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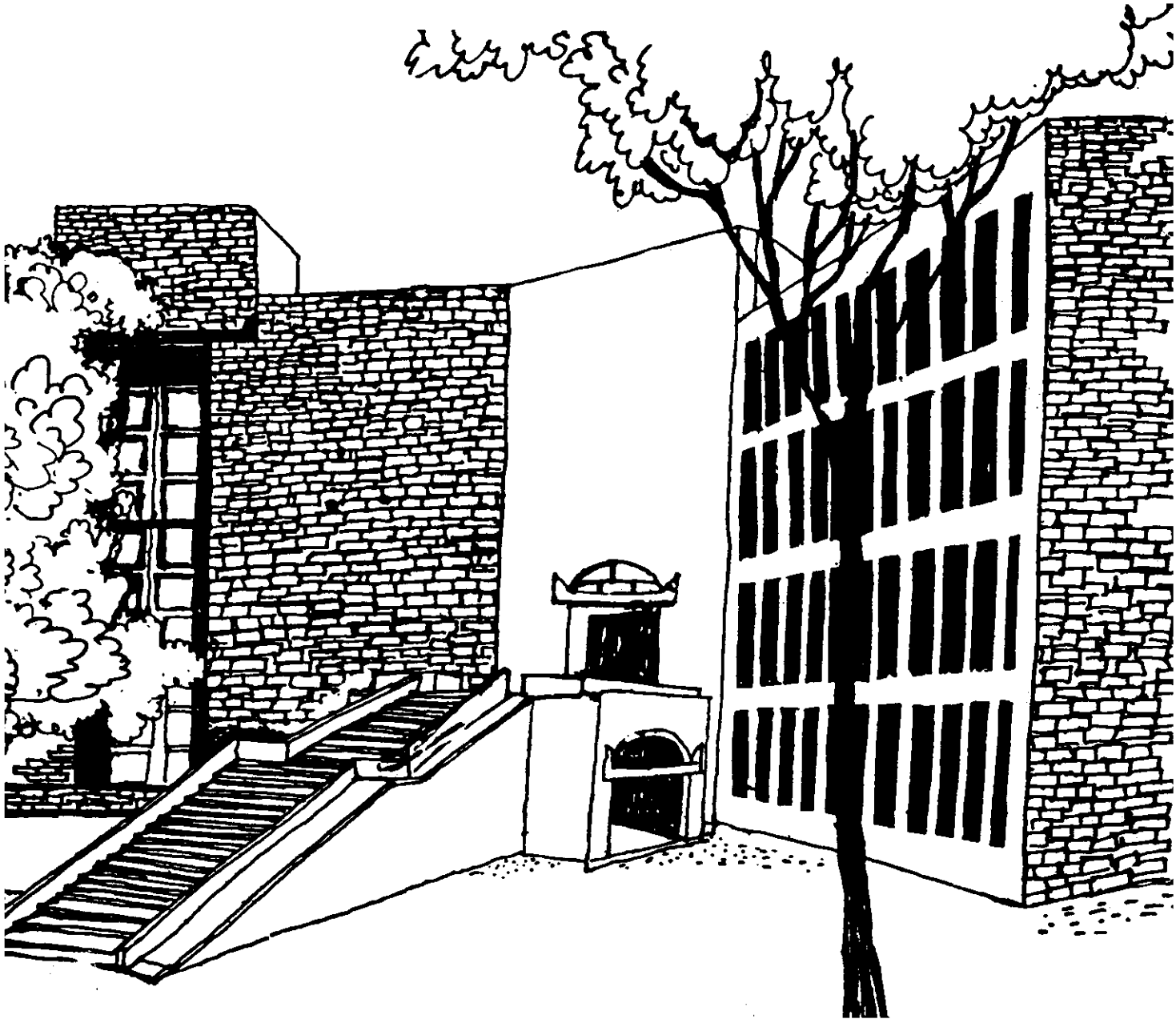

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CHANGING PATTERNS OF WOMEN'S IDENTITY

By
Indira J Parikh
&
Nayana Shah

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CHANGING PATTERNS OF WOMEN'S IDENTITY

Indira J. Parikh*

Nayana Shah**

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on

Identity and Social Change in Modern India

* Professor in Organizational Behaviour Area
** Research Associate in Centre for Educational Innovation

Indian Institute of Management
Vastrapur, Ahmedabad-380 015

Abstract

This paper examines the identity and role taking of Indian women over a period of time. The transition from the agrarian to the industrial/technological era has had a significant impact on the identity patterns of women in India. It has created dilemmas for Indian women in holding the agrarian model of role taking and identity patterns and the emergent new aspirations and choices.

Concept of identity consists of four dimensions - meaning making, role taking, action choices and replenishment. These four processes put together, contribute to the emergence of an identity of an individual in a given society.

The socio-cultural, familial and organizational influences on women's identity are highlighted. Three patterns have emerged in today's times - the adjuster, the asserter and the drifter. Further discussions revolve around role of women's movements and the government. The paper also identifies the barriers to women's growth and their role taking in establishing a relevant status are analysed.

New patterns and spaces for the identity of Indian women are explored with special reference to the professional women. Most women experience terror at crossing the threshold to a space beyond the horizon. This space demands that women take charge of her destiny and her life space with membership in multiple roles and multiple systems. With structures and systems women will locate themselves with courage of conviction and manage the pathos of the past and the ethos of the present in an ever changing environment.

CHANGING PATTERNS OF WOMEN'S IDENTITY

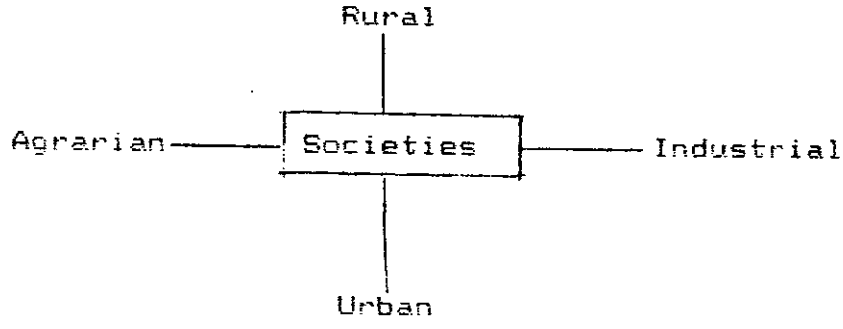
Introduction

This century has provided nations, societies and individuals opportunities to crystalize new identity for themselves. An individual's identity and role taking are shaped by the society, culture and the family each one is part of. In the five thousand years of men's existence, there have been four major historical discontinuities. Each has given rise to a model of society, man, collectivity and man's relationship with collectivity. These have affected the roles and identities of men and women. From the era of hunting, man has moved to nomadic way of life, to the agrarian era, and finally to the current industrial and technological era.

The shift from agrarian era to a technological era has also coincided with mass exodus from rural to urban areas. The simultaneous shift has had an impact on both men and women's identity and role taking. Figure 1 depicts the transition.

Figure 1

Transition of Societies



In the initial stages of transition men moved from traditional agrarian occupations to industrial occupations. As industrialization took roots and industries required more and more manpower there was migration of large number of men to urban centres. Women stayed in rural settings continuing in the agrarian modes and often took on the occupations of men which they had left behind. As the men got settled in urban centres eventually the families also joined. This transition generated experiences, encounters, demands and impact of urban industrial living which began to erode the agrarian social fabric. This in turn brought changes in the process of socialization from the culture, society and family and as such, the role and identity of both women and men.

The agrarian era had a continuity of two thousand five hundred years or more. It gradually crystallized role differentiation. Organizations and institutions were established with specific functional definitions. Bio-physiological differentiation which sets men and women apart as counter yet complimentary points for continuing life of the species seemed to have been capitalised by the agrarian culture to design differential roles and linking of these roles to distinct patterns of role activities. Agrarian society then set about to reinforce these differences. Over a period of time the classification and patterning of role activities acquired an absolutism for conduct as well as visualising of the role by individuals. The agrarian model identified women as anchored in stability, continuity, con-

sistency and permanence. In this design women managed the internal interface of home and family and the extended network of roles and relationships. They also became the holders of values and virtues on behalf of the society. The social history of Indian agrarian society had slowly, but over a period of time evolved a traditional ideal role for women which emphasized and glorified sacrifice, surrender of the self to the role, victimhood and martyrdom. The women's only salvation lay in their spiritual freedom of worship.

The women too internalized the agrarian model crystalized by Manu -- "Women are to be the property owned and protected by a successive set of males". They never recognized their own potentials, aspirations or inner urges. Their role was to adjust, adapt and accommodate. They were expected to sacrifice and suffer for the wellbeing of their families.

The agrarian social design further encountered the moghuls and then the British. Both influenced women's identity and role taking processes. As such, the transition from agrarian to industrial, from rural to urban and the universalization of education where women had opportunities to educate themselves drastically changed women's roles in the society.

The shift of Indian society from agrarian to industrial and from rural to urban is characterized by two distinct features:

1. In the agrarian society men managed the external interface while the women managed the internal, social and relational interface of the environment. In the industrial society of today's times men and women have to manage both the external and internal interfaces of the environment.

2. In the agrarian society men worked alone and in isolation while women lived in groups. In the formal work structures of organizations men work in groups while women live alone during large part of the day.

As such, all the processes of cultural, social and familial socialization anchored in the agrarian model of living and relationship come into direct confrontation with the experiences, expectations and aspirations of today's role requirements of women. This century and specifically in the last five decades- women have made significant shifts in their location in the social structure, in their role taking in family settings and the external environment. One such significant shift has been their transition from homes to that of formal work organizations and their role taking from social affiliative relations to managerial roles.

The post independence era which is moving at a high rate towards industrialization, complex technologies, professionalization and institutionalization presents a very confused but a challenging arena to women. Industrialization has created new

opportunities and role spaces for both women and men of India. This new space is that of formal work organizations and managerial roles which is a unique dimension of today's time and age.

Changing Patterns of Women's Identity

Concept of Identity

Before we take a look at the changing patterns of women's identity, let us first explore the concept of Identity. The social science literature has many definitions of identity. For example, in the context of this paper, Identity is postulated four dimensions.*

Meaning making

Role taking

Action choices

Replenishment

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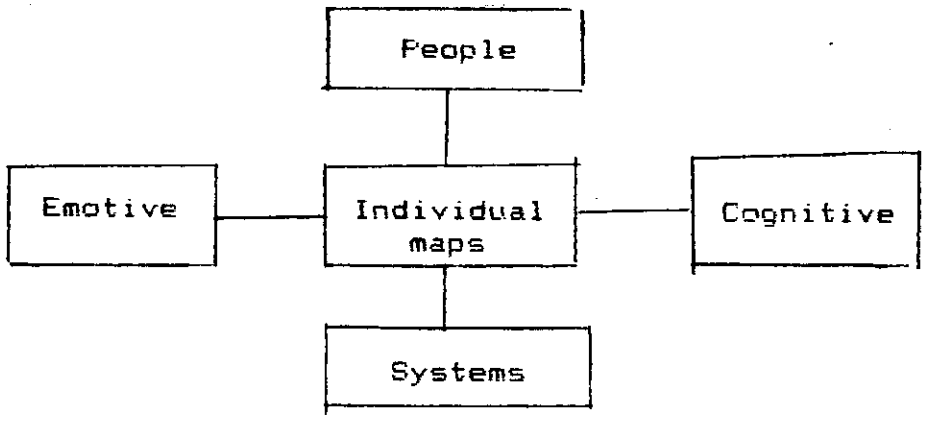
Socialization and acculturation of a child generates experiences of people and systems. These experiences generates emotive and cognitive maps in an individual of significant people and systems. Before language develops the human child has absorbed the experience of people and introjected some of the people and systemic qualities (Garg 1978). It is the development of language that meaning giving appears and a cognitive map develops of people and systems.

Garg, Pulin. K. International Conference on Transience and Transitions in Organizations. Keynote Address in Volume-I Corporate Culture of India. ISISD Publications, Eds. Parikh, Indira J., Garg, Vipin K. and Garg, Pulin K., 1989.

Figure 2

Coordinates of Emotive and Cognitive Maps



Adapted from Parikh, Indira, J. Structures and Systems: The Cultural Interface in Volume-II: Organization Design and Definitions, Eds. Garg, Pulin K. and Parikh, Indira J., ISISD Publications, 1990.

Some meanings are embedded in the experience with people and systems while other meanings are postulated by the self. These meaning giving processes then determine the nature of transactions the individuals will have with others and the systems. The meanings can focus on social, psychological or symbolic and thus influence the role and identity formulation.

Role taking is the process by which the individuals transact with the world. No individual can transact with the world as a pure self. Self is mediated through series of social and psychological roles. The social roles reflect being a son or a daughter, a husband or a wife and a father or a mother. The psychological role is the core around which feelings and meanings converge which influence the quality of social role taking. For

example, underlying the social role of a daughter or a son, a wife or a husband and a mother or a father may be a psychological role of a martyr, a victim, an orphan, an Atlas and a Hercules (Garg and Parikh, 1989). These psychological roles are anchored in role models from culture, society, epics and myths (Garg and Parikh, 1987, 1989). Both the social and psychological roles are anchored in the Identity.

Action choices are determined by the meanings given by the self, others and situation and the quality of role taking in the system. The action choices may be governed by the societal and familial expectations, the given norms and what is acceptable or non acceptable or what is considered socially desirable or non desirable. An individual may conform with the socially desirable and perpetuate the existing norms and beliefs and or may act given the context, situation, era and time. The action choice of an individual is largely determined by the quality of the social and psychological role, the meaning giving processes and the identity. For example, Indian women are largely focussed on affiliative and relational aspects and the expectations of them from the culture, society and family. Women more often conform to the norms of the socio-cultural context, systemic expectations and family's affirmation. (They surrender their beings to ideal role models and find it difficult to own up their existence in their own right independent of relational and affiliative linkages.)

Replenishment processes are squarely anchored in the pro-active identity of the individual. Replenishment means that an individual identity transacting with others and the system enhances the dignity of the self, others, systems and the transactions simultaneously. The individual can replenish the system when she/he acts with values and convictions. Replenishment processes adds to the wholesomeness of systems and well-being of individuals. It is only these processes which bring about re-shaping and refashioning of existing cultures, social structures and role taking processes.

Indian women give of themselves to people and systems through sacrifice, denials and deprivations. They will fight for maintenance of relationships and perpetuation of norms and beliefs based on traditions. Society and other roles idealise and glorifies these. However, Indian women find it difficult to assert, define and take charge of their destiny in their own hands. As such, they often end up making compromises or pseudo choices rather than replenish and redefine themselves, their roles or systems.

All these four processes put together contribute to the emergence of an identity of the individual. When the above four processes are dominantly influenced by socio-cultural structures and processes and normative expectations the identity gets masked and only social roles emerge. When only social roles emerge action choices get limited and no replenishment of self, others

and systems emerge. It is only in the unfolding of identity that new responses emerge and as such redefinition of roles, redesigning of systems and replenishment to refashion responses occur.

Socio Cultural Influences on Women's Identity

Socialization processes through culture, society and family have influenced women's role. These patterns reflect the era and history of various ages and the existing models of society. However, there have been some common threads running through these patterns in varying degrees. The agrarian design of society considered women to be the weaker sex, designed a marginal role in decision making concerning external environment, a victim of biological differentiation and predispositions, psychological and social oppressions and a denial of processes of being and becoming her ownself. There was over emphasis on conformity to the social roles as per the social design. Though Indian women like its culture and country carry a rich heritage of role models their location seems to be frozen in the social structure of the agrarian era.

In the Indian context, women have been worshipped and identified with goddesses or mothers since time immemorial. She is considered to be a source of strength, devotion, understanding, purity etc. Her symbolic existence as "Ardha Nareeshwar" or "Ardhangini" itself goes to prove her status as a co-partner or an individual and not a gender. This ideology has percolated down since the vedic age and to that extent the Indian culture is

largely responsible in maintaining a dignified status of women in society. Her role is complementary to that of a man. Though supposed to be vulnerable, in her all powerful form she can be the ultimate saviour or destructor of the universe. These processes of identity only unfold in crisis and for a macro cause or relationships. Indian women rarely use these aspects of their identity.

Though the scriptures have provided her legitimate space and due respect the socio-cultural structures have postulated her idealism by glorifying the roles like Seeta, Savitri, Kannagi portrayed in the great epics. Women are supposed to follow without stating what they feel or believe is right for her, others or the system. She is bounded by role performance with devotion.

In today's times also the continuity of the roles that women play in society have generated images and stereotypes not only from the exigencies of biological differentiation and social situations but are deeply rooted in myths and legends and the religion of that particular culture (Ghadially, R. 1988).

Influence of Family on Women's Identity

Given the baggage of society anchored in the agrarian model today's women have entered another era and another space of formal work organizations. Their entry has raised many issues as it directly confronts all those roles and expectations which were once held sacrocent (Parikh 1982, Parikh and Shah, Parikh 1991,

Kapur 1974). In this creation of new space families and role holders in families and society continues to bemoan the loss and erosion of traditional roles.

Families with male and female role models shape the child's role taking. Indian family with its deeply embedded social design prepared a female child for conformity, surrender of her being and becoming to a duty bound role of a daughter, wife, daughter-in-law and mother. Organizationally, there was a carry over of the familial structures and role models to formal work settings.

Although the Indian family setting provides eventual support to women working in organizations, it also creates tremendous guilt and stress. Each new step the woman takes, she is shown the prescriptive social ideal role model of an ever sacrificing woman -- a victim and a martyr. Her own ambition, achievement, involvement in work generates threats and anxieties in the significant role holders of the family, viz. the husband, the in-laws and the children. The husband puts her in the middle of two systems and questions her loyalty to the family setting. The in-laws demands the traditional ideal role model of a daughter-in-law; and the children demand her presence at all times. Indian women executives in the name of exclusive responsibility of a dual career and belonging in two systems get pulled and pushed between two competing systems, multiple roles and expectations (Sinha 1987).

At the family level, marriage as an institution and social living gets loaded with expectations of traditional roles. Inspite of genuine efforts by both, men and women keep regressing back to older modes. Men regress to the role of a provider and controller of resources and relatedness outside the home. He does not sustain the new role of sharing the turmoils of the outside world. The woman tends to regress back into a home maker and a mother role. She expects the husband to bestow all love and care and also to sustain the initiative to keep the marriage as a partnership.

A cultural lag is created as western models and behaviour patterns are adopted at in the eastern environment. At the cognitive level the Indian woman wants to gain total freedom from social and familial role expectations. However, at the emotive level they remain anchored in the traditional culture of the agrarian era in affiliative and relational dimension. An approach avoidance conflict is created resulting in the woman vascillating between her aspirations and her emotions.

Caught between rising aspirations for a new world view and role definitions and the persistence of beliefs of centuries old traditional agrarian society of India created a metaphor of making women into martyrs and the persecuted. Their life space has become overloaded with the struggle to create a sense of psychological equality, respect and autonomy. Besides, the universe of identities of the cultural lore also gets replayed by

the Indian female child. Perhaps the role models of the cultural lore are internalized as deeply as the universe of identities are introjected. The three significant and persistent models through mythology to history are that of a virtuous woman who suffers (Sita), virtuous and assertive woman who fights (Rani of Jhansi) and the one who escapes into religion (Meera). In terms of the 3 role models from history women attempt to either conform, react or sidestep the system without directly confronting it or modifying it. All models chose death -- either physical or psychological. These women became the martyrs who with all good intentions and personal struggle perpetuate the processes of dehomanization of women in the system (Parikh 1981, 1982).

The Current Stance of the Indian Women

Out of the deep rooted social order, there emerged three types of women in today's times. They are the adjuster, the asserter and the drifter.

The adjuster accepts the traditional roles and lives by them. They are content in their prescribed roles and experience no conflict -- internal nor external. Family is their focus of being and becoming and are greatly satisfied in their stance of conformity.

The asserter are the women who are constantly pushed and pulled by both the systems. They are aware of their potentials and react aggressively to their restrictive life role and the

inevitable nature of their life space. They constantly create conflicting situations to assert themselves.

The drifter are those who have chosen to create a new location and define a new meaning for themselves. In doing so, they attempt to redefine their roles, the system and the nature of relationships. They wish to bring something more to themselves and the system they live in. (These capable, intelligent, persistent and hard working women act with courage and conviction.) With every step they take, they create a space. The road they travel is unknown and lonely and each step is a discovery towards freedom.

Within these frames of identity and role models Indian women of today attempt to transcend the social milieu but fail to create real space for themselves in the social system. They attempt to define new roles but fail to trigger new processes within the system. They are captives of social traditions and role prescriptions.

Women's Movement in India

(Indian women have attempted to borrow new role models from the west. These borrowed models are very often not acceptable in both the family as well as work settings. The borrowed models do not acquire emotive roots or responses. Rational logical responses anchored in alien models creates barriers and inhibitions.) Women's movements have emerged from time to time. Beginning pre independence period, the women's movement was very much

a part of the nationalist movement. The radicalism and militancy which was characteristics of the women's movement during that period has substantially come down. The powerful women's movement of the pre independence period based on social and political work among women has lost both its vigour and sense of purpose afterwards.

First two decades after independence were marked by stereotyped activities by women's organizations and apathy towards crucial issues concerning women.

During the sixties, women were trying to get mobilized in large numbers and they joined the general struggles of the rural poor, tribals, industrial working class and other mass movements.

Participation of women in Naxalbari movement, anti-price rise demonstrations, Navnirman Youth Movement, rural revolt in Maharashtra and the Chipko Movement provided a backdrop for the ensuing struggles on women's issues. However, the fact that women participated in other larger struggles but had not evolved their own platform for focussing and pressing for their own issues till the mid seventies has been observed by various scholars and activists.

The International Women's Decade (1975-1985) has brought to limelight a number of crucial issues relating to women.

"Women's movement is the organized effort to achieve a common goal of equality and liberation of women and it presupposes sensitiveness to crucial issues affecting the life of women". Although women's movements have taken considerable strides since the mid seventies they have not been able to sufficiently obtain involvement of the rural women or urban poor. Individual groups have been working with all these women, yet semi permanent network has not been evolved, though many a time the need has been felt.

Women's movements gave rise to special interest groups like cultural groups, professional women, working women, and centres where women could go for emotional, legal and medical support. In various states organizations like the "Shramik Stree Mukti Sangathana", "Mahila Mukti Morcha", "Self-Employed Women's Association have established themselves.

Research on women is not new but studies regarding them offer a variety of concern with shifting emphasis and perspectives, depending on one's theoretical orientation, ideological alignments, changes in the contemporary situation and in priorities in development. Women's question is no more a woman's concern but an important issue in the development debate and policy.

Today's women attempt to deal with the inhibiting forces of the societal barriers. Some have actually come up with new responses which are meaningful and relevant for the times. These

new responses are anchored in today's times and have had no earlier role models or affirmation from societal structures.

Apart from women taking the initiative to help themselves and recreate an identity for their lot, society and government agencies too can work towards this end. Laws have been formed in favour of women. 'Abolition of Sati', 'Anti dowry bill', raising the age of marriage and 'equal pay for equal work' are positive advances by the government and concerned groups. The United Nations had declared 1975 as the 'Year of women' and the period 1975-1985 as the 'decade of women'. There is an all round recognition of the issues faced by women and various groups, committees, forums etc. are discussing and formulating policies to raise the status of women. Instead of reinforcing existing realities like discrimination, deprivation etc. actual sources of problems which can provide new directions are to be discovered.

However, all the external barriers to growth are resultant of Indian culture, societal design and history. The government policies are also reactive in the sense that they are designed on lacunaes, deprivations and discriminations. As such, in the absence of monitoring and concommitant deterrants they do not change the tide. What the government can do is to design policies which facilitate new choices and directions. Education, infrastructures for women to feel respected and dignified and support systems so that they find freedom to leave oppressive people and situations. Similarly, the social stigma attached to

divorce, separation and or widowhood need to be eroded so that men and women can live a life and redesign life and relationships if it becomes necessary. Policies are for living issues and not only for emergent problems. As such, policies need to be designed for people and today's relational, structural and systemic scenario of the society.

Though the rate of development in India is high, women have gained marginally because the pattern of development has been superimposed on a pre-existing system with social structures severely in disfavour of women. The main thrust should be to uplift the consciousness of women's issues. Without a change in the consciousness no social transformation will be able to set women free. Mass media which usually glorifies the subordination of women can help in a big way in influencing and reorienting the philosophy and attitudes of people. Values have to be internalized which no external force can help. What is required is reexamination of existing systems, structures, relationships and the culture of the environment. Only if prevailing practices are analyzed can one move towards a change for the better.

New Patterns of Identity for Indian Women

What should be the strategy of women to experience life, work, family and their ownselves to the fullest extent? How can they make more meaningful action choices in the complex and everchanging environment where they have to deal with the unknown and the unfamiliar? It seems that Indian men and women in

modern society have failed to delink the absolutism of role activities associated with that of being male and female. Women often get caught in their primary biological role of nurturance and sustainance. The career and professional women get stuck in the dilemmas of women-person encounters. Each attempt to get out sucks them deeper into resolving inter-personal relationships of their social and work roles.

Women respond differently to these pressures. Some remain job oriented anchored in economic criteria and deny to themselves the unfolding of their potentials. They accept routine, lower paid and lower status organizational positions. They give exclusive priority to the family demands and surrender their potentials at the altar of familial roles. However, the younger and more educated generation create greater rationality between family and work responsibilities than do their older peers. The last decade has undergone some dramatic change. Women have experienced that role processes anchored in the agrarian model were inadequate and insufficient for the industrialized and urbanized living of today. Nevertheless, with all the clarity and understanding, the strengths of socio-cultural structures and familial socialization tend to influence women's growth, status and career conditions.

Can we provide any alternatives for women to define a new role and crystalize new identity patterns for themselves? Can we provide a role model for them to follow?

Professional women who have attempted to work with their potentials, capabilities and resources and have entered the world of occupation and career get caught with the pathos of traditional past and ethos of modern times. They accept the responsibilities and expectations of both the past and the present, thus getting overburdened. This leaves them very little scope to disengage themselves from the pulls and pushes of dependence, surrender and control and generate for themselves processes of autonomy and commitment.

As a result such women are continuously struggling in the system to find freedom from dependent and controlling relationships, to redefine their status from being passive performers and being acted upon by the system, to being actors and acting upon the system for its own wellbeing. Economic independence is only a mask, to avoid confrontation with the basic issues of becoming a person in social interaction. Many a women in their struggle become victims of the fear of social stigma, isolation and loneliness. To break the barriers to self-actualization, growth and independence, women have used economic independence as a medium to rise above their usual subdued level. But in the process they do not realize that economic independence is not the only factor to release them of their bondedness. It may just be the beginning of self realization and assertion.

Women are at a crossroad. What choices do they make for themselves, their aspirations, urges and ultimate release? In today's times one charismatic woman cannot generate an ideal model

which other women can follow. This kind of a leader follower model would only repeat the historical process of turning others into echoes and shadows of a giant model. Women will only turn out pale replicas of others. The only alternative seems to be that women become "heroines" unto themselves to initiate a search to discover their own identity without condemning men, society or the system. Some women have opted to create a landmark for themselves. They have had the courage and convictions to choose the dimensions of their existence and grapple to discover an integrated identity which includes the multiple facets of social and work roles. They have claimed their existential and psychological identity beyond the social roles. Only then fulfilment and wider horizons have been experienced, acted upon and actualized.

The most enduring and difficult internal barriers are women's own social stereotypes, their psychological feeling of martyrdom and victimhood, their recepient status and doubts about the legitimacy of their formal roles in work organizations. These are deeply embedded through the cultural lore and processes of socialization (Parikh & Garg, 1989). Evidence of achievement aspirations and success does not free the women to accept their action choices, courage of convictions and their ownership of their own lives. (Women end up mortgaging their life to significant relationships and disowning their potentials and creativity.) Then identity is influenced by these internal cultural, social, familial, psychological and personal barriers. Women find it

difficult to take ownership of freedom and free themselves from its anhilating impact. The emerging pull of the new identityis to take charge of their lives and give shape to their destinies and those of the systems they are a part of.

The future scenario for women in India is to walk an uphill path, to transcend the monolithic social structures, to create new processes in the culture, the organizations and other families. The professional women will influence the social structures and culture by presenting a new role of being a professional, a new kind of a daughter, wife and a mother.

Exploring beyond the horizon

Most women experience terror at crossing the threshold to a space beyond the horizon. This space demands that women take charge of her destiny and her life-space around her. It demands that she refashions her response. Women confront the values which they hold and search for ways to encounter human existence with resilience.

One of the anchors of the space beyond the horizon lies in the freedom to make a choice and to experience the present. And to experience the present, women have to free themselves from the associative universe and the overwhelming symbols of past experiences.

The other anchor of the present lies in the space beyond the horizon -- where, instead of hope there is engagement with the world, instead of dreams there is commitment, instead of aspirations there are choices, instead of ideals there are convictions, instead of bestowal and affirmation there is courage (Parikh and Garg, 1989).

There are many complexities that evelope an Indian woman. There are pulls and pushes from her being to create an awareness/ awakening among them to break away from conventional stereotypes. There is a pull to look beyond being a helper or a procreater of children. All these issues are merely the tip of the iceberg. Awareness is just a stepping stone towards bringing about change. Today's women need to pro act rather than react to bring about a change in the existing system.

Patterns of identity which have changed at the macro-cultural level is the mother Goddess and the power Shakti. One fosters and the other destroys. At the micro family level identities are role bound either into idealization or subjugation. At the societal level either they are marginal and exploited or glorified.

None of these are relevant for today. Aternatives for today's times are that women accept their multiple roles in multiple contexts and create space for themselves so that they can meet the challenges of tomorrow. They have to rise like phoenix from ashes with resilience and courage and dignity and

grace to sow the seeds of new identity patterns and role models for future generations.

A whole host of women have lived the identity patterns of being treated as a Goddess, Mother, Shakti, power and essence of goodness and virtue. Many have lived the life of a idealized daughter, wife and a mother. Many have reactively or proactively made choices and been stigmatized, called names, labelled as whores and prostitutes. Many have burned themselves in the name of social decadence and perpetuated the syndrom of female child being a burden. Many have lived a life time in misery, burdened by drudgery and surrender of themselves. Far too many have clung as dependents and derived their meaning of existence in relationships which have been abusive, exploitative and violating in many a sugar coated names of romance and love. Many a women have led invisible lives being echoes and shadows of significant role holders and articulators of their norms. And millions of others have been lost in the jungles of giant figures and their voices lost in the wilderness, lives laid waste by non-choices. Women have turned their beings into non-beings and disowned their options of discovering new meanings and new definitions of roles in the emergent industrial context of todays times. Women refashion their responses to the new challenges in their role in the urban complex settings of today, and their action choices with multiple roles in multiple membership.

Indian women would have to cross a major threshold and enter an unknown land. They will have to design a path where none existed with a sense of discovery. They will have to encounter and live with threat, fears, anxieties and terrors. In the creation of a new path the women will discover new dimensions of their being and its unfolding. Similarly, the women having designed a path will have to embark on a journey and create their own landmarks. All the wherewithals of the past will be insufficient and inadequate to respond to the new environment. It is the trust in the self, of the resources to be generated, of the courage to journey forth in a new land, to live through the terrains of uncharted land that the women of today will shape the new identity. They will discover the voice which has been silented for centuries to sing the songs of life and living and to discover the joys of experiencing the beauty around.

The women of today will touch the magic of enlivening themselves and say, "this far I have travelled, there are distances to travel but there are moments here and now where I can be" (Parikh & Garg 1990). In this statement the past, present and future will merge to create that space where movement and stability where noise and silence, where light and darkness and chaos and tranquility loose their absolutism to create a new rhythm and unfolding.

Women in their emerging new Identity will have to open their eyes and look at people anchored in themselves and be responsive. They will determine and make choices as to who and in what manner their world will be postulated and with what quality of related-

ness. Women will discover what offerings they will make and what they will receive. They will also create a space where others will feel included as well as excluded. Women in their identities will discover the infinite quality of relatedness as well as the finiteness of boundaries. They will experience in themselves the gentleness of a meandering river as well as the raging overflowing river without negating or disowning either. Above all women will discover their continuity as well as discontinuity, their inclusion and exclusion and affirmations and denial with grace and in their humanness.

With structures and systems women will locate themselves with courage of convictions. Their own locations will provide them the stability and security rather than anchoring it in. structures, systems and others. The women will stand steadfast in their convictions to fight oppression and to generate autonomy and shared human values to live by. All in all the new patterns of women's identity will give shape to their own destiny in an ever flux environment.

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