

Women's Working and Living Conditions in a Mahaweli Settlement Area—PART II

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The System H area in the North Central Province was one of the first areas to come under the Mahaweli Project. It was provided with irrigation channels and a large number of families have been allotted land here. The changes that have occurred in the pattern of living of these settlers have become an important subject of social investigation, particularly the impact of the break-up of the traditional pattern of land inheritance and ownership by the new settlement principles being applied by the Mahaweli Development Board. Ragnhild Lund from Bergen University, Norway as well as research staff of People's Bank studied the pattern of these changes with special reference to the conditions of households through the viewpoint of women in region 3 of the H System, covering H1 and half of the H2 area, where about 7,000 acres of land were already cultivated and about 3,800 families allotted land at the time of the survey. Her report describes the deep changes that are occurring today. This paper is an abridged version of a part of this study. The first part of this article appeared in the Aug./Sept. 1979 issue and is continued below.

The young "Pioneer Woman" being the only female adult in the home, and having none to replace her, nor to help her, has to attend to all the traditional household tasks like cleaning, sweeping, looking after children, cooking, etc.

As the environment transformed with the new settlement pattern, household essentials like wood and water have been brought closer to the homestead. This implies that the woman has no need now to go far to gather firewood—once per week to build a 'storage' of firewood as Purana women still do. Quite often it was not even necessary for her to leave the domestic sphere, since she is still able to collect firewood from her homegarden (remnants of jungle clearing) and water from the bordering channel.

The resettler women have limited ability to leave their children in another's care, whenever it becomes necessary for them to leave the homestead. They usually take the children along with them. It is a common sight to see a woman walking with a child saddled on her hip and holding 1-2 others by the hand.

Women living in Purana villages were better off in this respect as there were usually others belonging to the same household who could look after their children.

Consequently, the resettlement women suffer because they lack assistance/complementarity in executing the main household tasks in sharing responsibilities.

Bringing up children has become a woman's chief responsibility, where formerly there were other adults in effecting the process of socialisation. For example, a grandmother's attention is believed to be good for the children—for she has more spare time and greater experience.

Another aspect of a woman's restricted mobility in the local and non-local spheres is reflected by the low standard of education. As most women have not even completed the primary school course, they have negligible prospects of securing lucrative employment in the new townships under construction. Of the 40 female workers at the M.D.B. of the area only two belong to the Anuradhapura district and have direct awareness about the socio-economic traditions prevailing in local society, (one of these women have been included in the sample).

There were some women who were employed as agricultural labourers, both on a seasonal as well as, on a permanent basis. Those who participated in building operations were engaged in constructing roads or channels, (digging, carrying etc.) As for cottage industries, there were some women who were sewing or weaving mats for sale. These occupations which required little skill and education, were not held in high regard, nor were the income prospects favourable. Women employed themselves in such a manner because of straightened domestic economic circumstances. Even though reluctant, some women were thus

compelled to leave the homestead. As one woman engaged in farming for a boutique-keeper said, "I have to lock up my house, with my children inside and go" (she had three children).

Agricultural Functions

In the Purana villages the "gardens" around the houses consisted of miscellaneous fruit trees. Vegetables, maize and kurakkan were cultivated in the 'chenas'. When one considers the changes caused by the Mahaweli Scheme, which affects the women most strikingly is the fact that agricultural functions have now become an integral, indispensable part of a woman's daily routine. As chena cultivation is now not possible, the cultivation of subsidiary crops takes place in the 0.5 acre homestead allotment. This is primarily due to the fact that farmers (the men) are encouraged to cultivate paddy during both seasons, except when the fields are too dry and then the farmers are advised to grow vegetables during the dry season (training takes place through agricultural extension officials and the primary beneficiaries are the 'link' farmers (Sambandha Goviyo). Since the agricultural extension officials as well as the link farmers address themselves almost exclusively to the head of the household who is usually a man, the woman is given no opportunity to acquire new agricultural techniques even though she is in charge of homegarden production. So it is not surprising that women's activities are unnecessarily tedious and time-consuming. It is possible that this factor has also affected levels of agricultural production.

It is often said that male farmers of the area are reluctant to engage in other types of food crop production owing to the high prestige attributed to paddy cultivation as well as to habitual practices of doing seasonal work only. Perhaps if agricultural training is given to the women too, results would improve as they are more used to engage in tedious labour.

Workloads of the Women

It was observed that pioneer women work much harder than the women of Purana villages. This is because her traditional burden has been made heavier by new tasks and responsibilities (please refer the above

mentioned fact about complementary efforts with other women regarding (chores/tending children, home garden production etc.).

It could be argued however, that wood and water are now close at hand and thus easily available. However, such facilities have not afforded actual relief, because of the additional tasks undertaken by the resettler women. Clearing of the jungle is taking place on a large scale at present, and that is why firewood is easily available today. Yet, since this stage is transient, it is possible that serious problems may take place regarding fuel in the future.

The women in the resettlement area appear to be losing one traditional responsibility, however. In the purana villages, the women were responsible for the feeding and herding of domestic animals like goats, cattle and buffaloes. Today these functions have become subject to alteration as the present tendency of land enclosure and the marked preference shown for mechanised implements has led to dispensing with livestock altogether in most cases. Mechanised implements are chiefly handled by the males which reiterates the fact women have a very limited access to innovations and that they are being largely ignored in the process of modernization.

Allocation of Time

Women tend to participate more in agricultural activities today (also on the local level). Processing of paddy is one of the most laborious functions and today the woman's work has increased in this respect due to the increase in paddy production, as well as the double cultivation seasons.

Increasing responsibilities had led to a different perception of time as one is now compelled to plan more carefully and definitely, not according to season but on a daily basis. Knox observed that the ordinary Sinhalese "keep their time by guess" so that it is possible to surmise that work was subject to routine even in the old days. Our contention is not that women have started to plan their working days according to fixed time schedules, but that more functions have to be discharged within a single day. (Interesting to note is that one seldom sees a woman

wearing a wrist-watch—a luxury item which is more appreciated as a status symbol, than valued for its utilitarian attributes).

Because of their relative isolation the resettler women tend to spend more time on traditional household tasks like sweeping, dusting, cooking, looking after children etc. than the old (early) settlers. This corresponds to the illustration above, regarding the demographic structure of the women, the number and ages of the children; the resettler women has to usually attend to associated tasks alone.

As regards the looking for firewood, for instance, the majority of the resettler women, have to do this work alone, whereas the old settler of ten have others to help (refers complementarity). The old settler usually organises working teams for gathering firewood once a week; but in order to make comparative estimates, daily averages have been presented here.

The preceding figures also show that resettler women work more in the fields than the Purana village women who display greater adherence to the traditional pattern of labour division. In the purana villages seasonal female participation in agriculture is sufficient while shortage of labour, as well as, high expenses make heavy demands on female labour participation in the resettlement areas. The resettler women often engage in non-traditional activities such as clearing the jungle, constructing the bunds of paddy fields; a few women have ventured so far as to take to ploughing which was hitherto an exclusively male performance. As one farmer commented "My wife is the farmer next to me".

However, it is too early to decide definitely whether this aspect of intensive female participation in agriculture represents a permanent trait or whether it is but a temporary admittance to the local sphere.

Most women said that they "were idling" a little, which generally means that they relax somewhat in between their various duties. However, the resettler women have less leisure than their purana counterparts.

Furthermore, the female labour input as well as work regularity, is

greater regarding activities entailed by the home garden than those associated with paddy cultivation. Only a tiny minority of women are not in home gardening. Even the old settlers have to take part in home gardening, since chena cultivation has been banned. Some home gardens are however still uncultivated, because the owners have moved into the area only very recently.

After the harvest, the women are confined to the task of processing the paddy and home garden products. Chillies are dried, while maize and kuakkian require both drying and pounding. Paddy processing consists of husking, boiling and drying. Today the paddy is usually milled; the transport operations being performed by the husband in a borrowed/hired cart or tractor. While the men have thus taken over this function wherever it is performed outside the domestic sphere, pounding a very tedious and strenuous task is still performed almost exclusively by women whenever it becomes necessary to husk or grind the paddy manually.

Only when women process paddy for those other than their own family, do they receive payment. Otherwise, such functions are considered to be an integral part of their household duties.

Thus the present system of work allocation in the resettlement areas had led to double exploitation of the females. Although a woman has to help her husband in the field, it is still considered shameful for a man to draw water, collect firewood, cook, etc. Traditionally a woman who allowed her husband to engage in such tasks was considered to disgrace her sex. It is this ideal of male exclusiveness and prerogative which prevents men from sharing domestic chores on an equal basis with the women, even though women being the subordinate sex today engage in heavy labour once performed almost exclusively by males. The women are perceptive about their oppressive life circumstances: The majority stressed the fact that they participated more in agricultural affairs; and many also emphasised the need to stay more within the domestic sphere.

Because a woman's mobility is restricted she has fewer opportu-

inhibits and means of access to information than a man. Previously within a more traditional ethos men and women had different "Information Channels" which defined relations between sexes and among each sex. At all spatial levels, conversation among women was socially sanctioned. Nearly always there were at least two adult women in every household and as the village women usually connected by ties of kinship formed a very closely knit community there was a high degree of social interaction between different village compounds.

Today, the channels of information are changing, concomitant to the attrition of the extended family group solidarity which originally embraced almost the whole village community.

As the nuclear family assumes increasing importance, it is observable that personal relationships between husband and wife tend to intensify, and that they form an effective partnership working together with the same objectives in mind with only very little contact outside the domestic sphere due to the following reasons.

Husband and wife become more attached as they—

- both work for the economic improvement of their family.
- realise that future welfare of their children largely depends on their efforts.
- have less time and energy to communicate with other villagers.
- have less contact with parents/relatives who are the persons normally resorted to for help and advice during family crises.

Women are very much aware of this type of isolation and insularity. One woman expressed the lack of communication with other women thus: "we do not know what is taking place in our village. People can die without our knowing it". Other women too expressed feelings of loneliness which is especially true of women who do not participate in work or types of social interaction outside the domestic sphere. When loneliness becomes unbearable they visit their native village or send for a relative to come and spend a few days with them.

It is also evident that about 50 percent of the old settler women hardly get any information by reading and writing. The pioneer women

are even less interested in literary activities. There are, however, a few papers and magazines available in the area, and only when the husband borrows these from the *Kazi*, is the family able to indulge in reading. However, listening to the radio is a very popular past-time. In fact the radio is one of the priority luxury articles which the people are inclined to buy, so that the radio becomes most effective as a mass communicator.

Regarding mobility the husband is of course, the most privileged person who is able to move between the domestic and local sphere with relative ease. He visits the neighbouring boutique almost daily and chats to his friends over a cup of tea. Only men appear to do the shopping in this area, as it is considered improper for women to frequent boutiques.

Another reason is that it is often very tiring for a woman to walk to the boutique which is usually situated alongside the main road, whereas the man can always hitch a ride from a passing jeep or lorry. It would be considered brazen of a woman to make a similar attempt.

Significance of Religion and Caste

The fact that religious activities and caste distinctions have become insignificant, is mostly felt because of lack of unity/solidarity in the local sphere. It was also observed that hardly any resettler family had the traditional Buddhist altar (consisting generally of a Buddha figure, joss-sticks and an oil lamp to light in the evenings) to worship. In the purana villages, on the contrary, such altars were always found on balconies of houses. The women also informed us that they were not encouraged to perform religious activities on the local level as the villagers have "different regional gods". Many people thus seem to be neglecting religion as religious activities are not encouraged, and because religion in this area seem to have functioned largely on a collective/village basis.

Caste distinctions and the traditional activities of certain castes are also breaking up as most people in the area have become farmers and the population of each hamlet is mixed according to caste. People

of "good" caste evidently do not appreciate this, and several women claimed that this is one of the reasons why they are not encouraged to leave the domestic sphere. One woman explicitly said that her neighbours were not suitable for social interaction because they belonged to Bacal (potters) and Wahumpura (jaggery). She was not used to moving with such people, nor did she want to.

The matter of mixed castes thus seemed to be a very touchy subject in the area, especially among the women who seem to be more attached to traditional values than men.

Economic Decision-Making

Formerly social status was ascribed, but now as private enterprise has come to the fore, there are increasing possibilities to achieve social status, which enables an individual to have greater control over his/her own material prospects. (Note, however, that the system of land tenure has been always underlined by individualized ownership).

However, there is every reason to believe that resettler women have little to say in economic affairs:

- They do not participate in all aspects of economic decision making.
- They have limited access to ownership of land thus their economic power is negligible (only unmarried women or widows appear to own land in the colonized areas. However, this may be a temporary phenomenon, as it is yet undecided as to how the next generation would inherit land grants).
- One cannot obtain credit if one does not own land.
- One cannot be a member of the Co-operative if one does not own land.
- Modern Agricultural training is chiefly given to males, so that the woman owing to her restricted mobility, is always dependent on her husband for knowledge regarding all aspects of farming.
- Men are in charge of marketing paddy as well as cash crops. Women only participate in the more casual and traditional methods of barter, which take place occasionally during the off-season when money becomes scarce. The above mentioned hindrances for women to participate in economic affairs also makes the women more tied down to the domestic sphere. She has few opportunities to disengage herself—neither is she encouraged to do so, nor would she be able to justify such independent behaviour.
- However, working women as well as women who co-operate with their husbands in the fields, exert greater influence in economic decision making.

Women appear to have greater economic decision power when it comes to regular expenses incurred by the household. It has already been stated however, that the husband has the final say in the matter as he is the one who undertakes the shopping. On the other hand many women, especially the pioneer women, claimed that both husband and wife handled the household budget together. This indicates that pioneer wives can express their opinion more freely.

The husband-and-wife relations in the Purana villages are not clearly apparent. In certain cases the husband assumed the dominant position, in other cases the eldest woman of the household or the eldest son appeared to take the most important decisions.

When it comes to methods of modern farming it has been mentioned earlier that women did not receive instructions on an equal basis with men. As such training provides direct knowledge about credit schemes, co-operatives and market facilities; women are handicapped in gaining a foothold in the economic aspects of agriculture. In traditional society where the subsistence motif was preponderant, women were involved in clearly specified and highly complementary functions. Now, as women participate more and more in all aspects of heavy agricultural labour it is only logical and just that they should participate in plan implementation programmes too. But on the contrary women seem to have been pushed down still further, which makes their status in agriculture more inferior. This is because firstly, they are losing their complementary functions as the sex differentiated division of labour lines are becoming blurred, secondly because they seem to have been thrust into the oppressive situation of becoming an agricultural labourer, as they are now largely deprived of the former powerful position of being the owners of property themselves. This has resulted in the proletarianization of the women in the resettlement areas.

Female access to income generating activities is restricted by the fact that she is unable to leave the domestic sphere and that few official directives are directed via the domes-

tic sphere to the women as a target group. It is also noticeable that women who earn money on their own and have access to the local and the non-local spheres, seem to be in a position to have a greater say in economic affairs, since they are able to exercise greater control of expenditure regarding their own income. However, the majority of the pioneer women seem to give most of their earnings to their husbands. They said while they retained a small share as pocket money the greater part of their income was given to their husbands as a contribution towards general expenditure.

The Nuclear Family and Its Members

Resettlement is a product of official development planning and settlement policy which ultimately effected sweeping changes not only in the environment but also in the original socio-economic organisation. Regarding the latter the most important changes have taken place in the family structure which is becoming a more separate and self-contained socio-economic unit. This type of centralisation has resulted in the relative isolation of the nuclear family.

Though the practice of registering marriages became popular among urban folk and the Tamil and Muslim communities, the peasants were not strongly motivated to follow suit. The distance to the Kachcheri, red tapism and expenses incurred had negative effects. However, the Mahaweli Scheme has dispelled this apathy since official land distribution policy favours married couples. As a result marriage is becoming a legalised institution for the trend is to register marriage at the earlier possible date in order to apply for a land grant. Thus marriages take place at a younger age than before, the mean average being about 18 years, while the women used to marry between 20-25 years and men between 25-30 years. To register at the nearest kachcheri which is stationed at Anuradhapura costs about Rs. 60 today.

Despite the introduction of a cash economy many persons do not receive financial help from friends and relatives. The respondents felt that they had to be self-reliant since the general poverty of the area prevented others from helping financially. Due

to the emergence of an impoverished cash economy, traditional patterns of communal help are being eroded with no replacement however. This very reason has compelled the nuclear family to become more self-contained.

As the resettlers become more profit-oriented they tend to reject traditional norms and values. Consequently the woman is breaking loose from the original web of social contacts, her traditional privileges related to the domestic and local spheres too, appear to be disappearing. Though the husband too has lost previous social contacts, he has been able to acquire new ones through economic and political activities which offer participation in all spheres unlike his wife. Since economic partnership is becoming a more important aspect of marriage, the success of a marriage tends to become heavily dependent on economic success. However, since the woman is primarily the 'doer' who has less influence on the process of decision-making her socio-economic position is weak. This affects her status in the marital context too. Whenever there is conflict between husband and wife the wife is well nigh helpless not only because she lacks economic power but also because her relations are absent and her anonymity in the impersonal social environment of the resettlement areas. The resettlement area consists of a loosely integrated community which tends to present a state of flux, a condition which encourages deviant behaviour. Increasing alcoholism among men in this area, causes great distress in many a family. It is possible to surmise that this is an outcome of the problems and pressures created by the process of resettlement.

The oppressive situation of the women is generated mainly by two factors:

1. The impersonality resulting from a new type of settlement and the individualism engendered by agrarian capitalism.
2. Traditional norms of female behaviour which stress modesty, passivity, retirement.

The elder settler women affirmed these values. The headmaster's wife who happened to be the original village headman's daughter said emphatically that she would always

expect her daughters to maintain the honour of the family however qualified they may become in the future. A younger teacher seemed to be in favour of greater liberation and individualism—she considered as ideal the women who would respond positively to all social changes, who had the capacity to adjust.

The women are aware of their oppressive conditions. Such perception is expressed in terms of "Alas our sinfulness!" (Ape Pavkarakama), "Alas! our Karma" (Ape Karma). The religious concept of karma helps the women to rationalise her plight to bear oppression. The apathy and sense of resignation created by this belief prevents them from reacting against forces of exploitation.

The Non-Local and the Local Spheres

From what has been said so far it can be adduced that the local sphere has become important than it was in the traditional society. Previously the local sphere was relatively more important than the domestic sphere in terms of solidarity and social integration. Within the domestic sphere which was then a compound unit, the elders were greatly respected, for they had monopoly of knowledge pertaining to technological know-how, religion, "magic" etc. The young women especially were subject to control and were thus expected to be generally submissive and obedient. Today this formal social structure has been inverted; the domestic sphere has now become the focal point of economic and social activity, which expresses and emphasizes personal relationships. This ethos has enabled young women to exercise greater power and influence within the domestic sphere.

The following changes which have taken place within the local and non-local spheres have affected the women most of all:

- * Social interaction is constrained among the women.
- * The importance attached to communal festivals and forms of collective labour has been reduced.
- * Female contribution towards agriculture is considered negligible.
- * Women hardly engage in social and political activities at the local level.
- * Among women there is mobility/communication between the domestic and the non-local sphere.

- * Women who hail from other districts, introduce different values and new skills to the resettlement areas.
- * Regarding industrial occupations in the future the employment potentialities of females is low, since the women of this area are largely ignorant of industrial knowledge.
- * Women do not hold key posts within the new stratum of leadership.
- * Female perception of the long-term implications of the development scheme is largely positive.

Social Interaction

It was observed that women were reserved in their relationships with people at the level of the local sphere. Mainly because women have few opportunities to associate with each other (owing to arduous time-consuming daily tasks, cultural barriers like caste differences, different places of origin etc.) They turn suspicious, uncertain. The women of the resettlement areas were hardly observed walking together in groups to fetch water and gather firewood. Single women arrive with their children to the village bathing spot. Even when such a group gathered occasionally relations are reserved and limited to formal greetings like "Avada" (Have you come?), "Api Yanawa" (We are going.) Signs of uninhibited gaiety and intimate friendship appeared to be almost wholly absent.

Owing to probably the lack of friendship at the local level, we found the majority of resettler women visiting their native villages as often as their husbands permitted. The frequency of their visits varied according to the distance to their native village and also according to the means of transport available.

Communal Activities

Fertility rites, Exorcist rituals, Thanksgiving fiestas were the most important traditional ceremonies performed previously by the villagers. Such ceremonies are characteristic of many peasant societies both in Asia and Africa.

After the rites were performed a communal feast ensued, towards which each household contributed according to its private means. Women mostly engaged in cooking, sewing and other types of preparatory work. However, they had little say in the ritualistic aspects of the ceremony, thus they held a secondary status even though they were

indispensable in performing more tedious and mundane functions.

Since the peasants possessed a very simple technology, these agrarian economics were heavily dependent on the beneficence of natural forces, which often proved to be unreliable and malignant. The above-mentioned ceremonies were held to propitiate the Gods and invoke their blessings in ensuring health, prosperity and protection. As such ceremonies were communal in character; they helped to intensify village solidarity.

Today, this solidarity is being violated by more individualistic norms. One reason being the use of more sophisticated agricultural technology which assures definite returns.

The implantations of agricultural capitalism has generated technological progress, which encourages private enterprise. The women of this area who are largely excluded by the process of plan implementation have not benefitted from this ethos of individualism, which assures success to those who possess means of participation. The women are not a target group of official development policy. At the level of the local sphere, women have only been drawn into pioneer agricultural development, as their husbands aides and thus as unpaid labourers; not as recipients of modern agricultural training and other facilities. This idea was also corroborated by extension officers of the area. Those officials considered the peasants lives to be easier than before owing to the rationalisation of agriculture which makes it possible to grow paddy annually. However, these officials overlooked the fact that other types of food crop production is still performed though within the domestic sphere. As long as official guidance and incentives are not offered to improve home-garden production women are condemned to continue agricultural operations laboriously and inefficiently. Consequently the situation is such that men largely work on a seasonal basis, whereas women work continuously.

Female Political and Social Activities

In the Purana villages the most important social and political activities devolved on the males. The situation seems to be very much the same today too, because we found

that only 5 female settlers and 7 female resettlers involved in activities external to the domestic sphere.

Most of the Purana village women knew how to weave mats—a traditional female skill facilitated by the availability of rushes. However, very few (only 9) were willing to produce for sale. Five Purana female settlers knew how to sew garments (3 had invested in sewing machines, which each cost about Rs. 1,000/-. Textiles had to be procured externally). Another woman was planning to convert part of her homestead into a boutique.

Some of the resettler women on the other hand appeared to possess more variegated vocational skills (acquired in their native villages), 15 resettler women who belonged to the same district knew only weaving and sewing. However, three others who hailed from Moratuwa, were adept at weaving rattan seats of chairs and sofas which enabled them to earn a handsome sum. Two of these women were planning to set up business. Prospects are fairly bright for this type of occupation, since there exists a demand for skilled carpenters in this area. About 9 women were skilled at the more advanced and sophisticated weaving practices like basket weaving for example.

Consequently, resettler women, whose native villages are situated outside the Anuradhapura district, introduce new values and skills to the resettlement areas, not only in terms of vocational training and trade but also in terms of different agricultural traditions. Certain Purana village women commented with a hint of envy that the "Outsiders" were acquainted with superior methods of farming too, and that consequently their fields were more productive, and that their products more diverse.

On the whole there is a paucity of industrial knowledge locally. The few families engaged in commerce found it difficult to expand beyond the limited scale of a small family enterprise owing to the lack of capital and marketing facilities. The initial capital possessed by most entrepreneurs was the negligible sum of Rs. 1,000/-

Thus the female potentialities for industrial occupations in the future is limited, unless of course proper training facilities are provided. Otherwise the females of this region will be confined to employment only as unskilled labourers.

Females and Leadership

We observed that women do not hold key positions within the new stratum of leadership. There are about 40 female "Professional" workers in the region.

When questioned about the villagers, most of these female officials stated that the villagers had little or no consideration for them. The same idea was reiterated by the villagers—a fact which illustrates the severe communication gap prevalent in the area, between the officials and the peasants. Consequently, it becomes evident that women have few opportunities of making their opinions felt, as long as they have not been granted positive roles in the scheme of plan implementation.

While the local sphere is losing importance, the ties between the domestic and non-local spheres have strengthened and now characterize a relationship of mutual dependency. It is generally believed that Purana Village society valued collective principles. However, one must refrain from overemphasis, since rights pertaining to inheritance and ownership were highly individualized. Thus is an ideal mode equally important.

However, it should be noted that the given data describes a society in transition so that it is probable that the findings will have only temporary relevance; on the other hand, trends may become strengthened/institutionalised in the future. A new type of social hierarchy is likely to emerge for example, which will be sustained by non-traditional values. Only post evaluations will reveal the effects of change that have taken on a more permanent character.

Due to the recent interest taken in women's living conditions in poor countries—and the information supplied on the subject—there appears to be a gradual awareness of the fact that women are seldom drawn into the so-called "process of develop-

ment/modernisation". In this respect it could be mentioned that the official authorities are yet undecided (or lacking practical answers) as to how women should be treated as a separate category in this development scheme in order to ensure that their situation is not proceeding from bad to worse during the present societal changes.

The success of any project initiated depends on a process of a two way communication :

- * external organizational forces, like the state for example, should take an interest in the scheme and exert project control.
- * positive responses by the beneficiaries of the project. As regards the Mahaweli Scheme, the authorities seem to be oblivious of the participatory role of the women. Owing to lack of job opportunities and the low standard of education and constrained mobility, women too are lazy and inarticulate about their problems. Nevertheless, it will be exhilarating for planners to know that the population of the area have favourable notions about future development created by this scheme. Since the project is as yet undergoing its initial state, it is not too late to try and improve the situation of these women.
- * female participation of a non-exploitative character Could be assured by taking steps to Provide agricultural training (for example intensification of home garden/foodcrop production).
- * courses in nutrition, domestic budgeting, introduction of labour-saving devices,
- * provision of avenues for female employment by accelerating industrial and other productive activities in the area,
- * introduction of legislation to protect rights of women, non-discriminatory legislation regarding the women in the roles of household heads/creditors/co-operative members.

Such steps could be realized if positive attempts are made. From the point of view of investment too, this emphasis of the female working potential is feasible when one considers the fact that women already appear to be very hard working and conscientious (and often even more so than men.) One aspect of Western experience regarding the transformation of a subsistence economy into a capitalist economy, is that women have lost many of their traditional privileges, complementary roles and functions in the process. It is possible for Sri Lankan policy-makers to benefit from this experience by devising measures carefully to avoid or minimize such undesirable effects.