

**FEMINIST CONCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE: IMPLICATIONS
FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY**

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the Dissertation entitled "**FEMINIST CONCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE : IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY**", submitted by **SWATI SUCHARITA NANDA** for the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**, is an original work and has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university.

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PREFACE

In simple words, feminism is the study of women -- their stories, experiences and their viewpoints. With the development of feminist standpoint theory, feminists have attempted not only to include women into various programs, but have begun to examine various ideas and concepts from what is called a 'feminist perspective'.

Seen from a feminist perspective, the conventional concept of 'justice' seems to be one-sided. The feminists therefore, have attempted to evolve a concept of justice that would give women their due by taking into account their problems and experiences. Such a conception of justice considers a just society as one which does not ignore the inherent differences between men and women. This view holds that inclusion of women into decision-making bodies in various areas should be used as a vehicle to achieve gender justice.

Of late, scholars in the field of International Relations have expressed interest to study feminism and to grant women a place in the field. The proposed study focusses on the feminist conception of justice in relation to international relations.

Chapter-I of this dissertation deals with the definitional problems of feminism and holds postmodernism as

the right approach to study feminism in various areas.

Chapter-II has dealt with the concept of empowerment that is so central to the feminist attempt to provide justice to women. This chapter also discusses the various strategies of empowerment as used in different countries and has attempted to assess the effectiveness of empowerment in various countries. Norway, which has the largest female representation in its decision-making bodies has been given special reference.

Chapter-III examines the need and efforts to include gender in the sphere of international politics. It also discusses the ways in which women have been excluded from the mainstream academy of International Relations and makes a case in favour of their inclusion.

Chapter-IV deals with the feminist conception of justice in theoretical terms. It also examines the 'equality vs. difference' debate in feminism.

The study concludes in the fifth chapter which considers the concept of empowerment as vital for the achievement of gender justice. This chapter also tries to focus on the implications of applying the 'feminist standpoint' and 'feminist conception of justice' to International Relations theory.

CHAPTER - I

FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF MODERNITY

CHAPTER - I

Over the last decade and a half a distinct body of scholarship on women, more commonly labeled as 'feminist scholarship' has been recognized as an important field of research in almost every academic field. The first task that faced with the scholars engaged in the field was the identification of pervasive male bias that was embedded in the disciplines and the discovery of how it leads to the omission or distortion of the study of women. These initial critiques called into question the basic assumptions of research and insisted that the disciplines fundamentally alter their purviews to study women ----- their lives, their works and their concerns. More ambitious scholars have aimed at reconstructing and reformulating the basic concepts of various fields from a feminist view point. Such feminist view point is both a product of the disciplines, and a reaction against them, that is rooted in the women's movement and in the academy.

However, there are some complexities involved in drawing boundaries around the field and in defining feminist ideas at its core. Several factors combine to hinder a precise determination of its boundaries : the differences among disciplines as to what should be considered as 'feminist' and 'about women'; the changing context of

scholarship on the subject; the varieties of feminism, both political and intellectual.

To start with, the word 'feminism' continues to inspire controversy -- indeed, even to evoke fear among a sizeable portion of general public. This has become an obstacle in understanding 'feminism' in its diversity and in its differences and in its specificity as well.

According to Kamla Bhasin and N. Said Khan, "unlike many other "isms", feminism does not derive its theoretical or conceptual base from any single theoretical formulation. There is therefore no specific abstract definition of feminism applicable to all women at all times. The definition thus can and does change because feminism is based on historically and culturally concrete realities and levels of consciousness, perceptions and actions. This means that feminism meant one thing in the seventeenth century and that it means something quite different in the 1980s. It can also be articulated differently in different parts of the world and, within a country, differently by different women depending on their class, background, level of education, consciousness etc. Even among similar kinds of women there are different currents and debates in feminist thinking, particularly with regard to the reasons for patriarchy and domination and to the final resolution of women's struggle

for a non-exploitative society free of class, caste, race, and gender bias¹.

Recently, the different meanings of feminism for different feminists have manifested themselves as a sort of sclerosis of the movement, segments of which have become separated and hardened against each other. Instead of internal dialogue there is a naming of parts : there are Radical Feminists, Socialist Feminists, Marxist Feminists and Liberal Feminists, each group with its own carefully preserved sense of identity. Liberal Feminists believe that women are oppressed in so far as they suffer unjust discrimination; Marxists believe that women are oppressed in their exclusion from public production; Radical Feminists see women's oppression as consisting primarily in the universal male control of women's sexual and procreative capacities; while socialist Feminists characterize women's oppression as consisting primarily in terms of a revised version of the Marxist theory of alienation. "While these distinctive Feminist perspectives have been in some ways cross-fertile, they are ultimately incompatible with each other"².

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1. Kamla Bhasin and Nighat Said Khan in **Some Questions on Feminism and its relevance in South Asia**, (New Delhi : Kali for Women, 1993), p. 2.
 2. Alison M. Jaggar, **Feminist Politics and Human Nature**, (Sussex : The Harvester Press Limited, 1983), p. 353.

Another noteworthy problem is that most popular approaches to 'feminism' are obsessed with 'image-building' giving rise to confusion. In many cases feminism often contains references to the style of dress, to looks, to ways of behaving to men and women, to what used to be called 'manners'. Such 'image-building' has now become a conscious process as feminists often play with a wide range of choices in the process of self-presentation registering a relation both to the body and to the social meanings of womanhood.

Despite these difficulties, it is certainly possible to construct a base-line definition of 'feminism' that can be shared by both feminists and non-feminists. Many would agree that at the very least a feminist is someone who holds that women suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied and that satisfaction of their needs would require a radical change in the social, economic and political order.

In other words, feminism could be taken to refer to the awareness of women's oppression and exploitation at work, in the home and in society as well as to the conscious (political) action taken by women to change the situation. Such a definition has a number of consequences : first, it implies that, at some fundamental level there exists a unitary body of women's interests which should be and can be fought for;

secondly, it is clear that although feminism recognises differences in feminist politics, the underlying premise of such politics is that there is an actual potential identity about women; thirdly, feminist politics further depends from its cohesion -- whether potential or actual -- on women's shared oppression which is the basis for sexual or gender politics premised on the notion that women as a social group are dominated by men as a social group.

However, one thing that should be noted is that if feminism is taken as a concern to advance women's interests, then anyone who shares such a concern becomes a feminist whether he acknowledges it or not. Seen this way, the range of feminism becomes general and its meaning becomes equally diffuse. Feminism becomes defined by its object of concern -- in much the same way as socialism has sometimes been defined by an object -- the poor and the working class. Social reformers, then can be classified as feminists because of the consequences of their activities, and not because they share any particular social analysis or critical spirit.

This way of looking at feminism as a diffuse activity makes 'feminism' understandably hard to pin down. Feminists, being involved in so many activities from so many different perspectives, would almost inevitably find it hard to unite except in specific campaigns.

On the other hand, there are those who claim that feminism does have a complex of ideas about women, specific to or emanating from feminists. This means that it should be possible to separate out feminists from the multiplicity of those concerned with women's issues. It is by no means absurd to suggest that one does not have to be a feminist to support women's issues and that not all those supportive of women's demands are feminists. In this light, feminism can claim its own history, its practices, its own ideas but feminists can make no claim to an exclusive interest in or copyright over the problems affecting women. Feminism, thus, can be established as a field but cannot claim women as its domain.

Feminist historians often considered 'feminism' as an active desire to change women's position in the society. For them, feminism is actually a social movement for change in the position of women. Its privilege form is taken to be political movement, the self-organization of a women's politics. "So unquestioningly are feminism and women's movement assumed to be co-terminus that histories of feminism are often written as histories of women's movement"³.

3. Olive Banks, **Faces of Feminism** (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1981), p. 6.

Feminism as a movement is often considered of having its roots in the enlightenment ideals of justice and freedom. Thinkers in the age of Enlightenment -- a period which may be loosely defined as the late seventeenth through eighteenth centuries -- were concerned to re-impose an order on a world which had philosophically fallen apart due to various scientific discoveries. The hierarchical "great chain of being" which ordered the medieval cosmos had been fatally challenged by such discoveries as Galileo's of the movement of the earth, published in 1632, which disproved the geocentric basis of the Ptolemaic astronomy, itself the backbone of the medieval cosmological system. A new synthesis was developed by Sir Isaac Newton whose 'Principia Mathematica' (1687) laid down the fundamental paradigm of the enlightenment world view that the entire cosmos is governed by a few simple immutable mathematical laws. The Newtonian paradigm -- that the physical universe operates according to simple rational laws -- became the governing metaphor of the age. If the physical world were ordered by a few basic laws, knowable through human reason, so too must be the moral world, the political world and the aesthetic world. Descartes, for example, in his 'Discourse on method' (1637) had determined that a few "clear and distinct ideas", known through the "light of reason", provide irrefutable principles of knowledge. The enlightenment

pictured the human race as engaged in an effort towards universal, moral and intellectual self-realization and so as the subject of a universal historical experience, it also postulated a universal human reason in terms of which social and political tendencies could be assessed as 'progressive' or otherwise. In other words, enlightenment period was based on scientific knowledge of the world and rational knowledge of value, which places highest premium on individual human life and freedom, and believes that such freedom and rationality will lead to social progress through virtuous, self-controlled work, creating a better material, political and intellectual life for all.

In each area of knowledge these ideals of objectivism and rationality were used to describe or prescribe behaviour. In the sphere of political science, philosophers developed the idea that certain natural rights or natural laws, known through the exercise of reason exists a priori. They, thus established one of the most important moral ideas of the modern world : that each individual has certain inherent or 'natural rights'. This premise is stated most eloquently in the American Declaration of Independence :

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life,

liberty, and the pursuit of happiness...."⁴.

These revolutionary theories of inalienable rights led the eighteenth century feminists to hold that women be considered entitled to the same natural rights as men. Such awareness among theorists led not only to movements for allowing women the right to vote and participate in the Political Process actively but it also led to the acceptance of the fact that most studies in various fields ignored and excluded women.

They also criticized the language used in the scholarship as being masculine. This was found even in John Locke's text 'second Treatise of Government' (1690) which is considered as the gospel of natural rights doctrine. In it, he unequivocally states⁵.

"The natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but to have only the law of nature for his rule" (IV, 22, P. 411).

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4. Quoted in Josephine Donovan **Feminist Theory : The intellectual traditions of American Feminism**, (New York : The continuum Publishing Company, 1996), p. 2.
 5. John Locke, 'An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent and End of Civil Government', in **The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill** (ed.) Edwin A. Burt, (New York : Random, 1939).

Here Locke had not used the term 'man' in a general sense, but in the specific sense of the male of the species. For later in the Treatise he states quite specifically that husbands are to be allowed authority over their wives and children, and although this is not an absolute authority, he does not spell out its limits. "But the husband and wife will unavoidably sometimes have different wills too. It being necessary that the rule ... be placed somewhere it naturally falls to the man's share as the abler and the stronger". (VII, 82, P. 435)

Moreover, Locke presumed a primary qualification for citizenship, the right to participate in public affairs, to be rationality. According to Locke, only when (male) children had reached a level of adult rationality could they become citizens. Women were presupposed lacking in rationality and were excluded from the role of citizens.

Feminist theorists of this tradition such as France Wright, Sarah Grimkë, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Harriet Taylor and John Stuart Mill argued that men and women are ontologically similar and demanded equal rights for women both in political and social spheres. Such views of equal rights, equal work and of equal treatment aimed to assimilate women to men to erase gender differences and construct a gender-neutral society.

The recent feminist theorists, however, have called into question the basic assumptions of the enlightenment thought, showing that what has been represented as 'human' or 'universal' has in fact been a reflection of the perspective of dominant white male westerners of the last few centuries; dependent on and exploitative of other genders, classes and cultures, whose own perspectives and experiences have been silenced and suppressed. In contrast to the misleading and unattainable ideal of transcendental reason and a view from nowhere these new feminists have argued that all knowledge is situated and limited by its 'positioning' that it reflects over interests and our values; that objectivity seen in terms of political, and that political disengagements and value-neutrality is neither possible nor desirable. Feminist theorists have argued for the need for the theorists to be aware of the historical, social and political context from which knowledge claims are made, and against generalizing from limited experience into the lives of others.

The enlightenment feminist theory which is based upon 'equality of women' argument has been much criticised. Firstly, it has been criticized by the recent feminists because of its attempts to identify women's experience as identical to that of men. The new feminists, in contrast,

hold that women should be treated differently as they share experiences that are specific to them. Secondly, the enlightenment feminism has been criticized by the Black, 'Third world' and many other women who do not identify with such feminist claims. They feel that their knowledge and experience has been ignored, marginalized or silenced by a feminism that reflects the perspective of white, western, middle-class women. It has been claimed that feminist theory itself also indulges in false universalism and a lack of critical awareness of its own situatedness. Instead of 'man' we are now presented with a generic term 'woman', a term like the universal 'man' or 'human', that hides or denies differences in situation and experience, privilege and power -- its content based not on actual commonalities between people, but on the experiences and interests of some who have the position and ability to impose these terms and therefore, define what they mean for themselves and for others.

Alongside these critiques and partially in response to them, there has been within feminist theory a growing awareness and opposition to essentialism and universalism. Universal assumptions about human or female nature, or about common conditions of social life made by many earlier feminist writers, have been exposed and criticized. There is

no longer emphasis on monocausal explanations of oppression of women, whether these are seen as living in the sphere of biology, reproduction, child socialization, psychological inclinations or whatever, and there is a distrust of those that posit universal social factors like a nature-culture or public-private split, or a common sexual division of labour to explain the position of women.

All these difficulties have led some feminists to take a postmodernist approach while building the feminist theory. Postmodern discourses are all "deconstructive" in that they seek to distance us from and make us skeptical about beliefs about truth, knowledge, power, the self, and language that are often taken for granted within and serve as legitimation for contemporary western culture. Central to postmodern critique is the claim that standards of truth are context-dependent and the rejection of the doctrine of unity and reason that was basic to enlightenment thinking. It refuses to conceive of humanity as a unitary subject striving towards the goal of perfect coherence or of perfect cohesion and stability. On the contrary, post-modernism opposes the search for coherence and the desire for 'the right answer'. It suggests instead the continuation of 'conversations' -- conversations not aiming at a single representation of reality. Post modernism, in short, offers a theoretical celebration of "difference", "partiality" and

"multiplicity".

Given that feminists are concerned with the problem of essentialism and universalism, about not making false generalizations from their own perspective, with the problem of marginalizing or excluding the perspective of others -- it is understandable that postmodernist theory, with its weariness of generalizations that transcend the boundaries of culture and region, with its emphasis on partiality and multiplicity, with its apparent attention to difference, diversity and local, is an attractive approach to take up or espouse.

Nancy Fraser and Linda J. Nicholson have argued that there are good reasons for exploring relations between 'feminism and postmodernism'. The reasons putforth by them are as follows :

Both have offered deep and far-reaching criticisms of the institution of philosophy. Both have elaborated critical perspectives on the relation of philosophy to the larger culture. And, both have sought to develop new paradigms of social criticism which do not rely on traditional philosophical underpinnings. Other differences notwithstanding, one could say that during the last decade feminists and postmodernists have worked independently on a

common nexus of problems. They have tried to rethink the relation between philosophy and social criticism so as to develop paradigms of criticism without philosophy⁶.

However, both Fraser and Nicholson agree, that the two tendencies have proceeded from opposite directions. While postmodernists have begun by elaborating antifoundational metaphilosophical perspectives and have drawn conclusions about the shape and character of social criticism, feminists have begun by developing critical political perspectives and from there, have drawn conclusions about the status of philosophy. As a result, an encounter between the two will initially be an exchange of criticisms but each of these has much to learn from the other as each is in possession of valuable resources that can help to correct the deficiencies of the other. Thus, ultimately, an encounter between feminism and postmodernism is the "prospect of a perspective which integrates their respective strengths while eliminating their respective weaknesses"⁷.

There are, however, two major problems with this

6. Nancy Fraser and Linda J. Nicholson *Social Criticism without Philosophy : An encounter between Feminism and Postmodernism*, in Linda J. Nicholson (ed.) **Feminism/Post Modernism**, (New York : Routledge, 1990), p.19.

7. Ibid. p. 20.

premise. One is that postmodernism offers no way to choose among theories; all are equally "essentialist" and "monocausal" and therefore equally suspect. As a political theory, it offers only a relativist pluralism. Second, it blocks the possibility of generic political identity, such as women, and upon the articulation of an agenda of needs by that group, this aspect of postmodernism seems most problematic from a feminist point of view because it negates the possibility of political action.

Seyla Benhabib warns that the uncritical acceptance of the main theses of postmodernism -- 'Death of Man', 'Death of History' and 'Death of Metaphysics' -- threatens not only to eliminate feminist theory as a distinct enterprise but also to dissolve its emancipatory goals⁸.

Nicholson and Fraser have argued that what is important for the postmodern critique is not to "abandon the large theoretical tools needed to address the larger political problems. There is nothing self-contradictory in the idea of a postmodern theory.... Such a theory would be explicitly historical, attuned to the cultural specificity of different societies and periods and to that of different groups within

8. See for a detailed discussion, Seyla Benhabib 'Feminism and the Question of Post Modernism' in '**The Polity Reader in Gender Studies**', Blackwell Publishers, pp. 76-92.

societies and periods. Thus, the categories of postmodern-feminist theory would be inflected by temporality, with historically specific institutional categories like the modern, restricted, male-headed, nuclear family taking precedence over ahistorical, functionalist categories like reproduction and mothering. Where categories of the latter sort were not eschewed altogether, they would be genealogized, that is, framed by a historical narrative and rendered temporally and culturally specific"⁹.

Thus, the postmodern feminist theory would be pragmatic and fallibilistic. It would have the capacity to tailor its methods and its categories to the specific task at hand, using multiple categories when appropriate and rejecting the metaphysical comfort of a single feminist method or feminist epistemology.

To come back again to the question of the trends that present-day feminism is experiencing, Kamla Bhasin and N. Said Khan hold that now it has become "a struggle for the achievement of women's equality, dignity and freedom of choice to control over their lives and bodies within and outside home"¹⁰. This conception is different from the

9. Linda J. Nicholson, **Feminism/Postmodernism**, (New York : Routledge, 1990), p. 34.

10. Kamla Bhasin and N. Said Khan, **Some Questions on Feminism and Its Relevance in South Asia**, (New Delhi : Kali for Women), 1993, p. 3.

earlier one in that it seeks more than equality or equal rights with men in the spheres of society, economy, politics and law.

Feminism in the present-day seeks to root out the causes of women's oppression, to empower them to participate in decision-making at all levels of society, and to transform society through the inclusion of women's participation and perspectives.

An international workshop entitled 'Feminist Ideology and Structures in the First Half of the Decade for Women', which brought together women from both the South and the North in 1979, expressed the intertwining of oppressions and identified two long-term feminist goals :

The oppression of women is rooted in both inequities and discriminations based on sex and in poverty and injustices of the political and economic systems based on race and class. First, the freedom from oppression for women involves not only equity, but also right of women to freedom of choice and the power to control their lives both within and outside home. Having control over lives and bodies is essential to ensure a sense of dignity and autonomy for every woman. The second goal of feminism is ... the removal of all forms of inequity and oppression through the creation of a more just social and economic order, nationally and inter-

nationally. This means the involvement of women in national liberation struggles, in plans for national development, in local and global strategies for change¹¹.

In this widely held view, feminism aims not simply for equal rights but for a transformation of all oppressive relationships in society. While scholars have identified certain commonalities of women's oppression, there is also a recognition of the diversity of women and their oppression. An emphasis on the complexity of and changing nature of gender role and oppression is characteristic of the contemporary feminist thinking. Feminism, then, is not simply one big global sisterhood, uniting women across barriers of class, colour, race, religion and nationality.

In fact, feminism, should be viewed as a rapidly developing major critical ideology, a comprehensive view of the world in its own right. As an ideology, it includes a broad spectrum of ideas and possesses an international scope, one whose developmental stages have historically been dependent on and in tension with male-centred political and intellectual discourse but whose more recent manifestations transcend the latter. Thus, feminism should be viewed as not intrinsically a subject of any other western religious or

11. Report of The International Workshop on Feminist Ideology and Structures in the First Half of the Decade for Women (1979), **Asia and Pacific Centre for Development Women's Programme**, p. 1.

secular ideology.

Feminism, viewed in this way, emerges as a concept that encompasses both the analysis of male privilege and women's subordination within any given society. At the starting point, of course, feminism posits gender or the differential social construction of the behaviour of sexes, based on their physiological differences as the primary category of analysis. By doing so, feminism raises issues concerning personal autonomy or freedom but not without constant references to the basic issues of societal organization. It seeks to destroy the masculinst hierarchy but not sexual dualism.

Feminism is necessarily pro-woman but it does not follow that it is anti-man. It is pro-woman because women as a social group are oppressed and are often denied basic rights. It stands for availability of justice, freedom and opportunities to all irrespective of gender differences. It makes claims for a rebalancing between men and women of the social, economic and political power within a given society on behalf of both sexes in the name of their common humanity, but with respect for their differences. The challenge is fundamentally a humanistic one, raising basic issues concerning individual freedom and responsibility as well as collective responsibility to others in society and in modes of dealing with others.

CHAPTER - II

**FEMINIST VIEW OF POLITICS :
EMPOWERMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY**

CHAPTER - II

In recent decades, with the second wave of the women's movement, there has been a re-evaluation of many male-created concepts and institutions including that of politics. The concept of 'politics' as it is generally understood in most contemporary societies denotes the exercise of power in the public realm. According to this view, individual and group involvement in established government structures such as parliaments or congresses, parties, campaigns, and voting, and in the use of control and influence within these institutions constitutes the essence of political activity. With a few exceptions, all over the world, the public political domain for many centuries has been, and continues to be, defined and controlled by men (usually upper class). With politics restricted to the public sphere of human life and perceived as an arena of male activity, the private or personal realm, by contrast, has come to be seen as a sphere reserved for women. The private sphere typically comprises the institution of family and interpersonal relations between friends and acquaintances. Within this realm, by definition, there is no politics. Hence, women's role in most societies have been defined by and largely limited to the private sphere and women's activities essentially apolitical.

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The Radical Feminists among others, have particularly spearheaded the inquiry against such a version of public-private division and have stimulated new ideas about politics within the wider women's movement. One of the pioneers in this regard has been Kate Millett¹. In her now classic 'Sexual Politics' she redefined politics from activity taking place within established structures to relationships based on power whereby one group of persons is controlled by another. Many other Radical Feminists have gone even further by attacking the notion that there exists a distinct political sphere and proclaimed that "the personal is Political"². While at first women made the connection between private lives and public and legal issues in relation to blacks, they soon recognized that every area of life is a sphere of "sexual politics". Since all relationships between men and women are institutionalized relationships of power, they constitute an appropriate field for political analysis. Thus, radical feminists concluded that such "Personal" institutions as child bearing, housework, love, marriage have deeply political dimensions. The assumption that these institutions and practices are

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1. See, Kate Millet, **Sexual politics**, (New York, Avon Books, 1971).
 2. See, Hester Eisenstein, **Contemporary Feminist Theory**, (Boston : G.K. Hall, 1983).

"natural" or of purely individual concern is shown to be an ideological curtain that conceals the reality of women's systematic oppression. According to this view, such oppression is universal. In spite of the wide cross-cultural variety, radical feminists found some underlying commonalities in women's experience in ways of organizing sexuality, marriage, and childrearing. Thus, they give the call for breaking such unjust traditional dichotomy between private and public. This has led many feminists to examine more closely the activities of women carried on outside the purview of established power structure. The feminists have felt that until the definition of politics is broadened to include women's experiences, their struggle to survive and change the relations in the society, women's political actions will remain obscured.

Central to the feminist definition of politics is the concept of empowerment. As used by feminists, empowerment is taken to mean a process by which oppressed persons gain some control over their lives by taking part with others in the development of activities and structures that allow people increased involvement in matters which affect them directly. In its course, people became enabled to govern themselves effectively. This process involves the use of power, but not 'power over' others or power as dominance as is traditionally the case; rather power is seen as 'power to'

or power as competence which is generated and shared by the disenfranchised as they begin to shape the content and structure of their daily existence and to participate in a movement for social change³. An important illustration of this notion comes from the literacy movement⁴. Feminists within literacy movement have drawn on the work of Paulo Freire who suggested that learners are empowered by entering into dialogue with their peers. Through this dialogue they learn to read and write as they name their experience and speak about their world.

Here empowerment of the learner is synonymous with a transformation to document their lives : by writing and publishing oppressed people's voices and histories thus bringing them into public realm, the established notion what constitutes literature is challenged and redefined. This process, involving the generation and use of power to bring about social change, is profoundly political.

So politics, according to this view, includes people's everyday experiences of oppressive conditions, the

3. Such a conception of Power is portrayed by Berenice Carroll, Peace Research : The Cult of Peace, in **Journal of Conflict Resolution**, 16(4), 1972, pp. 585-616.

4. See, Garber-katz, Elaine and Horseman, Is it her voice if she speaks their words ?, **Canadian Women's Studies**, 4(3/4) Fall Winter, 1988, 117-20.

recognition of the injustices of power differences, and the many and varied attempts to change power relationships at all societal levels. The struggle for empowerment ranges from attempts to secure a constitutional equal rights amendment to the struggle to attain a measure of economic self-sufficiency in an impoverished village.

According to Vanessa Griffen empowerment means "adding to women's power" and power means⁵ :

- * having control, or gaining further control;
- * having a say and being listened to;
- * being able to define and create from a woman's perspective;
- * being able to influence social choices and decisions affecting the whole society (not just areas of society accepted as woman's place);
- * being recognized and respected as equal citizens and human beings with a contribution to make.

Long before the word 'empowerment' became popular among the feminists, women were speaking about participating in the decisions that affect them in the home and community, in government and in international development policies. The

5. Vanessa Griffen (ed.), **Women, Development and Empowerment : A Pacifist Feminist Perspective**, Asian and Pacific Development Centre, Kuala Lumpur, 1987, pp. 117-118.

word 'empowerment' captures this sense of gaining control, of participating, of decision-making. More recently, the word has entered the vocabulary of development agencies, including the United Nations and other international organizations .

It should be noted that empowerment is a process and is not, therefore, something that can be given to the people. The process of empowerment is both individual and collective, since it is through involvement in groups that people most often begin to develop their awareness and the ability to organize to take actions and bring about change. Women's empowerment can be viewed as a continuum of several interrelated and mutually reinforcing components. Firstly, it is a process of building awareness about women's situation, discrimination, rights and opportunities as a step towards gender equality. Collective awareness building can provide a sense of group identity and the power of working as a group. Secondly, empowerment aims at capacity building or making the women able to plan, to make decisions, organize, and carry out activities to deal with people and with the institutions. Thirdly, empowerment also intends to make women able not only of participating but also to have greater control over the decision-making process in the home and also outside. Finally, it is a

process of bringing about greater equality between men and women.

The core of women's empowerment framework is its argument that women's development can be viewed in terms of five levels of equality, of which empowerment is an essential element at each level⁶. The levels are : Welfare, Access, conscientisation, participation and control.

1. Welfare addresses only the basic needs of women, without recognising or attempting to solve the underlying structural causes, which necessitate provision of welfare services. At this point, women are merely passive beneficiaries of welfare benefits.

2. Access is essential for women to make meaningful progress. This involves equality of access to resources, such as education opportunities, land and credit. The path to empowerment is initiated when women recognize their lack of access to resources as a barrier to their growth and overall wellbeing, and take actions to address this.

3. Conscientization is a critical point in the empowerment framework. For women to take appropriate action to close gender gap or gender irregularities, there must be a recognition that their problems stem from inherent

6. UNICEF, The Women's Empowerment Framework, **Women and Girls Advance**, vol. 1, no. 1, 1993, p.5.

structural and institutional discrimination. They must also recognise the role they often play in reinforcing the system that restricts their growth.

4. Participation is the point where women are taking decisions alongside men equally. To reach this level, however, mobilisation is necessary. By organising themselves and working collectively women will be empowered to gain increased representation in various fields, which will lead to increased empowerment and ultimately greater control.

5. Control is the ultimate level of equality and empowerment. Here, the balance of power between men and women is equal and neither party has dominance over the other. At this stage the women are able to make decisions over their lives, and play an active role in the development process. Further, contribution of women are fully recognized and rewarded.

One of the most important aspect of 'empowerment' is the strategies used to achieve it. By successful or effective strategy we refer to those political means used by women which have resulted in visible or tangible changes within a society, have increased the scope of women's activities, and have allowed a greater outlet for women's voices and views. This, according to the feminists, can be

achieved by active participation of women in public spheres whereby they can make their viewpoint known. The strategy that is frequently used to empower women is making them participate in the public affairs by granting them the right to vote. Beginning with New Zealand, in 1893, women have gained the right to vote almost everywhere although often only after long and difficult struggles. The long fight for women's suffrage in the UK, and the USA, for instance, began in the mid-nineteenth century and lasted well into the first quarter of the twentieth century. In the Philippines, women began organizing to get the right to vote in the early years of the twentieth century and obtained it only in 1937.

Though the right to vote is a necessary step for women's equality struggle, it cannot be regarded as a guarantee for the women to participate in politics on an equal basis with men.

Feminists around the world have agreed that what is more important for empowerment is to make the women participate in the policy-making process as decision-makers by which their viewpoints can be directly inducted. However, most feminists argue that it is quite important to get a sizeable number of women into the process. Moreover, just getting more women into the public offices as decision-makers might not bring about effective change. The women

entering politics need to have training in grassroots women's movements and to have a feminist agenda to bring with them. While in office they need to form coalitions with other women politicians, and women's groups and organizations outside the system. This however, does not undermine the argument that getting more women to the parliament or congress or to the national or international civil service is likely to make no difference in a given society. The election of a substantial number of women supported by a strong women's movement outside the existing system is more likely to make it possible for women in government to speak out on behalf of their sex, change the existing laws in favour of the deprived, and to legitimize the feminist perspective. This is what has happened in most Scandinavian countries. To take an example, Norway is one of the few countries where women have attained a relatively higher degree of representation and participation in established government structures.

In 1987, the head of the government of Norway was a woman; women held 44% of the cabinet positions, 34% of all parliamentary seats, 31% of the seats on local councils, 30% of all places on governmental commissions and boards. During 1990, the representation of women in the ruling government

rose to 47%⁷.

According to Bystydzienski, Scandinavian commitment to the values of equality and justice as well as a strong belief in the role of proportionally representative government as the equalizer of economic and, social difference had helped women to gain legitimacy for their demands to share political power with men. Moreover, a tradition of organizational involvement and local decision-making bodies as well as relatively open governmental structures (e.g. large number of political parties, flexible electoral procedures and lack of financial burdens for office candidates) have facilitated the entry of women into Norwegian Politics. However, these factors can only partially account for the dramatic recent increase in women's representation because despite long-standing existence of egalitarian values and participatory government, women began to enter Norwegian public offices only since early 1970s. This change was related directly to the emergence of a strong women's movement and its concerted drive to get more women into decision-making bodies. While political actions such as demonstrating, lobbying, positioning and attempting to influence public opinion were not new to Norwegian

7. Forde and Hernes, *Gender Equality in Norway*, in *Canadian Women's Studies*, 9(2), Summer, 1988, pp. 27-30.

women's activists during 1960s and 1970s, the nature of such actions changed significantly later. A large number of women than ever before devoted a great deal of their time and energy to class and ideological lines, making direct use of electoral and party systems to get more women elected into public offices. The most effective overarching strategy developed by Norwegian women activists during the 1960s and 1970s was the building of a strong coalition between the two groups of major significance within the women's movement : Women representing traditional women's organizations. "the establishment women" and the "new feminists". It is due to the coalition between the two that the Norwegian women's movement succeeded in not only getting more women into public offices but also in terms of incorporating a feminist agenda into the platforms of several political parties, as well as affecting some major legislation. Bystydzienski's research indicates that women in Norway contributed to a change in the political agenda and to the climate in the government. Today, there is a growing recognition among Norway's politicians that public and private lives are not totally separate spheres⁸. This can be seen from the acceptance of sex quotas by the Liberals, Socialist left

8. Bystydzienski, **Women in Politics in Norway** paper presented at the 14th Congress of International Political Science Association, Aug. 28 - Sept. 1, Washington, D.C.

and the Labour parties, the wording of major portions of the Equal Status Act in favour of women rather than in gender-neutral terms.

This Equal Status Act was adopted by the Norwegian Parliament in 1978 and is perhaps the only legal provision of its type which is not gender-neutral. The first paragraph of the document reads : "This Act shall Promote Equal Status between the sexes and aims particularly at improving the position of women". The Equal Status Act, in fact, acknowledges what Norway's women's movement expressed during the 1970s : that it is not possible to achieve equal status between men and women merely by prohibiting discrimination. In order to rectify the discrepancies between the sexes, measures need to be taken which will provide women with advantages in many areas. The Act recognizes that women be given certain special rights in connection with pregnancy, childbirth and nursing. This recognition of women's situation as different from men's and the incorporation of provisions allowing positive discrimination in favour of women attest to the effectiveness of women's movement in getting its views across to politicians and general public. As more women entered the parliament and country and municipal councils, they made it possible for women's issues, concerns, and values to be discussed, debated and

legislated more openly and frequently. Many of these women received their political training in the women's movement and were sympathetic to the views and demands of activist women. They thus, took the feminist agenda developed by the movement into the public sphere of establishment politics, and there it has had a significant impact. Skard (1980) found that from 1960 to 1975, the proportion of issues relating to the legal, economic and social positions of women discussed in the Norwegian Parliament increased from 5% to 25%, and female representatives initiated over 90% of the discussion on these issues⁹.

The greater number of women in public offices in Norway has also made possible the introduction of the female perspective into the public issues. What this means is that female representatives have been more likely than their male counterparts to consider problems and changes in less abstract terms, focussing on how they affect people, people's relationships to one another and their everyday lives. This approach to issues has been termed in Norway as the "Soft Approach" as contrasted to the traditional male technical and abstract "hard' approach.

9. Skard, Torild, **Chosen for Parliament**, (Oslo : Gyldendal, 1980).

In America, the reform-oriented wing of the women's movement accepted the election of greater number of women as a major goal. The election of women to the public offices is viewed as one means of achieving public policy more consistent with the preferences of women and more reflective of gender-specific problems that women face. A survey conducted by the Centre for American Women and Politics' in the summer of 1988 revealed that most women legislators worked on legislations aimed at helping women, and proportionally more women than men legislators place top priority on legislation dealing with women's issues, health care issues, and children's issues -- those areas that are most important for a welfare democracy but were most often neglected¹⁰.

It should be noted that even in the US, like that of the Scandinavian countries, most women legislators have been found to have received support from women's organizations when they run for office. So, in this way, the women's organizations, especially feminist groups, provide affirmation and sustenance for women office holders; they also function as a conscience for these women, providing

10. Susan J. Carroll, Women State Legislators, Women's Organizations, and the Representation of Women's Culture, in Jill M. Bystydzienski's **Women Transforming Politics**, (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 24-40.

sometimes subtle and sometimes not so subtle reminders that they have a responsibility to represent women's interests within the institutions in which they serve.

In societies like Uganda, Palestine, Nicaragua which have histories of external domination war, and severe economic problems, women's concerns have not been given much attention, and any attempts at improving the status of women have had to deal with national priorities. Since the majority of men in these societies also experience oppression, it is difficult for women to present a case that they are particularly oppressed. On the other hand, as women join with men in struggles for liberation and economic empowerment, they typically discover that unless they find ways to secure their equal rights with men, male domination will continue both within liberation movements and often the movements have achieved goals¹¹. In the process of joining the movements, women acquire a sense of competence, self-confidence, and opportunity for self-determination. In Uganda, for example, the National Resistance Movement recognized the importance of reserving seats for women at all levels of governance in order to break with the tradition of exclusion of women from formal decision-making

11. For a detailed study see, Kumari Jayawardane, **Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World**, (London : Zed Book, 1986).

bodies. During the twentieth century, this East African country experienced massive upheavals -- from colonization by the British to independence, followed by several brutal dictatorships, to a five-year civil war, and finally to recent attempts at reconstruction. During these years, the fate of Ugandan women and men had been closely tied together -- both had lost their self-determination under the colonial rule and both suffered massive injustices under fascist dictators; also both had seen no alternative but join an armed resistance to end the years of atrocities and to regain human dignity. In the process, the women acquired a sense of competence, self confidence, and opportunity for self-determination. Thus, here the involvement of women in struggle constituted an effective strategy for empowerment.

Alongside the empowerment of women in the national political arena, the concept of empowerment of women as a goal of development projects and programmes has been gaining wider acceptance in the 1990s. According to Kate Young, the concept of empowerment as used by development agencies, "refers mainly to self-reliance"¹².

Throughout the third world, particularly in the Past

12. Kate Young, **Planning Development with Women : Making a World of Difference**, (New York : Macmillan, 1993), p.157.

decade, there has been proliferation of policies, programmes and projects designed to integrate women into development. Such projects have chiefly aimed at assisting the low income women and change their lives through such intervention. In many cases as in India, national governments have voluntarily undertaken these as their policy targets, in many other countries this action has been prompted by the initiatives of the international agencies as the UN. Development Alternatives for a New Era (DAWN), a loose formation of individual women and women's groups set up prior to the 1985 World Conference of Women in Nairobi attempted to justify the integration of women in development projects :

We want a world where inequality based on class, gender, and race is absent from every country and from the relationship among countries. We want a world where basic needs become basic rights and where poverty and all forms of violence are eliminated. Each person will have the opportunity to develop her or his full potential and creativity, and women's value of nurturance and solidarity will characterise human relationships. In such a world women's reproductive role will be redefined : childcare will be shared by men, women and the society as a whole only by sharpening the links between equality, development and

peace, can we show that the 'basic rights' of the poor and the transformation of the institutions that subordinate women are inextricably linked. They can be achieved together through the self-empowerment of women¹³.

Using time as a basic parameter for change, DAWN distinguishes between long-term and short-term strategies. Long-term and short-term strategies are needed to break down the structures of inequality between genders, classes and nations. Fundamental requisites for this process include national liberation from colonial and neocolonial domination, shifts from export led strategies in agriculture, and greater control over the activities of multinationals. Short-term strategies are identified as the necessity to provide ways of responding to the current crises, with measures to assist women both in food production through the promotion of a diversified agricultural base, as well as in formal and informal sector employment. Although the short-term strategies correspond to practical gender needs, long-term strategies contain a far wider agenda than do strategic gender needs, with national liberation as a fundamental requisite for addressing them. However, DAWN

13. Caroline N. Moser, Gender Planning in the Third World, in Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland (ed.), **Gender and International Relations**, (Buckingham : Open University Press, 1991), p. 107.

does not identify that with the achievement of national liberation, women's liberation will follow. Recent liberation struggles in countries such as Cuba, Nicaragua and Zimbabwe have shown that this is not necessarily the case. The new era envisaged by DAWN also require the transformation of the structures of subordination that have been so inimical to women. Changes in law, civil codes, systems of property rights, control over women's bodies, labour codes and the social and legal institutions that underwrite male control and privilege are essential if women are to attain justice in society.

Recognition of the limitations of top down government legislation to actually, rather than potentially, meet strategic gender needs had led the adherents of the empowerment approach to acknowledge that their strategies will not be implemented without the sustained and systematic efforts of women's organizations and like-minded groups. In fact, the origins of the empowerment approach are derived less from the research of the first world women and more from the emergent feminist writings and grassroots organization of third world women. It recognises that feminism is simply not a western, urban, middle-class import. Kumari Jayawardane argues that the women's movement was not imposed on women by the UN or the western feminists

but has an independent history. Although the empowerment framework undertaken worldwide acknowledges inequalities between men and women, the origins of women's subordination in the family, it also emphasizes the fact that women experience oppression differently according to their race, class, colonial history and current position in the international economic order. It therefore, maintains that women have to challenge oppressive structures and situations simultaneously at different levels. The main aim of such empowerment approach of development is to enable women to make choices in life and to influence the direction of change through the ability to gain control over crucial material and non-material resources. In other words, it seeks to empower women through redistribution of power within as well as between societies.

One noteworthy tendency that has often been found is that increasing number of women are entering the political life through non-governmental organizations, women's movements and associations of professional women. Mostly, these groups have been actively participating in the politics of community and grassroot levels to translate their efforts into effective political actions. Such women with the support of women's groups are playing leading roles in movements for social change. One such example is the 'Chipko movement' of India. This movement is historically,

philosophically and organisationally on extension of the traditional Gandhian Satyagraha. In this movement it was the women who came to the forefront and transformed the struggle into something that was particularly theirs, although initially the movement was said to have started by men. The Chipko Movement drew its inspiration from the 17th century movement in India in which three hundred people of Bishnoi community led by Amrita Devi, gave their lives to save the sacred kherji trees by clinging to them, The modern Chipko Movement started around 1973 but the women joined it a year later. Women, in this movement, stopped the felling of the trees by clinging to them.

Within a few years the Movement spread all over Garhwal, with women being in the forefront in many places. Women, in this movement, had evolved their own unique ways of registering their protest, whether it was to embrace trees, or to bandage them. This reinforced the women's closeness to nature, their belief that natural resources were their to protect and conserve, not to exploit and destroy. As the movement spread, women began to realize the need to get organized and to sustain in the struggle. With the help of the Dasauli Gram Swarajya Mandal, women formed Mahila Mangal Dals in many villages and many of them began to claim the right to decide what was done in forests and

fields. In both Reni and neighbouring villages the Dals fought with male-dominated Panchayats over the protection of their crops.

As the Chipko movement grew, so did a movement for safe environment in Uttarakhand. Closely linked to these movements were the anti-alcohol movements. Activists working in these areas discovered that alcoholism among men posed a major problem for women. In some areas, it resulted in severe wife-battering, squandering family's earnings on liquor and also had negative effects on the men's health. In all these cases, women were the worst sufferers. This problem was taken up by the Uttarakhand Sangharsh Vahini which was active in Chipko movement. The Vahini organized public meetings and anti-alcohol campaigns. In Himachal, groups of women closed the liquor shops and the widespread agitation resulted in the government to declare prohibition in many areas. Since then, in many parts of India, women with the support of organizations have protested against alcoholism and have been successful in pressurising the governments to enforce prohibition.

In 1993, nearly 600 women activists gathered in Jhansi and intitated a national campaign against the sell of arrack. In Cuddapah district of Andhra Pradesh, 33 villagers conducted a referendum, complete with ballot papers, on

whether people wanted arrack to be sold in their village or not. In several other districts, signature campaigns were launched and meetings were called, and in all these, it was resolved that people did not want arrack to be sold. All this led to the state government to decide to impose total prohibition on the sale of arrack in the state from October 1, 1993 when the new excise year commences. And to begin with, prohibition of arrack was enforced in Nellore with immediate effect. This agitation against arrack, since then, has spread from the Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh to Raipur in Madhya Pradesh, Gadchiroli in Maharashtra and Kurukshetra in Haryana and also to many parts of Orissa. Today, in Andhra Pradesh, 'prohibition' has become an important issue for the politicians to come to power.

In conclusion, it can be said that empowering women by giving them right and the opportunity to raise their voice against oppression and to think and take decisions on the basis of their experiences has definitely succeeded in making a difference. Studies have shown that women in the decision-making bodies have shown more interest for issues concerning those areas that affect women. However, in many cases this has not been so due to many factors. Firstly, the 'number' of women in the public sphere matters a lot. As a minority operating in a male domain, most women public figures, to be accepted and to function on a basis of

equality with men, have had to adapt to and adopt the male priorities predominating in public life. Secondly, just as men, women are also subject to prevailing political practices and to global economic and political forces that affect their possibilities for action. Thirdly, and most importantly the presence of support from organizations or women outside the governmental structure can reinforce the actions of such decision-makers for the benefit of women. This point has been discussed earlier. However, absence of such support can demoralise the women decision-makers.

Thus, women's movements have been an important means of empowerment for women all over, the world. It is through organizing and joining women's groups and actions that many women have become aware of their oppression and have sought ways to gain control of their lives and to change the male-dominated structures of their societies. But unfortunately social science research tends to marginalize the women's movements by placing them into "non-institutionalized" and "social movement" categories, effectively minimizing women's political struggles for emancipation and change.

CHAPTER - III

**FEMINISM AND INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS**

CHAPTER - III

The presence of domination, oppression and powerlessness of women everywhere has always attracted the feminists to make it a worldwide women's movement so as to fight for the cause and benefit of the women both within and across the national boundaries. Another aim behind this is to strengthen the movement by the participation of more women and also by assimilating various interests and view points. Among the oldest of others is the International Council for Women founded in 1888 for the purpose of uniting women's organizations in various countries to promote equal rights for women as well as for women's participation in politics and public life. Such organizations mobilized their membership to press for women's participation in the international political arena in an attempt to exert women's influence in questions of peace, war and international political bodies by organizing conferences and meetings at the site of world politics. Such women's organizations have often acted as peace activists in societies all over the world and have often joined in anti-war campaigns. On the eve of the World War I, many such women in Europe and the US had stepped up their activities for Peace. With the outbreak of the war in 1914, they protested against the killings and destruction and pressed the neutral countries to bring the

belligerent to the negotiating table. An international congress of women held in the Hague in 1915 gave birth to the "Women's International League" for Peace and Freedom' (WILPF), an international women's NGO which has continued to play a significant role in women's peace activities of this day. Though not very successful, these women succeeded in achieving a cross-border solidarity.

Further, women have been in the forefront of the anti-nuclear movement since the dropping of bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In 1959, a conference on the responsibility of women, in the atomic age was held in Brunate, Italy by the newly formed 'European Movement Against Nuclear Armament' Women had also played an important role in arousing and organizing the public in massive educational and petition campaigns in support of a treaty to ban nuclear testing which resulted in the Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963. In 1964, a new peace movement was started in the US, calling itself 'Women Strike for Peace', and in the same year women from many countries demonstrated at a NATO Conference in the Netherlands against plans to set up a multilateral Nuclear force¹.

But it was only in the recent decades that the nature

1. See, Jeanne Vickers, **Women and War**, (London : Zed Books, 1993), pp. 121-122.

of women's activities and movements have been transformed from transnational arena and can be truly called international. There are two forces that can be identified as responsible for such internationalization of the movement. Firstly, in the contemporary times, we are focusing more on human rights, the internationally agreed standards of egalitarian relations between human beings, based on common humanity rather than on privileges of property ownership, lineage, race, name and sex. Such emphasis on the rights of men and women to live a life (with dignity) has come to form a contract between the states and the people, as individuals and social groups, to moderate the power of the state on the one hand and to mediate that of the groups and of the individuals towards each other. Secondly, the emergence of international agencies like the United Nations as important actors in the International Political Scene has also helped the women's movement. In fact, the UN has helped not only by providing a platform to the women to speak out their experiences and opinions but also by explaining to them that their unease with the pressures upon their lives are not peculiar to them. This has encouraged the women around the world to identify with others, link up their dissenting thoughts and actions.

The efforts of the UN for this, started in the year

1975 which was designated as the International Women's Year and the period from 1975-85 as the International Decade for Women. An International convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against women was adopted by the International Community in 1979 and an International Research and Training Institute (INSTRAW) was set up along with a voluntary fund for the year. Since then, International Conferences have been held under the UN auspices at Mexico (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and most recently at Beijing (1995).

These conferences are significant despite their formality and disappointments. Although government delegations tend to follow their countries' foreign policy and power-bloc priorities rather than make commitments in the interest of "equality, development and peace", enough consensus was found through conventional diplomacy for plans, programmes and the Radical 1985 Forward Looking strategies. These conferences are also important in the sense that they show the gradual increase of interest among the nations of the world regarding gender issues. It should be noted that a world conference is convened only when the international community agrees that the policy direction of an important issue needs to be reassessed, updated, or given special attention.

These non-governmental and international events have resulted in various feminist analyses of economics, international debt and structural adjustment programmes, debates on democracy, re-democratization and decision-making that excludes women, scholarly discourse on women's art, books on childbirth, medical ethics, and wider slogans on technology and pornography, studies on violence on women, and sharing domestic responsibilities by men, meetings on media theology and redefinition of god. Scarcely a topic has been untouched. Most importantly, however, these conferences have attempted to redefine and reformulate concepts, which are particularly important in the international field, to include the interests and viewpoints of women. The Nairobi Conference, for instance, redefines equality as "both a goal and a means whereby individuals are accorded treatment under the law, and equal opportunities to enjoy their rights and to develop their potential talents and skills so that they can participate in national political, economic, social and cultural development, both as beneficiaries and active agents. For women in particular, equality means the realization of rights that have been denied as a result of cultural, institutional behavioural and attitudinal discrimination"².

2. **The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies For the Advancement of Women**, Published by the UN Department of Public Information, New York, (Paragraph-11).

The same conference has redefined the concept of 'development' to mean "total development including development in the political, economic, social, cultural and other dimensions of human life as well as the development of economic and other material resources and the physical, moral, intellectual and cultural growth of human beings. Development also requires a moral dimension to ensure that it is just and responsive to the needs and rights of the individual and the science and technology are applied within a social and economic framework that ensures environmental safety for all life forms on our planet"³.

It also redefined peace as including "not only the absence of war, violence and hostilities at the national and international levels but also the enjoyment of economic and social justice, equality and the entire range of human rights and fundamental freedom within the society"⁴.

The Nairobi Conference also agreed upon that, "the attainment of the goals and objectives of the Decade requires a sharing of this responsibility by men and women and by society as a whole, and requires that women play a central role as intellectuals, policy-makers, decision-

3. Ibid, (Paragraph-12).

4. Ibid, (Paragraph-13).

makers, planners and contributors and beneficiaries of development" (Paragraph-15).

It also held that the need for women's perspective on human development is critical since it is in the interest of human enrichment and progress to introduce and weave into the social fabric the women's concept of equality, their choices between alternative development strategies and their approaches to peace in accordance with their aspirations, interests and talents.

More recently, the Beijing Declaration held that "women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making processes and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace"⁵.

These developments show that the nations of the world and the international agencies have come to recognize the importance of the women's issues. Through the conferences, they have provided an umbrella of legitimacy for women's groups and for work on women's issues. This has prompted large number of governments to revise parts of their legal

5. **The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action**, Department of Public Information, UN, New York, 1996, p.8.

codes, pass new legislations or establish departments or subdepartments to attend to women's issues. It has triggered a huge statistical endeavour to uncover the facts of women's existence, which had the effect of revolutionizing the perceptions of the problem. It pointed out that women constitute half of the world's population, fill two-thirds of its income and own less than one-hundredth of its property. This led the scholars and policy-makers to integrate the interests of women in the development projects which has resulted in the 'Women in Development' (WID) movement.

In the 1970s, development planners, founder and practitioners were facing the fact that the development projects and plans of the 1950s and 1960s had failed, in the aggregate, to make a substantial and lasting impact on the living standards of the poor majority. Though food production and Gross National Product (GNP) had arisen, in many areas, so had malnutrition and pauperization. Sparked by Ester Boserup's landmark book, 'Women's Role in Economic Development', awareness gradually dawned that one key, perhaps the key, to understanding and possibly resolving these contradictions was the previously overlooked role of women as producers. The inclination to look more broadly into the circumstances of women's lives was at the same time

given impetus by a growing sense of alarm at the high rate of population growth in the developing world.

The Women in Development was born as a transnational movement because of the meeting of two forces -- search for political solution to the failures of development and the growth of feminism based on a more systematic assessment of the roots of disadvantage. The pragmatic strain justified the commitment of resources from International Development Community, for which feminists lobbied effectively. In 1973, the US Law that established the US Agency of International Development was amended to require that a Proportion of agency funds be used for activities specifically benefitting women. A women in Development office was set up in the US Agency for International Development. The INSTRAW and a fund for women, UNIFEM, was also set up.

Most of the specialized agencies of the UN system devised programmes directed to women. in 1977, the World Bank created the post of adviser on women and ensured that account was taken of women's role in development. Virtually, all of the major foundations that were active in International Development, from giants like Ford and Rockefeller to much smaller institutions, had active women's programmes by the end of 1970s. Though the funds were relatively small and the programmes marginal to the

mainstream work of sponsoring organizations, they made possible the formation of an active, transnational coalition of women working on development from a female, if not always a feminist point of view. The resources that were made available, funded development projects designed to address women's problems specifically; equally importantly they supported an outpouring of the previously obscure nature and dimensions of the obstacles to their advancement.

With the United Nations extending its umbrella over the women's movement by declaring 1975-85 as the International Decade of Women, the governments started addressing gender issues within their countries. The WID movement benefited from the increase in resources and the attention given to women's issues. It also gained in sophistication as a result of the tremendous explosion of knowledge and data that it helped to create. But at the same time, the movement also suffered from the bruising encounters of the Decade experienced largely in the inter-governmental setting. However, this should not be taken as the failure of WID movement. In fact, the UN Development Programmes (UNDP) 'Human Development Report' for the year 1995 has reiterated the interest shown by the International Policy-planners for gender issues. This report has focused on gender disparities in development and also constructed a gender-related development index (GDI) for 130 countries. The UNDP report

of 1995 has held that "without engendering human development is endangered"⁶.

Though the transnational women's movement which was a loose coalition of women's groups, academicians, marginalized national and international civil servants has moved away from the transnational world society web of relationships into the cold realist light of international relations, still it has not got its due from the mainstream scholarship in International Relations.

In fact, two factors have contributed greatly to such indifference of International Relations towards gender issues. Firstly, International Relations as an academic field of study, started its life with the necessity to understand the relationship between various states and was particularly concerned with questions of war and how states seek security. Thus, there was no room for a feminist perspective in such a field which operated within a relatively narrow conception of what is relevant to the subject-matter. Secondly, the very sources from which the International Relations theory has drawn its inspiration are male-biased which in turn, have led to establish

6. Indira Hirway and Darshini Mahadevia, Critique of Gender Development Index, in **Economic and Political Weekly**, vol. 31, no. 43, October-26, 1996, p. WS-87.

International Relations as a "man's realm of politics"⁷. The western theoretical concepts like the 'State of Nature' and 'Human Nature' are often considered to be quite similar to the International society as both lack a formal, hierarchical social organization. So the description of man's pre-social behaviour written by Hobbes and Rousseau are therefore used as guides to the behaviour of states. But both Hobbes and Rousseau, on their part, have used a male archetype of the individual for the abstract formulation of man. Women are almost invisible in the state of Nature. These thinkers have succeeded not only in evacuating "women" from the public sphere but have held that politics and states are the fields of 'men'. Rousseau in his 'Emile' explicitly states that "women are permanent slaves of their sexual passions and cannot, therefore, develop the reason necessary to shape and participation in formal political culture. All women belong to the private places of households and all men have public responsibilities"⁸.

Niccolo Machiavelli goes a step further by writing in the 'Discourses' about "How States are Ruined on Account of Women", because they "tempt the men to mix private affairs

7. Christine Sylvester, **Feminist Theory in a Post-modern Era**, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp.5.

8. Ibid.

and public matters in ways that reduce rationality"⁹. All that one can infer from the writings of these western political thinkers is that those who are not "men" can succeed in public office only as exceptions to the common place cultural understanding that "men" rule, which means that women still have an anomalous place in politics and not a usual place"¹⁰. And, thus, by keeping women out of the public places, men governed the states and conducted relations between them. Till very recently, such gendered constructions which formed the very basis of the study of International Relations had gone unquestioned. However, growing awareness among feminist scholars about the gender-bias nature of the field, has led to the emergence of a new literature in the field.

Most feminist scholars have tried to identify the presence of 'male-bias' in the field as the first step to make it gender-neutral. Ann Tickner, for instance, has discovered the embedded masculine perspective in Morgenthau's explanation of International Politics¹¹.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. See Ann Tickner, Hans Morgenthau's Principle of Political Realism, in Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland (ed.) **Gender and International Relations**, (Buckingham : Open Unive. Press, 1991), pp. 27-39.

Morgenthau's description of International Politics is partial as it is based on assumptions about human nature that privilege masculinity and do not take into account the women. In particular, Tickner challenges Morgenthau's concept of 'Power' and 'Political' which are foundational to Maculinist International Relations theory. As Tickner sees it, this concept of 'Power', as used by Morgenthau, is an one-sided concept, meaning 'Power over' the other. Tickner argues that this concept of power is a reflection of masculine experience and therefore neglects alternative sense of power which emerge from female experience, the concept of power as 'power with' or 'empowerment'. Similarly Tickner argues that the traditional assumptions of the autonomy of the political from the ethical and economic sphere of the International Relations rests on male identification with the public sphere, which itself rests on the Maculinist distinction between private and public. Tickner also doubts Morgenthau's assumption that it is possible to build a rational (unemotional) theory of International Politics based on objective laws that have their roots in human nature. According to Tickner, this is just a way of keeping females out of the sphere of International Relations theory as women are often associated with emotion while men are associated with reason, and the traditional thought treats these two as opposites.

Nancy Hartstock also argues that Morgenthau's concept of Power-as-domination has always been associated with masculinity, since the exercise of power has generally been a masculine activity; rarely have women exercised legitimized power in the public domain¹¹. But with the recognition of the existence of 'Political' factor even in the private sphere of lives that undermined the Maculinist conception of public/private divide and also with the emergence of the concept of 'empowerment' in various parts of the world, women have come forward not only to write their experiences, but also what being 'powerful' means for them. Most of the women, writing about power, have stressed energy and capacity to do things as being powerful. Hannah Arendt, for instance, defines 'power' as the human ability to act in concern, or to take action in connection with others who share similar concerns. Psychologists David McClelland describes female power as "shared" rather than "assertive".

Jane Jacquette has argued that since women have had less access to the instruments of coercion, they have been more apt to rely on power as 'persuasion'; she compares women's domestic activities to coalition-building.

12. Ibid.

The above scholars have tried to portray power as a relationship of mutual enablement. Tying her definition of female power to International Relations, Jacqueline sees similarity between female strategies of persuasion and strategies of small states operating from a position of weakness in International system. There are also examples of state's behaviour of coalition-building. One such example is the South African Development coordination Conference (SADCC), which is designed to build regional infrastructure based on mutual cooperation and collective self-reliance in order to decrease dependence on the South-African economy. Another such example is the European Community, which has had considerable success in building mutual cooperation in an area of the world whose history would not predict such a course of events.

Thinking about 'Power' in this multi-dimensional sense may help us to think constructively about the potential for cooperation as well as conflict, an aspect of International Relations that is generally played down by Realism. Even the concept of 'Security Dilemma' which is often used by International Relations theorists has been seen by Tickner as gender-biased. Robert Jervis defined the 'Security Dilemma' as the problem that 'most of the ways in which a country seeks to increase its security have the unintended

effect of decreasing the security of others'¹³. What Jervis implies here, is that the security dilemma is a classical feature and a constant problem of International Relations, springing up from human nature and political organization. However, the origin of the 'Security Dilemma' also springs from a selective definition of gender roles in political society. The contrast between the roles of males and females crystallized around the problem of defending the state and thus, the conception of 'security' became a gendered one. There is also another problem with defining 'security' in this way. With the technological advancement resulting in interdependence among nations, no state can remain unaffected in the event of a war as the (nuclear) weapons would have equal devastating effects on both the winners and losers. Moreover, if one thinks of security in North-South rather than East-West terms, for a larger portion of the world's population security has as much to do with the satisfaction of basic material needs as with the military threats. As Johan Galtung holds, to suffer a lower life expectancy by virtue of one's place of birth is a form of violence whose effect can be as devastating as war.

Basic needs satisfaction has a great deal to do with women, but only recently have the women's roles as providers

13. Robert Jervis, *Realism, Game Theory and Cooperation*, *World Politics*, vol. 40, no.3, April 1988.

of basic needs, and in development, become more visible as important component in development strategies. Thinking about the role of women in development and the way in which we can define development and basic needs satisfaction to be inclusive of women's roles and needs are topics that deserve higher priority on the international agenda.

The feminist scholars believe that a truly realistic picture of International Relations must recognize the elements of cooperation as well as conflict, morality as well as real politik, and the striving for justice as well as order. Tickner argues that the old concept of objectivity and rationality help us to impose a raising of the international and of history which has given itself the status of an eternal, universal truth on an historically contingent and partial basis. The feminist concept of rationality ties to an ethic of care and responsibility rather than commitment to the maximization of self-interest, opens up new avenues in the analysis of global economic realities, since it enables recognition of rationality in activities that are not simply tied to profit-maximization. A fully humane science of International Politics and economics should take into account the insights of both the sexes. Berenice Carroll has argued that International Relations scholars will gain by shifting their gaze from a

few putatively powerful actors in the world affairs to the many who are putatively powerless. Carroll anticipated a reformed discipline whose subject-matter "genuinely includes the experience of all individuals regardless of race, culture, class and gender"¹⁴.

Many scholars have started the work by investigating the rarely discussed work of women in world politics. Elshtain and Tobias, for instance, have concentrated on work that is recognized even less frequently as central to the field. They have included an account of the Cuban Missile Crisis-era social movement, 'women strike for peace' (WSP) whose members described themselves as a group of unsophisticated housewives and mothers but who nonetheless were able to convince president Kennedy of the need for the first major nuclear arms control treaty -- at least according to his science advisor, Jerome Wisner¹⁵. None of the International Relations text books had taken pains to mention WSP.

Cynthia Enloe in her book, argues that even those who investigate the role of women's peace movements often limit

¹⁴. Berenice Carroll, Peace Research ; The Cult of Power in **Journal of Conflict Resolution**, 1972, vol. 16, no.4, pp. 585-616.

¹⁴. J.b. Elshtain and Sheila Tobias, **Women, Militarism and War**, (Savage, Md. : Rowman and Littlefield, 1990).

themselves by using conventional, state-centric definitions of International Relations and of the actions that might influence policy-makers. Enloe considers women whose roles in world politics escape those conventional definitions : Diplomatic wives and civilian women who serve military bases, those employed in the rapidly-growing export oriented industrializing sectors of the newly industrializing countries that are touted by the economists and the inter governmental development agencies as the models for the entire third world and those women who have served colonial and neocolonial projects for more than four centuries. Banana-hatted Carmen Miranda, the "Brazilian grocer's daughter who became a Hollywood star and a symbol of an American President's Latin American Policy", becomes Enloe's archetype of the women whose significance in world affairs should not be overlooked¹⁶.

According to Tetreault, focussing on women in revolutionary and nationalist movements can provide new insights into why some succeed and others fail¹⁷.

16. Cynthia Enloe, **Bananas, Beaches and Bases**, (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1990), XI.

17. Mary A. Tetreault, Women and Revolution in V. Spike Peterson (ed.) **Gendered States**, (Boulder, Colo : Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992).

Many other scholars have held that the unrecognized roles that women play in international affairs need not have any connection to their identities as women. Indeed, as Janeway argues, observing the work that women do to create society and paying attention to how they understand what they do leads to understanding of the powers of all those that the society treats as weak, whether they are marginalized by gender, class, race, or other factors. Both Janeway and Carroll consider what Carroll called "innovative power", the ability to think up new means of collective action, as one of the capacities typically exercised by the putatively powerless, even if the powerful might later lay claim to all such successful innovations.

One of the most important question that often comes to mind is : Would foreign policy differ from what it is under the male policy-makers, if women held positions of power ? Positions in this debate range from Sarah Ruddick, who argues that the social roles women traditionally fill as mothers and caregivers would make them more cooperative and peaceful policy-makers to that embraced by Ticker, who treats all gender differences as socially constructed and who argues that most progressive foreign policies appear to be those of states where there is a considerable overlap in gender roles. A similar position leads Sarah Brown to argue

that we should be searching for an explanation for how gender has been "constructed and maintained and if and how it can be removed"¹⁸.

To conclude the discussion, we need to consider women as a category, gender as a topic and feminism as an ideology as three powerful sources of ideas which can contribute to a new feminist epistemology in International Relations. Even if International Relations is interpreted as a sturdy workhouse ploughing toward immediate policy-relevance, its goal will never be attained until it is recognized that women are relevant to policy.

Feminism offers us a powerful set of criteria for the reconsideration of the field. It calls into action the boundaries of the discipline particularly those that cordon off the realm of private from public affairs that are 'proper' subject of International Relations. It draws attention not only to the relevance of women's experience but also to its validity as a constitutive element in International Relations. It focused on the ways in which the exclusion of women from the realm of "High Politics" has legitimized their subordination and oppression.

18. Sarah Brown, *Feminism, International Theory and International Relations of Gender Inequality*, *Millennium*, 1988, vol. 17, p. 473.

However, the new emerging scholarship's inherent focus on the rights of women would require a major change in the field. on the one hand, it would mean shifting the entire issue of human rights from the periphery of the field to its core and on the other, in order to answer these newly central questions about the constraints on women and the gendered construction of world politics, it would require us to blur the disciplinary line that separates international relations from other fields.

CHAPTER - IV

**FEMINIST CONCEPTION OF
JUSTICE : THE EQUALITY
VS. DIFFERENCE DILEMMA**

CHAPTER - IV

In common experience, people turn to justice when they confront a real or imagined instance of injustice. Feminist theorists' claims to seek justice for women also originates from the fact that women are being oppressed. Oppression in simple terms, means a situation in which the legitimate rights of a person are denied through the use of direct or indirect force -- physical, social, economic, moral, religious or cultural. It is also the refusal to provide the necessary facilities and opportunities to enable a person to enjoy his legitimate rights. Thus in an oppressive situation the oppressor enjoys illegitimate rights at the cost of the oppressed who is deprived of his legitimate rights. And women all over the world, and nearly in every period, have gone through experiences that truly makes them an oppressed aggregate. They have been made socially unequal with men and economically dependent on them. Biologically, they have been considered a symbol of sex and religiously a source of temptation. Further, we have evolved a social order where descent and succession are based on the male line, the family being ruled by men and men being favoured in all aspects of life.

To begin with, women in all cultures and societies have been assigned to the domestic sphere which is the result of

the division of labour based on sex in patriarchal systems. While it is true that in preindustrial societies the division between public and private labour may not have been so rigid as in the industrial nations, women have nevertheless been consigned to the domestic sphere and to the domestic duties -- including child rearing or mothering -- throughout recorded history. Such discrimination begins in the nursery, where male and female infants are handled differently, and continues in the educational system, where boys are encouraged to train for prestigious or well-paying occupations in the public sphere while girls are channeled into preparing for the lower paying but 'feminine' jobs. Families have often played an important role in encouraging the girls to learn domestic chores while boys are taught to have a master-like attitude.

In the political field women have often experienced oppression in the sense that they have not had substantial political power in society, and have not been in control of the realities that have shaped their lives. Further, women's historical economic function has chiefly been production for use, not production for exchange. Production for use means the creation of material consumed by the immediate family like food, clothing, not goods sold off or exchanged, so it is not valued for its abstract or exchange worth but for itself -- for its immediate physical worth.

The feminist agenda of the contemporary times has demanded for a reconfiguration of these gender roles as they are constructed in society. The mainstream campaign is characterized by questioning of the established (Patriarchal) gender norms, a call for reallocation of duties and responsibilities between men and women, and an insistence on casting women in new gender role in society. While the governments at the national level in various countries have attempted to frame laws that could be considered gender-just, the international agencies like UN and the policy-planners in the international arena have focused more on the development projects with a view to provide gender justice. However, very frequently the cultural specificities of a community are subordinated in this move to reinvent gender identities; that is, the oppression shared by all women is seen to overwhelm any difference that many exist between them. While this might provide a common starting point for providing gender justice, it cannot be taken too far because of the fact that the degree and form of oppression which varies from country to country and within one country from one community to another, cannot be ignored. The women in the third world countries, often experience what can be called 'multiple oppression' on account of their poverty and ignorance along with gender. Religion and culture have often been used than

any other reasons to defend practices oppressive to women. This can be seen from the fact that Hinduism does not allow women to light the pyre of their parents. Customs like 'Sati' in which the widow has to immolate herself on the pyre of her husband was not only supported but also glorified by people. This rite was banned by law in 1829 but 'Sati' continued to be recorded right upto September 1987 when an eighteen year old girl named Roop Kanwar burned to death on the funeral pyre of her husband in Rajasthan state in western India. In the wake of this incident the government passed a Sati (Prevention of Glorification Act) but several thousand supporters of the custom congregated in protest demonstrations claiming that 'Sati was a part of Hindu Religious observance and that law should not interfere in it. Under such concept is the concept of the virtuous woman who is unreservedly devoted to her husband¹. In many cases, parents have sold off their daughters to men much older than them on account of their poverty. One such case was reported in India in early December 1993 when Nizamuddin Police rescued a minor muslim girl named Kaneez from a Saudi Arab national. Another similar case was reported in India when a airhostess rescued Ameena from a similar situation².

1. Miranda Davis (ed.), **Women and Violence**, (London, Zed Books Ltd., 1994), pp. 43-52.

2. Maunshi, no. 85, Nov.-Dec., 1994 p. 11.

All these cases show that "women as a group "are not homogenous, they have very different experiences, depending on variables such as class, country, age or colour their positions in power relationships also vary considerably"³.

Recognition of such diversity have come to pose difficulty for feminist scholars to evolve a concept of justice that will take account of this fact. All the projects and laws that aimed at, providing justice to women failed to help majority of them because of the obstacles like poverty, race, caste etc. There are questions being asked as to what criteria should be adopted to get gender justice and more importantly, there are questions about what should be the nature of justice. A balanced conception of justice, feminist scholars often agree, should not only aim at treating all equally but should also take into account specific cases in which vulnerable agents (like the third world women) need more attention and special care. This brings us to a point where two opposite forces need to be united. Such a conception of justice has to give a theory based on "pluralism" but at the same time, it has to be grounded upon certain abstract principles. This chapter examines whether reasoned moves from very abstract

3. K. Lennon and M. Whitford, **Knowing the Difference**, (London : Routledge, 1994), p. 3.

principles towards specific principles, whose relevance and application to particular cases may be easier to access, may be possible.

To begin with, in the beginning of the recorded ethical and legal thought the term 'justice' was used as equivalent to righteousness in general⁴. Justice comprised the whole virtue and complete conformity with the approved pattern of moral conduct.

With enlightenment, concepts of 'impartiality' and 'rationality' became synonymous with justice. Such view holds that justice must abstract itself from the particularities of persons. Blindness to difference is a traditional image of justice and guarantees impartiality. Such idealized view of justice has often been attacked by feminists who hold that the principles of justice that are supposedly blind to differences of power and resources often seem to endorse practices and policies that suit the privileged.

However, the various schools of feminist thought disagree over the extent and import of differences between men and women. For liberals who defend abstract principles

4. **International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences**, David L. Sills (ed.), (New York : The MacMillan Company and Free Press), pp. 341-347.

of justice, it has been embarrassing that the "Rights of Man" were taken for so long and by so many of their predecessors as the rights of men excluding women in most cases and that liberal practice failed for so long to end male privilege⁵. Starting with Wollstonecraft and J.S. Mill, liberal feminists argued against difference and claimed that women's like rationality entitled them to equal rights. Such arguments often stress the similarity of their needs and concerns. And such feminists believed that if justice means providing equal rights to all, then, by implication, such rights must be appropriate to everyone.

More recent liberal feminists however, have noted that even when women had equal political and legal rights, their political participation and economic gains remained much less than those of men, and less than those of men whose qualifications and labour force participation women matched. supposedly gender neutral and neutralizing institutions, such as democratic political structures and markets did not eliminate differentials⁶. Many others have concluded that

5. See, Susan M. Okin, **Women in Political Thought** (Princeton : Princeton Univ. Press, New Jersey, 1979). Also see, Alison M. Jaggen, **Feminist Politics and Human Nature**, (Brighton : Sussex, Harvester, 1983).

6. Alison Scott, Industrialization, Gender and Segregation and Stratification Theory, in Crompton and Mann (ed.) **Gender and Stratification**, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1986).

approximation to political and legal justice in various domains of life evidently cannot close the radical gap between men's and women's paths and prospects. The differences run the gamut of social indicators. Most dramatically in some (third world) countries women and girls do worse on a constellation of very basic social indicators : they die early, have worse health, eat less than other family members, earn less and go to school less⁷.

In response, many liberal feminists argued that justice, demands more thorough equal treatment. For example, it may require forms of affirmative action and reverse (positive) discrimination in education and employment, as well as welfare rights, social support for the poor and those with heavy family responsibilities. Some differences are to be acknowledged in principles of justice. However, this move has two difficulties. Firstly, many liberals have denied that justice demands compensatory redistribution, especially of positional goods. They think that these should be allocated by competitive and meritocratic procedures. This debate is of particular importance in the developed world. The second problem arises even where the goods to be distributed are not positional and is particularly

7. Amartya K. Sen, **Gender and Cooperative Conflicts**, Helsinki, Working Paper of the World Institute for Development Economic Research, WIDER, UN University, 1987.

significant in the third world. Where resources are scarce, non-positional goods such as basic health care and income support or children's allowances or unemployment insurance may be unfundable out of a slender national tax base. In such cases, if social justice demands basic welfare provision, justice must reach across boundaries. This implies that an account of gender justice would have to be linked to the international distributive justice.

Many feminists have increasingly questioned the terms of the liberal debate, and have claimed that, despite its aspirations, gender bias is integral to liberal justice⁸. The most fundamental contemporary feminist challenge to abstract liberalism ostensibly impugns reliance on abstraction itself. Gilligan's influential work, for example, claims that an emphasis on justice excludes and marginalizes the 'other voice' of ethical thought. To them, abstract liberalism simply and unacceptably devalues care and concern for particular others, which are the core of women's moral life and thought, seeing them as moral immatures. These feminists consider the voice of justice as 'male' for its disregard of the virtues. On this account,

8. See, Carol Gilligan, **In a Different Voice**, (Cambridge, Mass : Harvard Univ. Press, 1982) and Susan M. Okin, **Justice and Gender**, in **Philosophy and Public Affairs**, 16 (1987), pp. 42-72.

the problem is not to secure like treatment for women, but to secure differentiated treatment for all. This type of feminist viewpoint has held that a just society cannot ignore the inherent differences between men and women. As Wolgast argues, a just society must deal with these differences respectfully and develop accomodating institutions. In other words, these feminists (like postmodernists) believe that discourses about justice cannot do without concepts of subjectivity. Hanna Pitkin suggests that the 'road to a better' account of justice goes by way of conceptions of what a person is. The beginning of such conceptions is available in psychoanalytic-feminist 'object relations' theories of subjectivity. Such conception eschews appeals to abstract rules, reason or a transcendental subject.

However, there are problems with such an assumption -- in rejecting 'abstract liberalism' such feminist converge with traditions that have excluded women from economic and public life. An appeal to 'women's experience' and 'women's traditions' does not escape rather echoes the ways in which women have been oppressed and marginalized. "The effect of the discovery of women's 'different voice' may ultimately have the effect of suppressing women's demands for change

beneath a new feminist imposed norm of difference"⁹. Moreover, with its tendency to eschew abstraction, such a conception might face problems in building a theory of justice.

The disputes that divide liberal feminists and their contextualist critics ostensibly pose an unwelcome dilemma about gender justice. If we adopt an abstract account of justice, which is blind to the ways in which women's lives in the developed and the undeveloped world differ from men's lives, we commit ourselves to uniform treatment regardless of difference. But if we acknowledge the ethical importance of human differences, we are likely to endorse traditional social forms that sustain these differences, including those which subordinate and oppress women. In advocating 'ethic of care', such radical feminists come close both to the traditional misogynist position and to ethical relativism.

If accounts of justice had to be either idealized or relativized, we would have to choose between demands for abstraction from difference and for sensitivity to difference. To build another possibility different from these, we need to take into account both the demands for

9. Jane S. Jacquette, Gender and Justice in Economic Development in Irene Tinker (ed.) **Persistent Inequalities**, (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1990), p.58.

abstract principles and context-sensitive judgements. Onora O'neil has given a model fore, proceeding towards a theory of justice based on such conception. This account of justice combines abstract principles with consideration of human differences in the application of principles. O'neil claims that such an account of justice will not only help the feminists to go beyond the 'equality vs. difference' debate but can also be applied to the area of international distributive justice¹⁰.

To begin with, we have to think of abstract principles which will have universal scope while rejecting the supposed link between abstraction and positions that not merely abstract but idealize. Much of the contemporary moral reasoning, and in particular 'abstract liberalism', handles issues of gender justice badly not because it abstracts but because it almost idealizes specific conceptions of the human agents which are often admired and are more feasible for men rather than women. However, abstraction itself, without idealization, is the route rather than the obstacle to broad scope and is unobjectionable in principles of justice.

10. Onora O'neil, Justice, Gender and International Boundaries, in **British Journal of Political Science**, 20(4), October 1990, p.439-459.

Secondly, it is important to answer the demands that we take account of the context and particularities of lives, but do not build culturally specific ideals of gender into principles of justice. This move insists that judgements of justice should take into account certain differences by applying abstract principles to determinate cases without tacitly reintroducing restricted ideals like gender, so relativized principles of justice to accepted beliefs, traditions or practices. Abstract principles can guide context-sensitive judgement without lapsing into relativism.

This means that the theory of justice should abstract but not idealize any one conception of rationality or independence, and so avoid marginalizing or excluding those who do not live up to specific deals of rationality or of independence from others.

Justice then, can be best understood as a matter of keeping to principles that can be adopted by any plurality of potentially interacting beings. But such a premise gives rise to many questions -- If we avoid both idealization and relativism, and rely on mere abstraction, will we have strong enough premises to identify the principles. Granted that universalizability is not uniformity, is it not too weak a demand to ground an account of justice; In

particular, will not any internally coherent principle for individual action be a universalizable principle ?

To start with, if we can imagine that justice demands (at least) that actions and institutions not be based on principles of deception or victimization still, we are far from showing what justice demands, since we do not know what refusing to deceive or to coerce may demand in specific situations. These guidelines seem to be highly indeterminate.

However, it should be remembered that abstract principles are only a part of the practical or specifically of ethical reasoning and that principles never determine their applications. All practical reasoning requires judgements and deliberations by which principles are applied to specific cases. An account of gender justice is then no exception. We need in particular to be able to judge what specific institutions and actions are needed if poor women in poor economies are to be accorded justice.

In this way we can hold that for 'gender justice' arguments, not only the 'material' or 'distributive' justice (arguments about allocation of 'values', be they material goods prestige, or power) are important, but procedural questions (whether an allocative decision was arrived at by

a process that is just) are also important. These are important not only because reallocative decisions must be arrived at by a process that is accepted as legitimate but because, value-allocating institutions directly affect the form and quality of justice.

Among all institutions the nation-state is obviously the most important one to carry out the charge of making sure that individuals enjoy equality, but is not the only one. Non-state institutions such as markets and systems of social norms, may be as important as laws in allocating values, as well as reallocating values, even when the nation-state is the 'ultimate' arbiter. Esther Boserup's work can be taken as an important example¹¹. He has argued that women's status in agricultural societies was positively correlated with their role in food production and that as technologies advanced (and as men monopolized the more advanced technologies), women were increasingly marginalized from agriculture. This, in turn, reduced women's status and consequently their freedom. Colonial bureaucracies exacerbated this tendencies by introducing new farming techniques and cash crops; because of the western nations about sexual division of labour in agriculture, men were trained to use these new techniques and women continued to

11. Esther Boserup, **Women's Role in Economic Development**, (London : Allen and Unwin, 1970).

work in the least productive land with the poorest inputs. As a result, women lost income and status to men. Examining the economic situation of women in the cities, Boserup noted that women were often excluded from the formal sector jobs in modern employment by their low level of education and by discriminatory practices and argued that women's access to the market and service occupations could be the basis for improving their status.

The need for the feminist conception now, is to move the 'equality vs difference' debate to an institutional context of justice. If the institutions of justice can be rethought and restructured the substance of what they deliver may also be recast.

The chief criteria of justice in the modern era have become the equality principle (the social goods including property, power and prestige be distributed equally), the merit principle (social goods should be distributed in proportion to productive contributions), and the welfare principle (according to the relative need of the members). However, not one but various institutions are involved in distributing these. The equality principle is largely the province of law, that is, of legislation and adjudication by the legal system. By contrast, the merit principle has come to be the almost exclusive terrain of the market place, as

notions of prestige and status have been reduced to the simpler measure of wealth, and wealth is increasingly accepted as global, not merely a capitalist, standard. Needs, which used to be met by kinship obligation or community charities, have been turned over to state or private bureaucracies which identify the needy and regulate their behaviours. At the same time, it should be remembered that there are overlapping boundaries among these mechanisms that allocate values and legitimize existing patterns of value-allocation. Economists recognize that the 'free market' exists because the state enforces contracts, and the state may intervene in the markets to serve other goals, such as higher levels of investment or more equal distribution of wealth. A full employment policy may substitute for a system of welfare or the state may refuse to cross the threshold when there is conflict within the family, choosing to let kinship authority (or brute force) rule, as has been the case until recently with domestic abuse in the US. Norms taught and reinforced in the family are critical to the legitimacy of the market system.

Yet each of these institutions create different sets of opportunities and constraints, and these may reinforce or even undermine the principle of justice that the institution was established to serve. For example, because bureaucracies

determine the need, and they are closed, hierarchical, and self-perpetuating institutions, the needy becomes the clients and the very institution that is supposed to remedy the plight of the poor acquires a stake in their continued powerlessness. Similarly, it can be seen that foreign assistance creates 'dependency' and makes it difficult for 'beneficiaries' to define their own needs. The bureaucratic organization of redistribution helps explain why socialism, which is egalitarian in its goals remains authoritarian in practice.

Besides changing the structures or institutional arrangements, another reasonable way of delivering justice to the vulnerable agents can be to ask to what extent the variable aspects of any arrangements that structure vulnerable lives could have been refused or renegotiated by those whom they actually constrain. If those affected by a given set of arrangements that could in principle be changed can in fact, refuse or renegotiate them, their consent is no mere formality, but genuine legitimate consent. If they could not but accept those institutions, their 'consent' will not be legitimate. thus, the main aim of 'justice' should be to give the capacity to reason injustice and also the independence to resist it. On this account, justice requires that institutions, like other acts, allow those on the receiving end, even if frail and dependent, to refuse or

renegotiate any variable aspects of the roles and tasks assigned to them. Thinking this way about justice, we can see that it demands more or less to be just to the vulnerable. the vulnerable are much easier to deceive and to victimize than the strong : their consent is all too easily elicited.

To make things more clear we can examine the family structures. In families, often a boundary between 'public' and 'private' domain is drawn. The women who are assigned the private domain lack adequate economic entitlements, effective enfranchisement or access to sources of information or debate by which they could check or challenge the proposals and plans of more powerful family members. Thus, family structures can impose forms of deception and domination. Such women who are isolated, secluded, barred from education and wage earning, or have access to information only through the more powerful family members, their judgement is weakened and their independence stunted. Thus, the women are not always coerced but are vulnerable to coercion. In such circumstances their consent cannot be taken as their independent decision. Thus, if they are to be treated with justice, they should be given the power to refuse and negotiate the decisions that constrain them. And, the other people who interact with them must not rely on

their reduced capacities and opportunities to impose their will. The most significant features of actual situations that must be taken into account in judgements of justice are the security or vulnerability that allow actual others to dissent from and to seek change in variable aspects of the arrangements which structure their lives.

CHAPTER - V

FEMINIST CONCEPTION OF
JUSTICE AND INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS THEORY

CHAPTER - V

Feminism's most compelling epistemological insight lies in the connections it has made between knowledge and power. This, not simply in the obvious sense that access to knowledge enables empowerment; but more controversially through the recognition that legitimation of knowledge-claims is intimately tied to networks of domination and exclusion. This recognition has moved issues of epistemology from the world of somewhat esoteric philosophy to the centre-stage of contemporary culture. Not only philosophers, but also social scientists, political theorists, historians and literary theorists are addressing epistemological questions. Work within feminist epistemology therefore shares preoccupations and critical moments with other strands of recent thought : writings of Marxists and critical theorists, who for decades have argued that much of the contemporary culture reflects bourgeois interests; southern scholars who have pointed to the Eurocentrism of contemporary knowledge-production; radical philosophers of science, who have highlighted the role of value-judgements in scientific practice; and most importantly for this dissertation, the theorists of what is now called postmodernism.

Feminism is a movement rooted in the Enlightenment ideals of justice and freedom. It tries to understand the social order, so as to devise effective strategies for change. Nonetheless it shares, with the other directions of thought referred to above, a critique of those ideals and an awareness of the power/knowledge nexus which they so effectively disguise.

Feminist works have challenged the objectivity of many contemporary areas of knowledge and have claimed that such a goal of objectivity was itself masculine : that the problems to be investigated/discussed, reflected only male experience of the world; that the theoretical frameworks adopted, reflected the structure of masculine gender-identity in contemporary culture; that the narratives constructed, served the interests of men as a group, promoting their position and legitimating the subordination of women; that the whole symbolic order by means of which knowledge-claims were articulated, privileged the male and conceptualized the female only as that which lacked masculinity. Feminism, along with the above mentioned strands of thought, has argued that it is not simply due to bad practice that masculine subjects have allowed their subjectivity to imprint on their product, but that imprinting of subjectivity is inevitable. Knowledge bears the marks of its

producer. Exclusion of women from the sphere of knowledge production has led to the non-inclusion of female subjectivity, thus giving rise to a conception that does not take account of women. Therefore, the feminist scholars have developed a feminist stand-point theory which has led to the re-formulation of many basic ideas of Enlightenment origin, from a feminist perspective. While doing this, they have joined hands with the postmodernists who share feminism's concern for plurality and context-sensitivity. Alongside, feminists have redefined many concepts that have often been used as guiding principles for the society. These concepts have been redefined so as to include women's experience of subordination as well as to see things from their perspective.

The concept of Justice which has been so central to the feminist thinking has also been subject to feminist revision. Feminists have criticized the existing conception of Justice which is blind to the difference between men and women. Such a conception which has ignored the conditions and problems specific to women, has in fact ignored the female experience. Feminists hold that equality of opportunity in its full sense requires of fair, rational and appropriate competition for goods and benefits which means that the competitors must have an equal starting point, where possible. Thus, for women to compete equally with men,

both sexes must start equally. The question then becomes : do women have an equal starting point? The feminist discourse on Justice of the recent times differs from such conventional ideas of Justice by considering such homologization as a form of repression. According to them, 'homologization' risks working towards the erasure rather than the affirmation of sexual difference. They have, instead, argued for the recognition of the situations of women as different from those of men. However, there have been arguments (which are still going on) with regard to the degree and extent of differences to be recognized. While the feminists are yet to provide a complete theory of justice, they certainly have succeeded in developing principles that should be taken into account while according justice. The earlier chapter has tried to identify such principles.

There is a need, as discussed in that chapter, to balance the debate between 'equality' and 'difference'. While it is essential that women should not be discriminated against while goods are being distributed, the institutions that deliver justice should also be sensitive to the conditions of women. The problem with women is that they are not always explicitly coerced but are vulnerable to coercion because of the social structure and gender bias existent in the society. It is this element of 'vulnerability' that

exposes them to victimization and unjust treatment. So the institutions that are involved in according justice should take into account this 'vulnerable' situation of women. Thus the feminists hold, that both the 'material' and 'procedural' aspects of justice should be given equal importance.

Justice, from the feminist point of view, can be best understood as an ongoing process rather than a fixed set of procedures or a pre-given standard to which we must conform. The institutions and the people who are involved in according justice should not be too rigid, rather should take note of the incapacity of the victim and should aim at giving a judgement that takes note of such incapacity. In short, feminist conception of justice recognises sexual difference as a fact and seeks to fight against sexual victimization and institutional invisibility.

Most feminist scholars have considered 'empowerment of women' as a necessary, step for the achievement of gender justice. Empowering women, by giving them the chance to voice their problems and take charge of the situation and change it, is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy in the public sphere which had kept them out, but also a necessary condition for women's interests to be given importance. Empowerment, as held by feminists, is a process

that should be given to women not only in the political sphere but at various other spheres of society. Moreover as discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation, empowerment is not something that can be given to women at a time but needs to come through phases and through collective efforts. However, the most important thing about feminist empowerment is that the concept of 'Power' is used here not to imply 'power-as-control', but to imply 'Power-as-action-in-concert'. Such a conception is useful not only for achieving gender justice and women's equality in the national arena but also in the International field. Such a view has been held by the feminist scholars working in the field of International Relations who regard the concept of 'Power' used in International Relations by the realists as an one-sided concept. According to them, 'Power' should be understood in a multi-dimensional sense. These critics of International Relations theory hold that the feminist conception of justice, which stands for providing justice to women can be useful for International Relations theory. Berenice Carroll has challenged the study of International Relations which does not take account of the 'Power of the allegedly powerless" : the power to bind social orders together and to break them apart¹.

1. Berenice Carroll, Peace Research : The Cult of Power, in **Journal of Conflict Resolution**, 16, p. 608-614.

During the inter-war years the contribution of women was severely circumscribed because claims made for the greater participation of women at the level of International Politics could not break from the association of the category of women with specific political space or policy areas in traditional ideas about women's nature and women's spheres of activity. This was true despite the fact that these claims were most often voiced on the basis of equal citizenship, that is, women had been deemed to be equal citizens when they won right to vote and hold public office, and there was no reason why their civic responsibility should not extend to the International sphere.

This is not the only way in which women were marginalized from International Politics. Another most important area that is vital for International Relations is the gross and systematic violation, and situations that constitute serious obstacles to the full enjoyment of human rights have occurred and continue to occur in different parts of the world. This is very important with regard to matters of women's rights. For instance, while it is true that the entire 'communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict and terrorism, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in the society and their sex. Parties to conflict often rape women with impunity

sometimes using systematic rape as a tactic of war and terrorism. The impact of violence against women and violation of the human rights of women in such situations is experienced by women of all ages, who suffer displacement, loss of home and property, loss or involuntary disappearance of close relatives, poverty, and family separation and disintegration, and torture, involuntary disappearance, sexual slavery, rape, sexual abuse and forced pregnancy in situations of armed conflict, especially as a result of policies of ethnic cleansing and other new and emerging forms of violence. This is compounded by life-long social, economic and psychologically traumatic consequences of armed conflict and foreign occupation and alien domination"².

Feminist scholars working in the field of International Relations have, of late, shown concern for these problems. They have held that, as a discipline which deals with the questions of war and peace, International Relations ought to take the issues of human rights violation into account and look at them from the point of view of the victims. The critiques of traditional International Relations theory believe that the field tends to overvalue (1) a distanced and disinterested attitude toward its subjects, (2) the perspective of the powerful, and (3) the specific means it

2. See, **Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration**, UN Dept. of Public Information, N.Y., 1996, p. 84.

uses to close the scholarly debate. They hold that it is this attitude of International Relations theory that has helped it in excluding women from its arena.

The feminist conception of justice which stands for the recognition of the rights of women seeks International Relations theory to place human rights at its centre. This, undoubtedly, would need a major change in the field as it would threaten the current definition of the field and would tend to obliterate the domestic-international dimension. Thus, Newland concludes a study of the relative ineffectiveness of trans-national women's associations by highlighting the contrasting effectiveness of more domestic strategies and arguing that those domestic strategies are worth the attention of the discipline³. Similarly, Mona Harrington envisions the study of international human rights becoming an investigation of how "Rules at all levels of political organization (could be made) products of democratic discourse and decision-making, through processes giving full voice and weight (to all who are affected)", a research program that would demand that relations within societies and states be given the same attention as

3. Kathleen Newland, From transnational relationships to international relations : Women in development and international decade for women, in Grant and Newland (ed.), **Gender and International Relations**, 1991, p. 122-132.

relations between them⁴. Thus, International Relations would become the study of world politics, global political economy, or in Tickner's terms, global security.

Halliday argues that this demand of the feminist scholars for inclusion of women and gender simply reinforces "a shift already present in much of the literature on transnationalism and international political economy; this involves not only how states and societies relate to each other, but also how international processes, be these intergovernmental or not, make themselves felt within societies". He welcomes what he believes will be the result : a redefinition of international relations as the study of the way states and societies interact⁵. This new focus on intersocietal relations would be much broader, than the traditional focus on the interactions of juridical states. It would entail recognition that some juridical states are actually parts of larger, more effective political societies.

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4. Mona Harrington, What exactly is wrong with the liberal state as an agent of change? in **Gendered States; Feminist Revisions of International Relations Theory** edited by v. Spike Peterson (Boulder, Colo : Lynne Ricnner, 1992) p. 81.
 5. Fred Halliday, State and Society in International Relations : A Second Agenda in **Millennium**, 16, 1987, p. 166.

Many feminist scholars believe that the women scientists are more likely to value the connectedness "produced by the conventions of human birth and caretaking and then downplayed as boys become gendered"⁶. Keller argues for a form of knowledge which she calls 'dynamic objectivity' that grants to the world around us its independent integrity, but does so in a way that remains cognizant of indeed relies on, our connectivity with that world⁷. The point here is not to treat all one's subjects in exactly the same way that one treats oneself. Rather (in part) it is to work with irreducible similarities, much in the same way that a traditional ethnographer begins a reconnaissance of a foreign culture by assuming it will have elements that answer the same questions as elements within the ethnographer's own culture.

The feminist conception which would need us to engage in the perspectives of the disadvantaged and those who are "allegedly powerless, can be used to separate studies that concentrate on the limited issue of domination from those that concentrate on power, defined as competence to establish and maintain social order with minimal coercion.

6. Christine Sylvester, **Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Post Modern Era**, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 165.

7. Keller, Evelyn Fox, **Gender and Science**, (New Haven, Conn. : Yale University Press, 1985).

If we apply this method of using the view point of the disadvantaged to Antonio Gramsci's central insight that, force and consent always combine in the establishment and maintenance of states against their potential adversaries (internal and external), we will find a surprisingly large portion of it concerned only with domination and the views of the dominant, even though Gramscian arguments about the benefit of engaging the perspectives of the disadvantaged parallel the feminist arguments. Thus, as the feminist conception goes we cannot understand the sinews that bind a society -- domestic or international -- without understanding the reasons for the consent of the disadvantaged. When we view society from the varied stand points of the women within it, we gain perspective on those connections. The feminist debate in International Relations has chiefly criticized the field for its distanced and disinterested attitude towards its subjects which has originated from the realist conception of making International Relations a study of war, peace and relation between states. But today, after the cold war, the focus of the states is gradually changing from or conflicts to areas of cooperation. This requires the field to take into account the various issues that emerge both inside and between the nations, and to broaden its area to include the role of groups and societies in these. While gender issues can be

included within the field in this context, the more important task is to take note of the methodologies offered by the feminist standpoint which are intellectually justifiable and would not necessarily require a revolutionary recasting of the field.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX - I

THE BEIJING DECLARATION*

1. We, the Governments participating in the Fourth World Conference on Women,

2. Gathered here in Beijing in September 1995, the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations,

3. Determined to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity,

4. Acknowledging the voices of all women everywhere and taking note of the diversity of women and their roles and circumstances, honouring the women who paved the way and inspired by the hope present in the world's youth,

5. Recognize that the status of women has advanced in some important respects in the past decade but that progress has been uneven, inequalities between women and men have persisted and major obstacles remain, with serious consequences for the well-being of all people,

* Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 4-15 September, 1995.

6. also recognize that this situation is exacerbated by the increasing poverty that is affecting the lives of the majority of the world's people, in particular women and children, with origins in both the national and international domains,

7. Dedicate ourselves unreservedly to addressing these constraints and obstacles and thus enhancing further the advancement and empowerment of women all over the world, and agree that this requires urgent action in the spirit of determination, hope, cooperation and solidarity, now and to carry us forward into the next century.

We reaffirm our commitment to :

8. The equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men and other purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Declaration on the Right to Development;

9. Ensure the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental

freedoms;

10. Build on consensus and progress made at previous United Nations conferences and summits - on women in Nairobi in 1985, on children in New York in 1990, on environment and development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, on human rights in Vienna in 1993, on population and development in Cairo in 1994 and on social development in Copenhagen in 1995 with the objective of achieving equality, development and peace;

11. Achieve the full and effective implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women;

12. The empowerment and advancement of women, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, thus contributing to the moral, ethical, spiritual and intellectual needs of women and men, individually or in community with others and thereby guaranteeing them the possibility of realizing their full potential in society and shaping their lives in accordance with their own aspirations.

We are convinced that :

13. Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to

•

power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace;

14. Women's rights are human rights;

15. Equal rights, opportunities and access to resources, equal sharing of responsibilities for the family by men and women, and a harmonious partnership between them are critical to their well-being and that of their families as well as to the consolidation of democracy;

16. Eradication of poverty based on sustained economic growth, social development, environmental protection and social justice requires the involvement of women in economic and social development, equal opportunities and the full and equal participation of women and men as agents and beneficiaries of people-centred sustainable development;

17. The explicit recognition and reaffirmation of the right of all women to control all aspects of their health, in particular their own fertility, is basic to their empowerment;

18. Local, national, regional and global peace is attainable and is inextricably linked with the advancement of women, who are a fundamental force for leadership, conflict resolution and the promotion of lasting peace at all levels;

19. It is essential to design, implement and monitor, with the full participation of women, effective, efficient and mutually reinforcing gender-sensitive policies and programmes, including development policies and programmes, at all levels that will foster the empowerment and advancement of women;

20. The participation and contribution of all actors of civil society, particularly women's groups and networks and other non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, with full respect for their autonomy, in cooperation with Governments, are important to the effective implementation and follow-up of the Platform for Action;

21. The implementation of the Platform for Action requires commitment from Governments and the international community. By making national and international commitments for action, including those made at the Conference, Governments and the international community recognize the need to take priority action for the empowerment and advancement of women.

We are determined to :

22. Intensify efforts and actions to achieve the goals of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women by the end of this century;

23. Ensure the full enjoyment by women and the girl child of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and take effective action against violations of these rights and freedoms;

24. Take all necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and the girl child and remove all obstacles to gender equality and the advancement and empowerment of women;

25. Encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards equality;

26. Promote women's economic independence, including employment, and eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty through changes in economic structures, ensuring equal access for all women, including those in rural areas, as vital development agents, to productive resources, opportunities and public services;

27. Promote people-centred sustainable development, including sustained economic growth, through the provision of basic education, lifelong education, literacy and training, and primary health care for girls and women;

28. Take positive steps to ensure peace for the advancement of women and, recognizing the leading role that women have

played in the peace movement, work actively towards general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, and support negotiations on the conclusion, without delay, of a universal and multilaterally and effectively verifiably comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty which contributes to nuclear disarmament and the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects;

29. Prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls;

30. Ensure equal access to and equal treatment of women and men in education and health care and enhance women's sexual and reproductive health as well as education;

31. Promote and protect all human rights of women and girls;

32. Intensify efforts to ensure equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all women and girls who face multiple barriers to their empowerment and advancement because of such factors as their race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability, or because they are indigenous people;

33. Ensure respect for international law; including humanitarian law, in order to protect women and girls in particular;

34. Develop the fullest potential of girls and women of all ages, ensure their full and equal participation in building a better world for all and enhance their role in the development process.

We are determined to :

35. ensure women's equal access to economic resources, including land, credit, science and technology, vocational training, information, communication and markets, as a means to further the advancement and empowerment of women and girls, including through the enhancement of their capacities to enjoy the benefits of equal access to these resources, *inter alia*, by means of international cooperation;

36. Ensure the success of the Platform for Action, which will require a strong commitment on the part of Governments, international organizations and institutions at all levels. We are deeply convinced that economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development, which is the framework for our efforts to achieve a higher quality of life for all people. Equitable social development that recognizes empowering resources sustainably is a necessary foundation for sustainable development. We also recognize that broad-based and

sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development is necessary to sustain social development and social justice. The success of the Platform for Action will also require adequate mobilization of resources at the national and international levels as well as new and additional resources to the developing countries from all available funding mechanisms, including multilateral, bilateral and private sources for the advancement of women; financial resources to strengthen the capacity of national, subregional, regional and international institutions; a commitment to equal rights, equal responsibilities and equal opportunities and to the equal participation of women and men in all national, regional and international bodies and policy-making processes; and the establishment or strengthening of mechanisms at all levels for accountability to the world's women;

37. Ensure also the success of the Platform for Action in countries with economies in transition, which will require continued international cooperation and assistance;

38. We hereby adopt and commit ourselves as Governments to implement the following Platform for Action, ensuring that a gender perspective is reflected in all our policies and programmes. We urge the United Nations system, regional and international financial institutions, other relevant

regional and international institutions and all women and men, as well as non-governmental organizations, with full respect for their autonomy, and all sectors of civil society, in cooperation with Governments, to fully commit themselves and contribute to the implementation of this Platform for Action.

APPENDIX - II

PLATFORM FOR ACTION - STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS*

G. WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

181. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his/her country. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life. The power relations that prevent women from leading fulfilling lives operate at many levels of society, from the most personal to highly public. Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning. Equality in political decision-making performs a leverage function without which it is highly unlikely that a real integration of the equality dimension in government policy-making is feasible. In this respect, women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of

* Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration, fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 4-15 September, 1995.

women. Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.

182. Despite the widespread movement towards democratization in most countries, women are largely underrepresented at most levels of government, especially in ministerial and other executive bodies, and have made little progress in attaining political power in legislative bodies or in achieving the target endorsed by the Economic and Social Council of having 30 per cent women in positions at decision-making levels by 1995. Globally, only 10 per cent of the members of legislative bodies and a lower percentage of ministerial positions are now held by women. Indeed, some countries, including those that are undergoing fundamental political, economic and social changes, have seen a significant decrease in the number of women represented in legislative bodies. Although women make up at least half of the electorate in almost all countries and have attained the right to vote and hold office in almost all States Members of the United Nations, women continue to be seriously

underrepresented as candidates for public office. The traditional working patterns of many political parties and government structures continue to be barriers to women's participation in public life. Women may be discouraged from seeking political office by discriminatory attitudes and practices, family and child-care responsibilities, and the high cost of seeking and holding public office. Women in politics and decision-making positions in Governments and legislative bodies contribute to redefining political priorities, placing new items on the political agenda that reflect and address women's gender-specific concerns, values and experiences, and providing new perspectives on mainstream political issues.

183. Women have demonstrated considerable leadership in community and informal organizations, as well as in public office. However, socialization and negative stereotyping of women and men, including stereotyping through the media, reinforces the tendency for political decision-making to remain the domain of men. Likewise, the underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions in the areas of art, culture, sports, the media, education, religion and the law have prevented women from having a significant impact on many key institutions.

184. Owing to their limited access to the traditional avenues to power, such as the decision-making bodies of political parties, employer organizations and trade unions, women have gained access to power through alternative structures, particularly in the non-governmental organization sector. Through non-governmental organizations and grass-roots organizations, women have been able to articulate their interests and concerns and have placed women's issues on the national, regional and international agendas.

185. Inequality in the public arena can often start with discriminatory attitudes and practices and unequal power relations between women and men within the family, as defined in paragraph 29 above. The unequal division of labour and responsibilities within households based on unequal power relations also limits women's potential to find the time and develop the skills required for participation in decision-making in wider public forums. A more equal sharing of those responsibilities between women and men not only provides a better quality of life for women and their daughters but also enhances their opportunities to shape and design public policy, practice and expenditure so that their interest may be recognized and addressed. Non-formal networks and patterns of decision-making at the local

community level that reflect a dominant male ethos restrict women's ability to participate equally in political, economic and social life.

186. The low proportion of women among economic and political decision makers at the local, national, regional and international levels reflects structural and attitudinal barriers that need to be addressed through positive measures. Governments, transnational and national corporations, the mass media, banks, academic and scientific institutions, and regional and international organizations, including those in the United Nations system, do not make full use of women's talents as top-level managers, policy makers, diplomats and negotiators.

187. The equitable distribution of power and decision-making at all levels is dependent on Governments and other actors undertaking statistical gender analysis and mainstreaming a gender perspective in policy development and the implementation of programmes. Equality in decision-making is essential to the empowerment of women. In some countries, affirmative action has led to 33.3 per cent or larger representation in local and national Governments.

188. National, regional and international statistical institutions still have insufficient knowledge of how to present the issues related to the equal treatment of women

and men in the economic and social spheres. In particular, there is insufficient use of existing databases and methodologies in the important sphere of decision-making.

189. In addressing the inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels, Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.

Strategic objective G.1.

Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making

Actions to be taken :

190. By Governments :

(a) Commit themselves to establishing the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies and committees, as well as in public administrative entities, and in the judiciary, including, *inter alia*, setting specific targets and implementing measures to substantially increase the number of women with a view to achieving equal representation of women and men, if necessary through positive action, in all

governmental and public administration positions;

(b) Take measures, including, where appropriate, in electoral systems that encourage political parties to integrate women in elective and non-elective public parties to integrate women in elective and non-elective public positions in the same proportion and at the same levels as men;

(c) Protect and promote the equal rights of women and men to engage in political activities and to freedom of association, including membership in political parties and trade unions;

(d) Review the differential impact of electoral systems on the political representation of women in elected bodies and consider, where appropriate, the adjustment or reform of those systems;

(e) Monitor and evaluate progress in the representation of women through the regular collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative and qualitative data on women and men at all levels in various decision-making positions in the public and private sectors, and disseminate data on the number of women and men employed at various levels in Governments on a yearly basis; ensure that women and men have equal access to the full range of public appointments

and set up mechanisms within governmental structures for monitoring progress in this field;

(f) support non-governmental organizations and research institutes that conduct studies on women's participation in an impact on decision-making and the decision-making environment;

(g) Encourage greater involvement of indigenous women in decision-making at all levels;

(h) Encourage and, where appropriate, ensure that government-funded organizations adopt non-discriminatory policies and practices in order to increase the number and raise the position of women in their organizations;

(i) Recognize that shared work and parental responsibilities between women and men promote women's increased participation in public life, and take appropriate measures to achieve this, including measures to reconcile family and professional life;

(j) Aim at gender balance in the lists of national candidates nominated for election or appointment to United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and other autonomous organizations of the United Nations system, particularly for posts at the senior level.

191. By political parties :

(a) Consider examining party structures and procedures to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women;

(b) Consider developing initiatives that allow women to participate fully in all internal policy-making structures and appointive and electoral nominating processes;

(c) Consider incorporating gender issues in their political agenda, taking measures to ensure that women can participate in the leadership of political parties on an equal basis with men.

192. By Governments, national bodies, the private sector, political parties, trade unions, employers' organizations, research and academic institutions, subregional and regional bodies and non-governmental and international organizations;

(a) Take positive action to build a critical mass of women leaders, executives and managers in strategic decision-making positions;

(b) Create or strengthen, as appropriate, mechanisms to monitor women's access to senior levels of decision-making;

(c) Review the criteria for recruitment and appointment to advisory and decision-making bodies and promotion to senior positions to ensure that such criteria are relevant and do not discriminate against women;

(d) Encourage efforts by non-governmental organizations, trade unions and the private sector to achieve equality between women and men in their ranks, including equal participation in their decision-making bodies and in negotiations in all areas and at all levels;

(e) Develop communications strategies to promote public debate on the new roles of men and women in society, and in the family as defined in paragraph 29 above;

(f) Restructure recruitment and career-development programmes to ensure that all women, especially young women, have equal access to managerial, entrepreneurial, technical and leadership training, including on-the-job training;

(g) Develop career advancement programmes for women of all ages that include career planning, tracking, mentoring, coaching, training and retraining;

(h) Encourage and support the participation of women's non-governmental organizations in United Nations conferences and their preparatory processes;

(i) Aim at and support gender balance in the composition of delegations to the United Nations and other international forums.

193. By the United Nations :

(a) Implement existing and adopt new employment policies and measures in order to achieve overall gender equality, particularly at the Professional level and above, by the 2000, with due regard to the importance of recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible, in conformity with Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations;

(b) Develop mechanisms to nominate women candidates for appointment to senior posts in the United Nations, the specialized agencies and other organizations and bodies of the United Nations system;

(c) Continue to collect and disseminate quantitative and qualitative data on women and men in decision-making and analyse their differential impact on decision-making and monitor progress towards achieving the Secretary-General's target of having women hold 50 per cent of managerial and decision-making positions by the year 2000.

194. By women's organizations, non-governmental organizations, trade unions, social partners, producers, and

industrial and professional organizations :

(a) Build and strengthen solidarity among women through information, education and sensitization activities;

(b) Advocate at all levels to enable women to influence political, economic and social accountability from elected representatives on their commitment to gender concerns;

(c) Establish, consistent with data protection legislation, database on women and their qualification for use in appointing women to senior decision-making and advisory positions, for dissemination to Governments, regional and international organizations and private enterprise, political parties and other relevant bodies.

Strategic objective G.2

Increase Women Capacity to Participate in Decision-making and Leadership

Actions to be taken :

195. By Governments, national bodies, the private sector, political parties, trade unions, employers' organizations, subregional and regional bodies, non-governmental and international organizations and educational institutions :

(a) Provide leadership and self-esteem training to assist women and girls, particularly those with special needs, women with disabilities and women belonging to racial and ethnic minorities to strengthen their self-esteem and to encourage them to take decision-making positions;

(b) Have transparent criteria for decision-making positions and ensure that the selecting bodies have a gender-balanced composition;

(c) Create a system of mentoring for inexperienced women and, in particular, offer training, including training in leadership and decision-making, public speaking and self-assertion, as well as in political campaigning;

(d) Provide gender-sensitive training for women and men to promote non-discriminatory working relationships and respect for diversity in work and management styles;

(e) Develop mechanisms and training to encourage women to participate in the electoral process, political activities and other leadership areas.