

## **LIFE FOR WOMEN IN INDIA**

There was a book published in 1990, by Elizabeth Bumiller, called *May You be the Mother of a Hundred Sons*. We have included an excerpt here, prepared by Diamond's Daughters an evangelistic outreach of India Christian Ministries, to give you an idea of how a typical Indian woman lives today.

"The 'typical' Indian woman, representing about 75% of the 400 million women and female children in India, lives in a village. She comes from a small peasant family that owns less than an acre of land, or from a landless family that depends on the whims of big farmers for sporadic work and wages. She can neither read nor write, although she would like to, and has rarely traveled more than twenty miles from her place of birth. She does not own land in her own name, or even jointly with her husband.

She believes that she catches cold and fevers from evil spirits that lurk in trees. Her occupation is fieldwork, chiefly harvesting, planting and weeding, for which she often receives less than 50 cents a day, in many cases, half the wage that a man receives for the same amount of work. She has to juggle this labor with her other full-time job, the care of the house and the children. (All of her duties are performed under the strict and overbearing authority of her mother-in-law.) Her husband does not help her; indeed, he does not even consider what she does at home as work.



A village woman starts her life from scratch every day. Even a single chapati, the Indian flat bread, has behind it a chain of drudgery that has not changed in thousands of years. To make a chapati, a woman needs water, which are often several miles away by foot. She also needs wheat, which she must harvest by scythe (under a blazing sun in a back-breaking bent forward motion) and then grind by hand. To cook the bread she needs fuel, either firewood that she collects herself, or cow-dung cakes, which she makes herself. To get the dung she must feed the cow, and to feed the cow she must walk several miles to collect suitable grasses. (This assumes that the family is lucky enough to even have a cow; many do not.) The bread is at last prepared over a small mud stove built into the dirt floor of her hut. While she cooks, she breast feeds one child and watches over three others. If she fails in any of these tasks, or performs them too slowly, her husband often feels it is his prerogative to beat her. And yet invariably she considers her husband a god and says that she loves him."