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## The dilemma of development policy in the Third World and some ramifications for women

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**THE DILEMMA OF DEVELOPMENT POLICY  
IN THE THIRD WORLD AND SOME  
RAMIFICATIONS FOR WOMEN**

By

Pamela Jones Brown

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts

in

Liberal Studies

Graduate Program in Liberal Studies  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
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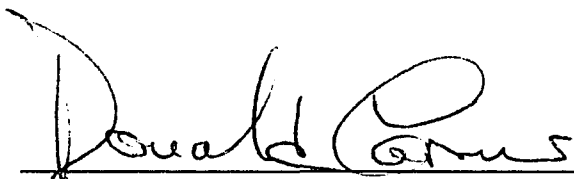
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## **ABSTRACT**

The first part of this thesis deals with the theoretical approaches to development and a discussion of the dilemma facing the policy makers in choosing the best approach to the Third World. I then offer examples from South Africa and India which support the premise of economic prosperity versus ethical concerns.

Lastly, the ramifications for women affected by Third World Development are presented with an emphasis upon the disruptive influences of advanced capitalist countries in their attempt to modernize technology and promote industrialization. The complexity of societal implications is explored from economic and political to social and cultural concerns.



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## **PREFACE**

This thesis is the result of a fifteen year personal search to find an answer to the dilemma of Third World Development. In 1982, my husband and I were fortunate to visit South Africa as guests of their ambassador to the United States. The purpose of our visit was to investigate aspects of the crisis facing all citizens of South Africa and make for ourselves a personal evaluation indifferent to media interpretations. I found the country and its many cultures to be complex in every way and each large city an entity unto itself. In Durban particularly I was struck by the contrast between the tribal nations who lived exclusively outside the city in the traditional kraals and those who worked in the city or in a factory and were housed in concrete buildings. Those persons practicing the traditional mores in opposition to the modern world encroaching upon them seemed to be the healthiest and happiest. It was then that I began to question the judgment of the Western world in choosing to modernize our neighbors and often doing them a great injustice in the name of progress. I don't have all the answers to this philosophical predicament, but it is my hope that a frank discussion of the issues will lead us all to better decisions when we are called to influence the lives of others.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the major social concerns of modern society is the economic and social development of Third World countries. The ramifications involved in spreading modernist principles to underdeveloped countries include the cultural and philosophical manipulation of primitive societies. Economic growth must be balanced with political, educational and social advancement. Value judgments and criticism must come from within the society being studied as well as from the advanced capitalist countries who are proposing political and moral solutions for the impoverished areas. It is crucial to note that human development goes beyond economic prosperity and technological advancement. We must learn to define individual growth as we assess the political ramifications as well as the moral questions posed by capitalist domination. When prosperity is achieved at the expense of the individual, then what is the cost to the country and its inhabitants? Often the development goals result in alienation and the resources sent to meet basic needs create an elitist structure within the society.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **DEVELOPMENT--A CRUEL CHOICE**

Modern societies do serve as an example for technological advancement and economic prosperity, but ethical values often suffer as a result of attempts to control the vulnerable Third World. The economic goals of foreign investment are frequently the underlying impetus for assistance rather than a true humanitarian effort: "U.S. aid seems to work best in countries which are lackeys of American foreign policy" (Goulet 1985:XVI). After capitalist and Soviet intervention, repressive political regimes often arise which negate any positive economic gains. The success of any interventionist program is determined by a combination of class relationships, distribution of wealth and power, and social system development.

Tanzania is an excellent example of the rejection by a Third World country to consumerist values in favor of self-reliance. Foreign aid was rejected when an undesirable elitist class developed. Economic progress was sacrificed "to the creation of new African values founded on ancient communitarian practices" (Goulet 1985:XVII).

One dramatic example of the success or failure of Third World development policy is the analysis of Iran during the reign of the late Mohammad Reza Shah from 1963 to 1979 (Dickens, 1989). This study focuses on the relevance of domestic traditions in the development process and analyzes in detail the three key areas of agriculture, industry and culture. This project is similar to other Third World development studies in that it acknowledges the probability of exploitation and imperialism based on the assumption that the Third World is backward compared to Western societies. This premise allows Western intervention to ignore domestic traditions and fails to enlist participation by the populace in determining the policies which will impact profoundly upon their livelihood. The subsequent manipulation of the emotional well being of the populace heightens expectations which often results in political instability. The goal of self-sustained growth cannot be accomplished when there is a disregard for social relationships, and traditions are seen simply as obstacles to consumerist values. As shown in the Iran study, modern agricultural systems and practices can even undermine more traditional farming techniques and create a crisis within the rural social structure.

Another example of modernization failing to take into account domestic traditions was the industrialization taking place in South Africa over the last thirty years. I visited South Africa in 1982 and saw first hand how these development policies were failing. Since the beginning of time, the entire Zulu culture has been based upon the concept of the circle. Their homes are built around the idea of

a circle. Everything is round. To “give the Zulus a better life” rows of concrete square houses were built to house the workers for the factory. The homes were not cared for and ultimately the workers abandoned them; going back to the countryside and building their Kraals or mud huts in the shape of a circle. The Zulus felt no attachment for the concrete squares and took little pride in keeping them tidy. To me, this was the most obvious example of development intervention not working and creating havoc. Because those planning the intervention did not take into account long-standing domestic traditions and philosophical beliefs, the development policy was doomed to failure. The situations in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East are not promising as long as the premise of narrowly equating societal advancement with financial success is espoused.

Within our commercialized culture, the fate of modernization and Third World development is tenuous at best. If success is to be measured by autonomy and creativity is valued above imitation, there needs to be a process whereby peoples of the Third World become agents of their own transformation rather than passive observers. Economic benefits devoid of societal advancement will fail to foster autonomy when economic growth becomes the central focus at the expense of ethics and morality. In ancient times, moral philosophy was tied to economic prosperity, and only in modern times have personal gain and profit-seeking become independent goals. As Daniel Bell (1976) points out, capitalism can foster alienation and suspend morality and ethical behavior in the pursuit of

innovation and consumerist values. The responsibility of the economic base of society is to incorporate moral codes to achieve greater societal gains. We do not want to end up with technological advancements which have no philosophical basis.

Adolph Berle made the following statement in 1954, but we are still debating the issue forty years later.

The really great corporation managements have reached a position for the first time in their history in which they must consciously take account of the philosophical considerations. They must consider the kind of a community in which they have faith, and in which they will serve, and which they intend to help construct and maintain. In a word, they must consider at least in its more elementary phases the ancient problem of the 'good life' and how their operations in a community can be adapted to affording or fostering it (Goulet 1985:7).

Cultural and industrial manipulation continues to sacrifice behavioral and ethical guidelines because an ethnocentric view of life predisposes man to equate happiness with wealth and technical superiority.

At this point we should question how "backward" those Third World countries really are. When Industrialism becomes the sole focus of a human society, "the pursuit of unlimited material growth is the *raison d'etre*. In such circumstances, nature will inevitably be regarded as external to humans and defined as a resource to be exploited for human gain. This attitude is a central feature of the industrial culture as a whole, and reflects the dominance of material over aesthetic, spiritual and other human values" (Jones, 190:108).



The environment of the entire world is of great concern and especially now when we find ourselves in an ecological crisis.

Man's altered relationship to time and space introduces new dimensions into his awareness. Moreover, psychic and social transformations are paralleled by unprecedented ecological changes as a result of which the total environment becomes increasingly man-made, not natural. Not surprisingly, he finds it necessary to redefine himself and his roles. Even man's psyche, to say nothing of his body, can no longer be viewed as part of nature or as a mere physiological entity. Like his environment, man himself has become a technically manipulable artifact (Goulet 1985:13).

In this sense, a moral judgment can be made as to the end result of such mechanistic thinking within the industrialized world "in which relationships are fragmented, self-motivated and egocentric. Rational will comes into prominence over natural will and puts calculative thought before being, is future-oriented and emphasizes means over ends. No longer do people treat each other as ends or whole persons, but as means by which to achieve particular objectives or purposes" (Jones 1990:108).

With this undeniably depressing outlook, it is no wonder that society looks back with nostalgic regret upon the "good old days" as a time when people cared more about the fate of their families and neighbors than the products they were able to purchase: "People are conditioned to get things rather than to do them; they are trained to value what can be purchased rather than what they themselves can create. They want to be taught, moved, treated, or guided rather than to learn, to heal, and to find their own way" (Jones 1990:111).

In this manner, development takes on a morally manipulative character in an attempt to reform. To advance the tenets of capitalism and forge economic progress, Western intellectual ideology creates a crisis which actually undermines the economic and political stability of a region.

We cannot simply infiltrate a country with aid and other resources from the top and expect them to be absorbed at a grass roots level where people can actually utilize them. In contrast, if we don't ignore and destroy local traditions but build on them and network to create a strong political structure, then development will be more successful. The success of any development effort is crucially tied to the prevailing political and cultural concerns which exist. Economic advancement does not take place in a void, and the success of an established cultural basis to build upon fosters independence and self-reliance needed to absorb new ideas. If existing political structures are not respected, exploitation and repression result. It then becomes difficult to separate prosperity benefitting the sponsoring corporate world and indiscriminate profit taking.

Capitalism, with its rewards and drawbacks, is not the basis for a moral structure. A reciprocal relationship must be established for the underdeveloped nations to achieve dignity and become an integral part in their own development rather than allowing the stronger partner's technical expertise to prevail. The "developing" partner should not be asked to compromise his own value system in the name of progress. Ethnocentrism becomes a contributing factor, but the

technical expertise of the more powerful partner must be balanced with a consciousness of the weaker partner's vulnerability.

Development and underdevelopment alike are but superficial manifestations of a universal crisis in basic human values. This crisis bears on the degree of freedom men can snatch away from the necessitating pressures generated by the larger ecological processes described. These broad processes are as poorly comprehended, in their totality, by the technologically sophisticated man as by the illiterate members of traditional societies. ... Developed countries have surrendered themselves to the dynamisms and determinisms of development much more totally--perhaps even irrevocably--than those who have just begun to seek development. Consequently, many of the values peculiar to pre-modern societies may hold the key to the solution of the post-technological problems faced by groups which long ago embarked on the processes of development (Goulet 1985:53-4).

We must also consider the insatiable desires of the developing society as they are exposed to more and more options. The developing world is not static, but constantly affected by changes through increased exposure and as they become societies in transition, so their attitudes toward development change.

There is cause to reflect on the profound meaning of the growing thirst, within mass-consumer societies such as the 'developed' United States, for the restoration of relationships on a humanly manageable scale. Perhaps a major lesson to be learned from the failures of developed societies to abolish unhappiness is that the scale of operations posited by demands of productivity may possibly be incompatible with universal values of the good society (Goulet 1985:54).

Rapid technological change creates an imbalance of economic power and control which serves to fragment the society just as it is attempting to establish a new model of development.

If hierarchy and authority quickly gain a disproportionately powerful upper hand just as society is moving into the complex demands of the industrial era, then it becomes all the more unlikely that the base of society will be able to reverse the imbalance and gain its necessary leverage later on. Centralized power will firmly establish itself. The culture of the plan takes on a life of its own. More importantly, it will set out to erode the norms, scales, and institutions that might check its own arbitrariness. Once these have been weakened or even forgotten, after a generation or even less, who will be able to imagine a different way of doing things? (Goodell, 1986:305-6).

If industrial progress leads to capital accumulation at the expense of other aspects of the society, then the accompanying decline in moral philosophy will precipitate a subsequent decline economically. Just as the wealthy nation is incomprehensible to the impoverished, underdeveloped nation so does the same polarization take place within the developing nation as haves and have-nots are created with the influx of economic resources and different political ideologies.

In the United States, we are currently facing a post-modern crisis of ennui and our attempts to bring the Third World into the 21st Century amplify our own concerns with the ghettos and impoverished areas within our own borders. Marx revealed the gap between ethics and economics in the past, and perhaps if the economists and the moral philosophers were more closely involved, the gap

would not be so great. Ethnocentric views can prejudice any unbiased appraisal of developing societies as well as our own.

Development has become a central issue in world politics. The isolationists have learned a difficult lesson in contemporary history, and the majority realizes that the United States touches all aspects of development throughout the world:

As a result of broad ecological, social, and symbolic processes, man's image of himself and of the world is transformed. His instincts, his mind, his genetic potential, his societies, and his symbols are all modified. The collective knowledge now possessed by the human species can transcend parochialisms of time and of space. A mere century and a half ago man ignored the existence of countless ancient civilizations. But with the advent of archeology, they overcame temporal as well as spatial provincialism. Their spatial horizons of knowledge, in turn, are now expanding as rapidly as the universe itself (Goulet 1985:13).

Social change does not necessarily instigate accompanying economic change. Unfortunately, just the opposite seems to be occurring:

Technologically advanced nations wield dominant political power and ideological influence in the world. Consequently, entry into technological modernity can only be obtained on terms set by those who already master both series of processes--those relating to technology itself, and those which pertain to power, political and ideological. Historically, colonialism has been an expression of the industrialized world's role in the second set of processes, but the industrialized world has also been responsible for the spread of the ideas of progress, political democracy, and a secular view of life. .... Power and ideological mastery are not to be transferred on the same terms and in the same manner as economic progress or scientific know-how. The crucial problem arises precisely because low income nations are often thwarted in their pursuit of

goals implicit in the first processes by the prevailing structures which govern the second (Goulet 1985:15).

There is a certain seductive quality to the trans-cultural relationships of today and societies who are the objects of development strategies have a great difficulty resisting the offerings of modern man:

He can tamper with time to suit his ends. He reinterprets the past to fit his conceptual frames, not those of actors in the past. He tampers with the present by prolonging human life, shortening the duration of pain, capturing time in photographs and motion film, and, in 'advanced' economies, by liberating men from having to spend their time merely producing necessities. Finally, technological man tampers with time by programming and shaping, instead of passively awaiting, the future (Goulet 1985:17).

One can imagine how this sets up a conflict within the inhabitants of any underdeveloped country. Because of their feelings of helplessness and their fatalistic regard toward disease and death, they are more vulnerable to the strong economic promise of status and product by the developing country. It is also shocking for the developed man to face the problems of underdevelopment because there is no one solution.

It is discomforting for a sophisticated technical expert from a rich country to learn that men who live on the margin of subsistence and daily flirt with death and insecurity are sometimes capable of greater happiness, wisdom, and human communion than he is, notwithstanding his knowledge, wealth, and technical superiority. At the very least, the shock alerts men to the massive ethnocentrism latent in their normal views of life (Goulet 1985:27-8).

The condition of underdevelopment in its totality is a consciously experienced state of deprivation rendered intolerable because of newly-acquired information regarding the development of other societies and the existence of technical means for abolishing misery. .... At a given moment in history, however, in the words of Freyssinet, 'the industrialization of western capitalist economies not only accentuated the spread and aggravated the lag but actually propelled industrial economies, on the one hand, and non-industrial economies on the other, into divergent paths.' As a result, over long periods, industrial economies sustained rates of economic growth far higher than those previously registered anywhere in the world. Technical progress was rapid and lead to the speedy accumulation of productive wealth (Goulet 1985:39).

There was an unequal exchange in the past and now between powerful nations and their weaker neighbors, but despite their vulnerability, the weaker economies frequently displayed resistance to progress based on their fears that industrialization and modernization would lead to economic exploitation and political domination with military intervention. Cuba was just such an example. However, the underdeveloped situation in many Third World countries cannot be explained away by simply blaming either outsiders for exploitation or faulting the residents of that country for inertia.

The dilemma is far more complex because the effects of modernization are felt in all elements of a society--political, cultural, economic, religious, and psychological. Third World development efforts are often contradictory because the most rapid and efficient way to achieve progress means acceptance of modernization as a gift from the rich world. This entails a sacrifice of one's own social identity and independence and sets up a demeaning relationship which can

be characterized as neo-colonialism. However, if the non-developed societies can recreate for themselves a new cultural identity based on new relationships in which wealth is transferred from developed to non-developed countries, the people will be more receptive and development has a greater chance of being successful. As a Brazilian bishop, Dom Fragoso, eloquently explained:

We do not need paternalistic redemption. We need conditions so that those who are now abandoned may free themselves from their own underdevelopment with their own united force...the poor have no hope in those who still have economic power. And the poor are those who struggle for justice. If those who fight for justice are called subversive, then subversion is their hope. ....Although responsible Third World leaders want to achieve development by their own efforts, this might be impossible as long as rich nations decide which ground rules govern transfers of wealth and technology. The technologically advanced nations enjoy disproportionate bargaining strength and will not permit underdeveloped nations to develop in a manner which challenges their dominant position (Goulet 1985:47).

We can't just export capitalism like a product because the political ground needs to be fertile to receive a new political ideology. If the goals of development, as described by Goulet, are life sustenance, esteem and freedom, then it is also necessary to consider the goal of achieving cultural fulfillment: "The combination of expanding wants, industrial power, and technological modernity can bring prestige to a society while leaving its members profoundly dissatisfied and insecure as to their identity" (Goulet 1985:125). Goulet goes on to add:



Beyond survival, man seeks goods capable of enriching his existence. By action, passion, desire, choice, and realization, he adds new qualities to his naked act of being. Even his need for non-essential things is a summons to be more. Thus, when man has things, he is more than he was before. To have, helps him to be. So true is this that unless man has minimum goods, he ceases to be altogether. Even when he has enough to be, he feels stunted in his being until he has more (Goulet 1985:129).

In retrospect, we can see that the process of development is a "cruel choice," as the title of Goulet's book suggests, because while it may be arduous, it is also necessary. The benefits of development are obtained at a great price, but the alternative is unthinkable:

The major task faced by developers everywhere is to fashion institutions which will allow men to transform their drive for economic and social development into a liberating enterprise. This implies, of course, that the benefits of development are often obtained in a manner which is alienating rather than liberating. At the global level, the needs of all men must be met according to a two-fold order of priorities--of urgency and of importance (Goulet 1985:327).

The critical consideration is to design changes that are attainable through efficient planning and goal-setting to ensure that the ethical concerns remain paramount in the minds of all who engage in development of the Third World.

An analysis of theories of Third World development employed by sociologists and other analysts sheds light on the reasoning behind these policies as well as their specific effect on individual cultures. There have been two basic viewpoints espoused by sociologists studying the Third World. Modernization theory focuses on "the ideological mechanisms by which political allegiances are

transferred from the traditional political units of tribe, extended family and village to a modern nation-state through increased political participation" (Dickens 1987:46). Modernization theorists firmly believe that the success of Third World development depends upon increased contact with and emulation of capitalist nations (Dickens 1987:46).

The dependency approach contrasts markedly with the modernization theory by emphasizing that:

their exploited economic ties with the more advanced nations left the Third World regions with a narrowly limited, export-oriented, primary production system, and a rigid social structure dominated by a small, land-based comprador elite. These elites became increasingly tied to the more advanced countries culturally as well, adopting the latter's life-styles and tastes (Dickens 1987:47).

Instead dependency theorists advocated "a program based on the dual policies of state-protected industrialization and import substitution aided by foreign investment" (Dickens 1987:46). Multi-national corporations are a major source of the problem here because of their large investment of industrial capital in the Third World economies.

The neo-Marxist approach to development challenges the view that Third World countries are capitalist. "Under capitalism the forces of production (land, labor, and capital) become commodities freely exchanged in a market where the prices are determined by supply and demand. In other words, free wage labor and freely transferable property are necessary conditions of the capitalist mode of production" (Dickens 1987:49). Because Third World countries are largely

organized according to pre-capitalist production methods, their relation with capitalist countries favored the latter at the expense of the Third World countries.

Another approach is the World Futures idea espoused by Kahn and Wiener, focusing on the potential of technological advancement. They hoped that by solving all of a societies' material needs, the citizens could be free to concentrate on personal development (Dickens 1987:51). In contrast, researchers associated with the Club of Rome argued that "it would be a mistake for Third World nations to industrialize their economies as this would only exacerbate the problems of resource depletion and global pollution. In place of this, they recommended a redistribution of wealth to diminish the gap between rich and poor nations" (Dickens 1987:52).

To refute this anti-growth ideology Kahn and World Futures proponents endorse technology and maintain that "continued growth in the developed nations trickles down to the Third World, enabling them to develop their own economies rather than rely on the largesse of the rich nations" (Dickens 1987:52).

A final perspective, represented most prominently by Denis Goulet, defines the primary issue of Third World development as ethical and moral. His idea is that all men should have the opportunity to live full human lives, and that the good life should not be based on material goods or privileges which would only reinforce inequities between classes. The citizens must take responsibility for their decision-making in order to eliminate poverty and preserve their cultural diversity.

Another writer also concerned with the ethical approach is E.F. Schumacher who focuses on self-sufficiency as a way to overcome development problems. He does so by opposing:

the emphasis on heavy investment in capital, mass production, centralized planned and reliance on advanced technology found in Western models of Third World development. In their place he proposes work places which would be created so as not to draw people to large cities. The work places would be inexpensive and could be created without tremendous capital input. Marketing and production would be very simple, and rely on materials obtained locally (Dickens 1987: 53).

A limited use of technology would be acceptable only if individuals could be encouraged to participate in their own growth in social and personal development.

The sharp contrast between the ethical approach and the more materialistic conventional approaches clearly shows that even given the urgency of Third World considerations a unified, cohesively effective policy has not been developed to the satisfaction of all concerned.

On a related note, it is important to point out that politics and economics are related in this situation but not in a simplistic way. The influential Harvard political scientist, Samuel P. Huntington, maintains that the violence and instability characterizing developing nations is a "product of rapid social change and the rapid mobilization of new groups in politics coupled with the slow development of political institutions" (Huntington 1968:4). Clearly, American foreign policy needs to more adequately address the issue of social and economic change and the fact

that such change can undermine political authority because with awareness comes an increase in social dissatisfaction.

Aid and loan programs, such as those sponsored by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are often more concerned with economic development than political stability. The assumption had been that stability would be the inevitable result of economic prosperity, but these are two at least partially independent goals. Not only do social reform or economic development not guarantee political stability, reforms can actually "exacerbate tensions, precipitate violence and be a catalyst of rather than a substitute for revolution" (Huntington 1968:7):

When economic goals are obtained by sacrificing stability and order in a society, the results are chaotic and unproductive. The primary concern should not be liberty but the creation of order according to Huntington, who cites Madison's warning in the Federalist: "the great difficulty in this; you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place of logic to control itself" (Huntington 1968:7).

It is definitely a mistake to regard a Third World country as capitalist simply because the United States or other nations are providing economic support to the government. When traditional and tribal values come into conflict with the imposition of a modern political system, social forces can alienate one group from another and produce civil strife. A primary requirement for a political system "is the ability to assimilate successfully into the system the social forces produced

by modernization and achieve a new social consciousness as a result of modernization” (Huntington 1968:140). It is inevitable that groups in society will demand participation in the political system but if the system fails to provide for participation in a smooth and harmonious way, the groups become alienated and civil strife results.

As Huntington states, the difference between the countries that modernized early on, such as Great Britain, and the United States, and the Third World countries which attempted to modernize later was the ability of many groups in the earlier societies to take the initiative to develop innovative proposals for modernization. There appears to be less stable organization and division of power in the later modernizing societies. Later modernizing societies play a more passive role in the adoption of modernization strategies:

Modernization is associated with a marked redistribution of power within the political system: the breakdown of local, religious, ethnic, and other power centers and the centralization of power in the national political institutions. Tribes and villages with more highly concentrated power structures innovate more easily and more rapidly than those with more dispersed power structures (Huntington 1968:142).

To successfully assimilate new power groups into the system, the new group must be adaptive and receptive enough to willingly relinquish some of its values in order to gain admittance into the system.

Women have been especially vulnerable to the detrimental impact of development because they provide a critical and essential component to the economic and cultural welfare of their own families and their society. Acting as

the barometer for the success or failure of development policy, women have experienced most acutely the dissatisfaction and lack of stability that accompanies rapid social change. As previously discussed, attempts at social reform in the United States have not always led to political and social stability. As one society, we can best contribute to the formulation of solutions for global problems by paying close attention to the cultural conflicts and social disruption of the Third World in the hope of creating a better future for all the world's population.

Even in America we have observed the increasing feminization of poverty where the role of women is often subservient and absent from policy making. By viewing Third World women in a similarly paternalistic way and by classifying non-western societies as inferior because of their inability to create business and financial opportunities or technological advancements, policy makers have created a gender crisis. The problem with such a superiority complex is evident when the intent develops to "impose outsider interpretations and evaluations of societies and people experiencing 'development', and specifically to misinterpret and marginalize women's roles and lives" (Afshar, 1991:108). A better goal would be to analyze the thoughts and misconceptions that apply to women universally before implementing policy.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

Once the problems of development philosophy are recognized, a study of the effects of such policies on individual countries can best provide useful data needed to prevent future exploitation. With regard to women we observe extremely harmful results occurring in India and South Africa, where the combination of indigenous cultural attitudes with modern ideology have proven disastrous. In light of the varying sociological views of Third World development, it is interesting to note that South Africa continues to occupy a unique position because of the presence of Third World communities within a capitalist society. In South Africa, people who lack income, education, food and productivity live literally side by side with those who are wealthy, better educated and highly productive. Despite all the emphasis on increased education and development, the economic inequalities between the developed and the underdeveloped have been increasing. When political conditions create a concentration of power in the hands of the white minority, the black majority reacts with unrest and civil strife.



This is a tremendous problem in South Africa because of the diversity of cultures among the groups involved and the difficulty of such groups to coexist within a single social or political system. Many groups want to participate in the political arena, not to coexist with other political groups, but to achieve or retain power. There are also different groups within South Africa who want to benefit from modernization and the distribution of wealth, but lack the accompanying goal of assimilation. Ethnocentric concerns produce dogmatic policies which prevent the emergence of a black middle class which might act as a stabilizing force. The enfranchisement of the majority population could result in socialism or a non-racial capitalism.

South Africa is unique because you have the “paradox of a highly developed capitalism functioning amidst racial restrictions on where to live, where to work, and where to open a shop” (Adams 1984:271). Racial competition and prejudice exist when people vie for scarce resources because the difference in cultural heritage alone can instigate racism.

A unique and disturbing situation in South Africa is the official backing of the government of physical distinctions by law. The relative ease with which South African capitalism adjusted to this situation seems incredible despite the substantial advantages they might have had from a formerly colorblind social order. Political instability results because the non-motivated and discontented can't identify with the goals of the society. Because of their low purchasing power and underdeveloped status, there is an erosion of black family life and a high

crime rate. The inability of the black workers to form trade unions or express salary demands and better working conditions and job security has frustrated black aspirations and created violent reaction within the townships and beyond.

The relocation of blacks to the townships was highly destructive because it broke down their social network and created an atmosphere where escapism by drug abuse and withdrawal from responsibility were common. The exploited became more disillusioned as they fought to gain from those exploiting them. The conciliatory efforts being made by the government now only seem to enrage the different black tribes more because they perceive the rewards as already belonging to them anyway and not as some type of incentive: "Black spokespersons argue for the spoils of capitalism not as a socialist utopia but as something to which they have always been entitled" (Adams 1984:278).

Feelings toward the government's motives have become so hostile over the years given the totalitarian police state atmosphere in South Africa that blacks don't take advantage of concessions and the lifting of bans when these occur. Similar groups in Latin America and Russia are so fatalistic and apathetic that they don't advocate any change in policy. In South Africa you find the unique problem that upwardly mobile blacks cannot accept advancement without the stigma of pursuing individual values at the expense of collective gains. Nadine Gordimer, a South African novelist states, "All black South Africans know of Western capitalism is political and economic terror" (Adams 1984:281). The hope of Adams is that with the abolition of legal, racial categorization, a black middle

class will be allowed access to wealth and political power. This could help stabilize the political situation so that modernization efforts could be more effective.

Instability and socio-political turbulence in South Africa is augmented by the failure of the economic institutions, such as large corporations, to act in the best interests of either the society or the free enterprise system. An authoritarian society does not espouse economic freedom or the distribution of political power and the sharing of worldly goods is confined to the economically prosperous. Ironically, South Africa is a land of

tremendous economic and human resources. It has a stable political and social infrastructure and its institutions are capable of developing and harnessing its vast resources. However, the country's economic and social progress has been held back for reasons totally of its own making. Given a stable socio-political environment, it has the potential for providing unprecedented economic growth and prosperity which could spill over into the rest of Africa (Sethi 1987:2).

Even though many within and outside the government desired to abolish apartheid and to grant all people equal rights,

the problem lies both in reasons for reform and the control of power in South Africa. President Botha's desire for changes in the apartheid laws is most likely born out of necessity rather than a vision of future based on a sense of equity, fairness, and justice. The necessity of black anger and violence accompanied by international pressure, demands that he yield to some reforms. And yet the necessity of maintaining political control constantly pulls him toward satisfying the extreme right wing of the white minority, which wants to maintain status quo at all costs (Sethi 1987:7).

There were some changes because of the economic sanctions placed by the outside world, but for the most part, violence is a continuing reality both from the oppressive police force and a result of fighting between rival factions or tribes. The extreme political instability precludes the success of a democratic process because the focus remains on the privileges of those who stand to lose those privileges rather than on an emphasis to obtain rights for those who have been denied them.

The unstable political climate created an unstable economic climate and after American companies realized a loss of profitability, many withdrew from the country. Large corporations can be a force for positive change if they eliminate discriminatory practices in employment, but the economics of the situation often are not supported positively by genuine moral and social concerns. The desire for business institutions to make a profit sometimes precludes a higher ethical approach as we have seen in the development of corporations in the United States and their ongoing problems. A peaceful transition should involve the creation of

forums for bringing together leaders of all political segments with a view to discuss possible ways of creating a more democratic South Africa, provide avenues for negotiating transition arrangements between the South African government and opposition groups, and various groups whose cooperation will be necessary to develop and implement a viable plan for power-sharing in South Africa (Sethi 1987:25).

Many of the problems occurring in South Africa can be compared to our own problems of dealing with poverty and the ghettos in the United States. To

build a better society, you must have competent communities capable of coping within a new environment and surviving. Individual freedom is crucial but cannot be obtained unless the society has stability. Instead, many federal programs since the 1960's have focused on entitlement to benefit individuals without obligations (Mead 1986).

Cultural rehabilitation is necessary to restore civility so that people act responsibly to respect the rights of other and learn to work together. A lack of dignity forces people to look outside of themselves for their inability to act responsibly instead of making them personally responsible for their own behavior. Both the black townships in South Africa and American ghettos reflect an unstable family life by denying social obligations and impeding progress toward modernization. As Lawrence Mead (1986) observes, a social policy cannot effectively solve problems when the support for the disadvantaged and unemployed is based upon permissive instead of authoritative policy. When the recipients of well intended benefactors are separated socially and economically, they need a fundamental sense of order and work ethic to properly succeed. The social dimensions of citizenship need to be defined so that the obligations are clear before the benefits are realized. Entitlements should only be earned by income or service because to make individuals accountable encourages competence and dispels weakness or need. Mead would like to see the American government enforce values and personal behavior with sanctions imposed for noncompliance.

Just as in the ghetto, the economic based problems in South Africa result from class as much, if not more than from race. Class conflicts result in polarization and a feeling that the deprived areas are socially dislocated and separate. The effect of such isolation in the inner city and in the South African townships creates behavior patterns which undermine the values that might enable them to succeed. Economic policies designed to produce jobs need to focus on a strategy of how to train people to accept the social obligations of their citizenship. It is not enough to make economic prosperity available to an underclass, because a social infrastructure is needed to develop the foundation needed to lift the social barriers and make people act responsibly.

In both cases, modernization has tended to destroy traditional values and replace them with narrowly economic concerns. If those in the ghettos of America and the black townships in South Africa are not goal-oriented to support society as a whole, they will be unable to advance their own interests and get ahead even when given the chance. Alternatives to dependency can only work when individual competence is not problematic. Simply providing jobs is not a panacea:

The struggle with dependency could lead to a general demoralization. The lethargy of the dependent may be too great for any policy to change. The conviction of the poor, and their leaders, that they are victims plumbs emotional depths that class identities never did. To counter that appeal, mainstream groups may trumpet their own disadvantages. Morale could spiral downward in an orgy of competitive victimhood. But claiming the status of victim leads only to dependency; it cannot promote social harmony or progressive change. For those goals, some greater self-reliance,

a willingness to absorb injuries rather than flaunt them, is simply indispensable (Mead 1992:260).

When society fails to demand responsible behavior from its citizens, trust among individuals deteriorates and control is lost. Civility must be required for the poor as well as the rich because personal behavior should have nothing to do with wealth. If an explicit policy of personal responsibility is demanded along with guarantees of economic opportunities, then a more hopeful view of individual and societal potential is more feasible.

It seems on this point, too, that American foreign policy towards the African continent and U.S. domestic policy toward poverty in the ghetto have great similarities. There is a tendency to project the American experience onto the South African scene without regard to the evolutionary changes that have occurred in the American experience. Because South Africa is a totalitarian police state, great levels of distress and suspicion are created. The ability to protest or dissent literally puts lives in danger and often hinders change rather than expediting it. The loss of political control and economic privileges in the ghetto and the townships shifts political power to unstable elements and creates an unhealthy environment for modernizing principles.

There appears to be a double standard at work here, and the inability of the American policymakers to understand this colors U.S. foreign policy toward the Third World. As in South Africa, police brutality is becoming the norm in the ghettos of America, further alienating those whom the government purports to help. Perhaps there would be more empathy toward South Africa and its

problems if we re-evaluated our own societal problems with an eye towards American foreign policy interests. Just as South Africa is a polarized nation, so the gap between the ghetto and the affluent communities is becoming greater in the United States. A formula must be found that rejects violence and urges negotiation with the leaders of both underclass communities. Support of those who work for peaceful change is crucial while a practical and moral policy in dealing with both groups must be found.

Conditions in developing countries demonstrate the negative effects of social policies similar to domestic American ones that have dramatically accelerated inner city poverty and produced a growing underclass. The crime and despair of the ghetto now reaches into every neighborhood in America and threatens to destroy our society from within. In the debates concerning these social problems, a rhetoric about family values that often faults the mother is increasingly common. Women all over the world have faced the double-edged sword of financial and emotional responsibility for their families while attempting to live up to an idealized image.

Stephanie Coontz (1992), in her book The Way We Never Were, examines perceptions and expectations for family life and gender roles to evaluate the complex history of women's identity in the twentieth century: "On both a personal and a social level, when things are going well, we credit our successful adherence to the family ideal, forgetting the conflicts, ambivalences, and departures from the 'norm.' When things are going poorly, we look for the 'dysfunctional' elements of



the family life, blaming our problems on 'abnormal' experiences or innovations" (Coontz 1991:2).

Nostalgic notions of traditional family life actually create false delusions which are impossible to, live up to especially in times of crises. A better method, recommended by Coontz, is to look at the past more realistically to learn about the present:

The historical record is clear on one point: Although there are many things to draw on in our past, there is no one family form that has ever protected people from poverty or social disruption, and no traditional arrangement that provides a workable model for how we might organize family relations in the modern world (Coontz 1992:5).

The disparity between myth and reality often results in guilt and anger because the struggle to live up to the false image is impossible. Even in Colonial America, there was a debate over family values and how best to raise children, and in Victorian times, when child work laws were not yet established, there was even more concern for how free time would be spent: "The expectation that the family should be the main source of personal fulfillment was not traditional in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (Coontz 1992:17).

Emphasis on emotional investment in family life fluctuates historically, and, in fact, often depends, more on individual response than societal trends or historical forecasts. The majority of people

don't believe that every hard-won victory for women's rights and personal liberty has been destructive of social bonds and that the only way to find a sense of community is to go back to some sketchily defined

'traditional' family that clearly involves denying the validity of any alternative familial and personal choices (Coontz 1992:21).

The perception of the mother's role in American culture has proven to be especially difficult because "the hybrid idea that a woman can be fully absorbed with her youngsters while simultaneously maintaining passionate sexual excitement with her husband was a 1950's invention that drove thousands of women to therapists, tranquilizers, or alcohol when they actually tried to live up to it" (Coontz 1992:9).

In general, Coontz argues that "gender roles and family ideals are far from natural and have not always existed" (Coontz 1992:43). The dilemma that women as mothers face is balancing a private self-image separate from their offspring and husbands, and the public expectations of superhuman status. The perception that the basis for traditional family values lies in a division of gender roles has

produced a sentimental, almost sacred, domestic sphere whose long-term commitments and nurturing balanced the pursuit of self-interest in the public arena. Recent social problems, they argue, stem from a self-defeating, superegalitarianism that denies men's and women's differing needs and abilities and desanctifies family relations (Coontz 1992:43).

Public right and private needs have become polarized as "Western tradition came to view independence and concern for others as mutually exclusive traits" (Coontz 1992:44). Caring for others became the province of women and personal independence was relegated to men.

In truth, a woman's ability to sublimate her own needs and aspirations to those of her family enabled modern society to develop as it has, but under that outwardly feminine appearance, one physician wrote in 1953, "there was often 'an inwardly tense and emotionally unstable individual seething with hidden aggressiveness and resentment'" (Coontz 1992:36).

In the United States we are seeing a lack of tolerance and even anger towards impoverished women among the underclass. The current political climate fuels an ideology of isolationism and self-interest where women and children suffer the most. As Frederick Strobil (1993) states in his book, Upward Dreams, Downward Mobility, we are witnessing the economic decline of the American middle class. Wage earners who are primarily labor-dependent are increasingly shut out of the economic rewards that would allow them to achieve a significant measure of success. There are acrimonious disputes over how government should play a role in addressing society's ills when rights have been replaced by entitlement. Capitalism needs competition to counteract the selfishness of individuals and the scientific rationale that the end justifies the means. Sethi (1987), however, asks whether it is reasonable to expect individuals in a free enterprise system to be willing to share worldly goods and political power during either periods of economic hardship or prosperity.

In both the developed, post-modern and the Third World, women are involved in production and reproduction, and their desire to define their place in

the new international order has dictated a need to clarify and articulate cultural concerns.

India provides an excellent example for further discussion and comparison of traditional responses to modern intervention. Alienation and fragmentation have resulted when the fragile balance of old and new is destroyed. Internal documentaries are bringing to light the taboo subjects of infanticide, gender violence, domestic abuse and dowry death. Women are indeed "the window into the Indian interior world, and into the issues of family, culture, history, religion, poverty, over population, and national unity" (Bumiller 1990:8). "Indian society has glorified the image of the woman as mother and goddess, but in reality women are devalued and discriminated against" (Melwani 1995:1). Even in the face of death, some women are afraid to testify to police that their husband's family has tried to kill them by dowsing them with kerosene and setting them afire. Perhaps the greatest tragedy here is the devaluation of female children who clean, cook and look after younger siblings while their parents work in the fields or at construction sites. Some are working as young as five or six years old in sweatshops or factories and face a dismal future at the hands of abusive husbands and in-laws: "Dowry deaths are the culmination of a lifetime of discrimination against women, and this abuse begins right in the womb when, through amniocentesis, women often choose to abort female fetuses" (Melwani 1995:10).

This combination of modern technology and ancient cultural beliefs exacerbates the crisis for Indian women. The most impoverished homes want a television set yet when families view the programs they become even more enraged when the wife's dowry can't provide what they see on the screen. The contradictions between the traditional and modern make "the condition of some Indian women so wretched that if their plight received the attention given to that of ethnic and racial minorities in other parts of the world, their cause would be taken up by human rights groups" (Bumiller 1990:10).

To counter the abuse, there is a growing women's movement there, and the Indian government is investing millions in new training programs aimed at rural women becoming financially secure. Because women are now beginning to be seen by development specialists as the real agents for change in rural India, hope for a more autonomous life is possible.

The typical Indian woman, who represents 75 percent of the 400 million women and female children in India, comes from a small peasant family living in a village. She feeds and raises her children while also working in the field at a meager wage of fifty cents a day. History shows, however, that India's women did not always live in misery but enjoyed a "golden age" around 1000 B.C. when they were considered equal to men (Bumiller 1990:17). No one is quite sure why their position gradually eroded, but anthropology may provide the clue to

what happens to all women as a society evolves from wandering, pastoral clans into sedentary groups that make their living by agriculture. In a tribal society, women are more involved in the means of production.

In a settled society, when there is relatively more leisure and less fear of enemies, the roles of men and women become increasingly demarcated (Bumiller, 1990:17).

Indian women tend to be truly representative of the majority of Third World women and their plight reveals the striking outcome when modernity and tradition clash:

Development has been one of the ideals and aspirations of all human societies. It has an inherent functional value in raising the socio-economic standard and the lifestyle of the citizens as it aims to provide basic needs to all, particularly the deprived sections of society. The supreme aim of development should be to improve the quality of life for its citizens and to guarantee social justice. The functional aspect of development demands constant planning and programming with a view to harmonize the desired objectives with the available resources. However, development may have a multitude of functional aspects as well as an equal number of dysfunctional aspects. It has been observed that over the years, development of activities has brought happiness to one group and misery to another. It has motivated and involved one sector, but alienated another. It has infused commitment in a segment and generated indifference in another (Shukla 1987:12).

This alienation has particularly affected women as a group when economic growth is seen not only as failing to solve cultural problems, but actually creating them. "The process of development may lead to a rearrangement or modification in the existing institutional structures, interactions, relations, etc. thereby creating problems of adjustment for an individual or group" (Shukla 1987:14).

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RAMIFICATIONS FOR WOMEN IN THIRD WORLD DEVELOPMENT**

The reality of a woman's plight in developing countries is clearly the result of a complex interaction between traditional practices and outside intervention. Development policies have often proved detrimental because their theories are driven by Western cultural ideology. Ethnocentrism promotes the narrow view that our way is the best way and the only way.

When misunderstanding and prejudice dominate development theory and practice:

Simple correlations between development and betterment are hard to sustain in the face of the uneven and often unpredicted effects of planning new technology or urban growth on Third World ecologies, economies, and communities, whether in the Amazonian forests, the export manufacturing zones of Southeast Asia, or the shanty towns of Cairo or Buenos Aires (Afshar 1991:108).

Since developing societies tend to be those previously controlled by Europe or North America, a complex relationship has evolved between "colonial rulers and

subjects, buyers and sellers, investors and producers" (Afshar 1991:109) that impact material, political and cultural lifestyles:

The British domination of the Indian subcontinent is not so much a history of commercial or territorial expansion in isolation, but of the impact of British investment on family production systems, or of government intervention on landlord-peasant relations. The 'incorporation' of Indians into a world system involved the emergence of an English speaking and nationalist professional elite, new legal framework and education systems influencing class, caste, and gender divisions, and new patterns of rural life and urbanization (Afshar 1991:109).

The growth of a world system has served to link societies in an inextricable manner as economic activity has forged changes in the daily life of every community and family and influenced the way they view the world. "Indian cultivators confronted new views of the relationships between land, kinship, and power as well as demands for taxes or market pressures" (Afshar 1991:110).

The response to imposing new social and cultural values on the Third World has ranged from enthusiastic acceptance to aggressive rejection, and created new and undefined roles for women:

The model of 'development' which emerged into modern times was partly based on the 19th Century experience of these encounters, of radical changes within European societies and a corresponding interest in systematic study and explanation of change through the emerging 'scientific' disciplines of economics, history and sociology. European involvement in the expansion and intensification of the world system entailed not just trade, colonization, investment, or military aggression, but also the construction of new, systematic interpretations of the different societies in the system (Afshar 1991:110).



While 19th Century Europe was experiencing vast changes within its own societies, it viewed the Third World with ethnocentric judgments because of their failure to match European standards. Europeans felt that indigenous (non-Western) societies were inadequate and cultural differences were a major means of denoting inferiority. For example, the women of the Third World were compared unfavorably with women of Western Europe as inferior in familial, religious and social life: "By moralizing about an unfamiliar society rather than attempting to delve into the legal, familial and cultural framework of women's lives, the end result was to stress the image of women as the victim of an oppression intrinsic to the societies being described" (Afshar 1991:113).

Empirical observations in the field often conflicted with theoretical dogma and stereotypical views influenced foreign policy as much as they shaped public opinion: "Where women's role as mothers or their role in production, or the rules governing their social conduct did not meet the norms accepted by middle class Europeans, then their situation was by definition and necessarily 'inferior' to that of European women" (Afshar 1991:114). There was a great need for critical, unbiased, comparative analyses that would understand the influences on women's lives. But, instead, women were characterized as child-like, emotionally needy beings, justifying the "exclusion of women from access to material opportunity, political power, or personal autonomy" (Afshar 1991:117).

This cultural and ideological legacy has exerted a lasting and pervasive influence over development policy: "The absence of women from positions of

material and political power seemed to confirm their marginal or subordinate status within such work and its lack of concern with their experiences or interests as a priority" (Afshar 1991:119). Afshar goes on to add:

Female identity has traditionally been associated with a domestic role emphasizing familial rather than community roles. When policy making is based primarily on these concepts, women become invisible in a male-dominated society. Ultimately, the material needs and legal rights of women are ignored, and consequently their opportunities within that society are diminished (Afshar 1991:120).

Women of the Third World, when confronted by external influences, have impacted their own societies differently and not always in a positive way: "The impact of a growing, changing world system on production, trade, and investment in many areas has affected women's productive activities, their movement within and between particular countries, and their roles in consumption and services" (Afshar 1991:121). A woman's commitment to her own family places her at a disadvantage with her male relatives who pursue their own interests: The complex interactions "between economic needs, family interests, status intervention, and male power" (Afshar 1991:123) combine to relegate women to a disadvantaged status with regard to their position in the culture.

By nature, women have to constantly make difficult choices about their lives according to their own priorities and possibilities available to them. This is true both in the developed countries and the underdeveloped Third World. When one nation paternalistically exerts economic, political, and cultural control over

another, women are often impacted more acutely because of their subservient role as individuals within the group or community.

An extensive gender analysis and critique of property rights, familial relationships, and the system of production will make development theory more productive. The roles, values and worth of women are subject to exploitation and oppression and only the flexibility of individual women to adapt and subvert power predisposes them to a positive outcome:

Concern with wage labor and trade unions may well not be appropriate for women whose productive work takes place in un-waged family settings. The politics of citizenship and participation in Central America or South Africa will not necessarily focus on the issues of suffrage or party politics which have been central for women in the West. Domestic violence or educational discrimination need to be addressed differently in India or North Africa than in Europe or China (Afshar 1991:123).

A multi-cultural approach should encompass individual needs of women assessed within the traditional concerns of their unique position in that society. Stereotypes should not apply.

While discussions of women and development need to be critical and comparative in order to deal with both diversity and similarity, they also need a historical dimension, that is to take account of change over time. One of the classic stereotypes passed on to 20th Century social scientists by their 19th Century predecessors was the image of non-Western societies as hidebound, stagnant, and indeed lacking the capacity to change without Western assistance. In the 19th Century, this was seen in terms of the benefits of colonial rule, of the forces of the free market, or of missionary efforts for societies which were unable to generate 'progress' themselves. By the 20th Century,

this image had been recast to represent the problem as one of introducing 'modern' production, government or technology into 'traditional' societies which by definition lacked them (Afshar 1991:126).

The analysis of women's experience in non-Western societies must also consider that

women's histories do not just begin with the colonial penetration of women's lives in the modern period. The impact of population movements and the rise and fall of state systems on the situation of women in African or pre-Columbian America, like the effect of incoming nomadic pastoralism or new religious influences on their lives in the Middle East, illustrate crucial themes in the histories of non-Western women predating their encounter with the West. The interaction between internal and external influences on women's lives which has been stressed earlier as a crucial element in their involvement in development can only be properly understood if it is given an historical dimension....Only by dissolving the myth that women in non-Western societies were sleeping beauties immobilized in static 'traditional' systems; waiting for Western style 'progress' to waken them, can any serious analysis proceed (Afshar 1991:128).

A typical example is presented in Afshar's discussion of the perceived passive behavior of Egyptian women within their own families and in their extended social relationships:

This investigation reveals not only the high level of women's productive involvement in agriculture in Egypt, their domestic services, craft manufacture, and petty commerce, but also their complex relationships to kin groups, landlords, communities, and government officials. Women's actions in defense of their rights in the law courts, and in social protest, is well analyzed, and informed description of their lives in aristocratic households and the entertainment professions effectively challenges oppressive and inaccurate

stereotypes of Oriental harems and dancing girls. Women's lives are also situated within the framework of growing Egyptian involvement in the world economy, of foreign political intervention, and changing government structures and strategies (Afshar 1991:128).

The close of the twentieth century makes us more aware than ever how difficult it is to classify any society as exclusively traditional or modern because the postmodern world is above all one of global transition. Progressive changes molds each society differently and efforts towards urbanization, literacy, media and political participation bring no guarantees of acceptance or advancement. For example, when superstition and religion dominate individual rights, discrimination based on caste and sex can flourish despite laws in opposition (Beteille 1991:221).

Real advance can only start "when planners begin to realize that expecting a country to develop toward modernization with the female half of its population unable to take full part in the process was like asking someone to work with one arm and leg tied behind their back" (Ostergaard 1992:xii). The ideal is to identify women's situation and insure that they play a full role in the development process. Development will only make women poorer if they don't have the option to participate in the support of their families outside the home by earning a livelihood.

At present, "the advantages of development go primarily to the men in the form of increased earnings or labor-saving techniques and the disadvantages go to the women in the form of increased and unremunerated workload" (Ostergaard

1992:2). The solution is not to marginalize women and include them only in women's projects, but to incorporate them from the beginning in the entire process.

An interesting anthropological perspective on the problems women face is held by Sherry Ortner who discusses the cultural construction of gender in terms of the question: "Is female to male as nature is to culture?":

All cultures recognize and make a distinction between human society and the natural world. Culture attempts to control and transcend nature, to use it for its own purposes. Culture is therefore superior to the natural world and seeks to mark out or socialize nature, in order to regulate and maintain relations between society and the forces and conditions of the environment. Ortner suggests that women are identified, or symbolically associated, with nature, while men are associated with culture. Since culture seeks to control and transcend nature, then it is 'natural' that women, by virtue of their close association with 'nature', should also be controlled and contained (Moore 1988:14).

This conception assumes that the physiology of a woman, and specifically reproduction, aligns her more closely with nature. Men, on the other hand, create technology and symbols to embody their creative force. This special role of women in reproduction has limited them in the past to those social functions which are closer to nature and because of this, their primary sphere of operation has been within the familial, domestic domain as opposed to public, political domain of a man's social life. By looking at the categories of men and women in such a symbolic manner, the expectations and values which individual cultures associate with male or female behavior become more clear. Ortner's discussion

of gender symbolism provides clues as to how people categorize each other and how differently Third World societies are viewed according to Western preconceptions:

Readings on Australian Aborigines, American, Asian, and African hunter-gatherers and hunter-horticulturists led to the discovery that themes of motherhood and sexual reproduction are far less central to such people's conceptions of 'woman' than we had assumed. Contrary to our expectations that motherhood provides women everywhere with a natural source of emotional satisfaction and cultural value, we found that neither women nor men in very simple societies celebrate women as nurturers or women's unique capacity to give life ... Woman the Fertile, Woman the Mother and Source of All Life was, quite remarkably, absent from all available accounts (Moore 1988:29).

It seems, therefore, that when women are not defined solely in terms of their reproductive status as child-bearers, their cultural value appears to improve. When women are nurturers and wage earners actually involved in agricultural labor and small-scale market production, their response to development has been more positive. According to Moore (1988), the work of women can be analyzed in four areas: "agricultural work, commerce, household work, and wage labor" (Moore 1988:43). When women do not have the ability to work outside of household work, they are more dependent upon their husbands for economic support and therefore more vulnerable.

The status of women in traditional African societies is representative of a male-dominated household where economic and kinship relations are organized strictly along gender lines. Because a woman there cannot inherit or benefit from

a dowry, her male relatives retain all rights and benefits. When she marries, gifts of cattle and goods are bestowed from her husband to the men of her birth family to compensate for the loss of her labor. This custom of bridal wealth ensures that all children born will be a part of her husband's family instead of her own kin group (Moore 1988:45). By emphasizing the lack of female private property ownership, policymakers have at times overlooked the fact that work by men and women may receive equal social value (Moore 1988:47). Domestic/reproductive labor does not preclude a significant contribution to other agricultural and commercial concerns, and the ethnocentric assumptions of policymakers have resulted in the further marginalization of women's status (Moore 1988:75).

The greatest suffering occurs in societies where there is a high male migration rate resulting in rural and urban poverty for the female headed household (Moore 1988:63). Rural women of the Third World have endured undue exploitation when capitalist driven economic decisions affecting commercial agriculture and wage labor excluded them from participating in the economic prosperity. An example in African agriculture occurred in Southern Ghana when a boom in cocoa production enabled men to take over the job of producing the cocoa while women took on the responsibility for cultivating the basic food for the household. In the 1970's the price of cocoa fell and men were forced to migrate elsewhere to look for work while the children and women remained on the land. This made the job of women much more difficult because they now had to cover their own household expenses by combining "farming with petty trading, wage



labor, craft work and food processing so that their workload was, in effect, tripled”  
(Moore 1988:76).

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

As we can see, the best efforts of capitalist development to forge progress and enlighten the Third World often have not been mutually beneficial to men and women. Increased education and exposure to modern technology cannot be seen as the panacea we would like it to be because all intervention carries increased risks of cultural contamination and even destruction. Obviously, isolationism is not a realistic alternative, but the ripple effects felt by developing nations when we intervene need to be considered and reviewed before the policies are enacted. When, for example, individuals are exposed to higher education and trained for specific jobs, it must first be determined if the supply of applicants will exceed the jobs available.

Discernible changes within the nature of kinship and familial relations are often the indirect or unexpected result of modernization and industrialization. The uncritical glorification of the nuclear family needs close inspection both in the Third World and the American ghetto. Joint or extended family arrangements where parents or in-laws assist with domestic tasks can also provide essential

support to an overburdened household. However, as in the case of the Indian family hierarchy, for example, the overbearing dominance of the mother-in-law might preclude assistance because of a clash with traditional beliefs.

Feminist anthropology has developed as a significant approach to gender studies and continues to shed new light on a complex subject. In theorizing that the assumed identity of "woman" and "mother" are not the same but more a reflection of the "self" or individual within a society, Eurocentric concepts are challenged within the domestic and cultural arena (Moore 1988:187). This insight has led policy makers to consider the beneficial effects of incorporating large numbers of women into bureaucratic institutions and possibly altering state policies to the extent that true equality might prevail (Moore 1988:213).

If we hope to espouse a new vision for the future, we can draw strength from the fact that women are connected in a visceral way to nature and environmental and ecological concerns. Women are becoming more reliant upon each other for survival and are bonding together, not to seek control over forces of the natural world, but to teach others to accept what nature provides and to respect the power of Mother Earth. In ancient times, according to some feminists, women developed agriculture and the domestication of animals to enhance the life force of Gaia or Mother Earth and rejected the concepts of hierarchy and oppression or sexist economism. The ideal was to live in cooperation with the customs of the village and the laws of nature with no male or female dominance, in a peaceful and creative lifestyle with no fortifications. Women celebrated a

oneness with each other and a worship of nature. The rise of a militaristic attitude and patriarchal communalism based on warfare used fear as the defining element of their culture and emphasized control over nature rather than a connectedness with nature. These attitudes replaced cooperation with power and control and created a patriarchal society that transformed needs and commodities and conditioned people to get things rather than to do them (Jones 1990:111):

In the era of post-colonial disillusionment, of gloomy development prospects, new levels of internationalization of exploitation, and new forces of resistance, the views which have concerned us still play an important role in debate and policy making. The development of representations, definitions and explanations of non-European women and their lives in every form from the most scholarly to the most popular during the nineteenth Century had lasting consequences for social, scientific and policy approaches to women and 'development' in the 20th Century. Modern academic study and practical economic or administrative organization in the 'development' field rested on Eurocentric, gender blind foundations and powerfully sexualized and racialized understanding and scholarship, expressed in the 'neutral' language of planners, researchers and experts (Afshar 1991:118).

In the final analysis, we see that the cultural differences among women all over the world need not separate them from their common goals of prosperity and happiness. However, as long as development policies are based on ethnocentric and sexist ideologies, the dream to create a better world will be thwarted. If the desire to politically manipulate and control others is greater than the goal of mutually productive economic, social and cultural growth, then the future is grim indeed.

A reappraisal of goals is long overdue with regard to both the Third World and the industrialized nations. There is a need to negotiate a new relationship based on mutual reciprocity, and a course of action should be designed to encourage appropriate growth within strict environmental guidelines. There is every indication that the forces of nature will continue to direct the evolution of the planet, and if man does not want to become an artifact, we must reform obsolete policies with the ultimate priority of utilizing individual potential for the betterment of society.

Women can play a critical role in the process and to deprive them of that challenge is to lose the battle before it has begun. The United Nations Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 provided impressive evidence for the strength and independence of women the world over. Their defiance at being over-generalized gives credence to their potentially crucial input into addressing the concerns of poverty, nutrition, education, warfare, and disease. In India, banks found that loaning money to women was a more profitable venture for all concerned than anyone had ever imagined. Regardless of where the worldwide preconceptions about women came from, the time has come for cooperation, coordination, and communication.

The future of the planet is at stake and as we approach the 21st Century, the rights of all individuals need to be respected and included in the search for global solutions to the social, environmental and political problems. As modern mass media and communications continue to blur the lines between the

developed and underdeveloped, the future of all cultures becomes the focus, and planetary cooperation the essential challenge to ensure survival of the human race. Hopefully, the past is our teacher and the inspiration for a genuine alliance.

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