

**SOCIO-POLITICAL ROLE OF WOMEN IN CENTRAL AND
EASTERN EUROPE: CASE STUDIES OF POLAND AND BULGARIA,
1989-2004**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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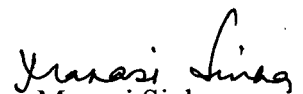
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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "THE SOCIO-POLITICAL ROLE OF WOMEN IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: CASE STUDIES OF POLAND AND BULGARIA, 1989-2004", submitted by me in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is my work and has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other university.

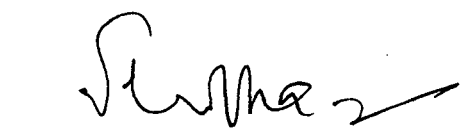

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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Manasi Sinha

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List of Abbreviations

AWS	Electoral Action Solidarity
BSP	Bulgarian Socialist Party
BCP	Bulgarian Socialist Party
BCP	Bulgarian Communist Party
BBB	Bulgarian Business Block
BBWR	Non-Party block in Support of Reforms
KLD	Liberal Democratic Congress
KPN	Confederation of Independent Poland
LPR	League of Polish Families
MRF	Movement For Rights and Freedoms
NMSII	National Movement Simeon II
MN	Social and Cultural of the German Minority in Silesia
PÚWP	Polish United Worker's Party
PSL	Polish Peasant Party
PIS	Law and Justice
PC	Civic Centre Alliance
PSL-PL	Polish Peasant Party-Popular Agreement
PChD	Party Of Christian Democrats
PO	Civic Platform
ROP	Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland
SO	Self-Defense of the Polish Republic
SAMOOBRONA	Self-Defence
SdRP	Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland
SLD	Democratic left Alliance
SLD	Democratic Left Alliance
UDF	Union Democratic Forces
UP	Labour Union
UD	Democratic Union
UW	Freedom Union
WAK	Electoral Catholic Action

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING OF ‘GENDER’, ‘ROLE’, ‘STATUS’, ‘POWER’, ‘PATRIARCHY’ AND ‘EMPOWERMENT’, IN RELATION TO WOMEN AND SOCIETY

“Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size”

Virginia Woolf

In spite of women’s 50% share in population on the globe, women were never given equal status to men. A major part of this outlook can be attributed to gender role socialization that operates in every society. This ‘role’ is usually being exemplified through socialization process in childhood which over the time developed into a stereotyped sex role and being accepted in a natural way. In a male dominated society men’s role are given a higher status and whatever women does is rated below. Woman always takes on multiple roles that exceed that of her counterpart.

This chapter would split around two segments: the theoretical understanding of ‘Social Construction of Gender’ and ‘Theories of Feminism and its Presence in Central and Eastern Europe’. As this research would seek to explore the Socio-Political role of women, the theoretical understanding of the terms such as ‘Role’, ‘Status’ would of immense help in order to perceive the position of women in society. This would also help understanding of how the role and status are constructed as per various norms of society. In the context of Central and Eastern Europe, particularly Poland and Bulgaria, the position of women has been thoroughly impacted by the socio-political and cultural history of the region and which led to the formation of their stereotyped/gendered role. The existence of patriarchy and the exploitation of women in Central and Eastern Europe can be better understood with the theories of feminism and its presence in the region.

“‘Status’ is considered as the ascribed position of an individual or section of the community at par with the necessities arising out of the ecological and traditional conditions” (Boraian, 2008:44). It is a social position associated with distinct roles performed by different gender. Women’s status is the position women enjoy in

society where certain roles they are required to perform because of this status. 'Role' is a particular set of duties and responsibilities which are allotted to a person occupying a status position in the social structure. The 'Status' and 'Role' are inseparable as "each individual is occupying a number of statuses and to each status some roles are attributed by the society" (Linton: 1936, Vivel: 1978 *et al.*)¹. Therefore the role and status can be perceived as social construct which the society or the system creates from time to time. The society plays a crucial role in allotting different roles and responsibilities to the two different sexes which led to the formation of gender and which emphasize on social construction of masculinity, femininity and social ordering of relations between men and women.

"Gender" has been a significant term for examining the status of women. It is a learned behaviour which is socially and culturally constructed. V. Geetha (2002), points out that 'gender is everywhere', and when we allocate to the male and female sexes, specific and distinctive attributes and roles, we are 'doing' gender. She talks about different spaces meant for both the sexes. Thus men are being taken as more outdoor going whereas women are seen as bearer of indoor responsibility. Female identity is linked to her role as mothers, wives and daughters while male identity is linked to the productive work. However, we attach a particular historical and sociological identity to the female sex and make it appear natural. However, 'Power' plays a very dominant role in defining these roles and statuses. The theory of power has been connected to 'authority', 'domination', and/or exploitation and it is an entity that an individual or groups can possess. However, whichever group has power can define roles, can access to all the economic and political resources and can eventually shape the social structure as per its own interests. In 'Sexual Politics', Kate Millet (1972) has defined politics as a 'Power Structured Relationships' arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another'. What made her argument debatable was that she applied this definition to the relation between Women and Men. Thus 'Power' is only one form of gender inequality. Inequalities exist across a range of resources, from income and wealth to social honour and cultural authority. She argues that those benefiting from inequalities have an interest in defending them and those who bear the costs have an interest in ending them. Thus 'Power' can be manifested in autonomy, influence, decide for others, ability to manipulate,

¹ Cited in Mondal, Rahim Sekh. 2005; p. 4

institutionalized position in the authority structure of a society. For decades women in general have been taking their 'stereotypical role' as something universal and traditional way and have not questioned this power structured relations. They have been doing it out of lacking social, economic and political *empowerment*.

The term "*Empowerment*" means the process of generating and building capabilities to exercise control over one's own life. The most conspicuous feature of the term 'empowerment' is that it contains within it the word 'Power' itself. Therefore the empowerment is about power, about changing the balance of power or about the balanced distribution of power between men and women. The concepts of power and authority are implicit in the notion of women's empowerment. More specifically, the empowerment of women results in women having '*Power to*' (e.g., acquire the ability to make choices), '*Power within*' (e.g., to have agency in seeking higher levels of access and control) and '*Power with*' (sharing power with men). Power has therefore two central aspects, 'control over resources (physical, human, intellectual, financial, and the self) and control over ideology' (beliefs, values and attitudes)². *Power* is one's capacity to have control of these resources over others; and as such when this capacity to control is legitimized, it becomes authority. But in reality women lack power and authority in every sphere of life. The distribution of power has been hierarchical in nature in human history. This process of hierarchisation has arranged social groups in the steep ordering of people, with a powerful 'few' at the social and economic command deciding the mainstream of the society, polity and the economy. However, women are the one who often remained at the lowest level of this power hierarchy. They rarely question this power hierarchy and accept this subjugation willingly placing greater value to stability and integrity to the family institutions. They experience powerlessness not only in the household but also in (and though) the interaction of multiple social, political and economic institutions³. Therefore through empowerment women individually or collectively become aware of how power relations operate lives and with this awareness they gain self confidence and strength to challenge gender and the stereotype role which has been ascribed to them. Therefore empowerment of women would capable them to have more choices in life like getting better access to knowledge, greater autonomy in decision-making, greater

² Varghese, Jaimon. 2005; p. 13

³ Ibid

ability to plan their lives, which would enable them to lead their life in own term terms.

“Patriarchy” suggests perpetuated norms, values through a process of institutionalization of social, cultural, and religious practices and is legitimized through political, legal and economic systems of the society. It leads women to internalize patriarchal ways of thinking in values and behavior. Therefore, “patriarchal refers to power relations in whom women’s interests are subordinated to the interests of men”.⁴ These power relations reflect in different forms ranging from the sexual division of labour in family and the social organization of procreation to the internalized norms of femininity and which make them to follow certain behaviour or expectation defined by the male oriented society.

I. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER:

The ‘*gender*’ is a social construct which has a variety of manifestations and it has more to do with institutions than with individuals. The gendered role, the division of labor between men and women has often been simply treated as consequences of ‘natural’ differences between male and female beings. Early thinking about the difference between women and men was based on essentialist ideas about gender which considered that men’s and women’s differences have been a result of biology. Essentialists has found significance in a relative universality of physical characteristics among humans and of a gender division of labor that assigned men to certain tasks and women to others, a division that sometimes characterized the public sphere as a male domain and the private sphere as a female domain. They saw men as able to think logically, abstractly and analytically while women were seen as emotional, compassionate and nurturing creature. Therefore essentialists proposed that these differences were natural, biologically determined, universal and unchangeable. However, feminists have long fought to disperse such myths about gender. Thus arguing that ‘anatomy is not destiny’ and that ‘one is not born, but rather becomes a woman’, Simone de Beauvoir questioned the assumptions behind such formulations in her feminist classic ‘The Second Sex’.

⁴ Cited by Chris Weedon in Jenainati and Groves. 2007; p. 4

Subsequently a number of theories came up to oppose such narrow view of gender role. Such as 'Environmentalists' emphasized that it is not biology which is at the base of diverse role a human being carry, rather it is the "natural" features of society which shapes it. They say that child birth, lactation etc do not predestine women to stay at home; but societies devise a division of labor that enables such mechanism to make women mobile. However, biologically oriented theories tend to keep 'gender differences' out of debate as they attach 'gender role' with its biological capacity; wherein socio-cultural theories tend to view the pattern of women's subordination rooted in society, and therefore view this subordination as subject to change and which helps diminishing the 'universal' view of subordinate status of women and strengthen the possibility of a gender-equal societies. Hence some of the studies try to search for matriarchies or gender equal societies in the past or present.

The functionalists however, suggest that men and women have been socialized into sex-specific roles, namely 'instrumental' and 'expressive'⁵. These roles have been the basis of a complementary relation between men and women, which along with the sexual division of labor, contributed to a stable social order (Talcott Parsons). George Peter Murdock held the view that Men were assigned to 'roles' that require physical strength and Women were associated with soft tasks like house-holding, raising family, child bearing etc. This view of biological determinant in deciding gender stereotypes have been questioned by feminist perspectives like 'maximalist/essentialist' and 'minimalist/conservatism' approach. The first one holds the view that though there are basic differences between the sexes which are biologically determined, the differences in gendered role are the product of 'social conditioning' (typically set early in life). The minimalist perspective or constructivism on the other hand holds the view that two sexes are fundamentally similar and that gender differences linked to sexual functions (reproduction) are not invariably or necessarily related to psychological traits or social roles.

Ann Oakley, a British sociologist disagreed on the notion of 'sexual division of labor or gendered role' as something universal and rejected it as a myth that women are biologically incapable to carry out heavy and demanding work. For Oakley, sex is "a

⁵ Talcott Parsons who validates women's role in family as 'expressive' which provides emotional support and warmth necessary for the socialization of the child. The men's role on the other hand he said is being seen as 'instrumental' or as the bread winner of society.

word that refers to the biological differences between male and female: the visible difference in genitalia, the related difference in procreative function and Gender is however a matter of culture, it refers to the social classification into “masculine” and “feminine”⁶. Emile Durkheim, one of the founding fathers of sociology also argued that primitive societies were not divided on sex lines and men and women were fairly similar in strength and intelligence and performed any kinds of tasks. This view has been further strengthened by even Engels Leacock who found that the early communal society was self sufficient and men and women worked together which was based on reciprocal division of labor. There was no distinction between the public world of men’s work and private world of women’s household work. He further said that as the civilization progressed, process of industrialization began and goods were produced on a large scale, concepts of trading and exchange became common, new codes/norms evolved slowly. In order to maximize the profit, the capitalists started exploitation of women and workers. This led to the isolation of family as a separate unit and women were then continued to push into their families and thus the place of work and residence was separated. Therefore, “most gender differences are not deeply rooted or immutable as has been believed...they are relatively superficial...they are socially constructed and kept in place by the way each sex is positioned in the social structure” (Fuchs Epstein)⁷. Freeing her from home and family life, women have encountered a closed social milieu. The identity of women has been defined so strictly by home and family that when they ‘got out,’ it turned out that the only identity models available were male stereotypes (Giddens, 2001: 294).

As we know the process of socialization begins the moment a person is born. ‘Sex roles’ are started at the early stage of childhood. Thus sex role allocation is a social phenomenon and is in fact learned behavior. The social learning process that imbues people into understanding the various aspects of their culture includes the process of gender socialization. It encompasses the process of learning society’s gender roles and their advantages and limitations. In many societies there is a clear categorization of what it means to be male or female. This categorization process and the agents of socialization that transmits knowledge about gender roles influence how individuals define themselves and others in terms of gender and sex roles. Freud theorized it

⁶ Cited in Anuja Agarwal, “Social construction of Gender”.

⁷ Cited in Jacobsen, P. Joyce. 2007; p.18

further and said that identification and imitation of same sex parents leads to effective gender identity formation. Males and females tend to segregate themselves from each other in their latency period which further solidifies gender identification and role specific behavior.

Nancy Chodorow⁸ throws light on the development of gender personality in “The Reproduction of Mothering” by saying that the primary person in life of both men and women is their mother. However, the significant stages of psychological development that leads to the formation of a separate sense of identity, personality characteristics, the acquisition of gender identity and sexual orientation, play out for both boys and girls in the context of their relation to their mothers. Because of her own identity, the mother identifies with her girl child more than with her boy child. The mother thus often tends to relate to her daughter more as an extension of herself than as a separate person. But for the boy the story is rather different. Due to her own gender identity, the mother does not identify with him as much as with a girl. She tends unconsciously to sexualize her relation to him, thus pushing him into a relation of opposition with her. Unlike the girl, the boy then is encouraged in his effort to separate his identity from his mother. When the boy begins to acquire an understanding of gender, his project of separating from the mother becomes one not merely of defining himself as a different person, but as a different kind of person. While separating from the mother and developing a distinct identity, the boy sets himself in opposition to the mother and all that is feminine. Chodorow thus concludes that from this process the masculine personality typically develops rigid ego boundaries.

Hartsock⁹ strongly echoes the same notion and says further that this masculine personality causes institutions of dominations in the following way. Being mothered by women produces in men a propensity to approach relations with others in an oppositional and competitive way. Thus, men produce institutions defined by opposition, hierarchy and competition. The masculine personality generated by women’s mothering also produces the oppression of women because men tend to denigrate and repress activities associated with the body, and women are most linked to such activities.

⁸ Young Marion Iris, 1997 ; p. 26-28

⁹ Ibid., p. 25

Sociological theories also offer two main explanations for gender biasness in society. One school of thought give value to the *endogenous* factors like Modernization theory which assumes that societies develop along roughly similar lines, which is characterized as the modernization syndrome: Societies develop economically, improve medical care, citizens attain higher levels of education, etc. Ronald Inglehart and his collaborators have shown that with modernization, citizen's values shift from a materialist emphasis towards post-materialist values, such as the desire for self fulfillment , tolerance, and ideas of equality-all these can influence the attitude of people towards gender role. Another endogenous factor is society's religious composition, which has proven to be particularly influential on gender issues; for instance, Protestant countries tend to be more liberal than Catholic countries. There are other schools of thought that claim that *exogenous* influences , i.e. factors external to particular countries are becoming more important in light of trans-nationalization and globalization processes: the global reach of value shifts, their synchronized appearance , and their similar direction led neo-institutionalists to interpret them as result of 'World Polity'. This can be understood as a global cultural model spread by supranational organizations that formulate 'scripts' that are then enacted and may be reformulated by individuals and most importantly nation-states. Empirical inquiry shows how world politics have influenced issues such as environmental protection, school curricula, children's rights, women's rights, gender relations etc. In this theoretical tradition, world politics and citizens' values are seen as linked; while they may be 'de-coupled' at any given point in time, they are connected long term. Once a world polity has been implemented into national legislation, this will also influence citizens' attitudes.¹⁰

II. THEORIES OF FEMINISM AND ITS PRESENCE IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE:

The prevailing stereotype role of women in society which has been frequently regarded as a 'natural' and taken as unproblematic, has been challenged by the resurgence of Feminism in the 19th century which challenged the andocentric view of the world that prevailed for a long time. It was central to the feminist project to

¹⁰ Gerhards, Jurgen. et al. 2009

counter the assumption that existing differences between women and men were ordained by nature. There have been various theories of Feminism which have expounded diverse patterns of female subordination and suggested ways for their liberation. Though differed in various reasons for female exploitation all share the same view that women must be free to decide their own careers and life patterns.

Liberal feminist thought has prevailed during 18th and 19th centuries with thinkers as Marry Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), Harriet Taylor Mill (1807-1858), and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) who argued the rights of women on the basis of liberal philosophical understanding. Liberal feminism stood in stark opposition to the feudal values of divinely ordained truth and hierarchy (social inequality). It advocated a social and political structure that would recognize equality of all individuals and provide women with equality of opportunity. Liberal feminist like, Mary Wollstonecraft had mainly dealt with equal education and equal opportunities for women's liberation. She argued that if women get equal educational and economic opportunities and equal share in legal and administrative affairs, they can become as rational and as capable as men. In her book "A vindication of the Rights of Women" (1791), she argued against the feudal patriarchal notions about women's natural dependence on men, that women were created to please men, that they cannot be independent.

In contrast to the pragmatic approach taken by liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism considered society and its institutions as inherently patriarchal. They held the view that male dominated society has been responsible for the exploitation of women. They believed that differences between masculine and feminine were socially constructed and rejected the view that women's oppression originated in their biology and saw male rule as largely a product of culture. Kate Millet saw the relations between men and women as relationship of power and men's domination over women as a form of power in society. According to her, to eliminate patriarchy men and women must eliminate gender, i.e. sexual status, role and temperament as they have been constructed under patriarchy. Patriarchal ideology exaggerated the biological differences between men and women and subordinated women. Like other radical feminists, Millet suggested that gender has been the primary source of identity for individuals in modern societies. People react to others first and foremost as men and women, rather than in terms of their class membership. Firestone also outlined a

radical feminist explanation of female inequality in her book 'The dialectics of Sex' (1970). Marxists felt that economic problems faced by women were central to maintaining their dependant and subordinate status. According to them little or no change was possible unless women come closer to achieving economic parity with men. Unlike Marxists, she did not attach primary importance to economic differences in the explanation of inequality and said that Marx and Engels had confined their studies to economic production only and ignored an important part of the material world: 'Reproduction' which in her opinion, has been the reason behind women's oppression. Sherry B. Ortner, a cultural feminist, also has similar opinion in line of women being universally oppressed and devalued. However, she claimed that it was not biology as such that ascribed women to their status in society, but the way in which every culture defined and evaluated female biology. She said that in every society, a higher value was placed on culture than on nature. She further argued that women's social role as mothers was also seen as closer to nature as they were primarily responsible for the socialization of the young. Since the mother role was linked to the family, the family itself was regarded as closer to nature compared to activities and institutions outside the family. Thus activities such as politics, warfare, and religion were seen as more removed from nature, as superior to domestic tasks and therefore as the province of men. Cultural feminists have celebrated women's identification with nature in art, poetry, music and communes. They identify women and nature against (male) culture. It has been clear that the Radical feminists have stood Marxism on its head while talking on gender inequality. They have ignored the political-economic structure and concentrated only on the social and cultural aspects of advanced and projected the situation as the universal human condition.

Another branch of Feminism called 'Socialist Feminism' was critical of the socialists and communists for ignoring the women's question, but concentrated their efforts on combining Marxism with Radical feminist ideas. At one end of the separatism were a section called Marxist feminists who differentiated themselves from socialist feminist because they adhered more closely to Marx, Engels and Lenin's writings and have concentrated their analysis on women's exploitation within the capitalist political economy. At the other end of spectrum were those who have focused on how gender identity was created through child rearing practices. Marxism has dealt with women's question only in relation to the economic system. Women were viewed as workers,

and Engels believed that sexual division of labour would be destroyed if women come to production and studied all aspects of women's life only in relation to how it perpetuated the capitalist system. This perspective which named as 'Marxism-Leninism' focused on maximizing women's role in production while retaining rather conventional views on motherhood, amounted to a policy which was often directly functional to the developmental goals of socialist states. Thus it can be derived why the elements of official theory on women's subordination were derived from two main texts, 'Engle's *Origins of the Family Private Property and the State*' and Lenin's '*On the Emancipation of Women*'. Thus Engels and Marxists did not analyze the labour of women in the family properly but rather associated women's exploitation and inequality to their 'class struggle':

"Marxists have ascribed that the causes of the unequal position of women do not lie in their oppression by men, and that women do not constitute a uniform stratum; rather, their status is inextricably linked to the existence of class society based on the exploitation of man by man on the basis of private ownership. Hence the only way to achieve the emancipation of women...is by pursuing ...the road of revolutionary struggle [in order to] topple the class social system"

(Tomsic, 1978)¹¹

Thus the above text reiterated Engle's argument that "as long as women are excluded from socially productive work they cannot be emancipated and in order for them to participate in social production 'housework must be only a minor burden". However, this perspective became the official state policy of most of the socialist system throughout 19th century. Thus the policies of socialist system emphasized on policy measures like : bringing women out of home and into the economy; reorganizing peasant households that kept women in subservient positions; developing communal services to alleviate domestic work and child care; providing equal opportunities for women; mobilizing women into political work and into governmental administration ; and providing adequate working conditions to 'satisfy the particular needs of the female organism and the moral and spiritual needs of women as mothers'¹². Therefore, Socialist states intended to lay emphasis on the entry into wage work as a key to

¹¹ Cited in Molyneux, Maxine. 1981; p. 8-9

¹² Ibid., p. 9

solving women's problems and excluded rigorous analysis of ideological forms, of pre-capitalist relations and practices, and of the relations between sexes, in such a way as to leave out all spaces through which women continued to be taken their subordinated status as natural even while they were involved in productive work.¹³

Feminist groups began appearing in the communist nations in the 1970s when the UN Decade of Women offered an international forum for discourse on women's issues, but most groups were suppressed. There has been a strong debate among the western and socialist feminists on the relative importance of either class or gender as the primary category of analysis while discussing the oppression of women in Central and Eastern European society. As communism instilled the belief into the minds of women that they should not distinguish their needs from the needs of men, but rather should struggle together in their class interests, they could not think of articulating their own rights separately; "...their needs were constantly subsumed under class rhetoric by communist states dominated by male leaders" (Ghodsee, 2008: 229). Moreover, until 1989 feminism had been considered as a 'tool of capitalism' and after the collapse of communism it was seen as a foreign and unwelcome ideology. Although the general perception of women being the losers of the democratic transition has been accepted by most of the women in Central and Eastern Europe, but reasons given for their lack of contribution in social and political level have been associated mostly to personal and family issues. The constructed social role of women rather had been taken as 'natural' and thus their stereotyped role had been traditionally rooted in all sphere of life. So questioning gender role in the family, social and political life had hardly gained any response. Though "there is still a resistance to western feminist ideas and practices, and a few signs of feminist movements in the region" (Slavova, Kornelia. 2006:45) women remained mostly passive. Moreover, the past of historical, cultural and religious background of Central and Eastern region impacted a lot on the development of such disliking towards feminism.

There have been a rejection by East European Feminists towards Western feminists' perceived notion of Eastern women as "monolithic third world woman as sexually constrained, ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family oriented,

¹³ Ibid., p. 10

and victimized versus the self-presentation of Western women as educated, modern women who have control over their bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions” (Mohanty, 1991: 56). East European feminist, Hanna Havelkova claimed that “the tensions in the dialogue between Western and East European women are rooted in the direct application of Western Feminist Theory to Post-Communist Reality”, resulting to a sham assumption that “East European women are second – class citizens, and they are conservative”. It has been stated by several scholars that East European women reluctant to see themselves as “backward, apolitical, full of apathy, and they consider Western feminists as an “internationally messianic brigade, banging the drums of feminism, implicitly universalizing and brainwashing, and thus imperialistic.”(Busheikin, 1997:141)¹⁴

There have been a few researches done on the intersection of Patriarchy with the Communist system. The communist state or the so-called “Father State” combined the idea of fathering and masculinity and handled the ‘woman’s question’ in a patronizing way and always put it aside in order to address other important questions such as production efficiency, the building of canals and roads , the cold war threat etc. The communist state acted as a paternalistic force prescribing women to bear responsibility of family and joining labour force simultaneously. It also interfered into the private sphere of women’s lives like; in the legal right to abortion was recognized in Bulgaria in 1957, but it was restricted in 1968 and in the 1980s die to pro-natalist state policy.¹⁵ There is a debate in literature if the existence of conservative tendencies in Central and Eastern Europe had been rooted in cultural past that predated communism or were a creation of Marxist system itself. Olga Voronina argued that in spite of a discourse of equality for women, the domination of men over women was presupposed by, and implicit in, Marxist – Leninist theory. She criticized the Marxist explanation of the oppression of women along class lines for the analysis of the situation of women. She further argued that the communist system continued to subordinate women, conceptually as well as organizationally. Moreover, the communist patriarchal state used to take most of political decision-making, prescribed

¹⁴ Cited in Slavova, Kornelia. (2006); p. 248

¹⁵ The pro-natalist policies in Bulgaria in 1980s had made in two ways: first, restrictions on abortion (especially for married women who had only one or two children) and incentives for giving birth (such as two year paid maternity leave, advantages for student-mothers, monthly bonuses for each child, state funding of day care centers and kindergartens, and others). However, Bulgarian parliament came up with a liberalized abortion law in 1990.

norms for femininity and masculinity, limited social interaction, took control of media, art, education etc. Thus women's subordination had been a result of both collective male power in the public sphere and individual male power at the private sphere which overlapped and worked as a coalition force in controlling the lives of women. Moreover, a final difference with feminism was that post-revolutionary states usually permitted no autonomous or even semi-autonomous women's movement; women's organizations were strictly subordinated to the party, and to its social and economic priorities. This contrasted with the demand by the Western feminists for autonomous and non-hierarchical women's organizations based on a loosely federated association of grassroots groups. This form of organizational independence was seen as an essential pre-condition for any successful women's struggle. Given these differences, it is not surprising that Western feminists and Eastern feminist used to have hostile view towards each other. The former were aware of the limitations of the socialist states and some may even denied that anything at all has been achieved. The latter however, saw the women's movement as it has arisen since the mid 1960s as wasting its time on 'bourgeois' or 'diversionary' issues, and they often denigrate Western feminism in virulent tones¹⁶. The notion of feminism was thus strongly resisted by the public, women as well as men, in the region (Huland, 2001)¹⁷. This resistance also has arisen out of the past experience of women's emancipation committed by the communist regime which became unsustainable in the face of the economic costs of providing communal arrangements for family and household chores. "The efforts to secure women's emancipation quickly lost political commitment with a consequent worsening of women's employment and family circumstances. Over a period of forty years, the propaganda of emancipation became equated with a duty to hold down a full-time job (generally inferior to that of men) while also keeping the household going" (Lindovska, 1995: 381)¹⁸.

As the so called emancipation gave women an expectation of lifelong employment, even if the positions they held were less paid off, provided social supports to working mothers, provided high educational career for women as men- the emancipation was seen positively. However, the 1989 transitional replacement along with the removal of previous social support created space for discriminatory practices of employers

¹⁶ Molyeneux, Maxine. 1981; p. 12

¹⁷ Cited in Calloni, Marina. et al, 2007, p. 80

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 80

against women who sought to take maternity and child sickness leave, and there also existed continued gender pay gap of around 20 % which had increased women's burden across the region (Pollert, 2003), which also created a vacuum of trust towards the new system and its related ism's. However, "the resistance to gender equality is the belief that women are already emancipated, given four decades of communism, and that this issue is not a problem any longer. The rhetoric that held that women attained equality with men during socialist times is still ingrained in popular attitudes" (Calloni, Marina. et al. 2007: 82) which lead to the rejection of a gender problem in a liberalized economy and society.

Another aspect of this resistance arose from the combination of backlash against the state socialism and a resistance to western ideas of women's liberation (Fodor 2005; Huland, 2001)¹⁹. The idea of western feminism provoked a negative response in the public mind as feminism was "seen as being hostile to men, denying femininity and posing a threat to family (Lindovska, 1995: 381)²⁰. Also "the widespread reluctance to acknowledge gender inequalities is the pervasiveness of traditional views on women's social roles.²¹" The survival of traditional values through conservative parties, Catholic Church which keep valorizing the traditional family unit and women's place within family after transition started dominating the policy making where gender discrimination became pervasive, like in Poland preferred gender of a candidate for employment was common occurrence there. Therefore, it has been a usual matter to find a relative lack of feminist consciousness among women themselves in the region. One of the female signatories of Charter 77 described her relation to the women's movement and her attitude towards present gender equality concern follows:

"I have never been directly involved in any movement. I did not like the company of the socialist communist female leaders.....But this equality that is discussed today, I do not understand it. A woman should work , but she should also stay at home little and make life nicer for the people around her.....No I do not know any women's organization ...I do not follow this gender agenda"²².

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 81

²⁰ Ibid., p. 80

²¹ Ibid., p. 82

²² Ibid., p. 83

Also Eastern European Women's attitude towards feminism arose from the very new circumstances in which these women encountered their western counterparts and travelled to western countries. Living behind the iron curtain, prevented from travelling to the West, and deprived of free access to news media, Eastern European women had developed an idealized view of the west- a view that was based largely on their reading of the glamorous women's magazines that, although officially forbidden, were nonetheless widely available. With the lifting of these restrictions, these women were soon disillusioned. The Western society that they had imagined as a utopia of universal prosperity proved in fact to be pervaded by inequality, poverty, alienation, and violence. Moreover the combination of democratic rights of free speech with capitalist greed could produce some very unpleasant effects- pornography, prostitution, and the sex industry flourished everywhere. If after two centuries of struggle Western feminists had not been able to free women of their own countries from violence and misogyny, then how effective were the ideologies and political strategies that they now urged upon Eastern European women"²³. Thus the stereotypical image of the Western feminist as the single, childless professional was deeply unappealing to many women who prized the familial relationships that their overburdened lived had left them little to cultivate. Western feminists' view of the family as the primary focus of women's subordination hardly fit the experience of women for whom the home had been the only retreat from the coercive pressures of a totalitarian society.²⁴

The decade of the 1990s witnessed a burgeoning of women's NGOs, as well as the creation of alliances with other organizations operating both at national and transnational levels. However, because these organizations largely depended on foreign donors, their autonomy, as well as their capacity to voice women's interests in political deliberation and decision-making, was rather limited.

The transition in 1989 encompassed all transformation and structural change that took place in public sphere in Central and Eastern European society, but it hardly took on the aspect of transformation of the 'private sphere', the relationship between the family and the state, the social position of women and women's participation in that transformation. During transition women were being pushed back to their home and

²³ Allen, Taylor Ann. 2008; p. 136-137

²⁴ Ibid., p. 138

they became marginalized in social, economic and political domain of life. Women destined to have little power or no power in the constitutional, legal and political institutions. However, the concepts of “feminism”, “emancipation,” “equality,” all bore different meanings for Eastern and Western women. All these ideas have been incorporated to the existence of individuality in the form of “freedom” by the Western women whereas the same had been subsumed under the conscience of collective freedom for the Eastern European women. Women did identify them as a ‘class’ rather than as ‘category’ which lead them make their collective consciences prioritized over their individual consciousness. “Feminism” has been seen as a “bourgeoisie” movement by the women in the region, “emancipation” however meant for them as the inclusion of women in the paid labor force along with familial responsibility and “equality” meant their equal participation in the labor force. Hanna Havelkova argued that this sense of being equal also cropped up because women were equally lacked rights of citizenship along with men. Therefore all these terms seemed not so important for them. “Whereas women in the West had negative political rights and wanted positive social rights, women in the East had something like social rights but lacked political rights and negative rights” (Funk, Nanette. 1993, p. 85-88). Women who took an interest in women’s issues were at risk of being labeled feminists. The entire concept of feminism was discredited with the term being misunderstood and associated with the most extreme Western feminists. The Eastern stereotype of a Western feminist was a masculine, domineering woman who hates men. Although many women lead their lives in ways most Western feminists would label as liberated (e.g. obtaining high education, achieving economic independence, and valuing their careers), most post-communist women were reluctant to use the term. Moreover “most of the Eastern European women did not channel their political energies into feminism, but joined their men in calling for the basic human rights and freedom of which both men and women had been deprived.²⁵” In Bulgaria the attitude of women towards feminism has been largely affected by the communist ideology. The romantic declaration of equal opportunities in areas of education , employment, professional careers, and social benefits kept women under the illusion and they continued taking quadruple burden of their roles as wives , mothers, workers, and

²⁵ Ibid., p. 103

often, public activists(Valentich & Gripton, 1991)²⁶ as natural for women. While their attitude of taking all these roles usual and normal, many women generated a firm conviction that there was no need to establish independent women's organizations for the protection of women's rights and interests. Moreover communist regime disbanded any (feminine) 'ism' or any autonomous women's organizations which was politically independent from the policy of ruling communist party.²⁷ All these reasons decreased the feminist consciousness of Bulgarian women and inhibited the development of a feminist movement.

Feminism made its very first, shy appearance in Poland among university students in the early '80s, and it was then, that the debate on women's issues began. The women's discourse in Poland has been based on indigenous questions and problems. It involved not only women scholars, journalists, and politicians but also a new breed of women activists. The very word "feminism" has been perceived in Poland as a pejorative one, and it was considered political suicide for a woman active in public life to identify herself primarily with women's issues (Matynia, Elzbieta. 1994: 243). The process of discovering, acknowledging, and defining women's problems has not been an easy one, especially in the context of Post-Communist societies undergoing systemic transformation. One of the by-products of this transformation, for example, has been the rise of nationalist ideologies that gave the rights of the nation priority over the rights of the citizen. Women were defined as bearers of the nation's ethnicity and were, therefore, considered a vital factor in national survival. However, "In Poland, women's political mobilization around a feminist agenda and gender issues is weak²⁸".

This research would study the socio-political role of women in Central and Eastern Europe especially in Poland and Bulgaria in the wake of transition and would attempt to explore the trajectory of women's lives. After so much of bountiful expression of gender equality, neither communist regime nor the new democracy brought women at par with men in political domain or in decision-making. The decade long gender inequality which traced back to pre-historic times had been suppressed under the fabricated version of socialism but which again resurfaced during transition period in

²⁶ Cited in Latridis, D. Demetrius. (eds.)2000; p. 92

²⁷ Ibid., p. 92

²⁸ Cited in Calloni, Marina. et al. 2007; p. 83

a more prominent way. Women though had achieved higher education, there was no substantial representation of women in the politics or decision –making body and women in general show apathy towards politics or other professional domain. Under the apparently gender equal exterior society, women continued to have given unequal treatment in public as well as in private life.

The following chapter would discuss the lives of women during and after transition in Central and Eastern Europe. It would give an overview of the lives of women in Pre-transition and in Post-transition in a general way and then would situate them in the context on Poland and Bulgaria. The Social role of women in Central and Eastern Europe has mainly taken into consideration in the following chapter where it has been seen how the social role of women being framed by religion, tradition, patriarchal structure of society as well as by the male oriented state. Their social role has been discussed in the sphere of family, civil society and in managerial position which would help us understanding their position in social life.

CHAPTER 2

WOMEN'S LIVES: BEFORE AND AFTER THE TRANSITION

"Equality is not simply giving women the right to shovel manure."

Valentina Dobrokhotova²⁹.

The common features of inhabiting the region of Central and Eastern Europe are the feudal and imperial past, the heritage of two world wars, and the experience of different variations of socialism. This feudal nature and the imperial past have had a foremost influence in shaping the lives of people in the region. The social roles within the family and in society have been defined by both traditions and social policy. Some of the most important differences within the area resulted from the variety of religious traditions. The region houses a large population of Catholics Eastern Orthodox and Muslims. Some areas like Poland have been dominated by one major religion, Catholicism in this case. Therefore various religion and cultural traditions played an important role in determining women's role within the household, the family and thus the larger society. Most of these religions held a traditional and conservative outlook of women's role, tying them to household duties and child bearing. Since Eastern European regions have been subject to different feudal and imperial authorities, it also has faced different policies regarding women. Like in the areas formerly under Ottoman control, there was a long-standing tradition of the peasant, Christian family unit being in opposition to the imperial administration. The family pattern that evolved was thus incorporated the code of honour and the blood feud, a strict hierarchy. It had put an emphasis on women's fertility, as large families offered greater protection and the family had to surrender one male child to the state. In Poland Catholicism dictated the families to be large and advocated strict anti-abortion rules. The creation of the Soviet bloc redefined the role of women in family and society. Communist government formally committed itself to emancipate women and made women's lives and responsibilities eased by government sponsored schools and workplace, canteens, communal, laundries, and improved shopping and service

²⁹ Cited in LaFont, Suzanne. 2001.

facilities. But the eventual economic problem drove women outside home along with their familial burden. The official doctrine of state socialism treated the family being responsible for duties towards the society and the state. Women were responsible for fulfilling their obligations as both mother and worker. Thus gender division within the family still persisted. Since the WW II, a large number of women entered into the labour force to fulfill their financial needs not for self-liberation. The collapse of the soviet bloc had a major impact on public policy regarding women's rights and their place in the family. With the fall of communist system, the trappings of gender parity fell away, exposing discrimination against women that had persisted in the totalitarian state (Hunt, Swanee. 1997: 2). Women used to live in regimes that at least theoretically guaranteed them the legal right to equality and basis family planning practices but are now subject to right wing parties' rejection of state socialist policies on women's emancipation. The new system emphasized the traditional role of women and pushed them back to home. Most women though still worked outside the home but due to the increasing privatization of child care facilities and unemployment most of the middle class women could not afford the facility and chose to accept their home maker role.³⁰

There have been various indicators through which women's status in society can be analyzed. Such as Political Participation, Levels of education, State of health, representation in decision-making, Access to property, abortion etc. However, in the context of Central and Eastern Europe we will take into consideration the level of decision-making as an indicator to study their status in society. The chapter would run through Pre-transition and Post-transition era depicting the lives of women and would seek to understand their social role. However, decision-making, would be the parameter to analyze their status in social life. Although the communist system encouraged women to take education and incorporated large chunk of them in to the labour force, but it did not make them vocal in terms of taking decisions either within family or in public life. While being highly educated, they continued to occupy low level positions in public domain. We would also see how the new market economy marginalized women in the economy, displaced them politically, thus disable them in all sphere of lives.

³⁰ Dale, Spender and Chervis, Kramarae. 2000; p. 1392.



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Tracing the position of women since interwar years, especially under the authoritarian and totalitarian regimes we have seen how structural arrangements of the regimes had perpetually shaped the lives of women. These regimes arose when democracy failed to carry out in many European countries after the WW I. Authoritarian regimes found its root in Eastern and Southern Europe which aimed at preserving an existing social order and made conservative base through an established Church and a set of national customs and traditions. Totalitarian regimes on the other hand aimed at radical change particularly Soviet Union perpetually showed contempt for traditional norms and mobilized its populations along the line of 'classless society'. The position of women however was no better even in the authoritarian states of Eastern and Southern Europe because it upheld traditional values, including those of patriarchal family and also it based Orthodox Churches in its land which perpetually has been dominated and interfered in matters of public as well as private life. This chapter intends to portray the lives of women within the social-cultural framework during and after transition in central and Eastern Europe vis-à-vis Poland and Bulgaria.

I. PRE-TRANSITION SCENARIO:

While holding a different view from Hitler on 'Woman question'³¹, Lenin, the leader of Bolshevik Revolution which brought communist rule in Soviet Russia in 1917, agreed on a similar line that the state and its ruling party defined the status and shaped the lives of women.

However, Lenin's concern of 'Women question' which envisaged that "women are crushed by their domestic drudgery and only socialism can relieve them of this drudgery"³², never materialized in reality. Fashioning on Soviet empire's desired projection of a utopian society based on gender equality, the Soviet satellites too, initiated policies and mandated gender equality in the family, in work place, in educational institutions and in politics, but all left mostly unaccomplished. Although numerous efforts were taken to equal the status of women by providing them educational opportunities and incorporating them into the workforce, it never created

³¹ Hitler believed that woman's world must be limited to her husband, her family, her children, her home where as Lenin believed in emancipation of women through socialist society: (Allen, Taylor. Ann,2008, pp- 42)

³² Allen, Taylor. Ann. 2008; p. 43

a democratic space to empower women as the male oriented system was reluctant to fulfill woman's aspirations to be "able to live as a whole person, to make use of all their senses and abilities"³³. The communist ideology was based on the belief that inequality between women and men would be resolved when inequality, based on class relations and private property would be eliminated...therefore the general idea of equality was the inclusion and participation of both women and men in the public sphere, i.e. in the sphere of politics and labor market (Kiczkova & Farkasova, 1993; Watson, 2000)³⁴. The continuous phenomena of low wages, unsatisfactory working conditions, monotonous and repetitive work, easy hiring and firing along with familial responsibility put a double burden on women and deteriorated the status of women in society. Subsequently, even the formulations of policies were not made women friendly rather of it were troublesome for them.

As the political system of all the Central and Eastern European countries had been highly centralized and adopted Marxism –Leninism as official ideology, the party reserved to itself the right to interpret the ideology, set national policy and oversaw its implementation. The dominance of the communist party meant "...that women as well as other citizens have fewer avenues to participate in politics or become part of the political elite than citizens in democratic political systems"³⁵. Also the public policies were very much influenced by the party elites. Apparently the party seemed to comply with the ideology of women's equality in all sphere of life which in reality was a far cry. Women from former socialist countries often expressed their feelings about this in such contradictory statements as "...we are too emancipated and the emancipation did not bring anything to women, it has not really liberated us" (Zmroczek, et al, 1999: 99). Difference in women's status and other conditions during the pre- communist period set the stage for efforts on the part of the communist leaders to change women's role in Eastern Europe but the fate of women remained same during communist era also, as the women issue continued being a low priority concerns throughout the communist era, another reason of this denial was that the communist elites adopted very similar political institutions as well as strategies for economic development and social transformation after coming to power.

³³ Ibid., p. 97

³⁴ Cited by Humer, Zlva in Fabian, and Katalin. 2007; p. 309

³⁵ Wolchik L. Sharon and Meyer G. Alfred (eds.), 1985; p.37

Moreover, because of the totalitarian and paternalistic nature of communist regime, the social status of a person was not a matter of individual achievement through personal merit like knowledge, efficiency, but was dependent on the status granted from above. Thus the ideology of overall social equality left a feeling of injustice in almost every profession especially in regard of salary. The paradox was paramount in the case of women. On one hand women's social or public status undoubtedly increased because of communist policies and on the other hand those policies were not really liberating for women because as individuals their status was also determined by the same system. Like the Five Year Plan introduced by Stalin had harsh impact on the status of women. As the goal of five year plans was the rapid and massive growth of heavy industry and as the countries in central and eastern region were undergoing crisis due to inflation, decline in productivity and massive displacement of rural population, women were pushed into labor force to compensate this.

The decade long legal restriction to politics by women, which had been abolished by communist states could not confer them a bright career. Beneath the synchronized exterior, politics seemed to have still the domain of male bodies and not all women but a few were bestowed with political career, some of which were wives of dictators or belong to the elite class or other prominent women. Even the picture was more depressing in the decision making part as the finally recruited women also rarely had any role except approving decisions already made by party leadership. Women politicians were usually assigned to work in areas that were stereotyped female, such as health, education, social service, or the distribution of consumer goods. However, the 'male elite' continued to enjoy political power and women were forbidden to exercise that power. In many countries women academic and administrative staff has been concentrated at lower levels of their institutions and formed only a small minority in the most senior positions. The gendered division of labor in society was also reflected in women's greater share of teaching, pastoral care, child bearing and rearing, and clerical roles, while men used to dominate in research and senior management role.

Even in employment sphere the scene was dismaying as the high rate of educational growth could not get tuned with the rate of employment. Everywhere, women's rate of literacy increased dramatically during communist rule and an increasing number of

girls attended secondary school and university. For example, in Czechoslovakia, women had comprised only about 20% of all university students in 1950 which went up by 44% in 1989³⁶. The integration of educated qualified women into the labor force has been disproportionate with their level of qualification and women's occupational patterns remained much the same as they had been during the inter war period. In many field, male and female spheres were defined by technology, the higher its level of technological sophistication, the more likely a job was to be labeled male. Women continued to concentrate in textile industry and garment factories which classified as 'light' industry but which actually involved long shifts and stressful conditions and of low wages. In most East European countries almost all nurses, secretaries and preschool teachers were women. In the 1980s, in the USSR, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, close to 90% of working-age women were employed³⁷. Despite this, gender segregation in the labor force persisted with women concentrated in the low status, low paying jobs and being passed over for promotions and important positions because their child care and domestic responsibilities prevented them from being "reliable" workers³⁸. Thus so convincing glossy image of 'really existing socialism' was in reality an unfulfilled propaganda and women in communist economies were disadvantaged relatively to those who lived under capitalism.

There was another paradox which is manifested in the ideological level: on one hand officially all the problems were declared solved but problems were still lying beneath. The system propagated social equality in all sphere but indirectly they blocked any articulation of any such problem, any gathering around, any alien voice against system, any movements. In one sense any such mechanisms which could help spreading awareness among people and especially for women was stopped totally. Moreover, any activity pertaining to women from below was paralyzed as they were strongly protected by the state, so theoretically they had no reason to complain and also theoretically most women were unexposed to feminist ideas as their minds were convinced conditionally if not forcibly.

³⁶ Allen, Taylor. Ann 2008; p. 109

³⁷ LaFont, Suzanne. 2001, p; 205

³⁸ Ibid., p. 206

Therefore, there was a sheer gap between the bright promise and dismal reality of communist societies in several areas like in politics, in family, in employment etc. It seemed that the values of gender rights were lagging behind other concepts such as democracy, human rights, civil society, and political institution building. Thus in the realm of gender, the regime tended to reproduce traditional sex roles, not officially but in an unspoken and subtle way. “For legal reform and inspirational propaganda alone could not do much to change hallowed customs and well established ways of life. The most insightful social theorists of the past had realized that true gender equality required the restructuring of the household, domestic work and child rearing, but apart from child care that enabled women to work outside the home, communists’ governments did not provide many such services. Any truly effective attack on male supremacy in the family would have violated an implicit bargain between the regimes and their male citizens, who in return for obedience to the government continued to enjoy their traditional privileges at home. The foundation of the communist as of the capitalist economies continued to be the unpaid household and reproductive labor of women, enforced by durable and largely unquestioned traditions of male supremacy.”³⁹

II. TRANSITION 1989-PRESENT:

The introduction of the new market economy and new democracy held no promise of the earlier government, and virtually restored the same ‘gender inequality’ in all spheres which has now become more discernible in the case of women. Women also confronted with cultural shock which originated in the fact that they have been uprooted and are suddenly living in a totally new environment in which they must quickly adapt. “Many women soon realized that although communism was dead, patriarchy was still alive and well⁴⁰”. The new democratic system which apparently offered the hope of truly representative and gender equal democracy in the region could not empower and emancipate women in true sense. Although women managed to get some space in educational institutions, in the workplace, in politics, in social

³⁹ Allen, Taylor Ann. 2008; pp 104

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 132

and recreational pursuits, they still experienced a partial 'democratization' where women were outpaced from the democratized spaces.

At the same time privatization put women in the periphery of market economy as less competent, less efficient, and less likely to hold a leadership position per se. The new government encouraged women by sponsoring many new institutions, opened sky ending opportunity for women to compete with male counterparts, but new democracy could not free them from their overburden of work and family task. Moreover, the abolished quota system left women almost invisible in the parliament. The election results showed a dramatic decrease in the number of women delegates to national legislative bodies. In Czechoslovakia women gained only 19% of parliamentary seats; Poland 13%...and there was no substantial increase in these numbers in subsequent elections.⁴¹ Moreover, discrimination still persisted in terms of decision-making process as political parties were still reluctant to share political space with women and they liked to see women being stereotyped.

There was a traumatic impact on the employment patterns too. Unemployment rose rapidly as state owned enterprises were closed down or reorganized under private management, which usually upgraded technology and fired unskilled and inefficient workers especially women. The vulnerability of women continued to be prominent in the new market structure - industries that employed large numbers of women under communism, particularly textile industry became least needed now in new industrialized phase and got closed first due to elimination of trade barrier, which resulted in the elimination of women. Also a large group of women who had worked in social services, particularly in health and educational sectors got chucked out with the reorganization and privatization process inside these sectors. The open and competent market economy also very often preferred the male candidate for a lucrative job as it demanded stereotypical male qualities like aggression, initiative and competitiveness which ruled out the possibility of entrance of women.

The formation of a new democratic nation state disappointed the participation in politics by female politicians. Most communist governments had appointed seats to women according to quota (30%) and thus women could play a visible parliamentary role. Of course, with the fall of communism these quotas were abolished and

⁴¹ Ibid., p.134

representatives were chosen through elections in which multiple parties competed. Also few women who were elected to national parliaments were often so disappointed by their reception that they wondered whether politics was worth the immense time and effort that it required. In 1992, the political scientist Mary Ellen Fisher interviewed five such deputies who represented a range of political parties who complained that their male colleagues did not take them seriously, that their own party leaders refused to choose them for important committees, that there was little attention to women's issues-even the Commission for Labor, Health, Social Protection and the Status of Women was headed by a man- and that the hectic schedule of a politician was hard to combine with the responsibilities of a wife and mother.⁴²

Other than these, women were also exploited by the existing norms and values of society which were designed after the interests of Orthodox Churches prevailing in the region and which led women carried their prescribed role in society unquestionably. The Church was dominant in almost all the satellite countries which carried its legacy even after transition. Immediately after the transition the religious leaders in the region used their considerable financial resources in political arena, sponsoring candidates, exerting pressure on government, in order to propagate things in favor of their own interests. The Church got succeeded in influencing the minds of people like "in 1990s church attendance declined in Western Europe but increased in Eastern Europe by about 10% ..."⁴³ The Church, the media, even the secular policy-makers all emphasized the notion of "traditional family unit" and "traditional gender roles". Women were taken as bearer of racial tradition to continue the nationalistic trend. The revival of traditional "family values" added consequences for women in many areas of life: "double shift" in communist period became increasingly difficult due to lacking of any paid maternity leaves now. However, total absence of effective measures against gender discrimination etc. contributed to the economic vulnerability of pregnant women and mothers. In recent transition though the laws mandated paid maternity leaves and opportunity for motherhood but it remained scripted on books only. Also due to low priority to contraception women were exposed to unprecedented consequences like 'sex trafficking' and all.

⁴² Ibid; p. 135

⁴³ Ibid; p.143

Almost similar condition of geographical proximity of Poland and Bulgaria made these countries vulnerable to foreign influence or outright domination. The women issue in both Poland and Bulgaria has been differently shaped. In 1945 they both started from a different position in creating a new political order. Poland has been linked for 10 centuries with the community of Western European states and the Roman Catholic Church, in which women were granted full legal equality shortly after WW-I, prior to the majority of Western European countries. In Bulgaria the signs of Turkish oppression of several hundred years and the impact of Islam were still remarkable, and it was only in 1947 that Bulgarian women received their civil rights. The following parts will be processed on the status of women in Poland and Bulgaria within the framework of Socio-Political role and their status would thus be explored.

III. WOMEN AND THEIR 'SOCIAL ROLE' DURING AND AFTER TRANSITION

The Communist era had accomplished two things for women (1) solidification and reinforcement of women's role in preserving cultural values and (2) accommodation (formally and informally) of family needs in the workplace via a number of welfare programs which worked as 'safety net' for women. State services or benefits like: extensive maternity benefits, earlier retirement ages for women, day care, medical facilities, etc. tried to apparently pacify the minds of people especially women so that they would mum about their real fate in life. Moreover, the soviet women had benefits and accommodating informal work patterns (e.g. it was permissible to leave the job to shop for groceries) that supported family responsibilities. These arrangements were done for the need of family survival which was given highest importance during Soviet era. Beside this conservative gender ideologies played an important role in determining women's positions in the Central and Eastern region. For example, several authors had pointed to the pervasiveness of the role of the Catholic Church in Poland, which they link to the revocation of abortion rights, the imposed image of "Matka Polka"⁴⁴ as a nationalist symbol and the dissemination of constructing ideas about women's proper sexual behavior and personal character (Fodor, Éva. and Lippe, der. Van. Tanja.1998: 132). All these successfully reinforce

⁴⁴ The heroic Polish Mother

the message that women's appropriate place was in the home. Moreover, pressure increased on women to give up individual aspirations and personal goals and to adhere to group-defined norms and collective goals, which Papanek said usually took the form of renewed demand for family stability and appealed to traditional roles for women. Thus the role of women under socialism was largely defined in terms of traditional pattern. Their individual aspirations were overlooked; their social role was split between a mother and a working lady who had to work outside not for recognition of her individual existence but to sustain her family needs.

The political and economic reforms during transition also had a profound impact on the daily lives of women. East European societies had a tradition of strong conservative patriarchal structures, which were suppressed during the state socialist era but it resurfaced immediately after the collapse of the regime, resulting in women's increased oppression. Some researchers attributed the resurfacing of staunchly traditional gender role expectations on part of both men and women to a backlash against forty years of communist propaganda. Women continued being seen as primary caretakers of the household which affected their career also. Their engagement with the family responsibility made them less suitable candidate for the employers who view it as an indication of lack of ambition, unreliability and more time off work due to outside responsibilities. Also there are researchers who had pointed out that while women were pushed out of the labor force, there were no civil organizations which were successful in identifying and fighting for women's interests. Many female MPs turned a blind eye to the gendered consequences of policies passed by their own parties in Parliament.

Although modernization entered through the prism of transition in 1989, but the cognitive nature of society still remained strong there. This created a conflict between the traditional and modern ideas about the role of a woman. In spite of scholarly discourse and official rhetoric, women's position in society may it be social or political could not have been redefined. Their roles were largely ineffective in all spheres. They did not usually appear in the higher posts in the party, and their ministerial positions were mainly in ministries carrying lesser prestige and power.

A. THE CONFLICT BETWEEN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SPHERE:

Socialist systems legitimated themselves with the claim that they redistributed the social product in the interests of the general welfare. Using this premise, socialist paternalist constructed its “nation” on an implicit view of society as a family headed by a “Wise” Party that, in a paternal guise, made all the family’s allocative decisions as to who should produce what and who should receive what reward – thus it became a “Parent-State”. Socialist society thus resembled the classic *zadruga-state*: as an extended family, it was composed of individual nuclear families, but these were bound into a larger familial organization of patriarchy with the “father” Party at its head”(Verdery, Katherine. 1996: 64).

According to some European sociologists, during the Communist period, men and women retreated to the private sphere, a sphere dominated by women – to protect cultural norms and values in the face of a state that had either lost its credibility (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary) or was eroding in moral authority (USSR). It was here that women took on the role of preserving and transmitting culture and values via education and socialization of their children. Women’s identity became closely associated with national, cultural, and family survival. In times of national endangerment, women’s roles became critical to preserving a sense of unity and communal identity and their stature increased. Thus, Communist paternalism – Verdery (1994: 63) calls it ‘socialist paternalism’ – came to dominate the public sphere where male supremacy prevailed, and women became the caretaker of private sphere. Anthropologist Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo (1974) was the first one to argue that women’s subordination was the consequence of a division between public and the private world which were associated with men and women respectively. “Women may be important , powerful, and influential, but it seems that relative to men of their age and social status women lack generally recognized and culturally valued authority...this cultural and political subordination derived from the gender division of labor between women’s domestic and men’s public activities”(Rosaldo, Michelle)⁴⁵ and thus they have less power than men in all societies. However, she fostered no possibility of having a totally egalitarian society and believed that women would never come closer to equality even if men become more involved in

⁴⁵ Cited in Schackel, Sandra. 2003; p. 19

domestic life. For her men's separation from the domestic sphere set them apart from the intimacy of the domestic world, and made them more suitable for involvement in religious and political life which led them exercising power over the domestic units which were the focus of women's lives. As women were not party to the original contract; they were incorporated into the private sphere through the marriage contract as wives subservient to their husbands, rather than as individuals (Pateman)⁴⁶. Therefore, private sphere has been a site of subjection, a part of civil society, but separated from the 'civil' sphere. This separation of the public and private spheres has had important implication for the construction and evolution of political and economic institutions at all levels. Feminists saw them as intimately related. For them what goes on in the public sphere of politics and the economy cannot be understood as separate from the private one. Historically, therefore, terms such as citizen and head of household were not neutral but associated with men. Even in states where women have achieved formal or near-formal equality, feminists have claimed that this historical legacy still inhibited their political and economic participation on an equal basis with men. And women's activities such as reproduction and child rearing tend to devalued them in all societies. Deep structures, upheld by the public and private divide, have continued to keep women in positions of subordination, even after the acquisition of the vote or other legal gains; despite the fact that women have always participated in the public sphere as workers, they did not have the same civil standing as men in most societies. However feminist scholarship on women and politics in Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic States highlighted the prevalence of traditional gender role stereotyping as an important barrier to women's political representation and civic participation in the region after 1989. According to this literature, the traditional division of gender roles along the public-private divide was never questioned during the period of state socialism and despite achieving high levels of participation in education, politics and employment, women continued to be regarded as the primary caregivers of children, nurturers of family life, and responsible for performing the essential household tasks. Men on the other hand were seen as *breadwinners* with greater access to job promotions; they occupied the majority of

⁴⁶ Cited in Tickner, Ann J. 2001

key management and decision-making positions and received, on average, a 25 to 30% higher salary than women.⁴⁷

In line with Socialist pattern, democratic transitions also have been prominently negative for women in states of Central and Eastern Europe: gender relations associated with the public /private divide became more pronounced after the transition. Because of the elimination of quota system in legislatures in this region, the number of women in institutional politics was sharply reduced after transitions to democracy, with the proportion of women elected to representative bodies declining from an average of 33% to 10%. Notable was the fact that women's representation in politics under communist regimes which was largely window dressing which have been reiterated even in the new regime of democracy and thus women were equally marginalized from the real centers of power before and after democratic transitions. The drop in political participation of women was further accompanied by a loss of economic status. The transition to market economies and structural adjustment associated with the opening to the global economy took disproportionate number of women out of the labor force because of the need to shed labor to adjust to market competition. In early 1990s, in all of Central Eastern Europe except Hungary, women constituted 50-70% of total unemployed. However, working women tended to be confined to traditional, low paying female occupations. Given the diminishing demand for labor and the erosion of state provided social services such as day care and health care, women were became dependent wives, mothers, and consumers and caregivers; with child care and maternity leave being dismantled, women were cast as 'unreliable' workers. Barbara Einhorn suggested that these roles were profoundly undemocratic as women began to be redefined as passive beings rather than mature political subjects. In 1990s, there was also a sense that women's rights were peripheral and that working to improve their status was a luxury, given the economic difficulties of transition. She concluded that women have generally been more disadvantaged than men by structural changes. Given their triple burden under socialism, as workers, mothers and homemakers, many women did not regret giving up paid work. However, they believed that accommodations in the workplace have been made for biological reasons, not out of socially constructed gender reasons. "The

⁴⁷ Calloni, Marina. et al, 2007; p. 12

biological reproduction now permeated the public sphere rather than confined to be the domestic one” (Verdery, Katherine. 1996:66). The workplace thus defined as a *secondary* responsibility for women, not primary and therefore promotions will go to those for whom the workplace was a primary responsibility (i.e. the primary ‘breadwinner’ role task), usually to men. This has, from their perspective, nothing to do with *achieved* social roles and accomplishments, but with biological differences between men and women that were socially accommodated. For Marody ⁴⁸, women then ‘rebelled against their female fate and not against the society that treated them in unequal ways’. And thus their political participation has been traditionally taken as restricted or unnatural. Women had what is commonly referred to as the triple shift or burden, working for paid employment, performing the majority of domestic duties (which increased substantially during periods of shortages by having to stand in long queues for basic goods), and participating as social activists. Bulgarian women described all of this responsibility with the saying “It is difficult and hazardous to carry three watermelons under one arm” (Petrova, D. 1993: 23)

However, unlike Western Europe where the attitude towards women in political life has been more egalitarian before attitudes on family life, the dynamic has been different in Eastern and Central Europe where attitudes that are more egalitarian were shaped in the areas of employment, education and family life only.

IV. ROLE OF WOMEN IN FAMILY, CIVIL SOCIETY AND MANAGERIAL POSITION

A. POLAND

(i) Family:

In Poland “there are two traditions predominated and molded the most common personality patterns: the class tradition (of the workers, peasants and the gentry) and the Roman Catholic tradition.”⁴⁹ Roman Catholicism has had a special place in the cultural and psychological makeup of the Poles. Also Poland’s unique economic and political history in the past made particular class and strata to view women’s role

⁴⁸ Cited in Goldfarb, Jeffrey. 1998: 198

⁴⁹ Siemienska, Renata. 1985; p. 332

differently. Generally women were housewives and mothers loaded with family responsibility of looking after the home and children. Beside, women were also responsible for the patriotic upbringing of the younger generation and often ran estate alone while their husbands went off to fight in war; among the peasants, women used to do farm work and also joined in industrial work. "In 1931, 33.6% of all workers were women."⁵⁰

During the 16th and 17th centuries the existence of women and their status was determined by two crucial factors: *gender* and *belonging to a given social group*. The phases of women's existence were determined by her gender and her place in the family, regardless of her social position. Thus women were usually perceived as maidens, wives, mothers, widows, etc. Each phase had its own features, granted different rights and duties, the awareness of which was deeply rooted not only in legal regulations but, above all, in old Polish mentality and custom⁵¹. However, the marriage had been considered the most important phase in women's life.

The gender disparity manifested itself at the very moment of childbirth where male child was preferred most as it ensured the continuity of family line and also a stable source for future for parents. Female child though was not that aspired one but she was even loved deeply by her parents. However, the life of a girl was framed within the purview of traditional norms and they were lacking any choice to make decision for their own lives. For an example: a teenage polish girl usually has to confront with two options: marriage or convent. In case of a poor girl, one could take up a position as a servant and remain unmarried till her death. This choice was made not by the girl but by her parents and relatives. Thus, it was the parents and relatives who decided on marriage or a religious carrier for a young girl. The rigorous model of the patriarchal family also prevailed among the moderately wealthy families where parents especially the fathers, exercised strong control even over the adult children, and the matter of choice of husband was decided by the head of the family.⁵² The continuation of patriarchy after marriage made the lives of women even worse. Theoretically, the model of marriage in a patriarchal old polish family was based on the domination of the husband, on the one hand, and the subordination and submission of the wife, on

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 333

⁵¹ Bogucka, Maria. 2004; p. 1

⁵² Ibid., p.5

the other. A married woman did not need to have her own head as her husband's head was enough to dictate her life.

The status of women in Poland after WW II had also been largely influenced by two important factors: educational opportunity for women, and propagation of gender equality. The change in the socio-economic and political system associated with rapid industrialization resulted in a new situation for women. The old patterns of women's behaviour were considered passé and the state propaganda stressed new expectations. Although women's position in education and paid professions had contributed to their independence, their overall status could not have upgraded. And their occupational status could not get tuned with their status at home.

Beside these, the labour policies, the pro-natalist policies of the state had defined women exclusively as workers and mothers respectively. Thus in the state's essentialising vision, women were just workers and mothers and nothing else (Kligman Gail and Gal Susan, 2000). Though the communist government encouraged both the roles but it did little to help women coordinate the two roles, instead it reemphasized a traditional image of the self-sacrificing Polish Mother who subordinated her needs and aspirations to the needs of the family and country. Thus women's social identity was most often described as *wife, mother, citizen, bread winner*-the women who carried these images were treated positive way and women who did not comply with it were taken as negative models and characterized as mistresses, divorces, hussies, bamboos, economical, clever, reasonable , and considered to be lonely and depressed and tired. Thus the socialist state took great interest in shaping women's role's vis-à-vis work and motherhood; it was silent on gender relations.

The patriarchal model of family continued to be the order of the day. The man considered to be the head of the household and the primary wage earner and women being a housewife and domestic caretaker. This existence of patriarchal family in Poland has been rooted in Polish society even prior to Poland's pre-war social structure. The socialist government had however failed to attempt to redefine men and women's social roles; instead it reinforced pre-war conceptions of gender. In most empirical and theoretical works, it has been evident that in Poland there has been a strong adherence to the tradition which has assigned separate roles and domains to

women and men. This tradition confined the majority of women to inferior positions in every aspect of social life and stood in the way of their achieving full equality. The majority of women work in the traditional feminine occupations with low status and low pay, and there were not many women who held better-paying, managerial and professional positions. Moreover, in spite of the almost universal participation of women in the labour force, their employment was not widely accepted, and women destined to be primarily expected to fulfill first the roles of wives, mothers, and homemakers. They worked, because they wanted, first of all, to secure the basic means of maintaining the family and to maintain contact with a wider environment.⁵³

Thus Communism did provide women with rights and social entitlements which at the time were often unavailable to women in Western countries: legal guarantees of women's equality, greater access to education, increasing opportunities in the public sphere, property and inheritance rights, child allowances, state-sponsored child care, lengthy maternity leaves, etc. But all these social entitlements though theoretically attempted, but failed, to reconcile women's roles as producers and reproducers. Women who placed their children in state-run childcare institutions were considered "bad" mothers, while women who juggled job and family were considered "bad" workers because their domestic responsibilities made them unreliable employees⁵⁴. Such laws and policies also reinforced women's reproductive and child rearing roles by granting benefits to mothers and excluding fathers, e.g. in Poland, prior to 1975, fathers were ineligible for child care sick days (Goven, 2000; Einhorn, 1993).⁵⁵

The end of state socialism brought restructuring of the labor market , reshaping of legal and political infrastructures, welfare policy reform and the institution of markets and private property which led to the massive job loss through layoffs and forced retirements. Poland for example was successful in implementing economic reforms, including the mass privatization of firms. Though initially it experienced deep recessions and reductions in output, it was able to maintain economic growth by the mid-1990s. By early 1993, more than 50 % of Polish Workers were employed in private enterprise⁵⁶. One of the consequences of successful and rapid privatization in Poland was early and substantial labor shedding. In Poland employment declined

⁵³ Wesola, Gontarczyk. Ewa, 1995; p. 69

⁵⁴ LaFont, Suzanne.2001, p. 206

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Goldman, F. Minton. 1997; p. 244.

nearly 15% in the early 1990s. Bulgarians also experienced massive job loss in the early 1990s as well, though not as a result of economic restructuring but due to the decline of demand and lack of competitiveness of Bulgarian firms that accompanied trade liberalization and the collapse of the COMECON trading system. Bulgaria experienced the steepest declines in employment due to economic crisis of 1992-1993 which cut the industrial production nearly half. Around 25% decline was noticed in jobs and nearly double the unemployment rate relative to other countries of Central and Eastern Europe⁵⁷. Thus the structural and economic change of transition gave a lip service in order to enhance the status of women in society. Women were trapped into 'traditional role' and 'new role'. Economically, the abundance of goods and services stood in stark contrast to the 'economy of shortage' that marked the period before transition and which led to easing the burden of daily work for family like in the new system women did not have to wait in queue or carry heavy bags or do everything themselves and thus diminished the importance of family as an economic unit. But at the same time women also had to be more efficient and economically stable so to purchase the goods and services flooding the market. Thus again women were being sandwiched between family and professional roles. They were rather given an identity of 'brave victim' where one could "emphasize a woman's sacrifice and the burden of dividing her life between job and family (brave) , or one might focus on the wickedness of a male world in which a woman is discriminated against both as an employee and as a woman (victim).....the notion of "bravery" provides supplemental gratification , making bearable such onerous tasks as "carrying heavy bags full of shopping , suffering from lack of sleep, and being terribly tired," simply to have some "justifiable sense of being an indispensable manager of family life" (Titkow 1995: 318)⁵⁸

Beside this, the growing unemployment and expectation for high skilled workers marginalized women in the new system. This situation led to the rise of new class of professional women whose investment in education and training has finally begun to pay off. But such careers usually demanded significant personal concessions, making it almost impossible for women in Poland to combine career and family. Hochschild, for example, stressed that women expected to accept the rules of free market

⁵⁷ Glass, M. Christy, 2008; p. 760

⁵⁸ Cited in Kligman Gail and Gal Susan, 2000; p. 163

competition at work and to maintain unequal gender relations at home (Hochschild, 1989)⁵⁹. Thus, even if women were in a more advantageous material situation and earned more, they still had to compensate for their husbands' supposed emasculation by assuming submissive roles. The decision-making areas of wives include cooking meals and other types of housework (washing, cleaning, sewing, knitting, etc.), children (especially if small), everyday shopping and managing tight finances, any activity connected with shame (asking for credit in a store, lobbying for social assistance, making small loans from friends or family), and supplementing income. Husbands' areas of control were: work outside of the home, large purchases (anything but everyday shopping), acquiring money by virtue of earning or making bank loans (if not connected with shame or otherwise stigmatized).

(ii) Women in Decision-Making Positions:

In Poland like in other post-socialist countries, the representations of women in power elite or in the decision-making bodies have been marginal. "Few women rose to positions of leadership, even in those branches of the economy where they have a numerical majority. Even rarer are cases of women who were holding top level posts in government, the administration, and political parties" (Siemienska, Renata.1985:335). Under the communist rule there were larger proportion of women who pursued law but their representation in Supreme Court was minimal. "In 1976 there were only seven women among 98 justices of the supreme court" (Siemienska, Renata. 1985: 335)

Moreover, equal representation of women was not found even in educational sector where women were leading and where women accounted for one –third of the number of the university and college lecturers and faculty members but hardly women could get promoted to the position of professorship. In 1975, the position of professor was conferred to 7 women and 77 menin 1983, 13 women and 145 men. (Rocznik, Statystyczny. 1984: 435)⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Cited in Szklarska Jastrzebska Joanna 2002; p.445

⁶⁰ Cited in Siemienska, Renata. 1985

In communist Poland, the manager was an administrator with their task focused on performing and not on creativity. The manager's role was determined by the 'production plan' prescribed by the centrally planned bureaucracy. The social responsibility of the communist manager was related to society; individuality was banned and stressing on one's own position was also not popular and managers were to subject themselves to the needs of the society. The transition of Poland during 1980s through the 1990s until present day brought numerous changes in the role of manager. The new role of manager demanded to be more market oriented and new Polish managers are involved in organization and motivation of teams. However, women were perceived as bad managers thus often rejected for managerial role.

Women constituted only 21% among those holding high position in administration and in cultural elite including persons in the highest positions in the mass media, education, the largest publishing houses and the chair of creative associations i.e. individuals holding strategic positions in the formal decision-making structure where women were having less representation. Furthermore, the percentage of women did not exceed 15% in the new elite system in privatized and private owned enterprises (Siemienska, Reneta. 2003). In state owned enterprises it was 4% which corresponded to the percentage of women in 1988 i.e. even before the change of the system (Borocz and Ronatas 1995)⁶¹. Also some Polish data revealed that women made up about 30% of all senior officials and managers and there were more women in regional elite than in the national elite. . . . the factor which made it [i.e., promotion] more difficult was not only the men's reluctance to appoint women as managers, but also women's own reluctance to accept women managers, as well as the woman's resistance to compete with men for managerial posts. (Dziccielska-Machnikowska. 1974:1).⁶² Very few women were managers in leading industries or even in production. Even in the education sector the discrimination was visible. While women accounted for over half of all university students, they were not proportionately represented in the faculty. For the 1992-93 academic years, women accounted for 36 percent of all teaching staff at universities and only 17 percent of full professors. In this respect Poland has been very similar to the United States, where for the 1992-93 academic year women

⁶¹ Ibid., 337

⁶² Cited in Malinowsk, Ewa. 1995; p.37

accounted for only 16 percent of full professors and 33 percent of all teaching staff at universities⁶³.

Thus the change in the political and economic system while creating good conditions for social mobility due to restructuring of economy, also resulted in women not being too successful at entering into the system of elites. Membership in the political and economic top management in the period preceding the beginning of the transformation was a very important advantage. Women were at that time, almost absent from higher positions in the system which made them vulnerable to the situation and because of which they could not have become beneficiaries of changes and new opportunities in the new period of market economy.

(iii) Civil Society:

While a number of women's organization mushroomed across the region, these were state initiated and state controlled which never showed concerned for gender equality and for the empowerment of women and as a result, the political process overlooked gender issues in Poland. As most of the women's organizations were established and financed by the communist party, these organizations did not represent women or women's problems in any real sense. On the contrary women were usually supporting and publicizing the policies of the communist party among women. These organizations however, had little political influence and even less popular support and as a result lost its legitimacy immediately after the fall of the state socialist regimes. As the control of communist parties extended into civil society it tried to constrain the emergence of women's movements. No independent women's organizations were tolerated, and those women's organizations which could sustain had a strong communist party backup. It has been claimed that a large number of women's organizations that had flourished in the interwar period in Poland were suppressed when the communists came to power. Therefore, claims of equality and quota system that gave women considerable numerical representation were often important for symbolic purposes only. Despite the attempts of the communist party to minimize dissent, a few opposed voices to the regime could emerge in the late 1980s and

⁶³ Source : Bureau of Census, 1995, U.S. Department of Commerce,p.4

women became active within it. Such as the Solidarity movement. But even in Solidarity movement women were put at the marginal level. “Women in the opposition appear more marginal to the organizational structure of the opposition movements, with visibility in leadership depending on male endorsement”.⁶⁴ Barbara Jancar analyzed the role of women in the Solidarity in Poland in the 1970s which she said was a mass movement of both workers and intellectuals. “The functioning of the Solidarity underground depended on the work of women. They were the key figures in the workings of underground press, and were in large part the underground network of transportation and communication which could not get repressed by the communist authorities. But even after so much of their active role they occupied no leadership position within the Solidarity hierarchy. “The general findings show that women were placed at the lowest echelons of mobilization: they prepared memos, organized and hosted secret meetings, worked at photocopying and distributing material etc....and when it comes to leadership roles, or even ideological positions, the opposition groups were far from women-friendly⁶⁵”. Paradoxically though women accounted for half the members of Solidarity; there have not been any prominent visible women leaders in the opposition. Moreover, the opposition often propagated women’s role in keeping the sanctity of the household intact over the importance of their public participation. “Thus women within the movement rarely spoke on behalf of gender issues, considering these as being of less significance than more noble causes, such as freedom from oppression and liberty⁶⁶”.

It has been stated that women participated in a huge number in the opposition due to social and economic problems. Women in Poland became frustrated in the procurement of the basic means of survival: shelter, food, and clothing. In Poland the shortages began to be more severe after the OPEC price increases. The situation deteriorated around 1980. Thus women appeared to join the opposition because of regime oppression which had affected their private lives through a member of the family or because of job loss or loss of educational opportunities for themselves or their families. Women appeared to prefer to downplay the political and emphasized human and social rights as they could not identify their problem as political. Moreover, women played a principal role in the transmission of national values from

⁶⁴ Cited by Barbara J. Jancar in Wolchik and Meyer (eds.) 1985; p.177

⁶⁵ Goetz Marie Anne(eds.) 2009; p. 114

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 115

one generation to the next and thus enter more readily into a movement with a strong nationalist posture. The dissident movement like Solidarity in Poland was dominated by men and represented an ideology which opposed women's public role in society and which meant a step back rather than a step forward from the point of view of the advancement of women's political positions. "Solidarity" was dominated by men, but it solicited help from "mothers," "wives," or "women textile workers." So it addressed not "women" as such but different female social categories (it also addressed students, farmers, pupils, and teachers). Despite the fact that it transformed slowly into a wide social movement, with a strong active and moral women's support (advisers, wives, mothers, and women workers); it could not be of significant help in making women realize their own social problems. As a social movement, "Solidarity" had different aims to achieve. Yet, with the very few exceptions, women were almost immediately dropped out or were forced out of public life when a more open society was achieved. Moreover, they themselves were silent about the contribution they have made" (Goldfarb, Jeffrey. 1998:184). The proportion of women elected to the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers party (PUWP) in the summer of 1981 fell to 7.5% from 10.5 % in 1980, although the first and only woman to be a member of the party presidium was also a member of Solidarity. Also Solidarity's position on women's issues was conservative which reflected the fact that Polish workers were not concerned with women's problems in and of themselves but with their impact on family life. However, this indifferent attitude has been attributed to the conservative polish religious culture and the influence of the Catholic Church.

Moreover, none of the women involved believed in feminist's ideology, rather they saw themselves as protesting about social and human rights issues. Therefore even after having a large number of presences in the demonstrations, women were not in a position to influence the state and the newly active political parties during the collapse of the old order in 1989.

Towards the end of the 1980s, a group of women, active "Solidarity" supporters, managed to organize a women's section, as a part of the Country's Commission of "Solidarity." Some others undertook actions in the sphere of public life and became members of newly created political parties formed after 1989. Numerous current Sejm representatives, or members of the Senate, have been "Solidarity" members and the so-called Civil Committee's active supporters and workers. Some women's

organizations have been currently emerging and it appears that the attack on abortion rights has produced a wide coalition opposing it and is proving a spur to nascent feminist movements in Poland and in other eastern European countries. However, by all accounts, the dominant voices of civil society have been “overrepresented by Poland’s male intelligentsia” (Kennedy 1994, p. 306).⁶⁷

B. BULGARIA

(i) Family:

Under the communist regime, the positional status of women was influenced by Communist ideology. The status of women never uplifted and the roles remained all traditionalized. Women bore the quadruple burden of their roles as wives, mothers etc. The decade long submission of women to their traditional roles and the denial of any autonomous women’s organization by the Communist ideology created a vacuum of consciousness among Bulgarian women and inhibited the development of any feminist movement.

The role of women underwent remarkable changes during and after transition period. A huge number of women entered into production and services with a number of incentives and privileges. The promise of an egalitarian society manifested in equality in family and workplace was implemented but in reality the apparent liberation of women and their status of ‘working women’ could not uplift their roles in society as a whole rather their newly adopted role of working women has had a series of negative impacts such as a double workload, mental stress and exhaustion, deteriorating health, low sexual and reproductive awareness and irresponsible parenthood. Men continued to enjoy relative advantages in social, economic, professional and political arena as they still were holding the power resources and decision-making profile. The post-transition although paved the way for women and helped them realizing a legal, economic and ideological opportunities at par with men, it has led to increased sexism and hostility towards women (Valentich & Gripton. 91)⁶⁸ Moreover, “the transition period saw the decline in erstwhile social security, social services and health care

⁶⁷ Regulska, J. and Graham, A. 1991; p. 68.

⁶⁸ Cited in Latridis, D. Demetrius(eds.) 2000; p. 91

system which together made Bulgarian women a vulnerable social group affected by poverty and social exclusion (Ekaterina, Dimitrova. 1995:80).

Until 1989, the existence of a public day care system for small children benefited working women as they could resume their career after maternity leave. This helped young mothers to work even for full time. But during 90's the scenario changed. There was a decline in women's employment due to high overall unemployment since early 1990's. In order to cope with the situation women were bound to take up double shift. "Although married women cum working women became the dominant and stereotype model of the day but economic considerations were not only women's leading motivation to work they were also driven to work because of activity of working, liking one's profession, reluctance to confine oneself to domestic concerns only, fear of boredom etc. (Spasovska, 1986)⁶⁹.

(ii). Managerial or Professional Role:

It has been stated that in 1989 only 31% of all managerial positions were occupied by women; 28% of all top level managers and 31% of all middle level managers were women; only in 1990 did the absolute number of all managerial positions increased for both men and women; the proportion of women in such occupations recorded at 32%; more recently the absolute number of top level managers has decreased for both men and women, for women dramatically; there has been a 50% drop in their number; this circumstance has caused a remarkable decrease in the proportion of women in top level management: 13% (Anachkova, Bistra)⁷⁰. Therefore it has been visible that in Bulgaria, there have been and still has separate men's and women's spheres. And leadership positions held by women were really less in numbers.

Under socialist regime, female workers were concentrated mostly in selected sectors of the economy like textiles, clothing and food production, clerical sales etc and semi skilled or unskilled jobs were dominated by women. And earning in these sectors was less than other sectors. On the other hand there has been substantial decrease in number of women in the domain of science and technology which was due because of

⁶⁹ Cited by Tatyana Kotzeva in Genov Nikolai and Krusteva Anna, 2001; p. 109

⁷⁰ Lobodozonska, Barbara(eds.),1995;p.57

the 'traditionally upheld image of science and technology as male professions and with women's slow career advancement (Ananieva. 1991)⁷¹. It has also seen that there has been less number of women in executives and managerial body in Bulgaria.

Table: 1: Women in Various Positions in Bulgaria (1989-1990)

Occupations- Positions	1989 (women in % of total)	1990(women in % of total)
Executives /directors	27.8	12.6
Managers	31.8	35.6
Secretaries/office workers	95.8	95
Nurses	90.8	91.6
Teachers	75.0	75.6

Source: Statisticheski godishnik na Republika Bulgaria 1990, Sofia: National Statistical Institute, 1990:105-106, Statisticheski godishnik na Republika Bulgaria 1991, Sofia: National Statistical Institute, 1991, 71-72, Gyorgy Sziraczki and James Windell: impact of employment restructuring on disadvantaged groups in Hungary and Bulgaria, International Labour Review, 131(4-5), 199:48⁷²

Thus though educated equally as men, women were assumed to split attention between the workplace and the home and often been deprived of advancement to high-ranking positions in workplace. According to 1990 census data, the number of Bulgarian female workers in the professional, technical, clerical and sales sectors exceeded that of male workers and in administrative or managerial positions however, there were only 44 women per 100 men (The World's Women 1995:99)⁷³. Also, Calculations of figures in 1991 Statistical Yearbook indicate that 13.1 % of all executives in the state sector were female; women held 13% of the seats in parliament and 13% of senior positions in the administration making up 8% of all mayors of large municipalities and 23% of mayors of small and depopulated municipalities (Kotzeva, Tatyana.)⁷⁴

Therefore, it can be said that the employment of women was relatively better before transition but the sectors and occupations they concentrated were light industry like

⁷¹ Ibid; p. -59

⁷² Ibid; p. 60

⁷³ Cited in Montgomery A. Kathleen and Matland E. Richard (eds.),2003; p. 360

⁷⁴ Cited in Genov Nikolai and Krusteva Anna . 2001; p.110

textile, sales, teaching, nursing, and social care. In the late 80's health care and social work, clerical and secretarial jobs and services in general were strongly dominated by women (Ekaterina, Dimitrova. 1995:80). In nursing and childcare their share was 97%. On the other hand women had difficulties to reach the higher levels of hierarchies in organizations. The situation of women could not better even after transition. In 1990 women occupied only 29% of the administrative and managerial jobs. And even in the feminized occupational domains like schools and health care institutions the superiors were usually men. However, Bulgarian women face limited supportive structures for their care giving roles in the new privatized market place. Indeed, not only has there no support for care giving and child care, but women who do have children have also been discriminated in the workplace. When they became pregnant, they could be let go and if they became a "problem" with sick children, they could also be dismissed. Although on paper women had the "right" to maternity leave, no woman could count on getting her job back, especially in the private market. In the context of economic hardship there has been a new "work and family" theme in Bulgaria. Everyone, men and women, tried to obtain an income but the difficulties of doing so, especially for women with child care needs, have resulted in restrictions on fertility and a heavy use of abortion to limit care giving responsibilities.

(iii). Civil Society:

Bulgaria had been populated by a large number of non- governmental organizations over the years since transition and even before that. 'According to the 1998 Directory of Nonprofit Organizations' in Bulgaria published by the information Center of the Open Society Fund of Sofia, more than 1000 NGO were active in more than 50 towns⁷⁵. These groups focused usually on areas pertaining to Bulgarian social life including human rights, minority issues, health care, education, women's issues, charity work, culture, social services etc. Proliferation of women's organizations in Bulgaria after 1989 had been largely tuned with the political life. Most of the organizations were tied up with the existing political parties and the major political parties in particular. "But the price of being linked to political parties was high, as women's claims were often subjugated to party interests and party discipline

⁷⁵ Cited in Schnetzer Amanda, et al(eds.),2002; p. 130

(especially since women activists enter the National Assembly on party lists).”⁷⁶ The women activists were hardly concerned about genuine issues pertaining to women because they conceived of themselves first and foremost party representatives entrusted with the task of capturing women’s votes for the party by addressing the concerns of a female audience. These party-dependent women’s organizations could not be properly defined as women’s movement because their scope of autonomous action was very limited and their agenda changed on a notice from the party leadership. One organization of this type was the Democratic Women’s Union which was the successor of the Communist-era Women’s Union. It undertook “to express the interests and to defend the rights of Bulgarian women and of the family and children; it undertakes to work for the attainment of real equality and to support women’s striving for self-fulfillment and spiritual uplifting...and women under the conditions of a market economy, for the participation of women in all power structure, for reduction of unemployment and the removal of all obstacles to the professional self-fulfillment of women, for the support of newly formed families with many children...and for ‘recognition in the laws’ of the social utility and significance of motherhood (and of the domestic work of women) and of parenthood in general as well as for the strengthening of the family and the observation of children’s rights.”⁷⁷ This apparently welfare kind of agenda at the protection of women was in true sense a conservative stance aimed at preserving traditional gender roles. It revealed a patronizing attitude towards women, viewed from ‘above’ by a condescending and caring agency. ‘In principle, parties could promote women’s interests as well as any other organizations. But in practice, parties readily ignore the actual goals of their ‘women’s section’ and simply regard these organizations as conduits for electoral propaganda’ (Daskalova, Krassimira. 2000)⁷⁸. Thus the long patriarchal tradition of the party transpires behind the thin veil of women’s activism.

There were other politically affiliated women’s organizations such as the Bulgarian Agrarian People’s Union, the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party (the Federation of Women’s clubs), the Bulgarian Green Parliament etc. whose public activities were very much dependent on the views and instructions of their respective party leadership and thus in real sense severely handicapped. However, the leaders of these

⁷⁶ Keates, Debra. et al, 1997, p.162

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 163

⁷⁸ Cited in Kligman Gail and Gal Susan(eds.), 2000; p.353

organizations perceived 'feminism' and 'feminist' as alien to their world and an impingement upon the 'traditional Bulgarian Values' of love, marriage, and family.⁷⁹ Therefore, despite the apparent diversity of women's NGO's, their claims about women's needs have been all alike and sadly match conservative, state-defined views about motherhood and about women as subordinate objects of social protection . Daskalova held the view that the condition of women in Bulgaria, as well as discourse about them, constrained the possibilities of action for women's NGO's in Bulgaria (Gail Kligman and Gal Susan, 2000: 363).

⁷⁹ Keates Debra, et al, 1997;p.163

CHAPTER 3

WOMEN, POLITICS AND DECISION-MAKING IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: POLAND AND BULGARIA

“For most of history, Anonymous was a woman”

Virginia Woolf

The rate of women’s participation in the political domain has been a very old concern in democratic political life. “Although the percentage of women office holders has generally increased since the mid 20th century, women remain underrepresented due to various cultural, societal, and structural factors. Women members of parliament are not an exception: about 17% of all MPs in the world are women; the average for the European countries is 19.5% as of 2006 (IPU 2006).”⁸⁰ The experience of the post-communist states has been particularly an interesting case. Women there had achieved relatively better representation in terms of their equal participation in the social and political life until 1989. However, after 1989, the trend seemed to reverse. In Bulgaria, for example, the percentage of women members of Parliament decreased from 21% in 1987 to 13% in the 1994 Parliament and 11% in the 1997 one (La Font 2001).⁸¹

An elaboration has been taken place by feminist scholars on the aspect of Pitkin’s descriptive’ representation⁸² for which Feminist scholars have argued that parliaments and indeed other decision-making bodies should reflect the gender balance of society if they are to be considered democratic institutions. They also argued that gender-equal assemblies are more open to debating and acting on women’s concerns. However, “In terms of democratization, the countries of Eastern Europe had a unique opportunity to create gender-balanced governing institutions in the 1990s. This opportunity was however, not fully utilized, and women’s inclusion in democratic decision-making has followed an uneven, though generally positive, trajectory since 1989” (Calloni. et al, 2007:89).

⁸⁰ Cited in Spirova, Maria.2007;p. 2

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² The notion that legislatures are composed of representatives constituting a ‘mirror’ of the represented.

It has been stated that the communist party membership tended to be predominately white collar. For Poland, Weydenthal (1986:108) reported that the percentage of technicians and economists in the party doubled between 1970 and 1980, and that of doctors, teachers and scientists trebled⁸³. The communist system was comprised primarily of an elite cadre of men in which women did not occupy high positions of power. As communist gender policies failed to uproot traditional gender hierarchies, it made women put up with more responsibility in social life as in family and made them confronted with less opportunity in political life. Extensive welfare programmes though allowed women to work but female labour was concentrated in lower pay and prestige sectors and women were still expected to perform the bulk of household and childbearing duties. Moreover, though political participation was mandatory and quotas ensured that there would be female faces in the parliament; but the legislatures themselves served as rubber stamps and decisions were made in the top echelons of party and state power where women were notably absent. Thus women were being marginalized across economic, political, and social spheres and they found themselves at a structural disadvantage vis-à-vis men in competitive elections. Verdery rightly said that the core sectors of socialism – the bureaucracy itself, heavy industry, the army, and the apparatus of repression – were almost wholly male. He further said that even in the state bureaucracy, women overwhelmingly held clerical and secretarial functions. Women were indeed brought into political office but generally at lower levels and in areas deemed appropriately female: education, health care, and culture (Verdery, 1996).

The new era of transition however, could not overcome this gender biasness. Though it exposed women to the outside world in a more competitive way, it still preferred women to continue its stereotype ‘traditional’ and ‘homely’ role and made the male body being more modern and public. At the same time the people also accepted the modern version of transition but they continued to follow the traditional pattern of thinking. Thus the imbalanced gender relationships pervaded through all sphere of life from social to political one and thus made women marginalized all across the domains. In actuality, the system liberated women not so that they could choose their

⁸³ Cited in Marks, N. Gary, 2004; p. 243

work and interests, but so that they could more easily contribute to the “common good” as dictated by the totalitarian political system.

Prior to 1989, the average level of women’s representation in East European parliaments was relatively high when compared with West European liberal democracy. At the end of 1980s women held, on average 27% of the seats in the socialist parliamentary assemblies.⁸⁴ This relatively better presence was due to the 30% women’s quota provision. Since 1989, the removal of quotas and the introduction of multiparty democracy brought a dramatic fall in the share of women parliamentarians in all of the post- socialist countries.

Before 1989, very few women could gather a seat in the Central Committee of the Communist Party as the decision-making positions were usually given to senior male party members. Moreover, those few women who could make through to the executive positions were given charge of ministries such as education, health, culture, social affairs, and light industry. Thus the ‘token women’ remained “subservient to male dominated politics and inadequate in their articulation of women’s interests”⁸⁵.

Following the transition however, the number of women ministers though increased apparently and women began to hold traditionally male –dominated posts such as foreign affairs ministries (Bulgaria, Poland, etc) but the overall presence of women in politics was still inadequate. Few women only occupied top positions like Prime minister Renata Indzhova of Bulgaria, or Hanna Suchocka of Poland, or Kazimira Prunskiene and Irena Degutiene of Lithuania etc. But all these successful women masked a continued absence of political women from electoral contests. Women’s proportion of candidacies was still around 25% on average, and they were generally afforded the lower slots on party lists⁸⁶. Therefore, the measure of quota provision could not be effective in bringing more women into political life. There was a substantial difference in attitudes toward women in politics. In the Western democracies many women regarded political activity positively, as a means to empower individuals and groups, and therefore worked to increase women’s political involvement. Women who lived under communism took a much more negative view of political success, which they attributed less to individual merit than to conformity

⁸⁴ Calloni. et al, 2007; p. 90

⁸⁵ Ibid., 93

⁸⁶ Ibid; p. 95

to the Party's ever changing doctrines and associated more with corruption than with public spirit. (Allen, Taylor Ann. 2008:101)

Scholars examining the status of women in post-communist states often noted that women have lost a great deal of descriptive representation upon the introduction of democratic parliaments formed through competitive, multi-party elections. Women were well-represented in communist-era governmental bodies, achieving levels of formal representation that were much higher than their own countries' pre-communist experience and the experience of most Western democracies. However, it has also been acknowledged that the high levels of formal representation in the communist period did not translate into real political power for women. Although constituting a respectable proportion of the rank and profile in communist parties and communist-era legislatures, women typically did not occupy positions of genuine political or economic power in the highly centralized systems of Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union (Rueschemeyer, 1994; Nechemias, 1994)⁸⁷. With the introduction of democratization, legislatures became genuine centers of democratic decision-making but the removal of gender quotas used during communist times meant many fewer women populated these institutions. Thus, democratization has presented a paradox for women in post-communist states that might be new to them but was all too familiar for women in most democratic regimes—the existence of opportunities for genuine political influence through democratic political institutions but the failure of women to attain significant representation in these very same institutions(Moser, G. Robert, 2001: 356)

The economic and political change in Central and Eastern Europe, which surfaced the transitional era (1989-1990), resulted in structural change in Poland and Bulgaria also impacted the gendered dimension of political sphere there. The decade long patriarchal society in Poland and Bulgaria has tended to favour political discourses that relied on traditional gender regimes and continued to maintain cleavage between the public sphere and private sphere making political domain exclusive for men and the realm of family for women. "Politics in the region is still often regarded as a dirty, corrupt, and somehow useless business that is not suited to women."(Fuchs, Gesine. 2003:1).

⁸⁷ Cited in Moser, G. Robert, 2001; p. 356

While previous chapters have explored the social role of women in the family, civil society, and their decision-making power in professional domains, this chapter focuses on women's presence in political decision-making aspects in Central and Eastern Europe particularly in Poland and Bulgaria. It would also seek to explore the barriers to political representation of women in Central and Eastern Europe particularly in Poland and Bulgaria.

I. WOMEN IN MAINSTREAM POLITICS

A. POLAND

The representation of women in the legislative or governmental bodies in Poland had always been minimal even prior to WW II. "Women accounted for a mere 2% of the Sejm... and 5% of the Senate members" (Fuszara, Magorzata. 1994). The first election after the transition represented a dramatic change in the fortunes of women in the Polish Parliament (the Sejm). Women's representation in Sejm however has never exceeded 13% in the decade following the break with the old regime, despite women playing an important role in subverting the communist regime and despite the brief ascendancy of one woman, Hanna Suchocka, to the Prime Ministership in 1992-1993. In 2001 general elections, however, there was a dramatic jump as women gained 20.2% of the seats in the Polish Parliament.⁸⁸

As elsewhere in the region, in Poland, the Communist Parliament served a primary decorative role. The membership composition was set at the top according to a more or less rigorously respected principle that parliament was to be a reflection of society. The presence of female faces was thus ensured but these women did not represent the best and the brightest Polish society. They had fewer economic, cultural and social resources at their disposal than male MPs and fewer resources than might have been expected, given the educational and occupational attainment of women in Polish society as a whole. Female parliamentarians were younger and less educated than men. Moreover the presence of women in the Sejm was accompanied by prejudice and sexism, much of which was expressed by female deputies themselves. However, the change in the trend happened with the advent of multiparty elections. The overall

⁸⁸ A. Kathleen and Matland, E. Richard (eds.), 2003.

representation of women declined, and women remained largely outside the top leadership circles⁸⁹.

Prior to 1989 women's representation in politics had been little visible as the communist party placed emphasis on the inclusion of women in political positions through quota system which led to women's political proportion in Poland around 23% during mid 1980s. Thus the bargained offer of quota system was apparently bringing some women to the political domain but there was still discrimination persisted in terms of power sharing and decision-making. Although these quotas were duly met, women representatives were not necessarily chosen for their voices as women. On the contrary, women were frequently recruited from the countryside to fulfill the quotas rather than to articulate women's interests. In the Soviet Union, such recruitment was labeled the 'milkmaid syndrome'.⁹⁰

The dominance of 'single party' limited the role of parliament in national legislature and vested power of decisions in the hands the Communist Party, in the Central Committees and especially the Politburos of the Party, where Women did not exert much power and "they held low level positions and were virtually absent from central committees and councils where most of the important decisions were made (Regulska, 1992). Women only had an average of 30% of Party members (Einhorn, 1993:151–152). Under the guise of socialism the male domination continued to fabricate the status of women by projecting them as 'political subject' but women were always constructed as inferior to men and less trustworthy politically. Their gendered disadvantages (such as the 'double burden' of work and responsibility for the household) made them structurally less able than men to devote themselves to party political activities. They had no influence on policy-making as 'they are likely to be in typically female sectors, such as education, social affairs, and health' (Goetz Marie Anne (eds.) 2009, p.117). Thus their jobs in parliament had symbolic rather than practical meaning. However, women issues continued to be overlooked by the major actors in Polish Politics even during transition, like Polish United Worker's Party (PUWP). Women constituted very small portion in both PUWP and the opposing groupings. Renata, Siemienska argued that among 2500 candidates, there were approximately only 200 women and among the 460 persons elected to the Sejm there

⁸⁹ Ibid; p. 218

⁹⁰ Cited in Corrin, Chris. 1992.

were 62 women (13%). The dropping rate of women in Politics continued to dominate the first free elections that took place in Oct 1991 in which only 42 women were elected (9%). However women's legislative recruitment improved in 1993 to 13% which was replicated in 1997 elections and then after a prolonged gap 2001 elections brought this level of women's representation to about 20% (Matland, E. Richard (eds.), 2003: 219).

In the first free parliamentary election to the Sejm (Lower House) and in Senate, women's representation decreased dramatically. Even after 200 women candidates were in the run up to election, only 6 out of 100 could get through to Senate (6%) and 62 of 420 seats in the Sejm(14.8%). Even in elections held at local level during 1990s, women gained only 10.2% of the seats on the local councils (Regulska, 1992:187)⁹¹. However, 1991 parliamentary election brought even worse results for women. Only 44 out of total 560 elected (in both houses) or 8% were women.⁹². Following table summarizes the election trend from 1990s to 2001 which reflected their lower participation in political sphere.

Table: 2: The proportion of Women in the Sejm (the Lower House of Polish Parliament in Poland (1991-2001)

	Lower House
1991	9.1%
1993	13%
1997	13%
2001	20%

Source: Simemienska (2003:220), Spurek (2002:18)⁹³

As data shows that in Poland the percentage of women MPs had already fallen in the period 1980–1989. The level was halved again in 1991, but rose again to its 1989 level in 1993. In the 1997 elections the number of women elected to the Sejm stayed constant, but the number in the Senate fell slightly. Malgorzata, Fuszara interpreted the fall since 1989 as the exact reverse of the trend in Western Europe, where the number of women elected to parliament has risen in the last few years. The election in Poland in September 2001 saw a dramatic increase in the number of female

⁹¹ Cited in Lobodzinska, Barbara(eds.),1995; p. 195

⁹² Ibid

⁹³ Cited in Goetz Marie Anne(eds.) 2009; p. 115

politicians elected, from 13% to 20% in the Sejm. Thus an increase in the level of representation though happened in 2001, but the overall result has not been remarkable.

Recruitment to the Polish parties has been quite difficult for women where the Socio-demographic aspects of the female candidates were taken most. Women who were through with the funnel of recruitment required having qualities that bestowed legitimacy in the eyes of the party gate keepers and voters who found them attractive than their male counterparts. Most of them held university level degree than men and they also had to have longer records of working with party and trade union service. Thus in 1993, 73% of women who made it to parliament had been members of Solidarity in 1980, and 34% had been members of the ruling Polish United Workers Party (PUWP) or one of its branch unions or alliance parties.⁹⁴ Thus women were required being hyper-qualified to be selected by the gate keepers and voters. Also a number of structural features within party affected their recruitment status like: the electoral system, characteristic of the party and party system, and the political culture. All these factors played an important role in determining the degree to which women could access to the halls of parliament. These factors also affected the supply of female candidates and demands of party gatekeepers and voters.

It has been seen that usually proportional representation has been largely favorable for women than direct electoral systems. The electoral system in Poland set up rules like MPs had to be selected from party lists on two levels i.e. local and national level list and required to touch 5 % thresholds for parties to gain seats. However, in spite of proportional representation in Poland, it did not prove fruitful for women. After the collapse of communism, Poland and other post communist states like Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Hungary adopted mixed majoritarian and /or proportional representation system which resulted in women's dropping rate in parliament of around 10% by 1990.⁹⁵

Aftermath of transition brought around 200 parties on the political scene. The erstwhile 'Solidarity' movement was now being replaced by a wide spectrum of political orientations and the new emergent political players gathered around the new

⁹⁴ Kathleen and Matland, E. Richard (eds.), 2003; p. 218

⁹⁵ Cited in Zimmerman and Rule, Wilma, F. Joseph, 1994; p.22

Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland (SdRP) and trade unions of similar background. However, the nomination to Sejm and Senate had been largely done through party channel of union selection. Women of different political orientations tried to become candidates on behalf of various political parties. Since 1991 election there has been a number of coalition parties emerged on to the Polish politics. As in 1991 election brought Solidarity affiliated right wing parties at the centre with Democratic Left Alliance as the primary opposition. 1993 elections replaced the right wing government with the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and the Polish Peasant Party (PSL) who held the coalition government which again reverted by right wing coalition in 1997 as a broad coalition under the banner of 'Electoral Action Solidarity' (AWS) and came to power. In 2001, the SLD coalesced with the Labour Union (UP) and won a clear plurality as the AWS failed to win a single seat in parliament. However, women were mostly nominated by Democratic Union (UD)⁹⁶ or the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD). "Half of all women deputies in 1991 were from two parties either the Democratic Union (UD) or the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), even though these parties only won slightly more than 25% of the seats" (Renata Siemienka)⁹⁷. Even in 1993 elections, women were nominated largely by the same coalition. Even Freedom Union (UW), continued to elect above average numbers of women in Parliament. In 2001, UW became the stronger supporter of women by establishing a 30% quota and honoring it by having women filled 31% of its list positions.⁹⁸ The Solidarity Election Action (AWS), a right wing opposition had put a greater emphasis on traditional, Christian values, and among other things, opposed abortion. It gained the highest of around 201 seats in 1997 among other parties but it brought only 20 women into parliament. The reason being the anticipation by the party gatekeeper of the voter rejection of women in politics and thus nominated relatively few women.⁹⁹

Therefore it has been seen that election of women has been largely dependent upon getting nominated by parties and being nominated in a prominent position on party lists. Moreover, party ideology matters a lot in accounting the nomination of women. As in Poland, "the Social Democratic Party consistently nominated and promoted a

⁹⁶ UW and UD were parties evolved from Solidarity and groups of intellectual elites of that movement.

⁹⁷ Cited by Renata Siemienka in Montgomery A. Kathleen and Matland E. Richard (eds.), 2003, p.220

⁹⁸ Ibid; p. 223

⁹⁹ Ibid; p. 224

higher number of women to parliament than its conservative Right wing counterparts. SLD has introduced a 30% quota for women on electoral lists in 1999 and indeed nominated over 30% women.” (Goetz Marie Anne, 2009:125). And the Labour Union held a traditional view of women and thus emphasized on women’s right to employment, their family role, and protection of women n children in the family, right to safe abortion on economic ground etc. The Democratic Left Alliance however (SLD), emphasized on women’s right to equality and equal opportunities, access to employment, family planning and abortion among its major principles. The party also gave support to sex education, counseling and contraception. The party’s programme referred to the right to safe abortion on all grounds, the protection of women’s rights and dignity, and opposed any attempts to diminish women’s rights. It also strongly supported the inclusion of women in public life and stated that women’s aspirations in this regard would not be ignored or marginalized. The Right wing groups and parties which included Elections Action ”Solidarity”, Bloc for Poland or the Union of Real Politics, however, either ignored specific gender issues or presented them in the context of family life, not really supporting women as such, but rather made them fulfill their roles within family relations. It can be noted that “Polish Rightist parties view gender as a ‘natural’ category, which is unchallengeable, a-historical and created by God” (Graff 2001: 15)¹⁰⁰. This group claimed the need to better construct the job market so that women could combine family and professional roles, but did not go as far as to make men to bear the double shift of family and work.

However 2001 election had shown better results both in terms of the party system and in terms of women’s representation. This time League of polish Families (LPR) had shown maximum representation of women in parliament by capturing 26.3% seats won by women. Women who have been elected from LPR made to carry a traditionalist and nationalist message. The basic theme of LPR programme has been to promote the polish values of language, family, and home. Following tables represent the number of women promoted or nominated by major political parties in 2001 election.

¹⁰⁰ Cited in Chimiak Galia.2003;p.11

Table: 3: Party Representation and Women's Representation among Deputies to the Sejm, 1991-2001

Name of party/ electoral Coalition	1991 ¹⁰¹				1993				1997				2001			
	T	% T	W	% W	T	% T	W	% W	T	% T	W	% W	T	% T	W	% W
Total	460		42	9.1	460		60	13	460		60	13	460		93	20.2
SLD ¹⁰²	60	13.0	9	15.0	171	37.2	28	16.4	164	35.7	31	18.9	200	43.5	50	25.0
UP	4	0.9	-		41	8.9	7	17.1					16	3.4	5	31.3
PSL	50	10.9	1	2	132	28.7	8	6.1	27	5.9	-	-	42	9.1	0	0.0
PO													65	14.1	13	20.0
LPR													38	8.3	10	6.3
AWS									201	43.7	20	10	-	-	-	-
SO													53	11.5	9	17.0
PIS													44	9.6	6	13.6
MN	7	1.5			3	0.7	-	-	2	0.4	-	-	2	0.4	-	-
UD ¹⁰³	62	13.5	12	19.4	74	16.1	16	21.6	-	-	-	-				
KLD	37	8.0	-													
KPN ¹⁰⁴	51	11.1	5	9.8	22	4.8	1	4.5								
WAK	50	10.9	6	12.0												
PC	44	9.6	1	2.3												
PSL-PL	28	6.1	1	3.6			-	-								
Solidarity	27	5.9	3	11.1												
Polish Party Of Beer Lovers	16	3.5	-													
PChD	4	0.9	1	25												
BBWR					16	3.5										
ROP									6	1.3	-	-				

Sources: Announcement of the State Election Commission, 31st Oct 1991, published in Rzeczpospolita, 4th Nov 1991; Kronika Sejmowa (Sejm Cronicle) 124 (4th Oct 1993); Data of the State Election Commission 1997, and author's calculation, www.ipu.org¹⁰⁵, T (total), W (Women).

¹⁰¹ Parties listed only those with the highest number of seats or those that have women among their deputies. Twenty-nine parties or groups of various types had representatives in 1991 Sejm

¹⁰² SLD and UP(in Italics) ran in an electoral coalition the Democratic Left Alliance

¹⁰³ The UD and KLD formed the Freedom Union UW in 1997

¹⁰⁴ The set of parties, trade unions etc. like KPN, WAK, PC, PSL-PL , Polish Party Of Beer Lovers, Solidarity, PChD, BBWR- all constitute the Electoral Action Solidarity (AWS) in 1991

¹⁰⁵ Cited in Renata Sieminska, in Montgomery A. Kathleen and Matland E. Richard (eds.);2003;p. 220, 225

Table 3, shows that the biggest parties or coalition parties used to nominate more women than others. In 1991 women were represented from the largest parties UD and SLD even though these parties only won slightly more than 25% of the seats. In the 1993 elections once again the UD and SLD nominated overwhelming percentage of female MPs. In 1997 election SLD and AWS produced a decent percent of women deputies. In 2001 dramatic change happened in the political scenario. This time two radical parties came to the fore with strong showings of capturing seats like Self-Defense of the Polish Republic (SO) and the League of Polish Families (LPR) who won 11.5 and 8.3% of the seats respectively. Also it was striking to see that women had captured 26.3% of the seats won by LPR. However, these results showed that election of women depended both upon getting nominated by parties and getting nominated in a prominent position on the party list.

Table: 4: Proportion of Female MPs (and candidates) by Party, Poland 2001

	2001	
	Women Candidates	Women Elected (%)
Democratic left SLD+ UP	36.2	25.5
Freedom Union (UW)	31.2	-
Polish Peasant Party (PSL)	19.3	0
Civic Platform(PO)	17.1	21.5
Solidarity (AWS)	14.7	-
Self-Defence(SAMOOBRONA)	20.5	16.9
Law and Justice(PIS)	17.4	13.6
League of Polish Families(LPR)	24.8	26.3
Total		20.43

Source: Spurek (2002)¹⁰⁶

As per Table 4, it's been seen that during Post-Communist elections in Poland leftist parties were more willing to nominate women as their representative. There has been a steady growth in the proportion of women elected by SLD- the major leftist alliance which had held 25.5 % of the seats in parliament along with UP. League of Polish

¹⁰⁶ Cited in Goetz Marie Anne (eds.), 2009; p. 126.

Families (LPR) also made an overwhelming representation of women which was around 26.3%.

Under Communism “Women were more visible at the local level than in higher posts in government” (Reszke, 1991)¹⁰⁷. But even at local level women were discriminated. They had less opportunity to rise in the top position in local politics thus making it more male centric. They were assigned to a narrow spectrum of duties and lack resources like networking, volunteer worked to build up support group as gathering or organizing people in public was not entertained during communist regime. In the absence of freedom to promote own interests, most of women relied on political parties for political support. This dependence on political parties made women almost passive and voiceless. Moreover due to double burden of work and family responsibility women could not spend much time in party tasks which in a way affected their active membership within party. Their political activism however remains confined to family and local issues and their behavior shaped by male oriented party system. Besides this, the predominance of authoritarian Catholic Church in the region also impacted the lives of women in Polish society. It kept on emphasizing on ‘family values’ and ‘traditional role’ of women which in turn diminished their political interests. Yet even after having all these hurdles few women played some role in local politics under socialism due to quota system. “Under the quota system women’s presence in local authorities grew from 7.6% in 1958 to its peak of 25.6% in 1978 and was maintained at over 20% during 1980s.”(Regulska, 1992)¹⁰⁸. “Female councilors are also becoming more numerous....in 1957, women accounted for 12.3% of the councilors in provincial people’s councils; by 1980 that proportion had grown to 30 %”(Siemienska, Renata.1985:335).

Some author said that after the transition women continued to be underrepresented on lower local government authorities. In the initial years of 90s the number of women in local authorities though grew from 11% in 1990 up to 13.2% in 1994 and in the local elections of 1998, women constituted 15.98% of the councilors elected. However, provincial parliaments tend to elect lowest proportion of women, while in town and commune councils the percentages were higher. “Among province councilors women made up to 10.88%, varying from 4.4% in two of the sixteen provinces to 16% in

¹⁰⁷ Cited in Regulska, Joanna 1998; p. 292-305.

¹⁰⁸ Cited in Marilyn, Rueschemeyer, 1998; p.37

three others...women achieved higher representation in urban areas”(Stokes, Wendy. 2005, p. 198).

A study of local politics in Poland noted that the elaboration of group interests and political priorities tended to be articulated by men who were blind to gender as a structuring principle of unequal power relations. Men in power insisted that women’s issues must wait until other more critical problems are resolved. However For women in Poland, neither the official “sameness” imposed by the communist political culture nor the “difference” engendered by democratization liberated women as fully participating citizens. After years of domination of totalitarianism, Poland’s patriarchal political culture has not diminished during communist period rather it resurfaced again during democratic transition, and its manifestations emerged in different patterns throughout the country. In short, Polish women did not share political power under communism, did not exercise it during the early, euphoric years of transition, and remain marginalized even today (Graham and Regulska 1997)¹⁰⁹.

B. BULGARIA

There had been a token representation of women in Bulgarian parliament since 1975 when it was 27.5%, which significantly declined during 1980 and 1990 from around 19.5% to 8.5% respectively.¹¹⁰ Women’s representation increased by 5% in 1991 to 13.8% , but declined in the course of subsequent elections, first 12.9% in 1994 and then to 10.4% in 1997. And finally in 2001, there was a dramatic jump up to 26.3%, making Bulgaria the leader in women’s representation in Eastern Europe.¹¹¹

Women in socialist Bulgaria had relatively high percentage of representation in Bulgaria’s national assembly. To be in line with the dominant Marxist-Leninist ideology which recognized complete equality of men and women, Bulgarian Assembly came up with a bill in October 1944 proclaiming equal opportunities regardless of gender (Kostova, Dobrinka. 1998). This resulted into a majority of women being drawn into the labour force and a large group of them entered into politics. Women for the first time entered the national parliament as deputies in 1945

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 36

¹¹⁰ Cited in Lobodozinska, Barbara(eds.),1995;p.53

¹¹¹ Montgomery A. Kathleen and Matland E. Richard (eds.), 2003; p. 305

which paved the way for others to enter into politics (Kostadinova, Tatiana. 1995). From 1945 to 1989 female legislative representation in Bulgaria was determined by the ruling Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) which set a recruitment rate in 20-30%. With the advent of multiparty election in 1990 new changes began to take place. It had shown a dramatic drop in female representation which got down to 8.8% of the seats. The high level of uncertainty, reinforced by the introduction of a new mixed electoral system and the extremely competitive nature of this first test of the distribution of voter's support, contributed to the election of a parliament composed predominantly of men.¹¹²

Although institutional choices promoted female representation which were made by Bulgarian political elites, but the dynamics of economic and political transition shaped the behaviour of potential female aspirants and party gatekeepers in a way which seriously affected women's legislative recruitment.

Women's political interest became noticeable during post-war social period where the participation and association of women were largely determined by the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP). BCP's social programme during post-war period was mostly schematized to establish equal rights for men and women to study, work and participate in the party's work. Along with this the external exposures like industrialization, urbanization brought about employment, opportunities etc. which made Bulgarian women skilled, self confident and made them taking interest in politics. "By 1982, the mass entry of women in the labour force reached to 49% of all employees, 53% of those working in the field of science and 51% employed in public administration (Ananieva and Razvigorova 1991: 305). But their political career could not live its full expectations due to uprising unemployment during transition because the burden of unemployment fell somewhat disproportionately on women's shoulders. The need to look after the family made women vulnerable to situation. There has not been a broad retreat into the private sphere, as that was not economically feasible for most families; at the same time, women also could not improve their professional status (Lippe and Fodor 1998). This double burden of home and work intensified during transitional period. As the state's ability to provide social welfare has diminished and household living standards have declined, women have had to spend

¹¹² Ibid., p 305-306

even more time and energy on the 'second shift' work at home. For a great number of women, the exigencies of family survival had simply supplanted the desire and opportunity to devote time to political participation.¹¹³

Education was another factor which shaped up the minds of political elite in terms of candidate selection. Although free access to education made women and men educated equally but the traditional role of women was still assumed by women only. Thus even after being highly educated Bulgarian women have often been deprived of advancement to high ranking positions in the workplace. "According to 1990 census data, the number of Bulgarian female workers in the professional, technical, clerical, and sales sectors exceeded that of male workers. In administrative or managerial positions, however, there were only 44 workers per 100 men; in the wake of an emerging market economy, for many party gatekeepers, experience in profit-oriented enterprises, rather than ideological considerations, was seen as a crucial attribute for possible candidates. Therefore Bulgarian men was often being preferred when selecting candidates"¹¹⁴

Beside this the socio-economic changes during Socialist Bulgaria caused changes in the perception of people towards the role of women in society. Urbanization weakened traditional values. The role of women being wives and mothers was now associated with active public role of women. Women were interested in political issues as well and their educational profile also made them actively involved into local and municipal organization leadership. But their willingness to pursue political career was constrained by the difficulties of economic transition that generate a need to devote time to the family. Moreover, the changing perception of women's role also had limitations. "True decision-making positions were dominated by men and after the fall of the old system, traditional values re-established themselves in Bulgaria; the rhetoric of directive emancipation did not have some effects on women's position in society, but there was still a considerable gap between the rhetoric of true equality and the societal reality".¹¹⁵ Moreover party nominations played an important role in determining the political presence of women in Bulgaria. Though in Bulgaria women had the formal right to freely associate but in real practice they were not able to form

¹¹³ Ibid; p. 307

¹¹⁴ Cited in *The World's Women*, 1995.

¹¹⁵ Montgomery A. Kathleen and Matland E. Richard (eds.), 2003; p. 305

any group or organization that was not initiated and monitored by BCP. Women therefore had to convince party leader, usually men for nominations that they could bring important resources and foremost votes, to the party ticket.

The structure of the political system and the political culture of the population also put a significant effect on women's political participation in Bulgaria. The emergence of multiparty system after transition made electoral system an important mechanism for formation and influence of various political parties. Since 1989 various electoral methods were used like proportional and majority representation system (1990) and proportional representation (1991). In both the cases the Party had to win 4% of the vote to enter parliament.

The introduction of new electoral system also affected a lot in lessening the political representation of women in Bulgaria. The quota system had been replaced by new electoral rules: single member district¹¹⁶ and proportional representation (PR)¹¹⁷. However, PR system superseded the earlier one in the eve of the second Bulgarian multiparty election in 1991 and two institutional elements important for female representation were also introduced in the same election year: a moderate average district magnitude and a legal threshold. The major parties however, won several seats in many districts which resulted in an average party magnitude favorable to the election of female. But ironically still women could not reach to the political list to contest. They had to overcome two hurdles first at the nomination level where high ranking party leaders were given preference in the party regional lists so as to ensure their election; and local nominees where they were ranked lower on the ballot. Thus women had to be approved by the central leadership as candidates and second to be placed high on the list to overcome the tension between central and local dilemma. Moreover, the political participation was beyond the reach of general women workers and women having a background in liberal professions, lawyers, engineers were the one who could reach to the political list. Besides this, single unmarried women were given priority over working women. Following tables have been put up to show the background of women who entered into politics and the level of women representation in politics in Bulgaria.

¹¹⁶ BCP preferred this single member district relying on its strong local support.

¹¹⁷ Opposition to BCP supported this system.

**Table 5: Sociological Profile of Bulgarian members of parliament,
1994, 1997 and 2001 (%)**

Occupation	1994/ women	1997/women	2001/women
Liberal profession ¹¹⁸	48.4	44.0	55.7
Lawyers	29.0	24.0	23.0
Workers	-	-	-
Party official ¹¹⁹	58.1	36.0	29.5
Single women ¹²⁰	25.8	36.0	27.9
Engineers	12.9	24.0	18.0
Business	-	-	1.6

Source: Bulgarian National Assembly <http://www.parliament.bg/-deputati>.¹²¹

**Table 6: Women elected to the Bulgarian Grand National Assembly,
1990 First Round**

Allocation Rule	BSP		UDF		MRF	
	Total	% Female	Total	% Female	Total	% Female
PR	97	17.5	75	8.0	12	0
Majority	72	6.9	31	3.2	0	0
Total	169	13.0	106	6.6	12	0

Source: FBIS-EEU, 13th June 1990, 7-8; FBIS-EEU, 22nd June 1990, 3-4¹²²

From Table 5, we can see that most of the female representatives worked in the liberal profession were lawyers and the numbers were consistent in the subsequent election years. There has been a noticeable influx of new representatives from the business sector in 2001 which was of around 1, 6%. Also it has been seen that workers have been slowly disappeared from parliament. Thus most of MPs were overwhelmingly socio-economic elites. Also the preference for single woman was visible in the party nomination and it can be said that single women in Bulgaria were more likely to

¹¹⁸ This category includes scientists, school teacher, university professors, physicians etc

¹¹⁹ Members of local and central party councils

¹²⁰ Divorced, widows etc.

¹²¹ Cited in Montgomery A. Kathleen and Matland E. Richard (eds.) 2003, p. 308

¹²² Ibid; pp 315

become the members of parliament than married one. As many married women was lacking time and other resources necessary to pursue a political career, Party gatekeepers and voters saw them as belonging primarily in the private sphere, taking care of their families, and therefore the party gate keepers were more hesitant to consider their candidacies”.

Table 6, has shown that during the first democratic election in 1990, the former Communist Party was most supportive of female representation which was about 13% whereas the right UDF elected barely half of that i.e. 6.6%. MRF did not even elect any women in 1990. From the data presented in Table 6, it has also seen that women were elected more in a PR than in a majoritarian system. For both the BSP and UDF, women made up a substantially larger portion of the delegation elected via proportional representation than they did of the proportion elected via majoritarian districts.

Table: 7 Women in the Bulgarian National Assembly by Party and by Election
Year 1991-2001

Party	1991	1994	1997	2001
BSP %of women MPs Total # Seats	18.9 106	16.8 125	10.3 58	10.4 48
UDF %of women MPs Total # Seats	10.0 110	8.7 69	11.7 137	17.6 51
MRF %of women MPs Total # Seats	8.3 24	13.3 15	5.3 19	9.5 21
BBB %of women MPs Total # Seats	-	7.7 13	0.0 12	-
People's Union %of women MPs Total # Seats	-	5.6 18	-	-
Euro left %of women MPs Total # Seats	-	-	14.4 14	-
NMSII %of women MPs Total # Seats	-	-	-	40.0 120
Total %of women MPs Total # Seats	13.8 240	12.9 240	10.4 240	26.7 240

Source: Matematcheski kolektiv 'Izbori'. (Mathematical Team. 'Elections'). <http://Izbori.math.bas.bg>. Bulgarian National Assembly. 'Danni Za Deputati' (Data on Members of Parliament') <http://www.parliament.bg>.¹²³

There has been a gradual decrease in female representation in the BSP parliamentary group. In the 1991 election the female representation made by the party was 18.9% which came down during the 2001 election to around 10.4%. The Euroleft seemed to be sympathetic towards women's representations which have had the highest

¹²³ Ibid., p. 316

proportion of women of any delegation in 1997 but it failed to win representation in the 2001 parliamentary elections. While UDF failed to improve female representation in the 1994 elections, it did somewhat better in 1997 and much better in 2001 which was 17.6%. The MRF being an ethnic party was expected to be culturally and religiously less supportive of women's participation in politics yet it was more successful than the UDF in increasing the female representation in its parliamentary group. The NMSII's rate of female nomination in 2001 was clearly atypical for post-communist Bulgaria. It was much counted for the abrupt increase in the number of women elected to the National Assembly which was around 40%.

The post-1989 elections were dominated by two major political forces: BSP (Bulgarian Socialist Party)¹²⁴ and opposition Party UDF (Union of democratic forces, centre left coalition). The difference between the two were their nature of being organized in the earlier and relatively less organized in the latter . UDF though not organized like BSP but enjoyed the prestige of being an anti-communist pro-democratic political alternative. These two parties won the elections from 1990-2001. But due to split within the two dominant parties small independent parties came to take place in political arena. The subsequent structural changes in the party system in 2001 helped BWP (Bulgarian Women's Party) to come to the fore.¹²⁵ But after the collapse of the older system BWP started confronting difficulties in sustaining itself. Once the regime collapsed, Bulgarian women struggled to find a vehicle for active involvement in politics. Paradoxically though some alternate parties acknowledge themselves as successor party to BWP but their basic goals were formulated using much of the rhetoric of the past. Therefore, priority was given to women's self realization within the family' and observing the laws guaranteeing the protection of mothers and children' (FBIS-EEU, 1990)¹²⁶. Also the post 1989 women's organizations became weak and they tended to address issues pertaining to family and tradition within the framework of civil society and women thus got away from formal political channel. Blaga Dimitrova, the vice president of Bulgaria (1993) once stated that the marginal role of women in politics has happened because of a widespread patronization by men. Also she said the stereotype of women as impulsive, unable to

¹²⁴ Successor party to the former BCP

¹²⁵ It coalesced with NMSII

¹²⁶ Cited in Montgomery A. Kathleen and Matland E. Richard (eds.) 2003; p. 310

keep secrets, vain, easily agitated along with their own lacking interest caused them to remain on the periphery of decision-making. Thus the male politicians discriminate and isolate women from leadership, using deceitful and covert techniques, under the guise of chivalry and the protection of femininity. In Bulgaria, where women MPs had the largest presence in parliaments—26 percent—they were not organized in support of gender equality reform, which explained the state failure to adopt equality legislation in Bulgaria by 2004 (Avdeyeva, Olga. 2008: 212).

II. COMPARISON BETWEEN POLAND AND BULGARIA

Some tables are given below to show the comparison between Bulgaria and Poland in regard of women's representation in Government, National Parliament, and local politics:

Table 8: Women in Parliament (1989-2005).

	Pre-1989	1 st post -89	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th
Bulgaria	21	8.5(1990)	12.9(1991)	13.3(1994)	11.2(1997)	26.3(2001)	22.0(2005)
Poland	20.2	13.5(1991)	9.6(1993)	13.0(1997)	13.0(2001)	20.2(2005)	20.4(2007)

Source: IPU 1995 and IPU online data based on women in parliaments (<http://www.ipu.org/wmoe/world.htm>)¹²⁷

Table 9: Women in National Government 1985-2005 (%)

	Mid 1980s	2005
Bulgaria	3.7	23.8
Poland	3.1	15.4

Source: National Statistics archives (EGG database) and UNDP (2005)¹²⁸

Bulgaria had higher female representation in National Government since 1985 to 2005 whereas Poland has represented few female candidates. During mid 90s 3.7% of women used to hold position in National Government which got increased during 2005 to around 23.8%. Women in Poland on the other hand were not represented well

¹²⁷ Calloni Marina et al, 2007; p.92

¹²⁸ Ibid, p.94

in National Government since 1980s when the percentage was 3.1 and which got increased to around 15% during 2005 but which was less than Bulgaria.

Table 10: Percentage of Women in Government, the departments headed by them (Poland and Bulgaria, January 2003)

Country	Women's Share in Government	Departments headed by Women
Bulgaria	15% (3 of 20)	European Integration, Social affairs, Environment
Poland	7.8% (1 of 13)	Education

Source : Fuchs, Gesine. 2003: 4

Even in the matter of holding a profile in Government by women, the data shows that Women in Bulgaria had better off in terms of their share in Government and they handled better departments than those in Poland. In 2003, 15% women used to have share in the government and they were heading departments like European integration, social affairs, Environment etc. On the contrary women in Poland had only 7.8% of share in the government and they only handled profile in education sector.

Table 11: Party Membership among Local Representatives in Bulgaria, Poland 2002

Country	Members of a Party			
	Male	Female	Total	Gendered Gap
Bulgaria	87%	83%	86%	-4%
Poland**	38%	27%	36%	-11%

**p<.01 (based on chi-square)¹²⁹

In terms of Party membership and Local Representatives also Bulgaria was heading Poland (Table 11). In 2002, Bulgaria Political system had 83% of female representatives in the party and in local politics in compare to 87% male candidates but in Poland the ratio was too less. In Poland only 27% of female candidates were the party members and represented in local politics. The gender gap in Poland was

¹²⁹ Nyiri, Zsolt. 2004:p.23

lower than Bulgaria which was -11% and -4% respectively. Although the general decline in women's number in political domain has been visible in post-socialist Poland and Bulgaria but separately Bulgaria was doing better than Poland in representing women.

Table 12: Attitude Towards Employment, Education and Traditional Role between Men and Women in Poland and Bulgaria

1991-1993							1995-1997					
Scarce Jobs to Men			Housewife Fulfilling		Want Boy		Scarce Jobs to Men		Both Continue		Boys to College	
	M* (%)	W* (%)	M (%)	W (%)	M (%)	W (%)	M (%)	W (%)	M (%)	W (%)	M (%)	W (%)
Poland	58	52	Na	Na	28	10	48	41	7	14	7	7
Bulgaria	57	35	86	88	43	19	4	29	7	6	7	6

Source: Montgomery A. Kathleen and Matland E. Richard (eds.), 2003: 48-51, M* (Men), W*(Women)

Table 12 shows the percentage of who agreed that when jobs were scarce, men were first right to the job. During the time span of 1991-1993 and 1995-1997 the attitude has been all the same. Support for reserving scarce jobs for men has been higher in Poland in compare to Bulgaria. In Poland 58% of Men thought that the men should get scarce job as against 57% men in Bulgaria and 52% women in Poland thought that men should get scarce job which was very less in Bulgaria. Even in the period 1995-1997, the attitude remained same with a slightly less percentage of 48% men and 41 % women in Poland as compare to 42% men and 29% women in Bulgaria.

In accounting the belief that a university education was more important for a boy than a girl, Poland almost shown egalitarian approach. In terms of attitude towards family roles, it has been seen that support for housewife role has been higher in Bulgaria where women showed greater interest in housewife roles which is around 88% as compare to 86% men. The column 'Both contribute' shows the disagreement that both husband and wife should contribute to household income. In Poland and Bulgaria the norm of two-income households appeared to be same among men in both the countries but the disagreement was higher among women in Poland (14%) than in Bulgaria. While counting the preference for a boy child the column 'want boy' shows that preference for a male child was more likened by Bulgarian men(43%) than their

counterparts (19%) wherein men and women in Poland are least likely to voice this sentiment .

While counting the correspondence between recruitment and parental membership it has been seen that the correspondence with parental membership was strongest in Bulgaria where 40% of the recruits had one or both parents in the party. Poland however showed the weakest relationship between recruitment and parental membership with about one-fifth of new members having parents who were also party members. So far as members with elite background, in Bulgaria, Poland and Hungary together the proportion of recruited with administrative or professional backgrounds was around 10%. The proportion of members with agricultural background was high in Bulgaria at 23%, although this was lower than the proportion in general with agricultural backgrounds in Poland. In Poland, only 5% of members reported having an agricultural background, substantially lower than the proportion of the population with an agricultural background (27%). There has been a general tendency for the proportion of recruits with agricultural backgrounds to decline, probably due to the proportion of the population with this background also declining.¹³⁰

While percentage of women in Bulgarian parliament has been shrinking since 1991, dropping from around 14.1 to 10.4 % , their participation was relatively better in Polish Sejm which got increased from 9 to 13%, and in the Senate it has varied between 8 and 12 per cent (Siemienska, 2000b: 58)¹³¹. But in both the cases the overall representation has been very low which has been caused by the mechanisms parties had used to promote candidates for election. In Bulgaria although some political parties created space for women: like *Democratic Left* (17.8 %), *Euro-left* (16.8%) and the *Bulgarian Business Block* (15.2%), but all women were positioned on the 'unelectable' positions. However, The Union of Democratic Forces has been less discriminatory in this respect. It had the highest proportion of women which was around 9.4 per cent. In Poland however, the *Democratic Left Alliance* was ideologically opponent to *Union of Democratic Forces (Bulgaria)* and they did not have many women on their list, but they gave them comparatively advantageous positions. *Electoral Action 'Solidarity'* due to its Catholic influence neither included many women among its candidates nor gave them any chances to be elected.

¹³⁰ Marks, N. Gary, 2004

¹³¹ Cited in Chimiak, Galia. 2003,p.10

However, the *Labor Union*, and some other small political parties, took women into account. The least attentive to the representation of women on its list was the *Polish Peasant Party*.

Participation of women in local politics has been better in Central and Eastern Europe as it permitted articulation and negotiation of problems and issues pertaining to women and their lives. As Regulska, said 'Women's political activities are concentrated predominantly at the local level, outside formal politics'. This focus on local politics on part of women was however caused because of the exclusion of local and gender dimension from mainstream politics and moreover for the marginalization of women in the mainstream politics. However, Regulska argued that 'the exclusion of local and gender dimensions meant a double political marginalization' (Regulska, 1998a: 310). Despite this dismal fact, women were better represented at the local level in Bulgaria and Poland. "During the last local elections in 1999 Bulgaria political parties had 17.5 per cent women-candidates in the first 'zone', while coalitions had almost 30 per cent presentation."¹³² However, difficult economic situation, the taken-for-granted social roles, family obligations of women created hurdles for women to participate in Politics. Moreover, the nature of political life and the societal attitude to the political participation of women also affected the level of participation of women in Bulgaria. In Poland, too, women were better represented at the local-level than national-level politics. Among candidates they accounted for 15 per cent, 17.8 per cent and 21 per cent in the local elections of 1990, 1994 and 1998, respectively (Siemienska, 2000b: 81)¹³³. However, barriers like 'lack of time, excessive responsibilities, lack of trust in women office holders created hurdles for women. In addition to that 'politics' was being considered as a dirty business and therefore being preferred to be out of it. The other two barriers Regulska identified were the unwillingness of men to allow women into politics and the 'state's responses' to the problems unrelated to free-market economics.

Although the participation of women in Politics have been relatively better in Poland and Bulgaria in compare to other regions in central and eastern Europe, the male elitism in politics have been equally predominant even at the local level in Poland and Bulgaria. However, due to the local (male-dominated) political culture and its

¹³² Ibid. 12

¹³³ Ibid., p. 13

interaction with national politics, women were always kept marginalized even at the local politics in both Poland and Bulgaria. Although people were aware of women's fragile political representation, but they hardly questioned the rules of male dominated culture and they never even tried to overcome the decade long patriarchal dominance.

III. FACTORS IMPEDING THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN:

In accounting for women's absence in the political and decision-making in the central and Eastern Europe, several explanations have been put across. Some literature has focused on cultural explanations, mentioning the influence of three interrelated factors: the cultural legacy of state socialism, the prevalence of traditional attitudes toward gender, and the lack of women's mobilization in civil society¹³⁴.

Cultural legacy of state socialism based on the observation that women's legislative representation during state socialism was merely symbolic. The quota system served only to mask gender inequalities in the political sphere. The male dominated central committee kept dominating the top positions and the few women who got through were hardly concerned of women issues. The negative image of the manipulated female politician had important consequences for the overall level of women's political representation when parliamentary quotas were removed after 1989. It acted as a deterrent to women interested in entering democratic politics, influenced the decisions of party gate keepers when it came to candidate selection, and affected voter choices at the polls (Einhorn 1993; Siklova 1993). Factors based on traditional gender stereotypes argued that, despite high levels of women's participation in education, employment, and politics, state socialism kept patriarchal arrangements intact. The decade long stereotype gender role continued to reflect in private and public sphere. The status of women though was updated under socialism as a working lady; her role remained unchanged in the family. The system also had put a double burden on her to carry on family responsibility as well as fulfilling their duties as worker-citizens. However, Men continued to be the legitimate occupiers of the public domain, considered principal family breadwinners unencumbered by domestic obligations (Tóth, 1993). Therefore these private-public arrangements encouraged a

¹³⁴ Clavero, Sara. and Galligan, Yvonne. 2008; p. 151

set of traditional attitudes toward gender that were later reinforced by the resurgence of a conservative discourse after 1989 that idealized women's traditional roles in the family and the community (Daskalova 2000; Watson, 1993). Beside these, the women's relative underrepresentation was also affected in the absence of a feminist discourse and the lack of women's mobilization in civil society around feminist aims. It has been seen that usually, women's political engagement in civil society in Central and Eastern Europe during communist era, was focused on "conservative" issues such as the welfare of the family, the preservation of communities, and nation building rather than on their empowerment and emancipation as an oppressed group. Most of the literature viewed these set of factors rooted in societal values and attitudes toward women's role inherited from the period of state socialism (Duffy 2000; Einhorn, and Sever 2003; Marody 1993)¹³⁵.

Apart from cultural explanations studies in liberal democracies also have suggested that the level of female recruitment to a legislature has been determined by a combination of political, cultural, and socioeconomic factors (Norris and Lovenduski 1995). Among these, electoral systems have consistently been shown to be one of the key variables influencing women's level of representation (Kenworthy and Malami 1999; Matland 2005; Paxton 1997)¹³⁶. In addition to it, influence of party-level factors, such as ideology and nomination procedures also laid an important role in determining women's presence. A number of studies emphasized the role of political parties in post socialist countries in influencing the process of female legislative recruitment.

Feminists' political scientists declined to see individualist approaches as sufficient source to explain the underrepresentation of women in politics in Central and Eastern Europe. They rather resorted to 'magic triangle' in order to explain systematic connections and determinants for political behaviour and "they argued that socio-economic factors, political culture, and institutions form three crucial intertwined determinants for political participation" (cf. Hoecker 1995: 28 ff.)¹³⁷ The 'socio-economic standard model' (1970) by Verba and Nie has been dominant in literature in explaining the political participation of women. For them education, qualified

¹³⁵ Ibid

¹³⁶ Ibid; p.153

¹³⁷ Cited in Fuchs, Gesine. 2003; p. 4

employment, and high income have been positively correlated to political participation. The more resources one has, the more likely was person's political participation. High levels of education and high employment rates of women in Central and Eastern European countries set up precondition for their political participation. However, the employment structure has been strongly segregated with women and made them visible in sectors such as health care and education. Women have been outpaced in highly prestigious and in leadership or decision-making process. The proportionate number of educated women was not represented in the higher position.

As per some feminist scholars, Political culture in Central and Eastern Europe has been predominantly paternalist and elitist, which constituted obstacles to political participation. Traditional gender roles were widely accepted throughout region but co-existed with the image of the working woman (Fuchs, Gesine. 2003:5). It has been seen that the traditional gender roles have been strongly rooted in the societies of Central and Eastern European countries which resulted in the image of super-woman along with their double burden and created an imbalance condition for women in the region. Moreover, the Catholic Church, media, put a pressure on women to restore the traditional role and restricted them to have political participation. Thus the hegemony of conservative values, and traditional gender roles continued to impede the lives of women and their public participation.

The multiparty-system with proportional representation¹³⁸ which was introduced in Central and Eastern Europe after the transition, could not better the level of women's political participation. However, preference voting have been little helpful for women candidate as voters could choose the candidate form the list. In Poland women were often graded up and their chance of being elected was relatively better than other parts of the region. Beside all these, lacking of time due to over burden in the family, male attitude towards their female colleges within the party also contributed to the underrepresentation of women in politics.

¹³⁸ It has been said that proportional elections favour women's representation because in proportional elections a party rather than a person is elected and the parties have an incentive to present a "balanced ballot" to gain votes from many parts of society- so some women are nominated (Fuchs, Gesine. 2003, and p.6).

Barbara Einhorn pointed out number of reasons for the numerical drop in women's representation in politics in Central and Eastern Europe. She said that level of women's representation in the pre-1989 was better because of available tokenism which facilitated fixed quotas for women within political parties; still women were absent from the politburos and the important seats in the Central Committees of the various communist parties. However, their apathy towards political participation after the transition has been due to their bitter experience of double or triple burden imposed by the communist state which they could not get rid of that time but now in the wake of new democracy the spark of getting job simply could not make them forgetful of their past which is why they seemed to decline to take more burden on them.

Irene Dolling has argued that since state socialism was a form of patriarchy in which the all powerful father figure brooked no disobedience from his children; hence there was no political space for the articulation of alternative political views and approaches. Also as the 'father state' was all providing this meant that women's rights were handed out from above rather than attained through struggle from below. Thus the dramatic drop in female representation in the newly democratic formal political structures resulted from a complex combination of causes, and could be seen as both a break with and a continuation of the past. On the one hand the sphere of formal politics was itself regarded with mistrust by many and on the other hand there was a growing sense among women that formal democratic rights were not necessarily synonymous with the real representation of their interests. Moreover, women did not appear to be conscious of the need to speak up or struggle on their own behalf.

The subsequent withdrawal of post-communist women from political domain has also been associated with not only to increased familial stability but also to the need to increase birth rates. Region-wide demographics revealed fertility rates ranging from 1.2 to 1.5. The consequence of such low rates has been the decline in populations (UN, 2000). With fertility rates articulated as a threat to national survival, the image of the "death of a nation" has been invoked. Campaigns to increase birth rates glorified motherhood. For instance In Lithuania, slogans such as "We are a perishing nation" were popular; in Russia, a post-communist campaign slogan bluntly

advocated “Women go home”; Bulgarian slogans advocated “Back to home and family”.

In case Poland, barriers to participation of women in the political process include: (1) long-time habits of socialization which promoted passivity in both sexes; (2) re-emerging nationalist rhetoric (with the strong support of the Catholic Church) which encouraged women to stay at home and assumed their “proper” role as wives and mothers; (3) the legacy of collective group interests which favored the interests of men; and (4) the continuation of patriarchal political structures which disallowed the voices of women¹³⁹.

Initially the prevalence of traditional social values was effective barriers discouraging women from mobilizing pro-equality feminist organizations. These traditional values encouraged party leaders to view women as ‘risky’ candidates. The general absence of a strong women’s movement and the absence of women in party leadership positions encouraged the political parties to cover up women issue as they did not face substantial pressure to place women in competitive positions on the electoral lists.¹⁴⁰

Polish society although was undergoing a drastic change during transition but it could not get rid of its historical past and the socialization process which had been framed within the purview of patriarchal structure. “Long-time habits of socialization discouraged both the acquisition of knowledge and skills and the behavior now needed to participate openly in public life” (Marody, 1992). Thus the memory of the past life and its socialization lead to reinforcement of unwillingness to participate in public and political life and declining confidence in authority. Poles were in the “trap of mental habits, even if no longer relevant. Tensions between public and private worlds guaranteed the creation of the ‘Polish mind [which] appears to be split, torn apart by a sort of schizophrenia.. which follow[s] the public-private dichotomy” (Sztompka, 1991:300). Most importantly distrust of official actions translated into an “us versus them” mentality and manifestations of this mentality pervaded private and public life and assumed a number of forms. Politics however has been considered as “not really the business of ordinary or honest people” (Millar and Wolchik, 1994: 2). Women, in particular, regarded it as a “dirty” game suitable only for men. Thus Poles

¹³⁹ Cited in Graham and J. Regulska 1997; p. 68

¹⁴⁰ Montgomery A. Kathleen. and Matland, E. Richard.(eds.) 2003

have been reluctant to assume leadership, anxious to avoid accountability, and, most importantly, suspicious of both the world itself and the meaning of citizen.

Nationalism and the Catholic religion, and their interrelationship also have been an impeding factor in women's political representation. The effect of the sense of nationalism and the predominance of Catholic Church on women and gender relations ensured that women's place and women's concerns were secondary to the more important work of rebuilding the Polish nation within the strictures of the Catholic faith. Their "patriarchal character" (Molyneux, 1994:307) of nationalism and the Catholic religion has been intended to place women in the private sphere of the family as mothers and wives. The expectations of the new Polish nation relied on a "unique national consciousness"¹⁴¹ which separated it from its former partners in the Soviet bloc. The demise of communism and the rise of nationalism provoked a diminished sense of the universalism which socialism encouraged and an increased attachment to exclusivism¹⁴², and which distinguished Poles from non-Poles and men from women. Initially the Polish yearnings for the long-denied Polish nation were tied inevitably to the strength of its Catholic faith. This distinction was tightly bound up with exposing the falseness of communism's rhetoric of equality and the perception of genuine Christian values espoused by the Roman Catholic Church. However, replacement of the communist ideology with the ideologies of Catholicism and nationalism did not encourage an active civil society. The political leaders under the guise of nationalism and clericalism exploited the gender equality provision in the region. Governments regarded themselves as representative of the Polish nation rather than society which then has been alienated by a government that could not resolve society's problems, and women were further isolated from the affairs of a state that minimized their needs. The re-emergent nationalist rhetoric associated with the Catholic Church, encouraged women to assume their 'proper place' in the home as the biological producer of Polish culture and identity. A number of interviews considered political barrier as rooted in women's reproductive role and their natural attachment to family and children:

¹⁴¹ Kennedy, 1994; p. 158

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 157

“In all certainty women have it worse. After all, they are burdened with duties. They have to conduct the home, take care of children, and so forth....well this is the norm, essentially men are devoted to professional matters. On the other hand, women have to take care of household matters. In this regard, it is definitely more difficult for women since to be truly active in politics one has to subordinate everything to this. (MP, Conservative Party, Poland).¹⁴³

These distinctions have negative consequences for participation. Moreover, as locally elected male aspired to have national positions and concentrated on national “problems” rather than on the local grind of waters, sewers, and unemployment problem, women wondered at such an incomplete accomplishment of local issues by the politics. However, such romantic attachments to the utopia of the Polish nation and diminished individuals’ problems vis-à-vis the current mistrustful state.

Despite Poland’s strong historical ties to the Roman Catholic Church, the Church’s role after the transition has been problematic. Its powerful advocacy of democracy and its over forty years of anticommunist underground activities has not by design elevated it to the status of “guardian of the national heritage”¹⁴⁴ or grant it the power of “unquestioned moral authority”¹⁴⁵ in the new Polish state. Provoked by its attempts to “influence the development of a new socio-political system based on its interpretation of Christian values” (Pasini, 1996: 35), the current conflict among the Church, the State, and the Polish people adversely affected the development of democracy and an active civil society.

As the communist social order transformed the pre-socialist, traditional social structure into one determined by new ideologies of social justice and central planning¹⁴⁶, the increased working and professional classes, the remaining peasant class after World War II, and women and men (the ruling landowners and bourgeoisie classes were eliminated) came to depend on the system of distribution of privileges in which social and economic behavior was controlled, and individual and group expectations and interests were determined. Reform of the political system has

¹⁴³ Clavero, Sara. and Yvonne Galligan. 2008; p. 161

¹⁴⁴ Mucha, 1993, p. 87

¹⁴⁵ Kowalski, 1993, p. 241

¹⁴⁶ Mokrzycki, 1992, p. 271

however altered the old system and created a new environment for the articulation of group interests which has unleashed group competition for dwindling national resources for which the same rules of the earlier system no longer apply. Therefore, group interest were articulated in favor of the experience of men who emphasized “relevant” political issues and ignored “women’s” issues such as childcare, health, decreased employment opportunities for women. Groups, in this case, referred to the majority of groups which gave priority to male interests. Moreover although organizations which addressed the needs of women were emerging in a few large cities, their effectiveness in small communities remained minimal. As men began to learn new political rules, women continued to be disadvantaged by their past. Paradoxically, women’s participation often disappeared when activism became institutionalized into direct and formal interaction with governmental sectors. Whereas in Western society, institutions and organizations were the vehicle through which “individuals attain and construct their identities in public life”.¹⁴⁷ In Poland, as in other Eastern European countries, separate institutions, political parties, and representative organizations were regarded as threats to the only institution i.e. the communist system. However, weakened institutions offered no legitimate channels to resolve grievances and disputes and ensured a continued environment of distrust of politics and politicians. It also lead to a “strong sense that politics was all about personal gain and nothing else, which then led people to conclude that there was nothing to be gained from political participation”¹⁴⁸

As the complex legacy of communism and the instability of the democratic transition constricted the opening of political spaces for women, some research indicated that new openings of political space for women have now been relatively available. The prime avenue of participation for women in Poland has been the non-governmental organization or NGOs. Since 1989, at least 50 NGOs have been representing the needs of women which have been created in Poland. Studies of women elected to local positions in 1990 emphasized, however, the difficulties in local women’s activism. Lack of time, excessive responsibilities, lack of trust in women office holders, traditional belief that women were not assertive enough have been majorly affected the political participation of women. However, a deep prevalence of

¹⁴⁷ Schopflin, 1993; p. 275

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 277

traditional attitudes towards women's political role and the internalization of these traditional gender norms have been voiced by the female representatives as prime barriers to their political participation and their restricted opportunity structure within the aggressively masculinized Polish political system.

Therefore the 'equality of women' was just a declared objective of politics and realization to it was a far cry. While women certainly went to vote (the right having become an unconditional must for both sexes), they have remained vastly underrepresented in all leading positions¹⁴⁹ and the illusion of equality pervaded through during and after the transition.

In case of Bulgaria the dynamics of economic and political transition influenced the political behaviour of women. Bulgarian women have been interested in politics throughout even during post-war social period where the participation and association of women were largely determined by the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP). They have equally been active in professions as their exposure to industrialization and urbanization made them skilled, self confident. But their political interest was subdued due to uprising unemployment during transition because the burden of unemployment made them unbearable to take political career seriously. Due to economic necessity they had to take up jobs which were less paid as compare to their qualification. Thus their double burden of home and work affected their political interest which even intensified during transitional period.

Also their higher degree could not get tuned with their equal access to political career like men. Rather they still assumed the traditional role and family matters on their priority list. Beside this although urbanization weakened traditional values and Bulgarian women were accepted as professionals also but the role of women being wives and mothers could not lessen their public role in society. Moreover, the changing perception of women's role as mother and working lady could not change the hierarchical arrangements in society where true decision-making positions were still dominated by men and which continued after the transition as well. Apart from all these, party nominations, structure of the political system and the political culture played an important role in determining the political presence of women in Bulgaria.

¹⁴⁹ Ferge, Susuza. 1997;p. 160

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

The new democracy in Central and Eastern Europe initially promised to keep gender equality in all sphere of lives in the new system, but it drastically kept deviating from its own set up norms and made the new system completely vulnerable and paralyzed in the hands of new state dominated by male elite parties.

The paradox of 'gender equality' permeated through all the spheres of life during transition may it be private or public. Although men and women both were exposed to the same market system, both were competing with each other in public domain in order to get a job but women were mostly discriminated in the new market system. Women were left out spaced in the socio-political domain. Their right to be 'own self' has been denied by the society. As the male elites of the communist system had control over all the resources they could easily shaped the lives of people and particularly women as per their own interests. Also the control over ideology (beliefs, values and attitudes) made the system control over the private sphere of women like abortion and all. Such domination continued even after the collapse of the system because the new system remained male oriented. In the new market system the split between male and female got widened up because of the stereotyped notion prevailing in the society which had been carrying the shadow of socialist system and which even after such a huge drastic change in the system, could not get rid of from the minds of people.

The gendered division of labour still continued in the family and in workplace after the transition. The lives of women were no better in the new market economy rather women now were exposed to number of unwanted consequences like losing maternity leaves, childcare facilities by state, getting hired lastly and being fired easily, and other social benefits provided during socialism. Moreover the abolition of quotas from political parties created a vacuum in the political domain and also in decision-making bodies. However, the memory of the haunting past along with the new shocking competitive world made women prone towards their 'traditional homely affairs' and made them apathetic in terms of participating in politics. On top of this mental

turmoil, the traditional church and also the conservative parties, the employers pushed the women out of market by emphasizing more of their stereotyped 'traditional role' like bearing and rearing children, taking care of the family etc. and rejected any kind of compromise in terms of sharing equal power and resources with women in private and public domain. Thus women were completely relegated to the background and lost their voice in the midst of new market oriented issues and other issues that interest the state. Among the most salient issues affecting the lives of women were abortion, the continuity of child care and other social supports, and the integration of women in the labour force. As women issues were not paid much attention to, and also because women could not represent into the decision-making part, the policies during transition and even before transition were not shaped in line with the interests of women at large. Therefore women in Central and Eastern European countries have really been subjected to all sorts of discrimination during and after the transition and barred from full participation in the affairs of society at large particularly in politics and decision making levels. Though there has been a formal equality prescribed down in legalistic terms in the constitution of almost all the Central and Eastern European countries particularly in Poland and Bulgaria, but no substantive equality guaranteed in the respective societies even today. In Poland – as in many other socialist countries – equality of men and women has been a political and ideological question. The constitution (1952) itself emphasized the equality of men and women as citizens: "Women in the Polish People's Republic enjoy the same rights as men in all sphere of life: state, political, economic, and culture." However, while analyzing the actual participation of women in different sphere of life, it has been apparent that women's status in society differed from men. It should be particularly noted that a sexist perspective evident in a wide range of social research reflected the prevalence of traditional patriarchal attitudes toward women in Poland which reinforced commonly held views. Moreover, women's traits, domains, and social roles have been generally seen to flow naturally from women's psychology which has been seen as determined by biology and not as a social construct. Thus, to a great extent, women's needs, interests, potentialities, possibilities for self-actualization, and women themselves as primarily human beings were almost always left out. Bulgaria also has not adopted specific gender equality legislation. The Bill on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was prepared in 2001 by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. However, the National Assembly has twice rejected it, both in 2002 and 2003. Unlike the women in

democracies , who despite their disadvantages had considerable freedom to organize and to work for social change , Bulgarian women had little choice but to conform to coercive policies that often regulated their entire lives , including their most intimate and private affairs.

Bulgarian women have been well educated and interested in political issues. During Communist era, their previous involvement in local and national structures of political and social organizations impacted their political involvement in the post-communist period. Although women were made skillful through their involvement in labour force but they have been relatively passive with regard to competing for and winning public office. And the explanation given for women's diminished presence in politics has been reasoned out as lacking investing time and energy in public life as against the family which needed to be supported against the crisis of economic transition. Autonomous organized women's groups have been slow to take root in Bulgaria which resulted in party gatekeepers replacing women interest with other concerns. Due to the absence of struggle for gender equality and women's active voice, party gatekeepers got rid of the pressure of recruiting more women and to place them in top leadership positions within the party. The aftermath of transition was dominated by coalition parties whose prime concern has been to promote party leaders in parliament and those leaders have disproportionately been male. The result of the 1990-97 multiparty elections in Bulgaria did not promote female representation in an outstanding manner. Yet a very few women could only make it through to the legislature. Since the first election in 1990, 83 Bulgarian women have been elected to parliament and 26.5% have been reelected. 2001 election came up with manifold implications: women seemed to benefit when parties became clearly unified organizations and when women achieved leadership positions in the parties. Theoretically the existing electoral institutions ought to be woman-friendly but in practice even reasonably large party magnitudes did not ensure the recruitment of women as party gatekeepers were not pressurized to place women in competitive slots. The volatile party system and the uncertainty generated from voters support has made parties hesitant to nominate women in competitive list positions. Though the election results after transition has been prospective in terms of female representation but the trend has not been very strong and the attitude remained traditional towards the role and status of women in Bulgarian society even today.

While counting the role of women in Polish politics, it was found that they women were more conservative than Bulgarian women with respect to their political interest. They seemed to be away from political domain because of the conviction that politics is dirty and is a domain of male body. However, as regard to the attitude of major political parties towards the inclusion of women it has been seen that in Poland women were most successful when the parties of the left do well. Worth mentioning is that several right wing parties also did surprisingly well. While accounting the nomination of women in the party much has been dependent on the will of the party gatekeepers. The Polish electorate has been traditional towards segregation of gender roles which has been discouraging women from entering the funnel of recruitment and has prevented the formation of an organized, explicitly pro-equality women's movement that could have put a pressure on parties to get women into competitive slots or adopt quotas. A major obstacle to women's success in politics was a widespread assumption, shared by the politicians across the party spectrum, that politics was a male job, for which women were not well suited. None of the new political parties however has a plan to involve women in political life, and not one of them yet planned to adhere to the principle that women should be representative alongside men in decision-making levels. As the attitude of women in Eastern Europe towards politics has been largely shaped by their experience under communism where they were made politically passive and the individual self assertion in any form was risky, as it could easily be taken for dissidence or subversion, their new experience reiterated the same experience. The 'emancipation' which women received under communism was a gift from above, to be gratefully accepted rather than actively sought. Thus when after the communist governments fell, feminist leaders urged women to participate in politics in the name of a new ideal of "emancipation" but they received no response from women there as those women who had always associated "emancipation" with the deprived and laborious lives lived under communism were unable and unwilling to grasp any other definition of this word. Renoutt, Kira rightly said that "having been convinced all their lives that their exploitation is emancipation, they are unable to understand what true emancipation is, and it's rare that they will listen to you when you try to explain otherwise" (Renoutt, Kira).¹⁵⁰ More the overload of housework and professional work led to the apathy and/or the unwillingness among

¹⁵⁰ Cited in Allen, Taylor. Ann 2008, p. 136

them to enter in to the male dominated sphere of politics. Many post-communist women view participation in politics as just one more burden. Not all women, however, were contented to take a political backseat. Although, Bulgaria, and Poland have had women prime ministers during the post-communist era, but these women, being the first in their nations to hold the highest office, considered themselves to be 'exceptions' rather than part of a trend towards the acceptance of women in high office. Reneta Injova, appointed as Prime Minister of an interim Bulgarian government from October 18, 1994 to January 27, 1995, stated, "I am the exception in modern Bulgarian history"¹⁵¹.

Unlike their western counterparts where the sense of being victimized to patriarchal society and the system, led the emergence of feminism in West, the women of Central and Eastern Europe became the prey of the communist government itself which struck down all laws that subordinated wives to their husbands. Though some historians claimed that the transition had liberated women as well as men, others argued that women actually lost many of the advantages that they had enjoyed under communism. Communist governments claimed to have emancipated women by forcing them into the workplace and providing social benefits and services that helped them to combine work and family life. The policy makers of the regimes that succeeded communism likewise claimed to have emancipated women by leaving them free to make their own choice of home or workplace. However, neither communist system nor the new democracy became women-friendly in true sense. Despite their ideological differences, democracy or the socialism had all male leadership structures, permitted women little or no say about governmental policies, and sanctioned male supremacy in public and private life.

The crisis of gender equality reemerged after the transition period. The new democracy promised to erase the gap of gender inequality in all sphere of life but ironically the lives of women even worsened after 1989. Women were given no empowerment and their life fall prey to the midst of private and public patriarchy. Women were given no choice to make their decisions in terms of their role and status in society. It was as if their fate legally got sealed in the hands of patriarchy.

¹⁵¹ Boncheva, E. 1995; p. 4

Both the socialist regime and the new market economy propagated the true 'empowerment' of women, but the reality fell far short of their propaganda. The new market economy, new technological innovation and higher levels of education were supposed to liberate women from the onus of household work and to encourage their social participation. But their liberation has happened partially as they were apparently brought into the forefront level where their status got relatively better but beneath that their socially constructed role dominated their whole lives and also their existence. The identity of women in Central and Eastern Europe particularly in Poland and Bulgaria has all been trapped into the traditionally backed up society. Also the paradox of gender equality reflected in the fact that the current modern industrial society in Poland and Bulgaria looked down upon women as the "second class citizen" because they have been the "reproductive gender" and as the concept of Human Rights invented by the modern civil society did not reach women. Though the process of modernization has brought little change in the status of women but the role still seems stereotypical and 'family oriented' and not 'career oriented'.

After transition many of the post-communist states hardly addressed women's interests. Most of the states though have been providing legal rights in the wake of EU accession but women issues have been easily ignored. In the areas of employment, political representation, and reproductive rights, women have lost ground but their governments seem to be less concerned about women's empowerment in the region. Women's rights and women's incorporation into the new system should have been an integral part of the transition, but it hardly happened. Women still remained underpowered, under-politicized, and unaware and they have been constantly falling upon the patriarchal, male dominated system. They have been thus stopped being taken "two steps forward" to keep a pace with the male authority of the system so as to make their life equally empowered. The transition has throughout been focused predominantly on the interplay of political and economic factors, on party politics, on the social and economic implications of regime change, but other aspects of transition like local dimension or gender one was given only lip service and have often been marginalized or entirely ignored in public debate. The reason behind the exclusion of these dimensions of transition being the fact that their inclusion would have required the sharing of power with women by those who did not wish to do so, namely the

national state and the recently empowered dissident men who occupy high ranking positions.

Thus Communism though promised to liberate women through increased opportunities in education, employment, and political representation but it failed, because it could not eliminate patriarchy. Unfortunately, the introduction of the market economy and democracy did not hold such promise. Women experienced a dual patriarchy under both the communist as well as the new democratic system: private patriarchy in the domestic sphere and public patriarchy in civil life. Moreover, the Party, which defined the role of women, promoted patriarchy disguised as equality. The Social policies also reinforced women's roles in the domestic domain and held them responsible for child care. And the communist governments repeatedly postponed or ignored answering the question of women's real equality at work and at home.

The European Union, which most post – communist countries eagerly aspired to enter, required its member nations to guarantee the rights of women and minority groups. But in Poland or in Bulgaria the status of women could not neither change, nor their traditional role could get rid of the decade long stereotypes. The entrance of women into the male sphere was not paralleled by a symmetrical movement of men into the female world of home, family and child care. Though opportunities were given to women but the proportionate participation did not take place in all sphere of life and thus striking inequalities remained. The EU's employment strategy aimed not only to bring women into the labor market-the Lisbon Summit 2000 envisaged a 60% female employment rate throughout EU area by 2010-but also to enable them to rise to leadership positions in business , industry, and government agencies. EU leaders urged member nations to initiate affirmative action programmes, aggressively enforce laws against gender discrimination, recruit women into traditionally male occupations, and increase the availability of child care services. (Allen Taylor Ann, 2008: 156). But Women's status still varies widely among EU countries particularly in Poland and Bulgaria. Though Women have increased their visibility in the political life of Western European nations, there has been no similar development in the post communist east, even in countries such as Poland which have recently joined EU.

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