

Women in India: third rate citizen in own family

by Colleen Weber

Recently, Club I.D.C. (Issues in Developing Countries) sponsored a lecture entitled "Women and Development in India." Mrs. Dipika Fernandez, a professional fashion designer from Bangalore, India who was in Canada on behalf of the Camrose One World Institute and the Alberta provincial government, gave an informal talk on the status of women in India.

Fernandez, dressed in an emerald green and fuchsia silk sari, explained how a woman's situation in India is largely dependent upon one's position within the caste system as well as the customs and beliefs of the Hindu religion.

Despite the fact that the caste system has been officially abolished by India's government, the hierarchy of social classes within Indian society is still observed by the population.

Fernandez, herself a Brahmin — the highest caste and usually the most socially influential of the hereditary social classes in Hinduism — denies that women within the higher castes have the best advantages when it comes to exercising personal freedom. Certainly, due to their greater economic status, the Brahmin women have the option of attending university and have the benefit of receiving optimum health care.

However, due to the custom of living in an extended family, these

upper middle class women are generally "relegated to the lowest position" despite their educational background.

A wife's duties include having to look after the house, the family, the poultry, and the dairy, yet she is still not considered as contributing to the wealth of the family. The wealth arises from the family business which is usually managed by the husband and father-in-law.

Fernandez explains, shaking her dark, shoulder-length hair, "she is a third rate citizen in her own family."

This third rate status is also reflected in the various Hindu traditions and beliefs affecting Indian women.

According to Fernandez, Hinduism does not grant equal status to women. Women are considered impure due to menstruation and childbirth.

For this reason they are not permitted to take part in certain religious rituals.

Within the upper castes, these religious beliefs are carried over into social customs exercised daily within the joint family household.

A woman cannot be present in the company of men, she must bow her head when her father-in-law is present, and she becomes the subject of her son if her husband should pass away.

Fernandez adds to this list the practice of the giving of dowries. While the tradition of dowry giving

has been made illegal constitutionally, apparently it is still being done.

A dowry is some kind of financial security, it can be in the form of jewelry or money, which a father provides for his daughter once a marriage has been arranged.

As Fernandez bluntly put it, "A dowry is the price you set for the man you marry."

Ultimately, the dowry provides little security for the woman. If a woman decides to give up her marriage, she automatically gives up her dowry — it becomes the property of her husband and she is left with nothing and usually no place to go.

By contrast, Fernandez recounts some of the advantages to women living within the lower castes in Indian society. Because these women live within a single family setting, they have a major role in the household decision-making process.

In addition, due to their often impoverished living conditions, the women work as labourers — they contribute to the wealth of the family.

However, despite the greater independence these women may have, one must consider the types

of jobs they are performing — menial, physical labour with low pay and few benefits.

Because of the necessity to earn money, young girls drop out of school as early as age 11 in order to assist at home while their mothers go out and work.

Health care for lower class families is poor and day-care is practically non-existent.

Here is where Dipika Fernandez is attempting to change things. She is involved with an integrational rural development program called Myrada.

Myrada is based in Bangalore, India and functions much in the same respect as CIDA: Myrada receives funds from around the

world, including Canada, in order to assist the development of small, agriculturally orientated communities.

Myrada has assisted women in setting up various types of cooperatives such as dairy farms and handicrafts.

The women, with their children alongside of them, perform all the necessary functions, from milking the cows to keeping the accounts.

Fernandez smiles as she recounts some of the successes of these women.

The reason for her trip to Canada was to generate a market for silks and handicrafts produced by these women's cooperatives in India.

by Colleen Weber

The lecture given by Mrs. Dipika Fernandez is the second in a series of lectures being sponsored by Club I.D.C. (Issues in Developing Countries) over the course of the academic school year.

Students from all fields and faculties are invited to attend these meetings; times and topics are posted in advance on bulletin

boards throughout the campus.

If you are interested in attending these lectures or would like more information regarding the club's organization and upcoming cultural events, you are welcome to contact club president Charlene Deary at 432-5348, or drop by her office located in Education North, Room 5-181A.

A Couple's Weekend

This is an opportunity for couples to participate in a relationship-enhancing weekend. Participants will be invited to explore:

- how they use themselves in their relationship
- separateness and connectedness
- how to grow together in relationship

Friday, Nov. 7: 7 pm. - 9 pm.
Saturday, Nov. 8: 9 am. - 4 pm.
Sunday, Nov. 9: 9 am. - 4 pm.

For more information contact Robyn or Deborah at STUDENT COUNSELLING SERVICES, 432-5205.

There is no fee.

S.O.S.

INFO CORNER

Student Ombudsman Service

The deadline for submission of **Writing Competence Petitions** to G.F.C. is **Thursday, Nov. 13 at 4:30 p.m.** . . . Please see us if you require help preparing or have any questions (following previous Oct. 15th announcement).

Wednesday, Oct. 15 marks the day that registration will be cancelled for those who have not paid at least their first term fees.

For any assistance, advice or information on any University policies or related problems,

Please stop by:
Room 272 SUB
432-4689 (24 hrs.)

Pat Perron	Shawna Stonehouse
MW - 9-12	M - 3:30-6:00
F - 9-11	TR - 6-7
	W - 2-5

If you are unable to meet during these times, please leave a message to set a convenient time.

EXPERIENCE A SEASON OF ADVENTURE

The Citadel's 86/87 Rice Season presents

THE double bass

Oct 22 - Nov 2

By Patrick Süskind
 Translated by Roy Kift
 Starring Eric Peterson
 A Tarragon Theatre production
 "... by turns comically bitter and tragically sweet, it resonates like a bowed instrument in a silent hall... the work is that rarest of marriages between a rivetting performance and a fascinating text."
Globe and Mail, Sept. 20/86

"...Already well-known to Canadians for his stunning role in "Billy Bishop Goes to War", Peterson is brilliant as the player. Coddling, stroking and finally raping the instrument with his bow, he manages to combine wild humour and desperate sadness."
Macleans Magazine, Sept. /86

ASINAMALI!

Nov 19 - 30

By Mbongeni Ngema
 A vibrant and unfiltered gaze into a South African township, filled with a mixture of song, dance, story-telling and mime.

FIRE

Feb 11 - 22

By Paul Ledoux and David Young
 "I'm draggin' the audience to hell with me." (Jerry Lee Lewis) The story of rock 'n roll's emergence from evangelical gospel music is told through the lives of two brothers - a pastor and a rock star. Using God's music for the devil's purpose may do more than give you a bad conscience; it may damn your soul for eternity. A new Canadian musical by the authors of "Love is Strange".

Pericles Prince of Tyre

April 22 - May 3

By William Shakespeare
 Pursued by a vengeful king whose dark secret he has discovered, Pericles sets out on a journey which will last into his later years. He finds and loses both a wife and a daughter, then in a moving conclusion, recovers them again. True ensemble acting and creative direction bring new life to one of Shakespeare's most romantic, epic and haunting stories. This powerful production of one of Shakespeare's very last plays, comes from Montreal where it has been hailed as a sign of the rebirth of imaginative English-speaking theatre in La Belle Province.

special rates for students
 An entire season from \$30!
 Subscriptions on sale at the Citadel Box Office until Oct 24

425-1820

the
Citadel

9828 - 101A Ave.