

Towards Safe Motherhood

by Pial Das Rajat

It is not possible to change the present practice within a short period, so it is better to train the TBA's. Above all, considerable emphasis must be placed on the education of the community and the family members to encourage them so that they may give up the present practices.



...unprompted knowledge across the categories of respondents was below 50 per cent" (Barkat et al. 1995). The study identifies husbands and mothers-in-law as the principal decision makers at a time of maternal crisis. They are also identified as having the least knowledge about obstetric complications. Thus here I may advocate the extension of maternal care education to family members, including the motivation of men in the promotion of pre-natal care.

Families fear the institutional delivery because they will be unable to control the situation, as they can at home. The woman may be seen by a male doctor which may cause shame for the family and the woman herself. It should be noted that the number of female doctor in our country is not sufficient enough. In addition to this, the female doctors like to perform their duty in the city or town rather than the rural area. The family members further worry that they would be asked to pay more than they are able to for the required treatment. A USAID publication (1995) states that women preferred to have their babies delivered by a known and trusted female

member of their family or community. They generally hesitate to give birth in a hospital, because according to the publication, "paying for normal deliveries was beyond the means of many Bangladeshis let alone paying between Tk 10,000 and Tk 20,000 for a cesarean section". In addition to this, greater number of people are of the belief that the doctors try to find the scope of operating upon the pregnant woman so that they (doctors) may earn a lot.

Both in rural and urban Bangladesh, there is a scarcity of healthcare centres or hospitals. So by the time people reach a facility which has the services they require, it can be too late (Blanchet, 1991). And thus the distance of healthcare centre is one of the identified reasons for the delaying taking to a facility. Thus the upgrading of health facilities, specially rural health facilities, is a must.

Past negative experiences with health facilities is a contributing factor to not seeking help on an emergency basis. When they cannot get routine services they require in an appropriate and timely manner, how could they be expected to turn these services in times of

distress?

Almost all disadvantaged people face a number of problems at the health care centres, and lack of competent doctors, absence of doctors and staff, private practice conducted in public facilities, long waiting time, lack of privacy, shortages of medicine and the sale of medicines outside the centre, are important. It is an undeniable fact that a lot of Thana Health Complex doctors do not reside at their working places, they often do their jobs from the district headquarters. According to BDHS (1996-97) 65 per cent of births in Bangladesh are assisted by traditional birth attendants (dai), with 8 per cent being assisted by trained dais and 57 per cent by untrained dais. Another one-fourth of births are assisted by relatives and friends. Moreover it is possible that some women may have reported traditional birth attendants as their 'friends', since the distinction between friend and dai is slight. So the percentage of traditional birth attendants may be higher. Less than 10 per cent of births are assisted by medically trained personnel — either doctors (5 per cent) or nurses, family welfare visitors (3 per cent).

There has been little change over time in the proportion of births assisted by medical personnel. But very surprisingly and unfortunately even this change is not towards development but towards risk motherhood. Data from the 1993-94 BDHS show that about 10 per cent of births were assisted at delivery by a doctor, nurse or midwife. According to 1996-97 BDHS, the analogous figure is about 8 per cent. As might be expected, births in urban areas are more likely to be assisted by medical personnel (doctors, nurses or trained midwife) than in rural areas. It is nearly 35 per cent in urban areas and only 6 per cent in rural areas.

Beyond all doubt the majority of Bangladeshi women will continue to give birth at home with the assistance of dai for a long time to come. Thus the training of TBA's is obviously important. Though the training programme has already been started, there is great controversy over such training of TBA's. No doubt, TBA's are not the substitute of the trained medical personnel. But it is not possible to change the present practice within a short period, so it is better to train the TBA's. Above all, considerable emphasis must be placed on the education of the community and the family members to encourage them so that they may give up the present practices.

Freedom Fighters: Responsibility and Pride

by Akku Chowdhury

With the independence of Bangladesh the commitment of the freedom fighters for the country has not ended. In 1971 they were willing to make the supreme sacrifice... They still have a responsibility to the people and the land.

THE interest of the youth in the Liberation War is very encouraging and understandable. They have been denied knowledge of their heritage, which has already passed over two decades. Those who were little children or born after 1971 were robbed of the glorious past by misinterpretation or downplaying of the Liberation movement and the great struggle that the people of Bangladesh went through for a free and sovereign Bangladesh. Today a visit to the Liberation War Museum is quenching their thirst. However, the Museum can satisfy only a bit of their craving for the truth. But it is a beginning. They at least can get the lead to follow up further. They can share some of the pride of their older generation and learn to love their motherland a bit more. They can understand and respect their culture, heritage and the nation. They can stand up with their head high, knowing how proudly and bravely their forefathers fought to bring independence for them. They are citizens of one of the few nations who have had the privilege to have an armed struggle to become an independent nation.

Our generation, which participated and witnessed the making of history in one of the epic moments of Bangladesh failed to make the youth of today, the new generation, aware of that moment and be a part of it. Although today we blame the youth because of their rebellious and disjointed attitude, we fail to recognize the fact that ever since Bangladesh came to being we have been groping in the dark trying to write individual history rather than the history of the nation and con-

tribute towards a brighter future. For the last 27 years our struggle for freedom took a back seat and we distorted, told and retold the historical moments of 1971 to represent only certain interest groups. As a result the essence and the spirit of the Liberation War got lost and our existence as a nation to survive in resilience became trivial to the personal interest and survival of the individual. The youth fell in the crossfire of our generation's total about turn in attitude to the country and ideology. They found us hypocritical and dishonest. We sold our soul to the devil and became part of a rat race that didn't fit in the bigger backdrop of the characteristic of a generation which fought a Liberation Struggle. This double standard no doubt disappointed the youth and made them sceptic of our struggle and us. A gap was thus created between them and us. The enemies of the Liberation War took the opportunity to fill this gap by fitting in a picture disgracing the Liberation War that seemed more glib to the youth in the face of our failure.

In 1971 when the people of Bangladesh realized the treachery of the Pakistani military junta who began the genocide to crush the Bangladesh as a nation, they rose, in unison, in resistance. This resistance was an

unhesitating response against the wrongdoing of Pakistani regime against the Bangalee people. People from all walks of life, all colour and creed felt the need to fight against the wrath that had fallen upon them. In the beginning it seemed like the call of the day to take up arms without any collective direction or guidance. People in different parts of the country on their own initiative took it as their obligation to resist the Pakistanis. Of course in no time this force was guided to emerge into a fierce and disciplined Mukti Bahini (Freedom Fighters) which ultimately led to our independence and freedom with the help of the Indian Forces to reach our goal in the shortest possible time of only nine months. But there can be no denying the bravery and sincerity of the freedom fighters in their cause of the Liberation of their motherland. They were embedded with the spirit of freeing the country and its people from the shackles of the oppressors. Their dream was of a free Bangladesh where all people will live as equal human beings. These fighters realized from the very beginning when they joined that the struggle will be long, hard and most probably they will not survive to see their victory. But one thing they were sure about was that the struggle would continue till the defeat of the Pakistani

Forces. The freedom fighters were meagerly outfitted and half fed. Even then nobody questioned or demanded for anything better. They were prepared to embrace death while fighting for the liberation of their country. They were even willing to fight bare hand. They fought with all their might and heart. And they fought like tigers till victory was attained. Many of them didn't survive and they are buried in unmarked graves or fields, which is today the soil of free Bangladesh. That is their glory.

With the independence of Bangladesh the commitment of the freedom fighters for the country has not ended. In 1971 they were willing to make the supreme sacrifice of giving their life for their motherland. They still have a responsibility to the people and the land. The fighters didn't expect anything for their participation in the liberation struggle from their country but the country expects they continue their service to the nation for a better tomorrow till their death. As true freedom fighters they must continue to be the conscience of the nation and march forward to reach the dream they had and their fallen comrades had in 1971. We have shrugged off our responsibilities for too long but it is not too late for us to serve our country and take the responsibility we pledged to carry on in 1971 till our death. To rephrase John Kennedy's famous line we asked not what the country would give to us rather we asked ourselves what we could give to the country in 1971. That holds true even today. Let us not shy away from our responsibility and pride. There is still a spark in the cinder, don't extinguish it.

Small, Medium, Big and ... Women's Business

by Iryna Ozhohina

Experts are convinced that concrete obstacles to the appearance of women's initiatives undoubtedly exist, but that women must start from their own positive personal qualities.

OLENA Shulha, 30, is the director of one of the most prestigious private cosmetic medicine clinics in Kiev.

"I am a dentist by training and never thought that I would become involved in business," Shulha says.

"My English husband gave me the idea. He always stressed that if our relationship did not work out, I should have my own business, financial independence. Among other things, he financed the project at the first stage. I found the premises, experts, created a company, registered it as a joint Ukrainian-English enterprise, and we started our work."

After four months, the costs spent in creating the clinic had been recovered. "She goes on to add, "The project was unusually profitable, and I could have bit by bit begun to pay back the debts to my investor if it were not for the necessity of expanding and purchasing new equipment, considerable duties on imports ... and still one more thing -- racket. Yes, I had a meeting with local mafia who, having found out that we began to make a bit of money, came to 'skim the cream.' And that's where all our profit went."

Few are involved in conducting well-grounded research on women's business in Ukraine. Experts are not inclined to divide entrepreneurs, bankers, and managers by gender, recognizing that both men and women, for the time being, are forced to build their business in the tough economic conditions of the transition period.

Most people starting up businesses, both men and women, tend to borrow money from friends rather than take credit from banks.

Social and economic analysts say this trend is the result of the harsh credit policy of Ukrainian financial institutes, with their high interest rates, unwillingness to give long-term credit, and poor terms of repayment.

But reality demonstrates that women's business in

Ukraine does indeed have its particularities. What follows are the arguments put forth by the academics at the Lviv Institute of Management (LiM), incidentally one of the first educational institutions in Ukraine, that proposed creating special centres to support women's business.

According to statistical data, 70 per cent of the unemployed are women," states one of the employees at LiM, Liudmyla Kyzolych. The reason for this is not the low level of education; women make up 55.2 per cent of students in higher education institutions. So there's no lack of initiative. Also, according to the analysis conducted, 60 per cent of the participants in training and re-training courses are women. In addition, the percentage of women students enrolled in the Master's of Business Administration (MBA) Programme in the six years of LiM's existence has grown from 20 per cent to 50 per cent.

Moreover, according to analysts, Ukrainian women can be characterised by a developed sense of responsibility, seriousness and a well grounded approach to organising their own business.

They also take their education concerning their future profession very seriously.

Among the women directors of commercial medical establishments, over 90 per cent are professional doctors. Women directors of legal firms are lawyers by training. Women bankers most often have a background in either finance or economics as well as impressive work records in their field in contrast to men bankers, more than half of who were formerly employed in the Party

or the Young Communist League and have a degree in engineering or education.

The division of business into "women's" and "men's" sectors is noticeable.

Women's business are generally centered on private educational institutions for preschool children, medical and other services (hair-dressing, cosmetic salons, tutoring services etc.). In trade and the sale of food products, the involvement of women and men is about equal.

Alongside this, there is the "shuttle" business -- the business of buying and re-selling goods with a rather narrow profit margin. It is largely women who take to such work as either a secondary or a distress means to provide for their families. The profit -- the difference between the prices minus the transport costs and payment to local mafia groups -- is marginal, and for that reason virtually all individuals involved in this business hide their income from official taxation.

The "shuttle" business is born of specific political, economic and social factors of the transition period (unemployment, wage arrears etc.) and, according to experts, is a temporary affair. This, and the fact that it is part of the "shadow economy," makes it difficult to research.

Estimates of today's reality are, however, that between 40 per cent and 50 per cent of the Ukrainian economy falls outside of the control of the state. This would safely lead to the conclusion that a significant portion of women in business are operating in the shadow economy.

The activities of some Amer-

ican firms in Ukraine can also be classified as half-legal. "Mary Kay", "Herbal Life," and "New Ways" import their products into CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries through Moscow, and distribute them through a network of small private consultants and not through official trade or pharmaceutical services.

The tax control on the activities of these firms is complicated because of the fact that their consultants (the majority of whom are women in the home) conduct business out of their private homes. These women feel that such work has several advantages. First, by being based at home, they can simultaneously work and attend to children and family responsibilities; second, it allows them to avoid unpleasant confrontations with mafia groups and tax inspectors; and third, they earn decent money. Understandably, official statistics concerning these activities do not exist.

Academics from the Lviv Institute of Management are proposing to create a women's business centre as a first step towards strengthening women's role in economic life.

"The main task of such a centre will be to conduct psychological training to help women overcome mental barriers and define those professional abilities most natural and effective for development," explains Liudmyla Kyzymch, a doctoral student at the institute.

"And only at the next stage, will the centre refer women to training programmes on management, marketing, accounting, information systems, etc."

Experts are convinced that concrete obstacles to the appearance of women's initiatives undoubtedly exist, but that women must start from their own positive personal qualities.

But how exactly? By thinking, "I am -- therefore there will be business."

And that's the way it should be. — WFS/News Network

Despair Rules the Lives of Kashmiri Refugees in Delhi

by V Radhika

An estimated 100,000 are in Delhi — sharing the same fate and leading almost similar lives as an estimated 80,000 refugees from Tibet and nearly 5,000 from Afghanistan who fled their strife-torn homelands.

WHAT is it like to be a refugee in your own country? What is it like to flee your home carrying nothing but terror and despair? The answers lie in the cramped cubicles of Delhi's 14 refugee camps which house Kashmiri Hindus, known as Pandits, who abandoned everything in the insurgency-battered state and landed nearly eight years ago with just one possession — a will to live — and just one dream — to return home.

But eight years is a long time. In these eight years the trickle of refugees has turned into a flood. Over 300,000 Hindus have fled the Kashmir Valley and most of them have sought refuge in neighbouring Jammu.

An estimated 100,000 are in Delhi — sharing the same fate and leading almost similar lives as an estimated 80,000 refugees from Tibet and nearly 5,000 from Afghanistan who fled their strife-torn homelands. There is just one difference though — the latter have sought asylum in another country, the Kashmiris are refugees in their own.

It takes a tragedy like the massacre of 25 Hindu members of a marriage procession in Doda in Jammu and Kashmir for the spotlight to turn on the Kashmiri refugees in Delhi. Little surprise then that the response of a greying old lady at a camp in the southern Delhi neighbourhood of Lajpat Nagar to any query is a sullen silence

and an angry glare. Her hunched back, bent further by the burden of bringing up her four children alone, (her husband was killed by terrorists, her neighbour said) however disappears when she musters up as much dignity as she can and says: "Don't make a spectacle of our lives. Give us some privacy."

But she knows, as do the other inmates at the camp, that from the moment they fled their homes under the cover of darkness nothing was private — not even their thoughts. The curtains on the cubicles are their attempt to have a corner of their own.

Even after living in the camp at Babu Dham, near central Delhi, for over eight years, Suneeta Dhar can vividly recall her initial reaction when she was shown her new home. "I was shocked. After living in a four-storeyed house in Anantnag, how will my family live in this cubby hole?" I asked myself," she told India Abroad News Service. "But, we did not have a choice. We did have a relative staying in Delhi, but how could we move in with them and for how long. We were a family of eight. And the space allotted to us was ten feet by six feet."

But this, as Suneeta and others discovered, was just the beginning. It took but a few months for them to realise that whether one is a Kashmiri in the Lajpat Nagar camp or a Tibetan in the capital's Majnu ka Tila area in northern Delhi,

one is a refugee and will be treated like one. It did not take long either for them to figure out that for all the tall claims made by the government, their children were not to be easily admitted to schools here.

"It took me three months to realise that my daughter's admission was possible only through influence," says Ganga Nath Dhar, who owns several acres of land in Anantnag and lived in opulence — till 1990. For the past eight years his family has been cooped up in the Babu Dham camp and has no illusions about getting out of it — ever. The family, which used to eat only the finest food, now lives on what is distributed by the government — just rice and lentils.

Every day Dhar's wife has to spend at least half an hour trying to clean the rice. After all, it is not easy for her or anyone for that matter to cull out the rice mixed with tiny pebbles! But then the Dhars are actually not all that badly off when compared with the Shungloos. At least they have a room. That ten people live in a room which serves as a living-cum-dining-cum-bedroom-cum-kitchen is a different thing altogether.

The Shungloos continue to live in what can at best be called a pathetically small cubicle. Prabha Shungloo has tried her best to give it the look of a home. A small stove with a steel box to store cooking items is her kitchen, a few calendars of Hindu gods that are stuck on the curtain is her prayer room and

a thin mattress serves as a living room during the day and bedroom at night for four people.

It has been like this for seven years now. The family held on in Kashmir while most of their neighbours fled. But one morning when Prabha opened the door to find a notice stuck on it asking them to get out, they boarded the first train leaving Kashmir. Armed with just a graduate degree, her husband, who was employed in a private firm back home, is yet to find a job that will pay him enough to take his family out of the camp.

With the passage of time and the possibility of returning home turning bleaker, the survival instinct has taken over. Gone is the camaraderie and spirit of adjustment that marked the initial stages of camp life. The more enterprising ones have made their lives comfortable by getting an extra room.

The Afghan refugees managed to rent accommodation due to the financial aid provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Tibetans have their own colony in Majnu ka Tila. But the Kashmiri Pandits, who receive a monthly dole of Rs. 1,500 (\$35) from the Indian government, can neither afford to do neither.

And they continue to fume silently and long to return to the home that no more exists.

— IANS

The Hindus Who Dared to Stay on in Kashmir Valley

by Binoo Joshi

"No photographs please," pleaded Brij Nath Raina, who is among 4,800 Hindus still living in the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley.

He has consistently refused to shift to the Hindu-dominated Jammu region of the state where a majority of his community has been living in refugee camps for the past eight years. He feels that photographs and television footage attract the attention of terrorists.

Raina, who runs a grocery shop in Giroo-Noorpoora, a Muslim dominated village of about 700 families, is the father of six daughters of marriageable age, but is in no mood to leave behind his land, shop and home for an uncertain future outside the valley.

There are 30 families of Kashmiri Hindus in the vast Giroo-Noorpoora village, which is a township. But there

are certain inherent fears that Raina, like his community members, has not been able to overcome.

"We are here because our Muslim brothers do not allow us to move out," Madhu Sudan, a farmer, told India Abroad News Service. "Here we have our orchards and fields and do not have to look for dole from the government and have big and spacious houses to live in while those in Jammu are cramped one room tenements," he said in visible contempt of those who migrated.

Staying back in the valley has its own problems for the Kashmiri Pandits. They have not found prospective grooms for their daughters and brides for their sons. Raina has tried hard for the past five years to find matches for his daughters, but without success.

His fellow community members point out the case of Santosh Kumar Kaul who has turned 40 but has not got a bride for himself despite frantic efforts by his father Janaki Nath Kaul, an affluent orchardist. The problem is that the girls who have migrated to Jammu do not want to marry into families still settled in the valley.

"The girls look for a settled and safe life and after the massacres in Sangrama and Wandhama, they have become more fearful of marrying boys living in the valley," said Maharaj Krishan, whose family migrated in 1990.

Many of those who have stayed back in the valley have sent their children to Jammu. Brij Nath Dhar, a development worker, stays with his widowed sister Omajee. The two have sent their children to Jammu.

They feel that if at all extremists attack them, at least their children would be safe. That is why the 30 families there have just 74 people though entire families account for 230. All the others are in Jammu and Udhampur. Dhar's son Sanjay is in Jammu where he has completed his graduation. Omajee's son Upinder too is there.

The girls are sent to Jammu to protect them from abuse by extremists. Boys are sent to study and get jobs in an atmosphere free of tension. The few who have remained in the valley are here because of their large land holdings, orchards and a reluctance to live as refugees. Though terrorists have created panic with frequent massacres of Hindus, they feel they are safe surrounded by friendly local Muslims.

—India Abroad News Service

Garfield® by Jim Davis

