

Gender Equity, NGOs and Poverty and Development

*Note: This is a welcome address by Shri S.P.Ahuja, then President, SID Delhi Chapter delivered on 24.3.1988 at Ahoka Hotel, New Delhi at the inauguration of meeting on "Gender and Equity" as part of 19th SID International Conference at New Delhi. **

Gender Equity to my mind, has four components: Political, Legal, Social and Economic. Today, political and legal equity is, by and large, assured. The problem in most countries is social and economic equity.

In India, of approximately 32 percent of the population is in work force, 50 percent are men and only 10 percent women. Of these 10 percent are women, 15 percent are in Agriculture and only 5 percent in the professions outside agriculture. These inequities in the nature of work performed are compounded by the fact that asset ownership of women is near zero.

A study of time disposition of men and women in work in a selected rural area suggests that as compared to men, women spend one-third of the time on self development that is rest, recreation, education, personal hygiene and self maintenance.

Certain inequities against women are sometime eulogized as tradition, good behaviour, and upkeep of "values" which forces young people to follow a pre-defined stereo typed role.

All these and other situations which are at the root of social and economic inequities against women call for strengthening of social and economic infrastructure that surrounds and helps women. This includes extensive state and public support for female education, health nutrition, skill formation and asset transfers in favour of females particularly early in their age, so that they are not seen as a burden from day one.

Gender Equity, NGOs

That we begin this important conference with a discussion on women's issues and their role in development, I consider it a very good augury for a World Conference on Poverty, Development and Collective Survival, Private and Public Responsibilities. There can be no eradication of poverty- nor development - if better half of humanity is left out of the scheme of things, either intended for poverty alleviation or accelerated development with equity. In such a situation, neither private nor public responsibilities would have been honoured.

Women also have a special interest in collective survival, because the burden of readjustment consequent upon wars or even degradation of nature largely falls upon them. Women, therefore, have a very important stake in the theme of this conference and its outcome.

Furthermore, since women represent one of the most important and stable institution that humanity has given to itself i.e. the family their upliftment will most certainly benefit all members of the family including children and not to forget-we men.

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