CHAPTER XIII

STATUS OF FEMALE

- Selected Socio-Cultural and Economic Aspects

- *Dr. Meena Acharya*

1. Introduction

Women constitute about half of the world's population and a major part of the unrecognized labor force in the world. It has been a matter of great concern during the last few decades that conventional statistics reflect neither tile substantial contributions of women in labor input and management of household production nor their progressive marginalization from modern forms of asset ownership and employment avenues (United Nations, 1992; Beneria, 1982).

In Nepal `The Status of Women' study series, published between 1979-1981 by Centre for Economic Development and Administration, (CEDA), established that women constitute the backbone of Nepalese agriculture, specially in the hill areas. Their contribution to household production and income was found to be at par with men, both in terms of labor input as well as in decision making roles.

Accordingly, a major recommendation running through `The Status of Women' study series called for improving statistical methods of data gathering and processing so as to underline the differential impact of various developmental interventions among men and women. (See Acharya and Bennett, 1981). A recent review of 1981 and 1991 census data reveals that substantial improvements have been made in the methodology of data collection, but still a large gap remains (Acharya, 1994). Nevertheless, census data, however inadequate, are the only information for analysing trends in a periodic framework. The following census snapshot, therefore, should be viewed in this context.

2. Sex Ratio

The sex-ratio, defined as the number of males per 100 females, is an important indicator of women's status because it is a cumulative product of demographic and social behavior patterns. A sex ratio over 100 denotes an excess of males over females and a ratio below 100 denotes an excess of females over males. As a natural rule, there is a preponderance of male births over female births among the human population in general. By the age of five the sex ratio is considered to be equalized since, by nature, male children are physically weaker than female children and thus a

smaller proportion of males survive compared to females (United Nations, 1992, p. 11). Further, universally, a larger proportion of women survive to old age, as compared to men (ibid.). Consequently, world population composition is in favor of the female of the species. However, in South Asia, the economically more backward countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh and India have had a reverse overall sex ratio due to socio-economic discrimination against the female child and women in general (Ibid). According to the 1991 census, in Nepal that ratio seemed to be reversing itself.

Table 1: Sex Ratio of Population by Ecological Zones and Development Regions, Nepal, 1991

Zone/ Region	Census Year	Eastern	Central	Western	Mid Western	Far Western	All Regions
Mountain	1971	98.0	100.0	103.0	105.0	101.0	100.8
	1981	101.9	106.7	108.4	107.8	102.3	104.7
	1991	96.3	99.9	109.1	103.1	94.6	98.4
Hill	1971	97.4	100.2	95.2	97.0	98.5	98.0
	1981	101.5	106.9	99.9	100.2	98.9	102.1
	1991	96.7	101.6	88.6	96.3	91.6	95.3
Terai	1971	107.5	105.0	106.6	107.0	110.4	106.4
	1981	108.1	107.3	108.9	107.2	115.9	108.3
	1991	103.1	106.2	102.7	102.0	101.3	103.9
All Zones	1971	102.3	103.3	97.9	100.8	100.7	101.4
	1981	105.3	107.1	102.6	103.5	104.9	105.0
	1991	100.5	103.7	93.5	99.2	96.0	99.5

Source: CBS, 1987, p. 30

CBS, 1993, Vol. 1, Part IV.

Note: Sex ratio is the number of males per 100 females.

In 1981, 7.3 million persons or 48.8 per cent of tile total population was female. The sex ratio for tile population was 105 males per 100 females. In 1991, of the 18.5 million population 9.2 million were males and 9.3 million females (Table 1). Thus, while the overall sex ratios observed in 1971 and 1981 were in favor of males, the 1991 census shows a slight dominance of females in the population. The region-wise sex ratio for the 1991 census shows a greater number of males only in the Terai zone. However, the sex ratio declined from 108.3 in 1981 to 103.9 in 1991 even in the Terai (Table 1). This may indicate that the mainly-male migration to the Terai during the seventies either petered out during the eighties or that many earlier emigrants have moved their families as well.

The social status of women and their access to resources varies widely depending on the cultural group they belong to. `The Status of Women' series asserted forcefully that Women's status in the Tibeto-Burman group as measured by the degree of freedom they enjoyed in mobility, choice of marriage partners, remarriages, separation and divorce etc., and their input in the decisions made within the household, was much higher. Generally, Women belonging to Tibeto-Burman cultural groups were found to have considerably greater freedom in matters such as choice of marriage partners, deciding the time for marriage and in selection of economic activities they wished to pursue, as compared to their sisters belonging to the Indo-Aryan cultural, group. The Tibeto-Burman groups included in `The Status of Women' study were Mustang Bhote (Tibetan), Kham Magars, Rais and Tamangs. The Indo-Aryan group included high and low caste Nepali-speaking hill groups, as well as Maithili, Tharus and Newars. While Indo-Aryan Women were married early, had no choice in their life partners and were severely restricted in their social mobility; such findings did not generally apply to women belonging to Tibeto-Burman groups. In all cultural groups, however, women's access to modern resources in the form of knowledge (education, training, etc.,) and traditional and newly created assets (e.g. land, machines, employment) was severely limited.

The 1991 census data does provide an opportunity to test whether such difference is reflected in the sex ratio by language groups. Table 2 does indicate Maithali, Bhojpuri, and Abadhi communities do have significantly higher than average sex ratios. This must be indicative of a relatively low social status of women in these communities, besides the in-migration of male population to Terai from other parts of the country and from across the border.

Table 2: Sex Ratio of Population by Mother Tongue, Nepal, 1981-1991

Mother Tongue	1981	1991
Nepali	104.5	96.6
Maithili	109.7	107.4
Bhojpuri	107.6	107.7
Newari	104.5	99.4
Gurung	92.1	89.5
Tamang	100.9	99.7
Abadhi	111.0	109.3
Tharu	104.5	100.4
Magar	98.3	93.7
Limbu	97.9	95.1
Rai	101.9	95.5
Sherpa	102.3	97.9
Others/unstated	106.1	102.4

Source: CBS, 1984, Vol. I, Part III
CBS, 1993, Vol. I, Part V1.

3. Fertility

One of the most important indicators of women's empowerment is control over their own fertility. Women's bodies have been used and abused on account of their fertility. To an extent, social control over women's sexuality is also related to their fertility. In the Hindu tradition, women are worshipped for their fertility, in the exalted status of mother-Goddess, while infertility is considered a curse (see Bennett, 1983). Pregnancies, child-birth and lactation force women to withdraw from active economic work, thus making them dependent on other members of the family. Frequent pregnancies impinge on their health and sometimes even on their very lives. It is therefore most important to examine whether women have control over their own fertility. Hitherto, no research has focussed on the degree of control that women exercise over their own fertility.

Information thus far collected on the attitudes of women towards family planning and fertility control are not adequate to fully establish who controls their fertility. Social and family pressures, for example, are not reflected in such statistics. The desire for children, specially sons, who can provide women with social status and power, is internalized since their early childhood. The socially acceptable role for women is only though marriage and motherhood. As her fertility is the end product of these complex social processes, it may be considered as an indicator whether or not such processes are changing.

Statistics on fertility are conflicting and continuously reestimated by various sources. According to the nation-wide 1991 Survey on Fertility, Family Planning and Health (NFHS), there has hardly been any change in the total marital fertility rate between 1971-76 and 1991 (Table 3). Although awareness about family planning methods are reported to be high (Table 4), their use and end effect on marital fertility seems only to be marginal. That is indicative of the very slow change in perceptions about women's role and status which still exclusively depend on their fertility. No change is visible among the 15-29 age group of currently married women. Currently married women between 30-34 years do show marginal changes in their fertility behavior. Those figures indicate that family planning methods are adopted only after 3 to 4 births have taken place. It would have been very interesting from social dimension to explore this issue further by desegregating this data according to the sex of the surviving children.

Table 3: Indicators of Fertility Behavior, Nepal, 1971-1991

Age Group	Fertility Surveys Average Number of Children per Currently Married Women		Census to Census Estimates c/ Age-Specific Fertility Rates		
	1971-76 a/	1991 b/	1971	1981	1991
15-19	0.3	0.5	0.074	0.066	0.095
20-24	1.4	1.5	0.267	0.230	0.286
25-29	2.9	2.9	0.310	0.266	0.272
30-34	4.2	4.0	0.261	0.245	0.212
35-39	5.2	5.0	0.196	0.206	0.151
40-44	5.7	5.6	0.109	0.142	0.077
45-49	6.1	6.1	0.043	0.099	0.028
Completed fertility TFR	6.1	6.1	6.3	6.3	5.6

Source: a/ MOH, 1977, Table 5.1
b/ MOH, 1993, Table 6.3
c/ R.K. Gharty Chhetry, Chapter III, (This Volume).

Table 4: Per cent Currently Married Women Reporting Knowledge and Use of Contraceptives, Nepal, 1976-1991

Year	Know at least one method	Current use (non-pregnant)
1976	21.3	3.9
1981	51.9	7.6
1986	55.9	15.1
1991	92.7	24.1

Source: MOH, 1993, Table 9.2 & 9.9.

The age specific fertility rates calculated from census to census and the total fertility rate (TFR) do show significant changes in fertility behavior between 1981 and 1991 censuses (Table 3). TFR has declined from 6.3 to 5.6 per women. Yet fertility has actually increased among 15-29 age group, which is very strange given a significant decline in the proportion of married girls from 14.3 per cent in 1981 to 7.4 per cent in 1991 and a perceptible increase in the literacy rate among this age group (see section 4 & 6 below). It may be pointed out that these estimates where obtained through indirect methods and the overall levels viz.. TFR are more reliable for comparison than their age patterns (ASFR).

Although strictly comparable figures are not available, comparison of children ever born and surviving to married women in 1991 in relation to similar indicators regrading ever married women in 1971-76, show that the rate of child survival has also improved notably, from 72.7 per cent of births in 1971-76 to 82.9 per cent in 1991 (Table 5).

Table 5: Mean Number of Children Ever Born and Children Still Alive

Age Group	1971-76 a/ To ever married women Ever born	Still alive	1991 b/ To currently married women Ever born	Still alive
15-19	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.4
20-24	1.4	1.1	1.5	1.4
25-29	2.9	2.3	2.9	2.5
30-34	4.1	3.1	4.0	3.4.
35-39	5.1	3.7	5.0	4.0
40-44	5.5	3.8	5.6	4.5
45-49	5.7	4.0	6.1	4.7
Total	3.3	2.4	3.5	2.9

Source: a/ MOH, 1977
b/ MOH, 1993.

There is a significant difference between the fertility behavior of urban and rural women. Urban women give birth to less children (5.3) during their life time than their rural sisters (6.2). The total marital fertility rate differs perceptibly also by education levels. Illiterate women have as much as 1.4 children more than those with some primary education (Table 6). Higher school education also makes a substantial difference. These figures, however, should be considered holding income constant. Unfortunately, no data on fertility relating to income levels have been collected or analyzed. Low income groups do tend to have larger families compared to higher income families (see Acharya, 1994). Higher infant and child mortality in the poor households would contribute to higher fertility through the biological effect of reduced length of breast-feeding and consequently of birth spacing, and through the behavioral effect in terms of replacement of the lost child.

Table 6: Fertility and Related Indicators by Socio-Economic Group, 1991

Indicators	Nepal	Rural	Urban	None	Education Primary	Secondary
Median Age of Marriage (20-49) Age Group	16.4	16.3	17.3	16.1	17.0	19.1
Knowledge of Contraception (%)	92.6	72.9	90.1	91.7	97.8	99.7
Total Marital Fertility Rate	6.1	6.2	5.3	6.2	4.8	-4.0
Birth Intervals (months)	33.7	33.8	32.7	34.2	31.2	27.8

Source: MOH, 1993, Various Tables.

Mountain families seem to have fertility rates much higher than the national average (Table 7). This may probably be explained by the lack of family planning services in mountain areas.

Table 7: Total Marital Fertility Rate by Ecological-Development Regions, 1991

Ecological Zones	Eastern	Central	Western	Mid Western	Far Western	All Regions
Mountain	6.2	6.2	7.2	7.2	7.2	6.6
Hill	7.2	6.2	5.4	6.5	6.0	6.1
Terai	5.7	5.8	6.6	6.5	6.5	6.0
All Zones	6.2	5.9	5.8	6.5	6.5	6.1

Source: MOH, 1993, p. 59.

4. Mortality and Life Expectancy

Infant and child mortality rates are important indicators of women's status. This is because while, on the one hand, infant and child mortality rates reflect social attitudes towards male and female children, on the other hand, they throw light on the situation of women as mothers. A comparatively higher female infant and child mortality rate signifies social neglect of female infants and children. At the same time, a high infant and child mortality rate force women to multiple and wasted pregnancies, thus depleting their strength.

Infant mortality rate (IMR) in Nepal, although declining over the years, is still one of the highest in the region. The Demographic Sample Survey of 1976 estimated the IMR at 132.5 per 1000. The NFFH Survey 1991 confirms the IMR at 98 with 104.7 for males and 91.0 for females (Table 8). This sex differential in the infant mortality rate, if accurate, reverses the earlier trend with higher mortality for female infants.

As discussed earlier, it is a scientifically proven fact that female children are stronger than male children during their infancy and early childhood. As such, in the natural process more boys than girls are born. Given equal treatment, their ratios would equalize around 5 years of age. If a larger proportion of girls die during infancy and childhood it must therefore be due to social discrimination. A change in the ratio of male/female infant and child mortality rates towards approximating the natural phenomenon may, therefore, be taken as an indicator of more equal social behavior towards female children. According to the figures for late seventies through 1991 NFFH survey, a lower proportion of girls are dying at infancy than before.

Table 8: Trends in Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) by Sex, Nepal, 1976-1991

	Year	Male	Female	Fem. IMR X 100 / Mal. IMR
DSS 1976 a/	1974-75			
Urban	"	55.2	59.2	107.2
Rural	"	143.9	124.9	86.8
Total	"	141.2	123.0	87.1
DSS 1977 b/	1976			
Urban	"	55.3	50.2	90.8
Rural	"	130.7	140.6	107.6
Total	"	128.4	137.9	107.4
DSS 1978 c/	1977-78	110.0	98.0	89.1
CBS 1985 d/	1978	147.0	142.0	96.6
New Era, 1986 e/	1981	136.0	111.0	81.6
NFFS, 1986 f/	1986	117.0	98.0	83.8
NFHS, 1991 g/	1990-91	104.7	91.0	86.9

Source: a/ CBS, 1976, The Demographic Sample Survey of Nepal, 1974-75, Survey Method and Findings, Kathmandu.
b/ CBS, 1977, The Demographic Sample Survey of Nepal, Second Year Survey, 1976, Kathmandu.
c/ CBS, 1978, DSS of Nepal, Third Year Survey 1977-78, Kathmandu.
d/ CBS, 1985, Inter-censal Changes of Some Key Census Variables, Nepal 1952/54-81.
e/ New Era, 1986: Nepal Fertility and Mortality Survey-Extracted from Population Monograph of Nepal, 1987.
f/ MOH, 1987, Nepal Fertility and Family Planning Survey, 1986.
g/ MOH, 1993, Nepal Fertility Family Planning and Health Surveys, 1991.

Nevertheless, as far as under five child mortality rates are concerned, the social discrimination against girls is clearly indicated by the child mortality rate figures. For example according to the NFHS female children are systematically discriminated against in vaccination (MOH, 1993, p. 158162). While only 125 per 1000 boys born, die under five annually, the number of girls dying before they are five years old is 139 per 1000. These figures are still one of the highest in the region (Table 9).

Table 9: Under Five Mortality Rate (per 1000 live births) by Sex in SAARC Countries, 1991

SAARC Countries	1989 a/		1991 b/	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Bangladesh	146	162	130	136
Bhutan	180	187	188	200
Nepal	178	187	125	139
India	118	134	123	125
Pakistan	145 c/	151 c/	137	139
Sri Lanka	28	22	25	19

Source: a/ World Bank: World Development Report, 1991
b/ World Bank: World Development Report, 1993
c/ Figures are for 1990; World Bank, World development Report 1992.

Similarly, there has been a substantial decline in the crude death rates during the last three decades. A 50 per cent decline in the CDR is observed between 1953-61 and 1971-81 from 27.0 deaths per 1000 to 13.5. The Nepal Fertility and Mortality Survey, 1986 reported a still lower figure for 1984 (Table 10).

Table 10: Estimates of Crude Death Rate by Sex, Nepal, 1976-1991

Source	Reference Period	Male	Female	Female per 100 Male
DSS 1976 a/	1974-75			
Urban	"	8.7	9.4	108.0
Rural	"	18.9	20.7	109.5
Total	"	18.6	20.4	109.7
DSS 1977 b/	1976			
Urban	"	8.2	9.7	118.3
Rural	"	21.9	23.2	105.9
Total	"	21.5	22.8	106.0
DSS 1978 c/	1977-78	17.9	16.2	90.5
CBS 1985 d/	1971-81	12.2	14.9	122.1
New Era, 1986 e/	1984	10.8	11.0	101.9

Source: a/ CBS, 1976, The Demographic Sample Survey of Nepal, 1974-75, Survey Method and Findings, Kathmandu.
b/ CBS, 1977, The Demographic Sample Survey of Nepal, Second Year Survey, 1976, Kathmandu.
c/ CBS, 1978, DSS of Nepal, Third Year Survey 1977-78, Kathmandu.
d/ CBS, 1985, Inter-censal Changes of Some Key Census Variables, Nepal 1952/54-81.
c/ New Era 1986, Fertility & Mortality Rates in Nepal - A Survey Report Submitted to National Commission on Population, Kathmandu.

A higher proportion of females, as compared to males, have been dying in Nepal. That is contrary to the international trend which indicates higher mortality among men. The higher mortality of women in Nepal is attributed to a higher female than male child mortality and maternal mortality rates. For example, even within South Asia, Nepal was reported to have the highest maternal mortality rate at 850 per hundred thousand population in 1988 (Table 11).

Table 11: Selected Demographic Indicators for SAARC Countries

	Indicators	Nepal	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
1.	Infant Mortality Rate d/						
	per 1,000 live births	104.7 a/	94e/	-	-	-	
	Male						
	Female	91.0 a/	87 e/	-	-	-	
	Total	98.0 a/	111	133	90	101	25
2.	Crude Death Rate b/						
	per 1,000 population			-	-	-	
	Male	12.2 g/	12.3 h/				7.3 i/
	Female	14.9 g/	11.6 h/				5.0 i/
	Total	13.0	13.0	17.0	10.0	11.0	6.0
3.	Life Expectancy at						
	Birth (in years) b/						
	Male	55.0 c/	56.4 e/	48	60	59	70
	Female	53.5 c/	55.4 e/	50	61	59	74
	Total	54.3 c/	56.1 f/	-	-	-	-
4.	Maternal Mortality Rate						
	per 100,000 live births	850	650	800	550	600	180
	1988 d/						

Source: a/ Nepal Fertility and Family Planning Survey, 1991; Main Report
b/ The World Bank, World Development Report, 1993
c/ CBS, Estimates based on Population Census, 1991
d/ UNDP, Human Development Report, 1993
e/ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Women and Men in Bangladesh, Facts & Figures, 1992
f/ Provisional figures for 1991, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Year book of Bangladesh, 1992
g/ CBS, 1985, Inter-censal Changes of Some Key Census Variables, Nepal, 1952/54-81
h/ Figures refer to 1986; United Nations Demographic Year Book, 1991
i/ Figures refer to 1985.

NFHS data, however, shows a substantial decline in the maternal mortality rate to 515 per 100,000 live births. Nevertheless, life time risks of dying of pregnancy related causes is still about I in 3 1 (MOH, 1993, p. 143). High maternal mortality is attributed to low nutritional status of women due to systematic discrimination in intra-family food distribution, lack of antenatal and post-natal health care services, early and frequent pregnancies etc. Nearly 85 per cent of the pregnant women in rural areas had no antenatal care in 1990/91. Even in urban areas about 45 per cent went without any professional care during pregnancy. Moreover, a lower proportion of antenatal care (e.g. 15 per cent for girls below 20 years) was provided by a medical doctor (MOH, 1993, p. 146). Only about 45 per cent of the mothers in urban areas and 26 per cent in rural areas had received tetanus toxoid vaccinations (Ibid, p. 150). About 39 per cent of the urban women and more than 69 per cent rural women had no professional assistance during delivery (Ibid. p. 154).

As a consequence of such factors - higher infant and child mortality among female children and high maternal mortality rates- life expectancy at birth is lower for women than for men in Nepal.

However, with recent changes in infant mortality rates in favor of female children and a decline in the maternal mortality rate, women's life expectancy at birth may have improved, though that has not, as yet, been reflected in estimates of current life expectancies.

5. Marital Status

Marriage is tile single most important event in the life of a woman since, in most societies, that still offers the only respected career opening for her. That event decides all her life options and subsequent livelihood. Marital options, i.e. the woman's say in deciding to get married, or not, to whom and when, arc important indicators of her social status (Giele, 1977). According to the Hindu tradition, marriage is a Must fur all, whether man or woman. While a man's life is not considered complete without a wife, a woman has no option but to get married. Hence, in Nepal, the overwhelming majority of both men and women are married before they are 25 years old. According to the 1991 census, 86.1 per cent of women and 613 per cent of men were married before that age. The corresponding percentages for women and men, in 1971 census, were 92.1 per cent and 66.9 per cent (Table 12).

In the Indo-Aryan cultural groups, girls are married off by their parents in their early teens or even earlier. Since women are tied for life by their marriage bonds, their power to accept or reject such partnerships is evidently an index of the degree of freedom they exercise in the management of their own lives, and thus also of their status. In the case of early marriages, the concerned children are too young to comprehend the issues involved. By the time they wake up to reality, they are tied down for life. Early marriages are rooted to the concept of purity of the female body in the Indo-Aryan community (Bennett, 1979) and to the need for helping hands in farm households (Acharya and Bennett, 1981). An increase in the mean age of marriage would indicate some relaxation in early marriage practices and of social control over female sexuality.

For women, the mean age at marriage has increased significantly from 15.4 years in 1961 to 18.1 years in 1991, indicating a slow but steady change in social perceptions about the institution of child marriage (Chapter VI in this Volume). Between those two census years, the mean age of marriage increased by about 2 years for men and 2.7 years for women, on the average.

The change is most pronounced for young girls. In 1991, 7.4 per cent of females in the 10-14 age group were reported to be already married as against 14.3 per cent in 1981. 1n 1991, 86 per cent of women in 20-24 age group were married. That compares well to the figure of 95 per cent in 1961. The proportion of the ever married population was lower in 1981 as compared to that indicated in the 1971 census in all but the 10-14 age group. That declining trend has been observed in the 1981-1991 decade in the 10-14 and 15-19 age groups. Marriages of girl children before the age of 15 seem to be on the decline. The proportion of ever-married girls in the age group 10-14 has declined from 13.4 per cent in 1971 to 7.4 per cent in 1991 (Table 12).

Early widowhood with little possibility of remarriage is another curse upon women. More than 1.6 per cent of the female population - were already widowed before 30 years of age according to the 1971 census. The risk of widowhood tends to increase with age. The percentage of widowed females in younger age groups, as well as in the total female population, is lower in 1991 as compared to that in 1971 - indicating a declining death rate of the male population. Between 1981 and 1991, however, the proportion of widowed female population has shown an increase. The divorced/separated proportion has shown an increasing trend from 0.3 per cent of the total population in 1971 to 0.4 and 0.7 per cent in 1981 and 1991 respectively (Table 13). Divorce rates also increase with age. Even girls in the 10-14 age group face the risk of widowhood as well as of divorce. While a higher proprotion of divorced women may indicate an increased determination of women to escape from oppressive marriages and situations of polygamy, it may also indicate increasing abandonment by men. Even today, women who are divorced are stigmatized in the Hindu tradition. Thus, a divorcee has little chance of re-marriage within her own socio-economic group if she comes from a high/caste/class Hindu family. The need, from the religious point of view, to keep the clan's blood pure is a overwhelming factor in thus condemning women to single status for life or loss of social status, if her First marriage fails.

From the regional perspective, a higher proportion of females is married at an earlier age in the Terai than in the Hills and Mountains (Table 12). In 1991, more than 90 per cent of the females in Terai were married before the age of 25. 'File corresponding figures were notably lower, standing at 82.4 per cent for the Hills and 83.6 per cent for the Mountains. That regional differential has generally been maintained between the 1971 and 1991 census periods.

The divorce/separated rate in the Mountains is higher than in the Hills or in the Terai. The divorce rate in the Terai is the lowest of all three regions, in all three censuses. Such figures may indicate that in the Terai the forces of tradition exercise the maximum hold over women's lives. Among the Mountain population the Tibeto-Burman group dominate. These communities provide more life options to women where even divorcees may lead normal lives. In 1981, the widowhood rate was highest in the Terai with 6.1 per cent of the total female population. In 1991, however, it shows up as highest in the Mountains, at 8.2 per cent (Table 13). No consistent pattern has been observed between the three censuses regarding the proportion of widowed women in three regions. It has declined between 1971 and 1981 in all three, but has increased, again in all three, in 1991. In the face of more rapidly declining death rates for men vis-à-vis women, it is difficult to fathom why a larger proportion of women were widowed in 1991, as compared to 1981.

It should be cautioned that the data used in the above discussion does not permit firm conclusions to be drawn since these are prevalence data. Prevalence rates of widowhood and divorce do depend on the rate of remarriage. Variations by age, time and region exhibited by these prevalence rates depict the end-results of the differences in the incidence of widowhood/divorce and remarriage.

6. The Population Policies and Women

Although family planning had been a declared government policy in Nepal since 1965, only the Fifth Five Year Plan (1975/76-1979/80) spelled out the population policy in some detail. The whole emphasis in the earlier plans was on family planning. Tile Fifth Plan for the first time, shifted the emphasis to MCH services. A full blown chapter on population with objectives, policies, priorities and programs was included only in the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980/81-1984/95). The two objectives outlined in the plan were to stabilize the population growth rate around 2.3 per cent per annum and to regularize the internal and external migration process. Increasing the coverage and effectiveness of the FP programs topped the list of priorities. Integration of FP programs with other development activities and mobilization of people's participation in FP programs were envisaged for the first time. Women and women's programs also featured for the first time in the population policy. A more comprehensive and multi dimensional approach to population education in various formal and non-formal education programs was outlined.

Table 12: Per cent Ever Married Population by Ecological Zones, Age and Sex, Nepal, 1971-1991

Age Group	Male 1971	1981	1991	Female 1971	1981	1991
			Mountain			
10-14	1.8	13.9	2.5	**4.6**	10.9	4.6
15-19	15.2	21.8	17.4	34.8	40.4	42.8
20-24	52.1	53.5	60.3	75.3	80.3	83.6
25-29	76.6	76.6	85.2	89.8	91.6	93.7
Total	51.4	63.9	63.9	63.3	74.5	72.8
			Hill			
10-14	1.8	13.7	2.8.	5.1	10.6	4.1
15-19	18.5	21.9	14.0	51.4	42.8	37.0
20-24	62.8	53.7	56.4	88.7	92.4	82.4
25-29	86.9	75.9	84.5	96.6	92.7	94.2
Total	54.9	61.3	60.9	66.9	73.3	70.2
			Terai			
10-14	11.4	16.4	5.8	25.6	19.4	11.4
15-19	38.3	31.9	26.0	75.1	64.0	56.5
20-24	72.7	66.3	66.0	96.3	93.2	90.4
25-29	90.0	85.3	89.1	98.9	92.3	97.6
Total	62.7	68.9	66.8	74.4	81.2	77.3
			Nepal			
10-14	6.3	14.9	4.2	13.4	14.3	7.4
15-19	27.0	25.9	19.9	60.7	50.8	46.0
20-24	66.9	59.2	61.3	92.1	86.9	86.1
25-29	87.7	80.5	86.9	97.4	94.7	95.7
Total	64.1	62.1	64.0	70.3	70.8	73.6

Source: CBS, 1975, Vol. II, Part II
CBS, 1984, Vol. II
CBS, 1995, Vol. IV.

Table 13: Per cent Divorced and Widowed Female Population by Ecological Zones, Age and Sex, Nepal, 1971 -1991

Age Group	Widowed			Divorced/Separated		
	1971	1981	1991	1971	1981	1991
			Mountain			
10-14	0.1	0.1	0.1	-	0.2	0.1
15-19	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.4
20-24	0.8	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.9
25-29	2.0	1.2	1.1	0.5	0.7	1.0
Total	8.0	5.3	8.2	0.4	0.5	0.9
			Hill			
10-14	0.03	0.6	0.04	0.01	0.3	0.1
15-19	0.3	0.5	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.4
20-24	0.7	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.7
25-29	1.7	1.0	0.9	0.5	0.5	0.9
Total	8.7	4.9	7.2	0,3	0.5	0.8
			Terai			
10-14	0.1	0.8	0.1	0.02	0.2	0.1
15-19	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.3
20-24	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.5
25-29	1.5	1.1	0.9	0.2	0.3	0.5
Total	9.2	6.1	7.0	0.1	0.3	0.5
			Nepal			
10-14	0.1	0.7	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1
15-19	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3
20-24	0.7	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.6
25-29	1.6	1.0	0.9	0.4	0.4	0.7
Total	10.1	5.4	7.2	0.3	0.4	0.7

Source: Same as Table 12.

The Seventh Five Year Plan (1985/86-1989-90) and now the Eighth Five Year Plan (1991/921995/96) elaborate on the objectives, priorities, policies and programs further in the same direction. Total fertility rate is targeted to be reduced to 4.5 by the end of the Eighth Plan period. Programs for female education and women's status have been specially mentioned. The objectives and policies on women and children have been outlined in separate chapters in the recent two plans (Acharya, 1994).

Thus, the population programs in Nepal have evolved through several stages in conformity with the international trends. The start with the population programs were limited to family planning (FP). Then MCH was introduced. Currently the complexity of population problem is understood in a broader context and related to the infant mortality and child survival rates, women's education and employment. However, women's health needs are still perceived only as the problem of maternal and child health.

Concern expressed for maternal health and attempts to integrate health and family planning programs, even though only for mother and the child health, will help to improve women's lives as maternal mortality is still quite high. Intended integration of FP services in development programs could increase the effectiveness of family planning messages significantly. However, little attention has been paid to implementation of this policy so far. Attempts to integrate income-generating activities for women by the FP agencies have not been successful, because they were conceptualized without any attention to economic viability or sustainability (e.g., the various population education programs implemented during the eighties. For a summary see Acharya 1990). Emphasis on the education of the female child and delay in marriage; both would provide much more life options to women and also help to reduce the fertility rate.

The Government has emphasized greatly the involvement of the local government institutions in population programs. A concerned effort is needed to generate population program awareness among the local leadership in order to benefit from their involvement in such programs. The provision of MCH workers at the sub-health post level envisaged in the new health structure is a welcome move. But those posts may be difficult to fill up unless intensive efforts are made to train, recruit and retain them in these positions. A large proportion of ANM positions even in the district hospitals are often found vacant (MOH, 1991).

Although the formulation of policy on children and women in itself is some achievement, the main crux lies in their implementation. Most sectoral policies and programs still ignore women or plan for only token involvement e.g., agricultural training, community forestry, etc.

Family planning programs should be targeted both at men and women. Population is one issue where women's roles seem to be overemphasized. A review of statistics on use of contraceptives reveals that there has been an excessive emphasis on female sterilization iii recent years. Between 1981 and 1991 the number of female sterilization's has increased more than 358 per cent while the male sterilization rate has increased just by 134 per cent (Table 14). Given the incidence of extensive polygamy, men's fertility should be an important issue of concern. Since women are less mobile and have less access to resources concentrated in urban areas, it is not fair to put the whole burden of adopting family planning methods on women. It has also been found that women may he rejected by men, if they practice family planning without the consent of the husbands (Lakhcy & Malla, 1992).

Table 14: Trends in Ever Use of Contraceptives, Nepal, 1976-1991

	Per cent Currently Married Women Who have Ever Used			
Contraceptive Method	1976	1981	1986	1991
Female Sterilization	0.1	2.4	6.2	11.0
Male Sterilization	1.5	2.9	5.7	6.8
Pill	1.9	3.1	1.8	5.4
Injection		0.4	0.6	4.6
Condom	1.2	1.2	1.2	2.3
Norplant		-		0.3
IUD	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.6
Diaphragm, Foam, Jelly				0.4

Source : a/ MOH, 1977
b/ MO11, 1987
c/ MOH, 1993.

Most of the family planning devices are targeted to women without much attention to their side effects. In the recent NFH survey (1991) more than 18 per cent of the women who were not using FP devices expressed health concerns as the factor for non-use (MOH, 1993, p. 106). For the poor women, who have no access to resources for treatment in the case of failure, it is risky to accept family planning methods.

Women's non-maternity related health needs are not adequately taken into consideration in formulation of policies and programs on health and family planning. In a society where infertility

is a curse, providing just fertility control services is not adequate. In the NFH Survey over 18 per cent of women were reported infertile or menopausal by 30-34 years of age (MOH, 1993, p. 79). Women have no security if her fertility system fails. As a married woman, she has no property rights in her parental households and her status in the affinal households is jeopardized if abandoned by the husband. According to Nepal's Muluki Ain (Law of the Land, Clause) men are allowed to remarry on pretexts such as having no child, which is often interpreted to mean a "son".

Women have their reproductive organs infected by various venereal diseases and now AIDS. No health education or facilities are available for their treatment. Infections are often caused by a wandering husband, but it is women who are often blamed and abandoned. Cervical cancer which is becoming a major problem in Nepal are induced by continuous presence of venereal diseases. Very few rural women know about this. In Kathmandu and Pokhara the number of women with venereal diseases are 10 times more than other similar places. Nepal has less than 20 doctors specialized on venereal diseases (Dixit, 1992). Women are socially blamed for these diseases, therefore feel embarrassed to get medical treatment, which worsens the situation. AIDS might gain epidemic proportions in the next few years and women's health situation may further deteriorate as people with venereal diseases are easier victims of AIDS. Even ordinary infection of the urinary tract which is rampant, is not treated. Use of condoms, which could act as effective protection, is now relegated to the least priority FP device.

Women have very little reproductive rights e.g., to have the desired number of children, to select marriage partners, and/or when to get married. This is all controlled by the society. The state reinforces this control by various means. Most glaring example of this state-reinforcement is the fact that abortion is a legal crime in Nepal. A substantial number of women are in prison because of abortion (IIDS, 1982). A large number of women die on account of abortion-related cases.

Some of these abortions might have been related to failure of birth control measures. The methods of abortion used are crude such as foreign body in genital tract, injury to genital tract, use of paste, cowdung accreflam solution etc which result in high rate of death. Experts have written that "dangers of illegal abortion can be up to 100 times as great as those of legal abortion" (Lakhey and Malla, 1992). Government hospitals and clinics need husband's consent even for adoption of FP methods. As discussed above, the Law of the Land (Muluki Ain) allows second marriage if no child is born to a woman. Legally men have sole right over the children. If a girl wants to go abroad for further studies and applies for various Government scholarships, she has to get her parents' consent.

Adolescent girls have no access to health education or medical services to deal with their problems. Start of menarche, even among urban elite, is viewed with alarm (Asmita, 1992). Girls look at it as a curse and as a sin for something they have done wrong. Culturally menstrual blood is viewed as impure and rituals related to first menarche frighten the girls. Sex-education is still a taboo.

Government media are not used adequately for raising women's issues or projecting positive life options for women. School books are still gender-biased (Acharya, 1994).

Finally, family planning programming should take into account specific issues related to various socio-economic groups, e.g., how to convince the labor class that vasectomy would not weaken men, affecting their load carrying capacity adversely or get them sick. Personal observation from neighboring areas and personal interviews with people working in Kathmandu, indicate a pervasive belief of this kind among the rural/urban labor class. No statistics are compiled on fertility or adoption of FP methods, or other vital statistics according to the class, so that it might become a more important differentiating variable effecting adoption of FP methods than either ethnicity or geography.

Children (males) are viewed as resource rather than liability in the poor households as there is little investment in children in these households. They start earning as young as 6 years. This contributes to preference for children among the labor class.

To conclude, although some attitudinal changes have taken place in population policies, they are still not conceptualized in terms of "reproductive health". The "reproductive health" approach implies an attitudinal change in population policies from public health oriented MCH programs to more integrated packages which would include care for men, women and adolescents' total reproductive health needs, besides the MCH services (Fathalla, 1992). Not denying the centrality of the fertility control to all aspects of reproductive health, women need to be catered to as women and not only as mothers.

7. Education

Literacy and educational qualification are other vital indicators of women's social status. These are crucial factors for not only availing of employment opportunities created in the process of modernization but also for communication with the outside world as with increasingly educated

males within the household. An educated wife and mother naturally has better communication with her educated male counterparts in the family and commands greater respect than one without education. Hence in addition to marriage options, educational attainment has become a most valuable indicator of a women's social status.

Achievements in the educational field have been substantial during the past three decades. The overall literacy rate went up to 23.3 per cent in 1981 and to 39.6 per cent in 1991, as against about 13.9 per cent in 1971 (Table 15). The male literacy rates have increased from 23.6 per cent in 1971 to 34 per cent in 1981 and 54 per cent in 1991. The proportion of literate females is continuously moving up from 3.9 per cent in 1971 to 12.1 per cent in 1981 and 25.0 per cent in 1991. However, the sex differential in the literacy rate is still high. The current female literacy rate is close to male literacy 20 years ago. The disparity between male and female educational attainments has not improved greatly during the 1981-1991 decade. The difference between the male and female literacy rates, for example, has increased to nearly 30 percentage points in 1991 compared to about 20 percentage points in 1971 and about 22 percentage points in 1981.

Table 15: Per cent Literate, Age 6 Years and Above, Males and Females, Nepal, 1971-1991

Census	Male	Female	Both	Male/Female Difference
1971	23.59	3.91	13.89	19.68
1981	33.96	12.05	23.26	21.91
1991	54.49	24.95	39.64	29.54

Source:
CBS, 1975, Vol. II, Part II
CBS, 1984, Vol. 1, Part IV
CBS, 1993, Vol. 1, Part X.

Age specific literacy rates also do not indicate decreasing gender disparity (Table 16). Even among the 15-19 age group the disparity in the proportion of literate men and women is increasing. For example while in 1981, the percentage point difference in the male and female literacy rate was 30.7 (48.2 - 17.5), in 1991 it had gone up to 32.8 (71.2 - 38.4). Only the 10-14 age group girls have started to catch up with same age cohort boys and the gender disparity in literacy rates has started to decline, e.g., from 29.6 percentage pints in 1981 to 26.7 percentage points in 1991.

Table 16: Per cent Literate by Age Group and Sex, Nepal, 1961-1991

Age Group	1961		1971		1981		1991	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	**Male**	Female	Male	Female
10-14	14.5	3.1	35.8	9.6	50.8	21.2	75.8	49.1
15-19	19.5	2.4	35.4	7.1	48.2	17.5	71.2	38.4
20-24	20.2	1.6	30.9	4.1	41.7	12.6	64.0	26.1
25-29	17.4	1.2	24.4	2.5	36.3	10.1	54.4	17.5
30-34	16.4	1.2	20.3	1.6	31.8	7.8	49.4	13.8
35-39	16.4	0.9	17.6	1.4	27.6	6.7	45.0	11.1
40-44	15.4	0.9	16.4	1.1	23.7	5.5	40.9	7.8
45-54	14.3	0.8	15.7	1.0	17.3	4.8	34.0	5.6
55+	13.0	0.6	12.6	0.7	19.1	4.0	25.6	3.6

Source: CBS, 1987, Table 6.2
CBS, 1993, Vol. I, Part X.

As the level of education increases, the ratio of females to males declines progressively. At the post-graduate level, the female-male ratio is one-to-four (Table 17).

Table 17: Female-Male Ratio by Educational Attainment, Age 6 Years and Above, Nepal, 1971-1991

Particulars	Females Per 100 Males		
	1971	1981	1991
Illiterate	122.4	127.1	166.7
Literate	16.2	33.8	46.3
a) No Schooling	-	32.2	50.0
b) Primary	10.4	41.5	53.5
c) Lower Secondary	-	27.9	-
d) Secondary	-	21.4	39.2
e) SLC	11.7	22.2	31.2
f) Intermediate	-	21.5	26.4
g) Graduates	'10.2	18.7	22.2
h) Post Graduates		17.6	23.7

Source: CBS, 1975, Vol. II, Part II
CBS, 1984, Vol. I, Part I, Part IV
CBS, 1993, Vol. I, Part X.

Among the five development regions, the Western Development Region has the highest proportion (30.6%) of literate women in 1991. The Mid-Western and Far-Western Development Regions lag far behind that level. On further classification, the Western Hill region tops the list with more than 34 per cent literate women. The mountains of the Mid-Western Development Region with only 6.3 per cent of women being able to read and write, is at the bottom of the literacy ladder. Similarly for males the highest literacy rate of 63.3 per cent has been noted in the hills of the Western

Development Region and the lowest of 36.6 per cent in the Mid-Western Mountain (Table 18). The difference between male, female literacy rates is highest in the Far-Western Hills and Mountains. This indicates that discrimination against women is most acute in that region, dominated by IndoAryan cultural groups.

Table 18: Literacy Rates by Sex and Ecological-Development Regions, Nepal, 1971-1991

Development	Male			Female			Male/Female Differentials
Region	1971	1981	1991	1971	1981	1991	1991
Eastern	25.5	39.5	59.0	4.7	14.5	29.1	29.9
Mountain	23.5	40.6	61.7	3.2	12.1	28.7	33.0
Hill	23.9	38.7	61.0	3.2	11.7	28.2	32.8
Terai	27.1	16.8	57.7	6.3	39.7	29.6	28.1
Central	23.1	32.3	51.6	4.8	12.5	24.4	27.2
Mountain	15.6	23.6	46.0	1.7	6.9	15.4	30.6
Hill	27.9	39.3	62.6	6.9	17.1	33.3	29.3
Terai	19.9	27.5	42.7	3.4	9.3	17.6	25.1
Western	29.5	38.4	58.2	3.9	20.3	30.6	27.6
Mountain	19.5	31.4	59.1	5.0	12.4	33.4	25.7
Hill	31.7	41.3	63.3	3.8	14.1	34.4	28.9
Terai	24.0	32.2	49.6	4.3	11.0	22.8	26.8
Mid-Western *		25.3	47.4		7.3	16.1	31.3
Mountain		19.3	36.6		4.7	6.3	33.3
Hill		25.8	49.2		6.6	14.5	34.7
Terai		26.5	48.1		9.3	21.1	27.0
Far-Western	16.3	26.8	51.6	1.6	7.7	13.1	38.5
Mountain	14.8	24.9	52.7	1.4	6.2	10.4	42.3
Hill	17.2	26.9	52.7	1.2	7.6	10.0	42.7
Terai	15.1	28.0	50.0	3.1	8.7	18.0	32.0
All Nepal	23.6	34.0	54.5	3.9	12.1	25.0	29.5
Rural	22.9	32.9	53.4	2.7	9.8	20.4	33.0
Urban	61.6	62.0	80.0	26.4	37.5	51.2	28.8
Mountain	17.6	27.6	49.8	2.1	7.8	16.3	33.5
Hill	25.8	36.9	59.9	3.9	12.9	28.3	31.6
Terai	22.1	32.1	49.5	4.4	11.9	22.6	26.9

Source: CBS, 1975, Vol. II, Part II
CBS, 1984, Vol. 11
CBS, 1993, Vol. 1, Part X
CBS, 1995, Vol. IV.
* This region was part of Western Development Region in 1971.

Household income, workload and the concern with the purity of the female body leading to the early marriage are important variables in female education. As long as there is no resource crunch in the family, the primary school age girls may get to go to school. But as soon as the resource constraint arises, the first casualty is the female child's education. Girls in lower income groups get little opportunity to go to school at all. Those who do go to school get little opportunity to further their education beyond the secondary school (Acharya, 1994).

Girls in the 6-9 age group in rural areas have been reported to be working 2.6 to 4.5 hours per day compared to boys' 1.7 to 2.9 hours of work per day (Table 19). Girls in 10-14 age group work almost as many hours as the adult men.

Table 19: Time Use Pattern of Rural and Urban Children by Ecological Zones, Nepal

	Total Work-burden a/ (Hours per day)			
	Male		Female	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Mountain b/				
15 and above	8.7	-	11.2	
10 - 14 Years	4.4	-	7.7	-
06 - 09 Years	2.9	-	4.5	-
Hill				
15 and above	7.9	7.1	10.6	8.8
10 - 14 Years	4.1	1.6	7.0	4.0
06 - 09 Years	1.9	0.8	3.4	1.4
Terai				
15 and above	7.8	7.8	9.4	8.9
10 - 14 Years	3.3	2.4	5.9	4.3
06 - 09 Years	1.7	1.0	2.6	2.2

Source: Multipurpose Household Budget Survey, Nepal Rastra Bank, p. 141-142, 1988,

a/ Includes domestic work besides labor force participation and subsistence economic activities. see Table 20 for further details.

b/ Mountains have no urban areas.

Another compelling factor hindering women's education in general is the fact that girls are transferred to her affinal households after marriage and consequently parents have no claim on her work or income as adult women. When parents are asked in various surveys as to why they are not sending their girl children to school, one of the often repeated answers is "they will go to other people's house (Arkako Ghara Zane), so what is the use of educating them". In summary, poverty, workload and cultural perceptions are the major factors hindering female education.

Availability of education facilities in the localities, nevertheless, do seem to have positive effect on reducing male/female disparity in literacy levels. Hence, the Terai areas display lower disparity in male/female literacy rates, even though many communities in Terai practice female seclusion and do not send their daughters to school.

8. Economic Activity

Accuracy in reporting of labor force participation in censuses and the definition of economic activity are some of the major issues which concern women's rights activists the world over. Many books and reports have focussed on them. Several U.N. agencies have documented them in detail. In Nepal, they have been detailed in `The Status of Women' in Nepal series. For example, Acharya (1979), after a discussion on the practical difficulties involved in defining women's gainful employment and the conceptual inadequacies of the very idea of economic activity itself, recommended that women should be classified into the three following groups in population censuses (a) who produce marketable goods; (b) who are engaged in subsistence activities; and (c) who perform only domestic chores - in lieu of the present two categories, viz.. "active" and "inactive".

According to the revised manual of UN System of National Accounts (United Nations, 1992) and the new definition of labor force (ILO, 1990) both men and women if they are spending large proportion of their time on market and/or subsistence activities should be counted in the labor force. In the second part of `The Status of Women' series such analysis was attempted for Nepal on the basis of the time-use data. These data show that if the definition of economic activity is revised to include the subsistence activities, women's economic activity rates will go up substantially. For example while men were spending 6.7 hours per day on the combined category of labor force participation and extended economic activities, women were spending 6.8 hours (Table 20). Case studies (Acharya, 1981) showed that women's work input on the combined category was quite high even in Terai Maithili community, where ideologically a strict seclusion is imposed on women.

Yet the 1981 and 1991 censuses continue to provide data on occupational distribution classified only into economically active and inactive. Following analysis is made with a reservation that these data still do not reflect the full scope of women's activities. These are, nevertheless, useful in analysing the trends in the organized sector of the economy.

Table 20: Comparative Time Use Pattern (Hours Per Day) for Males and Females by Age Group, Nepal. (Based on Data for 6 Villages)

		Above 15 Years		10-14 Years	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
1.	Labour Force Participation	5.81	4.62	3.63	4.17
	Animal Husbandry	1.43	0.97	2.46	2.44
	Agriculture	2.73	2.74	0.90	1.51
	Manufacturing	0.42	0.45	0.03	0.08
	Market Activities (In-Village)	1.24	0.46	0.25	0.13
2.	Subsistence Economic	0.91	2.16	0.64	1.15
	Hunting and Gathering	0.17	0.05	0.08	0.03
	Fuel Collection	0.24	0.38	0.15	0.43
	Fetching Water	0.07	0.67	0.23	0.70
	House Construction	0.25	0.08	0.06	0.02
	Food Processing	0.18	0.97	0.12	0.34
I.	EXTENDED ECONOMIC (1+2)	6.72	6.78	4.27	5.32
3.	Domestic	0.79	4.03	0.55	1.63
	Domestic a/	0.63	3.34	0.33	1.28
	Child Care & Rearing	0.16	0.69	0.22	0.35
II.	WORK BURDEN (1+2+3)	7.51	10.81	4.83	7.31
4.	Education	0.43	0.10	1.72	0.83
5.	Leisure b/	8.06	5.09	9.45	7.86
III.	TOTAL IN-VIL. ACTIVITIES	16.00	16.00	16.00	16.00

Source: Acharya and Bennett, 1981.

a/ Include Cooking/Serving, Cleaning Dishes and Pots, Cleaning House/Mud, Laundry, Shopping, Other Domestic

b/ Include Personal Maintenance, Social Activities, Leisure.

8.1 Economic Activity Rates

Census reported economic activity rates show a declining trend for men and increasing trend for women. Proportion of economically active males has declined over the two decades, from 82.9 per cent in 1971 to 68.7 per cent in 1991. The proportion of economically active women on the other hand has stabilized around 46 per cent.

The patterns of age-specific participation rates for males and females are significantly different. The activity rates for males increase steeply with age up to the 30-34 age group and remain almost constant at a high level of over 95 per cent upto the age of 45, after which they begin to fall. Women become economically active earlier. In the 1991 census, 28 per cent of girls in the 10-14

age group were reported economically active as compared to only 18 per cent for boys in the same age group. The rate increases with age up to about the late forties, before it begins to decline. That pattern is considerably at variance with that reported in the 1981 census where the highest economic activity rates were reported for young women up to the age of 19 (Table 21).

Table 21: Age Specific Economic Activity Rate by Sex, Nepal, 1971-1991

Age Group	Total			Male			Female		
	1971	1981	1991	1971	1981	1991	1971	1981	1991
10-14	50.5	56.9	23.3	59.2	61.3	18.4	40.1	51.9	28.5
15-19	61.6	60.7	49.4	75.7	69.2	49.6	46.2	51.3	49.3
20-24	63.5	66.1	66.4	89.8	86.3	80.5	39.2	47.6	54.3
25-29	65.3	68.7	72.3	95.1	93.4	92.8	36.6	44.9	54.1
30-34	63.7	68.2	73.9	96.6	95.3	95.6	33.9	43.3	54.0
35-39	66.9	70.8	75.6	97.4	95.8	96.3	34.0	44.1	54.7
40-44	64.7	70.4	74.6	97,2	96.0	95.9	32.9	44.1	54.3
45-49	66.7	72.3	74.1	96.8	96.4	95.1	32.5	44.7	52.3
50-54	62.9	71.2	70.7	94.0	94.3	92.1	30.5	44.9	48.2
55-59	60.0	69.9	66.9	93.3	92.2	88.6	27.7	43.3	41.7
60-64	39.7	62.5	46.0	64.1	83.3	66.5	17.9	39.9	25.5
65+	25.1	52.9	26.9	40.5	68.7	40.3	10.4	35.0	12.9

Source: CBS, 1975, Vol. II[, Part I
CBS, 1984. Vol. 1, Part V
CBS, 1993, Vol. 1, Part III.

The daily chores of family life in rural Nepal involve women in labor-intensive farm work and time - consuming domestic work to provide fuel, water and food for household members and farm workers. The census definition of economic activity in theory takes into account wage labor, in cash or kind, as well as unpaid family labor. It does not, however, encompass activities such as water and fuel collection, food processing and child care, all of which are primarily the responsibility of women. Those activities that fall outside the formal economy, but which are essential for the survival of tile household, absorb the labor of those women who are reported as "economically inactive" and classified as homemakers and dependents. As per the 1991 census data, more than 36 per cent of the female population were reported as homemakers and thus inactive.

A scrutiny of the regional figures clearly indicates a persisting reporting bias in economic activity rates. While the overwhelming majority of Mountain (73.6%) and Hill (57.9%) women are reported as economically active, only about 27 per cent of the Terai women are thus reported (Acharya, 1994). `The Status of Women' report series had shown that women in the Terai were equally active in the economic sphere, albeit invisibly, within the household production system e.g., in food processing and cooking for farm labor (Acharya, 1979).

8.2 Industrial and Occupational Classification

Agriculture still predominates as a source of employment, although the share of the non-agriculture sector in total employment has shown a substantial increase in 1991 (Table 22). The percentage of the economically active population in agriculture has decreased from 94.4 per cent in 1971 to 91.2 per cent in 1981 and further to 81.2 per cent in 1991. Thus the decline in proportion of people in the agriculture sector is more pronounced in the 1991 census.

Table 22: Distribution of Economically Active Male and Female Population by Industry, Nepal, 1971-1991

		Total			Male			Female		
Industry		1971	1981	1991	1971	1981	1991	1971	1981	1991
I.	Agriculture & Forestry	94.4	91.2	81.2	92.8	88.7	74.9	98.2	95.8	90.5
II.	Non-Agriculture	5.6	7.0	17.8	7.2	9.2	23.8	1.8	2.9	8.9
	Manufacturing	1.1	0.5	2.0	1.3	0.6	2.6	0.5	0.2	1.2
	Elect. Gas & Water	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.3		0.0	0.0
	Construction	0.1	0.0	0.5	0.1	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.1
	Commerce	1.3	1.6	3.5	1.6	2.1	4.5	0.6	0.7	2.0
	Trans. & Comm.	0.2	0.1	0.7	0.3	0.2	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.1
	Fin. & Business Ser.	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.1
	Pers. & Community Ser.	2.8	4.6	10.3	3.7	6.0	13.6	0.8	1.9	5.3
	Mining & Quarrying		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0
	Others			0.4			0.6			0.1
III.	Activity not adequately described		1.9	1.0		2.1	1.2		1.4	0.6
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: CBS, 1975, Vol. III, Part I
CBS, 1984, Vol. 1, Part V, Vol. III
CBS, 1993, Vol. 1, Part XIII.

Concomitantly there has been an increase in the proportion of the economically active population in the non-agriculture sector. The proportion of the men employed in the non-agriculture sector has increased from 7.2 per cent in 1971 to 23.8 per cent in 1991. Similarly, the corresponding figure for women increased from 1.8 per cent in 1971 to 8.9 in 1991. In the non-agriculture sector, personnel and community services are the leading sources of employment for both men and women. According to the 1991 census, manufacturing is employing only 2 per cent of the labor force which is strange given the increase in industrial production and export in the past two decades. Commerce is generating employment for 3.5 per cent which is higher by 1.5 percentage points than in manufacturing.

Agriculture is becoming progressively feminized. Many, women engaged in family farms are still reported as economically not active. Nonetheless, even according to census figures, the proportion of female labor force in agriculture has increased between 1971 and 1991. In 1971, women constituted 30.4 per cent of the agricultural labor force. That increased to 36.4 per cent in 1981 and to 45 per cent in 1991 (Table 23). Although female employment is increasing in the non-agricultural sector, comparatively a larger proportion of female labor force is in the agriculture sector.

Table 23: Sex Composition of Economically Active Population by Broad Industry Group

		Male			Female		
		1971	1981	1991	1971	1981	1991
I.	Agriculture & Forestry	69.6	63.6	55.0	30.4	36.4	45.0
II.	Non Agriculture	90.5	85.7	79.8	9.5	14.3	20.2
	Total	70.8	65.4	59.6	29.2	34.6	40.4

Source: Same as Table 22.

Occupationally, more than 81 per cent of the total economically active population was engaged in farming and related occupations in 1991 (Table 22). Among all the occupational categories, the female proportion has been the greatest in the farm/fish category. Next largest field of employment for them is that of unskilled laborers. The proportion of females among the technical workers is still low (Table 24), while among the administrative workers it is lower.

Table 24: Sex Composition of Economically Active Population by Broad Occupational Groups, Nepal, 1971-1991

		Male			Female		
	Occupation	1971	1981	1991	1971	1981	1991
1.	Farm/Fish workers	69.6	63.6	55.0	30.4	36.4	45.1
2.	Professional/Technical	-	83.4	84.9	-	16.6	15.1
3.	Administrative	95.8	93.4	90.7	4.2	6.6	9.3
4.	Clerical workers	96.1	94.2	90.0	3.9	5.8	10.0
5.	Sales workers	88.0	85.4	77.4	12.1	14.6	22.6
6.	Service workers	84.3	85.5	74.9	15.7	14.5	25.1
7.	Prod. workers/Labor	-	80.8	81.3	-	19.2	15.8
8.	Unknown	-	84.9	64.1	-	15.1	35.9
9.	Others			84.2			15.8
	Total	70.8	65.4	59.6	29.2	34.6	40:4

Source: Same as Table 22.

The overwhelming majority of workers are still self-employed or own account workers while less than one per cent are employers. The percentage of self-employed workers, which remained more or less constant at about 86 per cent between 1971 and 1981, has decreased to 75 per cent in 1991. That decrease is mainly accounted for by males. In other words, a larger proportion of women are self-employed than men.

There is a slow but perceptible change taking place in the employment status of the population. The proportions of both male and female employees in the population are increasing while that of the self-employed or unpaid family workers are decreasing (Table 25). This may signify a positive or negative trend, depending on whether those who move out of tile self-employment are getting batter jobs or loosing employment on account of the flooding of the market by factory produced goods. Many traditional craft workers for example, have been ruined by the flood of plastic goods in the market.

Table 25: Employment Status of Male and Female Economically Active Population, Nepal, 1971-1991

Status	Male			Female			Both		
	1971	1981	1991	1971	1981	1991	1971	1981	1991
Employer	0.6	0.9	0.7	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.6
Employee	11.7	11.8	27.8	3.6	3.8	12.0	9.3	9.1	21.4
Self-Employed	84.6	83.2	69.5	89.0	90.0	83.7	85.9	85.5	75.3
Family Worker	3.1	1.7	1.5	7.2	4.0	3.5	4.3	2.5	2.3
Not Stated	-	2.4	0.4	-	1.8	0.5	-	2.2	0.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: CBS, 1975, Vol. III, Part 11, Vol. V
CBS, 1984, Vol. I, Part V, Vol. III
CBS, 1993, Vol. I, Part XIII.

Most male and female unpaid family workers are below 20 years of age. The proportion of men and women working as unpaid family workers decreases with increase in age. In the higher age groups the percentage of the male unpaid family worker is negligible. Furthermore, with an increase in age the percentage of male employers expands. That is also true of female employers although the increase is less significant (Acharya, 1994). It should, however, be noted that most women reported as self-employed are actually working as unpaid family workers. Women working in household farms or other household enterprises would not be perceived as unpaid family workers and reported so.

8.3 Socio-economic Characteristics of the Working Population

An overwhelming majority of the workforce are married, illiterate and are between 25 and 64 years of age. A larger proportion of male workforce are literate (Table 26). illiterate workforce is concentrated in agriculture. Modern sectors such as electricity, gas & water, commerce, finance & business have highest proportion of literate workforce.

It is evident that relatively small proportion of women workers are literate in all fields. Most men and women in various occupations are married. The proportion of married women are relatively lower in manufacturing. Even by age group 10-14 years, female workers are getting concentrated in manufacturing. This conforms to the trends in other countries where the manufacturing sector tends to employ unmarried young women. A larger proportion of female children than male children are recruited to the workforce early.

As per one Survey (Basnet, 1991) almost 71 per cent of women employees in the industries surveyed, worked because of poverty. Almost 29 per cent had no other bread winners in their household.

8.4 Industrial Transformations and Women

Tile industrial Structure in Nepal underwent a substantial change in the eighties. A decline in the share of the food and allied sub-sectors has been noted as also rapid gains in textile and garment, plastics and electric goods supply sub-sectors. Despite the low level of skills and cultural inhibitions, an increasing number of women are joining the ranks of industrial workers. According to the survey of manufacturing sector in 1976/77, women had constituted 11.2 per cent or the total labor force in manufacturing industries. That proportion went up to 17 per cent in 1986/87 and to 23.0 per cent in 1990/91. The number of female workers has increased more than six-fold i.e., from 5,557 in 1976/77 to 36,729 in 1990/91. The number of male workers during the same time span increased less than threefold (Table 27).

Table 26: Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Economically Active Population by Industry (10 Years and above), Nepal, 1991.

Industry	% Literate		% Ever married		Per cent Age Distribution							
					10-14		15-24		25-64		65+	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Agri. Forestry & Fish.	38.5	13.5	81.5	78.9	5.6	10.8	23.0	30.8	67.9	57.0	3.4	1.4
Mining & Quarrying	54.1	22.0	86.3	84.0	1.0	4.3	24.5	29.8	72.5	64.7	2.0	1.2
Manufacturing	52.8	27.0	79.6	62.4	3.8	11.0	27.9	44.6	66.1	43.5	2.1	0.9
Elec., Gas & Water	88.1	83.1	86.8	79.8	0.2	0.8	16.9	29.5	82.3	69.5	0.6	0.3
Construction	49.1	15.8	85.0	79.3	1.9	8.2	22.4	30.7	74.1	60.3	1.6	0.8
Commerce	74.0	36.1	84.3	89.0	1.6	2.5	20.8	22.5	74.8	73.3	2.8	1.7
Transport & Comm.	73.3	60.0	85.4	77.6	0.7	4.7	23.3	30.5	75.5	64.1	0.6	0.8
Finance & Buss. Serv.	94.6	93.6	88.3	86.5	0.2	0.5	11.0	14.8	88.3	84.3	0.5	0.3
Personal & Comm. Serv.	61.3	30.1	80.8	76.6	4.0	9.6	23.9	30.4	70.7	59.0	1.3	1.0
Others	60.8	48.0	75.4	79.8	2.6	3.6	31.7	31.7	64.6	63.6	1.1	1.1
Industry not stated	58.6	26.4	77.3	73.0	5.0	13.2	26.1	30.2	66.9	54.6	2.0	2.1
Total	44.8	15.2	81.5	78.7	5.0	10.6	23.2	30.7	68.8	57.3	3.0	1.4

Source: CBS, 1993, Vol. I, Parts XI, XIII, XIV.

Table 27: Structure of Female Employment - Manufacturing Survey (1976/77, and 1990/91).

Manufacturing	1976/77			1986/87			1990/91		
Industry	Total	Female	Per cent Female	Total	Female	Per cent Female	Total	Female	Per cent Female
Food and Allied	20021	2249	11.3	18454	1959	10.6	17789	2257	12.7
Drinks and Tobacco	5158	106	2.1	8446	1137	13.5	6945	554	8.0
Textile and Wearing apparel	3457	1248	36.1	35639	11881	33.3	55649	22084	39.7
Wood, paper and Printing	5793	318	5.5	11829	690	5.8	7799	436	5.6
Plastics, Cehmincals & Pharmaceuticals	441	76	17.2	7361	946	12.9	7445	1069	14.4
Non-metallic mineral products	6019	860	14.3	45757	6573	14.4	58792	10130	17.2
Metallic Products	1389	89	6.4	5540	105	1.9	3259	106	3.3
Electrical Machinery and Supplies	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	838	57	6.8	843	24	2.8
Activities n.e.c.	7341	611	8.3	888	68	7.7	1089	69	6.3
Total	49619	5557	11.2	134758	23416	17.4	159610	36729	23.0

Source: Survey of Manufacturing Industries, CBS, 1976/77, 1986/87, 1990/91.
Note: n.e.c. = not elsewhere classified.

Female employment is not increasing uniformly in all sectors. Textile and garment industries have been one of the fastest growing in the country with an increasing number of women being absorbed by them. The share of female workers according to these statistics however, is increasing only slowly, from about 36 per cent in 1976/77 to 40 per cent in 1990/91. The proportion of female workers in 1990/91 in the plastics, chemicals and pharmaceutical industries, as also in the field of metallic products, declined as compared to 1976/77. In food and allied industries the number of female workers has remained virtually constant. Women's employment in the formal manufacturing sector is however, increasing in all other product groups.

In 1987, women's employment in industries in the organized sector depended less on type of industry than on its location, size of investment and degree of mechanization (Rana and Shah, 1987). Thus, Rana and Shah note that while the Bansbari Leather and Shoe Factory of Kathmandu had 15.6 per cent female employees, the Universal Leather Pvt. Ltd. of Biratnagar had only 7.0 per cent. Similarly, the Gosali Kapada (Textile) Udyog of Pokhara, with little mechanization, had 89 per cent of female workers compared to about 26 per cent in the Balaju Kapada Udyog with power looms in Kathmandu, and zero per cent in the more, mechanized and automated Ashoka Textile of Biratnagar. With mechanization, women workers spem to be immediately replaced by male workers.

The pattern of female employment also seemed to be governed by the size of industrial investment. Female employment was concentrated in those industries where the fixed capital investment was the lowest. That meant that the majority of female workers received low pay.

The majority of women in the formal sector worked as semi-skilled and unskilled workers. In virtually all food, drink, tobacco and match industries, female workers were mainly concentrated in packing the finished product and in related processes (Shrestha, N. 1983). The large scale textile factories are no exception. For example, at the Hetauda textile factory, with 50 per cent women in the work force, there were very few women performing supervisory functions and none at all at the managerial level (Shrestha M. 1990).

The concentration of women in low-paid, unskilled jobs may be attributed to low literacy, low skill levels and also to social bias regarding the appropriateness of employing female workers for certain jobs but not others. A survey of 5.0 per cent of existing industries conducted by UNIDO in 1988 concluded that employers were biased against female employees. The reasons that were advanced concerning the concentration of women workers in certain jobs were: female temperament, docility,

nimble hands suitable for jobs such as carpet weaving, nursing, sewing by hand, dressing, weaving, knitting, packaging, tea-leaf picking, etc. The government, for its part, tends to reinforce such biases by providing training to women only in such skills as considered to be clearly women-specific. For example, a gender breakdown of the statistics on Cottage and Village Industries Development Board trainees between 1985/86 and 1989/90, clearly indicates the concentration of female trainees in textile and basket-weaving related skills (Acharya, 1994).

Home-based industries are either progressively dying due to competition from imported products or being replaced by organized formal units. On the one hand, the displacement of traditional crafts by light industry is causing the replacement of female workers by male laborers (Rana and Shah, 1989). On the other, women are being converted into wage laborers in such specialized sectors as the carpet industry. Women have been functioning as managers, supervisors, entrepreneurs, and even skilled workers in home-based craft enterprises. As industrial activities become increasingly externalized, however, both male as well as female workers lose control over the production process and become transformed into wage labor. In this process, women are affected more since newly emerging organised industries not only need more capital but also lay stress on more educated and mobile laborers. The managerial class in these industries, which is dominated by the Indo-Aryan and westernised conceptions of gender specialization, reinforce their own biases in hiring and firing. It may be recalled that both in education and capital, women are in a disadvantaged position vis-à-vis their male counterparts.

A progressive concentration of women in the textile, carpet and garment industries has been observed due to such biases. The work force in the carpet and cotton-textile weaving industries have become overwhelmingly women-and-children dominated. In units financed under the Cottage and Small Industry Project, for example, more than 65 per cent of workers in the woolen sector and 59 per cent of workers in the cotton sector were women (Economic Services Centre, 1990).

According to a recent survey (Thacker, 1992) the carpet industry in the Kathmandu Valley had 66 per cent women workers, but nearly 97.8 per cent of these women were piece rate while only 14 per cent of men were so. These women were overwhelmingly young (below 22 years of age) illiterate and worked for reasons of poverty. Cheating by the employers on payments of salary and wages was rampant. Women benefited little from mechanization, as men progressively took the mechanized jobs.

Table 28: Real Wage Rates (at 1987/88 prices, in NRs.)

Fiscal Year	Hill							Terai							
	Kathmandu							Biratnagar					Nepalgunj		
	Agriculture (Daily)		Industrial (Monthly)	Construction (Daily)		Agriculture (Daily)		Industrial (Monthly)	Construction (Daily)		Agriculture (Daily)		Industrial (Monthly)	Construction (Daily)	
	Male	Female	Unskilled	Male	Female	Male	Female	Unskilled	Male	Female	Male	Female	Unskilled	Male	Female
1980/81	29.9	19.9	398.2	-	-	20.4	18.4	530.6	-	-	18.4	16.3	492.7		
1981/82	27.4	18.5	411.9	-	-	22.1	20.2	478.6	-	-	21.8	19.2	493.5		
1982/83	31.2	23.2	416.2	-	-	19.2	17.6	416.2	-	-	21.2	18.4	499.2		
1983/84	30.4	22.8	395.3	-	-	22.7	21.1	392.8	-	-	22.4	18.7	475.7		
1984/85	32.1	26.3	474.4	-	-	26.3	23.4	453.8	-	-	23.4	19.0	465.6		
1985/86	31.3	25.0	406.3	-	-	24.4	23.5	409.4	-	-	21.4	18.9	409.4		
1986/87	27.3	21.8	354.3	32.5	-	22.4	22.4	401.3	22.4	22.4	19.0	17.8	364.0		
1987/88	35.0	35.0	425.0	35.0	35.0	22.5	21.0	425.0	-	-	21.0	21.0	402.5	-	-
1988/89	37.0	37.0	490.6	36.9	34.1	23.4	20.6	497.2	23.4	20.6	25.7	21.5	472.9	-	-
1989/90	34.0	32.0	424.0	33.5	31.9	23.7	22.8	458.6	23.7	21.6	28.0	25.9	458.6	28.0	-
1990/91	40.0	31.0	579.8	39.9	34.1	25.6	22.8	629.9	27.6	24.8	29.5	25.6	629.9	29.5	27.6
1991/92	36.0	27.0	479.9	35.9	31.5	24.2	21.0	516.1	27.4	24.2	25.2	21.0	516.1	24.8	22.6
1992/93	38.0	24.0	522.6	37.5	33.5	25.3	22.3	583.3	28.3	25.3	23.2	19.3	535.7	25.3	22.3

Source: Acharya, 1994.
- denotes not.

Not enough statistics are available on wage rates in gene[r]al. Industrial wages that are reported are usually close to the government fixed minimum, without gender breakdowns. Where discrimination exists in the industrial sector, it is in the nature of employment. While most men are employed as permanent workers and as skilled laborers, most women are employed at piece rates and thus debarred from regular salary and other benefits. The agricultural and construction wage labor market does show a clear gender discrimination (Acharya, 1994).

Inspite of the increasing work opportunities in carpets and garments for women in the Kathmandu valley, the male/female wage differentials have increased in the agricultural and construction sectors except in 1987/&8-1989/90 period, when there was a rapid rise in wages in general (Table 28). Biratnagar, in the east and Nepalgunj in the western Terai also showed similar trends: It seemed that in general male/female wage differentials increase when generally wage rates fall, signifying a fall in the demand for labor.

The reasons for the fall in the female real agricultural wages are not quite evident. It may be because of the fall in the demand in agricultural labor in general in the valley due to the shortage of agricultural land. Inflow of male labor from the neighboring areas and foreign labor may also have depressed the female wage rates. Employment of girls at lower wages, as adult women move to industrial employment, may be a third cause of this labor market depression.

9. Concluding Remarks

Foregoing analysis does indicate a slow but perceptible change in women's life options and opportunities. Mean age of marriage is increasing, compulsion to breed a large member of children is declining, and probability of survival for their children is increasing. Increasing number of women are getting access to family planning methods, acquiring modern education and skills and getting absorbed in alternative avenues of employment. Yet the discrimination in access to resources, education and employment are not declining fast enough to bridge the gap of gender disparity in these fields. Moreover, it is not clear whether all changes are leading to a more equitable socioeconomic structure from a gender perspective.

Knowledge about and availability of family planning services are increasing but her freedom to avail of them is limited. Social control over her fertility might be increasing rather than decreasing because society now has the technology to control her fertility. Her resistance is clear in her fertility behavior.

The total marital fertility rate (TMFR) is stagnating. Despite the emphasis on family planning, child and maternal health (MCH) services through the seventies and eighties, women still begin thinking about birth control only after they give birth to 4-5 children. Population experts agree, and statistics prove, that child survival, female education, and the age of marriage are the most significant factors affecting fertility behavior. Significant gains have been made in enhancing child survival rates. The mean age of marriage has also been increasing gradually. So, too, are female literacy rates and awareness about family planning devices. Nevertheless, the fertility behavior of women appears to be changing only very slowly.

A major cause for the above is the socio-economic compulsion for women to give birth to at least one son for taking care of her during old age. Women have no access to paternal property, their access to property in their husband's household is conditional on her "reproductive" behavior and her "capacity to breed sons". There• is no social or economic incentive for a woman to desire to control her "fertility".

Despite that, all current family planning programs and devices are mostly directed at women. Men, who are more mobile, have greater access to services and economic resources to ensure treatment in case of side effects on health, and who play a decisive role in whether family planning methods should be adopted at all, are hardly visible as targets in family planning programs or advertisements. Besides, women's other health needs related to her reproductive organs are scarcely taken care by the medical system. All family planning methods like elsewhere are directed at controlling her fertility rather than enabling her to control her own fertility.

Women's access to education, no doubt, has increased significantly during the last two decades. Overall, the literacy rate has trebled between 1971 and 1991. The female literacy rate has increased more than six-fold in the same period. However, the differential in the male/female literacy rate is still on the increase. The female literacy appears to be closely related to the overall status of women in various geographical regions of the country as also to the availability of educational facilities. Access to higher levels of education is still greatly limited for girls. Only a small proportion among literate women continue their education beyond the SLC level.

Thus, female education is another emerging issue that cannot be dealt with merely by ad hoc measures such as distribution of free text books or providing a number of scholarships. The real issue is how to change the legal system which disinherits married women from parental property

and frees her from the responsibility to look after the parents in their old age and which mandatorily forces the married female out of her parental household. The core questions also concern correcting society's perception of girls as "liabilities" and glorification of women only as "mothers". Similarly, they are also related to changing a religious belief system that compels females to be married at an early age and couples to breed sons for their after-life salvation.

Increasing number of women are being reported as economically active. Agriculture is still the major source of employment both for males and females, although the share of the non-agricultural sector in employment is increasing. As in past decades, a relatively larger proportion of women is involved in agriculture as compared to men.

The role of non-agricultural sectors as a source of employment is increasing at a faster rate for women than for men. However, the proportion of women in the agriculture labor force has also been on the increase. Increasingly younger women are getting concentrated in the manufacturing sector. The employment of women in this sector is inversely related to the degree of mechanization and scale of investment. The location of industry also influences employment opportunities for women. Thus, women in the Hill areas have a greater probability of obtaining employment in manufacturing than in the Terai due to the fact that, among many cultural groupings in the Terai, women are kept isolated from outside contact.

An increasing number of women are entering the work force in the formal manufacturing sector because of economic need. However, they are mainly concentrated in low-skill, menial and repetitive jobs and in the lower echelons of the industrial hierarchy in what is virtually an extension of their household activities. Even in the carpet industry, where it is a highly skilled job, women are still treated as unskilled and intensely exploited by the factory owners. Additionally, as international competition in such industries is very keen, wages are kept down. As a consequence a progressive disparity is developing between male and female wage rates in the labor market. All these hardly indicate a move towards a more equitable society from gender perspective.

References

Acharya Meena, 1979, 'Statistical Profile of Nepalese Women: A Critical Review' The Status of Women in Nepal, Vol. II, Part l, Center for Economic Development and Administration, Kathmandu.

' _____ , 1981, `The Maithili Women of Sirsia', The Status of Women in Nepal, Center for Economic Development and Administration, Kathmandu.

' _____ , 1994, `Statistical Profile o1' Nepalese Women: An Update in the Policy Context' `Institute for Integrated Development Studies' (Forthcoming).

Acharya Meena & Lynn Bennett, 1981, The Rural Women of Nepal: An Aggregate Analysis and Summary of 8 Village Studies, 'file Status of Women in Nepal, Vol. II, Part 9, Center for Economic Development and Administration, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu.

Asmita Publications, 1992, Asmita, December, Kathmandu.

Basnet, Prabha, 1992, `Status Of Women Workers in Some Industries' (Nepali) A Paper Presented to the Tripartite National Workshop n the Role of Labor Administration in Promotion of Employment and Welfare of Women Workers in Nepal, January, 1992. Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Women Development Division and ILO.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1993, Women and Men in Bangladesh, Facts and figures, 1992, Bangladesh.

Bennett Lynn, 1979, "File Parbatiya Women of Bakundol', The Status of Women in Nepal, Vol. I, Part 2, Center for Economic) Development and Administration, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu.

' _____ , 1983, `Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters', Columbia University Press, New York.

Beneria, Lourdes 1982, `The Sexual Division of Labor in Rural Societies', Praeger, New York.

Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991 Definitions and Regulations on the Nepal National Census (Nepali), Kathmandu.

CBS, 1975, Population Census 1971, Vol. 1, Vol. 11, Vol. III, Vol. V, National Planning Commission (NPC), Kathmandu, Nepal.

CBS, 1976, The Demographic Sample Survey of Nepal, 1974-75, Survey Method and Findings, Kathmandu, Nepal.

CBS, 1977, The Demographic Sample Survey of Nepal, Second Year Survey, 1976, Kathmandu, Nepal.

CBS, 1977, The Analysis of the population Statistics of Nepal, Kathmandu, Nepal.

CBS, 1978, The Demographic Sample Survey of Nepal, Third Years Survey 1977-78, Kathmandu, Nepal.

CBS, 1984, Population Census 1981, Vol. 1, Vol. ll, Vol. 111, NPC, Kathmandu, Nepal.

CBS, 1985, Inter-censal Changes of Some Key Census Variables, Nepal 1952/54-1981, Kathmandu, Nepal.

CBS, 1987, Population Monograph of Nepal, NPC, Kathmandu, Nepal.

CBS, 1993, Population Census 1991, Vol. I, NPC, Kathmandu, Nepal.

CBS, (993 The Analysis of the 199! Population Census (based on advance tables), Kathmandu,

Nepal.

CBS,. 1995, Population Census 1991, Vol., V NPC, Kathmandu, Nepal.

CBS, 1976/77. 1986/87, 1990/91, Survey of Manufacturing Industries, CBS, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Dixit, Shanta, 1992, `Sexual Diseases Transmitted by Men" in Asmita, December, 1992, Kathmandu.

Economic Services Centre Ltd., 1990, Socio-Economic Impact of CSI-Phase I - A Survey Study Report - Prepared for NRB, Kathmandu.

Fathalla, M.F., 1992, Reproductive Health in the World: Two Decades of Progress and the Challenge Ahead, in WHO, Reproductive Health. A Key to a Brighter Future, Biennial Report 1990-91. Special 20th Anniversary Issue.

Giele, Janet Zollinger, 1977, Introduction: The Status of Women in Comparative Perspective in 'Women's Roles and Status in Eight Countries', by Giele and Smock, (edt.) John Wiley and Sons, ':'Jexv York.

Institute for Integrated Development Studies, 1982, Women in Prison, Kathmandu.

lnternational Labor Organisation, 1993, Survey of Economically Active Population, Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment. An ILO Manual, Concepts and Methods, Geneva.

Lakhey, Bimala and D.S. Malla, 1992, `Septic Abortion and Maternal Mortality' (unpublished) Mimeo. Kathmandu.

Ministry of Law and Justice, 1983, (Publication date) Muluki Ain, Law Books Management Board, Kathmandu.

Ministry of Health (MOH), 1977, Nepal Fertility Survey 1976, First Report, Kathmandu.

MOH, 1987, Nepal Fertility and family Planning Survey, 1986, HMG, Nepal.

MOH, 1991, Maternal and Child Health: Management Issues at Community Health Post and District levels, MOH / HMG.

MOH, 1993, Nepal Fertility, Family Planning and Health Survey, 1991, HMG, Nepal.

National Planning Commission, HMG, Kathmandu, Fifth Five Year Plan, 1975/76-1979/80, Sixth Five Year Plan, 1980/81-1985/86, Seventh Five Year Plan, 1985/86-1989/90, Eighth Five Year Plan, 1991/92-1996/97.

Nepal Rastra Bank, 1988, Multipurpose Household Budget Survey: A Study on Income Distribution, Employment, and Consumption Patterns in Nepal, Kathmandu.

Rana, M.S.J.B./Shah A.J., 1987, Role of Women in Nepal's Industrial Development: Status, Constraints, Opportunities and Prospects, Vol. I & II, HMG/Nepal - UNIDO/Vienna Project.

Shrestha, Moti Shova, 1990, Participation of Women in Industrial Development Paper (Nepali) presented in the Seminar on Women and Development, organised by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, May-1990.

Shrestha, Neeru, 1983, Women's Employment in Industrial Sector, Nepal, CEDA, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu.

Thacker, Pravha, 1992, `Technology Womens Work and Status', (The Case of the Carpet Industry in Nepal), Mountain Regeneration and Employment - Discussion Paper Series, 21, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Kathmandu.

Tuladhar, Jayanti, Gubhaju, B.B., Stoeckel, John, 1977, The Population of Nepal: Structure and Change, Berkeley, University of California Press.

United Nations (UN), 1987, `Review of Occupation and Industry Classification Experience in Three Countries and Comments on the 1987 Proposed Revision of the International Standard Classification of Occupation from the Perspective of Women's Concerns' Fourteenth International Conference of Labor Statisticians, Geneva, 28 Oct. - 6 Nov. 1987.

UN, 1991, The World's Women - T rends and Statistics 1970 - 1990, New York.

UN, 1992, Revised System of National Accounts Chapter VI. The Production Account, ST/ESA/STAT/F/2/Rev. 4, 1992 May.

UN, 1993, The Human Development Report.

World Bank (WB), 1991, World Development Report, Oxford University Press, USA. WB, 1992, World Development Report, Oxford University Press, USA. WB, 1993, World Development Report, Oxford University Press, USA.

World Health Organization/HMG, 1992, Research Report on Prevention of Maternal Mortality in Hospitals of Nepal, Kathmandu.