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GENDER AND MEDIA

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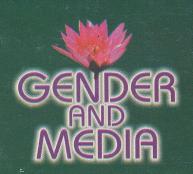
A Profile of Women in Transitional Sri Lanka

Prof. Indralal De Silva, University of Colombo

Introduction

Exposure of females to the development process in the recent decades witnessed, an emergence of new profiles for women in socio-demographic spheres. There is a need to identify these various profiles in Sri Lanka, because, women's role and status has gone through many phases of change over time. The introduction of free education in Sri Lanka paved the way for women to have equal access to higher education and to breakdown the barriers of a patriarchal society to a great extent (Department of Census, 1997). Further more, the added avenues for social exposure as well as economic independence through increased labour force participation and productive employment (Amarabandu, 2000) enhanced this process. Sri Lankan women are far superior than their counterparts in most other developing countries. For instance, the expectation of life at birth of Sri Lankan women, is higher than for males, their literacy rate approximate that of more developed countries.

Integration of women into the developmental process has been the main concern of most of the third world countries and international agencies during the last few decades. Many countries around the world realized, the need to develop easy mechanisms to meet, the specific requirements of women in development (Rasanayagam, 1995). Along with the declaration of 1970-1979 period, a second Development Decade by the United Nations, women's issues and the development process came to be conceptually linked. This process was called WID (Women In Development (Osteria, 2003).



The literature in Sinhala, on Gender Studies has not been written and published very frequently. So the publication of these papers on the topic, I hope, may fill, the particular void at least to a certain extent. In fact, this effort is an outcome of a series of seminars which was held by the Journalism unit of the university of Colombo.

These papers which have been presented by well known scholars in the field are full of information and they carry new insights. They will make a contribution to this new discipline which rapidly gains ground is Sri Lankan universities. I believe a commendable literature may appear in near future on this subject.

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