In this chapter we will attempt to focus primarily on the working and application of the guaranteed rights and liberties as they touch women. The society, organised on a patriarchal basis, is mediated upon, by the state with its paraphernalia of guaranteed rights, and positive transformatory legislation in an effort to give a position of equality to women vis-à-vis the men. However, this aspiration of the state — declared by articles 14, 15 — meets with limited success in practice. This has implications for the complete utilisation of other guaranteed rights and civil liberties by women. Voluntary organisations, specially identifying themselves with the issue of women and their interests, attempt to press towards removing the various restraining structures which handicap and restrict women in the exercise of their rights and civil liberties.

Voluntary organisations may have, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, their own agenda for transformation and change related to their world view. It may be of interest to examine two voluntary organisations concerned with women, their objectives and programmes, to discover the perception of social transformation they envision.
The two women's voluntary organisations chosen for close investigation are Manushi and Suraksha. The former, a Delhi based organisation, has made a unique intervention in the form of a magazine on women and women-related issues. Suraksha has identified its primary activity to be the issue of dowry-related demands and family counselling, in and around the city of Lucknow.

Part I

Manushi

In an earlier chapter we had pointed to the appearance of several organisations around the issues of democratic rights and civil liberties in the period of the seventies. Manushi is one such voluntary organisation, which has worked towards an improvement in women's situation in India.

Manushi is a Delhi-based organisation founded in 1978 which brings out the journal Manushi in English six times a year with the objective of giving women the opportunity to read, express, debate and think upon the various dimensions of women's oppression in society. Some members of Manushi had earlier been part of a broad-based women's group in Delhi University called the Stree Adhikar Manch.
Apart from the journal *Manushi*, published consistently since 1978, they have also expanded into further publication of books, and have brought out an audio-cassette of songs as well. Expansion and experimentation with street-theatre, films and the video is also planned. The scope of *Manushi'*s work has been described as conducting and collating research and carrying out investigations. The *Manushi* group participates in discussions and dialogues on various issues, maintains contacts with other activist groups, participates in protests and demonstrations around specific issues and perceives its work on women "as part of an over-all human rights movement in India".

In the initial period of *Manushi*'*s inception, it had also provided shelter to women in distress. However at present they give only advice and refer them to appropriate institutions. They also provide free legal advice to women and "take up public interest litigation cases which affect groups of women and aim at changing law and interpretation".

However the publication of the journal *Manushi* has been the first task undertaken by this organisation. It has also been one of the most consistent and visible activities of the organisation. It is intended, in this work, to critically examine this major prong of *Manushi*'*s activity.
The "Introduction" points out that the period of the seventies:

also saw the birth of many new magazines and journals, a number of them representing the non-commercial alternative media .... Manushi was among the earliest of such magazines to appear after the Emergency.

The inspiration behind the journal Manushi were acknowledged to be the struggles of rural women in Maharashtra and the hills of Uttar Pradesh, who were successfully challenging entrenched power structures and the strong desire to spread th story of their struggles.

We therefore felt the need to create women's own forms of communication, to collect and disseminate this information systematically, to begin to understand and identify the issues around which women in different parts of the country were beginning to struggle, and to try and find out how we could help strengthen and spread such struggles .... keep them from being isolated, and thus easy to repress.

This exercise it was hoped, would also encourage, strengthen, educate and support women's struggles in different fields, in different parts of the country.

An important task which Manushi envisaged "as a vital precondition for the development of theory and practice of the emerging movements" was information gathering about women's situations, their living and working conditions among different castes, classes, communities, regional and occupational groups in different parts of the country.
The magazine consciously avoided an urban-centred bias, recognising the necessity of drawing information about the life and struggles of the rural women.

The journal initially was brought out in both Hindi and English, with the former being priced lower for wider readership. However in 1987, the hindi Manushi had to be suspended, the reason being that,

The readership remained small for this type of magazine; interest never picked up sufficiently...

For the publication of Manushi a high degree of participation was envisaged at the editorial level. The magazine was initially being run by a "collective" and the pattern of listing members of the Editorial Board was dispensed with. The objective was to keep the organisational pattern non-hierarchical and democratic, open for the widest participation and assistance by many people in ways of their choice. Not mentioning of specific names was also affirmation of the fact that "help" for the journal had come in various ways - material assistance, physical help and even moral support.

However, the democratic norms of functioning were established only through some practical and theoretical tensions.

It was only through a long and painful struggle that we came to realise that merely using a label like "collective" does not automatically create the
reality of a truly egalitarian structure .... Very soon the term became a liability. Moreover we found ourselves dragged into the whole gamut of controversies surrounding the term "collective" in the western feminist movement .... Instead we say Manushi is brought out by a group of women and we accept help from whoever is willing to help, regardless of community, class, sex, political leanings or lack of them.  

On the level of readership too, a close participatory relationship was envisaged. There were invitations to the reader to "consider it yours", 17 to "share your experiences of being a woman with other women". 18 There were requests for assistance in enrolling subscribers, collecting donations, distributing the magazine and collecting advertisements. 

The pricing policy aimed towards acquiring the widest possible readership. Deliberately pricing the English edition at half its cost in India, the hindi edition was even more subsidised. A policy of dual pricing was followed - a minimum price is fixed, and those who can afford are encouraged to subscribe at higher rates. 19 

The publication of Manushi was envisaged as a non-profit venture, financed through subscriptions and donations from individuals, without seeking grants from any governmental and non-governmental organizations. This enables the journal to adopt an independent viewpoint.
A principled stand is taken on the advertising policy. *Manushi*, at inception decided not to accept advertisements which projected a degrading or subordinate image of women.

Despite financial constraints, they resolved not to accept grants from any institution, because we feel that *Manushi* should live and grow on the strength of those for whom it is a felt need.

Readers have been encouraged to reports on achievements and struggles of women, on atrocities on women. Newspaper clippings, articles, interviews, short stories, film reviews, photographs and sketches are invited too. This also enables the journal to have a country-wide focus while looking at women's issues. Readers' comments — complimentary and critical are published.

That *Manushi* was able to achieve an important objective of "breaking the passivity and isolation of women" is amply proved in its column of Readers' Response. We may quote one such:

"six times a year *Manushi* makes me feel I am not alone in the world".

In an early editorial, the editor quotes a reader's comment:

"One reader expressed this beautifully, "you do not know how many millions may find a voice here". This is how we see *Manushi* and how we hope you and many more women will relate to it".
In a recent article by Madhu Kishwar there has been an effort to explicate the ideology of the journal and to dissociate it from the label of "feminism" which is seen as being "alien to the vocabulary of women in India and inadequate for Manushi's purpose. It has also been perceived as being of limited importance in India since "feminism, as appropriated and defined by the west, has too often become a tool of cultural imperialism."

Manushi would argue for a point of view closer to the Indian ethos and social arrangements and therefore for an approach which is not bound by the compulsions of reacting to issues according to the bindings and requirements of any "ism". The establishment of battered women's homes is offered as an instance of culture-specific response to an activity.

In India, the article points out, the concept of battered women's homes has not really caught on because such women - largely without economic support - have to be sustained economically as well as socially and resources to sustain and rehabilitate them economically are difficult to obtain. Not much of such support is forthcoming from the state welfare resources either.

In the west the responsibility of such homes is not primarily economic since state security does exist and
the role such homes play in the west may be understood more in the nature of offering a period of moral support for women attempting to become self-dependent in a system where the natal families are not usually available for moral support. There Kishwar contends that the cultural, social context in viewing an issue would offer a better perception, rather than fixed ideological moorings in rooted "isms".

This denial of being bounds by constraints of 'isms' is actually a declaration of an autonomy of decisions and responses.

This basic approach, unqualified by any specific nomenclature of any "ism", is reiterated by another statement to buttress the fact that Manushi's ideology attempts to transcend a narrow ideology of feminism.

We deliberately chose the subtitle 'a journal about women and society' which along with the word Manushi is concerned not just with women's 'equality' as the term 'feminist' would imply, but with the protection of human rights of the disadvantaged or discriminated groups of our society, while having a special emphasis on women's rights.

This viewpoint has been well explained in "Manushi - a brief introduction".

The word Manushi means 'woman' with an emphasis on the human identity of the woman. It is a semi-coinage by us, from the Sanskrit word 'manush', which means 'human being' as distinct from 'purush', which means 'man'. The emphasis is on humanity not manhood... 'Manushiya' as an adjective means 'humane'. It is also close to the word 'manas' which means 'mind' or 'intellect...
In the course of the following discussion we will attempt to examine and outline the role which Manushi seeks to play in overcoming the legal as well as social "shortfalls" which handicap women's equality.

The journal has a pragmatic appraisal of the role of "law" as an instrument of change in the situation of women. It is seen as a positive asset. However there is a good understanding too, of the fact that having a law on the statute book is no guarantee of its implementation. Restriction to the utilisation of law may flow from a variety of sources. The patriarchal bias of law enforcers and law interpreters may serve to limit the practical application of law. Ignorance of the law, conditions of poverty, illiteracy and consequent non-assertiveness, entrenched patterns of socialisation and norms of behaviour are some constraints on the actual utilisation of law by women in whose interests it may be made.

Thus in Manushi a discussion on "Law for women", its content and form, its complexities, and its interpretations has been perceived as important for understanding and utilising law in the interests of women. We will later see that Manushi has also initiated an attempt to press for changes in the law. Together these may be seen as an effort to bridge the legal "shortfall" in the issue of women's equality.
Also, Manushi has attempted to bridge the "social shortfall" by attempting to explicate the complex social reality of women's subordination in India. It documents the conditions of Indian womanhood - largely rural and poor - and attempts to focus on the importance of women's struggles - individual and collective - to overcome this arena of social "shortfall" in order to achieve equality.

Thus at the heart of the Manushi journal is the notion of social change through women's struggles to alter those arrangements which restrict the use of their guaranteed rights in social, economic and legal fields which restrict real equality for women.

Manushi has made available a forum for the expression of personal opinion's, organisational experiences of individual and activist groups. In the columns, there are discussions on events, writings, legislation, interpretations of literature, history and contemporary debates. It has served the important task of disseminating information and building public opinion. Articles have delved into history attempting to enrich the reader's understanding and explicate women's subordinate position. Some have attempted positive assessment of women's roles in earlier historical struggles. Understanding of the cultural diversity of the country has been enriched by
translations from regional literature, of stories and poems which have a bearing on women's role and status.

Thus the commonalities which unify Indian women, despite the many diversities, have been emphasised in order to contribute towards building a movement of women.

Violence against women is one such issue which has integrated women despite the regional, social and economic disparities among them. Similarly the slogan raised - "Our Right to Our Bodies" has had the potential to educate as well as to suggest the uniting of womanhood irrespective of the differences of class, or region or age.

The journal has attempted to establish a pragmatic appraisal of the position of law as an instrument of change in the situation of women. A favourable law for women, it sees as a positive asset. But having a law on the statute book is no guarantee of its implementation. In order to use law constructively in favour of women, there is a column which discusses law, with the express purpose of "demystifying" law. States the journal:

It is true that the law givers deliberately surround the legal process with ... red tape and tongue-twisting language ... But we feel that this is a part of the conspiracy to deprive us of control over our own lives ...

What is the woman's position in law? How does law impinge on women's lives? What are the lacunae in law
as it applies to women? These are some of the issues that Manushi has attempted to explicate in various articles.35

Manushi would attempt to:

... expose not just how laws passed by the Parliament are biased against women but how the whole legal system from the police who record the case to the courts which judge it, to the legal books which interpret it, conspire to keep us oppressed ... 36

But apart from the patriarchal bias in the law itself, other factors which restrict the women in the utilisation of rights under law are poverty and deprivation.

The issues of women's inheritance rights, succession laws, divorce laws and guardianship laws, dowry and marriage related incidents appear to highlight the truth of the slogan initially put forward by the feminists in the West: "Private is Political". Manushi too has been concerned to demonstrate the truth of this phrase and has, through a perceptive article attempted to demonstrate the subtle modes by which women are conditioned to permit their own rights to go by default.

In an article entitled "Some Aspects of Bondage: The Denial of Fundamental Rights to Women", articles from Part Three of the Constitution are examined with the objective of discovering the particular limitations (over and above the constitutionally defined ones), that
restrict the application of these laws in women's lives. These special limitations stem from the position of subservience in which women are located in a society which is organised on a patriarchal basis.

Kishwar examines articles 16(2), 19(a), 19(c), 19(d), 19(g), 21, 23(i) and 38 which are concerned with the issues of equality, freedom and protection of life and personal liberty.

This discussion clearly points out to the working and patterns of civil society, which restrain the women from exercising constitutionally guaranteed rights.

Kishwar points out that the restriction of women's mobility outside the house by linking it to abstracts such as "respectability" and "family honour" tend to increase women's dependence on the males of the family. Absence of mobility also restricts external options like choice of jobs, communication and association with men and women outside the immediate family and circle of relatives.

By restricting women's mobility, men are able to influence labour market patterns such as the ghettoisation of women in the lowest paid jobs, making some jobs home-based in nature, withdrawal of the women from the labour market at their own discretion etc.
Another article "Unpaid, Unrecognised: Women Speak about Housework", is a series of short interviews about housework with some house-wives.39

There is a relationship between unpaid house-work, the isolation and the inevitable dependence upon the men of the family. It is pointed out that:

Because this labour is unpaid she is made to feel dependent on the husband ... Though the labour performed by the wife is crucial to the survival of the family members, it is depreciated by society and therefore by herself as "doing nothing, sitting at home." ...It is because it is seen as "natural" and inevitable for women to do housework and child care that their social isolation from the outside world also comes as natural and inevitable.40

Manushi has faithfully documented the issue of women and work. This serves the following objectives:

a. It emphasises that the average woman is making a paid contribution to her home;

b. It challenges the prevalent patriarchal notion of the man's role as the bread-winner of the family;

c. It amply demonstrates the pattern of women's employment in the unorganised sector - largely characterised by poor conditions of work, low wages, discriminatory wages and manipulatory techniques.

d. It also highlights the double burden that the women carry - of domestic work and paid labour outside the home.

The Shahbano case controversy has been analysed as being a women's issue more than a Muslim women's issue.

Manushi has pointed out that the demand for the Uniform Civil Code must be alive to the fact that:
"Equal rights for women should be an underlying principle of the Code."46

It has been argued that there are certain shortfalls within the inheritance laws of the Hindus,47 as well as in the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act which make them unfavourable for women. Manushi has thus identified three areas in which legal change towards greater equality would be desirable. These are—a Common Civil Code fair to women, equality in the inheritance rights for Hindu women48 under the Hindu Succession Act, and improvement in the provisions of the Guardianship Act.

Manushi has dedicated an entire issue to the subject of inheritance rights.49 In an article they have attempted to challenge conservative arguments which are held out as the general rationale for restricting in practice, even those inheritance rights which are conceded to women. Conservative opinion, for instance argues that women's inheritance of land leads to fragmentation, that it is likely to cause ill-will between brothers and sisters, that it may be unviable because the girls on marriage usually leave the location of the natal home. They also point to the possibility of a woman benefitting from the natal as well as the marital home. These arguments have been, in the article, exposed as weak and groundless.50
Manushi has also documented the intervention of the judiciary in upholding the interests of the women in some cases of inheritance rights, such as the striking down of the Travancore Christian Succession Act in the Mary Roy case.51

How the patriarchal ethos which defines the men in the family as the "head of the household" can lead to loss of economic rights of women is illustrated as well. In "Mine Workers Resist Retrenchment", the issue highlighted is of women workers being displaced to make place for men. More specifically, that husbands of women who were opting for voluntary retirement were being favoured with regularisation of jobs.52

Manushi also documents that the traditional patriarchal ethic has also governed State behaviour. In government programmes of land for the landless and the subsidies for the poor, it is the male head of the household in whose name such resources are given.53

In an article in Manushi, there has been the attempt to highlight that the inequality which inheres within a family has a bearing upon issues such as division of work-load, division of nutrition, health and life-chances for women.

In a specific study, the following questions were asked from women:
1. How are economic resources distributed within the family and with what consequences?

2. Which family members have acquired greater decision-making powers over others?

3. Who, within the family, contributes how much to family income?

4. What is the labour contribution of each family member?

5. Are the contributions of the family members commensurate with the benefits he or she derives from membership in it?

Another study raised the specific question of work load, calorie expenditure and nutrition levels within a family.

This task of unravelling the complex intermeshing of social, political, economic and cultural issues which inhere in the institution of the family, may themselves be seen as an effort to push for social change.

The journal thus attempts to clarify, with the help of essays, studies and examples, the insight which has been acquired by the feminists that "private is political." But Kishwar also clarifies, that despite the unequal distribution of power within the family:

At present whatever its limitations the family also is one of the few arrangements which provide the little support that is available to women. Wide variations exist between families ...

Manushi has through its discussions pointed out to shortfalls in some specific existing laws. The law on rape is one such. The significance of this lies not
only on the fact that rape constitutes a serious denial of the right to life and liberty for the woman, but also because the issue of amendment of law on rape had become an important platform on which women's groups had come together in the eighties.

Discussions on the issue highlight the backdrop of protest, the amendment made in the law, the lacunae in the law, the difficulties in the manner in which legislation is implemented and interpreted.

Mobilisation and protests had surfaced in the wake of what was considered a grossly patriarchal judgement by the Supreme Court on the Mathura Rape Case. Four university teachers too, in an open letter to the Supreme Court, had expressed their anguish at the judgement.

The Court itself gives no consideration whatsoever to the socio-economic status, the lack of knowledge of human rights, the age of the victim, the lack of access to legal services and the fear which haunts the poor and the exploited in the Indian police stations.

The campaign of the women's groups who had collected together under a loose federation called "Forum Against Rape" pressed for a change in law on rape. This pressure had led to the formation of a Law Commission to suggest changes in the Rape Law. The amendments later suggested and finally made have been discussed in the Manushi columns.
The law calls for in camera trials and forbids the publication of any material related to the trial. Women's groups however felt that this provision would make social protest impossible, and would also remove the likelihood of securing, through publicity any help and support for the victim.61

The recommendation of the women's groups and the Law Commission, that the past history of the victim should not be admissible as record in the case, was not accepted and not incorporated into the legislation.

Manushi has discussed the application of laws. How, in the course of judgements in a court of law, a patriarchal interpretation can delimit the woman's liberty, and a more liberal interpretation of law can be supportive of women's rights, has been highlighted.

In an article, Manushi points out that in a judgement on a case of gang-rape, the accused were let free for the Court held the woman to be of "bad character".62 However in the Bharwarda Bhoganhbai case, the Courts had a more sympathetic and liberal attitude, maintaining that in rape cases circumstantial evidence was sufficient to convict an accused, for in such cases witnesses are difficult to obtain. The Court sympathetically ruled that:
The rape victim is not to be treated like an accomplice whose testimony requires corroboration.
Her statement and circumstantial evidence are sufficient to indict the accused.

However, apart from the process of judicial interpretation, the process of implementation of law by the executive agency too, plays an important role. Police ineptitude or callousness, may even prevent cases in the incidence of rape from being registered, thus denying the woman her rights.

The issue of dowry, of dowry-related deaths, harassment within the marital home for dowry, have been a core concern of Manushi. The journal has attempted to document many incidents of women's deaths related to the dowry issue, as well as many protests and mobilisations against dowry.

Manushi has been vocal in its condemnation of dowry and in its early issues, oaths against taking of dowry, and boycott of dowry marriages were highlighted, as these were considered necessary to create public opinion around the issue.

In the recent years too the dowry issue has found mention in many articles, and an attempt has been made to analyse the tenacious survival of this social malady despite general public social condemnation and regulatory legislation.
In the case of dowry, the denial of women’s rights is rooted in the civil society. Kishwar attempts to put the issue in perspective:

The law is bound to remain a dead letter until there is a social base for a confrontation with dowry.

An effort is made to trace the interlinkages of the dowry issue. Kishwar rules out the hypothesis generally held out, that the escalation in dowry-demand cases, and dowry harassment cases are related to the rampant greed and consumerism of the times. Her argument is that if this was true the general expenditure incurred on pomp and show would be discouraged by the groom’s side and the money spent would be part of the dowry transaction. Goods like clothes and gadgets given to the woman too, would similarly be discouraged.

Dowry, Kishwar analyses, is significant not primarily as an economic arrangement, but is a political affirmation of the superior social status of the man vis-a-vis the woman. The giving of gifts is in the nature of a gift given by an inferior to a higher individual, overlord, or deity in acknowledgement of his superior status.

The dowry becomes a bridge to a son-in-law in a society where marriage is considered so essential that without it, a woman’s life is blighted.

Dowry giving is symptomatic of the woman’s inferior status and therefore,
Even when demands are not made, marriage is contracted in a highly competitive marriage market, wherein it is assumed that boys are precious commodities and daughters a burden whom parents must get rid off as early as is feasible.

Kishwar points out that giving of dowry is no insurance against the harassment of the girl in her marital home. Women who return to their natal homes out of harassment will not usually be welcomed back, partly out of fear of social embarrassment and partially also because the daughter is then perceived as a continuing economic burden to the family which has already spent large sums of money as dowry on her.

With the aim to prevent this agonising dilemma for the woman, as well as to strengthen the position of women in their natal and marital homes, Kishwar suggests some structural changes. She suggests, "The solution is not to stop giving to the girl but change the form of giving." The changes suggested emphasise the necessity of:

a. education aimed at the empowerment of girls,
b. a law which will prevent fathers from excluding daughters in their will,
c. giving daughters assets on attainment of adulthood and not on the occasion of marriage,
d. ensuring that deposits which are in the name of women should not be touched by the husband or by in-laws, and,
e. social acceptance of an individual's right to refuse marriage.
The issue of dowry—a social custom—is related to the issue of civil liberties for women. Through the prevailing social phenomenon of 'wife murders', the issue of dowry may deny the women the essential right to life.

In the backdrop of conditions of social, economic inequality of women, Manushi has also commented on the issue of "organising" for change, and "struggle" for change. When the system is unresponsive and impervious to change, women may have to make attempts to facilitate change or to compel it.

Efforts to change may have any of the following objectives:

a. to effect change in public opinion on the issue of change itself,

b. to demand specific change in some particular law,

c. to create some enabling structure such as a Union or Cooperative, and,

d. to use available means present in the system to press for change, i.e., through a responsive judiciary.

Manushi has stressed the importance of struggle in seizing one's constitutional and legal rights. In the pages of Manushi, there is a documentation of women-in-struggle. There is documentation of the experiences of ordinary women who have in their own varied ways, combated oppression and moved towards achieving a modicum of independence and self expression.
There is a documentation also of exceptional women:

who have been able to make a noteworthy contribution in their chosen fields, thereby exposing the lie that women are innately inferior to men, and thus forcing society to become more receptive to the idea of women’s independence and creativity.

The objective of highlighting women-in-struggle is that:

from these two kinds of experience we can learn something about ways of discovering, creating and exploring alternatives even in an oppressive society, thus pushing the environment towards change.

Apart from documentation of personal struggles there is a documentation of collectivity in struggle, arising out of a realisation of a commonality of oppression. The struggles may take many forms, arise around diverse issues. Some examples are of the women from the Uttar Pradesh hills resisting tree felling in the Garhwal region, the formation of the women’s wing of the Ryotu Cooie Sanghams — the Ryotu Mahila Sangham, identifying with the commonality of women’s oppression within the caste oppressed groups, or the forming of a cooperative endeavour for economic autonomy, or organising, with the assistance of another voluntary group, against liquor-vending as in parts of Himachal Pradesh.

The struggles may be waged against discrimination as evidenced by the case of Ms. Muthamma against the Government policy of promotion of women in the Indian
Administrative Services. Protests against sexual harassment of women at work are also documented with the objective of pressing for a better working environment for women.

In Manushi some articles have documented the process and mode of women's empowerment. In some cases this is actively facilitated by external activists. Two interesting articles are "An Assertion of Women Power: Organising Landless Women in Maharashtra" and "Women in the Bodhgaya Land Struggle".

The former documents the issues and the methods by which the poor landless workers of the Shahada Taluka were able to identify patterns of exploitation specific to women, and those which are experienced in common with their menfolk. According to Savara and Gothoskar:

The women labourers share certain problems with men of their own class and suffer from them to a greater extent. Some of these problems are low wages, irregular work, and long working hours. Maternity leave, crèches and medical care are totally non-existent.

However there are women-specific problems such as harassment, wife-beating, and beating and rape of women by forest guards, rich peasants, landlords and crop protecting watchmen.

Striking, boycotting of elections, protesting alcoholism by symbolically breaking liquor-pots and participation in women shibir (camps) have helped women
in the process, not only of understanding patterns of exploitation, but also the consciousness to struggle against them.

The article on women’s participation in the Bodhgaya struggle is a good exposition of the relationship between the issues of a land struggle of the landless and the women’s question. The issues of domestic violence, and even of ownership of land by women, have been understood and raised.

In course of the redistribution of land seized by the landless from the Mahant at Bodhgaya the women discovered that to be eligible to receive land:

- a man had to be landless or without means of subsistence. But a woman was eligible only if, first she was married and widowed, and second, she belonged to a family in which men were landless. The reality is that most women are landless even if their husbands own land. This was not recognised; a woman’s eligibility was made to rest on her relationship to a man living or dead.

Another article has spoken of the women’s successful pressure upon the government to give some land in the name of landless women.

Manushi has also adopted an activist posture attempting to push for correction and amendment of perceived shortfall in existing legislation. Thus we find that Manushi has moved public interest litigation in the following cases:
a. seeking changes in some sections of the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1955,

b. seeking changes in the rights of Tribal Women of the Ho Tribe to possess land.

In the former, a writ petition to the Supreme Court was filed on the 20 August 1982 by Madhu Kishwar, and two women of the Ho tribe - Makibui and Sonamuni - challenging the validity of the law which governs the Ho tribals. By this law Ho tribal women of the Bihar area have no right to inherit the family land and related assets. Women cannot inherit family land - not even in those cases where there is no direct male heir. A widow or daughter is maintained by the male relative who will possess the land. The widow and unmarried daughters who have usufructory rights over the land, are vulnerable to the greed and land hunger of the male relatives and may be made targets of vicious attacks. According to law, women cannot dispose of land; male relatives doing so do not have to seek the permission of the women. In this unfair arrangement Manushi made an appeal to the Supreme Court.

A writ petition under public litigation was also filed in the Supreme Court in June 1986 by Neela Deshmukh and Manushi, challenging as unconstitutional the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1955, which contains many discriminatory provisions which give precedence to fathers over mothers in matters of guardianship and custody of children. The petition
prays that sections 6, 7 and 9 of the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1955, be declared violative of the rights of Hindu women under articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution of India. By the sections 6, 7 and 9 of the Act, the father is the natural guardian of a legitimate minor boy or unmarried girl, the mother, the natural guardian of an illegitimate minor child, and the husband the natural guardian of a minor married girl.

The public interest petition prays that henceforth both the parents should be considered the natural guardians of their minor children, legitimate or illegitimate, in preference to others, including the spouses of the said minors.

The petition prays that the Court should declare that in case of a dispute, either party may sue under the Guardians and Wards Act 1890, and the welfare of the minor (nor defined as material welfare alone), shall be the paramount consideration in declaring one or the other parent the guardian of the minor.

Manushi has pointed out that by declaring the father the natural guardian, the law sets up a presumption in his favour. This means that whenever there is a dispute over guardianship, the mother has to sue.

There is ample documentation of activism of lawyers and others. The issue of eviction of pavement dwellers
of Bombay in July 1981 in Bombay in which two women Olga Tellis and Indira Jai Singh filed a petition on their behalf has been discussed.\textsuperscript{94}

Apart from the conscious attack on women's inequality through legal avenues in the columns of \textit{Manushi} we also find a careful documentation of institutions, developments, which erode the patriarchal structure. There is a write-up on women's hostels,\textsuperscript{96} there is documentation of women consciously demanding land in their own names, rather their jointly with their husbands;\textsuperscript{97} there is documentation also of a move of the DDA to allot flats jointly in the name of husband and wife.\textsuperscript{98}

Editorial comment has been made on all significant issues of the period, ranging from those in which the linkage with women's life-chances it specific such as drought,\textsuperscript{99} violence in elections and public life,\textsuperscript{100} women and elections, to issues of general social relevance such as capital punishment, communalism;\textsuperscript{101} reservations for the other backward classes. This emphasises \textit{Manushi}'s stated policy of being a "journal about women and society".

Similarly, \textit{Manushi} has attempted to unravel the past in an attempt to understand present day society and its problems. Does history have insights to offer on the complex social issues of significance to women's
status in India today? Can history throw light on the origin of Sati, the dowry custom, the issue of the Ram Janamsthan? What has been the influence of Islam and of the British colonialism on Indian society? These questions, among others, addressed to the eminent historian Romilla Thapar in an interview, aid in understanding the position of women in a complex Indian society. Relevant for the perception of women's place in society is the historian's contention that society often picks up and emphasises some interpretations of some aspects of tradition because those interpretations may, in some way, be useful for it.

The point Thapar makes about a society making a political choice about adopting the tradition which it will hold out, from other given options, is extremely useful for understanding the politics of women's subordination.

In this category of historical writing which enrich our understanding of women's position and subordination, would fall an article by Uma Chakravarty, attempting to analyse the position of women in the Buddhist society in order to discover the roles played by women and the degree of freedom they enjoyed in the three roles of wife, courtesan and bhikkhuni.
In another article, Uma Chakravarty has attempted to turn the spotlight on the labouring women - the dasis - in Ancient India. This is done to extend the traditional studies on women's status in Ancient India which tend to focus on women's high status within families and view it "as an index of their status in Indian civilisation". The whole truth should well comprehend the other perspective too i.e., the low status of the dasis.

This analysis is useful to understand the patriarchal organisation of the society.

An article on "Folklore" by A.K. Ramanujan points out the relevance of folklore as a tool for understanding society, especially the women's perception. Folklores carry within it:

the voice of what is fashionably called the subaltern - the woman, the peasant, the non-literate, and those who are marginal to the courts of kings and the offices of the bureaucrats, the centres of power ....

An article documents and comments on the life of a ten-year old girl who combines over six hours of work at domestic chores with attendance at school. Attention is also focussed on the inadequacies of teaching and of the curriculum to indicate how little it assists the child in advancing her understanding of the world she lives in, or widening her options for the future.
Manushi has closely examined the controversy which has been generated around the issue of reservations following announcement of the implementation of recommendations of the Mandal Commission. It has critically reviewed the arguments against extending reservations to the other Backward Classes and found them wanting. They are exposed as being more in the nature of protecting the entrenched interests and privilege of the Forward Classes.

In the reservation policy Kishwar would argue for protecting 50% seats within the Other Backward Class quota for women from these classes. 108

In an article, "In Defence of Our Dharma", 109 Kishwar emphasises the diversity, and the coexistence despite differences of religious and spiritual belief which characterises India. She stresses the importance of the true understanding of the cultural roots of Hinduism as the best and most effect counterpoise to the narrow concept of "hindu" nationalism advocated by the BJP-RSS-VHP combine which compromises "the unique space of dissent within the Hindu religious and cultural traditions".

Kishwar is critical of the distortions in understanding the real nature of Hinduism. Says Kishwar:

In the name of promoting 'secular' education, the western educated elite has deliberately promoted ignorance of India's rich heritage.
The issue of communal riots specially their adverse effect on the women and poorer sections has been raised in several articles.\textsuperscript{110}

Manushi has attempted to include articles reflecting the state of women's movement in the neighbouring countries, like Pakistan, and in the Asian Countries such as Fiji and even Egypt and Iran.\textsuperscript{111}

Manushi has highlighted that occasionally the denial of civil liberties for women may flow from the behaviour of the State itself, as in the case of the Sati incident at Deorala where the State showed itself incapable of enforcing its own laws. There is a sharp indictment of the State, which is held guilty of inaction, and of lacking in political will to deal with the issue.

The incident of Sati was seen as an incident of murder, and was perceived as linked with the general devaluation of women in society. Says Kishwar:

\begin{quote}
It is important that we demystify it and see it as a case of a woman being hounded to death under a specious religious cover.\textsuperscript{112}
\end{quote}

The article "The Burning of Roop Kanwar", points out that the "existing laws were perfectly adequate to prevent her death",\textsuperscript{113} and that the government did not need the additional powers it acquired under the new anti-Sati ordinance of the Rajasthan government to deal with such an incident.
The tendency of governments to arm themselves with additional draconian powers is viewed with suspicion; as these have generally been used to harass the general citizens.

The clause of death punishment for the crime of abetment to sati is perceived as anachronistic when most countries are considering the abolition of the death penalty, for it has proved futile as a way of reducing the crime rate. It has the potential of denying individuals in future of their right to life.

The track record of the State in the field of civil liberties too comes in for criticism:

In fact, our government machinery... is not only corrupt but often outright murderous, witness the Indian police record of atrocities, ranging from the Arwal massacre, to innumerable rapes in custody, to the recent PAC killings in cold blood of arrested Muslims in Meerut.

*Manushi* points out that:

Our government has perfected the art of passing draconian laws which it then uses not to solve problems but to acquire additional arbitrary powers and then intimidate the citizenry in general...

There is, in *Manushi's* pages an indictment of the police. That the law keepers themselves have been guilty of denying women their right to life and liberty has been documented in the journal.
There are no illusions about the nature of the police which is recognised as repressive, anti-poor, and as agents of the ruling class in the State.

Time and time again, the police fire on workers who demand their overdue wages. The police attack agricultural labourers who protest against their bonded conditions. When landless, poor women in Andhra formed groups to fight sexual and other exploitation by landlords, they were attacked by the police and hounded out of their villages. How is it we never hear of police torturing or beating up powerful landlords or factory owners?

The status quoist police is criticised:

... their function is to protect those in power to torture those who challenge this power.

Some cases have been reported which have highlighted police brutality. This police violence has been directed at either poor women, or at women and associates who have attempted to organise the poor, the slum dwellers, the landless. Thus Rajasthan Kisan Union's attempts to organise tribal women and the landless farmers on the issue of the poor management of the Famine Relief Programme, Chattray Yuva Sangharsh Vahini's struggle to implement land ceiling laws in the interests of slum dwellers in Agra, and the attempts by adivasi landless farmers to cultivate the fields of the mahajan in Beldih village of the Santhal Parganas have been met with repression by the State. These have been documented.
In the columns of Manushi, governmental policies too have come in for criticism. In an article on the Cholera Epidemic, in the resettlement colonies of Delhi in 1987, there is a critique of the government's handling of the crisis situation. The health-care policies of the government, notes an article:

With their emphasis on elephantine hospitals and sophisticated equipment, concentrated at a few centres are totally unfitted to cope with people's health care needs, let alone disasters.

The health policies, it is suggested should be redesigned to focus on community-based preventive medicine and on a delivery system that can reach those who need health care the most. More health care workers who should work under the direct supervision of the local self government were needed. The hutsments, the resettlement colonies without potable water and basic minimum sanitation actually were the consequence of the government's lop-sided planning and development policies. Manushi points out:

... hundreds of thousands throng to Delhi and other big cities not for the pleasure of living in slums, but because they find the barest survival impossible in the villages from where they are forced to migrate. The State, claiming as it does, to be omnipotent in economic development, cannot disown responsibility for the destitution which is the direct consequence of its own planning.

While the core of the journal is "change" and "transformation" to overcome the legal and social
'shortfalls' in women's equality, there can be discovered, in the pages of *Manushi*, a move to press for an "alternative" political arrangement and an alternative politics – or "new politics". This new politics enjoins accountability of state power, decentralisation and a greater participation of the people in local issues. 127

This envisages a system of community organisations and neighbourhood-based politics where the local populace is able to play a more meaningful role in exerting control over their own lives, rather than being regulated by large, complex governmental structures, which by their very nature are not, and cannot be responsive. "New politics" also envisages the local populace being able to influence the system with the positive qualities which characterise local politics – greater concern, tolerance and support – which are missing in large-scale organisations. These then can also act as a bulwark against the negative forces which have been released by the working of political parties – such as elections based on money power, elections based on fomenting communalism and elections marked with violence and unfairness.

These suggestions of a "new politics" have developed from a sense of disillusionment and helplessness faced by citizens – a system characterised
by widespread corruption, communalism, violence, and limited State accountability and responsiveness.

"New politics" would de-emphasise all the characteristics of old or traditional politics - i.e., low public participation, secrecy, privacy, compromises and the numbers game. 129

In course of several articles the issue of accountability of official personnel to the community has been stressed - whether it is the local health worker, the teacher, or even some levels of police officials. Control and accountability of police would also prevent their likely misuse in events of communal unrest. 131

It is suggested in an article:

The only way to make the police accountable to the people is to have elected neighbourhood councils to have complete control over the appointment, supervision and discharge of local police ... This structural change should be kept in mind as a goal. 132

But even while suggesting responsiveness and accountability of a government rendered unaccountable to the people by the vast powers at its disposal, "new politics" would raise more fundamental questions about the validity and justice of the social and legal arrangements which supports a system unjust to women.

Manushi questions the existing arrangements of society:
What we need to ask ourselves is whether, when we demand justice, it is only implementation of existing law we want? Because even if they were implemented, would that reduce crime, would the criminals suffer in society as the victim does? ... It is not law which determines who is treated as guilty, it is the weight of social opinion. So far, this opinion is heavily biased in favour of male privilege or power. If we are to change this situation, perhaps we need to think seriously not only about the role of the government and police in upholding this power, but also how we, individually and collectively, need to confront this leviathan - the patriarchal State.

"New politics" will demand new patterns of organisation for struggle, and organisation for change when the unjust system exhibits itself as unresponsive to the special needs and demands for women.

The new patterns of protest and organisation will challenge the existing ones which are not only ineffective, but also heavily biased in favour of the patriarchal arrangements. Actions against cases relating to dowry-deaths, harassment and rape, are often delayed, and often not forthcoming at all. The suggestion made is to bypass the police and the courts and make non-violent and public social protest and use these means to pass judgement on those who are guilty of such crime against women.

"New politics" hints at the totally new and imaginative ways which have emerged in course of expressing anguished protest against perceived wrong - such as the embracing of trees by women of the U.P. hill
region, the beating of *thalis* to protest against price-rise in Maharashtra in the 1970s, the breaking of liquor pots to protest against drunkenness and wife-beating in Dhulia and Shahada.

These actions will be public, draw public support and depend on self organisation. Women will shun dependence on State agencies, having little or no illusions of their impartiality.

We have learnt the value of women's organised action, we have realised that rights are never given to anyone - they have to be demanded and struggled for.

The opinion expressed is that in some cases, people's organisations are more effective and successful than State action. Notes *Manushi*:

Instead of relying on ordinances, stay-orders and the police ... it would be better if local human rights and women's organisations mobilised all concerned persons to offer indefinite satyagraha at Deorala.

These ideas on accountability of government, and structural changes to match it, and through structural changes to effect a change in the society, as well as the new methods of organisation of bringing these about, are consistent with the idea expressed in the editorial of an early *Manushi* issue:

Let us examine the whole question, all the questions. Let us not only redefine ourselves, our role, our image - but also the kind of society we want to live in.
Thus in the pages of *Manushi* attention has been focussed upon the important issues which have a bearing on women's position in the Indian society.

*Manushi* has been able to identify and highlight that arena in which the State should initiate legislative changes in the interest of women's equality.

*Manushi* has revealed too, an understanding that it will need more than legal changes to make this equality effective in practice, and so has taken cognisance of the importance of personal and collective struggle in this task.

*Manushi*’s contribution lies in its building of, and encouragement to this spirit of struggle in overcoming the constraints which limit the utilisation of rights, while yet pressing for change at the formal, legal level.

**Part II**

**Suraksha**

After examining the macro-perspective which has been taken by *Manushi*, highlighting the many dimensions of the women's subordination, we will now turn our attention to *Suraksha*, a small voluntary organisation
which sprang up around the specific issue of dowry and dowry demands in 1983. This shifts our attention to a narrower frame of reference, i.e., the unit of family, for it is here that the issue of dowry, dowry demands, harassment and often denial of the right of life of a woman may take place.

Suraksha had its inception, as a reaction to the spate of dowry-deaths and bride-burning cases which were being reported in the media and press in the early eighties, and arose as a citizens' intervention to see that such a grave denial of life of a woman should not remain unpunished because of apathy, or slow procedures. They were keen too, to build up a mass awareness around the issue of dowry. They envisaged a role for themselves helping women who had, or were likely to be faced with a problem related to dowry-demand.

The objectives which Suraksha has outlined for itself are:

a. to educate the general public at large specially on the evil of dowry and its effect upon society;

b. to aid destitute women who have been affected or are likely to be affected by dowry in all respects, including counselling, and medico-legal, legal and financial aid, resettlement and any other manner as may be decided;

c. to raise financial aid by way of subscriptions, donations and/or fund-raising projects to supplement the main objectives mentioned above; and

d. to create an awareness against the evil system of dowry and to actively propagate against dowry demands starting from one's neighbourhood.
In the initial period of its inception, Suraksha appeared to outline a strong interventionist role for itself. This is apparent from these excerpts of an early meeting "... the organisation should see that all cases were registered against the accused and further that adequate care was taken by the police in investigating the case fully and impartially".  

Thus they were cognisant of the working of the system where for various reasons such as, ignorance of law, police apathy, or a desire to shield a party, the case may not be adequately dealt with. There was a keenness that the guilty be booked.  

The second prong of this strategy to meet dowry-related issues was a sustained campaign at the city level against the dowry issue aimed through workshops at schools and colleges, mohalla and neighbourhood meetings and occasionally even at offices.  

At its inception, the organisation, which was registered in 1984, called itself "Dahej Maang Virodhi Samiti, or Anti-Dowry Demand Organisation. However, in the year 1987, an additional name was acquired by applying for a formal change of name, to the Registrar of Societies, and the body became "Suraksha - Dahej Maang Virodhi Samiti. It also performs the task of a Family Counselling Centre." From an organisation which dealt with eighteen cases in the first three years
of its existence, to registering 128 new cases in the twelve month period between April 1991 and March 1992. Suraksha appears as an answer to the needs of the troubled women in and around the city of Lucknow. Suraksha, presently functions from a centrally located office, which is opened 6 days a week. Suraksha is meticulous about records, and a study will reveal the kind of cases that come before the organisation, and the kind of assistance which may be sought from Suraksha.

a. Suraksha is available to lend a sympathetic ear and to guide women;
b. Distress calls made to Suraksha through telephone are responded to. Letters are similarly dealt with, and out-station requests are referred to agencies and groups in the area;
c. Some basic advice, even of a legal nature, may be given in the office itself;
d. Suraksha can, if the client desires, mediate in a dispute within a family in order to effect an amicable reconciliation and mutual settlement. The pattern generally followed is to invite both parties to put forward their grievance and their side of the story;
e. In cases of harassment or violence, Suraksha can assist the woman to lodge the First Information Report and help file a legal notice;
f. Suraksha counsellors are available to accompany women to the Family Courts. They may help outstation clients keep a track of the date of their hearings in the Courts;
g. Suraksha may, if it considers necessary, report a case to the Women's Cell of the Police;
h. Suraksha can, through its lawyers make available sound legal advice to its women clients, assist in the filing for maintenance, divorce or for the return of stridhan;
i. **Suraksha** may help to rehabilitate women economically in employment, or assist them in vocational training; and,

j. Women in distress, without a place to go to, may be temporarily accommodated in a shelter home.

Thus advice — practical and legal, and support — moral and legal, are two ways by which women can be aided by **Suraksha**. Legal advice is free.

Prior to 1986 **Suraksha** had been dependent upon donations and funds raised by members through assorted fund raising activities. However since 1986, **Suraksha** has become a recipient of a grant from the Social Welfare Board. It draws this grant as a Family Counselling Centre.

The organisational set up envisaged in the Constitution of **Suraksha** sets up a Managing Committee comprising of seven members elected from the General Body. Currently **Suraksha's** membership stands at about 50 members.

There are paid counsellors, an accountant and a peon, who perform the day to day tasks of **Suraksha**. The larger body of members help in the various tasks of **Suraksha** in modes and manner suitable to them, and also act as conduits for women who may need the assistance of **Suraksha**.
The paid counsellors work according to a work-plan which also outlines the manner in which the managing committee members can assist in Suraksha activities.

Day to day tasks of Suraksha would include counselling of women who come with family problems, fact finding visits to locations, accompanying women, if necessary, to the lawyers and to Family Courts. The organisation of mohalla meetings, workshops in schools, village work, visits to the shelter home, are also the tasks handled by the counsellors. The counsellors are encouraged to keep a daily diary.

The Managing Committee may step in to assist if required, in course of fact-finding in a particular case. They are in constant touch with the counsellors to meet any problem. The Committee can also help in legal guidance and in conducting workshops in schools and colleges. At the General Body meetings held once a month, the Counsellors may report on particularly difficult cases. Legal implications, or complications may be discussed.

Publicity is an important concern of Suraksha. Its success depends upon the wider dissemination of its idea of anti-dowry marriages, as well as its capability of counselling on people's problems. Publicity efforts have included distribution of leaflets, putting up of large hoardings, printing Suraksha's major purpose,
address and phone number in the local newspapers, encouraging members to have Suraksha sign boards on their homes/gates. Word about the organisation spreads also through the avenue of workshops and mohalla meetings as well as through the medium of the television and newspapers. Cases are brought to Suraksha also through the agency of women who themselves have benefitted from Suraksha's intervention.

An activist of Suraksha is a keen writer on women's issues in local papers and has written also for Dharamyug and the Femina. Other activists have been interviewed in the press as well. Also, Suraksha members and office bearers have participated in programmes on the Television as well.

Suraksha is forthcoming with its comment upon social issues raised in the city. While its sole dharna/rally against dowry demands was organised in April 1986, it has also participated, along with other voluntary organisations in a dharna against crimes against women in the city, in 1991, and in a "March for Peace" in the communally charged atmosphere of Lucknow in November 1990 in wake of activity at Ayodhya. It brought out an appeal in the local papers for maintaining secular values. Thus it has helped in raising the awareness level in the city.
Suraksha has been able to build a good supportive network of relationships with government and non-governmental agencies in and around the city of Lucknow. For some of its village development activity, and for the mohalla meetings, Suraksha is aided by the postgraduate students of the Social Work Department of the Lucknow University, who may occasionally link Suraksha with their curriculum requirement of project work.

Suraksha has collaborated closely with other agencies in promoting their message. The Civil Defence Organisation was seen as a medium to reach out to the wider public and to collaborate with to set up small watch-dog committees.

It has harmonious relations with the Self Employed Women's Association dealing with chikan craft, the Self Employed Women's Association dealing with zardozi, with the local office of Mahila Samakya and with another Lucknow-based women's group called Akanksha.

The files show that there have been instances of networking with women's organisations like Saheli, Manushi and Jagori. They have referred cases or volunteers to Suraksha. Similarly cases have been referred from Kanpur-based organisations too.

Other local units with which it has contacts are the Manushi Vichar Kendra, Lucknow Thinkers' Council and Sebhhagi Shikshan Kendra.
Linkages with the Social Welfare Board and the administration appear harmonious. Suraksha works closely with the police. Cases may be referred to the "Crime against Women Cell" and frequently interventions may be sought from Senior Police Officials.

Suraksha files documents that cases come in not only from Lucknow, but from neighboring cities as well, e.g., from Barabanki, Rae Bareli, Sultanpur too. Complete confidence is maintained regarding the identity and problem of the client. Often women, who out of embarrassment or fear of social comment, hesitate to go to the Suraksha office, even contact members of the organisation at their homes.

Generating awareness around the issue of dowry is an objective listed in Suraksha's Constitution and an important prong of its activity. The organisation therefore attempts to touch the young minds of students of schools and colleges through organising lectures, workshops and street plays. Poster competitions and essay competitions on the subject have also been organised. Adults are sensitised to the dowry issue and social problems through mohalla meetings, and by holding such meetings at offices. Two workshops and one mohalla meeting each month, are specified in the work-plan.

It may be useful to quote from the report of 1991-92:
nine workshops were held in institutions involving approximately 1200-1500 students. The method used for these were role play, street play, discussions and post film viewing discussions.

The discussion on dowry in these workshops further leads to other related issues such as economic independence of women, status of women, atrocities upon women, family discord, etc.

To build an awareness on the issue of dowry and the role of state agencies, as well as of society in fighting against it, Suraksha has from time to time organised seminars on topics such as Dowry (1985), Woman, Society and Law (1987), National Perspective Plan for Women (1988), jointly with the YWCA, Lucknow.

Suraksha has made an endeavour to expand its awareness generation programme into rural areas. It has organised two rural awareness programmes - at Phalenda in 1988 and at Kanar in 1989. These seven-day camps mixed the issue of women's rights along with other programmes on health, nutrition, adult education, employment schemes. Films and puppet shows served both to illuminate and entertain.

Suraksha's brush with the rural areas while organising the rural awareness camps has resulted in the appearance of another arena of action, i.e., relating to development. Suraksha had organised two rural awareness camps - one at Phalenda between 22 January to 28 January
1988 and the second at Kanar, between 23 February to 1 March 1989.

In the first camp, i.e. at Phalenda, the issues touched upon were health and hygiene, prevention of food contamination, status of women, laws relating to women, family welfare and planning, immunisation, information on governmental plans for women and the economic opportunities available for women. Demonstrations of cookery, sewing, first-aid and home remedies was also done.

In the second camp too, awareness of women's rights, under law, importance of health and hygiene, information on economic activities and an introduction to government programmes for women was given. There were demonstrations of first aid and home remedies, cooking and sewing. Matters of water management, energy management, pollution control were discussed. But whereas the first camp in Phalenda in 1988 culminated in the provision of six sewing machines to women for starting income generation activity, at the conclusion of the Kanar camp, 15 women were motivated to set up their own mahila mandal to discuss issues relevant to their lives.

This major success was followed by the setting up of a balwadi on the 1 April 1989, for adult education for women, and for children between the ages of four and ten.
A small programme of training in chikan embroidery for women in six villages was started with the collaboration of the Mahila Kalyan Nigam in May 1990. These trained women are able to obtain work from the Self Employed Women's Association, who have a local production centre in the area. Women are thus able to get a small supplementary income.

A novel breakthrough was attempted through the establishment of an innovative income-generation programme - the tractor scheme - under a one lakh, fifty thousand grant given by the Social Welfare Board. Under this scheme 45 women of the villages of Kanar Gulabkhera, Sanyasibagh have received a training in tractor driving and cooperatively use the tractor in order to become self-employed wage earners.

The value of the tractor scheme lies in the transformation it has been able to make in the system where tractor driving is perceived as essentially a male occupation. The consequent mobility of women has contributed to social change. The impact of such innovative activity in villages by Suraksha is that people tend to become more conscious and aware of Suraksha objectives.

Currently Suraksha is in the process of working out the practical application of a project which they have received from the UNICEF for water and sanitation scheme.
in 25 villages of the Malihabad, Sarojini Nagar, and Bakshi-ka-Taalab blocks. The project involves working closely with the Jal Nigam, Uttar Pradesh, as well.

The project envisages sinking the hand-pumps, training of local persons—largely women—as mechanics who will undertake repairs on pumps and look to their maintenance in future, setting up of associations of water-users and intervening, through these, in the area of women and health, general sanitation, hygiene and legal awareness.

Suraksha volunteers made a survey of villages to identify those which have to be touched by the programme. While Jal Nigam, U.P. is in charge of sinking the pumps and teaching repair and maintenance work, Suraksha will be closely involved with the other aspects of the programme. Women, it is envisaged, will be closely involved both in learning repairing skills as well as in the pani panchayats for water usage. The tentative approach is to have five teams—each of which will include two Jal Nigam workers, two resource persons linked to Suraksha, and four paid helpers trained and oriented for this kind of voluntary intervention by Suraksha.

Another programme on the anvil is that of a "Women's Resource Centre", funding for which is expected to come from OXFAM. Under this scheme Suraksha
envisages its own growth as a core organisation which will act as documentation centre and as a disseminator of information to other non-governmental agencies in the area. It envisages a training programme by which counsellors from other voluntary organisations can be trained for counselling. There is a proposal of setting up a para-legal training programme which will supply the basic modicum, of legal literacy which may be useful in the field areas. This can be kept open for workers of other voluntary organisations active in remote rural areas as well. However the project of the Resource Centre does not include the building up of any income-generation activities for women.

**Suraksha** reports also indicate a desire to expand its range of activities. The report of 1991-92 states:

> We have to start thinking of **Suraksha** in larger terms ... Unless we grow and develop ... a vision of the [sic] resource centre for women at State level we will fall behind. It is necessary to look for other funding avenues to render services more professionally and efficiently.

Thus **Suraksha** has been active both the field of social awareness as well as in the field of developmental activity. **Suraksha** has established its credibility as having contributed positively in family related counselling even in the eyes of the State. Says the Annual Report of 1991-92:

> [Further text]
Since last year the managing committee members have also been assisting the family courts as social counsellors in Lok Adalats.

Recently, when the Social Welfare Board disbanded their counselling services, their pending cases were shifted to Suraksha.

Through its actual interventions Suraksha has been able to develop a critical perception not only of law but also of its implementation.

On a general level there is a comment about the delay in releasing annual grants by the Social Welfare Board. There is also a critical opinion expressed about the absence of sensitivity of the Police in the handling of women's cases.

The Suraksha activists are generally of the opinion that Family Courts are slow, reconciliation-oriented rather than women oriented and that judges do not appear to fully utilise their extensive powers in favour of obtaining a better deal for the harassed women who appear before them.

In their recommendations on the National Perspective Plan for Women, Suraksha (with YWCA, Lucknow), recommended, among other things, that:

All investigations for special family courts cases should be time-bound and the procedures should not extend beyond six months.
It was also pointed out that:

Maintenance cases despite the establishment of Family Courts to provide speedy justice, lie pending in the Court for several years. Thus State agencies set up to facilitate justice for women tend to be backward in this task. This understanding had led Suraksha to draft a petition to the Administrative Judge, suggesting remedial measures for the efficient functioning of the Family Courts as well as for the prevention and avoidance of unnecessary harassment to women who appear before the Family Courts.

The Lok Adalats too tended to push through cases without really going into the sensitive nature of the issues, the emphasis being laid more on the number of cases decided and closed.

Suraksha has pointed also to the lacunae in the procedures which may defeat and nullify the advantage granted by law. Maintenance is a case in point. While the Courts can grant maintenance, yet there is no machinery by which its regular and full payment may be ensured for the woman. To demand resumption of payment, the woman will have to go through the tedious legal procedure once again.

Suraksha draws attention also to loopholes which work against women's interests. A delaying tactic is to
get a case transferred to the Court of another judge. 175

Filing a case for the custody of the child after divorce or separation has been granted, is another ploy to avoid payment of maintenance of children. 176

_Suraksha_ would like the Courts to take up the responsibility of enforcement of judgements in the interest of women. Says Bhatia:

_Implementation of Court judgements should be the responsibility of the Court._ 177

In _Suraksha's_ comments in the press and presentation in reports and seminars etc., there is apparent a criticism of the police in their treatment of dowry-death/wife-murder cases. _Suraksha_ activists point out that the police, overburdened with law and order problems, give low priority to the deaths of women in families.

They point to procedural rules which may upset the course of justice. 178 For example, there may be the conscious suppression of a dowry-death case by the police. The police may occasionally join up with the woman's marital family and may suppress evidence with the objective of weakening the case during investigation itself. 179 There may be grave delays in the preparation of charge-sheets. This laxity may work against justice for women. The police often reveal a rich class-police nexus. Cases of false post-mortem reports are not
unknown. There may be unusual delays in obtaining reports of the medical examination of the viscera which is conducted at Agra.

The Suraksha Counsellor points out that often they are unable to get immediate information from the police regarding the exact location in the city of a reported case of a woman's death.

However Suraksha, on the basis of its own investigations reacts in the press against police action of bypassing or suppressing incidents of women's deaths in suspicious circumstances.

It has also often made independent appeals to the District Magistrate or the Director General of Police to plead for independent investigations and further impartial inquiries. The Suraksha Counsellor feels that an ideal situation for effective intervention in dowry deaths would be one where the voluntary organisation would get the recognition and authority (backed by personnel and even police), to investigate women's death/murder cases.

Since dowry was the core issue around which Suraksha had developed, many discussions were held upon the issue to identify lacunae in legislation. In a letter to the Prime Minister in May 1983, the following suggestions were made:
a. Bail should not be given in case of dowry murders,

b. The definition of dowry should include waste and ostentation in marriages, and, this should also be legally prohibited.

It was suggested that each case of suspected bride-burning should be officially probed by the C.I.D., that there should be special police cell for dowry cases and also more protective institutions and working women's hostels. Other suggestions related to an emphasis on women's education especially in rural areas, inclusion of discussion on dowry and marriage in the Social Studies curricula of schools, and the setting up of a special committee at the Centre to investigate the issue of dowry from the social, economic and legal angles.

Provisions of the Dowry Prohibition Act which fail to set up a ceiling on the provision of gifts to the bride have been criticised. The legal sanction on gifts to the bride, provided their value is not excessive of the financial status of the giver, and provided they are entered in a list, which is signed by the bride, her father and the bridegroom's father, has been criticised. It is seen as imparting a legality to the giving of dowry.

The issue of punitive action against the dowry giver is also raised by Suraksha. Says Bhatia:

Whenever a case of dowry death, emanating from dowry demand is taken up and the parents of the woman state to the police or in the courts that
they had earlier paid ... to fulfil dowry-demands —
they should also be booked for propagating dowry
demands. Society has come to realise that a giver
of dowry (when it is demanded) is equally
responsible for the subsequent/ultimate crime.

Moreover the dowry issue is now being perceived in
its logical connections with the issue of women and
inheritance. This understanding of the issue in its
wider ramifications will generate a more comprehensive,
more realistic discussion on the issue rather than one
based on the moral and normative assertions about the
'evil of dowry'.

Identifying the wider roots of dowry will greatly
assist the voluntary organisation to make programmes and
projects to strike at those roots.

Recommendations, made by Suraksha from time to time
would highlight the perception Suraksha has about the
kind of environment Indian women should be able to
enjoy. Most of these recommendations are in the shape
of concrete suggestions to the State which the State is
competent to legislate upon. Some of these insights of
Suraksha have been drawn from their actual field
experiences and counselling activity. One
recommendation relates to the compulsory registration of
marriages. This they feel will take care of quite a few
controversial and problematic situations. They point
out:
child marriages would not be as common and frequent as they are even today; disputes as regards the legality of marriages would automatically be eliminated, dowry issues would be taken care of, to a certain extent, specially if registration of lists become a practice; bigamy cases would be on the decrease...

Some other recommendations are of far-reaching importance vis-a-vis women's position in the eyes of law. They are:

A common civil code be devised for all citizens of India and all personal laws should be made obsolete. This code should give equal rights of inheritance together with equal rights to matrimonial property. Women should have a right to stay in the matrimonial home in case of matrimonial dispute and [of] protection from harassment by their husbands by way of an injunction on the lines of English Matrimonial Homes Act 1967 and the Domestic Violence Act 1976.

Their recommendations also highlighted the importance of housework:

Domestic work should be given recognition and be regarded as positive economic contribution to the family. This should be definitely considered in cases of maintenance or divorce.

The issue of women in family has not been seen without an appreciation of the backdrop of the patriarchal society in which it is located. Critical references have been made about the misuse of the amniocentesis tests. Suraksha is actively considering an initiation of a public interest litigation appealing for legislation in U.P. to ban the uncontrolled use of the amniocentesis tests in private clinics for these are likely to have grave consequences for the life chances
of the unborn female population, as well as for the sex ratio in the nation which is already adverse for women.\(^{190}\) Comments have also been made upon the non-application of the Equal Remuneration Act.\(^{191}\)

A critical evaluation of \textit{Suraksha} shows that today \textit{Suraksha} appears to have adopted a two-pronged approach -- one falling under the broad rubric of dowry-related, family-related counselling, and the second relating to development activity in the rural areas.

To an outside observer they appear quite separate and a little difficult to reconcile. \textit{Suraksha} however maintains that development activity has emerged as a consequence of a felt need. It appears that the rural awareness camp of 1989 was the intervention which has later evolved into income generation and development activity. However the development orientation of the \textit{Suraksha} workers was apparent in the first camp at Phalenda. The problems they had identified during the camp were:

(a) a completely degenerated road to the village;
(b) dire paucity of drinking water;
(c) lack of irrigation facilities;
(d) no existing governmental medical aid;
(e) one poorly managed primary level school for the entire village;
(f) poor families with a large number of children; and,
(g) lack of opportunities for women.
None of these related to the issue specifically of dowry and dowry-related awareness. Also, the linkage to any social problem or to any socio-economic realities of the area was slender. No observations were made of the caste composition, class composition or dowry patterns existing among different castes in the area.

At Suraksha, the justification of reconciling the UNICEF scheme of handpumps with women's development appears somewhat laboured. However its linkages with women's awareness, women's training for hand-pump repair work and maintenance, are the expressed rationale for linking it with Suraksha's objectives of assisting women.

Suraksha members too admit that the two pronged approach at social change - counselling and development - has led to difficulty in management, and also sometimes resource constraints. However these problems are not perceived as unsurmountable.

A question may be raised. Is the women - in development approach accompanied by any decline in the numbers of dowry/family-related problems being brought to Suraksha? However the figures and the report of the year 1991-92 do not support such a hypothesis.

Another possible explanation for Suraksha branching out into development could be that the organisation
feels compelled to involve in activities and programmes which may be observed as evidence of work accomplished. This specially, since the body draws on state grants and has a degree of accountability.

The very nature of Suraksha's tasks - counselling, advising, mediation, efforts at reconciliation, conducting of workshops, generating awareness on women's issue - are such that they do not show effectively on paper, and therefore it is likely that Suraksha is reaching out to programmes which can be seen and observed and evaluated.

However Suraksha activists do not accept this hypothesis for explaining a change in approach from counselling to development. Their explanation remains that development activities emerged from perceived lacunae and felt needs in the rural areas. Another possible explanation for the emphasis on developmental activity relates to a natural readiness of good active voluntary organisations to engage in honest professional tasks of social improvement and the tendency of funding agencies to seek out committed voluntary organisations to take on their projects. Thus sometimes funding agencies may have worked out projects which need to be implemented and at other times voluntary agencies may have plans which funding agencies may be willing to underwrite.
The projected UNICEF hand pump scheme, and the tractor scheme of Suraksha could probably be explained in this way. But at present village activities do not draw any special financial support. Presently all activities, urban-based and rural-based, are funded by the grant Suraksha receives as a Family Counselling Centre. Therefore the explanation that the availability of funds explains Suraksha's development thrust, too does not seem fully justified.

In the working of Suraksha we discover that there is an understanding of the realities of the subordinate location of women within the family. It has generated an understanding of the laws relating to women and family, as well as highlighted the lacunae within them and in their implementation. There is a positive effort at helping to educate people on the issue of women's legal rights, as well as helping to build women's own autonomy and self-esteem. There is a stress upon the role that the local mohalla, neighbourhood and citizens can play in the issue of bringing into the public eye, the harassment of women within families. There is an effort in small ways towards creating avenues of economic independence for women.

Thus Suraksha has served not only those with whom it actually comes in touch with immediately, but also as an agency of social change. Suraksha has been able to
build space for weak and vulnerable women. Through counselling it has helped the women psychologically and emotionally. Through its pattern of discussing harassment and family problems, Suraksha acts as a support to the women, and thus gives them some advantage and moral support in fighting for better deal in a marriage or for bargaining for a fair settlement in case of an estrangement. Suraksha has, since its inception, been able to make a pioneering, path-breaking venture in the sensitive area of family and law and has been able to establish credibility for itself.

Persuasion of Suraksha files offers an interesting insight that women's oppression within families — harassment, violence and even death — cuts across economic classes. The Suraksha files offer empirical proof of the reality of women's subordination in the Indian society.

**Part III**

**An Analysis**

Treatment of women's issues by Manushi is on a panoramic scale — the economic, social, legal, political aspects are all included. It attempts to educate and inform about women's conditions as well as about women—
in-movement. Struggles, protests are an important concern for Manushi.

In Suraksha on the other hand, the issue is specific and demarcated. It is an anti-dowry demand organisation and a family counselling centre. On the positive side it has women's education for anti-dowry consciousness. It has gravitated into development issues.

In the columns of the former there is a sharp critique of the state. There is a call for changes in the Hindu Succession Act, Guardianship Act, inheritance rights for tribal women and a call for a uniform Civil Code, which will give women justice. In an activist posture there is use of social action litigation. There is also a documentation of protest struggle, and an implicit sanction of these methods for change.

In Suraksha a critical stance towards the police is becoming evident, there is a pointing towards lacunae in law relating to women and family issues. However the aspect of struggle and protest against the system does not came out very sharply. The anti-dowry protest against a dowry demand case took place in 1986. There is certainly a critical perception towards state and its agencies, but not an overt expression of this in the form of a dharna, or struggle.
- Even on their development projects while there is certainly an effort at aiding to create economic independence and literacy but there is no push towards helping them in understanding the roots and interconnections of their economic and social backwardness.
NOTES

1. Initially Manushi was brought out in Hindi as well, but since 1987, the Hindi edition has been discontinued.

2. August-September, 1977. This group lasted only a few months because the initiators of the group became involved in the publication of Manushi.

3. In the recent past Manushi has also published a book entitled "Gandhi and Women" authored by Madhu Kishwar, translated and published a collection of short stories, written on street-play entitled "Roshni" and brought out an audio-cassette.


5. Ibid., p.2.

6. Ibid., p.2.

7. Ibid., p.21.

8. The following discussion on Manushi is based on a review and examination of the journal Manushi brought out by the Manushi group.


10. Ibid., p.2.

11. Ibid., p.4.

12. Ibid., p.4.

13. Formally Manushi is run by Manushi Trust comprising of four members which takes the form of a parent-body. This Trust is only to provide a non-commercial, non-individual form of ownership.

14. It is hoped that the publication of some other relevant and useful material in Hindi will lay the groundwork for the eventual reappearance of a self-sustaining Hindi Manushi. These hindi publications include a street play, Roshni, Kishwar Naheed's poems, Sharanjit Shan's autobiography, and an anthology of significant articles from the earlier editions of Manushi. Pamphlets on health and legal self-help are on the anvil. Introduction, op. cit., 14.
15. Manushi, No.2, March-April, 1979, inside cover.


18. Ibid., inside front cover.

19. See inside of the back cover Manushi, No.7, 1981. Efforts was made to make the journal available to readers who could not afford even the subsidized rates of subscription.


24. Madhu Kishwar, alongwith Ruth Vanita is a founding member of Manushi and has been editor of Manushi since its inception. Articles written by Madhu Kishwar can in a way be perceived as establishing the ideology of Manushi. However Manushi has always been open to discussion and debate, and criticism on views put forth in the journal.


26. Ibid., p.3.

27. Ibid., p.6.

28. Ibid., p.2.


30. Ibid., p.1.

31. Says, Kishwar, "Even if for the forseeable future, change in laws will effect the lives of a small minority, it does become a pointer in the direction from which overall changes need to come". See "Pro-Women or Anti-Muslim? The Shahbano Controversy", Manushi, No.32, January-February 1986, p.13.
Moreover there has been an attempt to clarify the role of women's movement with other influential movements, like the working class movement, the environment and ecology movement and the civil liberties and democratic rights movement. This perspective not only prevents the ghettoisation of the women's movements but also ensures its momentum by making it part of the other influential movements of social change. This intermeshing will become clear from the following discussions.

An editorial pointed out to the similarities and commonalities of women's oppression and protest. "While on the one hand sexual violence and atrocities on women are increasing, there are promising signs that women are beginning to demand Our Right to Our Bodies. This issue seems to have the potential of uniting women irrespective of class, caste, religion. Isn't there a lot in common between the slogans raised by the University women's morcha against eve-teasing in Delhi and what the dalit women have to say about their organisations against rape?". See Manushi, No.2, March-April 1979, p.3.

"We need your response", Manushi, No.7, 1981, p.43.

Some relevant articles are:

Our Rights and Wrongs : "Bigamy Legalized", No.2, March-April 1979, p.35-36;

Our Rights and Wrongs : "Rape - The Victim is the Accused", No. 4, December 1979-January-February 1980, pp.42-56;

Our Rights and Wrongs : "When is Murder not Murder?", No.6, July-August 1980, pp.38-41;

Our Rights and Wrongs : "Savitri is in Prison Because She is a Girl", No.10, 1982, pp.12-13;

Our Rights and Wrongs : "A Discussion On the Proposed Amendment to the Marriage and Divorce Laws", No.11, 1982, pp.30-40;

The Bills to Amend the Rape and Dowry Laws - Mending or Marring ?, Vol.3, No.4, June-July 1983, 27-30;

Lucy Caroll : "Register Marriages Under the Special Marriage Act", No.33, March-April 1986, pp.21-22;

Mary Roy, "Who Should Throw the First Stone?", No.34, May-June 1986, pp.37-38;

"Who is Afraid of the Supreme Court?", No.42-43, September-December 1987, pp.45-46;

"A Wife's Right to Maintenance: The Subanu Case", Manushi, No.41, 1987, pp.37-38; and,

"Using Women As a Pretext for Repression -The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Bill", Manushi, No.37, November-December 1986, pp.2-8.


38. Article 31 giving the Right to Property was taken out of the list of fundamental rights by a constitutional amendment made in 1979.


40. Madhu Kishwar, "Some Aspects of Bondage ....", op.cit., p.34.


47. A daughter's rights are severely circumscribed in comparison to sons. A son, from the moment of his birth, is considered a co-partner, that is an equal owner of the family's joint property with other male members. A daughter cannot be a co-partner in a Hindu undivided family. She can get only a portion of what her father inherits if and when the property is divided. An unmarried daughter has a right to maintenance from the family property. But once she marries, she has no right to maintenance from her natal family's property, not even if she is divorced, abandoned or widowed. In the father's self-acquired property, a Hindu daughter is supposed to have an equal share if he dies without making a will. Even when a father dies without making a will, daughters are usually pressured into signing away their rights in favour of their brother. Also it has been pointed out that fathers have the right to convert self-acquired property into joint property, in which case the daughter is is denied equal inheritance as a brother. See, Ibid.

48. It may be important to recall that *Manushi*'s analysis for the elimination of the dowry problem has been linked with ensuring inheritance rights for the daughter.


57. Incidents of rape, as well as protests around the issue of rape have been documented. "Baghpat : Police Run Amok", Manushi, No.6, July-August 1980, p.20; "Medical Students Rape Woman Patient", Manushi, No.12, 1982, p.38; Sohaila Abdulali, "I Fought for my Life and Won", Manushi Vol.3, No.4, June-July 1983, pp.18-19.

58. Tukaran Vs State of Maharashtra (1979). Thirteen year old Mathura was raped in police custody on the 26 March 1972. The Sessions Court had held the accused police-rapists not guilty. But the High Court had reversed the judgement. However the Supreme Court held the policemen-rapists not guilty. See, "Rape : The Victim is the Accused", Manushi, No.4, December 1979-January 1980, pp.42-46.


61. Ruth Vanita points out, "... the bill came into existence only as a result of a sustained press coverage of rape cases, and unjust trial for rape cases". See, Ruth Vanita, Ibid. p.28.


65. Manushi points out that it was Mahila Dakshata Samiti which was the first to highlight that the so-called suicides and accidental deaths of young brides were often dowry murders. The Samiti was the first to produce documented evidence of this and to organise a morcha on the issue in Delhi in November 1978. See, "A Woman's Calendar : Little Knowledge More Prejudice", Manushi, No.7, 1981, pp.46-49.


Madhu Kishwar, "To Ensure Her Happiness or to Disinherit Her", Manushi, No.34, May-June 1986, pp.2-13;


Says Kishwar; "... a social practice cannot be eradicated if people continue to consider its observance vital to their interests and status in the community. Stringent laws penalising it will only remain ineffective or at the best make the practice assume disguised forms". See, "To Ensure Her Happiness or to Disinherit Her", Manushi, No.34, May-June 1986, p.12.

69. Ibid., p.12.
70. Ibid., p.2.
71. Ibid., p.4.
72. Ibid., p.4.
73. Ibid., p.12.
74. Ibid., p.12.

In search of Answers : Indian Women's Voices from Manushi, eds., Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanita (Delhi: Horizon India, 1991). This book which contains a selection from the first five years of Manushi, has the following dedication: "To all those women of India, some known, but mostly unknown, whose lives have been devoted to the struggle for freedom and dignity".


83. Ms C.B. Muthamma, the first woman Indian Foreign Service officer, had filed a writ petition against the Foreign Secretary and the Government of India for hostile discrimination against women, when her promotion to Grade I had been deferred and she had been superceded. See, "She Made Common Cause With All Women", Manushi, No.4, December 1979-January-February 1980, pp.25-28.


87. Savara and Gothoskar, op.cit.

88. Mani Mala, op.cit., pp.2-16.
89. Ibid., p.15.

90. Alaka and Chetna, "When Women Get Land: A Report from Bodhgaya", Manushi, No.40, 1987, p.25. Though only 150 acres of 1500 acres seized by the government from the land illegally held by the Math was distributed to women, its symbolic importance is considerable.


93. The petition reads: "In the absence of any valid statutory regulations providing for succession rights to land for Ho tribal women, the least that needs to be ensured is that these women get the benefit of the constitutional rights of all citizens. Considering that the bulk of the labour performed on the family land is done by women, common law rights as applied to family assets and their apportionment to individual members require that women's labour contribution be recognized as determining their share on the family land". Madhu Kishwar, "Challenging the Denial of Land Rights to Women", op.cit., November-December 1982, pp.2-6.


There is discussion with activists on the issue of eviction and clearance of some slums areas of Bombay in 1986 too. See, Manushi, No.36, September-October 1986, pp.2-13.

Also, A Report from Saheli, a woman's organisation in Delhi, "Supreme Court Upholds Woman's Right to Live Independently", January-February, pp.22-23.


Also, Jacqueline Winters, "Land in Women's Names: An Experiment in Thanjavur", Manushi, No.44, January-February 1988, pp.10-


103. Ibid., p.2.


108. The issue of reservations has been discussed in great detail in Manushi, Nos.63-64, March-June 1991; See, Dinesh Mohan, "Imitative Suicides?", pp.31-33; Madhu Kishwar, "Instigation of Hysteria;
Role of Media During Anti-Reservation Agitation", Review of October 1990, Newsstrack Video Magazine", 
Manushi, Nos.63-64, March-June 1991, pp.54-60; and, 
"Enabling Equal Competition", Dhirubhai Sheth 
Speaks to Manushi, Manushi, Nos.63-64, March-June 
Issues : The anti-Mandal 'Suicide' Spate", Manushi, 

109. Madhu Kishwar, "In Defence of Our Dharma", Manushi, 
No.60, 1990, pp.2-15

110. Mani Mala, "Men Riot, Women are Imprisoned :
Reports from Bihar Sharif and Ahmedabad", Manushi, 

Renana Jhabvala, "Caste Riots in Ahmedabad - Women 
Face the Fury", Manushi, No.9, 1981, pp.15-17;

"Why This Slow Murder?" A SEWA report on the 
Communal Violence in Ahmedabad on the Lives of 

111. Shirin Lateef, "Fijian Indians : The Women's 
Predicament", Manushi, No.41, Vol.7, No.5, July-
August 1987, pp.8-16;

"The Status of Women in Pakistan", Extracts from 
the Report of the Pakistan Commission on the Status 
of Women, December 1984, Manushi, No.44, January-
February 1988, pp.2-9

"Pakistani Women Against Repression : An Interview 

"Facts and Figures about Women's Situation in 
Pakistan", Manushi, No.12, 1982.

"Words of Fire : The Writings of Sara Shagufta", 
Manushi, No.12, 1982, pp.7-8.

"Women's Stir Threat to Zia's Regime", Report from 
Times of India, Indian Express", Manushi, Vol.3, 

"Women's Struggle Against Zia's Version of Islam" 

112. See Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanita, "The Burning of 

113. Ibid., p.23.

114. Ibid., p.24.


117. Ibid., p.24.

118. Editorial "Why Can't We Report to Each Other?", *Manushi*, No.7, 1981, p.4

119. Ibid., p.4.


123. Madhu Kishwar, "When Delhi's Invisible Citizen's were Noticed : The Cholera Epidemic", *Manushi*, No.47, 1988, pp.2-16. In this epidemic 32,646 cases of gastroenteritis were reported, 8,525 people were hospitalised and 304 confirmed deaths were reported.

124. Ibid., p.15.

125. Ibid., p.15.

126. Ibid., p.15.


134. Manushi Editorial, Ibid., p.5.


137. From the Constitution of Suraksha.


139. See, Kya Kar Rahi Hai Suraksha, Swatantra Bharat (Lucknow), 15 September, 1990.

140. It has this role since 1986.

141. See, Newsletter: Inaugural Issue. This also carries a report upon the activities of 1986-87.


143. The Annual Report of the year 1990-91 states: "The increase in the number of cases registered shows an increase in awareness, and willingness to seek assistance to solve these problems".

144. A small shelter home is run by another organisation to which Suraksha can refer its needy client women for temporary accommodation.

145. See, Newsletter reporting about the Third Quarter of 1987-88.

146. See, Newsletter: Inaugural Issue. "The organisation is also considering alternate funding sources such as foreign-funds, obtaining a corpus for achieving financial stability, raising large funds in a fund-raising drive". For details, see. Annual Report - 1991-92.
147. The work plan of 1992-93 indicates that three days in a week are devoted to counselling and fact-finding. Legal guidance and family court visits are done each Friday. Organising of two workshops and one mohalla meeting is done each month. There are two scheduled visits each month to supervise the village work and one monthly visit scheduled for visit to the shelter home.

148. In November 1985, the local Television featured Suraksha, and in June 1986, the organisation and its activities found mention in a programme "Doli Se Arthi Tak".

149. Particularly interesting or difficult cases are highlighted in the press by Suraksha—the names are changed to protect identities.


151. Along with Suraksha, others who participated were the YWCA, the Yuva Shakti Sanrakshan Parishad, and the National Women's Conference. See, Report 1990-91.

152. Ibid.


154. This is a governmental programme for women and education floated in 1989, which involves grassroots organisations in four districts of U.P. Mahila Samakhya programme is also underway in three districts of Karnataka, and three districts of Gujarat.

155. Through Akanksha, Suraksha was able to secure some drinking water facilities through sinking of handpumps around Phalenda village. Report on Camp on Rural Awareness, 1988.

156. Suraksha sent its counsellor to participate in a Training Programme conducted by Jagori.

157. Manushi Vichar Kendra, Lucknow and the Lucknow Thinkers' Council were co-sponsors for the Street Play Programme by Delhi based group "Ahsaas".
158. In the **Suraksha** files, there are instances of appeals for support to senior administrative officers of other districts for interventions in particularly difficult cases which may belong to that area or region. Also requests to CMD for improved health services, or to the DM, Lucknow for handpumps in village areas have been met.

159. Report of 1984-85 states: "During the year under review our first task was to mobilise the help of Police in favour of the victims of atrocities committed in the name of dowry".

160. See, **Annual Work Plan 1992-93**.

161. See, **Annual Report 1991-92**.

162. In course of the week-long camp at Phalenda (January 1988) strong effort was made towards generating an awareness on social issues. A puppet show from Literacy House aided in this task. Similarly in the camp at Kanar in 1989, a session was devoted to legal literacy, i.e., information on constitutional rights, property and inheritance laws, village panchayat laws, free legal aid, Dowry Prohibition Act, Child Labour, etc.

163. The school is supported by donations and subscriptions, and is run under the guidance of a school in Lucknow which is run by a **Suraksha** member. Nutrition supplement has also been made available. Members and other donors have contributed towards educational aids, food supplement and towards remuneration of teachers. Options for subscriptions have been worked out and range from Rupees Sixty to Rupees One Thousand Two Hundred annually.

164. Women who receivied the three month training received a stipend of Rs.20/- per day.

165. The scheme was initiated on 8 March 1991. The 27 women who enrolled in a four week training programme were paid Rs.10/- per day as a stipend. **Annual Report 1990-91**.

166. Says the Report of 1990-91, "SEWA also proposes to open a skill upgradation and distribution centre at Kanar to spread the activity to other villages".
The tractor can be used for threshing and ploughing as well as for carting goods especially mango crates, during the summer season in this mango belt. See, Darryl Correya, "Village Women Blaze a New Trail", Pioneer, 14 September 1991.


Conversation with activists.


Pratima Bhatia, "Problems relating to Enforcement of Legal Rights for Women: A Perspective from the Field", mimeographed paper, from Suraksha files.

This was done in 1987.

Conversations with volunteers of Suraksha. Also Dayanand Pandey, "Is Dampatya Se To Nark Bhala, Navbharat Times (Lucknow), 17 November, 1991.

Ibid. It may be relevant to quote the case "On filing a suit of maintenance, Sabiha was granted Rs.300/- per month. But her husband Salim decided not honour the judgement. Later another judgement was passed that she be paid maintenance directly from his salary. Salim has been successful in getting the case transferred to another judge's court, thus delaying the decision and implementation". Bhatia, op.cit., p.4.

Ibid., p.5.

Ibid., p.5.


Ibid.


"Conversation with Counsellor."

Letter to the Prime Minister, dated 18 May 1983, by Suraksha in the very first year of its inception.

At the Suraksha-YWCA Workshop (1988) suggestion had been made to incorporate a proviso in the Dowry Prohibition Act, that if total expenses on marriage expenses exceed Rs.20,000 it would be treated as a cognisable offence. See, Recommendations of the Workshop.

Pratima Bhatia, "They lived Unhappily Ever After". An article from Suraksha files.


The issue of Compulsory registration of marriages was also spoken of in the Suraksha, YWCA Workshop of 1988, op.cit.

Also reiterated in the Colloqium on the Girl Child, 14-15 April 1993.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Bhatia, "Problems Relating to Enforcement of Legal Rights", op.cit., p.3

However the approach towards solving perceived problems was somewhat paternalistic. It did not involve the village body, nor did it encourage them to become the initiators of their own processes of improvement and therefore empowerment. Approach of Suraksha embraced writing applications to the District Magistrate and another voluntary organisation Akansha for road improvement, for more wells, and for upgradation of existing school; to the C.M.O., for a monthly clinic, etc. See, Follow-up Report of Rural Awareness Camp at Phalenda, 1988.
193. The Report of 1991-92 states that: The total number of cases (old and new) dealt with were 134, and in each case counselling was done at least four times. Each case moreover required home visits and inquiries two to three times. This indicates the arduous nature of the task in family counselling related activity.

194. Suraksha files which register cases, specify in a few lines the kind of problem which the client has, and the nature of help she seeks. The files cannot document her anguish as well as the painstaking process by which the reconciliation is reached, problem solved or divorce effected. Clients, desiring confidentiality often hesitate to visit the Suraksha office, and contact activists at their homes. Thus Suraksha family related problems are worked at in silence and often without records.

195. The Tractor was obtained through a Government grant.