CHAPTER - II

STATUS OF HOUSEWIVES : A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

"How is it that this world has always
belonged to the men and that things have
begun to change only recently !"

Simone, De Beauvoir

The history of women is the history of ambivalence, strife and conflict all around the globe. In order to dig into the status of women, in our micro study in the family set up, a look through the generations all over the world that preceded us, their history of struggle for existence, status and their influence is indispensable. The United Nations declared the 8th March of every year as the international women's day in order to focus attention on the gamut of issues and problems that confront the half of humanity across the globe. If not long ago a segment of women felt constricted by the fundamentalists for banning them from going to schools keeping them confined in veils and forbidding them to participate in games and sports, even in the so called liberal societies women are subjected to numerous types of harassment and abuse if they happen to question the illogical traditions and customs. A look into some of the countries of the world, the position and status enjoyed by women gives a clean perspective in this regard.

The United States of America & status of housewives and education :

Women in the United States of America have passed through three basic phases of struggle for freedom and equal status as follows :
Phase I : The history of women in USA :

The phase was known as the Feminist Movement. The first phase of the history of United States of America was a significant stage that aimed at establishing equal status for women, breaking the stereotype roles of women based on strict division of labour. During the period of 1830-1840, a small number of active middle class women played a major role in the reformation process against social reservations on women. That was the period when there was hardly any difference between slaves and the housewives.¹ The Grimke sisters* of south Carolina, said, "what can women do for slaves when the herself is under the feet of man and shamed existence² In 1948. In New York 'Seneca Falls' 300 women and men issued a declaration of sentiments, a plea for ending the inequality of women in all aspects of life.³ In 1868 after the civil war, women in USA, joined their hands together to form "an Equal Rights Association" to promote the interests of women and the black. It also demanded for fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution. In 1869, with the leadership of Susan B. Anthony**a few women advocates formed the National Women's Suffrage Association to start a struggle to win the right to voice.⁴ In 1919, a suffrage amendment was finally passed by the Congress and a year later, on August 26, 1920, it bought about a little hope for the women and mothers as a whole for elevating their political status.

Phase No. II

The advancement of women in USA can be measured in terms of gains in education, participation in the labour force, and in legal measures which

². * Revolutionary black leaders, during 1830 - two sisters, in USA.
⁴. Ibid, 203
** Advocate and leader of Substance in 1869 USA.
have given women legal basis for equal status with men in a wide range of educational and work situations. USA, therefore has been called as the breeding ground of all feminist activities and 'women liberation movement.' Michelle Rosald in 1970, explained that, in 1970, the supremacy of man in the society prevailed in domesticity, while a good part of women adult life was spent in giving birth to and raising of children. A National sample of women in late 1970 revealed that:

- 40% of the white and 51% of the black population in USA agreed that:
  - Women were much happier while staying at home to take care of children.
  - However, a contradictory feelings developed in the year 1974.
  - The obligation of the husbands to share housework with wives raised from 56% to 79%.
  - The right of women to keep their jobs while bearing children rose from 50% to 85%.
  - The rights of women to be considered for top jobs on an equal footing with men, increased from 67% to 84%.
  - The concept that working mother was not harmful for children found supporters among 50% to 70%.
  - College educated women were more egalitarian than others.

Thus women's attitude in USA during this period and their roles in their home became increasingly related to their attitude towards their rights in the

5. Bhattacharya US, the Statesman, 2001 August 11, (price of freedom)
6. Rosaldo and Lamphere Louise - Introduction to woman culture and society, Stanford University, 1974 p 5
labour market. Thus the second phase of history of progress of women in USA - reveals that, against 27% employed educated women in 1960 it was 35% in 1970 and in 1979 it increased up 51%. Moreover while in 1940 married educated women consisted 15% of the employed, while in 1977, it increased upto 47% figuring 54% of married women aged between 25–44. During 1970 to 1979, men outnumbered women in managerial and administrative position, despite a large number of women being equally educated like their male counterparts. A new awakening ushered in when the educated women, contrary to the common belief that women were better suited for the department of gynaecology in medical department, educated women started choosing pathology, psychiatry and anthropology. This phase also depicts a new concept of woman called "Token woman." Sociologists Rosabeth Moss summed up the performances of 'Token woman' as follows –

- Mother, who gives comfort and to whom men bring their troubles.
- Seductress, who become sexual object and arouses jealousy
- pet, who is treated as cute and amusing.
- Iron maiden, the woman who successfully avoids the first three, but is trapped into appearing tougher and militant than she is.

Third phase of women liberation USA and Role of women in household

The World War II brought about a dramatic change to accommodate women to replace men who had joined the military service. It was observed

7. Mead Margaret, New York Mirror 1978 (A study on changing status of housewives in the world)
9. Ibid p. 4
* Women in 1970 - 1978 in USA.
that by 1960 women were marrying later, delaying the birth of their first child and planning to have fewer children and by the mid 1970, most young educated women planned to have no more than two children. With the inclusion of equal rights for women in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, groups like EEOC, began to concentrate on extending women's right to both radical and reformist movements, enabling women to sustain a quite varied range of activities modifying the male dominated environment.

Besides this, capitalism and industrialisation provided more educational opportunities for women with certain provisions in the family set up which were as follows:

- Separation of work and home
- Decline in family size
- Decline of extended family system
- Separation of family and education
- Loss of occupational succession.

Thus capitalism provided the roots of individualism. Since 1978 to the contemporary time increasing number of divorces in American society had often been viewed as an alarming indication of the decline of American commitment to marriage and family. By the end of 19th century the rate of divorce increased upto 30%.

The number of working wives increased as follows:

---

* See Abbreviation
12. Zaretsky Eli, the urban villagers group and class in the life of Italian-American-New York.
Table - 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working wives in America</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975 to 1990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table - 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working wives' status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source*:

Education and employment together freed women in USA, from the domination of their husbands and inspired them to raise their daughters and sons alike. New millennium changed the life style of American society and a few significant changes were noticed as follows:

➢ Dominant father model starts to disappear.

➢ Power relation in marriage is becoming dominant factor.

➢ The partner with more education, more organisational experience and a high status background started playing major role in the process of decision making in a household.

➢ New pattern of working women changed the profile of housewives as a whole.

Over the decades, debates and discussions regarding issues relating to women had been a part of concern for the American society. The major issues were:

* JR Blood Robert, in journal of marriage and family living 1990
Whether the conventional nuclear form of family should be continued;

Whether all adults should be expected to share the task of raising children?

How and in what way men and women should define the roles of husband-father and wife-mother relations;

How could the needs of family and the rights of children be recognised in everyday works?

What role should be played by the government to encourage Americans to sustain a healthy family life?

In the light of the above short assessment of different phases of history in American society, it was found out that several radical revolutionary feminist and thinkers* with the help of mass support, started a mission to enable American women to share equal rights with men. The constitution of America, by its various amendments lays down rights to women. Special mention may be made of the Amendment. XXVII – that says

"Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."

The Voting rights act of 1965, and various comprehensive educational programmes had been instrumental in liberating women from the shackles of bondage and discrimination. To quote eminent American judge Leonard hand:

"Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women, when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no count can even do much to help it."

---

* Rosa Parks: The 1st leader in civil right movement against social discrimination.
Jen Westwood, The first ever female democrat.
Anne Armstrong Republican who was a member of Nikon administration.
** The constitution of United States of American.
Thus despite speculations world around, the United States of America has continued to catch global attention, undoubtedly in any sphere relating to women and influence other countries including India by its latest discoveries and women oriented research works.

WOMEN IN THE UNITED KINGDOM—A brief profile

In a period when the possibilities of social progress and the practicability of applied social science are being questioned, it is a matter of satisfaction to recall some of the achievements of the "Women's suffrage Movement in Britain." The development of the personal, legal and political liberties of half of the population of the country within the span of less than eighty years stands as one of the supreme examples of consciously directed social change.\(^\text{13}\)

There have been numerous historical and biographical studies of this Movement. The study of the condition of the working-class mothers and housewives has been neglected till capitalism came into the fore in the United kingdom. The 'British Constitution' as the mother of all constitutions and the United Kingdom as the breeding ground of the feminist movement, has already caught the attention of all the studies that include women in varied forms of life in the society. Far reaching economic and technological changes have affected the status of women in their role as a wife, mother, home-maker, as well as the contributor to the economy of their family.

Mainly two major factors were crucial in determining the status of women is that country:

* Reformist in England.
(1) Vital statistics of birth, marriage and death.

(2) Accumulated effect of these changes that put some new fundamental problem to the society in UK.

The typical working mother of the 1890s, who married in her teens or early twenties and experiencing at least ten pregnancies, spent about fifteen years is a state of pregnancy and in nursing children for the first few years of her life. This period of child bearing declined in the last few years. A reduction of such time—devoted to child bearing, represents nothing less than the changes, which guaranteed more freedom to women in determining their own fertility.14 Bernard Shaw*, once described the power to determine of fertility as the 'ultimate freedom'15. The expectation of life span of a woman 1920 was 46 years, while 1999 it was 55 years. "A report of the Royal Commission on Population" noted the rapidity of the decline in family size after 1900 as a marked determination on the decision making status of women. However the changes in the decision making process, low rate of marriage and child bearing in the advent of the industrialised society, extensive division of labour, early acquisition of occupational skills, personal achievement of the status through educational and other channels, gave rise to certain new problems.16 The increasing independence and emotionally expressive maternal role became natural corollary to the development of self consciousness of women as a whole.

Over the decades the status of housewives in England had been evolving, setting a trend to the future generations, as with more educated working wives, the concept of 'democratizing marriage' emerged. While in 1499, the women in England petitioned for the right to vote, in 1790 the solid

14. Ibid pp. 91–92
15. Ibid - 13
milestone to the Feminist moments was established. However, a political assessment about the voting behaviour of the housewives in UK till 1981, revealed the following:

➢ Men were considered to be the head of household and in pivotal decision making process.

➢ Role of employed and educated wives in family set up were not properly defined.

➢ Women who entered the labour market with educational qualifications and individual attributes like men were much less successful in attaining major career advancement if they got married and stopped working to have children. Therefore educated, married wives with children were forced to join part-time jobs as well as jobs with less career prospects.

Since 1980 till the contemporary times, status of housewives in UK had been gaining astonishing elevation in all quarters. The UK had been the classic example where the housewives came to rule the roost in the social and political culture Margaret Thatcher* and Thatcharism changed the face of British empire to the maximum possible extent. From a simple housewife to the first woman Prime Minister of United Kingdom, Margaret Thatcher alone bears the testimony to the fact that education combined with intellect could result in wonders to the housewives in UK. The conventional British Monarchy, still climbing the popularity graph has demonstrated how Queen mother Elizabeth after, Queen Victoria, crossed the milestone, to remain a queen for long 63 years. Besides this, it was 'Lady Diana'* one of the most loved and mostly admired women of the world17, who added glory to the status of housewives in royal families.

* Iron lady - first long serving PM of Britain
** Princess of Wales who died in a fatal road accident. Most popular figure in British Monarchy.
17. Marton Andrew, Diana : Her true story, p. 3, 1992
In 2002, the rising inequality regarding pay-packet between the sexes in Britain was questioned by people: A study was made, pertaining to the following aspects:

The pay-gap between men and women has widened, promoting a chorus of complaints from the trade unions and equal-opportunities activists. But business leaders strongly resisted renewed calls for a change in the law to force all companies to carry out equal-pay. The average earnings of a woman engaged in full-time work rose by an annual 4.5 per cent upto April 2002, according to the Office for National Statistics. But the average earnings of a man were up by 4.8 per cent, leaving a woman's income at just 81.2 per cent of male income. No doubt, the status of educated housewives in United Kingdom adds a glorious and inspiring chapter. From sixties to the millennium, women have been showing courage and rare balance in maintaining both home and career but even then a few questions relating to equality of sexes in few sectors remain unanswered.\textsuperscript{18}

Housewives and women in Australia

For the past several decades, Australia had also been a centre of research studies touching issues of women and housewives. Especially, the housewives, have made a significant contribution to the Australian economy. Till 1970s women's liberation movement, women of Australia were confined mostly to the households and a very few journals and magazines meant only for women discussed the issues relating to marriage, glory of motherhood and the like:\textsuperscript{19} The outcome of women liberation movement resulted in more educated and career conscious, socially aware generations, who continued till then to be in the grip of economic dependency, domestic violence and similar such problems. Presently the family life and women's role within the household have become pet issues of the media and politicians.\textsuperscript{20} This interest was an expression of several social and economic projects.

\textsuperscript{18.} Sunday Statesman (2002) 27 Oct India.  
\textsuperscript{19.} Australia Week, women Magazine pg. 5 publishing year 1995 p. 10  
\textsuperscript{20.} Women Weekly, Australia 2001 p. 18
Married women in Australia entered the labour force in unprecedented large numbers between 1980 and 1995. The real value of wages declined by 15–25% over the same period as employers strove to cut costs and the income of women could not remove the increasing poverty in a growing number of households. By the mid-1990s the drive to cut wages and jobs escalated. Between November 1995 and May 1997, married women's employment decreased by 200,000. A survey by National Association also reveals that

"The removal of women's wages from many households will escalate poverty; the government has to roll back on the sentiment that women have the right to equal educational, workplace and personal choices and opportunities. Contrary to women and working wives in 1950s, inequality in pay scales fuelled widespread dissatisfaction amongst women. There are over 1 million women with ethnic background in Australia who are contributing to the economy of Australia. There have been a few emigrated young women from Italy, and other poor countries of the world. In 1950s a few arrived who had no more than five years of schooling prior to their arrival. Slowly and steadily governmental initiative in formal vocational qualification came to add a new dimension to even the aboriginals.\textsuperscript{21} A study conducted recently stated that aboriginal women were unlocking their potential as entrepreneurs and mostly wives who were educated got recognition from the farms and the companies. To 90% of Australian women, work matters as well as their respective families. The status and profile of the housewives are positively gearing up as a result of compulsive educational schemes incorporated in the recent governmental agenda.

\textbf{Status of women - an international comparisons}

An United Nations Development Report, 2000 reveals the present status of women in international sphere. It also gives important source material to our study on housewives and in checking Indian situation.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid p. 20
## Status of Women International Comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HDI Rank</th>
<th>Name of the country</th>
<th>Gender related Development Index (GDI)</th>
<th>Life Expectancy at Birth (years)</th>
<th>Combined Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Gross Enrolment Ratio (%)</th>
<th>Estimated Earned Income (PPP US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>High Human Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.937</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.935</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.934</td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>75.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.932</td>
<td>79.7</td>
<td>73.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.921</td>
<td>84.1</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.916</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>74.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Medium Human Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0.774</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>60.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>0.735</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>66.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.732</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>69.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>0.715</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>68.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>0.553</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>62.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Low Human Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>0.466</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>59.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>0.461</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>0.459</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>58.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>0.308</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>0.302</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161</td>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source*  

The study shows that Norway and Australia top the list of progressive women. Women organisations like Women of vision, women against evil have been spreading and rendering welfare services in several other poverty stricken countries through a comprehensive set of networking of educational programmes for young women and housewives.

South East Asia & Sex Workers

"In the south East Asia, prostitution has effectively become a fundamental element of tourism". During early 1970, the absence of jobs and prospects in the cities drove lots of women into prostitution, and to "the utter astonishment, a few developed countries rank first among the exploiters" of this sexual tourism". In Bangkok thousands of US troops went on to relax the horror of Vietnam war. 'Kisaeng' in South Korea became the prominent sex tourist centre. In Seoul 500902600 of the total population, 600 in 1000 of the total female, are sex workers and many of them are housewives. The malady without doubt, is the outcome of colonialism and industrialization.

Indonesia which is called the panchasila democracy with a population of 15347 in 1982 and now twice the size has the characteristic similarity with other Asian countries. It has been a model society for housewives since the last few decades. A restricted democracy, Indonesia with its female head of the State Sukarnapurti and her efficiency in counteracting terrorists events like the Bali blast, in October 2002 has been remarkable. It has also enhanced the status of women as a whole.

West Asia Gulf States, Arabian Peninsula and Middle East

The main issues relating to these areas and the most common factor touching women is the freedom of housewives and the general women, the...
religious fundamentalists, the strict laws prohibiting the freedom of expression of women, their education and participation in games have forced the housewives of those countries, still to lead a life under Burkha. A recently released study shows the adverse effect of Burkha on women, who fall easy victims to skin and viral ailments.

**Pakistan**

The rise and fall of Benazir Bhutto, the only female political leader, in the history of Pakistan has been the story of a family legacy, passed on to her by the supporters of the slain leader Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. She represented the privileged and affluent upper class women in Pakistan. In general the condition of Burkha clad housewives in the country continues to be deplorable, although a handful of them are western educated, the majority of women are still lagging behind in terms of availing of freedom. Religious fundamentalism and report of spate of violence, blasphemy laws, have combined together to take away the human rights according to a report of human right activists around the globe. Humanist like Dr. Riffat Hussain, and Women's Action Forum an umbrella, organisation of women activists have been constantly demanding for the need of more applied form of education and freedom for women in Pakistan.

**Burma**

Between India and China the Indo-Chinese peninsula has been an area of concern since Aung-San-Suu Kyi has raised the issues of democracy against the military junta who come to power in 1988. The whole world cheered when Burma's revolutionary figure and the opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi finally got out of house arrest of nearly six years. Her release infused a sense of enthusiasm and spirit in the heart of those who had been

---

fighting the self-imposed Junta for the restoration of democracy. They were now hoping for freedom from the clutches of the military rulers. However, nothing concrete happened in the political negotiation fronts.

**Africa:**

Be it Southern Africa, Central Africa or North or far West Africa, the issues of dowry, poverty, illiteracy and racial discrimination make the women the worst victims of circumstances. 'A great many of African countries have fixed the maximum amount of dowry usually at £100. Under the guise of maintaining cultural tradition, dowry has become a pretext for financially exploiting women. Moreover an inhuman practice of a practice has been that of female Vasectomy', that leaves women in several African countries with only the power to procreation but without the sensation. This painful process of operation came to light when a female model from Tripat revealed the trauma she experienced. She revealed how a girl child in Africa was subjected to secret operation in unhygienic conditions. She also related how young women had to bear the pain and thus become just like a piece of wood, who could only bear child and nothing else. In brief, dowry, female inequality, growing health hazard like AIDS have been putting the women in Africa as one of the most neglected area in the globe. Lack of education, food and unemployment have added to the trauma of the women there.

**Women in Iran:**

After being awarded, the nobel prize for peace, 2003 Sirin Ebadi, has attracted the attention, of the globe, towards her lone fight against injustice meted to women and children in Iran. It was in 1905 for the first time in the history of Iran, protest against authoritative regime of Czar did take place. Thereafter in 1921, on 21st february, Reja Khan started the regime of Pahlabi* empire. In 1951 with the help of Britain and America, the Shah became the

* Old manuscript of Iran
ruler of Iran. Under his rule, untold atrocities and total inequality prevailed, making the life of women and housewives in Iran miserable.

In 1975 Sirin Ebadi came to the limelight as a saviour to women. She became the first women justice in Iran. She fought against imposition of rules adverse to women and children by the then ruler Ayyatulla Khomeini in 1979. The atrocities on wives in Iran were the depiction of the most deplorable condition, any housewives in the whole world had ever faced. According to Iranian law: A man can keep four wives and without any excuse can divorce them. But a wife cannot do so. The husband is entitled to get the custody of their children after divorce. Wives, who are tortured in the household need to produce prime witness, which becomes adverse to her existence. Sirin Ebadi, on the death of a child, Arian golsani*, protested the ruling as discriminatory law in Iran. She in her books,** has made a detailed description of the human right violation in Iran she, thus became a symbol of the humanist movement in Iran. Her contribution to the field of protection of women and children rights has been exemplary

**Women in South Asia**

Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and India are the countries in South Asia. Sri Lanka, as a nation came to the headline with the present President Chandrika Kumaratunge's ascent to power, Chandrika Kumaratunge, once said "Fear is a word I do not know. when I took over this responsibility of my countrymen, I knew what this would mean."


* A 7 years old child who was tortured to death by his drug addict father who got his custody, in Iran

** The rights of the child,
- A study of legal aspects of children right in Iran.
- History and documentation of Human rights in Iran.
Fighting against terrorism, has been the challenge for most of the people including male and female. This fear and the fight against terrorism have undermined women related issues in this problem ridden land so far. In one way Chandrika Kumaratunge's ascent to power in Sri Lanka conforms cruelly to the subcontinent's paradoxical history of flourishing democracies amidst assassinations and the trend of an orphan or a widow taking over the mantle of a slain leader. Since Chandrik's father, S.w.r.d Bandaranaike, was assassinated in 1959 when he was the president and her film star-politician husband Vijaya Kumaratunge in 1988, her mother, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, was disenfranchised and hounded for more than a decade after she lost power as the first woman president of Sri Lanka.

Bangladesh

The rise and fall of Hasina and Begum Khalida Zia, have contributed to the political history of Bangladesh for the last several years. The importance of the two political leaders lies in the fact that both were housewives and became politicians of one of the most poverty-stricken countries of the world since its birth in 1971. 1991 was the year when parliamentary democracy in this land was restored by Begum Khaleda Zia. However in spite of the democratic values, Fatwa* was issued on 'Taslima Nasrin', for her book 'Lajja' which challenged the holy Quran. Freedom of women in that Muslim country is still at stake. Moreover, the increasing poverty and natural calamities on and off, total illiteracy amongst the lower class Bangladeshis have created stumbling block on the path of development of the masses including women.

The Year 2000 and a report on Women. Around the globe

There are certain facts about Women and Housewives catching the attention of the globe which are as follows– :

* A punishment
25. Readers Digest, 2000 (A magazine) p. 25 titled exploitation - I
As we enter the new millennium the fact remains that women in general still continue to be underprivileged, in spite of advances in all spheres of science and technology all over the world. Even the increase in employment of women during the last two decades, especially in developing nations, has not made a substantial difference and they continue to be discriminated against as before. Women produce 50 per cent of the world's food production, account for 60 per cent working force and contribute upto 30 per cent of official labour force, but receive only 10 per cent of the world's resources. Surprisingly the own less than one per cent of the world's real estate. India has a total working population of 297 million, of which only 30 million belong to the organised sector. Of the total employment of women the organised sector accounts for only four per cent. The unorganised sector provides employment to the majority of women workers in India. They account for 89 per cent of India's and 94 per cent of world's informal sector workers. As investment in the unorganised sector like agriculture, forestry, livestock, fisheries and khadi and village industries—is low, the sector is kept alive mainly due to the dynamism of poor women. In agriculture, rural women play a vital role and participate in all stages of crop production constituting 50 per cent of rural labour force. They contribute in sowing, harvesting, post-harvesting and handling of agricultural produce. A study in Himalayan region shows that on a one hectar farm, a man works for 1,202 hours per year and a woman, 3,485 hours, nearly three times more. A large part of work done by rural women like collecting water, fodder and fuel, working in their family farms and caring for children—is not-recognised and considered as pure labour of love.'

**Educated Women**

Economic, social and psychological factors lead women to enter the employment market and at the same time they have to engage themselves in the unpaid labour of family and child-care. While, employment opportunities
Educated women have increased, there is a negative trend in the participation rate of illiterate and semiliterate women. In the absence of adequate opportunities, supporting institutions, proper education and vocational training, women prefer to avoid competitive pressures, reinforcing the discriminatory attitude towards them. In the last two decades, women employment throughout the world has grown at a substantially faster rate than that of men, with the sole exception of Africa. However, strangely the position of women within the household and in the labour market has shown no signs of improvement. These facts have been highlighted by the '1999 World survey on the Role of Women in Development, released by the United Nations. The Report is a part of UN report, conducted every five years. This year's 76 page Report focused on developing countries in particular assumed significance as it served to be the basic document for the General Assembly's special Session on 'Women 2000— Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st century'.

Women organisations from India also participated in the Session, which had taken place at the UN headquarters in New York from June 5 to 9, 2000. Giving an overview of the effects of globalisation and the economic trends associated with it on employment and displacement of workers, the report discussed the effects from the gender point of view also. It highlighted how women's position within the household and in the labour market around the world deteriorated because of these trends. The Report outlined three economic trends commonly associated with globalisation. (1) trade liberalisation and expansion, (2) spread of production capacity around the world by multinationals and foreign direct investment, and (3) financial liberalisation and increased mobility of capital around the globe.

Globalisation

A report of the UN, in 2000, noted that during the last two decades, women had been incorporated into the paid employment in greater numbers,
but usually under conditions that were far inferior to those associated with men's employment. This was mainly due to the proliferation of various forms of precarious employment like part-time job, work in informal sector and home-based work. Employment of women in these types of jobs has grown much faster than in regular jobs having social security benefits. All over the world, women living in poverty had been made to disproportionately bear the costs of the International Monetary Fund-World Bank type 'structural adjustment' or 'restructuring programmes'. On Asian women, the report said, 'The adverse affects of the 1997 economic crisis on women in the continent were amplified because of the already severe gender inequalities in the labour markets and discrimination in the households'. The Report observed that the rising rates of unemployment and poverty in urban areas of Asia had exacerbated the situation in the rural areas as well. The reason is that lots of families in rural areas depended on the remittances, which they got from their relatives working in the cities. Here also, women had to bear the burden disproportionately. Quoting press report, the UN report said that a number of families in Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand were forced to throw their daughters into prostitution. Large number of migrant workers' families in most of the crisis-affected countries also suffered. By mid-1997, it was estimated that there were 25 lakh foreign workers in Malaysia, 13.54 lakh in Japan, 12.6 lakh in Thailand, 4.5 lakh in Singapore and 2.10 lakh in South Korea. The UN report also highlighted the psychological stress faced by women during the economic crisis. Given the inadequate social security networks in Asian countries, women had to cope with the consequent household distress and bear the anxiety about how to meet the needs of their families.

In brief, dowry, female inequality, growing health hazards like AIDS are putting the women in the several parts of the world as the most neglected people. Lack of education, food, employment add to their trauma. To top the list on the satisfactory status of housewives in international field come Norway.
and Australia. Australia the continent of 3,500 km width and 2,000 km breadth has been an ideal place for peace loving. Australian, people. It has a strange aboriginal footing, Where women, in all sectors have done well in their march towards progress.

In the light of the above analysis and comparison on the status of women and housewives in many countries of the world, their history of progress and struggle, and present profiles based on latest surveys and studies it was observed that positive changes in housewives around the globe seemed possible due to the increasing impact of education in the development of personality of the housewives. Education helped them to unlock their potential and in networking their talents in more productive ventures. This study tried to assess and compare the Indian educated housewives and the Assamese educated housewives with their counterparts of the developed countries. It's aim was to get a crystal picture on the topic of our research and thus strengthen the belief, that, problems faced by housewives are universal in nature and education as well as intellectual gains have changed the profiles of housewives around the world to a great extent.