



WOMAN'S ROLE
IN PLANNED ECONOMY

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K. T. Shah.

NATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE SERIES

WOMAN'S ROLE
IN
PLANNED ECONOMY

(Report of the Sub-Committee)

Chairwoman

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To
All Those
MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE
and of
Its Various Sub-Committees
A TRIBUTE OF APPRECIATION

प्रारब्धमुत्तमजना न परित्यजन्ति

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ROLE IN PLANNED ECONOMY

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PREFACE

The National Planning Committee appointed in 1938, began its work early in 1939. After defining the nature of a National Plan, and determining the nature and scope of the work entrusted to them, the Committee issued an elaborate and comprehensive questionnaire which was subsequently supplemented by specific details. Twenty-nine Sub-Committees, formed into eight groups were set up with special terms of reference to deal with all parts and aspects of the national life and work in accordance with a predetermined Plan.

After some unavoidable delay in getting replies to the Questionnaire, the Sub-Committees began their work, and submitted Reports,—some of them Final, some Interim,—which were considered at Plenary Sessions of the Parent Committee in 1940. Towards the end of that year the Chairman, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was arrested and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment, during which the work of the Committee had necessarily to be suspended.

On his release a year later, hope revived for an intensive resumption of the Committee's work. But the outbreak of war with Japan, the threat to India's own safety, and hectic march of political events, rendered it impossible to devote any attention to such work at that time. It, therefore, inevitably went into cold storage once again; and remained for the duration of the war.

When at last the War seemed nearing its end, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru with other leaders was released. The moment seemed again opportune to resume the work of

the Planning Committee. Meetings of that Body were held in September and November 1945, when certain more urgent questions, already included in the programme of the National Planning were given a special precedence. A Priority Committee was appointed to report upon them. Changes and developments occurring during the War had also to be taken into account; and another Committee was appointed to review the general instructions, given six years earlier to the Sub-Committees. Revised instructions were issued to them following the Report of this Sub-Committee; and the Chairmen and Secretaries of the several Sub-Committees were once again requested to revise and bring, up to date, such of the Reports as had already been submitted—either as final or interim—while those that had not submitted any reports at all were asked to do so at an early date.

As a result, many of the Sub-Committees which had not reported, or had made only an Interim Report, put in their Reports, or finalised them. The Parent Committee has had no chance to review them, and pass resolutions on the same. But the documents are, by themselves, of sufficient value—prepared as they are, by experts in each case, to be included in this series.

The following Table shows the condition of the Sub-Committee's work, and the stage to which the Planning Committee had reached in connection with them.

		Resolutions	N.P.C.	Resolution	the N.P.C.
	Group I.	Agriculture & other Sources of Primary Production	Handbook Pp.	Handbook Pp.	
	1.	Rural Marketing and Finance	97-99		
	2.	River Training and Irrigation Part I	88-85		
		" " Part II	118-115		
	3.	Soil Conservation and Afforestation	115-119		
	4.	Land Policy and Agriculture		180-141	
	5.	Animal Husbandry and Dairying	87-89		
	6.	Crop Planning and Production			do.
	7.	Horticulture	102-108		do.
	8.	Fisheries		do.	
	Group II	Industries or Secondary Sources of Production			
	1.	Rural and Cottage Industries			
	2.	Power and Fuel		do.	
	3.	Chemicals			
	4.	Mining and Metallurgy		77-79	
	5.	Engineering Industries	75-77	180-138	
	6.	Manufacturing Industries		do.	
	7.	Industries connected with Scientific Instruments		do.	
	Group III	Human Factor			
	1.	Labour	89-92		
	2.	Population	85-87		
	Group IV	Exchange and Finance			
	1.	Trade			do.
	2.	Industrial Finance		180	
	3.	Public Finance			
	4.	Currency and Banking		122-126	
	5.	Insurance		98-95	
	Group V	Public Utilities		95-97	
	1.	Transport			
	2.	Communications	126-129	120-122	
	Group VI	Social Services-Health and Housing			
	1.	National Housing			
	2.	Public Health	99-100		do.
	Group VII	Education			
	1.	General Education		188-189	do.
	2.	Technical Education			do.
	Group VIII	Woman's Role in Planned Economy			

To sum up, fourteen Sub-Committees had made final reports, of which ten have been considered, and Resolutions taken upon them, by the National Planning Committee. Twelve more have presented Interim Reports, of which nine have been considered by the Planning Committee, with Resolutions thereon, while three Sub-Committees have not yet presented any report on the reference made to them.

The idea that all this material, gathered together with the help of some of the best brains in India in the several departments of our national life, should be printed and published was before the Committee from the start. But the interruption caused by the war prevented its realisation. It was once again mooted in 1941; but the moment was not deemed ripe then for such action, partly because the leading spirits in almost every one of the Sub-Committees were unable to devote time and labour to bring their Reports up-to-date; and partly also because war-time restrictions or shortages had made scarcer than ever before the statistics and other facts, which particular sub-committees would need, to bring their work up-to-date. The War time needs of Government had attracted several of them to work on Government Bodies, Panels, or Committees. For all these reasons it was deemed undesirable that material of this character—valuable as it must be—should be put out in an incomplete, inchoate, obsolete form, which may reflect unfavourably upon Indian capacity for such tasks.

The last four years of the War were thus a period of suspended animation for the National Planning Committee. Even after the end of the war, it has not been feasible for obvious reasons, for the Planning Committee to resume its work and finalise decisions. Continuous Sessions of that body are indispensable for considering and taking decisions on the Sub-Committee reports presented since 1940, and putting all the material into shape, ready for publication, not to mention making its own Report; but the political situation in the country made it impossible. Other conditions, however, are somewhat more favourable than in 1938-39, when the Central Government of the country were all but openly hostile to such attempts. Lest, however, the momentary difficulties make for needless further delay, it was thought advisable by the Chairman and the undersigned that no more time should be lost in putting this material before the Public. Following this advice, it is now proposed to bring out a complete Series of the National Planning Committee's Sub-Committee Reports, which will

serve as appendices to the Parent Committee's own Report. The Plan of the proposed enterprise is briefly summarised below.

Every Sub-Committee's Report, which is in a final form and on which the National Planning Committee has itself taken resolutions, will be edited and published, with an Introduction assigning their due importance to the suggestions and recommendations contained in that particular report, its proper place in the over-all National Plan; and following it up, wherever necessary, by a kind of Epilogue, summarising the developments that have taken place during the seven years, during which the work of the Planning Committee had been in suspension.

Those Reports, again, which, though in a final form, have not yet been considered, and no resolutions taken thereon, by the Planning Committee, will also be included in the Series in the form in which they were submitted, with such Introduction and Epilogue to each as may be deemed appropriate. And the same treatment will be applied to Reports which are 'Ad Interim', whether or not the Parent Committee has expressed any opinion on the same. They will be finalised, wherever possible, in the office, with such aid as the Chairman or Secretary of the Sub-Committee may be good enough to render. Sub-Committees finally, which have not submitted any Report at all,—they are very few,—will also find their work similarly dealt with. The essence, in fine, of the scheme is that no avoidable delay will now be suffered to keep the National Planning Committee's work from the public.

Both the Introduction and the Epilogue will be supplied by the undersigned, who would naturally be grateful for such help as he may receive from the personnel of each Sub-Committee concerned. The purpose of these additions is, as already stated, to assign its true place to each such work in the overall Plan; and to bring up the material in each Report to date, wherever possible.

Not every Sub-Committee's Report is sufficiently large to make, more or less, a volume by itself, of uniform size, for this Series. In such cases two or more Reports will be combined, so as to maintain uniformity of size, get-up, and presentation of the material. The various Reports, it may be added, would not be taken in the order of the classification or grouping originally given by the Planning Commi-

tee; nor even of what may be called the intrinsic importance of each subject.

In view of the varying stages at which the several Reports are, for reasons of convenience, it has been thought advisable to take up for printing first those which are final, and on which the Planning Committee has pronounced some resolutions. Printing arrangements have been made with more than one Press, so that two or three Reports may be taken simultaneously and published as soon as possible so that the entire series may be completed in the course of the year.

Two other Sub-Committees not included in the list of Sub-Committees given above, were assigned special tasks of (1) preparing the basic ideas of National Planning; and (2) outlining the administrative machinery deemed appropriate for carrying out the Plan. These were unable to function for reasons already explained. The present writer has, however, in his personal capacity, and entirely on his own responsibility, published the "Principles of Planning" which attempt to outline the fundamental aims and ideals of a National Plan which remains to be considered by the Planning Committee. Similarly, he has also attempted to sketch an administrative machinery and arrangements, necessary to give effect to the Plan, when at last it is formulated, and put into execution. Notwithstanding that these two are outside the Scheme outlined in this Preface, they are mentioned to round up the general picture of the arrangements made for publication of the entire work up-to-date of the National Planning Committee and its several Sub-Committees.

The several volumes of Sub-Committee Reports, when published, will be treated as so many appendices to the Report of the parent body, the National Planning Committee. It is impossible to say when that Committee, as a whole, will be able to hold continuous sessions, review and resolve upon Sub-Committee Reports which have not yet been considered, and lay down their basic ideas and governing principles for an all over Plan, applicable to the country, including all the facts of its life, and all items making up the welfare of its people.

The disturbed conditions all over the country, and the Labour unrest that has followed the end of the War has caused unavoidable delays in printing and publishing the

several volumes in the series, which, it is hoped, will be excused.

In the end, a word of acknowledgment is necessary to put on record the aid received by the Editor in the preparation and publication of this Series. All those who are associated in the task,—members of the Parent Committee, or as Chairmen, Secretaries or Members of the various Sub-Committees, have laboured wholly, honorarily, and consistently striven to give the best that lay in them for the service of the country. Almost all Provincial Governments and some States,—the latter twice in some cases,—have made contributions towards the expenses of this office, which have been acknowledged and accounted for in the Handbooks of the Planning Committee, published earlier. Suitable appreciation of these will be expressed when the Parent Committee makes its own Report. At almost the end of its task, the expenditure needed to edit, compile, and otherwise prepare for the Press, the several Reports, has been financed by a Loan by Messrs. Tata Sons Ltd., which, even when repaid, will not diminish the value of the timely aid, nor the sense of gratitude felt by the undersigned.

The appendices to this report have been omitted from this volume to keep its size similar to that of other volumes in this series. A great deal of very useful material, laboriously collected and embodied in a number of Appendices, has had to be omitted, not only because of the need to keep the series as nearly uniform in all its Volumes as possible, but also because of the material having become in many instances obsolete. Circumstances permitting, this material will, at some future date, be brought upto date and published in a separate volume.

Bombay,
1st July, 1947.

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K. T. Shah

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INTRODUCTION

The Sub-Committee on **Woman's Role in Planned Economy** was appointed to deal with the place of woman in the planned economy of India, including consideration of her social, economic and legal status, her right to hold any property, carry on any trade, profession or occupation, and remove all obstacles or handicaps in the way of realising an equal status and opportunity for woman."

In particular the Sub-Committee was to concern itself with

- ✓ (a) the family life and organisation, and woman's employment in the house, and the change therein in recent years;
- (b) marriage and succession, and the laws governing these;
- ✓ (c) the conditions of industrial employment of women, and the protection of working women in mines, factories, plantations, workshops and cottage industries, as well as in domestic employment and retail trade;
- (d) social customs and institutions which precluded woman from taking her full share in India's planned economy;
- (e) the types and methods of appropriate education to enable her play her due role in household work, in the professions, and social and national services; and
- (f) any other question connected therewith."

This Report considers the entire structure of Planned Economy with Woman as the focus. On the ground of examining the socio-economic position of woman, the Sub-Committee has reviewed every field in which woman operates, or should operate, to contribute her share of the nation's wealth and the people's well-being. While considering principally the material aspect of Woman's Role in Planned Economy, the cultural or spiritual position of woman under a National Plan, and its reaction on the nation's life and work, is by no means ignored. The Report, accordingly, gives a full-sized profile of the entire system as it would be when planned economy on a national scale

comes into operation. Given the definition of the National Plan as a simultaneous advance on pre-determined lines and pre-conceived objectives on all fronts of the national life—social as well as economic, material as well as cultural,—consideration of the place of woman in all these respects becomes inevitably the consideration of the entire national life and all its activities.

The position of woman in this country, no matter from what standpoint one considers it,—social, economic, political or cultural,—leaves much to be desired from the standpoint of those who believe in the fundamental equality of all human beings, and freedom of the individual as a citizen or an economic unit. Freedom, it is true, is relative; and deeply conditioned by the demands of a modern industrialised community, with infinite division of labour among its members, and the inevitable intensive and close co-operation it necessitates. Notwithstanding the many and radical differences between the several communities making up the mass of the Indian people, in regard to their outlook on life, its purpose, and woman as an integral part of the community, the influence of the predominant majority—the Hindu population,—inevitably told upon the other communities as regards their modes of life and relations inter se. Whatever the governing ideal and fundamental outlook on such matters of each of the principal communities in accordance with the tenets of its religion, and, therefore, on the social fabric of each such community, woman's role, place or function, was deeply coloured by the influence of the corresponding ideals and outlook of the majority.

It is, therefore, quite in the fitness of things to take woman's position in this country to be more or less the same in all communities, notwithstanding all the radical differences between the several communities in the basic ideal or the actual practice in daily life wherever such differences manifest themselves.

One outstanding and intriguing fact of the problem is that, numerically speaking, woman forms the largest single minority in the country. Being based on biological differentiation fixed by Nature, this is an ineffable minority, and so differs radically from all other minorities—religious or political—which cry aloud to high heavens about their rights or grievances. Looking at the censuses ever since the regular census began to be taken in this country, it is evident that there are more female children per every thousand births in the country than males. Notwithstand-

ing this initial majority, after about the fifteenth year, the woman's numbers begin to fall, till in the aggregate she becomes a striking minority in the proportion of somewhere about 17 to 18. The decline in the numerical proportion of women several years after birth is, no doubt, due to the unwritten convention of man-made social system, in which woman's life has been held to be relatively cheaper than that of man. More attention has consequently been paid to the care, health, and strength of male children than to the female. The intense poverty of the people is also responsible for a higher rate of mortality amongst married women between 15 to 45 years of age. For the incidence of repeated child-birth at short intervals and as a consequence of comparatively earlier marriage, than may be quite consistent with the maintenance of the health and strength of woman, takes a heavy toll of her life. The reformer's zeal has, no doubt long since realised these handicaps of the Indian Social System and National Economy. But the remedies proposed to give woman her due place and importance in the scheme of things seem to have hardly touched the veriest fringe of the problem. They are at best palliatives; at worst provocation to the orthodox and the reactionary who can easily prop up and hold out in their falling bastions.

The consciousness of her rights,—or rather of her wrongs,—has dawned upon woman in India in quite recent years. And then, too, it is confined to a microscopic minority who scarcely raise an echo in the national heart when they plead for the Rights of the Sex. Woman is herself ignorant, superstitious, hide-bound in the chains of superstition mis-called Religion. She is victim of many a custom or convention that may have no warrant in any Religious text; but which, by the mere might of age-old inertia, has become harder to break than any injunction of religion. She is, therefore, still her own best enemy in any campaign against usage that denies her freedom or equality, or opportunity to realise the purpose of her being.)

As the Questionnaire appended to this Report will show, the Sub-Committee has viewed the problem of Woman's place and function in the national life from every angle from which it requires to be considered. The personal status of woman and her opportunities for maintaining that status,—including her right to own, hold or use property, carry on any trade, profession or calling, or join any occupation; her place and privileges as member of the

Family,—both on the father's and on the husband's side,—and in such institutions as Marriage or the Joint Family,—are all carefully examined. It would be needless repetition to go over or summarise the Sub-Committee's findings or recommendations on any of those matters in this Introduction. Suffice it to observe that, in each of the aspects in which the Report considers woman's place in planned economy, the Sub-Committee have suggested remedial measures which, when carried out, are calculated effectively to bring the position in line with that of any other civilised country in the world.—

At the time the Sub-Committee started its work, woman's position and prospects were, in almost every respect, utterly unenviable. We have already noted above the fact of her being in a numerical minority. The handicap of that minority has been intensified out of all proportion because of the economic disabilities and cultural backwardness of woman. For instance, the proportion of women barely literate,—that is, scarcely able to read and write a simple letter in one's own language,—was about 1 in 50 or 2 per cent. The corresponding proportion in the case of men was somewhere about 1 in 5 or about 20 per cent. This is poor for both—for the country as a whole; but still it is worse for woman. Before the citadel of superstition in regard to the place or function of woman in the domestic as well as the national life, could be battered, this appalling illiteracy must become a thing of the dead and buried past. The Sub-Committee has fully realised the importance of an intensive programme of education, which no Plan can ignore. Similarly, before the stranglehold of such institutions as Marriage or the Joint Family, which place woman at a long disadvantage in the mere struggle for existence, could be relaxed, Woman must attain economic emancipation.

Under the existing social order, girls could not be and were not educated to any decent level by parents, as education is a costly luxury in this country; and any money spent on the education of daughters would be a mere waste. For girls, however well educated and brought up, would ultimately go into another family by marriage; so that anything spent on their education would, from the economic viewpoint be a bad investment. Unless and until, therefore, the State takes upon itself the primary obligation of every civilised community to provide, at the community's expense a pre-determined standard of education and training, and not merely to make woman literate, as a basic right

of model citizenship,—an inescapable obligation of the State towards its citizens,—any hope of real and rapid progress in the place and work of woman must be abandoned. And so long as woman remains backward, illiterate, suppressed and enslaved, the country as a whole can make no progress. Lincoln's immortal words, "This country cannot progress, half free, half slave" were never more truly applicable than in the case of India.

Similarly, the health as well as the economic status of woman in the community will not be improved, unless and until the very foundations of the prevailing Social Order are re-cast; and the entire outlook is radically changed. The chances of many of the reforms suggested by the Subcommittee would be extremely slender, unless the National Planner takes this bold, broad view of the problem. The conversion, for example, of the institution of Marriage for a woman from a lifelong or eternal sacrament among the Hindus and those who imitate them, entailing perpetual widowhood on the woman whose husband dies before her, into a Civil Contract between equal partners, of a monogamous character, and dissoluble on identical grounds at the instance of either party, would involve a change in the entire outlook and rooted beliefs of very large sections of the Indian people, which without a corresponding progress in education and enlightenment, is hardly to be thought of. Even the Muslim, who theoretically conceives of marriage as a Civil Contract, has become tainted by his contact with the Hindu; and practically abrogated the woman's right to divorce. The ground he urges is specious, though Quaranic; since "of all things not actually forbidden, Divorce is the least pleasing in the eyes of God".

Something similar holds true in respect of property and opportunity. The rights of Woman as member of a Joint Family are not at all on a footing of equality with those of the male members of the same family among the Hindus, and their example is, in effect if not in name, copied by other communities. The Muslims accord a more liberal position to Woman in this regard. But, taken collectively, the basic position would need to be very radically changed before Woman can become a really equal member of the family. The entire legal system particularly places woman at a disadvantage in regard to holding or owning property by birth, or acquiring it by inheritance. Though attempts have been made in recent times to reform it, it forms a most material obstacle in the way of full emanci-

pation of woman, and her status as a real equal with man. The crux of the situation lies, indeed, in the economic position of woman, her right to own or hold or inherit or acquire property; carry on any trade, profession or vocation; or accept any remunerative employment. So long as this fundamental right is not fully conceded, and actually realised in daily life, all talk of relief, remedy or reform would be just hot wind.

While, however, the country remains so backward, and its resources undeveloped, or developed partially or *ad hoc*, without any co-ordinated system, the chances of woman acquiring economic independence, and, as its consequence, real social equality, are very slight. The overwhelming might of grinding poverty is common to both man and woman in India. But woman suffers more, perhaps, because of the absence of any recognition of such work as woman does all over the country in the field or in the household, or in occupations connected therewith. Members of family are unpaid workers, whose labours and contribution may be of the utmost value in the individual as well as the aggregate national economy. But no account is taken nor allowance made in the family any more than in the National Budget. House-work done by women,—cooking, washing, looking after children,—is as much a part of the nation's wealth as any other form of employment, whether for man or woman. Anyone doing any useful work should be recognised, irrespective of sex, age or relationship. Equal pay for equal work is a doctrine, which, however, is still more honoured in profession than in practice. Even for work where both men and women workers are paid, the latter are paid on a distinctly lower scale as in the Medical or Educational Service. There are, again, several branches of Public Service from which women are expressly or in effect excluded, even though theoretically men and women are equal citizens of the same Commonwealth. There are independent avenues of gainful employment, moreover, where, because of the ties of family, incidence of repeated maternity, or the relentless burden of house-work,—not to mention the lack of appropriate education and training, woman is necessarily unable to enter and much less compete on equal terms with man.

All these cases reinforce the urgency of a comprehensive programme of national development, wherein every citizen, man or woman, would be assigned his or her rightful place and work, so as to enable each to contribute his

or her quota to the commonwealth. In a sane scientific Plan there would be no place for parasites—male or female. Work in proportion to one's ability, aptitude or training would be the only claim to social status, and opportunity for self-expression.

So long, moreover as the basis of property exists and is recognised by law; and there is no planned provision of organised work for all, the disabilities due to sex in respect of property will be a heavy handicap against woman. They must, therefore, be rectified. Even if absolute equality in the matter of inheritance is deemed not necessary, the injustice now done to woman among the largest section of people in India, in that she is thoroughly denied the rights of property in her own right, must be remedied.

Finally, the political status of woman needs equal recognition along with the social or economic place assigned to her by law or usage. In a Democracy, such as we may now claim India to be, the people collectively are sovereign. Every member of the people must, therefore, necessarily claim to be part of that sovereign authority. This part is exercised normally by the right to vote at periodical elections to the Legislature and the Executive, and so influence the policy and working of the Government of the country, through the chosen representatives of the people. This reorientation, even if it does not bring instant relief to woman in many of the cases mentioned above, would nevertheless impart to her a growing consciousness of her place and realisation of the importance of her work. This cannot but give her, in harmony with the changed outlook regarding citizenship, its rights and obligations in a modern civilised community, a full realisation of her own potentiality.

This consciousness of Woman's' proper place in the social system, and her real role in the country's planned economy has come, though it is naturally still in its infancy. In the earliest manifestations of this consciousness in Western Industrialised countries, it almost threatened to become a War of the Sexes. The occurrence, however, of a world war on a global scale demonstrated beyond question the close inter-dependence of all classes and sections of the people in a modern community; and so facilitated the progress of Woman's emancipation which is being rapidly advanced in this country.

Democracy has been late in coming in this country. But all present indications point to its being rapidly ad-

vanced and fully established in real daily life at an early date. That democracy would fail to achieve its purpose if and so long as woman is debarred from any economic or cultural rights, privileges or obligations of equal citizenship. Equal opportunity is now guaranteed to all citizens of India; and there is no reason to doubt the guarantee will fail to be implemented. Woman, will, therefore, have soon an equal chance with man to realise to the full whatever potentiality she may have in her to serve the community.

The Sub-Committee has accordingly made in every Chapter constructive suggestions, intended and designed to relieve and improve the position of women in every one of those cases. They involve matters of law, as well as of custom or practice. It would be no inconsiderable part of the National Plan to recast the entire legal system founded on positive law, custom harder than law or usage from time immemorial; and so remedy the social and economic hardships of woman, without which any hope for the progress of the community as a whole would be a delusion.

Before ending this Introduction, a word may be added in regard to the method of treatment followed by this Sub-Committee. An exhaustive Questionnaire was prepared and circulated by the Sub-Committee to all Women's Organisations in the country and to several of its local correspondents specially set up for the purpose. This enabled it to definitise inquiry and gather very substantial material on specific issues. In every Province and in each important State, the Sub-Committee organised affiliations, which helped it to make a fairly thorough survey of the local conditions, which are not uniform all over this vast country. The results made an immense roll of data which were put together in the Appendix. It is omitted from this volume partly because the statistical portion at least has become out-of-date; and partly also because of fear of its bulk outrunning all proportions. Specific issues were next raised, arising out of the Questionnaire and replies received thereto. These were discussed at several sessions of the Sub-Committee; and the opinion there crystallised found its way eventually in the Report. Though the scope assigned to this Sub-Committee was vast; its handling of the problem set to it was no less courageous and exhaustive. The Members of almost every Sub-Committee have worked as devotedly as they were disinterested. To single out any Sub-Committee for special mention may, therefore, seem invidious. There is only one justification for this paragraph: While the per-

sonnel of almost every other Sub-Committee was made up of people claiming special knowledge of the subject or personal experience, this Sub-Committee was formed, largely, of women who might, without injustice, be described as lay persons. They were, no doubt, highly educated, and distinguished in the public life of the country by their service or sacrifice; but not all of them could claim personal expertise on all the variety of topics falling within the scope of this Sub-Committee. The results are nevertheless such as would do credit to any body of experts; and that is the only justification for the writer to make such a special mention, which, he hopes, will be found to be neither invidious nor impertinent.

K. T. SHAH.

SUB-COMMITTEE ON WOMAN'S ROLE IN PLANNED ECONOMY.

The Sub-Committee consisted of the following members: 1. Smt. Lakshmibai Rajwade (Chairman); 2. Smt. Sarojini Naidu; 3. Begum S. Hamid Ali; 4. Smt. Amrit Kaur; 5. Smt. Vijayalakshmi Pandit; 6. Smt. Radhabhai Subbarayan; 7. Smt. Vidyagouri Nilkanth; 8. Smt. Sushama P. K. Sen; 9. Smt. Perin Captain; 10. Smt. Lilavati Roy; 11. Mrs. Zarina E. Currimbhoy; 12. Begum Shah Nawaz; 13. Smt. Saraladevi; and 14. Smt. Mridula Sarabhai (Secretary).

By the 2nd September 1939, the following were co-opted as members of the Sub-Committee to make it more representative: 1. Joint Secretary, Smt. Perviz Dubash; Members: 2. Smt. S. C. Mukherjee; 3. Smt. Rameshwari Nehru; 4. Smt. Lavanyalata Chanda; 5. Smt. Anasuya Gyanchand; 6. Begum L. A. Rehman; 7. Smt. Jethi Sipahimalani; 8. Smt. Karunadevi Parmanand; 9. Smt. Indirabai Bhagwat; 10. Smt. Hansa Mehta; 11. Smt. Taraben Maneklal Premchand; 12. Smt. Durgabai Joshi; 13. Dr. Muthulaxmi Reddi; 14. Smt. A. V. Kuttiammalu Amma; 15. Smt. D. Barkat Rai; 16. Smt. Kapila Khandwalla; and 17. Smt. Godavari Gokhale.

The following subsequently resigned: 1. Smt. Amrit Kaur; and 2. Smt. Sushama P. K. Sen. Another member, Begum L. A. Rehman, did not respond at all to our invitation and hence was considered as having resigned.

At its meeting held on the 15th December 1939, the Sub-Committee co-opted the following as members in the vacancies caused: 1. Begum Aruna Asaf Ali; and 2. Smt. Pushpalata Saikia. Begum Khadija Yakub Hassan, who was co-opted later on in the place of Begum L. A. Rehman also did not respond to our invitation to work as a member.

REPORT

INTRODUCTION

On the 16th June 1939, the National Planning Committee appointed the Sub-Committee on Woman's Role in Planned Economy. The terms of reference to the Sub-Committee were as follows:

"This Sub-Committee will deal with the place of woman in the planned economy of India, including consideration of her social, economic and legal status, her right to hold property, carry on any trade, profession or occupation and remove all obstacles or handicaps in the way of realising an equal status and opportunity for woman.

"In particular it will concern itself with:

- (a) the family life and organisation, and woman's employment in the house, and the change therein in recent years;
- (b) marriage and succession and the laws governing these;
- (c) the conditions of industrial employment of women and the protection of working women in mines, factories, plantations, workshops and cottage industries as well as in domestic employment and retail trade;
- (d) social customs and institutions which preclude women from taking her full share in India's planned economy;
- (e) the types and methods of appropriate education to play her due role in household work, in the profession and in social and national services; and
- (f) any other questions connected therewith."

The terms of reference are very comprehensive and deal with every aspect of the woman's life and work. They touch the entire life of the nation. In a scheme of planned economy for the whole nation it is natural that this should be so. Woman has at least the same interest in planning as man has. In some respects this interest is deeper and more special to her. She has suffered in the past and still labours under disabilities which must be removed before she can take her proper share in the social life of the community. She has special problems and duties which require adjustment in the social scheme. She is even more perhaps than man a guardian and trustee of future generations.

Planning, as we understand it, is fundamentally a co-ordinated effort to raise the National Standard of Life to a higher level. This may partly be done by economic changes; but it requires a sound social structure where the individual is the unit and is assured of his or her fundamental rights. Apart from the obvious fact that there can be no effective planning of a Nation's Economy with half the population* left out of it, it is essential that woman should have her proper place in the scheme of things, and that she should be considered as an individual, and should have the same rights as man. If freedom and equality are the bases of human development, woman must share in them. As John Stuart Mill said: "A mere consciousness a woman would have of being a human being, like any other, entitled to choose her pursuits, urged or incited by the same inducements as any one else, to interest herself in whatever is interesting to human beings, entitled to the share of influence on all human concerns which belong to an individual

* The following table gives the total population of India (Males and Females) according to the Census of 1931.

	Males.	Females.
India	181,828,923	171,008,855
Provinces	139,931,556	131,595,377
States & Agencies ..	41,897,367	39,413,478

1931, Census Report, Vol. III.

opinion.....this alone would effect an immense expansion of the facilities of their moral sentiments.”*

It follows, therefore, as a natural corollary that woman should be recognised as an equal unit in the social order with man, and that she should gain the same political rights, civic and legal status, social equality and economic independence.

In 1931 the Indian National Congress issued its famous declaration of fundamental rights which made the position of woman clear and gave her in theory complete equality with man. It was welcomed by all women's organisations in the country and we gladly give it our full endorsement. The declaration reads as follows:

“All citizens are equal before the law, irrespective of religion, caste, creed or sex.

“No disability attaches to any citizen, by reason of his or her religion, caste, creed or sex, in regard to public employment, office of power or honour, and in the exercise of any trade or calling.”†

This is the background against which we have set our terms of reference and from which we embark upon our labours. Planning and co-operative effort are of course common features of our daily life, both in the household as well as in larger spheres of activity. But the word as recently used has some special features and in that sense it is a modern concept. Ordinarily it is used in an economic sense, and its objectives have been defined as efficiency of production, stability of economic life, and equality of distribution.§ It was felt, however, that the human aspect was of great importance and must also be considered. The idea of planning has now spread to social and cultural spheres as well.

The women's movement in India, though comparatively recent, has already made its mark. Beginning with the isolated efforts of a few individuals for social reform, it has gradually developed into a conscious desire for human development on equal terms. Politically woman's advance

* J. S. Mill : The Subjection of Women, pp. 155-156.

† N. P. C. Handbook No. 1, pp. 2-3.

§ “Planning under a democratic system may be defined as the technical co-ordination, by disinterested experts, of consumption, production, investment, trade and income distribution in accordance with social objectives set by bodies representative of the Nation. Such planning is not only to be considered from the point of view of economics and the raising of the standard of living, but must include cultural and spiritual values and the human side of life.” (Red Book 1, p. 77.)

has not met with the opposition which it has encountered in some of the Western countries. Many women, though not as many as we would wish, have got the vote in India, whereas women in some advanced Western countries are still dis-franchised. The national movement in India has helped the cause of women in this respect, and so, fortunately, the political conflicts between man and woman, so common in the West, as evidenced in the struggle for the vote, have not taken place in India.

Owing to the participation of women in the political movement* and through the work of various women's organisations, many ancient beliefs are undergoing a change and a degree of understanding and an appreciation of the difficulties she has to face in her effort for equal citizenship is growing in the public mind. But the fact remains that the freedom of woman has still to be achieved. This freedom means an entire reorganisation of life. For, woman cannot be free until the means and training for economic liberty have been assured to her, and until the functions which nature and society impose on her are organised in such a way that while fulfilling them woman still retains the right to mould her social and economic life in any way she chooses.

To facilitate collection of data regarding the present condition of woman in India, a comprehensive questionnaire† in English was issued by the Sub-Committee and widely circulated all over India through (a) provincial workers' groups created by the Sub-Committee in the provinces and in some of the important States; (b) the central, provincial and State governments; (c) various existing women's institutions and other institutions interested in women's problems; and (d) prominent workers in the social, economic, legal, educational and political fields. The questionnaire was also translated into Hindustani (Urdu and Devanagiri scripts), Gujarati, Bengali, Kanarese, Marathi and Oriya.

The replies to the questionnaire in the form of reports from individuals,‡ Provinces and States filtered in slowly and finally a summary of all the replies to the questionnaire received up-to-date from the Provinces and States was made in the form of a consolidated reply to each ques-

* See Appendix I—Political Movement and Women.

† See Appendix II—Questionnaire.

‡ See Appendix III—List of Replies received to the Questionnaire.

tionnaire. The consolidated summary of replies was circulated to all the members of the Sub-Committee for approval. It is now incorporated into the main report in the following manner. Whatever information, opinions, customs, etc., are common to all the provinces, we have incorporated in the text of the report. Whatever is individual or peculiar, we have attached by means of footnotes and appendices. Further details of methods adopted to deal with the work of the Sub-Committee are explained in the Appendix Method of Work.*

We would like to note here that we have not been able to get sufficient information from the States. There are a number of States and conditions in each of them vary. Laws passed for the amelioration of the condition of women do not exist in most of the States and the condition of women in such States is far from satisfactory.

As stated in the note of the Chairman of the N. P. C. issued for the guidance of the Sub-Committees:

"A complete scheme of Planned Economy is a vast undertaking requiring full information and data and the willing co-operation of the technical experts, industrialists, administrators and the public at large. It is a progressive scheme being continually adjusted to changing conditions and always taking advantage of the experience gained in its working. The N. P. C. is obviously not in a position to draw up such a complete scheme nor does it intend to do so at this stage. What is intended now is to lay the foundation of a Planned Economy on which the future structure can be built. But even at this stage the full picture must be envisaged, a complete outline drawn up which can be filled in later as opportunity comes and further materials are available."†

There is a serious lack of statistics, investigation and research, specially in regard to women's position and condition. Except vital statistics and a few educational and industrial statistics, there is no foundation of facts to proceed with: and hence in some places personal investigation by the Workers' Groups was undertaken, but unfortunately the response was not satisfactory.

We are grateful for the help received from our Provincial Workers' Groups during the very short time at their disposal, but we are unable at this stage to build a struc-

*See Appendix IV—Method of Work and Provincial Workers' Groups.

† Red Book No. 1, p. 82.

ture of any firmness on the foundations supplied to us in the shape of data. In the circumstances we could only lay down the main principles on which a structure may be built when full material is available. The work of the Sub-Committee may be regarded as no more than a frame work of principles. The Sub-Committee leaves it to the National Planning Commission or any other such permanent body to investigate into the details and to find out ways and means of fulfilling the principles and suggestions that are contained in this report.

In the world today great changes are taking place; and, we are told, that this is a period of transition; so also in India where a new order is being born, not only political but also social and economic. Present day problems thus require a full consideration of our social conditions and national planning must include them in its scope. The change from what is old and established to something new and untried always contains an element of danger. This fact is very evident in the realm of woman and requires special care on the part of the planning authority so that the new measures adopted are effective and do not become obstacles in the way of advance. We have, therefore, referred in our report to such a period in order to bridge the gulf between existing conditions and what might seem at first glance to be drastic recommendations for the future.

We have touched in this report upon subjects which are delicate and controversial, as the very nature of this work had demanded a scrutiny of all problems connected with the social order. An essential characteristic of our time is the rational application of scientific thought and experience to all vital problems; and it is in this spirit, desirous of finding practical solutions, that we have tried to approach each subject. The recommendations made by us follow mostly the lead given by our provincial Workers' Groups and express, so far as we have been able to ascertain, the sentiments of a large section of the thinking public.

A final word of assurance in regard to the relation which our plan will bear to the Indian woman. Circumstances have altered so radically in recent years that the old frame no longer fits the new picture, and hence it has become necessary to make some changes. - This does not imply condemnation. It merely seeks to make the system more fitted for the task before it by an effort of conscious planning. It is not our desire to belittle in any way those traditions, which have in the past, contributed to the happi-

ness and progress of the individual, and have been the means of raising the dignity and beauty of Indian womanhood and conserving the spiritual attributes of the Indian Nation. We do not wish to turn woman into a cheap imitation of man or to render her useless for the great tasks of motherhood and nation-building. But in demanding equal status and equal opportunity, we desire to achieve for woman the possibility of development under favourable circumstances of education and opportunity, and while so doing, urge upon the State its responsibility towards women in this respect.

We would like to displace the picture so deeply impressed upon the racial imagination of man striding forward to conquer new worlds, woman following wearily behind with a baby in her arms. The picture which we now envisage is that of man and woman, comrades of the road, going forward together, the child joyously shared by both. Such a reality we feel cannot but raise the manhood and womanhood of any nation.

Finally the Sub-Committee would like to record its thanks to all the various friends who have co-operated with us in this work.

The Sub-Committee especially wishes to record its thanks to Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, the Chairman of the National Planning Committee for the co-operation, understanding, and sympathy which he has given to the Sub-Committee. We desire to express to Prof. K. T. Shah, the Hon. General Secretary of the N. P. C., our gratitude for the valuable assistance he has given us throughout our work. Our sincere thanks are due to the Convenors and Workers who have assisted the Sub-Committee in their laborious and tedious tasks of collecting information and data. Their ready assistance has been of great help to the Sub-Committee, and without the investigations carried on so enthusiastically by these Workers' Groups, the Report would have lost much of its importance.

We would also like to acknowledge here our indebtedness to the Provincial and States' Governments for their goodwill and co-operation in the work of the Sub-Committee. The following governments helped:

Provincial:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| 1. North-West Frontier Province. | 5. Orissa. |
| 2. Punjab. | 6. Bombay. |
| 3. United Provinces. | 7. Sind. |
| 4. Bihar. | 8. C. P. |

States:

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. Baroda. | 8. Aundh. |
| 2. Banswara. | 9. Ichhalkaranji. |
| 3. Phaltan. | 10. Sangli. |
| 4. Khairpur. | 11. Gwalior. |
| 5. Kashmir. | 12. Mysore. |
| 6. Hyderabad. | 13. Travancore. |
| 7. Bhopal. | |

Last, but not least, our thanks are due to the following who have helped us by way of advice or by actually assisting in the collection and preparation of statistics on the various problems we have discussed:

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