CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE
INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade women from most parts of the world have begun to question the value their societies attribute to women's role and the way in which this affects their status.

Prompted by social movements, demands for development with social justice and by the world demographic scene inequality between sexes has received considerable attention recently from the social scientists. A clear look at the reality of women's contributions as a basis for planning is also recognised. As human power is an important resource for development, it is thought unwise and a serious omission to ignore fifty percent of the world's human resources by focusing development efforts on men only. Such an assessment would also help enhance their roles and participation. Finally, the question whether their economic partnership is equal and whether their economic contributions lead to equality in social status reflected in their share of power in family decision-making is sought to be answered by social scientists. The Mexico Conference (1984) on women has highlighted the importance of labour force participation bearing on the status of women:

APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF WOMEN'S STATUS AND ITS ORIGIN

Attempts have been made to examine the status of women against different classical theoretical
frameworks. A wide range of disciplines are involved in understanding the universal subordination of women to men.

Some extreme proponents of sociobiology seek to show that much of human behaviour can be explained in terms of physiology. This theory implies that the traditional role of women has been and is determined above all by the biological imperative of bearing and rearing children. There are others Strathern (1978) who labelled this school biological reductionists and seek to explain the subordination of women as a cultural rather than a natural fact, thus giving hope that women can work to change this cultural bias. They also believe that the fundamental inequalities of society are wholly cultural in origin and have been determined from time immemorial by men who have been in control of society.

Some sociologists who are interested in biology think that the assumption that biology determines behaviour, especially in complex species, is wrong. Biology predisposes animals to act in certain ways, but it is one influence among many in human behaviour. There is a reciprocity between what the individual brings to his social situation and how the situation affects him. However, "There are probably no direct physiological causes for most social behaviour" (Tiger and Shepher, 1977).
The lesser physical strength of women, the physical limitations of frequent pregnancy and the traditional responsibility of women for early child care are often discussed as factors for the origin of women's subordination. "The physical advantages of men over women are incorporated into social structure, most importantly in the economic, familial, and government institutions; women and men through the process of socialisation, learn to accept such institutions as NATURAL while religious and/or secular ideology provides the rationale. A monopoly by men of the technology of coercion (skills in fighting, guns, knives) further supports the inequality even long after the initial physical advantage has lost its importance" (Malbin and Waehrer, 1972: 3).

An evolutionary view proposes that throughout much of history, defence, subsistence and reproduction were necessary for survival. Women naturally devoted most of their time to reproduction, participating in subsistence when men were engaged in warfare, or in Swidden or horticul
ture ecosystems (Sanday, 1974). Subsistence activities that could be easily integrated with reproduction and rearing of children were naturally assigned to women while men took to prestigious hunting. Precluding women from participating in prestigious hunting activities gave men a distinctive importance which contributed to early male dominance (Washburn and Lancaster, 1968; Steward, 1968).
Men's domination is thus explained on the basis of male control of strategic resources. But some evidences now available from cave paintings in central India and elsewhere show that women were also engaged in hunting (Maphal, 1978). It is also held that the dangers of hunting and the physical strength required meant that men always performed this essential activity. This in turn has led to a 'differentiation of the domestic and public spheres of activity' which helped shape the social structure and psychology (Rosaldo, 1974).

Emphasis on the role of hunting in the formation of the nuclear family and on the division of labour between active males and more sedentary females restricted to child bearing and childrearing is considered unjustified (Tanner and Zihlman, 1976) and the place of plant life in the diet of early hominids, essentially omnivorous, should not be overlooked.

Some of these hypotheses are based both upon studies of bone morphology and social behaviour of primates. But only when man domesticated plants and animals, permitting settlement, is it believed that women's role became more restricted and the division of labour more established (Tanner and Zihlman, 1976; Zihlman and Tanner; 1978).
The structural-functional view stresses the importance of social structure in governing economic relations and roles between women and men. According to their assessment the status of women is low in pre-industrial society which improves in post-industrial society (Tiffany, 1978). Sex segregation is functional for the operation of the family and the occupational system. Talcott Parsons (1949) even maintained that sex segregation was a functional requirement for the working of the occupational system and for maintaining solidarity within the conjugal family.

Boserup (1975) traces the origin of the division of labour in the labour market to the division of labour within the family in communities with subsistence production. Socialization of the young to carry half the tasks would be easier and "within inter-marrying groups, it is necessary that all boys are taught to perform the same tasks, and that all girls are taught all the tasks which boys are not taught (p.103). Though the rationale of this sharp division of tasks gradually disappears due to economic development and occupational specialization, sex segregation is found firmly rooted in the cultural milieu and retained even in industrial activities. At this stage the sex stereotypes may not be functional but a cultural lag.
The historical-dialectical approach finds a high status for women in pre-industrial culture which deteriorates in industrial societies owing to the emergence of the dual economy based on use-value and market-value (Leacock, 1978; Gelber, 1973). Most household labour, assigned to women, but not often considered 'real work' remains in the pre-market stage. It is in the fact of assignment of household work as the function of a special category 'women' that 'we can find the basis for a definition of women' and 'the material basis for the inferior status of women is to be found in just this definition of women' (Benston, 1973: 121).

These scholars are also of the view that the advent of industrialization has not freed women as "no society has thus far industrialized housework" and converted private domestic work into a public industry (Benston, 1973: 122).

However, this outlook fails to take fully into account other structural variables which affect women's control over their production and income.

Women are likely to have more power over the products of their work in matrilineal - matriarchal societies (Tanner, 1974; Whyte and Whyte, 1982; Johnson, 1967), though women may exercise considerable power even in patriarchal societies, particularly within her family as in arranging their children's marriages. Yet, matriarchy does not ensure women equal power with men.
A given form of behaviour is also determined by individual personality. In the Mysore village studied by Srinivas (1976), dominance of one spouse over the other varied according to the strength of personality of the partners. Brandt (1971) finds support to this thesis among women in Korean villages. Hence we have to look beyond cultural norms in understanding the status of women. Jacobson (1978) concludes that it is difficult to ascertain whether a given form of behaviour is determined by cultural norms or by individual personality.

Therefore, 'an approach combining evolutionary, structural, cultural and economic factors seems essential for a clear understanding of women's position,' (Whyte and Whyte, 1982: 7) and we may add the personality factors.

Further, it is equally important to discuss the real from the traditional and formal status of women in family and community. The Korean women are often self-assertive and highly valued, yet formal indicators point to complete male dominance (Brandt, 1971). 'Male superiority is asserted in proportion to the formality of the occasion' (Whyte and Whyte, 1982).

Redefinition of women's Roles

In attempting to understand the factors underlying this inequality between the sexes different approaches have, as noted already, identified varying ones.
Some have traced it to underparticipation or non-participation of women in productive activities. Yet the wealth of information that have accumulated on women and development find the traditional economic theory inadequate as it recognised only a productivity measured by such monetary indicators as the GNP. It works with descriptors which devalue or ignore all of the principal contributions of women to their societies and tended to misperceive the current role of women (Gelber, 1973; Boserup, 1970).

When one examines the full spectrum of productive activities carried out in societies world-wide, most of the production has taken place outside of the cash-based, GNP-measured sector of national economies, which Marx refers to as production for use-value rather than for market-value. Recent investigations on social indicators of development focus on health, education, nutrition, housing and political participation (Adelman and Morris, 1974).

Time budget studies carried out on this basis have shown that women work longer hours. In India a high proportion of rural women recorded as housewives are involved in cultivation and work for 15 to 17 hours a day (INCCU, 1977). An adult female household member in Bangladesh spends about 6 hours in the household sphere and another 6 hours in the agricultural sphere (Montius von Harder, 1977).
Another study states that adult women in Bangladesh spend 1.61 hours per day in income earning activities, while adult men devote 7.04 hours in them. But women work for 6.68 hours daily in home production tasks, compared to 1.29 hours by men. Altogether both work for a little more than 8 hours (Harder, 1977).

In Indonesia, Melanesia and Malawi women work longer hours than their men (White, 1976; Kirkpatrick, 1978; Clark, 1975).

**Curvilinear Theory**

In broad theoretical perspectives, life options for women appear to be related to modernization of both cultural and structural features. A curvilinear relationship between societal complexity and sex equality has been discerned from world-wide data.

Boserup (1970) attributes women's status to environmental conditions and the form of agriculture that these permit as well as population density. Under Swidden culture (shifting cultivation) women have a high status which declines under plough system and again she is elevated under irrigated, settled agriculture.

In the simplest societies men's and women's freedom of choice are more nearly equal than in somewhat more complex societies. Their position declines during
the early stages of modernization of traditional peasant societies as a corollary of the relative decline in women's labour productivity, and improves again when the societies become even more complex (Zollinger and Smock, 1977) But the third stage of rising status for these two scholars is tied to the expansion of the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economic structure. At this stage women receive access to higher education and hence get into modern occupations, enjoying an independent income.

This curvilinear thesis finds support from Asian studies. Swidden way of life in Asia conferred respect for women in family, economic, community and religious affairs as well as independence and freedom of action, which have long since been obliterated by centuries of settled agriculture, male ownership of land, patrilineal Kinship and female subservience in south and east Asia' (Whyte and Whyte, 1982 : 204).

The same authors state that in India and China, women originally were respected by their husbands and by their society. They were educated before marriage, which occurred only after physical maturity. Their position gradually deteriorated around 500 B.C. Their subservient role to men became enshrined in India in the Laws of Manu which took final form around third to second centuries B.C. and in China in the tenets of Confucius.
Status and Production

A number of studies have drawn correlations between the role of women in production and their status in society. Lack of educational opportunities and other oppressive measures resulted in women's economic dependence in Chinese traditional society (Yang, 1959). Economic dependence implied inferior status. According to Boserup (1970) withdrawal of women from active role in production occurs with a transition from swidden to plough agriculture, but when land is irrigated and intensively farmed women become active participants again. The first and last categories are associated with higher status for women.

This is also found to be true in the rice-dominated economy of Japan (Johnson, 1967), India and China (Devos and Wagatsuma, 1967) Baker (1963) finds their status in rural areas of Hong Kong consistently rising for young women owing to urban-industrial employment and independent income.

But with regard to Boserup's third category that of irrigated land where women are as much involved as men and where their status should be correspondingly high, the immense variety of customs in Asia conflict with her scheme. In south-east Asia, in the lower socio-economic groups in north India and among the landless in south India women predominate in the fields. But only in south-east
Asia women paddy workers enjoy equality. Thus we find that female production is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the development of female status (Sanday, 1973 and 1974). However, south Indian women compared to those in the north are attributed a greater value (Leonard and Leonard (1981).

Murdock (1949) believed that ownership of land enhanced female status. Tambiah (1973) considers ownership of land by women conducive to bilateral Kinship structure and ambilocality, both of which in turn associated with higher status for women. Brandt (1971) states that in south-east Asia women often hold land where society is more equalitarian but in China, Korea and India women enjoy neither.

It has been further suggested that women have lower status because their tasks are mainly subsistence-oriented, while men work on cash crops (Boserup, 1970; Gelber, 1973). While it may be true in Africa, women in Asia have been associated with men in work on cash crops (Whyte and Whyte, 1982). Others believe that it is not so much subsistence tasks as lack of ownership of the means of production which brings lower status to Filipino women (Castillo, 1976).
Reporting on women in Java, Stoller (1977) status that it is not the type of production, but the productive relations involved which are important for social power. Economic independence of the poor does not mean social power.

There are others who find women's role in production less significant in determining their status than kinship organization (Johnson, 1967; Whyte and Whyte, 1982). Matrilineal, matriarchal societies give their women a higher status than in patriarchal and patrilineal. In India tribal women in patrilineal, patriarchal groups invariably are conferred low actual status, even if they have a high ideal status (Sachchidananda, 1978). The same is found among the polyandrous groups in Himalaya (Nandi, 1977).

Marriage system is also found to play a role in conferring status to women. South Indian women enjoy greater freedom of movement and a higher status. They enter into groups many of whose members are already known to them because of the preferential forms of marriage, and the distance of migration involved is short as no principle of village exogamy is followed (Mandelbaum, 1972). On the other hand, in north India cross-cousin or uncle-niece marriage is proscribed. Marriage should not ideally take place with those related within seven generations on the father's and five generations on the mother's side.
(Atlekar, 1959). Status of these women is much lower (Veena Das, 1975) and a greater extent of sex segregation is noticed.

Certain degree of sex segregation of tasks the world over has been accepted. What is the basis of segregation? Work that involves good muscular strength is male task and work which needs sedentary attention is predominantly a female responsibility in Kerala, India (Kala, 1976). But in some regions like East Africa women’s manual labour tasks are at least as physically demanding as those carried out by men and meet essential economic needs (McDowell and Hazzard, ).

According to Scarlett Epstein (1962) dairy farming is the domain of women in south Indian villages and the dairy products provide women with a small but independent income. She further states that in Dalena women provide the major part of labour required for their dryland farming, while their men focus on irrigated cultivation. Among the patels the entire realm of domestic chores, including cooking, childrearing, and sundry other jobs, is the exclusive domain of women (Tulsi Patel, 1982). Very often these tasks carry not only low economic returns but also a lower status (Kala, 1976).
The dividing line between masculine and feminine tasks is determined by the ecological setting and by the economic structure of the Kibbutz in Israel. The effect of the following factors is found discernible:

(a) the extent to which a given job requires considerable physical strength and strenuous exertion; (b) the extent to which it requires specialized technical skill; (c) the extent to which it requires spatial mobility; (d) the extent to which it requires continuity of effort for considerable blocks of time from the point of view of the rhythm of the working day and from the point of view of the overall work career. Agriculture in the Kibbutz is becoming increasingly large scale and heavily mechanized. Increasingly men are drawn into technically skilled work and women into services (Yonina Talmon, 1973).

Sex roles are learned as part of the basic attitudes and patterns of behaviour through socialization. This results in the development of preferences for occupation and life-goals (Albrecht, Bahr and Chadwick, 1977). Clear sex role definitions and divisions of labour have been found in most cultures. "Such role differentiation is perpetuated by cultural values and structural constraints leading to differential access to communication and resource networks" (Bakemeir and Tait, 1979: 255).
Displacement of Women

In many developing countries women are found being replaced even from the traditionally female tasks (Castillo, 1977)(ILO, 1977).

The problem of displacement of women from production is accelerated by modern technology. In many societies there are strong traditional inhibitions against giving them even general education. In the matter of providing agricultural training and extension services, the beneficiaries are mainly men while women are partners in most of the work relevant to these services. The resulting consequence is a serious gap between the roles which women could play in economic life and the means at their disposal to enable them to assume their roles (May Rihani, 1978);(Boserup and Liljencrantz, 1975). In these situations, no effort to improve productivity can succeed except by the direct involvement of women in the programmes (World Bank, 1982) (FAO, 1972).

"Whatever system prevails, the physical burden of these multiple roles falls particularly heavily on a poor rural Asian woman who is almost certainly inadequately nourished, who has never dreamed of the household gadgets which lighten labour elsewhere, for whom even piped water is a rarity, and who has to toil long hours in high temperatures on the backbreaking tasks involved in the agricultural cycle in the tropics and sub-tropics" (Whyte and Whyte, 1982 : 14).
Women and Family Power.

Emphasis has over the decades been continuously placed on the importance of equal access to decision-making for women (APCWD, 1977; Boserup, 1975; May Rihani, 1978). Bell and Vogel (1960) argue that family power is generally diffuse rather than being concentrated in one actor.

Blumberg and Wineb consider women's role in production compared with men's and the effect that this division of labour has on the structure of the family as a central fact. Within the peasant family women may be loved and revered and may be accorded high degree of informal authority. Many others also support this contention (Srinivas, 1976; Gonzalez and Hollnster, 1976; Whyte and Whyte, 1982). Where women are primarily responsible for production, their roles are more highly valued, and have control over the resources. Women retain considerable power primarily in the emotional domain (Scanzoni, 1979).

The Bogor Agricultural University study in Indonesia revealed no rigid demarcation between the sexes in decision-making, though there was greater equality when men were employed outside agriculture. Women's decisions usually predominated in expenditures on food, but men took part in those on housing, education, clothing, household utensils and medical care (Sajogyo et al, 1980). It could
not be concluded that women were firmly in control of expenditure. Wide variations are found as a result of differences in personality. Decisions on purchase of land, education of children and their marriage were discussed together, though the husband's decision was the final. Increasingly older children were also taking part (Ihromi, 1973).

The decision-making pattern is more egolitarian than patriarchal in Philippines villages in matters concerning household and family as well as farming (Castillo, 1976a). Among lower-class rural families women exercise the greatest influence in matters relating to household chores, care of children, discipline of daughters and allocation of monetary resources (Licuanan and Gonzalez, 1976).

According to a study of family power in East Samar most decisions are made jointly, but whereas the husband alone decides only major matters, his wife alone decides on major, intermediate and minor matters; men often give in to avoid conflict. Decisions are women-dominated when there are young children, but become more egolitarian after they have left the home (Contado, 1978). Wherever women have a distinctive economic role to play, they enjoy the right to make decisions, including family economic decisions (May Rihani, 1978). Reporting on a Wisconsin study, Wilkening (1953) found a curvilinear
relationship between farm income and joint involvement of husband and wife, the middle income group characterised by high joint decision-making. Yolenda Moses (1978) writing on a West Indian community, concludes that while economic role may bring more decision-making power, the degree to which those women exercise that power is restricted by cultural norms.

Structural changes in the family are expected to take place universally which would help enhance the status of women. "With industrialization and urbanization families everywhere tend to converge on the so-called conjugal system, a system which favours women" (Goode, 1963: 369). But he does not believe that any system now in operation, or likely to emerge in the next generation, will grant full equality to women, although throughout the world the general position of women will improve greatly. Equality between sexes is not possible without a radical reorganization of the social structure (Ibid: 373).

Nuss (1981) opines that, for basic structural changes to occur, there should be a "radical redefinition of male role in household labour" resulting in an equality in the performance of family maintenance activities. This means a greater male participation index in household maintenance than what is observed today. The emergence of the nuclear family as an institutionalised form may in the
long run be accompanied by such a redefinition. But Pitts argues that a "generalised male superiority is a basic theme of the structure of the nuclear family in all known societies" and hence this structural situation may not automatically bring about a reduction in the sex-segregation of tasks. Even in nuclear families women have expressive orientations, and when they work they tend to be in occupations relatively lower in prestige, power and income than those of their husbands. Consequently, the excess amounts of these three external elements that the husband possesses carry over into the family, giving him greater internal authority (Scanzoni: 1979). In contrast, other researches (Saflilios Rothschild: 1969; Middleton and Putney: 1960); Centers, et al: 1971) found that even the articulation of the wife into the economic system had no effect on her power. Engels (1968: 158) points out that women were equal partners before the emergence of private property and monogamy and the "first premise for the emancipation of women is the reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry" but still would be impossible "so long as household work is not industrialized". However, these conclusions on the trends are based on data on conjugal power obtained mostly from urban samples within the industrialized or industrializing countries.
In exploring the relationship between other variables and distribution of power in the domestic group, women with children were found to have more limited access to externally based resources and as a result less powerful than the childless wives (Heer, Blood and Wolfe, Michel, Centers et al). Reuben Hill (1965) found the wife's power to increase over the course of the family life-cycle.

According to Rodman, it is the middle and upper status groups in modernizing societies that first accept norms of marital egalitarianism, though they possess more resources than do men of lesser status. Consequently, higher status men may actually possess less power than lower status men. Burr (1973 : 194) describes patriarchy, modified patriarchy, transitional equalitarianism and equalitarianism as the four stages of societies which would influence the nature of relationship between resources and power of husbands. He further observes that such a situation analysed by Rodman "would only be expected when a society is in the process of changing from a patriarchal normative system", but not in societies which find themselves at other stages of modernization.

Cromwell and Olson define power as a "system property .. the ability of an individual to change the behaviour of other members in a social system" (1975 : 5) and add that "family power" which incorporates the
behaviours of household members other than the marital dyad, is to be distinguished from "marital power" which subsumes only behaviours between spouses.

Cromwell and Olson also identify three domains of family power: bases, processes, and outcomes. Bases of family power consist "primarily of the resources an individual possesses which may increase their ability to exercise control in a given situation" (5-6). Power may be legitimate, referent, expert, informational, reward or coercive power. These resources are used to reward or to punish and obtain the intended effects.

Processes are the interactions among family members during various stages of "discussion, decision-making, problem-solving, conflict resolution, and crisis-management" (P.6). Outcomes are the decisions made. An outcome is simply one stage of an ongoing process which includes important links with a variety of antecedent and consequential variables.

Considering the other issues related to family power such as legitimacy, Scanzoni treats saliency of the interest-sphere, or the goal in view as very crucial. He adds that "traditionally the interests or spheres of the male have been centred more in occupation, and next in disposal of income than in routine household maintenance or child care". Power in the two former areas is comparatively
much more significant to him than power in the latter two, which are the interests of the "traditional wife". It is in the realm of income disposal that husband-wife spheres overlap and potential for conflict have been greatest. "Power research better identifies such areas" (Scanzoni 1979) and find out whether each spouse has power where each one wants it. The research task is to identify the spheres of interest and ultimately "accounting for power where spouse interests overlap" that is the "locus of power".