INDIAN WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT: FOUR LENSES

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INTRODUCTION

What constitutes "emancipation," "development," and "liberation" for Indian women? Attempts during the last five decades to change the roles, status, and position of different groups of Indian women have resulted in many obvious, sometimes dramatic, changes in indicators such as literacy and life expectancy. These changes have been particularly apparent in large cities in the strata of educated, middle-class women. However, there appears to have been, in parallel, an increase of crimes against women such as murders which are sometimes euphemistically termed dowry deaths. Even if some of this apparent increase in violence against women can be attributed to a societal willingness to publicly acknowledge such incidences, it is clear that all is not well and development is not unequivocally improving the lives of Indian women. What we have been learning, as illustrated by confronting incidences such as dowry deaths, is that development of women's status is not measurable by isolated, quantifiable indicators of well-being such as literacy. We need to observe the changing contours of various parameters of women's condition, setting these observations within the context of that section of Indian society to which the particular women belong.

Indian women, over 383 million of them in 1985, are, obviously, heterogeneous, with different needs, constraints, opportunities, and aspirations. These vary with many factors but most importantly by whether they are urban or rural; social class (often closely associated in India with caste, particularly in rural areas); and age and marital status (factors which affect a woman's relative position within her family). The growing literature on Indian women has highlighted this heterogeneity, substantiating that different groups of Indian women have been affected quite differently from men of their group, and from each other, by the post-Independence decades of planned modernization.¹ But some overarching constraints operate, to varying degrees, on all Indian women simply because they are female. In fact, some of these forces influence women everywhere and are of universal feminist concern.

Most efforts to improve the lot of Indian women (excluding measures introduced in the spirit of "social welfare" and aid), have focused on their economic position. This is not surprising, given the scarcity of available resources in India and that women generally have been disenfranchised from their control. But this is a one-dimensional approach, also attributable to the global dominance of economics in development planning. If the place of women in traditional cultures, like India's, is to be understood, development of their status must be thought of in much more integrated and multi-faceted ways. Four parallel aspects of an Indian woman's position must be understood and recognized as interdependent. They are:

- 1) The woman's economic/resource base;
- 2) The public/political arena allowed her by society;
- 3) Her family structure and the strengths it provides and the limits it imposes on her; and
- 4) Perhaps most important, the psychological/ideological "sense" about women in her society, a sense which shapes her own perception of herself and the options she allows

herself to consider.

Insight into these facets of a woman's place in her society can be gleaned by drawing upon several disciplines including economics, anthropology, political science, psychology, psychoanalysis, and sociology. Through an eclectic cross-disciplinary drawing together of ideas a systemic view can be obtained. This provides a framework which is useful for examining and thinking about Indian women and their development.

The four "lenses" listed above are used in this paper to examine Indian women's development, focusing on the lives of rural women from a village here called Sugao, in Deccan Maharashtra, India. The development and changes that have occurred in this village have been documented elsewhere,² and the details will not be repeated here but a brief overview of the salient characteristics might be useful. Sugao is located in Satara District on the Deccan Plateau of Maharashtra State, India. Climatically, it is in the marwa zone, which receives sufficient rainfall for one reliable wet-season crop. Sugao is in transition in several ways. Its agriculture is shifting from subsistence farming to cash cropping, and there is a concomitant monetization of the village economy. Land-to-man ratios are decreasing (having dropped from 1.3 acres/person in 1942 to 0.84 acres/person in 1977), an outcome of increases of the population in the post-Independence decades. Sugao is over 150 miles from Bombay (a bumpy ten-hour bus ride), and like most other villages in the region, has been sending its adult men to the city, particularly to the textile mills, for work. This migration is essential. Currently more than half of Sugao's adult men live outside the village and there is an increasing dependency on cash and in-kind remittances from adult male migrants.

The migration of men to Bombay has resulted in 28 percent of the Sugao farms being cultivated predominantly by women in 1977. In addition, 72 percent of those working as agricultural laborers were women. It might be expected that this fact would have had profound implications for changes in the status, roles, and responsibilities of Sugao women. But it appears that Sugao women's work in subsistence production has not improved their status nor increased their control in the village. Women's growing role in agriculture has not increased their power in Sugao and in fact, in some instances, women's position has declined. This is a paradoxical phenomenon. An examination through the four lenses can provide some explanation.

1: ECONOMICS AND WORK

In a cross-cultural analysis of female status and work, Sanday presents a model of the evolution of female status in tribal societies from a relative imbalance of power between males and females to a more equal distribution.³ Sanday establishes empirically that the extent of women's participation in subsistence agriculture has some relation to their status. Her analysis indicates that too low or too high a participation by women in subsistence cultivation results in low female status, while a 40 percent contribution represents a balanced division of labor (given that women bear children and nurse them) and results in high female status.

This analysis offers some generic postulates for much of women's activity even in non-agricultural, non-rural situations. The fewer women in an activity (for example, medicine, law, politics), the higher the social recognition of that work, and therefore the lower the status of women in general since most do not do that work.⁴ Conversely, if many women are involved in a particular line of work, it loses prestige and therefore women involved in that activity have lower status than men who practiced it before women "took over" the field.

The application of Sanday's work to peasant, urban-influenced societies such as Sugao's appears convincing. For example, women predominate in cultivation in Sugao but the men have developed another independent, control sphere: wage work in Bombay. In the division of roles, Sugao male migrants are sent very few subsistence goods by the women but most men do send remittances to their families. Women depend more on the men to meet their non-subsistence needs than men depend on the women to meet their subsistence needs. Thus women's participation in subsistence agriculture brings them little status. Their daily grind, at housework and in the fields, keeps their families together and nurtures them, but this work does not empower women themselves.

Sanday speculates that in societies in which men and women are not interdependent the status of women is not enhanced even if they virtually monopolize production of subsistence goods. This appears to be true in Sugao. If equity between the sexes is considered important, the ideal division of labor seems to be a balanced participation in the work by men and women. (Sanday's observation of tribal societies of 60 percent participation in an activity by men, 40 percent by women, might be an appropriate balance.)

Overall, the prognosis for improving women's status in the village appears rather bleak, given that their increased participation in agriculture has brought them few personal rewards. Sanday hypothesizes that, if a demand arises for certain goods produced by women, the consequences will include development of economic rights that in turn can lead to an overall change in their status. This is the rationale of policy makers who espouse programs to reinforce women's economic strength as a means to change other societal forces that constrain them. They select this route of action because it appears that economic intervention is feasible, but acknowledge the tremendous influence of the Indian family structure in controlling women's access to productive resources and relegating them to low status.

This approach has proven to have limited validity for Sugao women. The very few women who have been able to "make a break" have done so largely by getting an education and migrating to the city. Little change seems possible in the village itself, and even in the city a village woman can quickly find herself isolated and vulnerable if she drifts from her village family. As Sugao women have developed control over the production of a good for which there is a demand outside the family, Sugao men have taken over that production. Women remain occupied with very small-scale rearing of chickens and a goat or two. Acquiring cross-bred cows that yield more milk that is sold to a dairy collective or establishing small poultry farms producing eggs and birds which are sold to urban markets are activities that have been adopted mostly by the men. In communities such as Sugao a "takeover" by men occurs if some aspect of women's production begins to enjoy a larger market. However, this phenomenon is not restricted to village society. Another telling example, in Bombay, has been the production of pickles, spices, and snacks which were initially produced only by women in small household industries. They are now made commercially in small factories that employ mostly men.

Work in the textile industry has been an avenue for upward mobility for Sugao men. By contrast, work opportunities for women in Bombay have been quite restricted because for a woman to work outside the house is not desirable by village standards. This is reflected in the fact that in 1977 only 11 of the 111 adult women who were living in the city had an earning occupation. Four of these eleven were in what are tradi-

tionally considered low status jobs, running meals-catering businesses, known as *khanawals*, for factory workers.⁵ Most of the Sugao women had moved to the city with their husbands and, in keeping with village norms, were housewives.

This lack of upward mobility has had a negative effect on women's wages in Sugao. In 1977, 72 percent of the agricultural laborers in Sugao were women. They were paid two-thirds the wages of men. This ratio had persisted at least since 1942. As fewer and fewer men are left in the village who are available for casual day labor, the discrepancy between wages for men and those for women has been increasing. In 1982, I observed that because of the scarcity of male labor, men received ten rupees per day for farm work at peak demand periods in the agricultural cycle, while women continued to receive the three rupees they had earned in 1977. Outside jobs for men have improved their earning capacity both outside and within the village. In contrast, Sugao women have experienced a stagnation and a relative decline in their earning capacity. Social and cultural attitudes about appropriate sex roles have prevented Sugao women from obtaining jobs in the formal sectors of the city economy, jobs that have enhanced men's earning capacity.

The only asset over which women have a monopoly is their ability to bear children, and even there, in the rural extended family, a new bride's security and livelihood depend on her performance. Not producing sons can at times be fatal; producing sons does not ensure status in the family but merely fulfills the preconditions for it.

2: THE PUBLIC REALM

Sugao women by and large do not have a significant role in the public and political life of the village. Their sphere of movement and interaction is primarily confined to the circle of women in the extended family. Even then, most women's groups are confined to just those gatherings necessary to complete agricultural or domestic tasks for the family. This is rather revealing in the context of the importance Sanday gives to women's presence in the public realm as an indicator of her status in the community.

Sanday defines the woman worker's status as related to the balance between her role in the domestic and in the public domains, suggesting the following four measures of her participation in the latter:

- 1) A control of resources such as land and its products, and crafts, in a range beyond that of the domestic unit;
- 2) A demand for products made by women that is recognized in the village or in a greater external market;
- 3) The political participation of women, including expression of opinions in regular, official procedures, that can influence policy affecting people beyond the domestic unit;
- 4) The establishment of women's solidarity groups devoted to female political or economic interests, groups that meet regularly and protect and represent women's interests and are recognized and effective in this activity.

These categories of participation in the public realm are organized in an increasing scale of female status: low status is surmised when none of these indicators is present in a society and high status is expected when female solidarity groups are established.

If these measures are applied to Sugao women, one notes that Sugao women lack even the first, control of resources. Despite post-Independence laws that give women rights to inherit land, they do not easily inherit or control it. In Sugao, the sentiment is that Sugao land has to stay in Sugao hands. More than half (55 percent) of Sugao families belong to two Maratha caste families who do not intermarry. For similar reasons members of other castes in Sugao also seek mates outside the village. Thus women married to Sugao men are considered outsiders, for they generally come from other villages. Daughters of Sugao families are considered outsiders too because they will marry men from other villages. Wives are considered outsiders if they have no sons because Sugao men are afraid that, if widowed, they may allow

village land to be inherited by their relatives from other villages. In this way all Sugao women are in some sense effectively considered outsiders and inheritance of Sugao land by them is discouraged. In rural contexts land is the most productive and valued resource; yet by and large women do not, *de facto*, have access to it.

Less than 3 percent of Sugao lands are legally owned by women. Even in these few cases only some of these lands are actually cultivated, and their produce controlled, by their owners. My interviews of women who were either alone or cultivating family lands while their men were away revealed that management decisions regarding the farm continued to be made predominantly by Sugao men. Often the male head of the family returned at critical junctures in the agricultural cycle and made provisions for the remaining decisions to be taken or the tasks to be completed. Often a male relative in the village was delegated the authority. In some families who had larger land holdings the older, senior women supervised the farm laborer's daily work. When wages were paid, in cash or a share of the crop, a man from the family usually oversaw the payments. Women did the tedious job of daily supervision but men wielded the power of actually paying the workers. The resulting lack of experience in management skills is a great handicap to a woman in Sugao who inherits land, because she falls easy prey to male farmers interested in acquiring her property.

Few women in Sugao own other productive resources such as a sewing machine with which to run a tailoring establishment. Even fewer have salaried jobs. Village housing too, another significant resource, is in the name of the male head of the family. A woman's jewelry, usually given as part of her dowry, has traditionally been considered women's wealth. Post-Independence legislation against dowry has had the effect of making it difficult to legally give a large dowry. There are therefore few formal records of the exchange, and the husband and his family can easily expropriate the jewelry and other gifts given as dowry. As was mentioned earlier, dowry deaths are not rare in India. Several women from Sugao and their family members have narrated to me the different ways women's lives have been threatened in their husband's house. One woman discovered rat poison mixed up in her food; another was found drowned in the village well; yet another died in what the family claimed was a household accident; her earl had caught fire when she had been cooking. Surprisingly, the accident had occurred at midnight when few families are cooking.

Sugao women's involvement outside the immediate family is minimal. Men control the management of the farm and disposal of farm surplus. They purchase and distribute most of the consumer goods. Men living in Bombay send home packages containing clothing, tea, sugar, cosmetics, and toys. In 1977, 7 percent of families claimed that they received all their consumer goods from Bombay. An additional 13 percent received about half and 7 percent received from 10 percent to 25 percent. Thus a large number of purchases of goods for use by women and children in Sugao are made by the men in Bombay. Women exercise little choice in the matter. Even when purchases are made in the nearby market town of Wai, women are rarely invited to accompany the men to help in the selection, even in matters as personal as the choice of saris that the women will wear for the next year!

Rosaldo postulates that it is an essential but not sufficient precondition that women have a public realm.⁶ She states that egalitarian relationships between men and women may be possible only when men and women participate equally in both the public and the domestic domain. She stresses that men must be involved in the domestic realm, and, furthermore, for true equity, that men's involvement in the domestic sphere is as important as women's participation in the public sphere, if not more so.

This statement is particularly significant in the study of the status of Indian women. Men working at domestic tasks are anathema to the ideology, embedded in the traditional family, of appropriate sex roles. Domestic work is women's work in rural and much of urban India too. This is so regardless of class or caste, and irrespective of whether

women are involved in productive work outside the homes - in agriculture or elsewhere. As Sugao women have increasingly shouldered the burden of subsistence cultivation in the village, this monopolistic responsibility of women for domestic chores is significant. Most Indian men and almost as many Indian women do not believe that a man has any responsibility for any domestic work.

Women accept this fact of life. Even Vidya, the one woman doctor from Sugao, trained and now practicing in Bombay, concurs with this on grounds of economic rationality ("He could earn more during that time working as a doctor and we could hire someone to do the cooking") and asserts that, were she married, she would not expect her husband to cook. Mrs. Khan, the high school science teacher in Sugao, shrugs resignedly and smilingly explains that she and her husband close the front door and shutter the windows so that their neighbors cannot observe her husband helping her with the domestic chores and gossip about it.

Needless to say, there are no women's solidarity groups in Sugao, and women do not participate in regular official procedures such as a village meeting.

3: THE FAMILY STRUCTURE

To those who have some knowledge of the modern, educated, usually uppercaste/class Indian women to be encountered in professional circles abroad or in metropolitan cities in India, the reality of a woman's position in the rigidly patriarchal Indian family can come as a rude shock. Maria Mies' investigation of Indian women and patriarchy notes this contradiction between a rigid patriarchal social structure and actual deviations from the norm.⁷ However, these deviations are particularly noticeable if one looks at upper-class, educated women. The former Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, was an obvious and inevitably cited example. Deviations in villages such as Sugao are not so obvious.

Mies contrasts the Indian and Western family and postulates that, although the dependency of a woman on her father, husband, and finally her son are common in both cultures, the role of the family is different in capitalist economies of the West from still largely feudal economies like India's. In this she echoes the major theme of the literature on families and on class issues. To summarize briefly, this literature suggests that in Western capitalist countries the patriarchal family gave way, as a result of the Industrial Revolution, to the conjugal family which is held together by the love relationship between the husband and wife. The values embedded in this family structure are free mate selection, notions of romantic love, and the right to divorce, but not the right to an independent career for the woman. As in the patriarchal family, the woman's sphere in the conjugal family continues to be domestic, not public, and limited to the internal family sphere. However, the concepts of egalitarianism and individualism of men, women, and children that have evolved in the West shake this structure. Gradually, as jobs become more available, women assume more and more roles outside the family.

In contrast to individualism and egalitarianism, the patriarchal family has embedded in it the notion of dominance by older men over younger, and by the group over the individual. Traditionally, love relationships in India between the husband and wife were censored. Love between, and emotional bonding of, husband and wife were seen as threatening to the bonds between the men in the family, bonds crucial to perpetuation of the family. When a love relationship did develop between a man and a woman, it was usually outside the institution of marriage.

Mies claims a carry over of this structure to the seemingly nuclear urban families in India. She observes that these nuclear families are different from the Western nuclear family in the persistence of close husband-mother relationship in joint, patriarchal families, a relationship often stronger than the husband-wife relationship. Seemingly nuclear families from Sugao living in Bombay are often extremely closely tied to the joint family in Sugao and function as an extension of it in the city.

The domestic sphere remains completely under the jurisdiction of the female and the ideology of Indian womanhood is built on the roles and responsibilities of the woman in the home, in her relationship with members of the joint family. During the nationalist struggle for Indian Independence and after Independence, Indian women were given rights and opportunities that allowed them a public sphere for involvement and action. The rights to take part in politics, to get an education, and to become professionally employed were bestowed upon Indian women, often as a result of social reform initiated by men influenced by the Western liberal tradition and its concepts of individualism and egalitarianism.⁸ Thus modern Indian women have not had to fight collectively for emancipation in the public realm. Partly as a result, Indian women under the protection of and encouragement from such men began assuming professional, at times quite powerful, roles in the public realm. However, in their private lives they have remained quite conservative, preferring arranged marriages and the patriarchal family structure to free mate selection and nuclear families bonded by the love relationship between husband and wife. The social and private lives of these Indian women are kept quite separate from their economic life and they continue to fulfill all their duties in the domestic realm.⁹ As a result of this "partial" emancipation, the educated Indian woman is acculturated to have fewer fears than her Western counterpart about losing her femininity through excellence in education and career, but is much more in conflict with herself if she does not fulfill her role in the domestic sphere.

In the Hindu joint family, which is predominant in Sugao, the central relationship in the system is based on continuation and expansion of the male lineage through inheritance from father to son and in which brother-brother relationships are important. Most women have no place in the public realm and as a result the conflicts that beset some urban women who do have a role outside the family are not issues for them. However, a few Sugao women are pushing at the boundaries of their designated roles and are feeling the push and pull of traditional ideology in conflict with, and in opposition to, the new reality. They try to bring an official, still patriarchal ideal of womanhood into harmony with their changed situation. This traditional concept of womanhood includes monogamy as ideal, motherhood as the true vocation of women, professional involvement as a danger, and true happiness in fulfilling the family role. By and large these concepts are alive in the minds of women as well as men and are important in affecting and shaping the lives of Sugao women today.

4: PSYCHOLOGICAL/IDEOLOGICAL ATTITUDES ABOUT WOMEN IN INDIAN SOCIETY

It is important to come to some understanding of why Indian women, across divisions of class, religion, occupation, and geographic regions, cling to the more traditional concepts about women's roles and position in the domestic, private, interpersonal realm. Some insights are obtained from work in psychology and psychoanalysis. Sudhir Kakar's path-breaking work on Indian society provides some tantalizing glimpses into themes and ideals which pervade and circumscribe female identity formation in India, particularly women in traditional patriarchal families.¹⁰ In these families the traditional preference for sons is very much intact. Kakar notes that female hostility against males, which, it could be postulated, would be a consequence of this tradition, does not manifest itself in India. He speculates that mitigating factors such as the close bonding between the mother and daughter as well as the security the girl derives from filling a defined niche in the traditional family might prevent this. More disturbing is his observation that it is possible that girls and women may transform the cultural devaluation of women into feelings of worthlessness and inferiority. Low self-esteem, depressive moodiness, and morbid sensitivity in interpersonal relations are noted as recurring characteristics in seemingly liberated Indian women. Monisha Roy's work on Bengali, upper-class, educated women reiterates this theme and offers some explanations.¹¹

The dominant virtues of the "good woman" in Indian society are defined as submission and docility. It is a theme that permeates modern Indian theater, cinema, romantic literature, and popular mythology. As a result, girls tend to conform and even over-conform to the prescription and expectation of those around them. Even the Western-educated, elite Hindu women who were interviewed by Rama Mehta by and large conformed to this pattern.¹² It is not surprising, therefore, to find the far less privileged, less educated Sugao women conforming to this norm. So ingrained is the attitude that Sugao women use these same yardsticks of appropriate behavior in their censure of other women.

In mythology, the Ram Sita legend (the Ramayana), which is the most widespread in India, confirms these notions of womanhood.¹³ Sita is self-sacrificing, obedient, chaste, pure, gentle, and completely faithful despite Rama's rejections, slights, and thoughtlessness. The Ram Sita epic is introduced to most Indian people in their early childhood. It is the best known of the epics, more so than the Mahabharata, the other major source of Hindu mythology. The Mahabharata features the strong-willed, polyandrous woman, Draupadi, wife of the five Pandawas, who are the heroes of the saga. Yet Draupadi is rarely cited as a role model for Indian women.

It is not only the religious channels of social communication that eulogize the cool and forbearing Sita as the model for Indian women. Mahatma Gandhi, in his proclamations of the meaning of Indian womanhood, also promoted the Sita ideal. Women were to play a role in the public domain, be active as freedom fighters, be pure and self-sacrificing.¹⁴ But Gandhi's struggles with his own sexuality put women's sexuality and seductiveness on trial, as dangers to be fought by the virtuous man and woman.¹⁵ The message to Indian women from Gandhi the political man and Gandhi the personal man were quite contradictory in the behavior they solicited - action in the one realm and passivity and suppression in the other. To women, and men, growing up in post-Independence India, Gandhi's position raised quite confusing and insecure feelings about even recognizing, let alone accepting, their own sexuality.

The Sita myth persists; it permeates the national consciousness. Sita-like behavior, chastity, self-sacrifice, stoic acceptance of the man's neglect of her are considered necessary for a virtuous woman. This is a fact of both men's and women's attitudes in Sugao. The myth persists in the most pervasive of the new media that have invaded the countryside - the Hindi and, in the case of Sugao, the Marathi movies. The contemporary Hindi movie features sexuality. By and large the sexually aggressive woman is a seductively clad, go-go dancing woman who is a tramp. The heroine is usually the quietly sensuous, virtuous woman who may be either surprised or victimized into the sexual act but never engages in it of her volition. The media do not encourage the idea that the Indian woman accepts her sexuality.

No wonder, then, that the Indian woman cannot function without tremendous sexual conflicts. This is especially true when she is faced with a society that had begun to incorporate some of the attributes of the Western conjugal family, a family in which the love bond between the husband and wife might require a more balanced acceptance and responsibility for sexuality and other aspects of companionship. This may be one explanation for the fact that researchers have often noted with surprise that educated, professionally powerful women often prefer arranged marriages and don't wish to find their own mates in the arena of "love." The Indian woman's inner world, which reflects her outer social world, renders her passive in some of the critical decisions that affect her personal life.

The societal expectations of Indian women, when incorporated into the inner world by both Indian men and women, do not provide a psychologically fertile ground for the development of husband-wife relationships based on companionship and mutual respect.¹⁶ Controversial value judgments are involved in statements concerning which male-female relationships are more egalitarian: those based on love, as

in Western cultures, or those based on a shared economic, social destiny in fulfilling one's obligations and role in the family, as in traditional societies such as the Indian. However, many of the ideas about development, and plans and projects to bring it about, are based on expectations that the people affected will act primarily for their individual good. The psychological profile of women in traditional Indian society, epitomized in rural Indian society, does not indicate a high potential for such a response.

CONCLUSION

The Indian woman and her place in society must be viewed from the perspective obtained by viewing through all four lenses together. The complex reality of a woman's life is shaped by their overlapping effects. A woman's self concept forms and is formed by her economic possibilities and/or her political powerlessness. This in turn is dependent on her place in the family. For example, Vidya, the woman doctor from Sugao, is now in an economically viable position, yet she is severely constrained in her public activity by the norms of family and society. She is an intelligent woman and recognizes this. Her actions and behavior are cautious reflecting this understanding. The need for such defensive behavior is even more a fact of life for all the other ambitious and educated Sugao women. All Sugao women know that their survival depends on it and they act accordingly.

Examples from lives of women from Sugao village were presented in this paper to suggest that improvement of the status of Indian women will result only from tangible changes in all the four dimensions of their existence described here. Improving women's access to economically productive resources will not in and of itself improve the woman's position in the family hierarchy, bestow upon her a greater freedom to operate in the public realm, or enhance her sense of self-worth. Economic development is a very important, sometimes crucial, element of the needed change, but it does not necessarily bring about a societal transformation. For a self sustained development the interrelationships between economic change and the other facets of woman's condition have to be considered and all four facets have to supportively and simultaneously be changed. Only a totality of change and increased power and control in all these arenas will add up to true development for the Indian woman. Planners and social activists have to keep that in mind as they develop intervention strategies, otherwise the development that is brought about will not give Indian women choice and freedom to determine their lives.

In the past, since family structures and values, societal ideology regarding women, and the culture of societal interactions have been considered deeply embedded and not easily changed, planners have concentrated in trying to improve the relative economic positions of selected groups of women. The thinking has been that change in the other arenas would follow. However, the danger in this approach has become clear from the experience of planned changes in many countries of South Asia. Merely improving the economic base and access to resources of a few women runs the danger of isolating these women in a social matrix unsupportive of them personally and hostile to their aspirations.

The nature of change needed in each of the four aspects differs according to the group of women who will be affected; whether they are urban or rural dwellers, their education and their socio-economic class. This is true in the microcosm of Sugao village. The women of the well-to-do families have different priorities and problems from those of the lower-caste women who do most of the agricultural field labor. But in all cases the total matrix in which their lives unfold has to be understood and changes have to be induced in various dimensions before development is achieved.

This paper has tried to point out that there is great interdependence between family structures and values, woman's sense of selfworth, her economic worth and her stature in the public, societal realm. It is this

totality of connected, related pieces that must change if women are truly to become emancipated in India.

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14. See Gandhi, M.K., Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth. Boston: Beacon Press, 1957.
15. See Erikson, Erik, Gandhi's Truth on the Origins of Militant Nonviolence, New York: W.W. Norton, 1969.
16. For a description of Sugao women's personal relationships, see Hema Dandekar, "Social and Spatial Constraints on Rural Women's Sexuality: Observations from an Indian Village," Ekistics 281 Nov-Dec 1981, pp. 422-428.