

ALL prognoses regarding an early improvement in the economic status of Indian women are gloomy. The only ray of hope is the slight expansion of their employment opportunities in the large cities. Although Indian women still overwhelmingly live in rural areas or small towns, their numbers in the large cities are now rapidly increasing. Of these, only a minority, but a significant minority, is now in the work force. Since women's employment in large cities is a new phenomenon, one would have hoped that here at least women would not be handicapped by the traditional practices of being confined to a few low paid "female type" jobs with their contingent discriminatory treatment. Unfortunately, the available data show that, in Calcutta, women workers consistently get a worse deal than male workers. In the organised sector, this could be due to the importing of standards of similar work from other countries. Even in the US labour market of the 1960s, there was significant discrimination against women workers mainly through their being confined to certain low paid jobs, but the fact that this practice extends even to increasing work for women in Calcutta's unorganised sector is rather surprising in view of the apparently chaotic and unplanned character of the activities there.

This almost instantaneous settlement of women in their traditional discriminated status in an entirely novel situation deserves a special explanation, since this experience has implications for the future expectations and policies regarding women's economic emancipation.

In general, explanations for discrimination in the labour market are sought on the demand side of the market, implying that employers have marked preferences in this matter which they are willing to back even at the cost of paying relatively higher wages to their preferred groups. However, its occurrence in a market which is otherwise still in a fluid state makes one suspect that the phenomenon may, at

NIRMALA BANERJEE

Why They Get A Worse Deal

—Report On Unorganised Women Workers In Calcutta

This study of unorganised women workers in Calcutta brings out an important but frequently overlooked characteristic of the female urban labour

It analyses the conditions under which women seek employment, and suggests that women's view of themselves as marginal workers who would prefer to give up their jobs if their husbands could afford to support them, maybe one of the contributory factors in maintaining women's low status in the labour market. Women have been conditioned to accept that they are primarily wives and mothers, not workers. This mental attitude of theirs makes them more vulnerable to exploitation by employers.



least partly, be the result of some characteristics of the supply function of female labour. The factors which influence a woman's preferences about work—its quantum and its character—are such as to make her particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

This is not to absolve the employers or the society of its huge burden of guilt. The character of women's labour supply function is itself a result of the continuing subordination of women in the society. Women are being systematically conditioned in a way that they enter the labour market handicapped, not just by their lack of education and training, but also by their attitudes towards work. This paper is meant mainly as a caution against the general attitude that women's miseries can be removed just by admonishing employers, making laws and public allocations for ensuring better employment conditions for them, or by providing further facilities for their education and skill draining. India's experience shows that this by itself is not enough.

The arguments in this paper are based on the data from a survey of women workers in the unorganised sector of Calcutta which I conducted in 1976-77. For the survey, a random sample by area of women working in all occupations outside the organised sector other than trade and construction was drawn from a listing of earners in households of the Calcutta municipal area. The sample is methodologically representative of this group of the Calcutta female workers.

We claim no general applicability for the conclusions drawn here since the pattern of Calcutta's urbanisation has shown many exaggerated and a typical trends in the last quarter century. However, the study does provide certain pointers to the factors which may be worth considering in further analysis of the process of sexual discrimination.

The Background

Historically, Indian women have had very little scope for participation in urban

economic activities, ever since the beginning of the twentieth century when these activities began to be organised in their modern form. Throughout the first half of the century, women's migration to urban areas, was much slower than that of males. Especially in the large cities with populations exceeding 100,000, the sex ratio was very unfavourable to women and it fell steadily from 1901 until about



the time of the second world war. In Calcutta, the sex ratio was the lowest throughout the country, and in spite of the reversal of these trends everywhere since the late 1940s, it still remains so. In 1971 there were only 698 women per 1,000 males in the Calcutta metropolitan area, as against 857 for the whole of urban India.

From 1911 onwards, the non-agricultural employment of women also fell in absolute numbers until 1961. Female employment fell first, in manufacturing between 1911 to 1931. Then their number in services, trade and

construction also fell. From the 1950s onwards female employment in manufacturing has been fluctuating wildly around a fairly low mean level. In the four large Cities of India—Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras—the percentage of women working in the various non agricultural sectors of the economy in the total population fell.

There is little doubt that this steady fall in women's participation in nonagricultural activities was a result mainly of a systematic discrimination against them. The percentage of men in the work force also fell somewhat over this period. About 90 percent of this fall could be accounted for by two factors. One was the change in the age structure of the population with an increase in the percentage of population under 15 years of age. This accounted for about 42 percent of the fall in the male work participation rate. The other factor was urbanisation which meant that casual labour was discouraged and children and old people were excluded from several activities. This explained another 43 percent of the fall in male participation rates. For women, however, the same two factors together explain only 64 percent of the fall in their participation rates.

Of the jobs that women lost over this period, only 8 percent were in industries which became obsolete over time. In the remaining 92 percent of the cases, they were simply pushed out as a group to be replaced by men. The few women who continued to work in manufacturing were confined to a very limited number of traditional industries. In the 1961, as well as in the 1911 census, the textile and food processing industries alone employed 70 percent of the women in manufacturing. Women did not share in the general expansion of employment in later years, either in those industries where they had traditionally worked, or in the metal and chemical based industries which were newly expanding in the country. What is more, of the women in manufacturing, over 80 percent always worked in the household

sector, not in the factory sector.

As an outcome of these discriminating practices, by 1961, only 6 percent of the women in Calcutta were in the work force, even by the very generous and wide definition of work in that census. Almost all these workers were in services and trade, mostly in domestic service or in petty trade. What is more, the overwhelming majority of the Calcutta working women were from very lowly placed social groups, mainly from scheduled castes, and from areas outside Bengal. Also, a large majority of them were widows or deserted women. There was no tradition of caste Hindu Bengali women working unless absolutely destitute; in any case, very few women worked in manufacturing industries.

There is now a definite change from this. Not only does one sense it, but experts on unemployment have also conceded that female employment in urban India has increased for all age groups since 1961, and most of this increase is concentrated in the large cities. Even in West Bengal, the percentage of urban women working had gone up by nearly 100 percent between 1961 and 1973. In the organised sector, women have made some gains because of the expansion of higher education facilities for women. Also their entry into jobs in the public sector as well as in education, banking and commercial institutions has been made somewhat easier. However, the bulk of the women workers have been absorbed in the unorganised sector of the Calcutta economy and as our enquiry revealed, the majority of the women working there are still illiterate. The change is all the more remarkable because we found that the majority of them are now caste Hindu Bengali married women living with their husbands. What is more, a fast growing proportion of these women is being absorbed in manufacturing activities.

Thus, over a span of just about a decade, a new group of women has come to work in Calcutta in occupations for which it had no history. In a large

number of cases some of the industries themselves have acquired importance in the city only recently, for example, manufacture of readymade garments, plastic goods, electrical and electronic fittings. On the other hand, women are relatively new entrants in some other traditional activities of Calcutta such as the manufacture of leather goods, ceramics, glass works. What concerns



us here is that, even in this short period, the tradition of discrimination against women has become well entrenched in the new female occupations.

Sexual Discrimination

In our survey, we found evidence of such discrimination in its crudest form. In some occupations, particularly tobacco processing and glass manufacturing, women were paid a lower piece rate than men. The more common practice, however, is for women to be concentrated in a large number of low paid jobs. The planning commission has identified a number of occupations where the majority of workers are women. As it happens, these are some of the lowest paid occupations in the country.

A more direct piece of evidence is the findings of the National Sample Survey on employment in their 27th round for 1972-73. For urban West

Bengal (35 percent of the urban population lives within the Calcutta municipal area), among the illiterate workers or workers with less than secondary education, the weekly earnings of women are a very low fraction of the male ones. This is partly because women on an average also get relatively less work in a week.

But the difference in the number of days worked per week does not fully explain the difference in the weekly mean earnings. Explanation for that must be in terms of differential rates of pay.

There are several explanations usually quoted for the unavoidability of sexual discrimination. Below, we shall consider whether any of these explanations are relevant in the Calcutta context.

Male Chauvinism?

The most facile explanation is that, for some special reasons, employers here have a marked preference for male as opposed to female workers, and for the same work, are willing to pay the former an extra margin in wage. Although several authors accept this possibility without question, it is difficult to accept that this kind of male chauvinism can persist over a spectrum of activities except where institutional factors appear to justify discrimination. If the entry to these industries is not completely closed, then in the long run, in the competitive case, such an employer will be driven out by others whose interest in lower costs preempts such discrimination. In a monopolistic situation, the employer will be bought out by another.

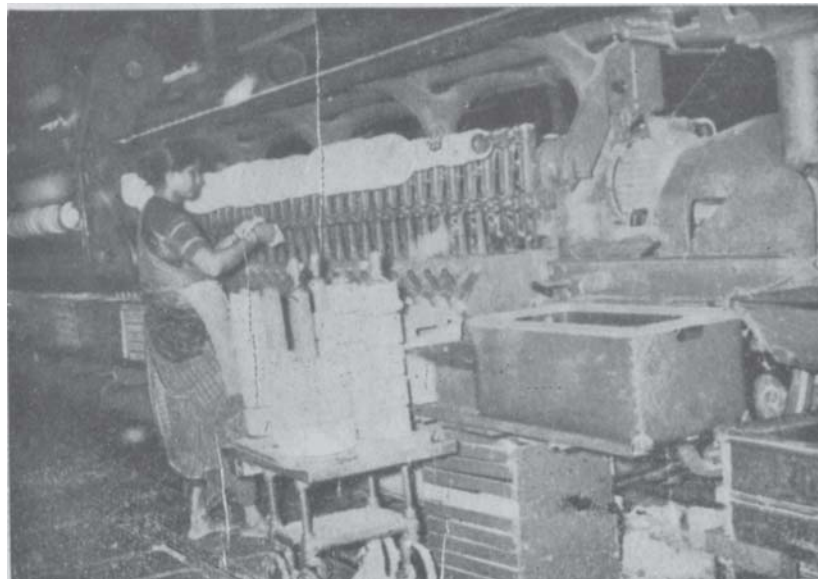
In the organised sector of the Indian economy, the discrimination against women can be explained in terms of several such institutional factors. Its most common and persistent form is the concentration of women in a few special kinds of occupations. Here, more than an active resistance by employers to recruit women in other jobs, the more important reasons are the institutional, mainly traditional barriers to women receiving the kind of training required for other jobs in, for example, the

engineering or the managerial cadres. This situation is changing slowly but steadily for the better.

The other kind of discrimination that is growing in the organised sector is the displacement of women in manufacturing. This, however, is essentially an outcome of precisely those two characteristics which distinguish the organised from the unorganised economic activities in India. One is the existence of strong trade unions in the former sector. The other is the enforcement of several legislative measures to ensure for the workers some protective measures such as minimum wages, regular hours, and sickness and old age benefits. The trade unions, at least in the textile and mining industries, were relatively less vigilant about the rights of the women employees in the period since 1950. Therefore, employers could carry out their policies of rationalisation of labour costs more easily by concentrating on women workers, mainly by retrenching them far in excess of their relative strength in the work force. On the other hand, the special legal measures meant to provide women workers with maternity benefits were largely responsible for the employers' reaction against women workers. Even for those women who had long experience in the industry, employers were unwilling to incur these extra expenses. With the connivance of the trade unions they, therefore, dismissed a large percentage of the women, often to reemploy them on a casual basis for the same tasks outside the factory premises.

In the unorganised sector, there are neither trade unions nor protective legislative measures. In their absence it is difficult to think of any rationale for this continual discrimination against women. In the Calcutta study, the relations between employers and employees of the unorganised sector appeared to be essentially impermanent. Even if the same employer had employed a worker for seven or more years, the former need not accept any responsibility for the worker's

security of employment or for a minimum of welfare. Of the employees who had worked for five or more years, only 22 percent had received any increment. Of the 628 jobs that the 400 workers held at the time of the interview (one woman may simultaneously work on more than one job), in only 40 percent of the jobs had there been any paid leave in the previous year. Only 5 percent had, received paid maternity leave, but for not more than a fortnight. Of the total, 86 women worked at daily rates or piece rates and for them payment was strictly by satisfactory results. In such a



situation why is there prejudice against women ?

The urban unorganised sector of India is an amalgam of several kinds of production arrangements— small workshops, farming out of work to small entrepreneurs or to individual workers, agencies producing a variety of goods as per order, and so on. All these businesses survive mainly through savings on labour costs. Even the self employed worker hardly ever manages to earn for himself the wage that he would pay to his own workers of equivalent skills. In such a situation, it is rather difficult to believe that employers would indulge their irrational preferences. Indeed, the situation may be quite the reverse. Because cheap female labour is available, employers

may be switching their activities to arrangements which can use this cheap labour.

Natural Division of Labour

One, of the usual explanations for the segregation and concentration of women in a few low paid jobs is that these jobs are specially designed to enable women to combine them with their natural tasks as housewives and mothers. The sexual division of labour supposedly corresponds to the “natural” role of a woman—upon which a whole myth regarding her “natural” maternal and protective instincts has

been created. These instincts are supposed to make her more efficient at housework and childcare. The economic activities on which she concentrates are considered an extension of her basic feminine role, such as food gathering, unpaid work in artisan families, or work under the putting out system in cities. In other words, the sexual division of labour is supposed to be yet another case of the general process of division of labour, which increases overall efficiency and production.

The contention, however, is easily refuted. Adam Smith himself said that:

“The difference in natural talents in different men is, in reality, much less than we are aware of; and the very different genius which appears to distinguish men of different

professions, when grown up to maturity, is not upon many occasions so much the cause as the effect of the division of labour. The difference between the most dissimilar characters, between a philosopher and a common street pedlar, for example, seems to arise not so much from nature, as from habit, custom and education.”

In writing of division of labour for development and growth, Adam Smith was referring to the continuously finer division of tasks in a way that makes it possible for any worker to undertake any task and develop skill in it, and in the end be replaced by a machine. The appeal to special talents and requirements made by the proponents of sexual division of labour is on an entirely different footing.

As facts stand, a woman's economic activities here are basically incompatible with her “natural” role as a wife and a mother, if such a thing exists. In most traditional occupations the usual tasks assigned to the poor women of India involve hard physical labour, such as carrying headloads of materials for construction, fetching and lifting water over distances, and so on. In our sample survey in Calcutta, domestic servants continued to lift heavy loads in late stages of pregnancy. Among women tailors who had to operate heavy sewing machines for several hours each day, uterine disorders were very common. Moreover, most workers were away from home for over nine hours a day, seven days a week. For most, this meant a drastic adjustment in their role in the home by resorting to unpaid help from their children and, when this was not possible, by carrying on the burden of a double day. On the other hand, working life was even more arduous for the outworkers who worked at home. While the families of the workers who had to leave home every day did try to adapt to the new routine, the families of the outworkers expected them to carry on as before without any extra help.

The argument can be refuted with yet another set of facts. If the female type jobs were designed especially to

suit married women with a household and children to look after, then within the female worker population such women ought not to be at a further disadvantage. After all, they are the ones who set the norm.

For our sample, we tested the following proposition: the mean wage rates of married women below 40 with children and for widows and deserted women of over 40 are the same. This hypothesis was rejected by the normal test for means of two normal populations. The mean wage rate of the younger married women was significantly below that of the other group. Thus, within the female population, women who are most involved in their “natural” tasks are at a further disadvantage in their economic activities even compared with other women. The adaptability of the jobs they do to their roles as mothers and

rates paid to women since we suspect that the wages themselves are a reflection of the unequal bargain in the female labour market. But again, the available data for the Calcutta female labour do not support this hypothesis. If it was productivity that determined the demand price for labour, then the wage rates received by the workers should either be uniform at the marginal level of productivity or they should vary according to the attributes which contribute to the productivity of the workers. Such attributes may be age (prime workers should have higher productivity), experience in the job (workers with longer experience should be more productive), or education and skill formation (workers with higher levels of education and training should produce more). All these factors together or separately should explain the variations in the actual wage rates



housewives cannot be said to account for the relatively low wages of women as a group.

Low Productivity

Another argument for the low wages of women is that as a sex, the productivity of women is lower and therefore the demand price for their labour is also lower. This possibility cannot be accepted or rejected on the sole basis of the data regarding wage

received. None of the variations in the wage rates, of the whole population as well as of the groups there of, can be explained by the variations in the levels of any of these characteristics of the workers.

Low or high productivity of workers is not a determinant of the relative levels of the demand prices within the female labour market and is therefore unlikely to be relevant in

determining the relative levels of wages between males and females.

Excess Of Supply Over Demand?

One reason put forward for the relatively low wages of women in recent years is the sudden increase in the supply of their labour. However, unless women are already being treated as a separate kind of labour, such an increase should have lowered the wages of all workers with similar qualifications. By itself, it does not provide any explanation for sex discrimination in wages or income.

Even if we rule out plain irrational male prejudice there remains the possibility that jobs in the unorganised sector are sharply divided by skill requirements and women as a sex do not possess the requisites for a large number of occupations. They therefore may have to crowd into the few for which they are qualified with the result that this pressure of increase in women's labour supply would push their relative wages down.

In the case of the Calcutta study, this hypothesis is difficult to test since women have, in actual fact, not remained confined to a few traditional occupations but have actually entered a large number of entirely new occupations. In the initial years of enquiry, 1969 and 1970, the one major occupational category employing over 60 percent of the women workers was domestic service. By 1975 and 1976, women entering new jobs, regardless of whether they had already been working or not, now tended far more to enter other nondomestic services or manufacturing jobs so that, of these new jobs accepted, less than 40 percent were in domestic service.

After 1972-73, the distribution of workers changed quite dramatically across the three occupational groups, and nearly half of the interviewees entered the labour market after these dates. However, there is little supporting evidence to show that these changes were linked either with changes in the overall labour market or with

occupational wage rates. For each of the three broad occupational categories we considered, namely, domestic service, other skilled occupations and other unskilled occupations, movements of wage rates over years showed no discernible trend to increase or decrease. Quite often, for the detailed occupational categories, the time trend of wage rates is a fluctuating one. Or it may also show an increase for some of the workers and a decrease for others in the same year. On the whole, all one can say is that, while in some occupations like tobacco processing and nursing, workers were in general forced to take a cut in their standard wage rate in later years, in most others this is not so. On the contrary, for the majority of occupations, the maximum rate has certainly risen although the

minimum has fallen somewhat due to the increased entry of very young workers.

On the whole, there is every reason to believe that in this period, many new avenues have been opened to women and they in their turn have been quick to respond to the new opportunities. In any area one went for the purpose of the survey, there was a ready group of potential women workers willing to learn new skills and take up the work, part time or full time, on a very flexible basis—either as casual or regular workers, working at home as outworkers or in workshops for fixed hours. Even women with young children tried as far as possible to compete closely with other workers by making shift arrangements for child care. They usually did not plead for special



consideration or special types of jobs.

Nor could we find any evidence of many women working on a part time basis voluntarily. If they could get enough work, over 40 percent of them worked for more than 42 hours a week. Absenteeism was severely punished by loss of wages and even of jobs, with the result that the workers were very careful about this. All in all, the women in the sample had very little formal training and little tradition of work, but they were highly adaptable, quick to learn skills, and very serious about their work. The continuous discriminating treatment that they receive therefore cannot be explained by any idea of their innate inferiority as workers.

Female Labour Supply Function

I feel we have to look for such an explanation in the character of the labour simply function of these women. The supply of labour is usually considered a function of the current wage rate, the level of income, probably of the family income of the workers, the pleasantness or otherwise of the work involved, the lifetime expected income from such work and also the attitude of society towards that work.

For women, however, at least in the market we are considering, there is a distinctly different pattern of relative importance given to these various factors determining their labour supply. And if women are, in any sense, a distinct group in this market, it is precisely this difference in relative valuation that sets them apart.

Level Of Family Income

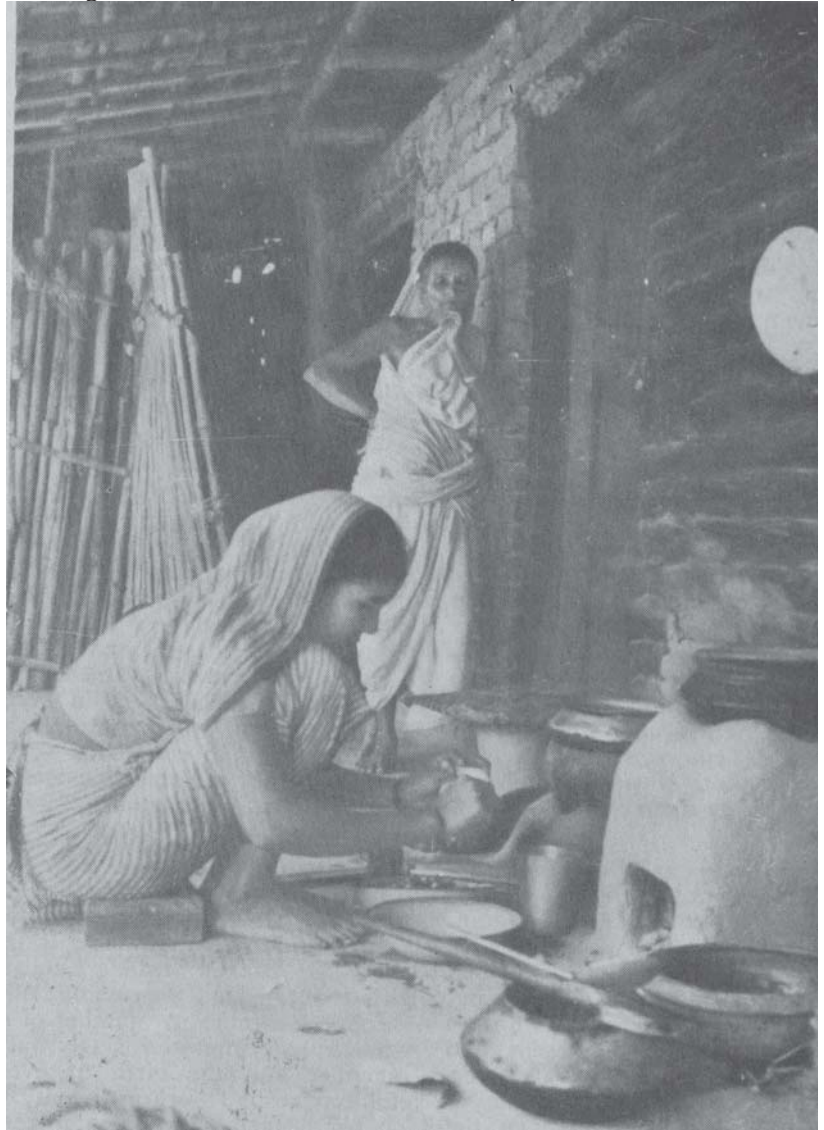
One of the most important factors in determining the quantity of work a woman does or whether she goes out to work at all is the level of her family income. The lower the family income, the more the work effort she puts in. When asked why they had started to work, over 75 percent of the women replied that they had been forced by the fall in their family incomes. We also tested the hypothesis for a category of domestic servants for whom more work is easily available and found that there

is a high negative correlation between the level of family income of a worker without her contribution and the hours of work she puts in.

When a woman is thus induced to work, or work more, by the exigencies of her family income she is governed more by the need to reach a target income than by balancing the displeasures of additional work against the rate of return obtained for it. In our sample, we found that for 17 women, the marginal wage rate had fallen below their previous standard rate when they took up additional work. For another 33, the standard rate at which they had been working fell in absolute terms. Of these, 20 managed to maintain or increase

income by working more. The rest did not change their quantum of work. Similarly, there were several women who took up more work even when the rate of payment remained unchanged.

This concern about the size of the income rather than the rate per unit of labour can partly be explained by the desperation of these women when they go to work. The initial level of the family income which had induced them to begin working, must generally have been extremely low since we found that even when women had worked for five or more years regularly for not less than 42 hours a week, the families had acquired little to show for this effort. Over 75 percent of them had no durable



goods except a few pots and pans, some bedding and a few crude pieces of furniture. Only 25 percent of them had even a transistor radio or a watch in the family. Since these women contributed about 45 percent of their meagre family incomes on an average, one can readily appreciate the desperation which makes any bargain, however unfair, acceptable to them in order to reach their target income.

Immediate Rather Than Distant Gains

Women's labour supply function probably differs from the norm in yet another respect. For them, attainment of this target income is far more important than any idea of maximising a lifetime expected income. This is why they are more willing to accept jobs with no prospects of promotion, increments or an improvement in working conditions. Among the women we interviewed, the widows and deserted women did expect to work for the rest of their lives, but since their mean age was over 40, it is not surprising that they did not expect any radical change in their employment prospects. However, even though the unmarried and the young married women had shown tremendous enterprise in learning new skills, there is no example of anyone among them planning for a career.

This may partly be because, until the present, changing jobs or learning new skills has not significantly improved the wage rates of more than 25 percent of the women who tried that; but it is also because of the underlying assumption that, as soon as the present bad patch of family fortunes is over, they would not have to continue to work. This is also why even the women who expected their daughters to be no better off than themselves did not think of training them for any trade, although they were against removing them from primary schools, even if they needed help at home or in their work. Yet these same women were trying their utmost to train their sons, often at the expense of making their daughters work at odd jobs to earn the necessary funds.

Taboos On Work

In some cases, women also fell victim to the inhibitions engendered by society. These inhibitions constrained their choices of occupation. It has been noted above that, although wage rates in all occupations were almost similar, the domestic service workers had a somewhat higher expected income since opportunities for such work were more numerous. Also they were granted certain leave facilities and some extra benefits. However, among the new entrants in the 1970s there was a definite resistance to domestic service. Of the women who did take up domestic service in this period, a large majority came from families where there was a tradition of female work. Either their mothers or their mothers-in-law had worked in the past, again as domestic servants or as agricultural labourers. In Calcutta's context, any woman with such a family tradition, of female work can be taken to belong to the lowest social groups. On the other hand, in our sample, women who clearly belong to upper castes either worked as outworkers or in the relatively better organised occupations such as casual untrained nurses in hospitals or workers in bigger workshops. It is worth noting that the few self employed women we met were all either of upper castes or in the caste occupations of their families.

It is surprising that we found little evidence of the prejudices one normally expects. For example, caste Hindu women made leather goods or packed fish. Educated girls took up food processing. What is more a significant number of the women, had migrated singly, after marriage and the birth of several children, to find work in the city.

These facts can be interpreted thus—women accept any clear family taboos about work, regardless of the opportunities open to them. On the other hand, in areas where there are as yet no taboos, mainly because the occupations are too modern for society to have given a ruling on them, they are extremely adaptable and enterprising.

Thus, domestic service is a traditional female occupation of low caste women and there is a definite barrier for upper caste women to take it up unless absolutely destitute. On the other hand, making leather goods may involve touching leather but as long as it is not shoemaking which is absolutely tabooed, they will take it up readily. Any outwork, however menial in character, like pounding grain and pulses, is acceptable since the indignity is not public.

The female labour market is therefore deeply fragmented, not so much by the employers but by the women themselves. Their own mores bar them from some occupations and make them put a premium on others, even at the cost of a cut in the wage rates. These barriers separate the otherwise similarly equipped workers into noncompeting or imperfectly competing groups and obstruct their mobility between the limited opportunities of work that are open to them. And since they themselves do not appreciate their common status as workers in the market, they find it all the more difficult to organise any workers' movements to resist their exploitation.

Employment Seen As Aberration?

Prejudices of the employers or beliefs about the natural distribution of talents between sexes often lead to discrimination against women workers. The above analysis is intended to show that, even in a situation where there is little scope for such forces to operate systematically, women may still receive unequal treatment because of their particular vulnerability. Employers are quick to recognise the profitability of exploiting this vulnerability and naturally take full advantage of it. This vulnerability of the women in the labour market has been imposed on them by society which has conditioned them to accept certain norms. These norms teach a woman to believe that she should function only as a wife and mother, that having to work is an aberration in the same sense that

unemployment is an aberration for a working male. At the same time she bears the ultimate responsibility for the cohesion of the family. The upshot of all this is that she is altogether unprepared for the labour market and totally desperate when the time comes for her to join it. She has no training in the skills required in the labour market and, at work, feels little affinity with other similarly placed workers. Also, her loyalty remains within her family and she makes frantic efforts to adjust to her working life without disturbing too many of the family mores.

Investment in the further expansion of women's education or employment



opportunities in the "women prone" industries as the draft Indian Sixth Plan envisages will not improve this situation singlehandedly. What is needed is a change in the attitudes of women towards economic activities. Expansion of women's jobs can bring about this change in the long run provided it is on a large enough scale. Further spread of education is also a vital albeit limited force, especially since the current education pattern itself embodies and reinforces these social values. To alter this, the educators themselves have to be reeducated and this promises to be a long drawn out process.

Development Workshop

The Food And Agricultural Organisation, United Nations, organised a South Asian Regional Training Programme for women development workers from October 23 to December 6, 1983. There were 16 rural development workers from Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka. They were together for seven weeks and shared a lot.

The first 10 days of the workshop were spent in Bangladesh, at a people's health organisation called Gonoshasthaya Kendra. The Kendra has to a large extent been able to implement the philosophy : "to each according to her or his needs, and from

each according to her or his ability." They have a smithy, a pharmaceutical workshop, a carpentry workshop, and a printing press, most of them run by women. The Bangladesh government's rural development board has a women's programme which runs about 230 women's cooperatives all over the country. Some of these were visited by the participants.

The second leg of the workshop was at Skills, Madras. Here the women learnt a few skills which could be useful in development work. A workshop on community theatre was conducted by Tripurari Sharma and Chandralekha. There was also a session on screen

printing and poster making.

From Madras, the group went to CROSS, an organisation near Hyderabad, where a group of people have been organising the villagers. Mahila Mandals have been an important constituent of their work. The participants were able to see how the group uses street theatre as a means of communication. The last session was at Ahmedabad where we visited the Self Employed Women's Association. Many women felt the SEW A model could be replicated in their own countries. Several questions and topics were set aside for discussion in the last few days.

—Ingrid Mendonca

In A Woman's Name

Razia Patel, who had led an agitation against the ban placed by community elders, on Muslim women seeing films got into a controversy with the woman manager of a branch of the Bank of India at Bombay, when she refused to write either Kumari or Saubhagyawati before her name. The manager said that a woman's name must be prefixed by either Miss or Mrs but Razia said she, as an individual, had a right to open a bank account, her marital status being irrelevant to this right. The manager could not produce any written rule to support her argument yet she refused to accept Razia's application or to open an account in her name.

Male Logic

What would you think of a reporter who wrote about a policeman arresting a suspect, and captioned it "Man's worst foe : man" ?

A news item in the Times of Indian December 8, 1983, narrates how Mrs Jai Kumari caught Hansa, an alleged pickpocket who had removed some money from her purse, and how Tara Devi nabbed Manita while she was trying to remove her earrings. This news, item is captioned "Woman's worst foe : woman", and the first line is "It takes a woman to catch a woman."