alternative kind of domestic arrangement, no disparagement in tone or content. This booklet had been prepared for the so-called "secular" school system in Israel (as

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Heard in a conference:
"Women in the South have made gains in their fight for rights, equality. But when the lesbian movement—which is more threatening to men—attached itself to the women's movement—the (the lesbian movement) eroded these gains." Do you agree?

If you have questions you wish to raise, send them to us also and let's ask our readers:

"What do you think?"

siphoning public funds into religious institutions, religious schools, and housing for the indigent religious; enforcing coercive laws that are on the books but only partially enforced (e.g., closing businesses and factories that are open on the Sabbath); and holding back further progress in the peace talks—that there will be very little time left for oppressing us as well. Maybe if they get re-elected in the year 2000, god-forbid.

"Jerusalem, 5 June 1996"

I received the latest publication of Isis and was impressed with your article on the media. It gave me much food for thought.

Elizabeth Lopez
U.S.A.

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CRACKING DOWN ON PORNO-TOURISM

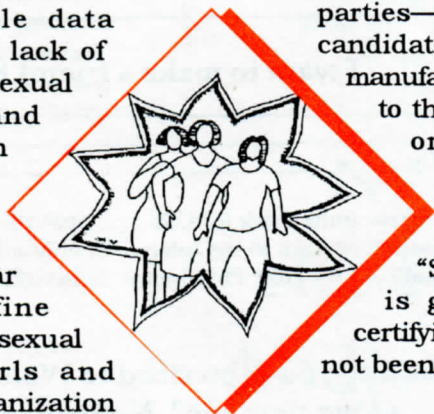
BRAZIL (IPS)—The first Seminar Against the Exploitation of Girls and Adolescents held in the Brazilian Capital last 16-19 April came up with the conclusion that an alliance between the government, the media and non-government organizations is essential to fight the widespread problem of sexual exploitation of minors. The seminar focused on specific problems plaguing each region—some of which are the lack of reliable data regarding the issue, lack of laws addressing the sexual abuse of minors, and police involvement in the “porno-tourism” trade.

To combat this problem the seminar proposed to redefine public policies on the sexual exploitation of girls and adolescents; the organization of a network of services in the areas of health, education, security and legal support focused on prevention and protection; and the creation of a network for creating public awareness and media support. The seminar’s conclusions will be presented at an international congress on the sexual exploitation of minors to be held in Stockholm, Sweden in August.

CHILD LABOR : SWEEPED UNDER THE CARPET BY EXPORTERS

INDIA (IPS)—“This is just a rumor. The fact is that there is no child labor here.” This is the lie that has been going around for the last 10 years in Bhadohi, India. The area, which is famous for its hand-

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woven wool rugs, is under fire from child activists who allege that the area forcibly employs children from outside and forces them to work long hours in wretched working conditions.

The activists of Saryathi’s South Asian Coalition Against Child Servitude (SACCS) are trying to make the plight of the “carpet children” an election issue by creating public awareness about them. The activists say that it is difficult to go against these carpet exporters since they are backed up by certain influential political parties—the ruling congress candidate, for instance, is a manufacturer. As a response to this problem, Saryathi’s organization created the “child labour-free carpet labeling scheme” in which a “Smiling Carpet” label is given to exporters certifying that the carpet has not been made by children.

INEQUALITY IN LITERACY

India is still struggling with its illiterate adult women. Female literacy has increased from 18.44 percent in 1971 to 39.24 percent in 1991. But it is still way behind male literacy which increased from 39.51 percent in 1971 to 64.13 percent in 1991.

This inequality stems from the fact that men and women are not equal in the labour market thus, women’s education is perceived as having lower economic utility.

The educational system itself reflects the lifestyles and expected roles of men and women. Textbooks and teachers generally project these images: the mother cooks, father goes to work, sister helps

mother, brother goes to play.

Also, the higher percentage of married females in the 15-19 age group, increasing death rate and deteriorating birth rate are factors in female illiteracy.

At higher education levels, the percentage of enrollees is small. When the students enrolling for higher education is only about 4.8 per cent of the relevant age group, the dropouts and failures account for 59 per cent of the students enrolled. At present, enrolling for higher education is better with about six percent of the relevant age group.

The high dropout and failure rates affect especially the girls and students belonging to disadvantaged sections of the population. Poor students are often weak either in the higher standards of education where English is the medium of instruction or even in the lesser standards that use regional languages as the media. All these prevent the lower groups from achieving the goal of equal educational opportunities.

The literacy problem is exacerbated by the growing polarization between educational institutions available to the elites and the masses and the growing irrelevance of education to the needs of the developing economy and the changing society.

(Source: Child Workers News, July-September and October-December 1995)

VIRGINITY A MUST FOR INDON ARMY WOMEN

JAKARTA (Reuter)—Virginity has been declared compulsory for women cadets entering the Indonesian police and military forces, the *Pos*

Kota newspaper said on Wednesday.

Indonesian police chief General Banurusman Astroemitro was quoted as telling a parliamentary commission on Tuesday that a woman's virginity would have to be verified before she could enter academies for the military, which includes the police. He said some women entering military academies had to leave after they were discovered to be pregnant.

"Usually the community in the region will give a party for a woman when she is accepted into the military. During that event, women who have boyfriends are left a "deposit." That deposit usually becomes known after a few months," Banurusman said. "The result is that the female cadet soldier must end her education," he said.

Answering legislators' questions, Banurusman said: "If needed, the examination can be done by a woman doctor."
(Source: Today, 7 March 1996)

NEW CURE FOR AN OLD COMPLAINT

CHILE (IPS)—Child abuse may be an old problem but it has never merited close attention and scrutiny. At least, not until recently. Official figures show that some 300,000 minors are victims of physical and psychological aggression in Chile. The country ranks third in terms of the prevalence of child abuse according to the National Women's Service. Publicity campaigns have made the public aware of this widespread problem especially since the

case of a five-month-old baby who was put into a coma by a beating from her father, hit the headlines.

The Chilean pediatric surgeon, who concentrated on the issue of child abuse for five years, expressed his frustration at the situation. This problem, according to him, existed mostly in industrialized nations and cuts across all socio-economic levels although he noted that it is more concealed in the upper classes. He cites the need for enacting more laws that deal specifically with child abuse as well as information campaigns in the media and community levels.

GETTING TOUGH ON PAEDOPHILES

PHILIPPINES (IPS)—An Australian businessman convicted under a 1992 Philippine Law on Paedophilia signals the start of concrete government efforts to crack down on paedophiliac activity in Asia. Similar actions have started in other countries in the region. Thailand, for instance, indicted a Japanese businessman for sexually abusing two under-aged girls in the Northern province of Chang Mai. Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downes initiated an inquiry in response to reports of Australian aid money being extended to orphanages and schools which supply "clean" children for Australian diplomats—sending out a clear message that he will not tolerate such unethical behavior from his compatriots.

Paedophiliac activity reportedly abound in the region with child prostitutes

numbering to more than a million in Asia. While NGOs fighting paedophilia are happy with the recent efforts to curb these activities, they still see the need for stricter implementation of existing laws as well as for richer countries to enact and enforce laws that would prosecute paedophiles returning to their own countries.

TRAFFICKED INTO INDIA

The Indian and Nepali governments share complicity in the abuse of thousands of women and girls who are trafficked from Nepal to India for the purposes of prostitution. "The willingness of Indian and Nepali government officials to tolerate and, in some cases, participate in the burgeoning flesh trade exacerbates abuse," says Human Rights Watch/Asia in a 90-page report released in July 1995.

HRW concludes that half of Bombay's 100,000 brothel workers are women and girls from Nepal. The report, *Rape for Profit: Trafficking of Nepali Girls and Women to India's Brothels*, says that the workers are kept in conditions tantamount to slavery.

"Held in debt bondage for years at a time, they are raped and subjected to severe beatings, exposed to AIDS, and face arbitrary imprisonment." Non-government workers in Bombay estimate that 20 percent of Bombay's brothel workers are under the age of 18 and at least half could be infected with AIDS.

"These abuses are not only violations of internationally recognized human rights but are especially prohibited under domestic laws of both



countries," states a press release accompanying the report.

Based largely on interviews with trafficking victims, the report says that many prostitutes are young women lured from remote villages and poor border communities in Nepal by local recruiters, relatives or neighbours promising jobs or marriage. They are then sold to brokers who deliver them to brothels in India.

The women then must work to pay off both their purchase price plus interest. However, most never know what they "owe" or the terms of repayment. They are under constant surveillance and face threats, beatings and other worse treatment if they misbehave.

Hoping for help from police or other officials is a waste of time. "Police are often the brothel owners' best clients," says HRW. "In India, police and local officials patronize brothels and protect brothel owners and traffickers." And despite human rights organizations in Nepal reporting extensively on the problem of forced trafficking and identifying traffickers, there have been few arrests and even fewer prosecutions.

The report outlines the distressingly cyclical nature of the abuse. Women who have managed to survive the system of debt bondage frequently become recruiters to fulfill their owners' requirement that they find another girl to take their place.

The report also notes that in 1993, Vinit Muntarbhorn, United Nations Special

Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, questioned the role of officials in trafficking in Nepal. "Law enforcement authorities are often weak, understaffed, undertrained and corrupt," said Muntarbhorn. "There is an expansive web of criminality which exploits children and which abuses the open border with India."

Muntarbhorn called for improved law enforcement, investigations and punishment of corrupt officials, better international cooperation against trafficking (including national co-operation with Interpol) and the establishment of national policies to deal with child exploitation. All these are supported by the Watch report. Human Rights

Watch/Asia says that despite an increased awareness of the problem of trafficking in women and children around the world the international community has "failed to make the control of human smuggling and forced prostitution issues of urgency for regional or global crime control initiatives. India, Nepal and the international community have an obligation to ensure that states rigorously pursue persecution of its own forces found guilty of complicity with the industry."

Human Rights Watch calls on India to protect the women and girls whose rights are violated within its territory, and on Nepal to improve the quality of its law enforcement personnel at all levels.

(Source: Human Rights Tribune, Vol. 3, Oct/Nov 1995)

LAY MIDWIVES UNDER ASSAULT IN NYS

by David Yarrow

Albany, NY—Witch hunts are past history, and recent

effort has begun to establish women's rights, and re-establish women's rites—including their role as professional midwives independent of medicine.

But in New York State (NYS) it's still legal to hunt midwives. December 13, 1995 Roberta Devers-Scott was called to the Onondaga County Family Planning front office where she worked as counselor. There, two undercover investigators and a police officer handed her a search warrant and handcuffed her. At the police station she was mugshot, fingerprinted and imprisoned, charged with felony. Her home was searched and records seized.

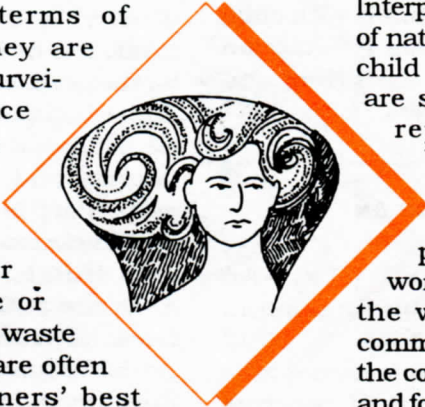
Her crime? Not drug dealing, prostitution, child abuse, street violence, murder. Roberta's felony was to help other women give birth at home, educate them about pregnancy, guide them through the birth process, empower women. Roberta practiced lay midwifery in central NY.

Roberta isn't the only midwife under legal attack in NYS. Rather, a serious effort seems underway to subvert a 1992 NYS law and abolish lay midwifery. To do so drastically reduces women's birth options and home births may become impossible, if not illegal.

An occasional official inquiry into traumatic outcomes of abnormal births was normal—until recently. NYS played "bait and betray" tactics to trap lay midwives and suppress their practice as unlicensed profession.

Statewide Harassment

Summer '93 a Long Island New York midwife investigated



by Education Department Office of Professional Discipline is coerced to agree to stop practicing.

Spring '94 Hudson Valley midwives Julia Kessler and Karen Pardini are charged by Health Department with unlicensed midwife practice.

October '95 midwife Maggie Kern investigated by Education Department Office of Professional Discipline.

November '95 midwife Susan Frank investigated by Education Department Office of Professional Discipline.

January '95 midwife Hilary Schlinger investigated by Education Department Office of Professional Discipline.

The Midwifery Connection of NY Friends of Midwives reports investigations of other NY midwives. Two midwives who are also nurses, charged with professional misconduct for practicing outside the scope of nursing, face internal hearings and loss of nursing licenses.

NY midwives are under legal attack—just when it seemed no longer under medical definition and lay midwives had gained recognition.

Politicians and preachers crow about “family values” while families are denied a basic right and rite: where and how to birth new family. Abortion is a raging national controversy while a woman’s choice of how and with whom to birth her child is restricted. Rising medical costs challenge state, federal and family budgets while a low cost, safe tradition—tested by time and proven effective worldwide—home birth with a midwife-is threatened with extinction.



Legislative Bait

In 1982 the Midwifery Practice Act was introduced to NYS' Legislature to establish midwifery as its own profession in NYS under the Education Department jurisdiction. Prior to this, NYS only recognized midwifery as nursing under the Health Department, and nurse-midwives practiced under physician supervision. Most states recognize and regulate midwifery as two separate professions: certified nurse-midwives and direct-entry midwives. The NY professional licensing bill, lobbied for by Midwives Alliance of NY (MANY) and NY Chapter of the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), sat in committee until 1988.

The law's intent is to license all midwives, regardless of route of entry—not only nurse-midwives, but also those trained and experienced outside the medical system (lay midwifery). The act addresses standards for direct-entry midwives through non-medical education and apprenticeship. Nurse-midwives certified by the Health Department are immediately eligible for licensure. Midwives trained and licensed outside NY must validate their education and experience before a licensure exam.

NYS Health Department Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on the Education and Recruitment of Midwives (April 1990) and Task Force on Midwifery (April 1990) both recommended direct-entry midwifery as a response to the dire need for more midwives in various care settings in NY.

In June 1992, the law passed, sponsored by Senator Tarky

Lombardi and Assemblyman Richard Gottfried. But last minute negotiations with the medical society changed “licensed individuals who represent a cross-section of midwifery practice and education” to “persons licensed or exempt under this section.” This eliminated direct-entry education, leaving nursing the only education route, and lay midwives no voice or vote on the Board.

PREVENT FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

by Karen E. Kun

Between 85 million and 115 million women and girls currently alive have been subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM). Each year, approximately two million girls undergo FGM, which translates into 6,000 new cases a day, five per minute. The incidence continues to increase due to population growth, exportation of the practice through immigration, and because it is viewed as a prerequisite for marriage—primarily because it is thought to ensure virginity and is a means to control sexuality.

FGM has serious ramifications for girls' and women's health. Immediate effects from FGM include infection, shock, swelling, hemorrhage, and accidental damage to the surrounding urethra, vagina, or rectum. Long-term effects can include urinary tract complications, chronic pelvic infections, infertility, and obstetric complications. Moreover, its implications for pregnancy are serious. The World Health Organization estimates that women subjected to FGM are twice as likely to die in childbirth as FGM can damage the reproductive tract and cause scarring, increasing the risk of obstruction and hemorrhage in labor.

In addition, FGM may be linked with a greater risk of HIV transmission in four ways: the use of unsterilized instruments such as knives or blades in its performance; blood transfusions due to tearing and bleeding during childbirth; a higher incidence of anal intercourse since anecdotal

action alert

evidence indicate that some women who have been subjected to FGM find it more comfortable than vaginal penetration.

To date, studies exploring the correlation between FGM and enhanced risk of HIV infection are noticeably absent from medical literature. Given the magnitude of HIV infection in the sub-Saharan Africa, research on any practice which may increase the risk of transmission must be prioritized. The WHO and other medical and health-related organizations must lead in advocating for the performance of such research, as it has been ignored for too long, and the implications of this neglect are immense.

Increased financial support is needed if sub-Saharan, African nations, grassroots women's groups working throughout the region, and the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices (an umbrella group with national committees in 24 African countries) are to eradicate FGM and other harmful traditional practices and increase the use of beneficial practices.

Enhanced cooperation and better integration must also ensue between non-government humanitarian organizations, national governments, UN bodies, health researchers, advocates, and other concerned individuals if FGM is to be successfully combatted. Countries that provide developmental assistance to nations where FGM is practiced should also call for the integration of education on the dangers of FGM into maternal and child health courses, primary care, family planning, and HIV prevention



efforts that they are funding. Such an integration would go far in disseminating knowledge about the serious health ramifications of FGM.

Individuals of all races, cultures, and nations must unite in the campaign against FGM. Only by enhancing the moral, financial and technical support for groups such as the Inter-African Committee and other indigenous groups that educate people about FGM's negative effects, only through enhancing the cooperation between NGOs, government agencies, researchers, and advocates, and only through integrating the message about the negative effects of FGM into community health programs will the campaign against FGM succeed.

From the Women's International Public Health Network, Summer 1995

From the E-mail

HUMANITARIAN SEXTOURISM?

It is an open secret that also in Zenica prostitution is increasing. We are alarmed by the fact that this concerns especially young women and girls sometimes not older than 14 years. The places for making

contact are known: the vicinity of big hotels like Hotel International, Metallurg, Dom Penzionera, and other central places like the main bridge or Radakovo.

It seems that most clients are Internationals, i.e. male members of humanitarian and other international organisations whose task it should be to help improve the living conditions in Bosnia. Instead, by buying sex they take advantage of economical need and inexperience of young women and girls. This fact itself is a scandal. It is outraging considering that thousands of women have been subject to rape, sexual violation and torture in this country during the war.

The increase of prostitution is a typical symptom of post war times. Especially in places where there are a lot of international male staff and soldiers. This is known from other countries like Germany or the Philippines, where women and girls are forced to prostitute themselves in order to survive.

Medica will start to monitor and observe the situation in Zenica. We ask all organisations working with women and girls to provide us with whatever information they have on this subject to mobilise their donators and head offices for setting up income generating projects especially for women and girls.

Last but not least we urge all head of offices to look into this matter with due care and dismiss immediately all male staff members having sex with minors or taking advantage of the miserable situation of many women in Zenica. Sexual exploitation is not a matter of

privacy!

Contact apcadmin@ax.apc.org or the Association for Progressive Communication International Secretariat, Rua Vicente de Souza, 29 Botafogo, Rio de Janeiro, RJ 22251-070 Brazil

A FILIPINA BATTERED IN KOREA

(The following is excerpted from a letter that came into our office that dramatizes the lack of protection for Filipinas married to men in South Korea.-Ed.)

"On 10 November 1995, my friend Mylene Luminarias-Park, a Filipina based in Tejon, Korea, almost lost her life. Her Korean husband, Chan-gyu Park had repeatedly banged her head to the wall and a steel door, slapped her several times, dragged her by the hair out of the house while trying to undress her, tried to choke her and throw her down the stairs, and almost forced her to jump from the fourth floor of their apartment building.

"Irked by his lack of concern at their son's illness, Mylene had berated her husband and told him that it might be best for her and the child to go home to the Philippines. The argument continued until the following morning. At this point, her husband brought up the subject of divorce, which they had been discussing for the past few months. When she inquired about the son, he told her that she would have to ask the judge. Knowing fully well that Korean courts would favor the father, Mylene insisted that he give her their son's passport.

Wanting to avoid further arguments, she asked him to leave the house and not to come back unless he could give her the necessary papers.

"Later that evening, Mylene's husband returned drunk and with a male companion. Mylene was on the phone with her friend when his husband started arguing with her again, with his friend joining him. Not wanting to argue, Mylene locked herself in the bedroom with her son. Her husband, enraged, kicked down the door and began beating her. While he beat her, Chan-gyu Park also repeatedly threatened to make true his earlier threats to commit suicide by jumping off the fourth floor and taking her along with him. Thinking of her child, Mylene tried to hang on to anything she could hold on to.

"It was a good thing that Mylene, fearing for her safety, did not hang up the phone so her friend could hear what was going on. After hearing what was going on, Mylene's friend left her dormitory residence and summoned the police.

"The police arrived only to first ask for Mylene's name, nationality and passport. They were more concerned about her husband whose foot was bleeding because he shattered their glass sliding door. By this time too, Chan-gyu's sister and Mylene's friend had also arrived. The sister lived nearby and immediately became worried about her brother's self-inflicted injuries. As Mylene



Sandra Torrijos

was leaving to find shelter elsewhere, Chan-gyu shouted at her: "Your husband is heaven. You are but earth."

Mylene has sought assistance from the Philippine embassy which has responded positively and supported her needs. But the problem of child custody remains. Many Filipinas who have gone to South Korea to marry—many through arranged marriages—end up battered and wanting to escape with their children but are unaware of the biases in South Korean laws. Those who did manage to get out of the cycle of domestic violence have found it impossible to bring their children.

Mylene Luminarias-Park is requesting for letters of support appealing to the South Korean authorities to allow her to go home with her child. In addition, she is asking for assistance from women's groups in Korea. Send letters to your Korean Embassy.

RALLY AROUND IRENE

Irene Fernandez, Director of Tenaganita, is being charged by the Malaysian government of violating the 1984 Printing Presses and Publications Act. Her trial started last 10 to 14 June 1996 at the Magistrates Court (5A) in Kuala Lumpur.

Irene made an application to the High Court on 30 May 1996 to transfer the case from the Magistrates Court to the High Court. One of the key reasons for this application is to challenge the validity of Section 8A of the Printing Presses and Publications Act as it may be *ultra vires* to the Constitution under Article 10 which guarantees the right to freedom of expression. Thus, because of this unusual difficulty in the law, the case is better heard at a High Court level. However, the application for transfer to High Court was

dismissed by the judge on 5 June 1996. Thus the trial took place as scheduled from 10-14 June 1996, at the Magistrates Court (5A), in Kuala Lumpur.

We would like to request your support in the following ways:

1. Hold visible forms of protest in your country especially where the Malaysian Embassy is situated. Please continue to send letters of protest to the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia.
2. Get hold and disseminate this information. We have printed pamphlets for distribution. Please refer to the E-Mail address given below for requests for pamphlets and for further information related to necessary actions.
3. Make independent press statements stating our fundamental right to freedom of expression and concern over treatment of migrant workers. Thank you.

Yours Sincerely,
Catherine A.

Those wishing to join the campaign for Irene Fernandez can contact: panap@geo2.poptel.org.uk



Sandra Torrijos

Isis International-Chile: POST BEIJING NEWSLETTER

Isis International-Chile has launched a post Beijing Newsletter monitoring the Platform for Action on health issues.

AGENDA SALUD is a Spanish language quarterly publication for the Wornen and Health Program of Isis International-Chile.

Each issue contains:

- ◆ Information on women and health from different perspectives
- ◆ Analysis of action and work by women on health
- ◆ Main proposals by women's groups and/or international organizations.

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DATA BASE ON WOMEN: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: A new publication from Isis International-Chile

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“The problems are media and education”

by Luz Maria Martinez

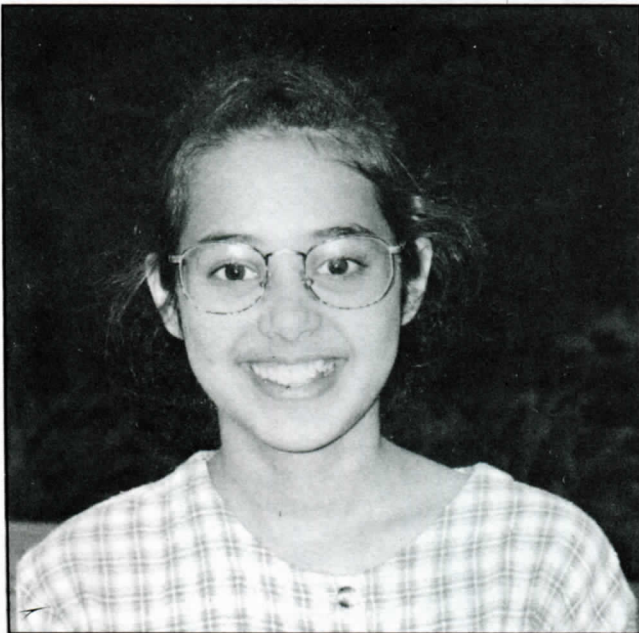
think our problems are rooted in education and the media”, says Reshma Pattni, 12-year old editorial board member of the *New Moon*, a publication based in the U.S.A. for young girls written by young girls.

“T.V. tells girls that they have to be skinny and that they have to be beautiful. They are always saying that you have to wear make-up and look nice and everything. That the whole reason why you are here is to make boys like you.

“I just don’t think so. I don’t think girls should have to live up to men’s and boys’ expectations. I think they should be able to be their own person, whomever they like to be and not what other people want them to be. It should not really matter if you are skinny or fat or ugly.”

At the Women’s World Conference in Beijing, Reshma, surrounded by feminists, contemplates the meaning of feminism for herself. “In some things I am and in some things I’m sort of iffy about feminism. You can perhaps consider me a feminist when I feel really strong about something and have to say what I’m thinking. A feminist is a woman or a man who is concerned about women’s rights and is concerned about girls and how they are growing up to be. A feminist really gets in there and does not only say we really have to change this and that and then put it out of her mind. A feminist goes and does something about it. That is what I consider a feminist.”

Reshma, a 6th grader of Indian and Croatian descent looked around in Beijing and with eyes gleaming with enthusiasim, said: “I’m glad we girls had a chance to come now and that we are getting heard, because in 10 years we will be the leaders and we’ll have to know about these issues.”



“In 10 years, we will be the leaders.”

The Girl Child at Risk

by Noeleen Heyzer



A sherpa girl carrying
hay in her *doka*

B.M. Chettri

Many girl children are treated as excess population to be eliminated. Others are controlled, reshaped and harnessed to changing social ends.

The indigenous inhabitants of Alaska, Canada and Greenland, the Inuit, say, that we do not inherit land from our ancestors. We borrow it from our children and we have, indeed, borrowed it. But what kind of a world are we handing over to them? It is a world in a crisis of unsustainability that threatens our human future. It is a world torn apart by conflicts, drained of resources, poisoned by toxic wastes. It is a world of increasing impoverishment and increasing wealth—where the bottom 20 percent of the world's population struggle to survive on only 1.4 percent of the world's resources, while the top 20 percent of the rich own and control 85 percent of the world's resources. Can such a world provide for our children and their children thereafter?

We need a global shift in the direction of development—from the current pattern of unsustainability to a mode of development that is truly sustainable. Sustainable development is a life-or-death necessity and not simply a "soft option" to be added to mainstream development. Sustainable development is about children because they are the future. The 21st century and the next millennium belong to them and their descendants.

Indeed, when the concept of "sustainable development" was

first introduced in *Our Common Future* (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), the children's needs were placed at the core: 'Sustainable development is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

Sustainable development is thus about the "world's children"—a concept of global responsibility introduced by Mr. James Grant, the late Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). To fulfil this global responsibility, sustainable development also has to be about "the children's world"—that is, a world that will ensure their security and well-being not just in the next generation but in the generations to follow. Ultimately, sustainable development must mean sustainability from one generation to the next.

All over the world, the girl child is the child whose life and body are most at risk.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has defined "sustainable development" as "development that not only generates economic growth but distributes its benefits equitably; that regenerates the environment rather than destroying it; that em-

powers people rather than marginalising them. It gives priority to the poor, enlarging their choices and opportunities and providing for their participation in decisions affecting them. It is development that is pro-poor, pro-nature, pro-jobs and pro-women."

Sustainable development is also necessarily pro-children—pro-girls in particular.

At the Fourth World Conference on Women that took place recently in September 1995, 40,000 women gathered to affirm the kind of world they want to live in. In the work they envisioned, development processes will empower people, particularly women. Such a world will be founded on sustainable livelihoods and stable lives in healthy communities. It will be built on peace and long term conflict-resolution. In such a world, children can grow up safely to take ownership of the future that is theirs, for the future belongs to children only if they actually live long enough to see it.

GIRL CHILDREN AT RISK

There can be no sustainable development if the lives and bodies of children are constantly put at risk. "In 1979, the International Year of the Child was launched, accompanied by internationally televised accounts of children whose lives were devastated by famine, war, and poverty ... [There is] a chasm between ... idealised concepts of childhood and the realities of many

children's lives, both in the Third World and in the heart of First World urban centres. A decade later, an explosion of media coverage of child abuse, and particularly child sexual abuse, again challenged traditional beliefs about childhood and made public

the private lives of children with no access to the mythic 'walled garden' of 'Happy, Safe, Protected, Innocent Childhood'."

All over the world, the girl child is the child whose life and body are most at risk. As noted in the introduction of the book *Children and the Politics of Culture*, edited by S. Stephens, not only are children put at risk, they are often seen as "the risk." Thus, "some children [are treated] as people out of place and excess population to be eliminated, while others must be controlled, reshaped, and harnessed to changing social ends."

Girl children are the ones who are most often regarded as "risks." In many societies, girls live in peril because the risk factor lies simply in being female.

In countries of every economic and social profile, gender inequity works against girls throughout their lives. A wide range of discriminatory and violent practices are institutionalised in cultural traditions and thereby legitimated as 'social norms' so routinely practised that they become invisible. These systemic forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child cannot be discounted as random accidents. Such practices have to be eliminated in an equally systematic manner in all contexts where they are perpetrated.

Violence against girls can occur at birth or even before. Despite the increased life expectancy of women, there are now one hundred million "missing girls" who should be alive yet are not. The unbalanced sex ratio of the world population is a grim indicator of the persistence and severity of discrimination against girls and women.

Female infanticide continues to be practised in many countries. Worse still, its scope has been enlarged through the misuse of medical technology—in particular, the misuse of amniocentesis and abortion as the means of terminating the gestation of female fetuses. Sex-selective abortions are nearly 100 percent female.



An anti-dowry demonstration in Delhi

Sheba Chhachhi

The underlying causes for the systematic homicide of girl babies are:

- ◆ A gender hierarchy that makes the birth of a girl child an unwelcome arrival of a socially inferior being whom the family sees as a liability, not an asset

- ◆ Social and economic conditions that further pressure the family to rid themselves of such a liability.

Accordingly, action needs to be undertaken both in the long and short term. In the longer term, we must eliminate the gender hierarchy that threatens the life-chances of women, girls and even female fetuses. At the Fourth World Conference on Women, it was recognised that the rights and realities of girl children are inseparable from the rights and realities of adult women. In societies where discrimination and violence constitute the routine treatment of adult women, girls too will be routinely discriminated against and abused. If women are regarded as socially inferior beings, then girls too will be so regarded. The gender hierarchy is not a static structure, but one that is actively reproduced through the inter-generational transmission of discrimination and violence against all female persons of all ages.

In the shorter term, we need to change or eliminate those policies and practices that have the effect of placing the lives of girl children in danger. An example

of this would be "one-child" population control policies. In male-biased societies where sons are desired, such policies tend to lead to female infanticide, because many families want their one child to be a son, not a daughter. Such a situation is reinforced by kinship structures that award the rights of descent, ownership, and inheritance only to males. If only a son can inherit and transmit the family name and the resources that go with the name, then in a situation where only one child per family is allowed, female infanticide comes to be seen as a "rational solution" for ensuring family continuity.

Another example would be dowry systems, which have led families to impoverish themselves through offering unaffordable dowries to marry off their daughters. Such dowry systems are based on deeply patriarchal kinship patterns where "wife-givers" are structurally inferior to "wife-takers," so that a dowry has to be given as compensation for "wife-takers" to take away a family liability. In cases where the dowry is deemed inadequate, "dowry deaths" have occurred, where brides have been literally burnt to death. Everyday in India, five women are burnt in dowry-related disputes. Each dowry death not only kills a young woman; it also reinforces the gender hierarchy, telling poor families how unaffordable daughters are. Therefore, if

dowries cannot be afforded and daughters cannot be married off, then in a society where women have no social status except as wives, female infanticide comes to be seen as a "rational solution" for reducing family liability.

This is the disturbing characteristic of systemic violence: it is not an accident of unthinking impulse, but the outcome of "opportunity-cost" calculations of the relative worth of female lives and male lives. In this situation, policy interventions must be targeted not just at individual acts of violence but at the underlying causes that lead to the systemic violence—namely, the processes and structures that systematically reduce the worth of female lives.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS

A key policy intervention is the comprehensive promotion of the empowerment and rights of women and girls, including rights of descent, ownership and inheritance, as well as full social and legal status as human persons. The Platform for Action that has emerged from the Fourth World Conference on Women must be taken seriously as a charter for action, because the fate of today's women directly affects the fate of today's girls who may or may not become tomorrow's women. To do this in earnest, we need greater commitment, accountability and resources from governments and society at large. The challenge is to implement the recommendations that have been agreed upon by the international community, so that they will actually improve the life-chances and realities of women and girls everywhere.

The gains made by women in expanding the scope of human

The massive process of globalization, while opening up new opportunities for some, exposes many others—especially girl children—to new risks.

rights to the familial domain are also gains for children, in addition to the advances institutionalised in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. As pointed out by M. John in "Children's Rights in a Free-market Culture" in the book *Children and the Politics of Culture*: "Possibly one of the most contentious assertions in the Convention is that the rights of young people can best be promoted within the context of a 'protective' and 'nurturing' family."

But of course, while a protective and nurturing family may be the desired ideal, the reality is often otherwise. Indeed, as noted by Stephens: "While the family is still privileged as the ideal protective frame for children's well-being, the Convention also acknowledges that many children live outside families in situations of war and abandonment, and that children should also be protected against abuse and neglect within families."

Family violence occurs more frequently than is acknowledged. It is a form of systemic violence that is usually invisible or, worse still, condoned. Like women's rights, children's rights are human rights, especially the rights of girl children in the familial domain.

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo held in 1994 was a watershed for its visible demonstration that women's empowerment, health and reproductive rights must be recognized as de-

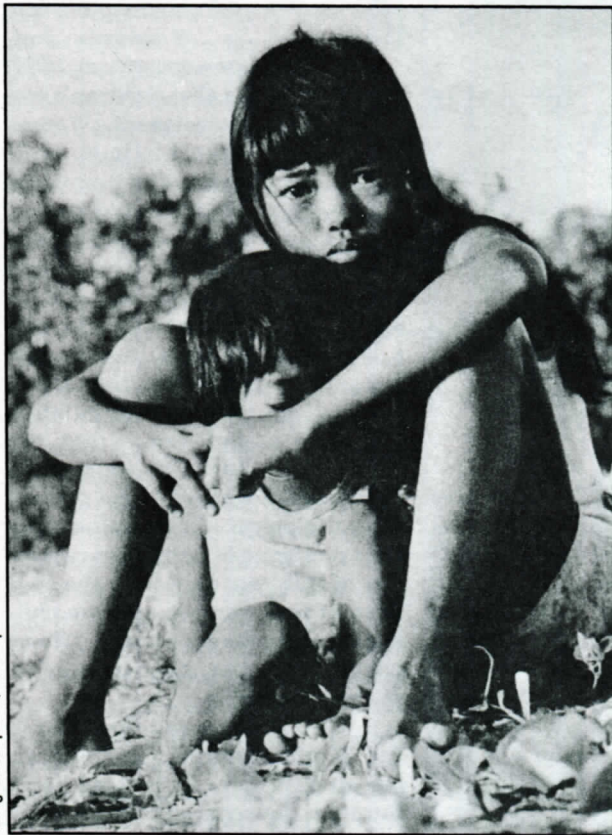
velopment priorities.

Women's empowerment at ICPD is also children's empowerment. Women give birth to children. The promotion of women's reproductive health and reproductive rights would help ensure that every child who is born is a wanted and healthy child. Because population policies target the fertility of certain categories of women, these policies have the power of determining the very existence of particular categories of children, especially the children of poor women and the children of indigenous women. These children are the most vulnerable of the vulnerable.

ICPD thus moved the gains of the World Summit for Children one step further. At the Children's Summit, governments made commitments to providing universal pre-natal care and trained attendants during childbirth, and recognised women's special health and nutritional needs at all stages of their lives. However, ICPD addressed the reproductive policy framework which sets the parameters for the very existence of children.

Women can exercise their reproductive rights only when they are empowered to do so. The control of women's fertility is also related to the control of their sexuality. Female genital mutilation continues to be inflicted on girl children as a customary means of controlling their sexuality and therefore their fertility. Women's rights over their own bodies thus constitute the foundation of their rights to economic and political resources.

The UN has designated 1996 as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty. In this year, national policies and strategies should be formulated or strengthened to reduce substantially overall poverty in the short-



A girl's sad eyes tell it all.

new risks. Capital, labour, goods and resources are moving much more rapidly across national boundaries, unleashing intense international competition. Production and communications systems are increasingly computerised and technologised. Employment patterns have changed: while new economic opportunities have been created for the "info-rich" and "techno-rich," many existing livelihoods and jobs are being destroyed

among the "info-poor" and "techno-poor."

These trends are symptomatic of a global shift to unregulated markets based on flexible capital. They have dramatic consequences for the shape of the world in the 21st century, the world that our children will live in. In the global shift to unregulated markets, social safety nets and other support systems have been eroded or stretched to breaking point. Policies come to be made by people and institutions that are more and more remote from the suffering of the poor. Deregulation on the current scale has freed too many economic actors of any social, ethical or political constraints. One trillion dollars currently change hands every day in the global financial market. While some billionaires are created overnight, many others are impoverished. The revenue of transnational corporations in 1992 was US\$ 5.5 trillion, untouched by any form of in-

ternational regulations or code of conduct.

The unregulated market is creating simultaneously the new rich and the new poor. Unfortunately, women and girls constitute the majority of the new poor. They have become steadily poorer in the struggle for scarce resources and a denser concentration of wealth at the top of a steep pyramid. The feminization of poverty is thus growing because of women's reduced access to increasingly scarce resources. In the context of competitive unregulated markets, women are affected by the fierce scramble over scarce resources, in particular, land and the means of livelihood.

When resources are scarce, gender hierarchies tend to be more rigid in the allocation of resources. In the absence of safety nets, the coping strategies of families in crisis are also usually gender-biased. Women's assets are often sold before men's assets. Women often end up having no land, fewer livelihood resources, less food, less health care, less education, and lower economic returns for their labour. In the extreme cases where children are sold off as family resource, it is the daughter, not the son, who is the first to be sold.

Impoverished mothers have scarce resources to share with their impoverished children. In developing countries, over 95 million children are working. The transmission of poverty from one generation to the next includes the transmission of gender injustice, where it is the girl child whose rights to life and her own person are not assured. First of all, the girl child born into poverty is more likely to suffer an early death either through deliberate infanticide or through—less deliberate but no less fatal—infant mortality, deprivation of food, clothes and health care. If a girl child is allowed to live, she is often vulnerable to abuse, condemned to remain illiterate, or reduced to being a family resource to be sold into bondage—whether as child-bride, prostitute or debt-slave.

est possible time, to reduce inequalities, and to "eradicate absolute poverty by a target date to be specified by each country in its national context." These policies and strategies must necessarily address the economic realities, needs and rights of women and girls since they now form the majority of the poor. If poverty is not eradicated for women in this generation, then that will become the inheritance of girls in the next.

SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN AN ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

There is an urgent need to implement the international agreements that have come out of the UN conferences on global development held since 1992. This need is particularly acute as the world undergoes a massive process of globalization, a process that has opened up new opportunities for some but exposed many others to

Even if the girl child is not sold off, she may still be caught in the poverty trap, as she is deprived of scarce household resources, held back from school and expected to be the family's secondary nurturer. Women currently form 60 percent of the one billion adults who have no access to basic education. Girls currently constitute the majority of the 130 million children who have no access to primary schooling.



B.M. Chattri

Older sister gives little brother a snack. In many places, boys eat first.

POLICY DIRECTIONS FOR GENDER EQUITY

Sustainable human development has to be founded on sustained peace at all levels of human society—familial, communal, national, regional and global. Violence against women and children occurs at all these levels. In 1993, there were 52 major conflicts in 42 countries, mainly in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Africa, involving large numbers of civilians and high levels of brutality and collective violence.

In order to make a fundamental difference to the lives of women and girls, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has launched a Women's Development Agenda for the 21st century that seeks to ensure the realization of the economic and political empowerment of women and girls. This innovative agenda looks forward to the creation of new institutions, new social values and new community structures. This agenda proposes the following policy recommendations for achieving this goal:

- ◆ Finding new pathways of development that will eliminate the feminisation of poverty, provide equitable benefits for all and cease

to generate new patterns of poverty in the wake of economic restructuring and globalisation. This requires a fundamental shift in development thinking, planning and practice that would incorporate the perspectives, needs and rights of women and girls.

- ◆ Creating new modes of sustainable livelihoods based on ecological, economic and social sustainability, that would take into account the everyday process whereby people produce, consume, survive and reproduce in specific social contexts—the livelihood needs, rights and realities of women and girls must be the primary basis of resource use and allocation.

- ◆ Rebuilding stable lives for women and girls affected by war, ecological destruction, economic and social disintegration.

- ◆ Promoting development ethics and good governance based on equity, sustainability and social justice. Policies derived from good governance would be responsive to the livelihood needs and realities of women and communities. Eliminating the remaining gender gaps in basic needs, over the next decade, especially in education and health, through accelerated investments in a human development agenda at the country level

implementing a world wide campaign for the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls.

- ◆ Ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to provide the global legal framework for equality and social justice.

- ◆ Providing resources, mechanisms and processes for the implementation of the Platform for Action.

The Women's Development Agenda is an agenda not just for women but, more significantly, by women for the transformation of global development process. Sustainable development can be truly sustainable, only when the lives and livelihoods of the world's women and girls can be sustained with equity and social justice.

Noleen Heyzer is Director of UNIFEM. She is also a board member of Isis International-Manila. Reprinted from Development, Journal of the Society for International Development, March 1996.

For the Girl Child

BEIJING Breaks Ground

by Mavic Cabrera-Balleza

The sad situation of many girl children was totally invisible in the agenda of the first three world conferences on women that took place in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi (1985). While each one tackled important issues confronted by women, none gave attention to the situation of the girl child. In 1989, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Since then, every UN Conference had to take children into account. This was evident at the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) and the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995).

Finally, at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China in September 1995, the girl children around the world finally received the attention long overdue them. The issue of the girl child was at last included on the agenda. In Section L of the Beijing Platform for Action, the blueprint for the advancement of women around the world, the girl child was identified as the 12th critical area of concern.

This development may be credited to non-government organizations and to the United Nations Children's Fund, especially those based in Africa, South Asia and the West. For the past two years, they worked very hard to ensure that the issue of the girl child is incorporated into every section of the Beijing Platform for Action.

CONTENTIOUS ISSUES

But bringing the girl child into the agenda of the Fourth World Conference on Women was not easy. As expected, several issues were contentious during the negotiation process, from the regional preparatory meetings up to the actual conference. These issues included prenatal sex selection, inheritance rights, sexual education and the use of the term family or "families." The last one stems from one of the Platform's earlier provision that says various forms of the family exist in different cultural, political and social systems.

Yet, the agenda agreed to include:

- ◆ The enforcement of steps to ensure that children receive appropriate financial support from their parents by, among other

measures, enforcing child-support laws.

- ◆ The enactment and strict enforcement of laws concerning the minimum legal age for marriage and raising of the minimum age for marriage.

- ◆ The disaggregation by sex and age of all data related to health, education and other areas relevant to planning, implementation and monitoring of programs that will protect the rights of the girl child.

- ◆ The development of formal and informal educational programs that support and enable girls to acquire knowledge, develop self-esteem and take responsibility for their own lives and

- ◆ The development of programs to educate adults, especially parents, on the importance of a girl's physical and mental well-being, including the elimination of discrimination against girls in food allocation, early marriage, child prostitution and female genital mutilation.

Moreover, the Beijing conference is also significant for the fact that, it is the first international meeting that reached an agreement on female genital mutilation. A study conducted in 1994 reveals that more than two million girls undergo genital mutilation each year.

EDUCATING GIRLS

Educating girls is key because two-thirds of the world's illiterate people are women. In 1993, 81 million of the 130 million children who had no access to primary school were girls. "Closing the Gender Gap: Educating Girls," a study by the Population Action International, shows that in 50 countries there are 76 million fewer girls than boys enrolled in primary and secondary schools. Except for five, these countries are all located in South Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

Moreover, the Beijing Platform includes a commitment to eliminate all barriers that impede the schooling of married or pregnant girls and young women and recommends the provision of affordable and physically accessible child care facilities to help achieve this.

Educating girls is a formidable task. As Carol Bellamy, UNICEF Executive Director, puts it, getting girls into schools is a complex social, political and cultural challenge. It requires building schools closer to home, hiring

more women teachers, creating support systems for parents and convincing them that it is safe and worthwhile to educate their daughters. It also entails the formulation of a non-sexist curricula and the development of teaching materials and textbooks that will improve the self-image of girls. To accomplish this task, it is also necessary to call on educational institutions and the media to adopt and project balanced and non-stereotype images of girls and boys.

If the first step—getting girls into school—is difficult, keeping them there is even harder. In Laos, for example, only five percent of those who enter primary school enter college. In other words, educating girls also means addressing issues such as poverty, health and nutrition, sexual exploitation and teenage pregnancy.

COMMITMENTS

Worthy of commendation are the commitments made by some governments intending to improve the situation of the girl child.

Cote d'Ivoire is aiming for a 100 percent enrollment rate for girls in primary school by the year 2000.

Mongolia is seeking to reduce infant mortality by 33 percent from 1990 levels by the year 2000.

The United Kingdom wants to increase child care by 20 percent by March 1996.

India will increase its investment in education to six percent of gross domestic product to benefit women and girls.

The World Bank, for its part, announced at the closing plenary that it would spend US\$2 billion over the next five years on education with US\$900 million a year on education for young girls.

However, the commitments came with reservations. Of the 189 countries represented in Beijing, only a few signified that they fully agree to the provisions in the Platform for Action. These countries are Cambodia, India, Bolivia, Colombia, Panama, El Salvador, South Africa, Madagascar, Cameroon and Tanzania.

NGOs would do girls around the world a great service if these commitments were monitored and especially if the monitoring is coupled with other actions to encourage other governments to fully implement the Beijing Platform.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Platform recognizes that all the efforts put in by the UN, governments, and NGOs into improving the girl child's situation will be futile without the cooperation and support from the parents or guardians. Thus, the Platform takes into account the responsibilities and duties of parents and legal guardians and calls on them to regard "the best interests of the child [as] primary consideration." The child's rights are recognized by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.



Teaching girls to read and write is a key task. Two-thirds of the world's illiterate are women.

GIRLS INTERNATIONAL FORUM

In Beijing, one of the few organized voices of girls was that of the Girls International Forum (GIF), an initiative of *New Moon*, a magazine for young girls published in the United States. Prior to and during the actual Beijing conference, GIF gathered feedback from young girls around the world to define the girls' agenda. Using the pages of *New Moon*, the Internet and actual interviews, GIF asked girls around the world what they thought are girls' biggest problem and greatest strengths and what girls' issues should be discussed at the Conference. GIF also asked girls how they think they can make things better for themselves and how adults can make things better for them.

The answers represent the whole gamut of women's issues. It touched on health, violence against women, shared parenting, children's rights, education, political participation and sexuality. Most of these issues are already part of the Beijing Platform for Action but one major exception is the often repeated concern that adults need to listen to girls and take them seriously.

For this reason, *New Moon* and GIF took 13 girls to the conference. The girls had the opportunity to listen and be heard through the Platform Committee set up at the NGO Forum Youth Tent. Recommendations on specific changes to the Beijing Platform were put forth by the girls and submitted to Janie Munoz, the official UN Youth delegate from the US, who in turn took the suggestions to the official UN Conference.

Moreover, some members of the GIF delegation were also able

to attend the official UN Conference and witnessed how government delegates deliberated on the final language of the Platform. They also took part in the Youth March and met other girls from other countries. It is interesting to note that all the GIF girls are planning to attend the Fifth World Conference on Women and to take other girls with them. Disappointed with the small turn out of girls in the Beijing Conference—400 girls out of

The Beijing conference is the first international meeting that reached an agreement on female genital mutilation.

30,000 participants—they vowed to ensure a bigger participation of girls in the next global women's conference.

In the end, what happens beyond Beijing is what really matters. Words do not effect change. Actions do and *New Moon* and GIF suggest you:

- ◆ Write to your elected officials to tell them how important beneficial changes for women and girls are to you;
- ◆ Work with your friends and adults to find ways to make changes happen now in your community;
- ◆ Tell your friends about what happened in China and think of new ways to make changes in your life; and
- ◆ Learn about girls' lives in other countries and help other people learn about them.

YOUTH VISION STATEMENT

On the final day of the Beijing Conference, youth delegates

formulated and presented a Youth Vision Statement that sees "a future that will be free of today's problems. A future where every girl and young woman will have access and a right to education free of discrimination. A future where all women, young and old, will have full access to health care, related information and complete control of their bodies. A future where women and men will share equally in the sense of ownership of the achievements of their countries.

Also a future where women can actively participate in determining a New World order free from armed conflict and guided by the principles upheld in the Culture of Peace. A future where a commitment to the preservation of our natural environment is reflected in all our international, national and local development

plans. A future where work done by women is recognized as an indispensable contribution to the world's economic growth.

"And in this vision, we foresee a Fifth World Conference on Women where the world will gather to celebrate the equality, development and peace achieved from actions agreed upon at this Conference.")

Mavic Cabrera-Balleza is a Communications Program Associate at Isis International-Manila.

feminist in the making

by Luz Maria Martinez

“What is feminism?”

I suppose that it's the desire or attempt on the part of women or of men to create a society where inequality does not exist in the widespread way that is now all over the world. I don't think that only women can be feminists. I think that men who feel strongly enough that there should be equality regardless of sex can be feminists as well.”

These words tumbled out of Kamaljit Bhasin, or Mito as she prefers to be called, a talented 16-year old student at a boarding school in the south of India who also happens to be the daughter of the foremost Indian feminist Kamla Bhasin. Together, Mito and Kamla attended the Women's World Conference in Beijing where Mito performed a classical Indian dance.

Mito likes to talk about the situation of women in her country India. “There, you see more women going out of the house, walking, expressing their opinions. There is progress but I don't think it is very dramatic. It's taking a lot of time, evolving slowly that I don't think it's something people can see in a period of five or 10 years. The issues my mother talked about 10 years ago are the same issues she is talking about now. These problems do not have immediate solutions.”

Mito thinks that these problems, especially the problem of social inequality, are difficult because they are not always explicit. She points to an experience she had in school as proof. “The school that I go to is one of the most progressive in India but even there, teachers, grown-ups and even kids make a clear distinction between the roles of girls and boys. For instance, even if a girl is very bright

she would be encouraged to go into the humanities and not into the sciences when she chooses her subjects after the 10th standard. When the time came for me to choose, I knew I wanted to go into humanities. But my mother wanted to see how the teachers would respond if I had chosen differently so she came to the school and asked them what I should do and a physics professor very clearly said that “girls don't have brains.” Naturally, my mother pounced on him.

“But opinions like that are quite widespread. Ninety percent of the girls in India would go for humanities and commerce and avoid the sciences. Clearly you have teachers who think that girls should study home sciences because after all they are supposed to get married.”

This is why Mito feels that it is important for women to get involved in the women's movement. “If we want to solve the problems we face, we need to get organized. We can sit back and do nothing but that is not going to get us anywhere. I do think young girls my age do feel strongly about gender and equality and women's issues generally. I think they would be willing to mobilize, although it is very difficult in a situation like in India. There are so many restrictions against expressing one's self. Things are not as bad for those who are economically better but for a large majority of young people, the situation is very difficult—for girls as well as for boys. There is a lot of pressure on the families about the image they project of themselves.

“This is why I am, oh most definitely, a feminist.” ☺



The Kumari

Girl-Child as Living Goddess

by Nancy Pearson Arcellana

Worship of the female energy is a rare occurrence in today's male-dominated world. But in Nepal, the worship and adoration of a girl-child as a living goddess known as the *Kumari* continues to this day, giving Nepal a special position in the religious history of the world.

According to Dhooswan Sayami, author of "Kumari: The Cult of Living Goddess" in *The Lotus & the Flame: An Account on Nepalese Culture*, this great human goddess, in the form of a girl-child, is the real mistress and protectress of the country. The king rules only as her trustee and in accordance to a mandate. The king shows every respect to this girl-child and gets the *Tika* from her hand. The tika is the mixture of paint (red) and food given as offering in the puja (worship) to the Goddess/God.

It is the common belief that the manner in which the child goddess reacts or responds to the king during the ceremony for the kumarijatra, where she puts the *Tika* on the king's head, forecasts the conditions of the country for the coming year. The country awaits with baited breath while the child goddess performs this duty and people believe that it is not good for the Kumari to laugh or cry too much. In fact, she should smile but not show her teeth.

The Kumari is also an important part of the coronation ceremony and all the festivals in the Kathmandu Valley. The Kumarijatra is one of the very important phases of

An adult's hand supports the headdress, which is too heavy for the child goddess' head to carry.

Indrajatra—a week long festival—so much so that it dominates this popular festival. People make the journey to Kathmandu to receive a blessing from the Kumari.

During special festivals, the child goddess is dressed in elaborate costume and bejeweled for her ride in a horse drawn chariot which takes her through the old city of Nepal.

A Life of Isolation

Only during these special occasions is the Kumari allowed outside of her temple. Rarely does the child goddess show herself to her devotees. It is also not possible to take photographs of her which can be done only by official



The Wheel of Life

government photographers or during the festivals when she appears in public.

The Kumari lives in a world of isolation. She is cut off from all contact with her

parents, home and society. She lives only with a caretaker family. The caretaker family is the *de facto* mistress of the Kumari's abode and the actual beneficiary of the generous gifts given to the child goddess. The child is naturally unaware of the material value of the precious gems and jewels bestowed upon her.

The Kumari's caretaker family, which also comes from the same line as the child goddess, is also the one who decides what gifts the child goddess should receive. When the child goddess relinquishes her duties to another child, the caretaker family may give her

“We Dreamt of Becoming Nuclear Physicists”

A Nepalese woman looks back at her childhood.

There is a sense of tranquility all around Angur, a woman almost 65 years old. The tranquility is a testament to her faith and the outlook she has had on her life. Born in 1932, Angur is the second daughter—and therefore most unwelcome addition—in her family. Her mother and father had to tend to the fields so they left Angur in the care of an aunt when she was barely five months old.

Upon their return, Angur's parents found their second daughter barely alive. Her father was so grief stricken by her condition that she became his pet from that day onwards, even when a son was born 13 months later.

Angur was brought up in an extended family household—her parents, brothers, sisters and the family of an uncle. They were nine altogether. In those days, which unfortunately are not so different

from today, only the boys received an education. A private tutor gave the boys their lessons while the girls listened in the background.

One day, the tutor asked the boys questions about their English lessons that they couldn't answer. To the tutor's surprise, the girls answered the questions. Their mother happened to overhear the tutor scolding the boys and praising the girls. When the father learned of the incident, instead of scolding the boys further, he allowed the girls to study along with the boys.

Angur grew up in a time when children were married at very young ages. Today, the law requires a young girl to be 14 before she is allowed to marry although child marriages are not uncommon in Nepal's rural areas. At the age of 10, Angur was introduced to a boy of 11 and asked if she liked him. She remembers thinking to herself that he

a memento of her time as Kumari. The girl, however, is not allowed to take all her valuable gifts with her.

Origins of the Kumari

The Kumari is said to be one of the manifestations of Adi Shakti Durga, one of the thirty three million gods and goddesses in the Hindu faith. In one of the rare dances, Adi Shakti Durga is represented as killing a *Daitya* (devil) by giving him poison after enchanting him with her beauty, youth and dance. Durga sculptures on the palace of the Kumari and the child goddess's role in the Durgapuja festival also attest to this belief.

But within the context of Nepalese society where women are not given the same rights and privileges as men, how did this practice of worshipping a girl-child begin?

According to one of the stories in the Vamsavalis regarding the origin of the Kumari, the rulers of Nepal were given the privilege of a regular audience with the

which was not to be seen by women. But it is said that the daughter of the king happened to look at the talisman one day.

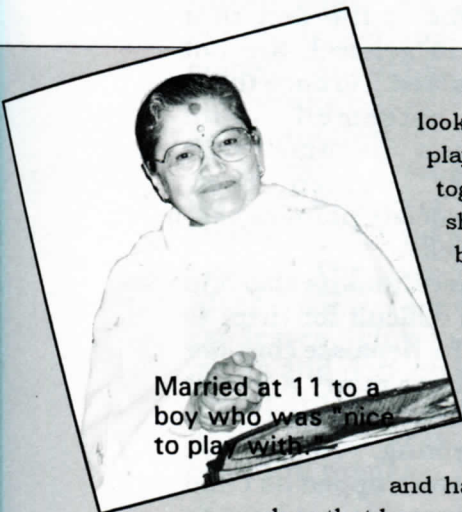
As a result, the king was deprived of the divine audience with the goddess. In his dream, however, the goddess advised the king that she would be going inside the body of a Sakya (Buddhist) girl. This began the custom of selecting the Kumari from the Sakyas.

According to Dhoo Swan Sayami, the Sakyas trace themselves back to Buddha, the

lion of the Sakyas. In the last decade of the 14th century A.D., a Malla king, Jayasthiti Malla reorganised Nepalese society. There were a large

The Kumari lives in a world of isolation

patron goddess, Taleja Bhavani, with whom the king, Trilokya Malla, used to play dice. This king had a diamond *Jantra* (talisman),



looked like "a nice boy to play with" and they spoke together easily. Little did she know that the young boy was being chosen as her husband. They were married one year later. Angur had remembered seeing her sister's wedding at the age of seven

and had asked herself, "Why does that happen?" Today, recalling her own wedding day, Angur says "that was one of my happy days. I never cried when I was married. They were giving me presents, honoring me, decorating me."

Angur and her husband lived separately for the first years of their marriage. But her mother-in-law, who had been widowed at the age of 15, was keen to have a grandson. So, when Angur turned 14, her husband came to live with her. "My husband would

go to school and when he came back he would teach me. He would be my teacher. He taught me mathematics, history, and geography. He taught me English and other things I sought to know." In a rather wistful way, Angur says, "We dreamt a beautiful dream...to be the first nuclear physicists." It was a dream that her husband did succeed in becoming. But for Angur, it was a dream that she was not allowed to fulfill, simply because she was born a female. She was not allowed into the laboratories and therefore could not continue in the sciences along with her husband. She was instead forced to take up humanities, which led her to political science and eventually to law. Although she has clearly excelled and was happy with what she did, Angur's eyes still carry the tears of longing for that long ago dream.

When will the time come when the fluke of nature and the whims of society's rules stop preventing girls from achieving their true dreams?

by N.P. Arcellana

number of Banras (goldsmiths) who could not be fit into the orthodox Hindu class system because they were Buddhists. Being Buddhists, they belonged to no Hindu caste. In addition, since they claimed to be decendants of the Buddha and were to be venerated (*bandana*) by all others, they were given the new caste name of Bandy-Banra (the Sakyas of modern times).

Choosing the Kumari

Sakya families "rotate" among themselves the privileged position of being the family from which the Kumari will be chosen. Given the stringent rules and tests which the Kumari must pass, one wonders if the girl is subjected to rigorous "training" from the moment she is born in order to perform correctly when the time comes for choosing the Kumari.

Choosing the Kumari involves a series of tests. First, the Sakya girl must be between the ages of three and four and without blemish, not even one small scratch. The Nepalese believe that the goddess leaves a girl's body when blood has flown out. This is also why a Kumari remains a living goddess only up to the age of 12, when she nears the age of menstruation or until she actually begins to menstruate, at which time the goddess has most certainly left her body.

The child must also pass the test of bravery. She is put into a dark chamber in

the Hanumandhoka palace. The chamber is filled with the heads of hundreds of sacrificed buffaloes. Adults place candles in such a way where the buffaloes eyes would seem like they were staring at her. The child remains in this room all night and if she does not cry and keeps a cool head, it is believed that she is not afraid and is thus fit to be a living goddess.

If the girl passes all these tests, she is taken to Kumarichhen, the palace of

The goddess
leaves a girl's
body when
blood has
flown out.

Kumari, and installed there as the human goddess on a special throne. From that point on, the girl-child is given the respect and honor of a divinity.

After Divinity, What Next?

Nepal's current Kumari was chosen at the age of four and has just reached the age of seven. She will most likely continue to serve for at least another four years before a new Kumari is chosen. As she nears the age of menstruation, she will be returned to society as an "ordinary" human being. What then will become of her?

In ages past, the child goddess was not even given any education during her stay in the Kumari's palace. Only recently was a tutor designated to provide the child goddess with some education.

But after being in such an honored place and worshipped by the king and society, the state gives the dethroned Kumari a meager monthly stipend of only 1,000 rupees (less than US\$ 20)—a terribly small compensation compared to the importance once given to her.

There may be, however, a very practical reason for such a small stipend from the Nepalese government. For one, there are hundreds of former Kumaris ranging from young to old; one former Kumari is now 75. But the bottomline is the fact that women, in general, are not highly valued. So once these highly esteemed child goddesses become just "ordinary" women, their value to society plunges very dramatically.

Former Kumaris also find that it is difficult for them to marry. The Nepalese consider it bad luck to marry a former child goddess. Those who do will die young. Young boys who are worshipped as child gods however do not have to contend with such superstitions or biases against marriage when they come of age.

The superstition against a Kumari marrying came from a legend that tells of a Kumari falling in love with

one of the devils. But the lovers could not be united because a goddess and a devil are not allowed to marry. When the devil became a problem for the other gods, they asked the Kumari to kill her beloved for the sake of her family of gods and goddesses.

The Kumari protests and initially refuses to obey. But the gods compel her to sacrifice her love. In the end, she is forced to kill the devil. But as a testimony to her love and faithfulness, she swore that she will never be married to another.

One Nepalese woman says this is why, like the devil before them, prospective husbands of former Kumaris are in danger of dying prematurely. At the same time, the legend illustrates how the Kumari is worshipped: as a virgin faithful to her vow never to marry. And if she marries, she breaks this vow to never marry another.

In reality, however, many former Kumaris do find husbands who take the risk against the superstition. After all, these child goddesses, chosen for their purity and perfection, were beautiful children who undoubtedly grew up into beautiful women.

Informal Kumaris

Among the Newari people of Kathmandu, there are other "informal" goddesses also called Kumari. Other cities, such as Baktapur, and other communities have their own Kumari. There is even

one day of the year where 365 Kumaris are honored. The main difference between these "informal" child goddesses and the Kumari is that they do not receive the same kind of national and state recognition as the official child goddess.

Nevertheless, for the Newari people, each girl-child is worshipped as a Kumari until her *Ihi* ceremony when

Former
Kumaris
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marry.

she is seven years old. The *Ihi* is a ceremony where the girl-child is married to the Bel Fruit to ensure her purity and begin her initiation into her caste. This initiation period is brought to completion by another ceremony when the Kumari is married to the sun.

It is not easy to approach those who were once a Kumari. There are many who wish to interview them, including foreigners willing to pay sizable fees for an interview. This has made it difficult for

women in Nepal who are trying to research the experiences and effects of the Kumari system on the women themselves. The Nepalese women cannot provide money for interviews even though they realize that the former kumaris are only seeking ways to supplement their incomes.

Women researchers hope to be able to provide a venue where women who were former child goddesses can share among themselves their experiences as a Kumari and gain support from each other. In the process, maybe they can help Nepalese women better understand the phenomenon of girl-child adoration in the midst of the general disregard for the rights and status of women in Nepal.

This understanding can also help women find ways to utilize this popular belief system in the power of female energy to help empower today's women.

But most importantly, this could help bring positive changes to the everyday lives of the ordinary girl-child and the women that they become. ♪

Nancy Pearson Arcellana is the Research Officer of Isis International-Manila.

it's ALL in the MESSAGE

by Meena M. Shivdas



The messages that are targeted at young women in the Asian region by the media, are similar to the ones their peers in the North receive—you have to be young, light-skinned, sexy, slim and beautiful if you want to get noticed. Young men, on the other hand, are exhorted to be the essential male—aggressive and dominating. Given this scenario, is there a chance that young women's images in the media will change to reflect some of their dreams, aspirations, joys and sorrows?

Concerted action by the women's movement, consumer groups and media practitioners in consultation with young women could initiate the process of change.

What's the in thing?

Television in most Asian countries beam images of young people that are considered "hip," "cool" and "trendy"—roughly translated, they would mean young women

in designer jeans, crop tops, shimmering lip gloss and waterproof mascara all on a body that is wafer slim, and young men in baggy trousers, trainers and the hallmark baseball cap worn reversed. Advertisements in the print media are replete with the

same kind of images that combine youth, energy and style.

The advertisement industry promotes a lifestyle through these images with the aim of raking in consumer dollars. The advertisement industry thrives because transnational



Feminists fight sexism in many ways. Pickets are just one of them.

corporations largely rely on their expertise and creativity to build markets. Where do young women and men fit into the picture? While they are largely seen as active consumers with impressionable minds and as part of the growing affluent middle class in most Asian countries, young women often become part of the projected lifestyle through the way their bodies are used by the industry. Although it may be argued that young women who are part of the industry chose to enter the trade and that they have profited from it, the point that the advertisement industry promoted a type of trendy lifestyle which attracted the young women in the first place still remains.

In fact, there is a fundamental difference in the way young women's bodies are used to provoke, titillate and convey a sense of subservience that sets them apart from the way young male bodies are used. Young male bodies are positioned to convey authority and power.

COFFEE, TEA OR ME?

In 1995, most governments geared up for the Fourth World

Conference on Women that took place in China by releasing reports and statements on the status of their women. Malaysia was no exception. However, International Distillers, a supplier and promoter from the brewing industry in Malaysia, thought otherwise. Their promotion of a tequila, Jose Cuervo 1800, drove home a major point: that commercial interests are not necessarily in congruence with women's interests. Media reports outlined in detail how several pubs in Penang hired young women to cater to customers according to the promotion's theme "Lick, Shoot and Suck." For RM10.00, customers got to lick salt from a young woman's cleavage, shoot down the tequila offered and then suck a sliver of lime held in the woman's mouth. As expected, the Mexican manufacturer denied that the promotions ever took place even as consumer and women's groups around the country denounced the promotions.

Some time ago, in neighbouring Singapore, a leading hotel chain, the Pan

Pacific group, released an offensive print advertisement that played on the word "tart." The advertisement showed a young woman standing at the entrance of the hotel holding a tart to promote the hotel's bakery. The imaging and the words used—"Come and pick up our tarts"—was blatantly sexist.

After encountering protests from groups, the Danish General Manager and the advertising agency took the campaign to further heights. The General Manager appeared in the advertisement and exhorted everyone to come by and get a danish instead. But the implications of using the word "tart" as against the use of the word "danish" was not lost on women's groups.

Although these are only two examples from the Southeast Asian region, they are fairly representative of Asia and, more importantly, of the way young women's bodies are constructed and used in advertisements. In Japan, young women's bodies are increasingly being used in the production of pornographic films. In the Philippines, women's bodies are used in beer advertisements. Indian teens and girls have had the chance to play with Barbie, the archetype 19-year old with the trademark body and outfits the world over. The Avon lady has hit China, where Mao outfits are out and fashions from Hong Kong and Shanghai are in. Silicon implants, body tatoos and slimming teas and supplements seem to have edged out regular exercise and healthy eating habits.

The female body is no longer viewed as holistic; it is seen in a fragmented way by corporations and media. Young women's self-

perception of their bodies is influenced by ideals of the perfect body and face promoted by media.

Where does all these leave the realities of young women's lives in Asia? Although Asia houses some of the miracle economies and the world's largest markets, it also has the poorest communities. Its young women are disadvantaged. While the advertisement industry largely addresses itself to an urban audience, it has had to contend with the rural populace as corporate tentacles seek out fresher markets. It is within this scenario and given the socio-economic realities of Asia's young women that the images promoted by media seem to be skewed and out of context.

THE REALITY

What are the realities of young women's lives in Asia? Incontrovertible facts prove that teen prostitution is on the rise and more and more young rural women are brought into the sex industry. Therefore the trafficking of young women as sex slaves is rampant across most Asian borders. The unsatisfactory state of girls' education in most Asian countries and the limited employment options available to them exacerbate the situation. Cultural and other institutional barriers set further limits on young women's lives.

At the same time, significant numbers of young Asian women are entering professions previously considered male bastions. They are becoming more independent and assertive. They also see the links between women's inequities and the

By choosing to say "no" to products that continue to be sold through sexist advertisements, young women can make a difference.

larger global inequities. And yet, media still see them as objects.

Although young women's lives were addressed at both the Asia-Pacific regional Women in Development (WID) meeting and the Beijing conference, the commitments made by governments in both events are couched in language that waters down intents. Significantly, the media sections in both the Jakarta Regional Plan of Action and the Beijing Global Platform for Action do not adequately address the issue of the advertisement sector of the media.

While it is acknowledged that images in advertisements continue to perpetuate sex-stereotypes, the "action" part of the commitment only seeks to encourage the advertisement sector to self-regulate and urges the industry to induct more women on management and executive boards. Given the profit motives of the industry and the largely inherent sexist work philosophy and culture that are deeply entrenched in the advertising and media industries, is there a way that young women—as a constituency—could bring about change?

WAY TO GO

The women's movement in Asia has made remarkable gains since 1975. As a lobbying force, it was able to influence public policy in order to change women's private lives. Women have been able to build on the gains through international networking and achieved much to further the status of women.

Women media practitioners and owners have also made significant gains but more needs to be done. This is where young women's strength as consumers could come in and a pro-active young women's constituency could be built to effect changes in the advertisement sector of the media.

For too long, young women have been considered passive consumers. Exercising their roles as consumers in their own right can be the first step. By forging links with women in the media industry, media practitioners and owners, activists and young women can build their case against the advertisement industry. More importantly, by choosing to say "no" to products that continue to be sold through sexist advertisements, young women can make a difference. After all, women have come a long way while media have not. ♪

Meena Moorthy Shivdas is currently pursuing a postgraduate course in gender and development at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, UK. She was formerly with the Gender and Development Programme of the Asian and Pacific Development Centre, Malaysia. Meena continues to write for the media in Singapore.

Sandra Torrijos



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FROM THE SHELVES OF ISIS

Rediscovering the Muses

Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music edited by Susan Cook and Judy S. Tson

In this groundbreaking volume, 10 of the best known scholars in the newly emerging field of feminist musicology explore how gender has helped shape genres and works of music and how music has contributed to prevailing notions of gender. Although most of the contributors define themselves as musicologists, many of their theoretical perspectives show the influence of an ethnomusicology that is enriched with the perspectives of women's history and feminist literary criticism and methodology.

The musical subjects themselves come mainly from Europe and North America. They include concert music, both instrumental and vocal, and the vernacular genres of ballads, salon music and contemporary African-American rap.

The essays raise issues not only of gender but also of race and

class, moving among musical practices of the courtly ruling class and the elite discourse of the 20th century modernist movements to practices surrounding marginal girls in renaissance Venice and the largely white middle class experiences of magazine music and balladry.

The title refers to Cecilia, a 15th century woman and Christian martyr regarded as the patron saint of music. (USA: *The Board of Trustee of the University of Illinois*, 1994. 241p. RN LIT 02253.00B)

Rediscovering the Muses: Women's Musical Traditions, edited by Kimberly Marshall

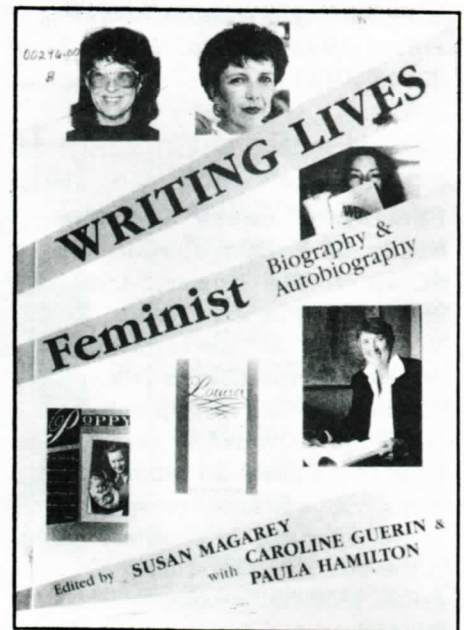
This pioneering collection of essays restores to history the significant contributions made by women musicians. It examines non-Western as well as Western cultures in a wide-ranging exploration of female musical activity—from purely oral works to precisely notated compositions. Musicologists, ethnographers, classicists, and historians describe the lost musical traditions of ancient Israel and Egypt, the Australian Aborigines, Central Javanese wayang, Byzantium, and Europe to the 17th century. Many of the essays are richly documented, with pictorial descriptions, written accounts, and archival records. (USA: *Northeastern University Press*, 1993. 304p. RN LIT 02350.00B)

Writing Lives: Feminist Biography and Autobiography, edited by Susan Magarey, Caroline Guerin and Paula Hamilton

In 1990 Antonia S. Byatt won the Booker prize for fiction for a work that is, at least partly, a satire on the subject of the articles collected here: the pursuit of knowledge about the

meaning of an individual life—biography, autobiography, life-writing. Byatt's novel, called *Possession*, depicts two kinds of possession. One is an intense romantic relationship between two 19th century writers and the other is the shared obsession of finding out about that relationship developed by two late 20th century literary critics. Neither of the critics embarks particularly enthusiastically upon what Hazel Rowley, in this collection, calls "a quest biography." Early in the plot, one of them says, "I'm a textual scholar. I'd rather deplore the modern feminist attitude to private lives." Yet the search overtakes them, as consuming and disruptively as passionate love overtakes the subjects they pursue through the politics of record-preservation. One of them feels as though he is being "urged on by some violent emotion of curiosity—not greed, curiosity, more fundamental even than sex, the desire for knowledge."

Most of the articles presented here were, in earlier manifestations, offered as papers to the Conference on Australian Feminist



Biography and Autobiography that was organised by the Research Centre for Women's Studies at Adelaide University, in conjunction with the School of Humanities & Social Sciences at the University of Technology in Sydney in 1989. (Australia: *Australian Feminist Studies*, 1992. 169 p. RN LIT 00296.00B)

The Necessity of Craft: Development and Women's Craft Practices in the Asia-Pacific Region, edited by Lorna Kaino

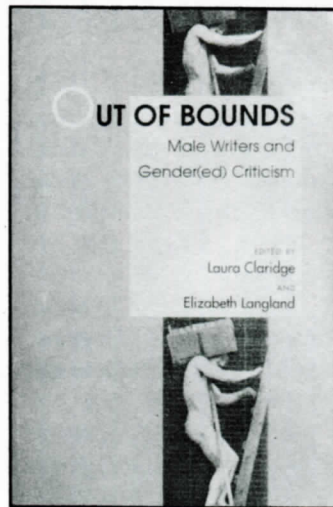
Sixteen writers from Asia and the Pacific examine the complex social and cultural issues surrounding the general decline in women's traditional craft practices and the appropriations of these crafts into a more commodified form of production. They address these issues through a diverse range of women's craft practices: carpet-making in refugee camps; weaving in Thailand, the Philippines, Australia and Tonga; scroll-making and clay modeling in India; kueh-making in Singapore; dough sculpture in China; and a range of crafts in Indonesian cooperatives. (Australia: *University of Western Australia Press*, 1995. 185 p. RN CUL 02338.00B)

Feminist Criticism

Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore, edited by Susan Hollis Tower, Linda Pershing and M. Jane Young

Taking a performance-centered perspective on folklore, the contributors to this volume challenge patriarchal assumptions of the past and rethink old topics from a feminist perspective while opening new areas of research. The book covers girls' games, political cartoons, quilting, Pentecostal preachers, daily

housework, Egyptian goddesses, tall tales and birth. This is a valuable resource for scholars and other interested readers. (USA: *The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois*, 1993. 414p. RN LIT 02264.00B)



Out of Bounds: Male Writers and Gender(ed) Criticism, edited by Laura Claridge and Elizabeth Langland

Until recently, "masculinity" and its impact on literary production and reception have received scant attention in the field of literary criticism.

Although critics certainly have been interested in examining gender, they have tended to be far more concerned with the "feminine" side of the equation than with the "masculine." This book is an attempt to redress that imbalance.

Positing that patriarchy victimizes men as well as women, the 15 original essays in *Out of Bounds* explore how certain male writers from the American and British canon have responded to the confines of the masculine code. The contributors apply a wide range of critical approaches and probe the gendered perspective in a variety of telling ways. (USA: *The University of Massachusetts Press*, 1990. 344p. RN LIT 01952.00B)

Feminist Readings, Feminists Reading, edited by Sara Mills, Lynne Pearce, Sue Spaul and Elaine Millard

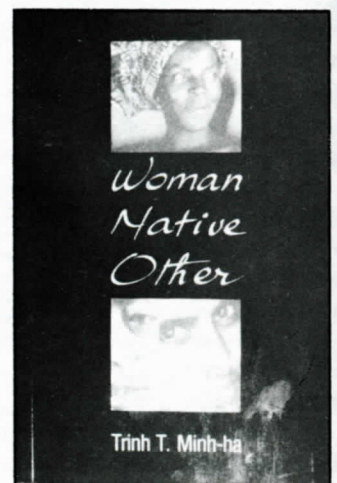
This wide ranging textbook approaches a broad spectrum of feminist literacy theories in a new and engaging way, giving practical

demonstrations of how a reader can engage with a particular theory when faced with a text to analyse. The writers show that there is a whole range of different options available to the literary critic who identifies herself as feminist. There are chapters on sexual politics, authentic realism, gynocritics, marxist feminist criticism, biological criticism and French criticism. The texts under consideration include *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Wuthering Heights* as well as works by Jean Rhys, Angela Carter and Charlotte Gilman.

A comprehensive bibliography and a clear Glossary of Terms make this doubly useful. (UK: *Harvester Wheatsheaf*, 1989. 268p. RN CUL 01191.00B)

Woman, Native, Other: Writing Post-Coloniality and Feminism by Trinh T Minh-ha

Trinh Minh-ha examines the post-colonial process of displacement—cultural hybridization and decentered realities, fragmented selves and multiple identities, marginal voices and languages of rupture. Working at the intersection of several fields—women's studies, anthropology, critical cultural studies, literary criticism, and feminist theory—she juxtaposes numerous prevailing contemporary



discourses in a form that questions the (male-is-norm) literary and theoretical establishment. She discusses questions of language and writing in relation to the notions of ethnicity and femininity; of identity, authenticity, and difference; of commitment as to the function and role of the woman writer; and of storytelling as one of the oldest forms of building historical consciousness and as a continuing process of integrating feminism and women's everyday life. (USA: Indiana University Press, 1989. 173p. RN IDE 01864.00B)

Sistahood

The Lesbian Heresy: A Feminist Perspective on the Lesbian Sexual Revolution by Sheila Jeffreys

Lesbian feminists have transformed lesbianism from a stigmatized sexual practice into a political practice that posed a challenge to male supremacy and its basic institution of heterosexuality. And now, lesbians are on the offensive again. This time, towards turning the pain of lesbian oppression into the source of sexual pleasure.

In the *Lesbian Heresy*, Sheila Jeffreys charts and condemns the patriarchal practices in the currently fashionable and commercially lucrative lesbian sexual scene, and argues for the rebuilding of a sexuality that is positive and egalitarian. (UK: The Women's Press Ltd., 1994. 262p. RN IDE 02176.00B)

Feminist Nightmares/ Women at Odds: Feminism and the Problem of Sisterhood, edited by Susan Ostrov Weisser and Jennifer Fleischner

Gone are the days when feminism translated simply into the advocacy of equality for

women. Women's interests are not always aligned. Race, class and sexuality complicated the equation. In recent years, feminist ideologies have become increasingly diverse. Today, one feminist's most ardent political opponent can very well be another feminist.

Women at Odds examines the social, political and psychological ramifications of women's oppression, as evidenced in a range of texts, from women's anti-slavery writing to women's anti-abortion writing, from mother-daughter incest stories to maternal surrogacy narratives, from the Bible to the popular romance novels, from Jane Austen to Alice Walker. (USA: New York University Press, 1994. 405p. RN IDE 02186.00B)

Daughters of the Pacific by Zohl de Ishtar

Zohl de Ishtar traveled the Pacific during 1986-87 on behalf of the group Women Working for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific and interviewed women from many Pacific nations. Following up with extensive research, de Ishtar has written an impressive book that gives voice to Pacific women and the strengths there are in these underknown cultures. The nuclear industry, tourism, dumping of waste and the pollution of the oceans all carry a huge price for these islands, on the rim of the world and of everyone else's imaginations. (Australia: Spinifex, 1994. 282p. RN CUL 02237.00B)

Japanese Women: New Feminist Perspectives on the Past, Present and Future, edited by Kumiko Fujimura-Fanselow and Atsuko Kameda

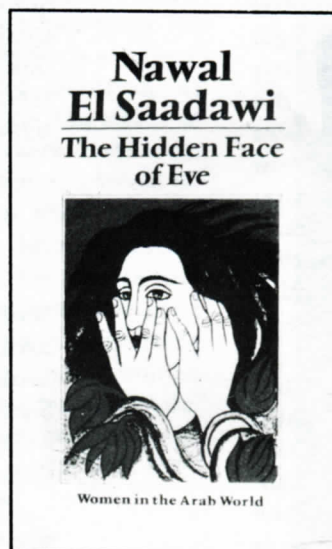
Over the past 20 years, women's status in Japanese society has changed markedly. Yet most Westerners think of Japanese women as submissive wives of their hardworking, successful corporate husbands. Japanese women make visible for the first time a new view of a changing society through their own perspective and words. Chronicling the revolution for women in education, work, family, religion, politics and culture over the past one hundred years, these essays describe the diverse forces at work in both helping and hindering women's struggles for equality and in changing men's lives as well.

Complete with the politics of key figures in the early feminist movements and in politics as well as up-to-date statistics on women in education and work, *Japanese Women* is a thorough volume on the history, culture, politics and everyday lives of women in Japan. (USA: The Feminist Press, 1995. 422 p. RN SOC 02291.00B)

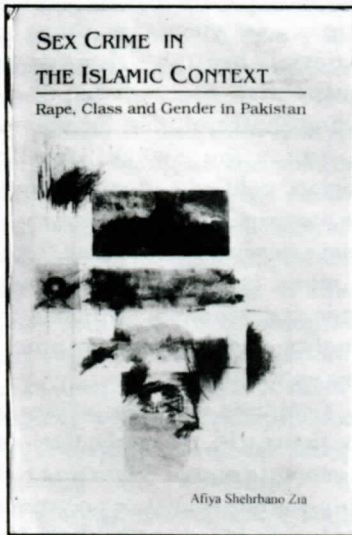
Women in Islam

The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World by Nawal El Saadawi

The power of this book has not diminished even after almost 20 years since it first came out. This disturbing account of one person's growing up into womanhood in the Islamic world. The author goes over a host of topics—from sexual aggression against



female children and the circumcision of young girls, to prostitution, sexual relationships, marriage and divorce. She relates women's position in the Middle East to the struggles between the left and right in Islam, and shows how the political priorities of Western and Third World women differ. (UK: Zed Books Ltd., 1980. 212p. RN LIT 01961.00B)



Sex Crime in the Islamic Context: Rape, Class and Gender in Pakistan by Afiya Shehribano Zia

Based on an academic thesis, the author analyzes the domestication of women and the control of their sexuality through legal means: the use of the Zina laws in Pakistan. Zia reviews the historical context of Islamic laws on sexuality and points out how these are being used against women today. She also looks at how media strengthens this oppression through its portrayal of women and its news coverage of crimes against women.

Highlighted in this short but daring book is how fundamentalist groups create obstacles to laws designed to protect women. Finally, Zia looks at how the women's movement in Pakistan is

handling the issues of sex and media and points out both its strengths and weaknesses. (Pakistan: ASR Publications, 1994. 80p. RN VAW 02347.00B)

Sharia' Law and Modern Nation-State: A Malaysian Symposium, edited by Norani Othman

As pressures mount in Malaysia and other predominantly Muslim societies for the implementation of forms and understandings of Islamic law that date back to the early centuries of Islamic civilization, the need to foster an enlightened and contemporary understanding of enduring Qur'anic imperatives is both necessary and urgent. The articles in this book are made up of papers presented at the Sisters in Islam's Symposium on the Modern Nation-State.

How should an Islamic state be run? How can modern-day Islamic people committed to both their religious heritage and to a vision of progress for its inheritors, interpret the essentials of the Medinan model? How are they to understand and realize the Qur'anic ideals of equality, justice and political sovereignty of the umma? These are the crucial questions tackled during the symposium and in the articles in this book. (Malaysia: Sisters in Islam, 1994. 160p. RN LAW 02348.00B)

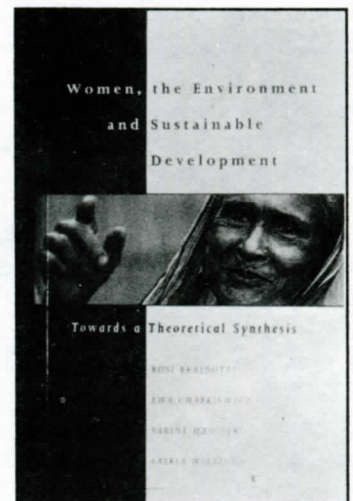
Women and the Environment

Women, the Environment and Sustainable Development: Towards a Theoretical Synthesis by Rosi Braidotti, Ewa Charkiewics, Sabine Hausler and Saskia Wieringa

There is a widespread perception that the development process

is in a state of multiple crisis. While the notion of sustainable development is supposed to address adequately its environmental dimensions, there is still no agreed framework relating women to this new perspective. This book is an attempt to present and disentangle the various positions put forward by major actors and to clarify the political and theoretical issues that are at stake in the debates on women, the environment and sustainable development.

Among the current critiques of the Western model of development which the authors review are the feminist analysis of Science itself and the power relations inherent in the production of knowledge; of Women, Environment and Development or WED; of Alternative Development; of Environmental Reformism; and of Deep Ecology, Social Ecology and Ecofeminism. In traversing this important landscape of ideas, the authors show how they criticise the dominant development model at the various levels of epistemology, theory and policy. They forward their own ideas on the basic elements they consider necessary in constructing a paradigmatic shift—emphasising such values as holism, mutuality, justice, autonomy, self-reliance, sustaina-



bility and peace. (UK: Zed Books Ltd., 1994. 220p. RN DEV 01809.00B)

Feminist Perspectives on Sustainable Development by Wendy Harcourt.

This collection captures the vitality and urgency of the feminists' responses to the environment and development debate. The authors-researchers, activists and policy-makers from the North and South offer new ways of challenging the present dominant knowledge-systems and development institutions, and discuss the difficulties that women in the margins of the development process face.

Contributions on resource management, power, knowledge production, culture, development institutions and politics, health and economics, show how gender relations are not simply a footnote to our understanding of history and societies, but are central to the development discourse. In so doing, they suggest that diversity itself is necessary to build new paradigms of development upon gender equity, secure livelihoods, ecological sustainability and political participation. (UK: Zed Books Ltd., 1994. 255p. RN DEV 01794.00B)

Close to Home: Women Reconnect Ecology, Health and Development Worldwide, edited by Vandana Shiva

As speed-driven corporations and governments pollute the earth, misuse technology and destroy the lives of the poor and disenfranchised, women throughout the world are successfully challenging and reversing this trend.

Close to Home chronicles these women-led struggles for truly sustainable community development. The women featured

in this book battle toxic wastes, low-level radiation, and biotechnology. While tracing the links between megaprojects and environmental destruction they document resounding victories against such imposing foes as Union Carbide

and several governments. (USA: New Society Publishers, 1994. 170p. RNENV 02252.00B)

Working Women

As Women, As Workers: A Cartoon Book for Asian Workers and Organizers, text by Cheung Choi Wan; illustrations

by Tranvin Jattidgarak

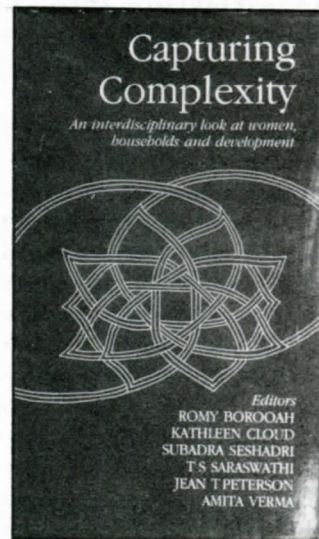
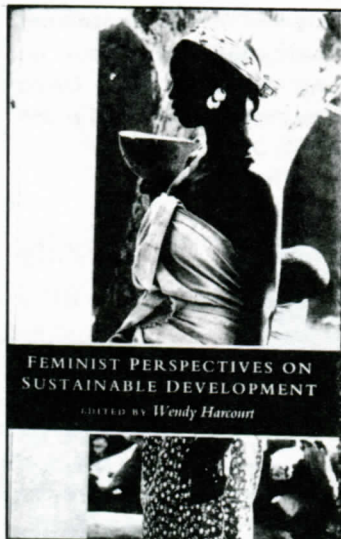
Women work in all kinds of places, doing all kinds of work. However, women's work and a woman's status as a worker are rarely recognized in official statistics. She is often excluded from jobs in which men dominate. She does not earn the same wages or enjoy the same benefits received by men workers doing the same job. She has no opportunity for promotion because she is a woman.

Through the medium of cartoon illustrations, the status of Asian women workers in different fields are presented. Organized as a source book for educators and labor organizers, there are helpful guides for using the stories and materials for consciousness-raising purposes. This is an important addition to the tool box of women organizers and popular educators. (Hong Kong: Committee for Asian Workers, 1994. 63p. RN ECO 01936.00B)

Capturing Complexity: An Interdisciplinary Look at Women, Households and Development, edited by Kathleen Cloud, Romy Borooah, et al.

While there is a considerable and growing body of literature concerning the role of women in social and economic development, appropriate research methods have yet to be developed to fully encompass the multiple dimensions of women's productive and reproductive activities as individuals and as members of households. This volume is a major step in improving the quality and quantity of data on women.

Arguing that concrete development problems know no disciplinary boundaries, the papers in this volume promote an integrated, interdisciplinary and problem-centered approach to development research. The contributors illustrate that issues such as fertility choices, women's productivity in agriculture, and the trade-offs that they make between childcare and work outside the home require that researchers consider a multitude of cross-cutting factors while developing research designs. (India: Sage Publications Ltd., 1994. 324p. RN ECO 01822.00B)



Of Mothers and Daughters

Daughters of Feminists

Rose L. Glickman

Filled with personal anecdotes that will engage mothers, daughters and anyone concerned with the progress of feminism in today's social climate, *Daughters of Feminists* explores the experiences of women directly influenced by mothers who worked towards equality and the transformation of the home, the workplace and the world at large.

Rose L. Glickman, a feminist historian and mother, interviewed 50 women between the ages 18 and 35 who come from varied ethnic backgrounds and family structures to find out where they stand on issues central to their mothers's feminist perspectives: work, family life, friendship, sexuality, self-image, public and private roles, feminism and racism, and even the word feminist itself. Their candid, thought-provoking, often surprising responses reveal the complexities behind media generalizations about the "post-feminist" generation. (USA: St. Martin's Press, 1993. 192p. RN FAM 02239.00B)

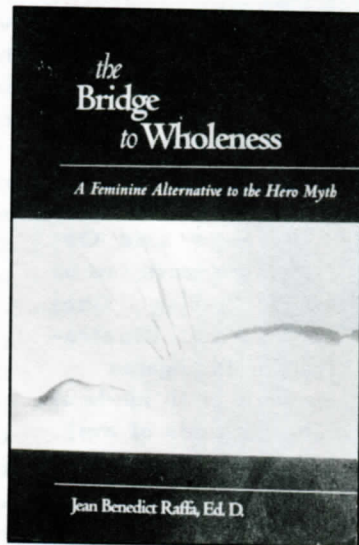
Motherhood and Modernity: An Investigation into the Rational Dimension of Mothering

by Christine Everingham

Christine Everingham presents an innovative analysis linking motherhood to broader sociological debates on modernity, rationality and the individual. Current models of mothering are based on the assumption that infants have biologically determined "needs" that mothers learn to recognize and meet in socially approved ways. Everingham critiques this and instead presents an alternative model of nurturing that locates mothers as subjects, actively

constructing the perspective of their child while asserting their own needs and interests in a particular socio-cultural context.

A well-handled mix of theoretical and ethnographic materials plus a focused review of contemporary discussions of rationality and the self, mothering and morality make this book an engaging read. (UK: Open University press, 1994. 156 p. RN FAM 02240.00B)



Sexuality and Spirituality

The Bridge to Wholeness: A Feminine Alternative to the Hero Myth,

edited by Jean Benedict Raffa

Throughout history there have been many stories about the journeys of heroes. These fairy

tales, myths, and other literary works have shown how male heroes strive to become their true selves. They do this by conquering cruel enemies, enduring difficult trials of strength or slaying terrible dragons. The reward for all this hard work is relationship with the feminine: the hand of the princess or a return to the waiting wife. And this is where the story ends.

When a woman appears in a hero myth, her work is done for the sake of relationship. She may be a helper, a witch, a victim, a prophet, a seductress or a reward for the hero, but she is almost never someone flowering as an individual. According to most traditional mythology, a man's task is individuation, or becoming

differentiated from everyone else by proving himself in personally fulfilling work in the physical world. If he succeeds, his reward is a return to the feminine. The combination of these two accomplishments (developing his individuality and achieving an intimate relationship with the feminine) allows him to become what he was intended to be and so live out his destiny. In religious language, this goal is equated with entering the kingdom of God. In psychological language, it is called wholeness, and the journey towards it is what this book is about. (USA: Lura Media, Inc., 1992. 205p. RN SEX 01816.00B)

Nobody Owns Me: A Celibate Woman Discovers Sexual Power

by Francis B. Rothluebber

With fierce tenderness and fearless intimacy, Francis Rothluebber charts a celibate woman's mid-life sexual initiation. Written in the form of a private journal, this book documents a pivotal year in the life of "Marilyn," a woman living in a religious community.... [as she] learns how to awaken the sacred fire living in her body. (USA: Lura Media, Inc., 1994. 125p. RN SEX 02356.00B)

Journey of the Priestess

by Asia Shepsut

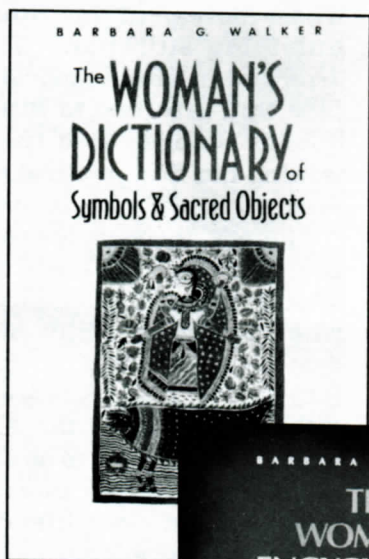
The issue of female priests has now moved to the forefront of public debate within the Christian Church. Yet many influential women working outside orthodox religions are already operating as priestesses, often at a very high level. *Journey of the Priestess* traces the remains of a submerged tradition of priestesses, whose characteristics have remained constant for millennia. (UK: The Aquarian Press, 1993. 251 p. RN REL 02244.00B)

Barbara G. Walker, Back-to-Back

The Women's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects.

Symbolism is a slippery subject. Any one symbol may have hundreds of interpretations, according to differing beliefs of people who interpret it. Symbols now associated with orthodox religions originally evolved from very different contexts in the prepatriarchal past, like the crescent moon of intensely male-oriented Islam, which descended from the female-oriented worship of the Moon Mother in archaic Arabia.

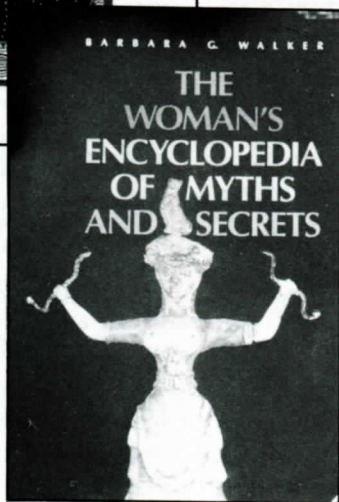
Barbara Walker's dictionary provides a fascinating tour of the history and mythology of some seven hundred woman-related symbols: from round and oval motifs, sacred and secular objects, deities' signs, ritual signs and supernaturals to symbols inspired by body parts, birds, plants, minerals, stones, shells and more. (USA: Harper San Francisco, 1988. 563p. RN REF 02250.00B)



The Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets

Do you know where the legend of a cat's nine lives comes from? Why "mama" is a word understood in nearly all languages? How the custom of kissing began? Whether there really was a female pope? Why Cinderella's glass slipper was so important to the Prince?

The answers to these and countless other intriguing questions are given in this compulsively readable, feminist



encyclopedia. Twenty-five years in preparation, this unique, comprehensive sourcebook focuses on mythology, anthropology, religion, and sexuality to uncover precisely what other encyclopedias leave out or misrepresent. *The Woman's Encyclopedia* presents the fascinating stories behind word origins, legends, superstitions, and customs. A browser's delight and an indispensable resource, it offers 1,350 entries on magic, witchcraft, fairies, elves, giants, goddesses, gods, and psychological anomalies such as demonic possession; the mystical meanings of sun, moon, earth, sea, time and space; ideas of the soul, reincarnation, creation and doomsday; ancient and modern attitudes toward sex, prostitution, romance, rape, warfare, death and sin, and much, much more. Tracing these concepts to their prepatriarchal origins, Barbara G. Walker explores the hidden footprints of history in addition to the valuable materials recovered

by archaeologists, orientalist, and other scholars. (USA: Harper San Francisco, 1983. 1124p. RN REF 02373.00B)

Classics

The Female Eunuch

 by Germaine Greer

Classic text in modern western feminism. *The Female*

Eunuch, with its chapter titles "Body," "Soul," "Love," and "Hate," was one of the first to consider women as a subject of discourse. Many of what today's feminists consider as common sense were

first argued out in Greer's book. (UK: Paladin, 1971. 354p. RN IDE 02156.00B)

Gyn/Ecology: The Meta Ethics of Radical Feminism

by Mary Daly

Gyn/Ecology is a book unlike any other. It invites us to acknowledge without forgiveness or collusion those forces which have shaped our lives. The ritualised mutilation, burning, mind-binding and torture of millions of women in China, India, Africa, and Europe is mercilessly recounted here.

In its total lack of inhibition by patriarchal forms and its sombre declaration of what has previously been kept hidden, *Gyn/Ecology* is a work of revolution. (UK: The Women's Press Limited, 1978. 485 p. RN IDE 02256.00B)



Sandra Torrijos



AUNG SAN SUU KYI'S
**Freedom from Fear
and Other Writings**

Reviewed by JING PORTE

Who has not heard of Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma's "woman of destiny," many times featured on the cover of various international publications, she who won the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 1990, and the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. Suu, as she is fondly called by her supporters, again featured prominently in media when she was released from six years of house arrest in Burma.

Freedom from Fear and Other Writings is a collection of essays by Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League of Democracy (NLD), the main coalition of groups fighting the authoritarian regime in Rangoon. Edited by her husband, Michael Aris, the book provides the readers with not only a glimpse of the socio-cultural history of Burma but also a personal account of Suu's participation in her people's struggle for democracy.

Suu's essays come in three batches, like a triptych of her political thoughts, reflections on Burmese history and culture and remembrances. Her earlier writings, completed before her return to Burma in 1988, make up the book's first part. Included are a daughter's remembrance of her father, Aung San, the revered leader of the nationalist movement in the 1930s and 1940s; essays on the literary and cultural heritage of Burma; and a comparative study of intellectual development in Burma and India under colonialism.

Forming the book's middle part are miscellaneous documents composed by Suu during her immersion in the Burmese people's democratic struggle. Collectively, these articles convey something of the atmosphere of the

whole movement and Suu's response to the unfolding situation. The documents are arranged in chronological sequence from the time Suu returned to Burma, whereafter she quickly stepped into the political scene by issuing her first political manifesto, up to the events that led to her house arrest in July 1989.

Finally, there are the essays written by other people about Suu. There are the poignant and often humorous reminiscences by two people who have known Suu before she became a symbol of Burma's struggle for democracy. Suu's growing up years are recalled by Ma Than E, a close friend of the Aung San family and whom Suu referred to as an "emergency aunt." Meanwhile Ann Pasternak Slater, Suu's neighbor and close friend in England, writes about Suu's academic years in Oxford and her family life with Michael Aris. The two other essays are by two academics who have closely followed the developments from England and the rise of Suu as Burma's prime spokesperson in the international stage. What emerges from these writings, specially those of her friends', is a more rounded picture of Suu as a person.

Her media celebrity notwithstanding, the question begs to be asked: Who is Aung San Suu Kyi? How does one account for her meteoric rise and continued popularity in a country where the military has dominated all aspects of life for the past 32 years and where no woman in modern times has ever been considered for national leadership?

Josef Silverstein, one of the book's contributors, gives a very telling reply: "There are no real cultural impediments to a woman

as a leader in Burma. Throughout its history, women have enjoyed equality with men in the household and the economy. Marriage was and is a civil act; women retain their own names during marriage, and divorce is a simple procedure with no stigma attached to either party. More important, women have always had the right of inheritance. Only in Buddhist religious terms were they considered inferior."

But while Burmese pre-colonial history is replete with instances where women attained positions of power and influence, the role of women in politics, administration and diplomacy deteriorated during the colonial period. This inferior position persists up to the present. From the colonial period onwards, women's organizations became attached to political parties. Countless women participated in the nationalist struggle of the colonial period and many worked closely with the men who were their leaders. But they never achieved leadership in their own right. Under the military dictatorship, women's social and political status further deteriorated.

Aung San Suu Kyi is special in so many ways. Aside from her being the daughter of a national hero, she has a number of qualities which prepared her well to enter and rise in the political arena in her own right. Suu is intelligent and well-educated, having finished her education in India and later at Oxford. She is also widely-traveled. After leaving Oxford, she went to New York where she was employed for some time at the United Nations Secretariat. Small and thin but feisty, Suu possesses a commanding presence that has been proven repeatedly by her capacity to attract crowds in their thousands.

But it is her courage in the face of adversity that stands out as most outstanding feature. In response to the military's seizure of power on 18 September 1988 after General Ne Win resigned and called for a referendum to adopt a multi-party system, Suu joined in the founding of the National League of Democracy (NLD) and became its general-secretary.

In her position, Suu spoke out sharply against the murder in the streets of Burmese youth, and the military's violations of human rights. At one time, she was accused by the military of allowing herself to be manipulated by the communists. Her party, the NLD, was equated with the banned Burmese Communist Party. She parried the attacks by telling the

military that she has a mind of her own and by expelling afterwards her co-party leader at NLD who was making similar charges.

Despite the military's ban on public gatherings, Suu traveled around Burma and gathered crowds in the thousands. On 5 April 1989, while campaigning in Danubyu province, an army captain ordered his soldiers to aim their rifles at her. She walked towards the soldiers as the captain started the countdown for the firing. An army major stepped forward and countermanded the order, preventing her assassination.

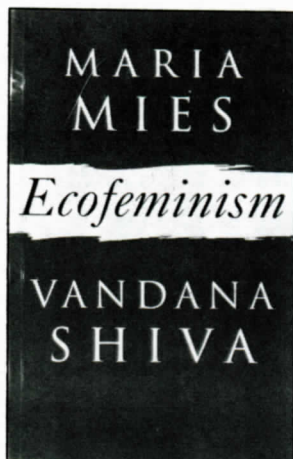
On 20 July 1989, the military intensified its attacks against the democratic opposition. Many NLD leaders and supporters were arrested and Suu and NLD chair Tin U were placed under house arrest. Suu immediately began a hunger strike when her demand to be put in the same jail as her supporters was turned down by the military. The hunger strike, which lasted 12 days, ended only after Suu was assured by her captors that her supporters would not be treated inhumanly and would be given due process.

In May 1990, the elections for the constitutional assembly was held. Though Suu was not allowed by the military to run, the NLD still won more than 80 per cent of the seats. But the military refused to recognize the results of the election. Instead, it tightened the dragnet against the NLD. By the end of October 1990, only four of NLD's leaders were free.

Suu's captors have finally let her out but the restrictions on her movements remain. Yet, Suu persists in her work, addressing local meetings and demonstrations and lobbying for international support to the democracy movement in Burma. Her initial public speeches indicate that Suu's commitment to the struggle for democracy in Burma is unwavering.

Suu is not only reshaping Burma's politics, but is also helping reinvigorate the Burmese women to reclaim the role they had played in pre-colonial times: coequal, if not better, with men in all aspects of life.

Jing Porte is a projects consultant of KABABAIHAN, a women's center working with urban poor women and trade unions. She was the coordinator for South East Asia of the Hong Kong-based Committee for Asian Workers in the early 1980s, and has written extensively about Filipino women workers.



MARIA MIES' and VANDANA SHIVA'S

Ecofeminism

Reviewed by HELEN R. GRAHAM, M.M.

In *Ecofeminism* Maria Mies, a German social scientist and activist in the feminist movement, and Vandana Shiva, an Indian theoretical physicist from the ecology movement, issue a serious and urgent call for a new vision, which they term the subsistence or survival perspectives. For Mies and Shiva the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (UNCED, June 1992) simply confirmed their conviction that "solutions to the present worldwide ecological, economic and social problems cannot be expected from the ruling elite of the North or the South... [Rather] a new vision—a new life for present and future generations, and for our fellow creatures on earth—in which praxis and theory are respected and preserved can be found only in the survival struggles of grassroots movements."

Ecofeminism is a collection of papers and articles in which the two women of different cultural and academic backgrounds, and geographical origins, creatively transcend their differences to make available "shared common concerns that emerge from an invisible global politics in which women worldwide are enmeshed in their everyday life; and a convergence of thinking arising from [their] participation in the efforts of women to keep alive the processes that sustain us."

Mies and Shiva divide the work, contributing a section or two for each of their book's seven chapters. Shiva opens the book with a trenchant critique of modern science "projected as a universal, value-free system of knowledge, which...claims to arrive at objective conclusions about life, the universe and almost everything." She argues that this paradigm is reductionist or mechanical, a "Western, male-oriented and patriarchal projection which necessarily entailed the subjugation of both nature and women." Mies follows with a series of seven methodological guidelines of feminist research which recognize that "the postulate of value-free research" needs to be replaced by what she terms, "conscious partiality" which considers both research objects and the

researchers themselves as parts of a bigger social whole."

In the book's second part, Mies discusses the pernicious effect on nature, women, and other people of "the myth of catching-up development," a path which is and will remain an illusion for women. This is so because the great values of the French revolution (i.e. the promises of freedom, equality, and the self-determination of the individual), "are betrayed for many women because all these rights depend on the possession of property, and of women." Such rights cannot be extended to all women in the world, since the self-interest of the individual is always in competition with the self-interest of others. When applied to the ecological problem, the principle of self-interest leads to intensified ecological degradation and destruction.

Shiva asks where the development paradigm went wrong since, instead of well-being and affluence for all, "it has brought environmental degradation and poverty" especially to women and children. In answer to her question, Shiva contributes significantly to the understanding of the term 'poverty.' The conventional development paradigm, misunderstands poverty as the "absence of Western consumption patterns" which leads to the pursuit of the development process as a 'poverty-removal' project. As Shiva points out, however, "Development," as a culturally biased process destroys wholesome and sustainable lifestyles and instead creates real material poverty, or misery, by denying the means of survival through the diversion of resources to resource-intensive commodity production."

By the end of the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985) it was evident that development itself was the problem as the increasing underdevelopment of women was seen to be the result of "their enforced but asymmetric participation whereby they bore the costs but were excluded from the benefits" of 'development.' This time, however, "it was not the old colonial powers but the new national elite that

masterminded the exploitation on grounds of 'national interest' and growing GNPs." It is women and children, Shiva sharply observes, who are most significantly affected by the "poverty trap, created through the vicious cycle of 'development,' debt, environmental destruction and structural adjustment.

Mies adds to this critique of the conventional development model with a reference to the Chernobyl disaster and the urgent lessons to be drawn from it. The fact that the effects of such industrial catastrophes do not respect political borders, demonstrates that the notion of 'unlimited progress' is a dangerous myth. Humans must realize that they cannot continue to "rape and destroy nature" without themselves suffering the consequences.

In "The Search for Roots," the third part of *Ecofeminism*, Shiva describes the new religion of development as an uprooting of people from their roots in the soil which is their "sacred mother," by the new highpriests-the managers of 'development'-often with the cooperation of a police state which uses terror tactics to wrench people "from their homes and homelands, and consign them as ecological and cultural refugees in the wasteland of industrial society." In what she terms "the process of masculinization of the motherland," Shiva charges the state with having changed its role from that of protector of its people and resources, to that of virtual provider and protector of TNCs. Rather than serve as the TNCs' regulator, the state now acts as their protector.

Shiva then points out the many ways in which gender and diversity are linked. Diversity, which is the principle of women's work and knowledge is also a matrix out of which emerge 'productivity' and 'skills' which respect, and do not destroy, diversity. This productivity and these skills are not given positive values, however, by those for whom value is conferred only through economic exploitation for commercial gain. This criterion of commercial value reduces diversity to a problem, a deficiency. Therefore, Shiva asserts, the "destruction of diversity and the creation of monocultures becomes an imperative for capitalist patriarchy." Shiva's insights into the relationship of sacredness and conservation are worth quoting at length:

"In the indigenous setting, sacredness is a large part of conservation. Sacredness encompasses the intrinsic value of diversity; sacredness denotes a relationship of the part to the whole-a relationship that recognizes and preserves integrity. Profane seed violates the integrity of ecological cycles and linkages and fragments agricultural ecosystems and the relationships responsible for sustainable production."

In the context of biotechnology, Mies takes up the issue of, what she terms, the "sexist and racist implications" of the new reproductive technologies.

She points out that the development of this technology took place "in the ideological climate which makes a sharp distinction between man and nature, culture and nature," and which assigns women and non-white peoples to the side of nature, which must then be conquered by White Man. This technology, therefore, "cannot claim to be neutral; nor is it free from the sexist, racist and ultimately fascist biases in our societies." Both Mies and Shiva address the controversial issues of population and reproduction in "Subsistence: Freedom versus Liberalization," the sixth chapter of *Ecofeminism*. In a jointly authored article, they offer a new concept of ecology of reproduction, one that challenges those feminists "who put emphases only on women's individual reproductive rights, without demanding changes in the overall political and economic structures of the present world (dis)order." "Population growth," they emphasize, is not a cause of the environmental crisis but only one aspect of it, and "both are related to resource alienation and destruction of livelihoods, first by colonialism and then continued by Northern-imposed models of maldevelopment."

Towards the latter part of their book, Shiva and Mies take up the question freedom for trade or freedom for survival, and the issue of the pernicious effect of the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) on agriculture and Third World women. Shiva maintains that 'free trade' in agriculture as interpreted by GATT gives transnational corporations (TNCs) freedom to invest, produce and trade without restriction, amount to "the denial of freedom to rural women to produce, process and consume food according to the local environmental, economic and cultural needs."

Finally, Mies concludes with a call to adopt an alternative to "the prevailing model of capitalist-patriarchal development. She offers the subsistence or survival perspective which can show people "the way out of the many impasses of [the] destructive system called industrial society, market economy or capitalist patriarchy." The main characteristics of the proposed subsistence perspective are summarized in nine assertions/paragraphs which are based on the firm conviction "that we live in a limited world, [and that sustainability is not compatible with the existing profit- and growth-oriented development paradigm."

Mies and Shiva are to be commended for a timely, well-researched, passionately argued and deeply challenging call for a profound metanoia.

Helen Graham is an American Maryknoll nun based in the Philippines, where she is active in the peace movement and the circle of feminist theologians. She wrote her review of Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva's book after turning in her PhD dissertation, and just before taking off for a long deserved break.

Satya: a Prayer for the Enemy

Directed by Ellen Bruno, 1993

28 minutes, color
USA, English language

Since the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950, more than one million people have been tortured, executed or starved to death for demonstrating against the Chinese occupation. Tibetan Buddhist nuns have taken the lead in the resistance by fearlessly staging courageous demonstrations for religious freedom and independence. In retaliation, the Chinese state has imprisoned, tortured and killed countless nuns.

Satya seeks to understand the basis and inspiration for the nuns' non-violent actions in their struggle against oppressive Chinese policies.

The Journey of the Women of Pakistan

Produced by The Himmat Society

60 minutes, color
Pakistan, English language

This film looks at the role women played in the history of Pakistan beginning with its liberation from its colonizers. It traces the accomplishments of Pakistani women and the points of resistance from liberation until the present. Focus themes include cultural bondage, political repression, oppressive religious practices, and economic exploitation.

Grabbing that Thread: One Day with Safari

Produced by Kalyanamitra
5 minutes, color

Indonesia, English language

Structured like a quick tour of Indonesia's various

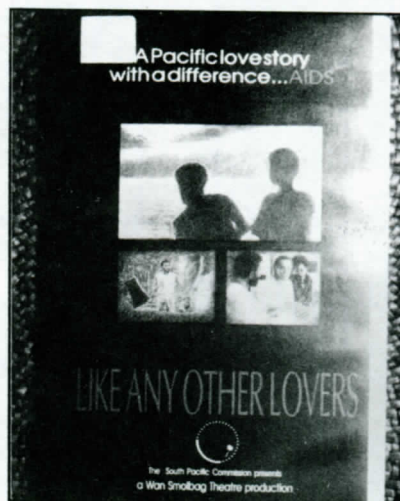
regions, *Grabbing the Thread* tells the situation of women in this Southeast Asian nation by highlighting the life and struggles of one woman from each region.

Charlotte's Story

Produced by the South Pacific Commission Regional Media Center

20 minutes, color
Fiji, English language

Charlotte Frankovich is a Samoan mother who lost her son to AIDS. In a frank and moving interview, she describes her son and the painful experience of losing him to a virus that she never thought would touch her life. It was not easy for Charlotte to recount how she lost her boy Nikolai but she says "if telling my story could help someone out there, then I would be so privileged to have had a chance to talk and tell people about what we've suffered."



Like Any Other Lovers

By Dale Hermanson
produced by the South Pacific Commission, 1993

53 minutes, color

Vanuatu, English language

Based on a play originally performed by the Wan Smolbag Theater group, *Like Any Other Lovers* is a story about facing fear with love, courage and hope. It is about Chris and Linda, a young couple whose relationship is threatened when Chris learns he is infected with HIV—the virus which can lead to AIDS. Together, their love overcomes the prejudice and rejection of those around them.

Neria

Directed by Godwin Mawuru, 1992

103 minutes, color
Zimbabwe, English language

Patrick and Neria, through shared hard work and resourcefulness, have built a comfortable home, a good life and a family in the city. But when their loving and equal partnership suddenly ends with the tragic death of Patrick, Neria's nightmare begins.

Patrick's brother Phineas helps himself to their car, bank book, furniture, and house. He takes advantage of tradition to suit his own needs, making no effort to take care of his brother's family. Yet Phineas claims that tradition and law are on his side.

Neria watches helplessly at first, believing there is no legal or moral recourse for her. But when Phineas takes her children, Neria decides she must fight back. In desperation she seeks justice. Neria learns that law and tradition can both be on her side if she remains strong and intelligently fights for her rights.

Ang Babae Kapag Nag-iisa sa Maynila (When a Woman is on Her Own in Manila)

Directed by Avic Ilagan, 1994
8 minutes, B/W
Philippines, Filipino language

What woman has not uttered a silent prayer before stepping out into the streets, specially if she is going out on her own. Avic Ilagan threads together a sequence of typical events in a typical day of a young woman who works outside the home. The result: a darkly humorous and biting commentary about living dangerously in the city—that is, if you are female, single and independent.

Taboo Talk

Produced by the Family Planning Federation of Australia, Inc.

18 minutes, color
South Pacific, English language

Young women and old, married and unmarried, women from villages and cities speak with humor and sensitivity about their experiences. They speak of menstruation, western and traditional methods of family planning and sex education.

Down There

Produced by the Family Planning Federation of Australia, Inc.

23 minutes, color (animation)
South Pacific, English language

An animated video, *Down There* also uses interviews with South Pacific women to provide information about human reproduction, methods of contraception and reproductive health care.

Rape by Any Name

Directed by Angelique LaCoure and Wade Hanks, 1990

60 minutes, color
USA, English language

Rarely reported and difficult to prosecute, acquaintance rape constitutes more than 60 percent of all rapes. This important video features candid interviews with rape survivors, counselors and male and female college students. Boundaries between consensual coercive sex are drawn by three date rape survivors whose testimonies contrast with a male defense attorney's justification of "casual" versus "absolute" rape. Male socialization, lack of legal recognition and the victim's assumed culpability perpetuate the dangerous and erroneous idea that "no" means "yes." An excellent resource and discussion starter to educate students—both male and female—about this pervasive problem on campuses.

Sandra's Garden: Women and Incest

Directed by Bonnie Dickie, 1991

34 minutes, color
Canada, English language

The struggle to cope with the trauma of incest is faced by many victims alone. Sandra was sexually abused by her father as a child and is now in a loving relationship with a woman. This moving and empowering video tells the story of one woman who found the courage to speak about her experience of incest and in doing so began to overcome the fear, guilt and denial that had shaped her life. *Sandra's Garden*

conveys the sense of wholeness Sandra has found through both the land on which she lives and the support of the women in her community.

Five Out of Five

directed by Ayoka Chenzira, 1987

7 minutes, color
USA, English language

This rock music video features the New York Women Against Rape's Acting Out Teen Theatre in an engaging yet serious look at the problem of child and teen sexual abuse. By using the popular media form of music video to address difficult and painful issues, young people can relate easily to the material. The video addresses the fear and isolation experienced by survivors. Teens talk about real experiences with sexual assault, as well as underlying themes of sexual role stereotypes and abuse of power. The video also includes information about what to do if a child is assaulted. ?



My name is
Kaisa Ligaya
Soto Sol Cruz.
And this is my
story about...

GROWING UP IN THE PHILIPPINES

Kaisa

in Filipino means "to be one with." My parents said that Kaisa is also a Finnish word for "victory." Ligaya is "joy." Everyone though calls me K.L. or simply, K.

I turned 11 last July and I am in fifth grade. I'm kind of small for my age. Today is a weekend so I'm in my grandfather's house in Paranaque. That is where my father lives, because it's closer to where he works. He is a computer analyst. My *tito* XC, *tita* Cate, Susan, and my grandparents, *Lolo* Tatay and *Lola* Nanay also live there.

On school days, I wake up at 6:00 a.m. I usually wear a shirt and a pair of shorts since jeans are not allowed in school if there is physical education class. A school bus picks me up at home and drives me to school. I go to a school called Community of Learners. My classes begin at 8:00 a.m. and end at 4:00 p.m. After classes, the school bus takes me to my mother's office. She is with Isis International-

Manila. Since her office is near our house, my mother and I walk home together. Oftentimes, we stop by a bakery along the way to buy bread and chocolate mousse which is my favorite. This is how a typical day for me goes.

In my class, the girls are more "reasonable" than the boys. For example, if the girls talk nicely and are always nice to boys, they will tease the girl to the boy whom she's nice to. So our teachers are kind of having a hard time with us because we are too noisy.

I like it when we write stories in class. I think it's really neat. I plan to be a writer when I grow up. Or maybe a computer analyst. I adore Louisa May Alcott, the author of *Little Women* because she writes good books. I also like to read, especially horror and mystery stories. I'm now reading some classics though I'm not really the classic type. Some of these books are really good. Aside from reading and



Bing Concepcion

writing, I also cross-stitch. My mother taught me how. She has done many beautiful cross-stitch patterns on cloth.

If I liken myself to anything, I think I would say that I am like the sea. The sea has many things in it—colorful, and big, and small. Like the sea, there are also many things going on in my head even though I can be quiet. I have different moods, and sometimes like the sea also, you cannot predict my moods.

My mother and I have a special kind of relationship. We are friends, although sometimes we also fight. My mother is kind of my “enemy” when it comes to food. She really likes tofu, veggy meat, spices, Italian seasoning, vegetables, and anything that is healthy. I’m actually the opposite. But I also eat her kind of food although I don’t really like them.

We also don’t agree about my hair. My mother wants to cut my hair short because she says I look

much better when its cut. But I want to grow it long and braid it and do anything I can with it.

There are many great men and women from my country’s past. But the one I admire most is Gabriela Silang who fought for justice during the 1700s, a time when the Philippines was a colony of Spain. Gabriela Silang was a brave woman who loved the people and suffered many hardships.

I think it would be neat to visit some other place like London in England. I would like to learn more about their past and culture, because they are countries far away from where I live. There are only two seasons in the Philippines—the wet, rainy season and the dry, hot season. I want to experience all the four seasons of other countries, but I would not want to live there. The Philippines is my only country. ☺

K.L. Soto Sol Cruz will be, as this piece proves, a writer whom her entire family will be proud of.

SO WHO IS THIS GUY?: A Mother's commitment

by Raihanah Mohamad Mydin

so, who is this guy
 you've found for her?
does he know anything about her?
what she look like?
how much she make?
how hot tempered she can be?
how stubborn she is?

does he care?

so, who is this fellow?
 you've asked her to meet?
who thinks he can take up
the responsibility
of a wife and later a family,
just maybe?

so, who is this joker?
 you want her to see?
whom she's later expected to attend to
 hand and foot
 day and night
for the rest of her living years?

ah! so this is "he"
 who i doubt know how to make
a decent cup of tea,
 and household chores
never in his vocabulary,
 and she's to say yes to
and let things be?

August 1993

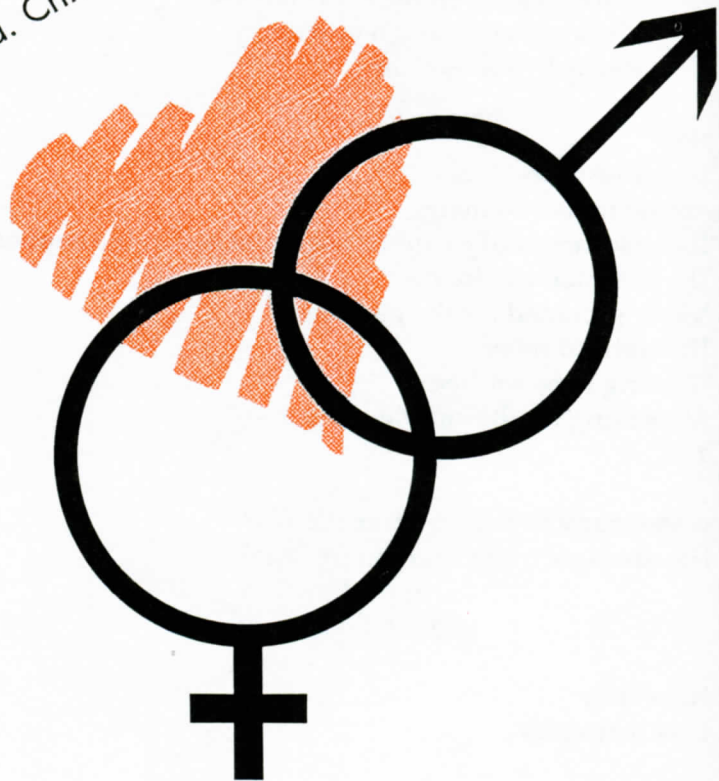
Raihanah Mohamad Mydin was born in Penang, Malaysia on 25 June 1970. She has a degree in education and is currently teaching at the National University of Malaysia.

A SURVEY ON GENDER RELATIONS

SHE Said, HE Said

by Ma. Christine Bantug

*Often, we have been told that the youth shall be the final measure of our effectiveness as advocates of change. So, **Women in Action** conducted an informal poll of male and female youths in Fiji and the Philippines to see if their ideas of gender relations are changing in any way. The answers that we got made us wonder, some stopped us in our tracks, some brought laughter, and some gave hope.*



A total of 48 male and female respondents from Fiji and the Philippines, whose ages ranged from 14 to 20 years old, answered **Women in Action's** questions on gender relations.

The majority of the respondents for both countries were girls (67 percent). They made up 75 percent of the Filipino sample and 60 percent of the Fijian sample.

Sixty-eight percent of the Fijian respondents are students. The remaining 32 percent gave no information about what they do. On the other hand, 70 percent of the Filipino respondents are students in secondary, college and vocational schools. Only five percent of the Filipino respondents, all of whom are male, are employed. The unemployed (10 percent) are all female. Fifteen percent of the respondents gave no information.

Forty-six percent of the Fijian respondents listed their mothers' occupations as "housewives" or having domestic duties. The mothers of the remaining 44 percent are "gainfully" employed: 21 percent as professionals (teachers, nurses); 14 percent in supervisory positions; seven percent as rank and file employees (secretaries, clerks); and two percent as skilled workers.

Regarding their fathers's occupations, only seven percent of the respondents said that their fathers had no occupation, most of whom are in retirement. The majority (89 percent) have fathers who are fully employed. Most of those who have work are engaged in a profession (53 percent). Some have supervisory functions, are in business or are self-employed, some are in sales and other occupations.

For the Filipino sample, 45 percent of the respondents' mothers are employed—30 percent have mothers holding professional jobs, 15 percent have mothers who are skilled workers, and five percent have mothers working overseas. Recognizing their mothers' reproductive roles as work, a quarter of the Filipino respondents said their mothers are full-time "housewives" when asked about their mothers' occupation. But 15 percent answered that their mothers were not working. Ten percent of the respondents gave no data.

Only 15 percent of the Filipino fathers are unemployed; two percent said their fathers were retired. On the other hand, 25 percent of the fathers are in business, 25 percent are skilled workers, 10

percent are rank and file employees and five percent are in supervisory positions. Of the remaining 20 percent, 10 percent were deceased. Ten percent of the respondents gave no answer.

Majority (80 percent) of the Filipino respondents are Catholics, five percent were born-again Christians, while 15 percent provided no information as to their religion. The religious affiliations of the Fijian respondents are Hinduism (39 percent), Roman Catholic (32 percent), Methodist (21 percent), and Islam (3 percent).

GENDER RELATIONS

In Fiji, a slight majority (60 percent) of the respondents have partners (boyfriends/girlfriends). There was an equal percentage of girls with and without partners (47 percent). Compared to the male sample, 82 percent are with partners and only nine percent are without. Nine percent of the males and five percent of the females gave no answer.

Among the Filipino respondents: girls with partners equaled those without (40 percent) and the percentage of boys with partners (45 percent) was only slightly higher than those without (40 percent).

DESIRABLE QUALITIES

Among the female Filipino respondents, 80 percent favored a partner who is thoughtful, sweet and

romantic. Sixty percent want a partner who is good-looking, handsome, tall, presentable and well dressed while 53 percent want a partner who is understanding. Moreover, they want partners that are: caring and loving (20 percent), responsible and hardworking (27 percent), honest (20 percent), intelligent or educated (20 percent), with a sense of humor (20 percent), and friendly (20 percent). The following qualities are also desirable: being a gentleman, simplicity, resourcefulness, steadfastness, and recognizing women as their equal.

The Fijian girls gave a more varied list of desirable qualities they looked for in boys. Only 47 percent want a physically attractive partner. They also

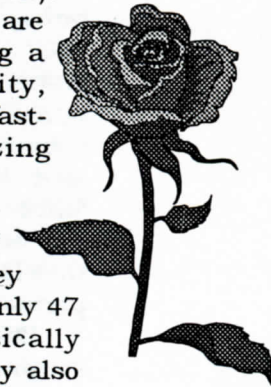


Table 1
Qualities you look for in a boyfriend
(Female Respondents)

* Qualities	Philippines	Fiji
Physically attractive	9	8
Thoughtful/Sweet/Romantic	12	
Understanding	8	6
Caring/Loving	3	7

Table 2
Qualities you look for in a girlfriend
(Male Respondents)

Qualities	Philippines	Fiji
Physically Attractive	4	4
Understanding	4	4
Caring/Loving	1	5
Intelligent/Educated	2	2

wanted partners to be: caring and loving (41 percent), understanding (35 percent), responsible and hardworking (29 percent), sensitive, supportive and respectful of women's needs (29 percent), honest (24 percent), with a sense of humor (24 percent), faithful and loyal (18 percent), expressive and open about their feelings (12 percent), friendly (12 percent), and intelligent or educated (12 percent). They also mentioned being modern, the ability to share, cooperation, fear of God, trustworthiness, and having a "nice personality" as qualities they look for in a partner.

Of the five Filipino males, only one did not mention physical attractiveness as an important quality of an ideal partner. Beauty (80 percent) was the number one quality looked for by Filipino males. Not only should a girl be beautiful, she should equally be understanding and kind (80 percent). Only 40 percent said they are also attracted by a woman's intelligence. Other favorable qualities include: the ability to communicate, neatness, humility, being caring and loving, industry especially in the home, unpossessiveness, and inner beauty.

The Fijian male teenagers, who are Christian, faithful, communicative, "good," jealous, who respect the male's wishes and who do not drink.

similar to the Fijian females, look for a wider range of desirable qualities. First in their list was a partner's being caring and loving (45 percent). They also like girls who are understanding (36 percent), who are physically attractive (36 percent), outgoing (18 percent), intelligent (18 percent), and able to provide good companionship (18 percent). The males said they also like girls who are funny,

transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancies.

But the thing to remember here are the reasons for virginity's importance. It is worthwhile to remember too that female respondents valued their virginity because they intend to share this only with the one they truly love whom they assume is their spouse. The male respondents, on the other hand, emphasized a woman's purity as their main reason for valuing virginity.

When it comes to the Filipino sample, it was the boys who manifested a nontraditional outlook on virginity. Sixty percent of the male respondents believed that virginity is not important. The one respondent who believes virginity to be still important gave

religion and culture as his reasons.

As for the female sample, only 20 percent said virginity is no longer important while the majority still value virginity because they look at it as the best gift they can give their future husbands.

ONLY FOR BOYS, ONLY FOR GIRLS

For both Fiji and the Philippines, a greater percentage of the female respondents (Fiji, 53 percent; Philippines, 46 percent) believe that either sex should not be barred from doing activities traditionally seen as men's or women's jobs.

But those who believe that there are activities only for boys

Table 3
Is Virginity Important?

	PHILIPPINES		FIJI	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	1	12	10	16
No	3	3		
Others			1	1
No answer	1			
Total	5	15	11	17

VIRGINITY IS TOPS

Both male and female respondents from Fiji put a lot of premium in virginity. Ninety-two percent of the Fijian respondents replied that virginity is important for many reasons. One, virginity is best shared only with someone you really love, and this means the spouse. Two, virginity is a sign of purity, dignity, responsibility, respect and sincerity. Three, a non-virgin is unacceptable in their religion and culture. And four, because they want to avoid potential problems of sexually



Male and female respondents from Fiji both placed a lot of premium on virginity.



cited the following as the boys's domain: (answers from the Philippines) being gentlemanly, being responsible and intelligent, basketball, drinking, pornographic magazines, and respect for women, (answers from Fiji) fixing a leaking faucet or broken furniture, being in the army, and being altar boys and priests.

The Filipino male respondents are almost equally divided in their opinion on stereotyping of activities according to sexes: 60 percent believe that boys and girls should be able to engage in any activity they want while 40 percent believe otherwise. Those who believe otherwise described the following to be solely boys's activities: priesthood, masturbation, smoking and drinking, and courting women.

In Fiji, although 72 percent of the boys said that there are activities only for boys, only 54 percent said that there are activities that are only for girls. Roughly, this can be taken to mean that the boys in the poll still believe that girls will have a difficulty doing activities that are traditionally for boys. But boys will have an easier time adjusting to activities that are traditionally done by girls.

Those who agreed to the a stereotyping of activities said that the protection of women, the cutting down of trees,

military work and hard labor were solely for boys.

Being reserved around boys, being understanding of the male's problems, domestic work, childbirth (and perhaps childrearing) and mental activities were activities and characteristics for girls.

It is interesting to note that even those who said that work should be shared between the sexes and that activities should not be stereotyped, said hard work should be done only by the male sex and that it is a man's role to protect a woman.

WOMEN COURTING MEN

When it comes to women courting men, 60 percent of the Filipino respondents believed that this behavior is unacceptable (girls, 46 percent; boys, 100 percent). The respondents think that women who court men are cheap, lack

ethics and are going against tradition.

On the contrary, majority of the respondents from Fiji (75 percent) have no problem with the idea. Instead, they look at it as a sign of gender equality—a recognition of a woman's right to pursue what she wants. A mere 11 percent of the total Fijian respondents found the idea unacceptable and all of them were boys.

It was also interesting to note how some girls from both countries gave a conditional response to the question (Philippines, 20 percent; Fiji, 24 percent). They said that only in certain situations is it acceptable for women to court men: when the man is too shy to make the first move or when the man approves of the idea.

HOMOSEXUALITY

Half of the total number of respondents from both

Table 4
What do you think of women courting men?

	PHILIPPINES		FIJI	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Agree		5	8	13
Disagree	5	7	3	
Depends		3		4
No answer				
Total	5	15	11	17

Table 5
Is marriage important?

	PHILIPPINES		FIJI	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	5	14	6	12
No		1	1	3
Others			3	2
No answer (don't know)			1	
Total	5	15	11	17

countries disapprove of homosexual relationships and in both countries, the boys were the majority of those who found homosexual relationships to be wrong. They found homosexual relationships immoral, unnatural, and against the teachings of their church.

On the other hand, there was almost an equal number of female respondents in both countries who find homosexuality acceptable.

Boys and girls who find homosexual relationships acceptable believe that homosexuals have the right to engage in normal relationships like any other human being.

On the other hand, 10 percent of the total respondents (15 percent of the Filipino respondents and 12 percent of the Fijian respondents) said that although they are personally against homosexual relationships, they believe that society should respect and

accept those who decide to engage in such relationships.

ON MARRIAGE

Majority of the respondents from both countries (Philippines, 95 percent; Fiji, 64 percent) believe that marriage is important. Among the Filipino respondents, only one female answered to the contrary. Meanwhile, only 14 percent of the Fijian respondents said that it is not important, while 18 percent said that, at this point in their life, marriage is not yet important. The 18 percent said that staying single is an alternate option to marriage.

As to gender roles in marriage, the Filipino respondents, cited caring for the husband and children (60 percent), managing the household (20 percent—all of whom are girls), and being responsible for the emotional, physical, social and moral (values) well-being of the family (10 percent—all of whom were boys) were the most commonly cited roles for women in marriage. However, 15 percent of the respondents said that a woman's role in marriage should not be any different from that of a man's.

In Fiji, the top answer for women's roles in marriage was

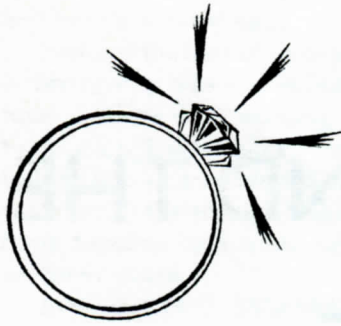
similar to that of their Filipino counterpart: caring for the husband and children (46 percent). The other roles mentioned were those that fall under traditional female roles: managing the household (18 percent), and providing support (emotional, spiritual, etc...) to the family (11 percent). And, similar to the Philippines, 25 percent of the respondents (mostly girls) said that there is no difference between a woman's and a man's role in marriage. Moreover, non-traditional roles such as being the provider for the family (14 percent) and doing anything she wants to do (11 percent) were also mentioned as female roles in marriage.

As for the married man, the Filipino respondents expected him to be the provider for the family (50 percent) and to care for his wife and children (50 percent). Only 18 percent said that there should be no difference between the roles of men and women in marriage. The respondents also said a married man should respect and support his wife, make the decisions in the family, discipline the children, and be understanding and loyal.

The Fiji respondents, meanwhile, said a man's primary role in marriage is caring for his wife and children (61 percent), followed by being the family's provider (32 percent). Twenty-five percent of the respondents said men should have a similar role to women. Eleven percent of the respondents (all of whom were girls) mentioned the role of being protector of the family as a man's role in marriage.

(The total number of responses made by the respondents is greater than the total number of





Respondents said women who court men are cheap, lack ethics and are going against tradition.

respondents since the respondents gave multiple responses.)

CHANGING ROLES

All of those polled in Fiji and 70 percent of the respondents from the Philippines believe that roles between men and women are changing. However, a sole female respondent (Filipino) believed that as long as men do not accept women as equals, there still will not be any change in roles between the two sexes.

According to the Filipino respondents, the changing roles are manifested mainly through the changing roles of women in the family. Nowadays, there are more women-headed households as more and more women are better educated and work outside the home while their husbands care for the children at home.

The Fijian respondents cited other factors to account for these changing roles. Fifty-four percent of the male respondents and 36 percent of the female respondents attributed

the shifting in roles to the increasing number of divorced cases in the country, and the couples' inability to cope with the "changing lifestyles." They said that unlike before, women are now heading the family and are being independent, working and providing for the family while the men stay at home to take care of the children, share in the household work, and listen to their wives because changes in the family structure, they said, resulted in women taking on traditionally male roles and men engaging in what used to be traditionally female roles. *(Responses for this item were multiple, therefore the total number of responses are greater than the total sample.)*

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With poll reports from Joyce E. Sierra for the Philippines and from Shamima Ali for Fiji.

Table 6
Roles Changing?

	PHILIPPINES		FIJI	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Yes	3	11	11	17
No	1	1		
Depends		2		
No answer	1	2		
Total	5	15	11	17

gOING bEYOND THE pP b ERSONAL

by Malu S. Marin

*A respected feminist looks closely at lesbian activism
and the women's movement in the Philippines.*

Lesbian activism in the Philippines grew out of the women's movement. In the 1980s, when feminism was not yet a buzz word among women activists, there were a handful of women who began the journey of discovering themselves and their sexual feelings towards other women. The atmosphere was not very conducive for coming out. Initial reactions faced by lesbians in the women's movement ranged from aversion to intense curiosity, from mild shock to voyeuristic interest. Some organizations, cognizant that lesbianism was an issue that went beyond the personal, conducted internal discussions and sharings. In general, there were no existing support mechanisms. Lesbianism was not considered a woman's issue, nor was it reflected in the over-all women's agenda.

BRIEF HISTORY

Initial attempts to organize lesbians began at the onset of the decade of the '90s. Encouraged perhaps by events happening globally and locally, women activists started

getting exposed to lesbian issues and to the physical presence of lesbian feminists. These events served as precursors to the blossoming of lesbian activism.

One such event was the Sisterhood is Global Dialogues held in 1988. The dialogues on sexuality was one of the first women-only discussions and this initiative prompted one of the organizer's funders, a big Manila-based foreign funding agency, to withhold an approved grant and demand an explanation to complaints that the organizers were promoting "exclusivism and lesbianism."

In 1990, the International Women and Health Meeting (IWHM), one of the biggest gatherings of international women's health activists, was held in Manila. The workshop on lesbianism in the meeting was one of the most well-attended workshops in the conference. Many Filipino workshop participants said that it was their first time to see and hear out "actual" lesbians.

These international events were important for several reasons. One, they provided avenues for lesbianism to be discussed as a political issue, devoid of the hysteria and uproar that usually accompa-

nied it in mainstream discussions. Lesbianism thus gained a legitimate status—at least during those conferences—equal with other women's issues. Two, the atmosphere of openness in these conferences encouraged some Filipino lesbians to speak about their existence and experience of homophobia and discrimination. Three, the conferences underscored the need to begin the process of addressing lesbian issues in the women's movement. And four, the opportunities for networking and collaborating with lesbians from other parts of the world were opened by these gatherings.

Despite these, the actual birthing of organized lesbian activism did not happen overnight.

The formation of a lesbian activist core group happened only after the 1991 Second National Conference on Health. The organizers of the conference gave the core group seed funding to enable them to convene and begin the process of organizing. The formation of the core group was not without difficulties. The group members, who came from diverse backgrounds, had to deal with conflicting needs and goals. The formation did not last very long, and no follow-up ac-

tivities were conducted after the first series of meetings.

Perhaps the idea of an organized lesbian group was still ahead of its time. There were ongoing initiatives and activities that centered on lesbian issues, but this did not create enough stirrings for lesbians to forge together and unite under a common cause.

In August 1992, KALAYAAN conducted a rap session on lesbianism in Baguio City. The Baguio-based participants continued having meetings after the rap session, leading to the eventual formation of LesBond. LesBond identifies itself as a lesbian feminist organization "envisioning a free, gender-fair, just and human(e) society where lesbians are free from any form of discrimination and oppression." LesBond is the first regional formation to identify itself as lesbian-feminist.

February 1993 witnessed the formation of The Lesbian Collective (TLC) in Manila. A self-propelled initiative of young lesbian feminists, TLC capped its launching by sending a contingent to the 1993 March 8 Women's Day March who walked under a collectively designed lesbian banner. A statement was read during the rally, despite the initial reluctance of the march's organizers to accommodate further changes in the program of activities.

TLC's formation had a lot of impact. For the first time, visible lesbians engaged in a pro-active campaign against homophobia in the women's movement. TLC received invitations from women's groups, enabling it to present its positions on various issues.

However, TLC was not spared from internal conflicts and factionalization, situated as it was in the midst of a conflict-ridden women's movement. By the end of 1994, most of its members became inactive, which was sad considering the group's promise. Yet, despite its current moribund status,

TLC's contribution to the growth of lesbian organizing remains important.

Unfazed by the difficulties of lesbian organizing, other groups started surfacing in 1994. The case of Elizabeth Lim and E v a n g e l i n e Castronuevo, the lesbian couple dismissed by Balay

Rehabilitation Center, a human rights organization, served as the impetus for lesbian organizations and women's groups to get together to form an advocacy and campaign network specifically addressing a lesbian issue. Can't Live in the Closet (CLIC), a lesbian group committed to media advocacy, was established in April 1994. CLIC was instrumental in drumming up international publicity and support for the case of Beth and Vangie.

ALERT or the Advocates for Lesbian Rights is another group that got started because of Beth and Vangie's case. ALERT started with 13 organizations but the number later dwindled to five. The difficulty in mobilizing local support for the case reflects the current state of activism in the women's movement.

Through the years, the diversity of the issues and the growth and expansion of the women's movement have resulted to specialization among women's organizations. The fact that campaigns and advocacy initiatives focused only on specific concerns make it difficult for women's organizations to rally behind issues that are outside their priority. Lesbian issues clearly remain in the periphery of priorities of most women's organizations.

In the same year, The Women Supporting Women Committee (WSWC) was organized. An existing project of Women's Education,



The Lesbian Collective (TLC), the first lesbian group to come out in public did so on International Women's Day in March 1993

Irene R. Chia

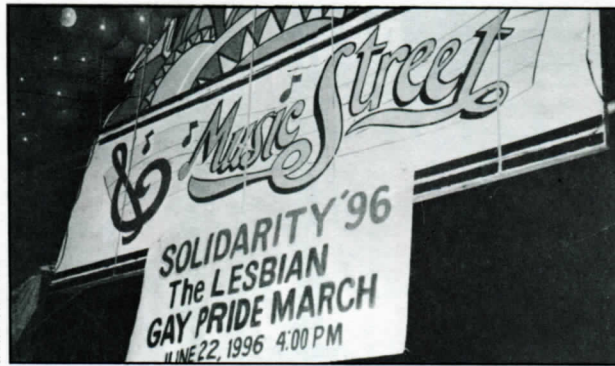
Development, Productivity and Research Organization [WEDPRO], WSWC was formed as a response to the public reaction to a magazine interview of lesbian feminist and WEDPRO executive director Aida Santos. WSWC operates the first lesbian hotline in the country.

SOFTENING THE GROUND

The existence of lesbian groups and lesbian-related activities and initiatives does not automatically translate into a lesbian movement. "There is lesbian organizing but I can't say that there is a lesbian movement...I always connect a movement with a mass base and that's what we don't have," remarks Tesa de Vela, one of the founding members of TLC.

Lesbian efforts are seen as scattered and sporadic, not yet representing a singular force. Nonetheless, they are necessary given the present conditions. Organized lesbian activism is a new endeavor and it has yet to determine the pulse of the women's movement vis-à-vis its own existence. Likewise, not all lesbians in the women's movement are involved in advocacy for lesbian-specific issues, though there are lesbian individuals working on lesbian-oriented issues who do not belong to any of the existing groups.

There is a strong perception that the women's movement has slowly



Announcement of the Lesbian and Gay Pride 1996.

become receptive to and supportive of lesbians today. Yet, the enthusiasm and openness remains to be reflected in actual policies and programs of most women's organizations. One member of the WSWC comments that the group's unreadiness to address lesbian issues became apparent when it organized a forum on lesbianism and the women's agenda. "We invited six big women's organizations. Only three came. The rest sent word at the last minute that they were not ready to discuss the issue. And during the forum itself, some of those who attended to represent the groups we invited also admitted their unreadiness.

Existing lesbian formations vary in their programs and projects depending on their analysis and perception of the needs and problems of the lesbian community. The groups' approaches and strategies are as different as their primary target audiences.

But there are also similarities, the most basic of which is the goal to address the needs of lesbians within and outside the women's movement.

DEFINITION OF ISSUES

Like women's issues, there is no singular encompassing definition of "lesbian issues." The framework of lesbian activism is hinged on the belief that lesbian rights are hu-

man rights, and that a struggle must be waged against homophobia and discrimination based on sexual orientation.

But more than looking at lesbianism as a human rights issue, lesbian feminists also recognize lesbianism

as a basic feminist issue. Lesbianism is seen as a rebuttal against a society that upholds and rewards heterosexual relations but does not protect heterosexual women who are abused by men. Instead, it puts women in a bind: If women relate with women, they face the repercussions of that defiance; if they relate with men, they expose themselves to the hazards of day to day relationships with men, a state of involvement and interaction fraught with potential conflicts.

This is not to say that there is no room for tenderness or caring in heterosexual relationships. But the inherent inequality that stems from the present system makes it easier for men to wield dominance and control over women. Furthermore, and much to the chagrin of feminists and proponents of women's rights, men's predominance over women is often rationalized and defended in society, even by some women.

Lesbian feminists battle a system that ensures men access to and control of women's lives—economically, emotionally, sexually, psychologically. Being or becoming a lesbian is staking a territorial claim to one's body and emotions. It is a space where men are not allowed to tread. Of course, this decision is not inconsequential. Lesbians brave great personal risks by standing up for their sexual choices. In the Philippines, as in most parts of Asia, lesbians find that their family

is most often their first battleground.

Most lesbian-feminists live personal lives that reflect their political views. For instance, there are conscious efforts to redefine relationships to free it of heterosexist elements such as role-playing or dominance-subordination. Lesbian relationships that occur in the women's movement somehow acquire new definitions and perspectives.

And because of the women's movement and because of feminism, there are women who have become more open to lesbianism. But there are women who look at lesbianism as a political alternative and a response to the many problems that beset heterosexual relationships. This resolution is simplistic, especially when accompanied by unrealistic—and unfair—expectations and assumptions about lesbian relationships. Thus, when lesbianism ceases to be the ideal that it is purported to be, these women end up frustrated and disappointed with the entire idea and concept of lesbianism.

But for those who have long regarded themselves as lesbians even before their involvement in the women's movement, the feminist analysis of heterosexism has been very useful in crystallizing their feelings. It gave them terms with which to describe their experiences. It provided them with the framework with which to view their existence more positively. These lesbians have chosen to be with women, not necessarily because they had an initial grasp or theoretical understanding of heterosexism, but because they have been oriented towards women even at an early age.

The links between lesbianism and feminism enable lesbian-feminists to get involved in issues that

LE concern all women. During the furor that accompanied Catholic conservative Philippine Senator Francisco Tatad's "election" as chair of the Senate Committee on Women, lesbian-feminist groups joined women's groups in the protest actions. Their actions, however, were not always appreciated.

When CLIC's letter denouncing Tatad's election was published in a national daily, one reader wrote CLIC to "please explain how the rights of its members got mixed up with those of women..." The letter further said that, "it is quite unnecessary for CLIC to usurp the role of legitimate women's groups... Lesbians in particular have no business trumpeting women's rights, since all they do is exploit women."

Such reaction is not the least surprising, given the prevailing mindset that lesbians are not women but "men trapped in women's bodies" or have "hearts of men and bodies of women." In fact, there are lesbians who do subscribe to this viewpoint. Media perpetuates these stereotypes, and sometimes goes to the extent of exaggerating or parodying such images.

The concept of lesbians as women in both personal and political spheres remains to be grasped and understood by many. Lesbian feminists have to work overtime in sensitizing people to their issues as well as in mobilizing support from the women's movement, in light of such reactions.

CRITICISMS

Lesbianism as Western

Lesbianism, much like feminism, is incessantly besieged by the criticism that its origins are western. This assertion obviously manifests societal resistance to the reality of indigenous lesbian existence. Unfortunately, even some women

activists toe the line. What is conveniently forgotten is that all social movements in this country owe much of their political theories and concepts from outside sources.

Lesbian activists are well aware of this criticism, and have started taking steps to cull data from local sources and redefine concepts and strategies so these may be grounded on local realities. The efforts to give the analysis a local context are evident in the emphasis on the cultural aspect of homophobia.

Being or becoming a lesbian is staking a territorial claim to one's body and emotions.

For instance, the pressures faced by Filipino lesbians come primarily from the family. There is recognition of the interplay of cultural apparatuses: religion, media, value systems and tradition. The analysis examines, but does not dwell heavily, on political apparatuses, given the absence of data on state violence or persecution of lesbians and gays.

Too, the issue of coming out is weighed carefully, taking into account the specificities of Filipino culture. Despite the need for visibility, for lesbianism to have a face and a name, "coming out" occurs at varying levels and does not automatically mean media exposure or appearances. There are levels to which lesbians permit themselves to be exposed, aware as they are that they are risking their lives and identities. To come out is not always to be empowered, for it can also mean exposing one's vulnerabilities.

Projection

Lesbian-feminists are also criticized for acting and "speaking the language of a small group, or a sub-culture." They endlessly engage in conceptual discussions and come across as too theoretical, even to their fellow activists. This criticism is partly a result of the increasing visibility and exposure of lesbians, especially in mainstream media.

It is the political nature of lesbian-feminism that causes the tendency to be issue-oriented and to focus on the task of redefining concepts. This is typical of any group that is in the process of ascertaining its space and directions in the political arena. There is also the primary objective of popularizing one's perspectives on an issue that hardly gets discussed or addressed intelligently in mainstream society.

However, lesbians must also realize that a hardsell approach is hardly ever effective, given the cultural milieu that they are situated in. The need to educate people about lesbian issues can go hand in hand with theorizing but there must be an appraisal of the target audience's level of understanding and consciousness.

Eventually, lesbian-feminists will have to critically assess themselves and their projection of the issues. There are ways to carry on an advocacy without resorting to too much jargon. Lesbians will have to learn to speak in a language that is comprehensible to non-lesbians and non-feminists. There should always be the awareness that there are limits to what can be said. The media is an independent and unconstrained entity and it operates on its own rules and procedures. Lesbians will have to be clear of their objectives and will have to recognize the limits in using the me-

dia for education and consciousness-raising.

Projects-driven

The current efforts of lesbian-activists are also being scrutinized for concentrating on projects rather than on mobilization and organizing. Lesbian groups for instance are more involved in specific projects that directly address the needs of the lesbian community, rather than in direct organizing of a lesbian mass base.

It must be noted however, that the current efforts of lesbian groups are based on their assessment of existing realities. While it is true that actual groundworking and organizing has yet to begin, the specificity of lesbian conditions and realities must be carefully gauged. The outsider or outcast status of lesbians in mainstream society is not at all akin to situations faced by other oppressed or marginalized sectors.

One of the biggest problems lesbians face is security and safety. Thus, lesbian activism will have to take an alternate route to achieve a parallel status to that of the other social movements. Unless there are systems in place that will assure lesbians of protection, it will remain difficult to organize lesbians as a political force. What the existing groups is doing is sowing the seeds for the eventual sprouting of a visible lesbian movement.

BEIJING AND BEYOND

Beijing and Huairou provided fertile grounds for lesbian activism. An international group of lesbian activists were in Beijing for the Official Conference and in Huairou for the parallel NGO Forum. Expectedly, more lesbians from western nations took part in the lobbying efforts and in organizing activities in the NGO forum. This predominance is not new, not only for lesbian issues but for other women's issues as well.

The conference attested to the diversity of contexts and cultural milieus faced by lesbians everywhere. Some came from countries where it is illegal to discriminate against lesbians. Others came from nations that allow lesbians to legally marry and establish families. However, in the global map of lesbian existence, these countries remain a minority as the rest of the world would rather persecute lesbians or render them invisible.

Everyday, different activities were organized by lesbians from dif-

lesbian
rights
are
human
rights

ferent regions. The lesbian tent drew in hundreds of lesbians and straight women daily. Regional caucuses were organized and Asian lesbians met every other day for the duration of the conference.

Unfortunately not all lesbians could partake of the relatively open and "safe" atmosphere of the tent. Some women, especially those from the South, felt that the name "lesbian" had excluded them from the onset. These were women who, for reasons of security and safety, could not risk exposing themselves by being visible in the tent. Too, there were women who felt ostracized because they did not identify

themselves as lesbians but considered themselves as bisexuals.

Beijing had opened avenues for lesbianism to be discussed as a critical issue. In fact, it emerged as one of the most controversial and contentious issues in the official conference. The deliberations uncovered the official positions of the member nations, and allowed lesbian activists to identify their enemies and potential allies.

Despite the failure to make the lesbian agenda visible, the experience in Beijing was not a lost cause. As Giney Villar of WSWC sums it, "A lot of people were very disappointed about it. But come to think of it, at least it gave people—those who are against lesbianism and those who are for it—an opportunity to discuss issues. It also prepares us better for what we have to deal with in the next few days and the next few years."

Huairou and Beijing had provided the world with another opportunity to acknowledge lesbian existence. It bore witness to a historical unfolding of a global lesbian movement, a foretoken that it will not be long before the tasks that remain undone will be done by a visible and tangible force. Despite the absence of discussions on issues of exclusion and dominance based on race, ethnicity, religion, culture and class, lesbian activists who were in Huairou and Beijing had established the possibilities for future cooperation and collaboration. The impact of the Forum and the Conference will define and shape the future of lesbian activism. For Filipino lesbians, this translates into a renewed activism and active linkage with their Asian sisters, in and outside Asia. There is no step to take but forward. ♪

Malu S. Marin is a founding member of The Lesbian Collective and Can't Live in the Closet (CLIC). She is a Council member of KALAYAAN, a feminist collective.

Speaking Out Against Violence



(From left) Sophia Jahon, Shamima Ali, Edesina Kotoisuva and Koila Costello of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre.

Shamima Ali has played a major role in putting violence against women on the Pacific agenda in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. She is a leader in the worldwide movement against gender violence and is a founding member of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. Today, Shamima is at the center of things at the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre.

Established in 1984, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre is now the hub of Pacific action on violence against women. It works to highlight gender violence as a key development issue. Shamima and her co-workers come from various ethnic backgrounds and religions. Their collective offers training and resources to community groups, the police, judiciary and health workers throughout the Pacific region. The Centre also provides a 24-hour emergency service that includes medical aid and refuge where possible, professional counselling for victims of all kinds of violence, marriage counselling and legal assistance.

With its sister organization, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre runs mass media campaigns that help both Fijian and Indo-Fijian communities to bring their problems out into the open. Since the Centre opened, more women have reported incidences of violence. This indicates the Centre's success in drawing out women and children from the culture of silence that allows violence to continue.

Shamima and the Centre has produced two regional training manuals, one on crisis counselling and the other on community education on violence. Through the Centre, Shamima has also helped Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea set up crisis counselling services.

Over the past eight years, Shamima has traveled throughout Fiji and the Pacific to train and lecture on women and violence. Using her background in media and education, Shamima has done and continues to do no less than a good job. ☺

Not Quite A CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK

Andrea Raquel Edralin Tiglaor or Ria is a 24-year old Filipina feminist who is a co-producer of Rocks Productions, a group that organizes rock concerts, ballets, and plays. Ria finished her B.A. Degrees in Philosophy and Fine Arts at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, U.S.A. Here, in this interview with Irene R. Chia, she speaks about her views on feminism. .

Irene: Many people—women included—find the feminist label loaded. How do you react to being called one?

Ria: I think now I can call myself a feminist although I never thought of myself that way before. Looking back though, I think I already had the values of a feminist since being a feminist is mostly asserting myself not only as a human being but as a woman. I have always put that on the forefront. I always need to speak up for what I believe in.

I already felt strongly about justice and equality for women and girls at an early age. I entered Mt. Holyoke College, an all-women's college with definite beliefs in women's rights, which all the more reinforced my feminist values. I guess that's when I started identifying with feminism. It started in college because

being "feminist" was part of the culture. I would have called myself a feminist much earlier had I been more familiar with the term and its history. I'm more acquainted with the women's movement in the USA because I studied there. While I'm aware that many people think that most feminists are lesbians, I particularly appreciate that in the history of the women's movement in the USA, the lesbians have been its pioneers and that must be acknowledged.

I think I look up to women who are really strong and most of them are in fact feminists. But sometimes there's a negative side to this, because I tend to get annoyed with women who seem to allow themselves to be oppressed even as I know that most women are abused by men simply because they are women.

But I do know too that there are women who play the role of the weaker sex and use this to their advantage which tends to put down women. Since I have always believed in asserting myself, I can't imagine how it would be to my advantage to play the weaker sex. Sometimes this makes me defensive and I tend to overreact.

This I think comes from the need to protect myself from a man's aggression. If a man blocks my way, my first reaction would be to defend myself. My own experience as a woman as well as my exposure to my mother's work on counseling battered women and children, prove that there is more

Ria, at left: Passionate about justice.



aggression against women and I have probably internalized a reactive mode of thinking in terms of this.

Men see that I am a woman: small, thin and they think they can push me around. But they don't know me and they don't know I can be as strong or smart as they are. For me feminism means women are free to do what they really think is right. What you should or shouldn't do cannot be based on your sex. That is how I define myself as a feminist.

Q: So how do you express your feminism? How does it manifest in your behavior and your thinking?

A: As a woman, I don't want to be seen as weak. When I work with men I show them that I am as intellectually capable as anybody else, or even better. It's one way of showing other people that women are their equals and even more. That's the only way I can really help in terms of the feminist movement, to encourage other women to enhance and develop a sharper and logical thinking. My parents' thinking and my background in Philosophy studies have made me put importance in this aspect of my being.

Q: But how do you think is your interpretation of feminism similar to or different from how other women involved in women's issues would view feminism?

A: I can't say that my views on feminism are unique because I'm sure other women share some of my experiences as a woman. The only difference I could think of is the way in which my beliefs came about, and how through my own development as a person, I have learned to live my life with a feminist point of view. I wouldn't be able to judge the different views because there are so many women with their many experiences.

Q: In terms of your work as producer of Rocks Productions, do you think you are able to express your feminism?

A: Oh, yes, definitely. I have a male partner, and we are equally in charge of organizing, directing and managing a concert or show. As a producer and a woman, I make sure that all our male staff and crew respect the women guests and their women co-workers. I'm also able to command authority and respect among our mostly male crew. I think and work as a feminist. And I am able to do that in my work.

Q: Children usually don't follow the line of work their parents do and your mother is very much involved in women's causes. What do you think will your career path be?

A: Well, even if I feel the same passion as my parents have for justice and freedom, I don't feel I have to belong to any organization to be a feminist or to help other people. I guess that's my little rebellion. My career path at the moment is of a business nature, like what I am doing now as a producer. Our company is moving towards advertising and publications wherein I will be able to use my knowledge in art. I am also pursuing my painting, one of my passions.

Q: Okay, but as a feminist, what issues are you most passionate about?

A: Justice, that's my passion. I wanted to be a lawyer when I was younger. In primary and secondary school, there's no justice in the way the administration treats the students. There are teachers there who humiliated students. These things should not be happening, most of the time there is no justice because sometimes people, especially women, are not used to

I think feminism will work better if we infiltrate the system and break down the oppressive structures and misconceptions that put down women.

speaking out for themselves. Probably that's how women are conditioned: to be passive.

Q: What do you think are the top three issues for women in the Philippines and why?

A: First is poverty. Many Filipino women do not have the financial capability to stand on their own and that's why they have to depend on men. As opportunities are mostly given to men, the more dependent women become on their husbands or partners. I think this inevitably keeps women from becoming free and happy.

Second are the very restrictive moral issues imposed by the church and society on women. Women have to give birth. Women cannot use

contraceptives. Women who are liberated are called bitches.

The third issue is objectification. Women always have to be attractive, useful and most of all "feminine" to be respected and to have a place in society. If a woman diverts from these "norms", she is punished.

I think all these women's issues have a direct co-relation with men. That's the reason why I didn't want to work for a company. I already know the dynamics in an office where the men are the ones usually in power. I don't want to deal with that. There will be trouble because I would not let those things happen to me. I really looked for ways so I can work in my own terms. In my work I feel that I am in charge of things and I don't have to worry about pleasing anybody. Also my male partner respects me as a woman.

...media is one of the most powerful tools of communication in this day and age..

Q: What actions are women taking to address these issues?

A: The women's organizations in the Philippines are fighting for reproductive rights and women's rights. They go to urban and rural areas to re-educate women. I think it's only the women's organizations who do this.

Q: In which direction do you think is the women's movement heading?

A: I think the direction it's heading is towards a more unified women's movement. And it is important for the women's movement to reach out to young students and children. I think educated children should be initiated into feminism because they are the ones more likely to get in positions of power.

I also think the women's movement should get into the mainstream through media. The majority of people still see the women's movement as a reactive group. I think the women's movement should try other avenues

and be attuned with the times. People are more cynical nowadays. They've already heard of activism before and they think it doesn't work anymore.

There is a lot of work to be done for feminists in the media. On TV commercials, programs, movies, advertising, and in the arts, we still see women being objectified and commodified. I think women should be portrayed as strong and positive. I think feminism will work better if we infiltrate the system and break down the oppressive structures and misconceptions that put down women.

Q: Being a daughter of a feminist, do you see any difference or similarity between you and your mother?

A: First of all, my mother works more effectively in an organization. She likes the interaction within organizations. My mom is more systematic and process-oriented in the way she works with people. I tend to be more "to-the-point." She's vocal but I think I'm 10 times more vocal.

She believes in the activist style of getting things done. I guess my generation is more individualistic, probably because we're more cynical. During her time, she had causes to fight for but now there are too many problems, too many causes. It's harder for people to get together to fight against one cause because people are too involved in their own personal dilemmas. Now we're finding out that people have more psychological baggages that they have to deal with first.

I was also involved in organizations (Filipino, Asian, College Networks etc.) and what I didn't like was that there were a lot of internal problems. When the organization becomes bigger, problems like funding or people pushing for their issues occur. That's why I'm not in any organization now. I think in some sense, my mom and I are similar in what we both believe in. She's married and she cooks because she likes to cook. I can be strong but I can also serve a man or a woman. It doesn't bother me for as long as I know I'm doing what I think is right. You don't have to follow the ABCs of being a feminist. I would feel constricted if I were in an organization because I would prefer to do things on my own.

But our difference is that I'm too aggressive sometimes, because I want my views to be heard and understood right away. My mom is more

even-tempered than I am. She's a saint compared to anyone I know. I'm very proud of her. I look up to her and I try to follow her but in another way. Our personal situations are very different, the people I've worked with and I've known.

Q: What do you think are the kinds of backlash that feminists have to endure ?

A: For one, feminists are being perceived as anti-family because feminists are more willing to accept different forms of family. Feminists have no quarrel with single mothers, or two-women or two-men families.

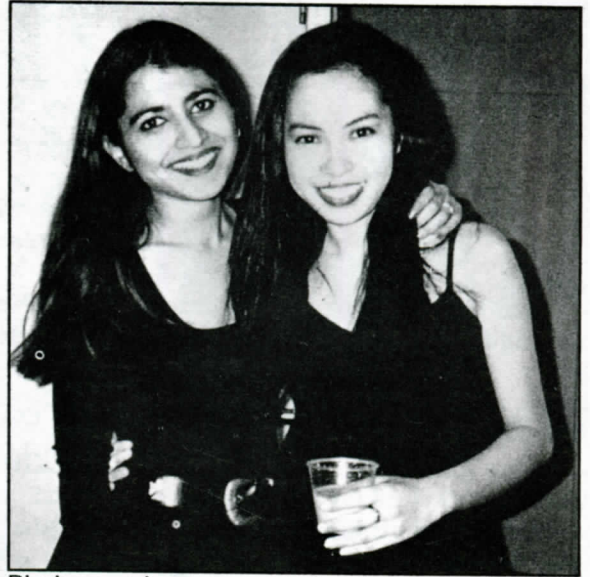
Another is the pressure on younger women to be independent because being independent means being strong. It shouldn't be a must, because it goes back to the thinking that women should be functional. If you're a woman and you don't have a job you get asked: "What? You're just a housewife? That's all you do?" All my peers are trying to achieve and be on top of their careers and to be "superwomen." I think it will come to a point when women will feel that the objectives of the women's movement, might become more frustrating than fulfilling if they tried to reach these ideals all at once.

Q: What do the women's movement think about lesbianism and is there a lesbian movement to speak of?

A: I don't really know what the feminist movement thinks about lesbianism. But I do know that the feminist movement in general provides a lot of support to the lesbian movement especially on the issue of women rights but I don't think lesbian issues are always dealt with intelligently, especially in Philippine society.

Homosexuals are more accepted than lesbians because the society is scared of stronger women. I guess that for most people, lesbians would be the extreme of what a strong woman could be. To completely not have relationships with men and disavow all of a woman's typical aspects is rarely discussed in schools, on TV, or movies. Perhaps there are more lesbians in foreign movies but in Filipino movies, you see lesbians called "tomboys" becoming "women" again. So it doesn't reflect the reality that there are lesbians.

Lesbianism simply is not yet accepted and people are not ready to talk about it. When people talk about lesbianism, they get nervous.



Ria knows how to work hard and play hard.

I guess it goes back to women being the weaker sex. Even women are scared of stronger women in general. I once wrote a philosophy paper on 'Cyborg' women, women who can change themselves through sexual operation, changing themselves physically, even mentally. It's being free. You won't be contained in your body and your person as a woman won't be defined by your body parts.

I really look forward to more women in media trying to change the perception of women because media is one of the most powerful tools of communication in this day and age. We should educate people through these terms because that is what the younger generation understands. They think of it as reality. It is easier to spread the word and get your message across because young females can relate to it and it will especially help younger males in becoming more gender aware.

When strong women are portrayed in media, they're always portrayed as evil. In alien movies, for example, the evil monster is almost always a female: the mother creature. The message that is sent subconsciously is that a strong and powerful woman is evil. You'll see that everywhere: woman as villain. If ever I would start a group, that would be the direction that I would want to pursue, to show women as they truly are, through art and the visual aspect of communication, that women are a vital part of the human race.☺

Mei-Ming has lain this way for 10 days now: tied up in urine-soaked blankets, scabs of dried mucus growing across her eyes, her face shrinking to a skull, malnutrition slowly shrivelling her two-year-old body.

Each morning a fellow inmate at her Guangdong orphanage goes into the dark fetid

makes her next to useless, a burden on the state with an almost zero chance of adoption. She is a girl.

When she dies four days later it will not be of some terminal, incurable illness. It will be of sheer neglect. Afterwards the orphanage will dispose of her desiccated corpse and deny she ever existed. She will be just another invisible victim of the collision between China's one-child policy and its traditional preference for male heirs. The name the orphanage gave her

Footage shot through a concealed camera provides the first video evidence of the existence of

the dying rooms

by Tom Hilditch

room where she lies alone to see if she is dead. The orphanage staff, paid to look after her, do not visit. They call her room the "dying room" and they have abandoned her there for the same reason her parents abandoned her shortly after she was born. Her problem is simple and tragic: she has a condition which in modern China

articulates precisely the futility of struggle to survive in a society that holds no value for her. In Putonghua, Mei-ming means "no name".

She is one of perhaps 15 million female babies who have gone missing from China's demographics since the one child per family policy was introduced in 1979. Another tiny bag

of bones in what some sinologists claim is the 20th century's hidden holocaust.

Yet her brief and miserable life may not have been in vain. Before she died she was discovered by a British documentary team who entered her orphanage posing as American charity fundraisers. The footage they shot, through a concealed camera, would provide the first video evidence of the existence of dying rooms. And when their documentary was shown 13 days ago, against the protestations of China's London embassy, little Mei-ming's dying cries for help were heard around the world.

The aim of the documentary team, funded by Britain's Channel Four, was to explore persistent reports that some state-run Chinese orphanages leave baby girls to die of starvation and neglect. Their starting point was the Sunday Morning Post's award-winning investigation of two years ago which gave the world the first eye-witness and photographic evidence of dying rooms at Nanning orphanage, in Guangxi province. Then the dying room was spoken of openly by staff and regular visitors. It was freely admitted that 90 per cent of the 50 to 60 baby girls who arrived at the orphanage each month would end their lives there. Since the outrage provided by our report, however, Nanning orphanage has been overhauled. Money raised by Hong Kong celebrities has upgraded facilities and the quality of care. The dying rooms there have ceased to exist.

Sadly, after touring and filming in orphanages in four provinces, the British documentary team's harrowing



Jimmy Domingo

Wishing all girls could laugh and smile...

report suggests that the attitudes towards baby girls so prevalent at Nanning two years ago are rife elsewhere.

The birth of a baby girl has never been a cause for celebration in China. In general, an infant boy will be greeted with firework displays and parties; a girl with silence. According to records there are currently six million women in China christened Lai Di. The name means "a son follows quickly".

Tradition dictates that when a daughter marries she will join her husband's family, her children will take his family name and she must support his parents in their old age. In rural areas, female infants are simply a drain on resources. They are referred to as "maggots in the rice". Stories of peasant farmers drowning new-born girls in a bucket of water have been commonplace for centuries. Now, however, as a direct result of the one-child policy there are growing reports of infanticide all across China, including its towns and cities. The members of baby girls being abandoned, aborted or dumped on orphanage steps is unprecedented.

It is impossible to understate both how crucial the one-child

policy is to China's stability and how rigidly it is enforced. Everyone—the World Bank, the United Nations, China's own statisticians—agrees that if the population, already at 1.2 billion, is allowed to grow, China will be unable to support itself, let alone develop. The result would be economic collapse, environmental ruin, famine.

But while most Chinese can accept the mathematics of the problem, many cannot accept the draconian mechanics of the solution. The population continues to rise. A child is born every 1.5 seconds, 2,400 every hour, 21 million a year. In March 1995 President Jiang Zemin was forced to set new, tougher population controls and tougher punishments for those who ignore them. Couples who attempt to have more than one child will be dealt with brutally.

According to Steven Mosher, the author of *A Mother's Ordeal*, coerced abortions, sometimes just days before the baby is due, are now commonplace. As are reports of enforced sterilization and of hospitals fatally injecting second babies shortly after their birth. "It means tremendous coercion," he says, "on women to submit to abortion and

sterilization. It also means that however overcrowded China's orphanages are now with baby girls, the problem is going to get worse. Very much worse."

For Kate Blewett, producer of the Channel Four documentary *The Dying Rooms*, The investigation was a journey into the heart of darkness. "I did not know that human beings could treat children with such contempt, such cruelty. It is not so much a problem of the orphanages being underfunded as it is a problem of attitude towards unwanted babies. Some of the orphanages we visited were little more than death camps. We filmed treatment that amounted to torture, conscious neglect that amounted to murder."

Travelling in China with hidden cameras and under false pretenses meant Blewett and her team were in danger of being arrested every step of the way. The risk for local Chinese who helped them gain access to orphanages and those she interviewed, unwittingly or otherwise, was even greater. For that reason the documentary does not name any of the orphanages or identify mainland interviewees. Nonetheless, the harrowing squalor of conditions is there for all to see.

In an orphanage a dozen or so baby girls are supervised by an adolescent girl in a white coat. As the team walk in she ignores them and goes out of the room, leaving a mentally handicapped child to show them around. The infant inmates sit in bamboo benches in the middle of a court yard. Their wrists and ankles are tied to the armrests and legs of the bench.

They have been there all day unable to move. A row of plastic buckets is lined up beneath holes in their seats to catch their urine and excrement. The children will not be moved again until night when their benches will be carried back into their cot room and they will be lifted out and tied to their beds.

"It was heart-breaking," said Blewett. "They had no stimulation, nothing to play

In general, an infant boy will be greeted with firework displays and parties; a girl with silence.

with, no one to touch them. They have never known affection. In one scene shown in the documentary one of the handicapped older boys walks up to one of the girls tied to a bench and begins head-butting her. He butts her relentlessly. It goes on and on. But the girl doesn't move or make a sound. Such is the lack of stimulation for the children that the one thing they all have in common is an endless rocking. They sit tied to their potty chairs rocking backwards and forwards and screaming. Few of them will ever learn to speak and the rocking is the only exercise, the only stimulation, the only pleasure in their lives."

Presently the teenager in the white coat returns with an

official of the orphanage. He buys Blewett's cover story and, seduced by the suggestion of foreign funds, he agrees to be interviewed. His monologue is chilling. Last year, he says, the orphanage had some 400 inmates. The summer temperatures soared above 37 degrees Celsius. Disease swept through the room. In a couple of weeks 20 per cent of the babies died.

Later, Blewett trains her camera on another of the assistants. "If 80 children died last summer, there should be 320 left," Blewett says, "but there don't appear to be more than a couple of dozen children here. Where are the others?"

"They disappear," the girl replies. "If I ask where they go, I am just told they die. That's all. I am afraid to ask any more."

Brutal neglect is the common theme of many of the orphanage scenes. In one sequence a lame child sits on a bench near the orphanage pharmacy. It is stocked full of medicines but none of the staff can be bothered to administer them. The child rocks listlessly back and forth as staff wander. The camera focuses on her vacant face, trails down her skinny body and settles on her leg...it is swollen with gangrene.

Such institutionalised cruelty and neglect was in no way limited to rural areas. The worse orphanage, the brief home of Mei-ming, was in Guangdong, one of the richest provinces in China. When they arrived the documentary makers wondered at first whether they had made a mistake. There were no children to be seen or heard.



Girls are neglected in many of China's orphanages. These two girls, luckily, have not been subjected to the treatment that caused many to die.

Then from under one of the blankets laid over a cot, as if left to dry out, there was the sound of crying. Lifting the blanket and unwrapping a tied bundle of cloth, Blewett found a baby girl. The last layer of her swaddling was a plastic bag filled with urine and faeces. The next cot was the same, and the next and the next. Many of the children had deep lesions where the string they were tied with had cut into their bodies. One child, described by staff as "normal", was suffering from vitamin B and C deficiency, acute liver failure and severe impetigo on her scalp. As always, Blewett made a point of checking the babies' gender. As always, all the non-handicapped children were girls.

The Chinese Government was approached several times both in Beijing and at its London embassy to provide comment or an interview for inclusion in the film. The Government was given a three-month deadline but remained silent. Then it was given a 10-day extension. On the ninth

day Channel Four received a two-page letter from the London embassy. It became the final sequence of the film.

"The so-called 'dying rooms' do not exist in China at all," read the statement's penultimate paragraph. "Our investigations confirm that those reports are vicious fabrications made out of ulterior motives. The contemptible lie about China's welfare work in orphanages cannot but arouse the indignation of the Chinese people, especially the great numbers of social workers who are working hard for children's welfare."

The statement was followed by diplomatic representations to have the station drop the documentary. Channel Four refused. The programme which was transmitted on June 12 and dedicated to Meiming created enormous publicity.

The following day questions were raised in the House of Commons about China's one-child policy and its dying rooms. Efforts are now being made by, among others, MP

Anne Winterton, to bring about diplomatic pressure to halt China's one-child policy. Predictably, however, no one has raised the subject of providing massive aid for a collapsed and famine-ridden China in the event of its population rising to, say, 2.4 billion if this generation is allowed to have two children per family.

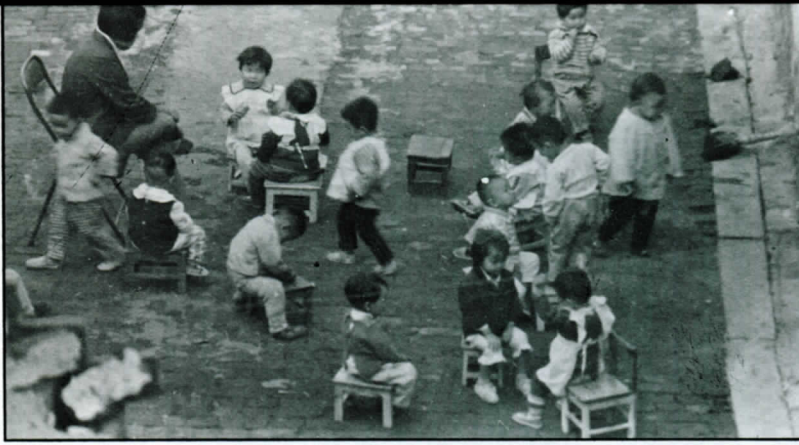
More practically, however, Blewett and her team have set up a fund, The Dying Rooms Trust, to make contributions to international charities working with Chinese orphanages, to help purchase and distribute milk powder, play-pens and basic medicines to the orphanages featured in the documentary and establish sponsorship system for their inmates.

"We don't want to criticize the one-child policy," says Blewett. "But we don't want to focus on the problem it is causing which can be solved." The documentary features a tour of a privately-run, locally funded orphanage where the children are happy, healthy and loved. "We were very keen to show what can be done with the right attitude," said Blewett. "No child should suffer the kind of neglect we filmed. Maybe we can help that happen. Maybe then, Meiming's life might have had some purpose."

The programme is unlikely to be shown in Hong Kong. For more information contact: The Dying Room Trust, 68 Thames Road, London W4 3RE. Cheques should be made payable to The Dying Rooms.

(Reprinted with permission from the Sunday Morning Post Magazine, June 25, 1995.)

Jimmy Domingo



The Amity Foundation says that China's orphanages lack funds but they're never short of concern for their wards.

THE AMITY FOUNDATION STATEMENT

The Other Side of the Story

(Editor's note: The Human Rights Report *"Death by Default" - China State Orphanages* also spoke about the deaths of girl children in China's orphanages. We could not reprint the whole report here—it's a whole book—but since we reprinted "The Dying Rooms," we decided to run Amity Foundation's statement in the spirit of balanced reporting.)

Recently, the Amity Foundation has received a number of inquiries about our work with orphanages. These have been in response to a report published by Human Rights Watch/Asia which documents serious problems in Chinese orphanages in general, and the Shanghai Children's Welfare Institute in particular. Unfortunately, this report makes sweeping judgements about the general situation in China, employing highly charged rhetoric but failing to substantiate many claims.

The Amity Foundation has tried, over the years, to address the problems of orphans and orphanages in China in a concrete way. Mr. Ting Yenren, Associate General Secretary of the Amity Foundation, made the following comments.

1. While we at Amity and many others in China are calling for increased government funding for orphanages, the Human Rights Watch report claims that orphanage

jobs are high-paying and people land there through good connections. At the same time, it causes some staff of Shanghai Orphanage of committing what it terms intentional "summary resolution" and gives readers the impression that deliberately allowing infants to die is a wide-spread practice in China. In so doing, the report changes the issue of funding shortage into one of a criminal case and actually puts the government entirely out of the picture. Since the funding shortage will only perpetuate the difficulties China's orphanages are faced with, we have serious doubts about the true motive of the Human Rights Watch report.

As for the charge of "summary resolution," although we do not know the actual situation at Shanghai Orphanage, we cannot believe that the social workers we have come to know through working with various orphanages over the years would share such criminal intention.

2. Orphanages in China are in great need of help, both from within China and without. The Human Rights Watch report, however, distorts the reality that one of the basic problems

with China's welfare work is insufficient funding from the government. This is also a problem that schools and medical clinics face at the grassroots level. The funding shortage not only results in dilapidated facilities, but also dampens staff morale to various degrees.

The staff at an orphanage often fall in the lowest income brackets. The government, in order to raise the profile of school teachers, nurses and welfare institution staff, does have a policy of offering them higher salaries than those of other government employees with the same level of education and the same length of work experience. Even so, however, the real income of the orphanage staff is still among the lowest because, by working at a non-profit institution, they receive almost no bonuses or any other fringe benefits, whereas, for their counterparts in other institutions, government salary often makes up only a small fraction of the income.

As a result of the funding shortage, the talented among the orphanage staff may be attracted to jobs that pay better, and the ones left

behind are further looked down upon by others or by themselves as failures. Therefore, as we visit orphanages, we do from time to time find low morale and irresponsibility on the part of some staff. We can also believe that some children may die of malnutrition or the lack of adequate care. Yet this is one of the very reasons why we should work with orphanages.

This is not just Amity's assessment of the problem with China's orphanages. It is also the view shared by committed social workers in orphanages and civil affairs bureaus who are deeply concerned that they cannot offer children good care under very low budgets and that not enough young people are willing to take over their positions when they retire. In fact, the problem of funding shortages is so obvious there's no wonder why the Human Rights Watch report turns a blind eye to it.

3. Improving the work of orphanages not only requires greater funding. It also needs participatory management and the establishment of accountability. We are concerned that the Human Rights Watch report may provide the pretext for a small number of officials to go to extremes and deny demands for more participation and accountability. The report comes at a time when there is growing public concern within China, and when non-government involvement is starting to make the orphanage staff suspicious of these efforts damages our work.

These days, all of China is moving toward a market economy, and this is a mixed blessing for China's welfare institutions. On the one hand, the balance is further tilted against them because government funds are also being drained into uses that offer good profit. With inflation and tax evasion, the government is increasingly unable to provide sufficient funds for welfare institutions. On the other hand, this is also a time when we have many opportunities for substantial improvement in the work of these institutions. Thanks to the reform policy, there is more money in non-government sectors and in private

hands, some of which can be channelled into welfare work. There is also a growing public awareness of the difficulties faced by orphanages, schools and rural clinics. Pressure is building for change and improvement. Eventually, more financial and legislative measures will be taken to safeguard the rights and interests of orphans and abandoned children.

Ms. Wu An'an, in charge of Amity's Social Welfare Division, adds to this:

It is not enough to just talk about the situation in the Chinese orphanages. Even more importantly, the root cause of the current problems needs to be addressed. Most of the children in the orphanages are there because they have been abandoned by their parents, either because they are girls or because they are sick or handicapped. To highlight this problem, Amity, together with Shanghai Television 2, produced a documentary about a Chinese couple who had found and raised more than 20 abandoned children. This film, produced in 1989, was subsequently shown on several local and provincial TV stations in China. The documentary was meant to educate the Chinese public about the situation of abandoned children, and it appealed to parents to take responsibility for their own children and not to abandon them. (For further information, see Amity Newsletter No.14, Autumn 1990.)

When we first approached Nanjing Orphanage 10 years ago, the situation there was very bad. Children were poorly clothed and fed; the staff had poor working skills and lacked enthusiasm, resulting in a lack of care for the children. There were also administrative problems. This is why Amity wanted to help.

Today things have changed dramatically. Amity sponsored a rehabilitation section at the orphanage, and seconded one American-trained Hongkong therapist to get it going. This project exclusively served children in the orphanage, not self-paying patients. Since the rehabilitation section was set up in the orphanage, the Nanjing Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children has started to open their services to

orphan children also, something that had not happened before. The treatment of these children is paid for by donations from some local organizations.

In addition to the rehabilitation section, Amity set up a volunteer program, called the "Grandmother Program," at the Nanjing Orphanage. Four retired nurses and doctors from Nanjing were sponsored by Amity to work at the orphanage five days a week, training staff and improving the care of the children. These "grandmothers," who were there on a day-to-day basis, have told me many times how things have improved at the orphanage. (For more detailed reports about Amity's involvement with Chinese orphanages, see Amity Newsletter Nos. 19, 20, 25 and 30.)

Amity has now terminated its assistance for the orphanage in Nanjing, as there are now plenty of voluntary workers, as well as individuals and institutions who regularly give donations. Many families have "adopted" children, that is they regularly take them out for short trips or meals, even though they cannot legally adopt them.

Our Grandmother Program, on the other hand, has now been extended to four more orphanages: Yangzhou, Wuxi, Changzhou and Shanghai.

Amity has also tried to raise awareness of the orphanage situation among church workers. Students from the Nanjing Theological Seminary, organized by Amity, have visited the Nanjing orphanage, and have been encouraged to get involved in orphanages in the places where they will be working as pastors.

The Amity Foundation has always believed in changing things by doing something about them.

Nanjing 18 January 1996

*For more information, contact:
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17 Da Jian Xiang, Nanjing, China
210029*

*Human Rights Watch
485 Fifth Avenue, 3rd Floor, New
York, N.Y. 10017, U.S.A.
E-mail: genaos@hru.org*

New Books on WOMEN AND THE UN

One of the positive outcomes from recent world conferences organized by the UN is the wealth of information presented in such gatherings. Often conscientiously organized in the form of books, conference proceedings serve as valuable tools for analysis and action. Examples of such are two current publications.

The first one is the book *Women and the United Nations: Reflections and New Horizons*. Edited by Filomena C. Steady and Remie Toure, this book addresses timely questions such as: How beneficial have UN programs been for women in the developing world? How must the UN change to make future programs more effective? What do the experiences of women working within the UN system tell us about the UN's commitment to gender equity? Compiled in this book are the papers and statements presented at the Forum of Women Professionals organized by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in Vienna in May 1995. The seminar was one of the activities that marked the 50th anniversary of the founding of the UN and also served as a preparatory activity for the Fourth World Conference on Women.

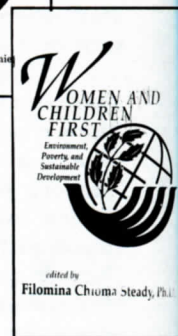
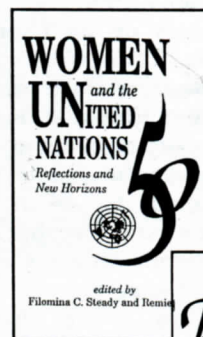
The second book, also edited by Filomena C. Steady, *Women and Children First: Environment, Poverty and Sustainable Development* is an anthology of papers presented at the symposium "Women and Children First: The Impact of Poverty and Environmental Degradation

on Women and Children" held in Geneva in May 1991. These essays were among the earliest substantive inputs into the policy considerations of governments in preparation for the Earth Summit. They also served as lobbying tools for the incorporation of the needs, concerns and aspirations of women and children in Agenda 21, the programme of action that came out of the Earth Summit.

The book hopes to be able to enrich the discourse on the role of gender and age in the distribution, management and protection of natural resources. Moreover, it aims to highlight the importance of ensuring a central role for women and children in policies and programs designed to promote sustainable development.

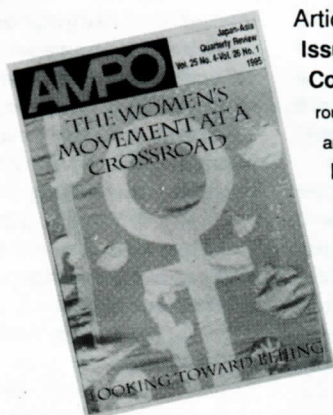
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CHILD PROSTITUTION

The Asian Reality

by Aaron Sacks

Kanita Karmha, a Dutch tour company, recently circulated a brochure that described prostitutes in Thailand as "little slaves who give real Thai warmth."

Two years ago in August, the Austrian airline, Lauda Air, ran a mock postcard in its in-flight magazine that featured a picture of a young, shirtless girl with a caption saying, "From Thailand with love." The back of the postcard explained that the writers didn't have time to say much because "the tarts in the Bangkok Baby Club are waiting for us."

Child prostitution is not new. But today it has assumed the proportions of a multibillion dollar industry, with children being bought, sold and traded like other mass-produced goods. Brazil alone has between 250,000 and 500,000 children involved in the sex trade, and a recent study conducted by the Bogota Chamber of Commerce concluded that the number of child prostitutes in the Colombian capital had nearly tripled over the past three years.

But the centre of the child sex industry is Asia: children's advocacy groups assert that there are about 60,000 child prostitutes in the Philippines, about 400,000 in India and about 600,000 in Thailand. Most of the children are girls under 16, though there are a few parts of the world where boys are sought. For instance, almost all of Sri Lanka's 20,000 to 30,000 child prostitutes are boys.

EXPLOITERS

As troubling as it may sound, the explosion of the child sex trade comes down to two basic market forces: supply and demand. A global society destabilised by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, environmental stress and the rapidly widening gap between the rich and the poor are producing more potential exploiters of the sex industry.

And the criminal sex traffickers, just like other opportunistic middlemen, have stepped in to take advantage of the situation while society has simply looked the other way.

Rural poverty and pressing socio-economic conditions have served to expand the potential supply of child prostitutes. No story is more

wrenching than that of a child who has been deceived or forced by violence into prostitution.

But it is perhaps even more tragic when parents, who have no other criminal dealings, knowingly offer their children to sex traffickers. Without faith in potential economic opportunities, especially for girls, parents see no point in training their female children, either at home or at school.

Many parents can hardly feed themselves and find it nearly impossible to refuse a cash payment in exchange for one of their daughters, whom they often expect to come back a few years later in full health and with substantial savings.

In Thailand, even poor, uneducated villagers often realise that a woman in the sex industry, as a study sponsored by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has shown, can make about 25 times as much as she could in any other occupation open to her.

The causes of rural poverty in recent times, are even more distressing. Along the borders of Thailand, Burma, Laos and China, people depended on the forest for their subsistence. But logging projects, whether legal or illegal, and

whether initiated by national governments, multi-lateral development banks, timber companies or frontier squatters, have laid waste the area's hillsides over the past three decades. Because the Thai government was investing so heavily in logging and large-scale export agriculture, it has to cut back on its social spending. The poor, with their livelihood deprived and social security withdrawn, had nowhere to go.

Meanwhile the demand for child prostitutes was growing. A mythologising of virginity fuelled it and fear of HIV/AIDS has further intensified it. Sadly, the involvement of children in prostitution is merely facilitating the spread of the disease—and is rapidly killing them. According to Saphasit Koomprahant, director of the Children's Rights Protection Centre in Thailand, the HIV infection rate among Thai child prostitutes is now almost 50 percent.

When brothel owners discover that one of their girls has the deadly disease, they usually send her straight back to her home village. Once there, she gets cut off from medical care. And because such communities have little experience with HIV, the virus may end up spreading even further. Child prostitution is one of the most important forces driving HIV/AIDS from its urban centres out to rural areas, which are still home to about 65 percent of the developing world's populations.

In 1967, when the US government, entrenched in the Vietnam War, signed a treaty with Thailand enabling US soldiers to come ashore for R&R (Rest and Relaxation), a new era dawned, where the sex industry got what amounted to official sanction.

Less than a decade later, Thailand had more than 20,000 brothels and other sex-industry establishments. The hyped mythology of the young, submissive girls waiting for wealthy tourists in sultry southeast Asia was making its way around the world.

Three years ago, the Japanese Foundation for AIDS prevention, an organisation affiliated with the

Japanese government, launched a high-profile poster campaign. Their central image was of a middle-aged man wearing a business suit, grinning, and displaying his passport. The caption read: "Have a nice trip! But be careful of AIDS." The assumptions implicit in this poster point to the major factor behind the increase in demand for child prostitutes: sex tourism.

When challenged, the Foundation justified its campaign as a reality check, citing the statistic that, 60 percent of Japanese men who contracted HIV through heterosexual sex did so overseas. But the language

Rural poverty and pressing socio-economic conditions have served to expand the potential supply of child prostitutes.

of the caption, in the name of AIDS prevention, could be interpreted as endorsing exploitative sexual behavior and giving sanction to those business and travel agencies that arrange sex tours in poorer countries like Thailand, Philippines and Sri Lanka.

"Rich tourists," according to Ellis Shenk, the director of the New York branch of the International Campaign to End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT), "have realised that human life is cheaper in the Third World".

ENCOURAGE

The First World even went so far as to encourage countries like Thailand to develop their sex tourism industries—although not quite so explicitly.

In 1971, Robert McNamara, the president of the World Bank, without specifically mentioning the sex industry, urged Thailand to supplement its export activities with

an all-out effort to attract rich foreigners to the country's various tourist facilities. After all, US spending on R&R quadrupled between 1967 and 1970, from about \$5 billion to \$20 billion.

By 1975, Thailand, with the help of World Bank economists, had instituted a National Plan of Tourist Development which specially underwrote the sex industry. The new plan basically just buttressed the 1966 Entertainment Places Act, the national law that had made possible the international R&R treaty.

Without directly legalising prostitution, the Act referred repeatedly to the "personal services" sector. According to Thai feminist, Sukyana Hantrakul, the law "was enacted to pave the way for whorehouses to be legalised in the guise of massage parlours, bars, nightclubs, tea houses, etc."

EMBEDDED

Of course, child prostitution in Asia is not completely governed by the politics and economics of sex tourism—it is also deeply embedded in many local and national cultures.

In Thailand for instance, according to Harvard researcher Hnin Hnin Pyne, 75 percent of all men have had sex with a prostitute. And on the border between Maharashtra and Karnataka in India, believers in the Hinduist devadasi system, who today number in the thousands, have been dedicating their daughters to a religiously sanctioned life of prostitution for well over a millennium.

In the 1990s, however, the child sex industry is no longer just a shameful reminder of the criminal element lurking beneath the surface of every civilization. It points to a fundamental injustice in the current materialist world order—a global willingness to sacrifice society's most vulnerable members for the sake of other's economic and sexual gratification. We are quite literally mortgaging our future.

Reprinted from Utusan Konsumer, February 1996

The Last 10_Q Years

Excerpts from "The Women's Movement in Sri Lanka 1985-95: A Glance Back Over Ten Years" give women the world over valuable insights.

Some say that the women's movement in Sri Lanka is defunct. They base their judgement on the contrast between the activism of the women's movement in Sri Lanka in the 1970s and early 1980s. But to say that the women's movement is now extinct is to make an inaccurate statement. Rather than being defunct or even in decline, the women's movement in Sri Lanka has expanded from the actions of small groups to a nationally recognized movement.

Feminism, once a taboo word and dismissed as a dangerous trend copied from the West, has become broadly accepted. The debate has moved on from discussions about whether feminism is a foreign ideology to the nature of equality and difference, to the role of the state and judiciary and to the need for changing laws and structures as they affect women's lives. The movement has entered a new phase of campaigning and lobbying for policy changes.

THE SHIFT TO RESEARCH

The slogans "action" and "consciousness raising" were popular among feminists in the 1970s, and research was then considered to be "ivory tower" or "elite" preoccupations. But in the 1980s and 1990s, not only was there a conscious shift to research but there were also important moves to expose the male bias in research and promote Women's Studies as an academic discipline.

There were debates on this issue. Some argued that every discipline taught should have a women's component while others felt that a separate course on Women's Studies was needed. Many local women during the 1980s had followed courses abroad in Women's Studies, especially at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in the Hague and the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) in Sussex. Moreover, local students at foreign universities were influenced by feminist movements and by programmes of study which included a feminist component. The

result was the welcome appearance in recent years of young feminist scholars doing research on gender.

Several women's research organizations were formed in the 1980s, including the Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR) in 1984, the Women's Education and Research Centre (WERC) in 1992, and the Muslim Women's Research and Action Forum (MWRAF) which was revived in 1986.

Other non-government organisations, such as the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES), Social Scientists' Association (SSA), the Centre for Society and Religion (CSR) and many others, have also done research on gender issues. The result has been a large number of valuable studies on women covering a wide range of issues. Moreover, CENWOR has organized four National Conventions on Women's Studies between 1989 and 1994, providing opportunities for local researchers to present their research.

WOMEN'S STUDIES

One major development in this area has been the launching in 1991 of a Master's Programme in Women's Studies by the Post-Graduate Institute of the University of Colombo. Previous to this, at an informal level, a few courses for women were conducted by women's groups and other non-government groups. The Master's Programme of the University is divided into course work and a dissertation. Feminist scholars teach course units in Methodology, Women and Development, Women and Law, Women and Ideology, and Strategies for Change. Each year around 20 women and men have followed the course for which there is now a good demand.

All these have had important consequences for Sri Lankan scholarship. The absence of gender awareness in the work of the most prominent Sri Lankan male scholars at home and abroad and the continuing chauvinism and sexism among sections of the academic community is now being seriously challenged.

Moreover, these "gender sensitizing" programmes have been launched by women's groups such as CENWOR and WERC which target organizations of both men and women in various sectors. Participants to these programmes are made

aware of women's subordination in society and the need for change.

WOMEN'S HISTORY

An important trend of the decade has been the interest in detailed research on women's history. These studies were prompted by the accusation that feminism was a foreign ideology imposed by the West.

To say that the women's movement in Sri Lanka is now extinct is to make an inaccurate statement.

Those active in the women's movement in the 1970s were keen on knowing if there were earlier women's protests about their subordinate status and struggles for equal rights. Research revealed a "lost history" of women's achievements and resistance which had been bypassed or ignored by both local and foreign scholars.

The Gender Unit of the Social Scientists' Association, in a project to retrieve women's history, has unearthed a veritable archive on this topic covering the last 150 years. As a result of all the research undertaken by women and women's groups, Sri Lanka has now an impressive number of books, pamphlets, and journals

in Sinhala, Tamil and English, which help to keep women's issues before the public.

The fact that women's literacy is very high—nearly 83 percent—helps spread ideas on women's rights. National newspapers and magazines have been increasingly covering feminism and women's rights, despite some sexism in the media. Even the

women's magazines, which highlight the usual "feminine" themes, now occasionally have important articles and interviews on feminist ideology and women's activism. The current women's journals which cover feminist issues include *Nivedini* (by WERC); *Voice of Women*; *Options* (by the Women and Media) and *Da Bidu* (in

Sinhala by the Jaela Women's Centre).

Source: *Sthree Prabodha*, newsletter of the Centre for Women's Research, August, 1995 Vol. 7 No. 1 & 2.

Address: 12 1/1, Ascot Avenue, Colombo 5, Sri Lanka



Q is for Questions

By Vinia M. Datinguino

Juliet is 25 and has four children one year apart, had kids early, and after the fourth child knew she and her husband could not afford one more. Once she tried taking pills but it made her forget things, so she stopped.

In late 1993, a worker from the local family planning clinic came and told her about a new method of sterilization that was permanent, free, and most of all, did not require her to be cut up.

Her husband's consent was sought. Three days later, Juliet came to the health center to be sterilized. The doctor explained how it works: pellets of a drug called quinacrine will be inserted into her uterus; she will return the next month for the next dosage, and the next for the third; the drug will close her tubes; she will never get pregnant again. She might feel a little nauseous after the procedure, said the doctor, but she should be alright. Juliet knew this was what she wanted, so she signed the consent form and lay down to be treated.

Over a year later, Juliet has never gotten pregnant again, and is happy she decided to get sterilized when she did.

What Juliet doesn't know—and what her doctors have not told her—is that the sterilization method she had undergone has been the subject of debate abroad for the past several years. The World Health Organization (WHO) itself has never recommended it, even after over two decades of research by its proponents.

Juliet's sterilization is part of a set of clinical trials being done to study the possibility of introducing in the Philippines a new method of nonsurgical female sterilization that uses the antimalarial drug quinacrine. When inserted into the uterus, the drug closes the woman's Fallopian tubes.

The ongoing clinical trials aim to test 600 women by January 1996. Proponents say the quinacrine method is cheaper, easier to administer, and is as safe and effective as surgical sterilization. It will provide women with one more good choice, they say.

But other sectors are sounding the alarm. Women's groups, as well as other family planning providers both here and abroad, say several questions on both quinacrine's safety and efficacy remain unsolved. They question the

80,000 Pregnancy Deaths Unlisted

by Diana G. Mendoza

Deaths due to pregnancy worldwide have been substantially underestimated, with nearly 80,000 more such deaths per year than what has been previously reported, said a major study by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef).

According to the study some 585,000 maternal deaths occur yearly, 99 percent of them in developing countries.

More than half (55 percent) of these pregnancy-related deaths occur in Asia, which also accounts for 61 percent of the world's births.

Africa, which takes up 20 percent of the world's births, also accounts for 40 percent of all maternal deaths.

In contrast, progressive countries have less than 1 percent of total maternal deaths and an almost reasonable number of births at 11 percent.

Dr. Susan Holck of the WHO Reproductive Program said "maternal mortality is a particularly sensitive indicator of inequity."

"Maternal mortality offers a litmus test of the status of women, their access to health care and the adequacy of the health care system in responding to their needs," she said.

The WHO said it is extremely difficult to assess level of maternal mortality. Maternal deaths tend to be underreported even in developed countries with vital registration systems.

Few countries count births and deaths; even fewer register

ethics of doctors who are administering drugs without warning women about its possible side-effects. They urge that clinical trials be paused, existing literature be evaluated, and gaps on toxicity issues be filled.

WHO's Special Program on Human Reproduction considers the evidence on the method's safety and efficacy "inadequate". Its position is that no clinical trials are even "justified" unless these questions are answered by a complete toxicological evaluation of the drug and the method.

In 1991, WHO's Toxicology

safe. This is no different from what is used for malaria. *Yun nga iniinom pa e, ito sa uterus lang* (That one is even taken orally. This just goes to the uterus)." The objective, he says, "is really to find out how best to introduce it here."

He dismisses toxicity questions from others as "common sensical." "We have been taking oral quinacrine, so what else is there to test if it is placed inside the uterus and is absorbed? Common sense."

First used for malaria in the 1920s, oral quinacrine has been found toxic when given in

the cause of deaths; and fewer still systematically note the pregnancy status on the death form.

The new estimates were developed by adjusting available country figures to account for underreporting and using a simple model to generate estimates for countries with no data or where there is concern about the adequacy of officially reported estimates.

Source: *Today*, February 27, 1996

IUD Not First Choice For Young, Never Pregnant Women

by Barbara Barnett

Young women and women who have not yet had children can generally use intrauterine devices (IUDs), but providers should be cautious. Because these groups face increased risk of IUD expulsion and pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), the IUD generally is not recommended as the first method of choice.

For adolescents who need family planning, the IUD does have distinct advantages: It is nonhormonal and requires minimal compliance after insertion. The risks of infertility, however, should be considered before recommending this method to younger women.

"Age by itself is not a contraindication for IUD use," says Dr. Roberto Rivera, FHI's corporate director of international medical affairs. "There is no biological reason to say a young woman is at higher risk

>81

The World Health Organization (WHO) itself has NEVER recommended quinacrine, even after over two decades of research by its proponents.

Panel recommended that the study of quinacrine pellets for female sterilization not be pursued. The Panel said the toxicological data concerning the method was unsatisfactory," and that "full, classical" toxicological testing was required before the compound could be used for female sterilization.

Such tests are at present being done in the United States, according to WHO's Human Reproduction Unit.

But Dr. Rafael Esmundo, coordinator of the Quinacrine or Q Study here in the Philippines, is convinced there is nothing more to prove as far as the method's safety and efficacy are concerned. "It is

large doses. Side effects associated with it include central nervous system excitation, skin rashes, dizziness, headaches, and rarely, aplastic anemia. When chloroquine became available, the use of quinacrine for malaria declined.

Quinacrine scars tissues, and it is this property that attracted researchers to its potential for permanent tubal sterilization. Its liquid form was first used in Chile in the 1960s by researchers of the Family Health International, a U.S.-based family planning organization involved with the development of contraceptive technologies.

But the liquid form was associated with "intense

mental irritability" and three deaths. Researchers then switched to the pellet form, which has since been tried on at least 80,000 women in 13 countries: Bangladesh, China, Costa Rica, Croatia, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, Venezuela, Chile, Vietnam, and the Philippines. Vietnam is considered the biggest trial field so far, with over 31,000 women having undergone insertions by end-1992, beginning in 1989.

The Philippine quinacrine clinical trials began in late 1993, after Esmundo came back from a family planners'

Quinacrine scars tissues, and it is this property that attracted researchers to its potential for permanent tubal sterilization.

meeting in China. He set up the Q Study with the help of the International Federation for Family Health and the Center for Research on Population and Security, two U.S.-based organizations involved with the development of contraceptive technology. These groups are funding the study with a \$10,000 grant.

Esmundo is special adviser to the health secretary on matters related to local governments. The Q study, however, is officially a project of the Movement for Development and Prosperity Foundation, a non-governmental organization (NGO) created by Esmundo in the 1970s.

The other investigators are Drs. Virgilio Oblepias of the

Mary Johnston Fertility Care Center, Iva Anastacio of Makati City's family planning unit, and Roger Ramones of the Ramones Medical and Surgical Hospital. All four are reputable gynecologists and family planning providers.

Dr. Anastacio, for instance, is head of Makati's family planning clinic. She was founder of the NGO, Family Planning Organization of the Philippines, and was president of the Philippine Medical Women's Association.

Anastacio has been getting an average of one patient per week for the Q Study.

"It's free, it's simple, and they do not want to be cut up." She says she has not received any serious complaints from patients so far, except

for a common experience of yellowish discharge. She says some of the quinacrine is expelled. On her logbook, one patient was said to have had "mental stress" after the first insertion. This patient must have had that condition before, says the doctor.

Anastacio says she is not aware of the controversy over the quinacrine method, neither of the WHO recommendations nor the positions taken by other local and international organizations. "The important thing is that we haven't experienced anything bad so far," she says.

Doctors at the Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital, the health department's clinical arm, were also approached by Esmundo for the study. But they declined to

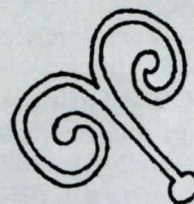
than an older woman. An older woman and younger woman with the same sexual behavior have the same risks."

While there is no medical rationale against IUD use by adolescents, demographic studies show that women under age 25 have a higher incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) than older women, who are more likely to be married or living in union. Younger women are not biologically more susceptible to STDs; however, lifestyles and sexual partners, may put them at greater risk.

For the majority of IUD users, fertility typically returns immediately or soon after the device is removed, and duration of use does not appear to affect a woman's ability to conceive. One study in New Zealand found that within 48 months of IUD removal, 91.5 percent of women, who had never before been pregnant, had conceived, while 95.7 percent of those who had been pregnant before IUD use had conceived.

Family planning providers should help clients understand how contraceptive use may affect their risks of PID and their future fertility. In spite of risks of infertility to young women and nulliparous women, the decision about which method to use ultimately should be made by the woman.

Source: *Network Family Health International*, Winter 1996 Vol. 16 No. 2, p. 13



join the clinical trials because of reservations on both the study design and the drug's toxicity.

"We suggested that there be two insertions instead of three," says Dr. Rebecca Ramos, chief of Fabella's WHO collaborating center. They also thought a test should be made on the patient after two insertions to see if the tubes have been closed. The Q Study's design involves three insertions, and no tests. Reasons Esmundo: "*Mas matipid ito* (This is more economical)."

The Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFD), meanwhile, says Esmundo's group "deviated from standard procedures" in the conduct of the clinical studies. The group did not first seek BFAD's approval, says bureau director Dr. Quintin Kintanar. Clinical trial proponents have to submit an application to the BFAD. The bureau then either approves or denies the application through evaluation of the reliability of the investigators, the design of the protocol, and the absence or presence of "unusual hazard" for the subject.

Esmundo says he wrote Kintanar to inform him of the quinacrine study plans and ask him of regulations they needed to follow. He showed PCIJ a copy of the letter. But it doesn't show it as received by BFAD because, according to Esmundo, the letter was mailed and not hand-delivered.

Still, some think there is an ethical case to be made against doctors engaging in clinical trials of quinacrine, when the WHO has said such studies were "not justified."

"WHO's position should serve as guidelines," says Dr. Sylvia Estrada Claudio of the women's group GABRIELA,

especially because WHO's reservations concern the toxicity of the drug in question.

Claudio also thinks private medical practitioners should keep abreast of developments in their field, and keep tabs of controversial discussions such as those on quinacrine.

Princess Nemenzo of the NGO WomanHealth wants the clinical trials stopped. She says she is alarmed because the quinacrine trials are being done on women, "in a clandestine manner." Nemenzo also says the WHO's word should be followed as "procedural guidelines."

Esmundo disagrees. The only ethical consideration he and his team have, he says, is ensuring that the patient is allowed informed consent. "What my patient and I have agreed upon is what's important," he says, "and not what the WHO dictates. The oath that I took is with my patient."

Neither does Esmundo accept as official the position of the WHO Special Program on Human Reproduction. "The supposed WHO position on quinacrine was issued by one adviser, and not by the organization."

The WHO itself refuses to say whether the clinical trials are unethical despite its position. "That is best answered by Philippine authorities rather than by WHO," says Dr. Giuseppe Benagiano, chief of WHO's Special Program on Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction.

BFAD's Dr. Quintin Kintanar thinks the same. "They are professionals, they are licensed. It's an old drug already approved for marketing, and they can use

it in the way they see fit."

Manila-based WHO consultant Dr. Marilen Danguilan asks as well: "Why should the WHO keep these doctors from performing the tests?" What is more important, she says, is ensuring that "the woman's rights are not violated, her body not trampled upon." Danguilan suggests that women be "open to technology, and see that it could further our interests."

But Juliet was not subject to a thorough physical exam before the procedure, contrary to what her doctor told PCIJ. "Nothing, I was just asked if I had pains during my period or with giving birth."

And Juliet never knew the method was still on trial. "No one said it was just an experiment," she says. "I was just told it was free, I was not going into surgery, I would not be hospitalized."

Nor was she told of the method's possible failure, including the risk of ectopic pregnancy. She laughs: "*Pero wala namang nangyaring ganon. Basta hindi na ako kinakabahan ngayon na baka mabuntis pa ako ulit.* (But nothing like that happened. The important thing is now I have no worries that I will ever get pregnant again)."

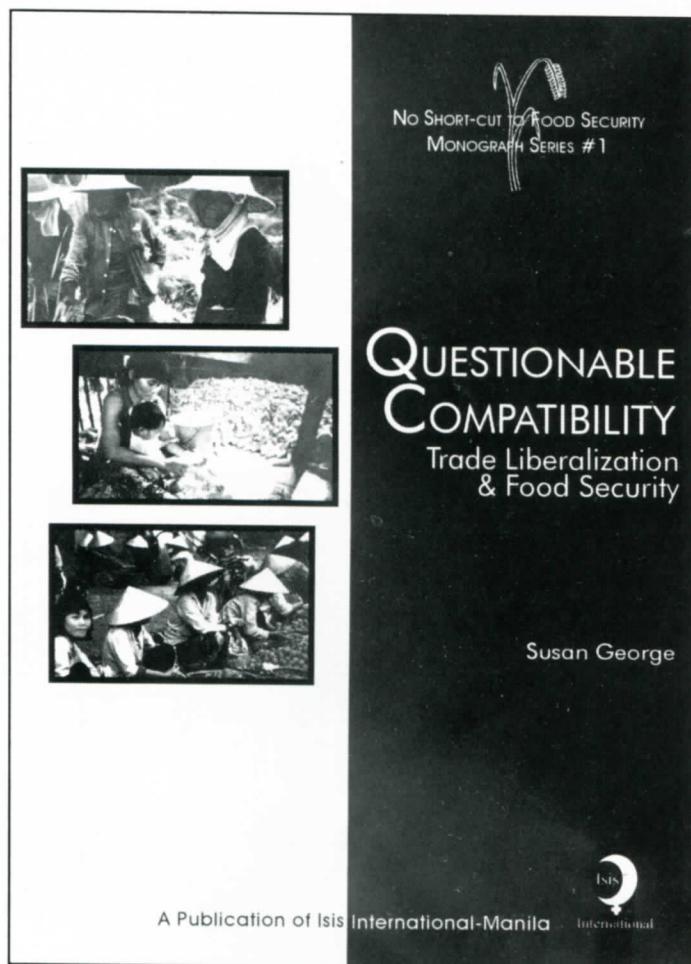
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