

## *To be or not to be<sup>1</sup>:*

the location of women in public policy .

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### *The Argument*

The main argument of my paper is that despite great leaps in uncovering of knowledge, as well as extraordinarily skillful strategizing, neither has the value of women's advisories to public policy been recognized; nor have the tools been adequate to achieve that recognition.

My argument is that there are in built difficulties, problematiques, in getting the inclusion of women in public policy right, which I attempt to capture in the title *to be or not to be*. This is the ancient and well traversed, and relevant to many other social groupings question: *separate or "integrated"*, also known as the difference and equal debate. On the grounds that centuries of exclusion, of deep unbridgeable differences, have to be overcome it is often argued that the identity tag, has its strategic value and is a necessary tool for negotiation of justice. But the identity 'tag' may not be "valid" as there are multiple identities with their embedded hierarchies within an identity tag, like women or even dalit or black. There is enough material on these debates from the racism<sup>2</sup> as well as dalit discourse.<sup>3</sup>

I often refer to the well known argument between Gandhiji and Ambedkar to illustrate the problematique of the separate vs integrate dilemmas. One of the most notable and still contentious issues in India in the field of social justice, is the debate on how to enable the castes who had been historically excluded and oppressed to level up, and overcome this historical blemish. Prior to drafting the constitution of free India in 1946-47, Dr. Ambedkar, demanded reservation, special provisions, ladders to "uplift" them from their neglected positions. Gandhi, argued that by thus doing, these castes would be marked, their identity made explicit, and therefore they would always be "separated", even continue to receive the 'n' demeaning gaze that they have historically received. and be impeded in being absorbed into the body politic, into social spaces as equals. To Gandhi integration meant muting of difference, and appeal to the moral sense of human beings to overcome their discriminatory mindsets. Dr Ambedkar, reasoned that this was an impractical hope and special provisions are crucial for compensating for historically embedded and experienced in Justice. The old debate still haunts this "difference " and has also led to ideas of "reservation " for women, and such legal, as opposed to moral mechanisms, to compensate for such practices of exclusion and subordination. The debate however rages on whether such provisions have

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<sup>1</sup> In Hamlet, Shakespeare immortalized the ultimate existential question: "To be or not to be?" This philosophical question that distinguishes the human mind touches on the universal experience of doubt, of questioning. Both of these elements of Hamlet's question resonate in this analysis

<sup>2</sup> Faye V. Harrison, *Facing Racism and the Moral Responsibility of Human Rights Knowledge*, New York Academy of Sciences (Reprinted from *Ethics and Anthropology*, Volume 925 of the *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, December 2000)

<sup>3</sup> Devaki Jain, 'Gender inequity as racism', *The Hindu*, 23 September 2000

reduced or exacerbated the inequalities,<sup>4</sup> whether they have not been scarred by the ‘creamy layer’ within the ‘excluded’ and soon.

Emphasizing the separate identity, such as women or dalit, also invites among other items exclusion, perpetuates it. *The room of ones own*, to take the metaphor from Virginia Woolf<sup>5</sup> does give the space for self strength. But it can also become the ghetto

In a book I have just completed called “**Women, Development, and the UN - A Sixty-Year Quest for Equality and Justice**,”<sup>6</sup> I have reviewed the historical struggle of women to be understood and included and given space in the international arena of justice, I found that whenever they did achieve some “success” in their quest for equality, it was through strategizing on collective identity as woman, as well as inclusion of even one woman in a drafting committee

A revealing and more current story is how when the Constitution of the yet to be “born free” South Africa was being drafted in Geneva (prior to the democratic elections of 1994) by some of the leading members of the African National Congress, Dr. Frene Ginwala was asked to go to Geneva from London to assist them. At the end of the day, the draft read “*he*” and “*he*” and “*he*”. Dr. Ginwala, being junior, in ANC hierarchy, asked the leaders to let her take the draft to her room and type it. When she returned with the draft the next morning, she had substituted all “*hes*” with “*shes*”. The others were aghast but Frene said, “Why not? ‘*She*’ includes ‘*he*’.” At this point they gave in. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa thus has he/she throughout its text.<sup>7</sup>

In the book I have later used a metaphor, *the Peace Tent*, as a symbol of this strategic space, the room of one’s own for mobilizing collective strength as well as showing the intersectionality of various identities and flaws in the classical dichotomies in the social sciences, and then raised the question is the Peace tent the space for “unity within difference” - a power house or a ghetto?<sup>8</sup> --***To be or not to be? “Integrate” into the mainstream, or remain apart, challenging its legitimacy and its values?***

The question of gendering public policy is intimately related to the answer to this question... If the table, i.e. the nature of public policy, as arising out of the given theories and frameworks of analysis and data are unacceptable to say a group, i.e. women, or even dalits as Gopal Guru<sup>9</sup> argues, in his essay ‘How Egalitarian Are the Social Sciences in India?’ then integrating into that set up is surrender apart from being *inaccurate* ,flawed and would

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<sup>4</sup> Bipin Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee, Aditya Mukherjee, KN Pannikar, Sucheta Mahajan, “Indias’s Struggle For Independence,” Penguin Books, 1988

<sup>5</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* (Granada, 1977 Published: 1929)

<sup>6</sup> Devaki Jain, *Women, Development, and the UN- A Sixty-Year Quest for Equality and Justice*, Indiana University Press, to be released in August 2005, New York, (Website: [www.unhistory.org](http://www.unhistory.org) or book can be ordered from IUP by email: [iupress@indiana.edu](mailto:iupress@indiana.edu))

<sup>7</sup> As South Africa’s Madam Speaker, Ginwala Still Shaping History, **Advance Archive**, September 11, 2000

<sup>8</sup> Devaki Jain, ‘Finding Strategic Identities in an Unequal World: Feminist Reflections from India’, in Faye V. Harrison, ed., *Resisting Racism and Xenophobia: Global Perspectives on Race, Gender and Human Rights*, AltaMira Press, California, to be released in September 2005

<sup>9</sup> Gopal Guru, *How Egalitarian Are the Social Sciences in India?*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXVII No. 51 December 14, 2002

perhaps lead to undesirable results . But this staying away , therefore , from participating also has its negative effects, ie exclusion .This is one of the dilemmas .

The second arises from the nature of women's intellectual history., or experiences of reconstructing knowledge. It is well known that the study of women, as well as their activism, revealed the flaws in the facts and the analysis in the social sciences (*even physical sciences as was told to me by the scientists at the NIAS* <sup>10</sup> Thus women have entered into a challenging mode, challenging the given<sup>11</sup>. Further since there is the question of finding a basis for identity on the basis of "sex", - as all the usual stratifications, class, caste etc apply here - there is a tendency to question every notion or concept which attempts an arrival at a boundary for identity fixing. In my book I call this *the nethi nethi syndrome*, borrowing from the Upanishads. It is definition by negation, but the negation defies unification. Then there are the significant differences in mainstream political choices, and since the voice that women need to develop to influence public policy, has to be political , a presence in power structures, these strong differences in their mainstream political identity, also impedes solidarity.

The notion of reconstructing knowledge has also been challenged, eg by Linda Gordon a feminist historian who<sup>12</sup> argues that:

“The feminist reconstitution of knowledge no longer seems to me so radical a break as it once did. ...

Indeed, I would venture to say that the rhetoric of the uniqueness of our intellectual project reflects a growing distance of scholars from the totalizing tendencies of a strong political feminist movement, and its desire to incorporate, even to subsume, other radical traditions...

So even re constructure theory, adds to the difficulties of building a uniting politics.

**Thus my argument is that whether one looks at the bricks on which development discourse, theories and policies are built or whether from the lobbying and intervening by the women's lobbies, there are serious obstacles to gendering of public policy –**

Naturally , I do think we can overcome this impasse, on both sides – once we take note of it and in this paper starting from some illustrations, I will move to some proposals

I would illustrate my gloomy views through four or five examples, whose interpretation is of course is my own, not necessarily one that all those who are engaged in women's battles with the demeaning gaze would agree. I would try to draw on some Karnataka efforts, but the primary thrust would be on the challenge of being included meaningfully in public policy.

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<sup>10</sup> Devaki Jain, Women's Participation in the History of Ideas: The Importance of Reconstructing Knowledge, for National Institute for Advanced Studies, 6 February 2002.

<sup>11</sup> The platform document "*Challenging the Given: DAWN's Perspectives on Social Development*", 1995, was disseminated at the World Summit on Social Development (WSSD, Copenhagen 1995) 11-12 March 1995 and the parallel NGO Forum.

<sup>12</sup> Linda Gordon, ed., *Women, the State and Welfare*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990)

I would have liked to have taken population policy building in India, as one of the lively examples of my thesis, as I was deeply engaged in this process from 1993 all the way to 2004, but since that is the theme of the workshops that follow this session , I thought I would stay away .

**Example one** is from **the international** mainly UN discourse. Over the so called development decades, the perception of women's role in the economy, and then the responses, changed not only over time, was not only re defined by women of the South. – but has not made a difference either in outcomes or in the acceptance by the “ big “tradition, or mainstream level of reasoning in development economics

**The second** is drawn from an attempt made **in Karnataka** to translate some of these ideas through an action oriented field study, which we called *Integrating Women's Interest into a State Five Year Plan (1983)*<sup>13</sup>. The finding could be summed up as one, that “method” of reaching a goal was more important than the goal and two that targeting poverty households with development offers neither reached the men nor the women and three that rubber stamping schemes, created stupid anomalies.

**The third is** in the field of women's work, through studies undertaken by Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST) in various parts of India, and also in Karnataka, in relation to a World Bank funded project to improve the sericulture industry.<sup>14</sup> While the studies gave the information that the project did not consider women's productive roles, and thereby . They provided visibility, provided gendered analysis, but it did not change the project design to include these roles, and showed that without women studies as a “lobby” a voice, policy cannot be influenced .

**The fourth** is from current affairs – the efforts to “gender” the 10<sup>th</sup> plan, the budget, the electoral commitment of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, called the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) knowledge. It reveals that historical knowledge was not being used and efforts at influencing public policy are still nullified

## Section I.

### *Illustrations in sum*

**One, the international experience** - which influenced some aspects of the Indian experience, it could be argued- came full circle in one sense, and in another showed the elusiveness of reversing embedded hierarchies and embedded mindsets in another sense.

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<sup>13</sup> “Integrating Women's Interests into State Five-Year Plan,” submitted to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Govt. of India in September 1984, used in an article by K.S. Krishnaswamy and Shashi Rajagopal, *Women in Employment: A Micro Study in Karnataka, Based on the ISST Bangalore Report*, in ed., by Devaki Jain and Nirmala Banerjee, *Tyranny of the Household- Investigative Essays on Women's Work*, for the workshop *Women in Poverty*, Shakti Books, New Delhi, 1985.

<sup>14</sup> *Impact of Sericulture pilot project in Karnataka- An Evaluation*, ISST, 1989

In what can be called a full circle, there is now a recognition of the need for the identity of woman. While recognizing that gender had played a useful role in understanding the difference, it is being increasingly acknowledged that it had muted the original political separate identity of woman, their intellectual contributions to knowledge theories and to practice as women. However once again the question appears what is the *voice* of that identity, how is it an identity at all in the heterogeneity that woman represents? Multiple identities, especially class and caste, cultural diversity, pluralism are concepts that are now in vogue, but they have not made it easier to bring women as an identity and a voice into public policy ... Gender was a crucial analytical tool, but tended to efface or mute collective identity, crucial for politics, which in turn is crucial for agency, for influencing public policy. **One could suggest that gendered analysis was revelatory but not transformative**

The recent conference in New York called Beijing +10<sup>15</sup> revealed a classical disjunction between the reality on the ground and the sense of progress what can be called the “visibility of the issue”<sup>16</sup> level., enabled by gendered analysis.

There was recognition that over the past decades, two trajectories relative to women and development indicating oppositional trends had emerged. The first trajectory is the emergence of a strong political presence in the national and international scene of the women's movement. There is now a widespread consciousness of the necessity of engaging in gendered analysis that recognizes both difference and inequality and its implications for development design. The other trajectory reveals that the situation on the ground for many women, especially those living in poverty and in conflict-ridden situations, seems to have worsened, despite the fact that it has been addressed specifically by both the State and development thought.

The question that arises then is, why does this disjunction exist after decades of what appears to be a vibrant and ostensibly effective partnership between policy makers and the women's movement? How much of the oppositional trajectories can be attributed to the external atmospherics of global power politics and its attendant economics? How much can be attributed to other factors, such as the style of functioning and priorities of the women's movement or its experience of the gendered institutional architecture of governance ? What are the spaces, the ideas, and the issues that can mobilize these agencies? What can bring into reality the old/new mandates of development to remove poverty, inequality, and injustice?

The conference also revealed the concern that unity was evading , and that some form of re uniting as an international women's movement was crucial to revive the political presence, and organized “unified “ voice” of women to intervene into global debates and turn them around .<sup>17</sup> Ideas such as that there should be a women's report on UN reform, a women's report on the financial institutional architecture, etc were necessary to stop the world from

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<sup>15</sup> Commission on the Status of Women – Forty Ninth Session, New York, 28<sup>th</sup> Feb-11<sup>th</sup> March 2005

<sup>16</sup> Devaki Jain, “Spaces and Hopes”, The Hindu, April 3, 2005

<sup>17</sup> The conclusion draws heavily from “Revitalising the International Feminist Movement: A Report of the Consultations Held at Kampala, Uganda, July 22-25, 2002.” The report is available online at [www.choike/documentos/kampala%202002.pdf](http://www.choike/documentos/kampala%202002.pdf) ; Joanna Kerr, Ellen Sprenger and Alison Symington, ed., ‘The Future of Women's Rights – Global Visions & Strategies’, Zed Books, New York, 2004;

moving away from the core concerns of women for equity, for basic human well being etc into militarism and related securities etc were expressed. There was recognition that the various strategies, known as Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), Gender and Development (GAD) and then empowerment and mainstreaming had not delivered women from the assaults .

Almost all the assessment reports both UN and academic that emerged raised the question how to tackle the *wall*<sup>18</sup>, the hard rock of resistance to inclusion of women as equal citizens, - even though there were many, many small and big “successes” at local national and international levels.<sup>19</sup>

The very beginning of women's quest was for equality or for overpowering, if not effacing, inequality. The strategy of leveling the playing fields by bringing in laws, introducing the power of rights, and finding ways to move women out of what looked like disadvantaged positions seemed all right for several decades. But it was clearly not enough. There was deep, widespread, unimaginable, and invisible discrimination. The women's movement responded to this by making inequality visible But that did not take care of the ignorance and invisibility of women's value as citizens, workers, providers who are equal if not even richer in value than men.

So the movement generated new knowledge to show the role of women in development-- again with the expectation that revealing truth would lead to women's equality with men. But that strategy still disabled them because they had no voice in the determination of their lives and its road map. Thus, the notion of equal participation, of equal power, of leadership was worked into the notions of ways to redress inequality.

The unpeeling of the layers of inequality goes on, and it is a blot on the humandscape that inequality is now on the increase across all divides<sup>20</sup> resonating women's experience. As Ravi Kanbur and others have pointed out inequality should be the frontal issue – and if any lobby or public action group here in Karnataka or elsewhere has experience on the “How to” claim redressal of this inequality it is the key – the women's movement. It is her experience of inequality, she holds the key, and women need to be asked here to lead.

## **Two, the Karnataka experience:**

The study integrating women into a State five year plan, (*ibid*) was initiated in the 80's by ISST partly, because of the stimulus of the overall 'ideology' or framework that was developed at the international space, namely bringing women into development; and partly

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<sup>18</sup> The wall, the unchanged minds of men. Devaki Jain, 'Women, Development, and the UN' (*ibid*)

<sup>19</sup> Joanna Kerr, Ellen Sprenger and Alison Symington, ed., 'The Future of Women's Rights – Global Visions & Strategies', Zed Books, New York, 2004; UNRISD Conference 'Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World' New York, 7 March 2005, Peggy Antrobus, 'Women's Struggle for political voice toward a redefinition of Human Security', paper presented at UNRISD Conference 'Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World' New York, 7 March 2005.

<sup>20</sup> Devaki Jain, "What Does It Take to Become a Citizen? Some neglected collective identities in building "nation", at a seminar on Democracy, Communalism, Secularism and the Dilemmas of Indian Nationhood, January 2005, New Delhi.

due to the overall interest in finding ways to enable women out of poverty. It should be recalled that it was around this time, namely the 70s, and 80's, that women's studies and women's advocacy was emerging as a major player in the struggle, and amongst other elements, beginning to reveal that the "household" needed to be broken open – as it was not the "benign " shelter for all its inhabitants.<sup>21</sup>

The investigation revealed that individuals within households had highly disparate locations in power, apart from in characteristics such as occupations, health and education status etc. This disparity amongst individuals seemed to be more enlarged the lower one went down in the asset/ income scale. Inspired by the international exposure to looking at the disparate impact of development between men and women, the study focused on examining the reach of the anti poverty programmes on women. What emerged was both: that the household was not benign, not a level playing field – women were unequally treated, but in the poverty households women had a different source of income from men. The study came up with the idea that women within poverty household had to be independently identified and reached out to with IRDP loans etc But it also revealed that targeting as an approach was flawed on many counts, inappropriate development offers, false reporting by functionaries.

This was further corroborated during the process of preparing a report for the Karnataka State Planning Board called District Level Planning for Social Development<sup>22</sup>. *For the report District Level Studies were commissioned* – one from a backward district i.e. Gulbarga and one advanced i.e. Dakshina Kannada. Achieving a target of covering couples of reproductive age with contraceptive services was irrelevant in Dakshina Kannada (a district in Karnataka's west coast, known for advancement in social indicators) where the fertility rate had already reached one, and in some villages less than one, but the fund allocated to the district continued to be allocated only for that purpose and when its irrelevance was brought out nothing could be done to shift the funds from contraception to more advanced health care.<sup>23</sup>

Planned development appeared, as it does even now, as blind rubber stamping of schemes. But it also brought out the even more significant lesson, that the methodology being used did not reach poor men either. **The process was completely flawed for men and women amongst the poor or deprived.**

Here was a finding that Method of offering or stimulating development was as crucial as gendering or integrating women into development

One dimension in Karnataka, which is dealing with this is the deeper and longer involvement with local self-government, a change in the framework for development implementation.<sup>24</sup> .

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<sup>21</sup> The Household Trap: Report on a Field Survey of Female Activity Patterns. P.215-246. In Tyranny of the Household. Edited by Devaki Jain and Nirmala Banerjee, New Delhi, Vikas, 1985; Nancy Folbre, Who Pays for the Kids? Gender and the Structures of Constraint. Routledge, New York, 1994

<sup>22</sup> District Level Planning for Social Development, Devaki Jain, Chairperson of Sub Committee, Karnataka State Planning Board (1994), Government of Karnataka

<sup>23</sup> Report from Dakshina Kannada by Shalini Rajaneesh, IAS

<sup>24</sup> Karnataka Gazette, No. 1132, Part IV-A, 22 September 2003, Bangalore, Government of Karnataka; Proceedings of Government of Karnataka on 'Implementation of assurances with regard to devolution of

While this schema has a long way to go, very recent initiatives both by the center and the state, has given more space to designing development locally and to holding the elected councils accountable for failure etc Within this framework, due to reservation of seats, women have emerged as visible and potentially powerful players in development. (*More on this later*) Here perhaps women's participation in governance, could enable inclusion of womens ideas and thus a gendering of policy. I have an example from Karnataka where some inroads are being made, and perhaps here is the chink in the armour of patriarchal control.

### **Example three:** women's work

The field of women's work became one of the major research domains both nationally and internationally. I would also suggest that it was one of the most creative pursuits , influencing international organizations like the ILO , but also underlining the ground realities in the developing countries.

Focusing on that area also reflected the overall interest of the women's movement in core issue of survival security for the principal defender of the family, namely the woman. So many issue, ranging from measurement, e.g. unpaid work, work which was to be counted as gainful activity but remained invisible, to discrimination in wages, in job security and revaluing what was called the informal sector emerged.

The new research about women as workers entered the development discourse. They looked at such practices as listing women engaged in domestic work as unemployed, unequal wages, discrimination of women in the workplace, women's double burden of work for wages and work at home, and the absence of social security for women who perform unpaid labor at home. From a more narrow and focused approach on women's status vis-à-vis men, this research broadened the scope of investigation to look at the broader implications of global and national economic, political, and social changes and their impact on women's lives in their entirety.

**The Karnataka experience** reveals the extraordinary value of women studies especially if they are designed specifically for policy purposes. One such effort in Karnataka again oriented to state level policy, was a response to the World Bank funded project to improve the quality of the cocoon in the sericulture industry. The World Bank project was to upgrade the seed, of the silk worm to bivoltine whose yarn would be stronger.

Sericulture was one of the dominant land based activities in Karnataka and the perception of the policy designers was that women were not an issue in this project. It was perceived that women were basically using thrown away cocoons which had holes in them to make garlands.<sup>25</sup> They were not engaged in the basic chain of production and the sale of cocoons. The investigation a breaking down of tasks in the chain of production revealed that while mulberry was grown by the farmers the men, it was women who not only picked the leaves

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powers to Panchayat Raj Institutions as the per the Act', Government of Karnataka order dated 15 October 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Assessment of women's roles- The Karnataka sericulture development project, ISST, 1982. Task force on sericulture, for a world bank funded project, Government of Karnataka

but looked after the trays in which the silk worms were nursed or nurtured. The silk worms are usually kept in trays called chandriks in shelves inside the home and have to be fed mulberry leaves every three hours just like a child, and the offal has to be removed as frequently so that they do not get diseased. Women in the strong sericulture farming areas complained that not only were their houses completely cramped with silk worms leaving hardly any place for the kitchen or their children, but the silk worm was more demanding than the child as it had a compulsive demand for leaves every three hours. Thus they were awake most of the night and most of them had chronic illnesses due to the suffocating atmosphere in the hut as well as this continuous labour. The next round of investigation revealed that when the bivoltine project did not take off too successfully it was found that it was because the women were not at all brought into the picture, not exposed to what were the special characteristics of feeding and health for the new worms. The old Ester Boserup story of the 70's continued. Programmes were knowledge – proof as the late Raj Krishna used to say.<sup>26</sup>

During a visit to the World Bank in Washington at this time, when I pointed out to the Vice President that there was an atrocious neglect of women in the sericulture programme they said they could not do anything about it, I would have to go and lobby with the central and state governments.

As a result of lobbying both in Washington and in Karnataka with the government, a task force on sericulture was set up by the Government of Karnataka with the principal secretary of agriculture as its chair and I was a member. We had all the relevant agencies around the table and had one meeting to show that there needs to be greater inclusion of women as workers in the sericulture development programmes.

At the Sericulture training Institute , a state government institution, no women were included on the grounds that there was no hostel accommodation for women. A proposal was made, by the Task force, to build a women's hostel using another government scheme called Hostels for working women. However, the task force neither sustained itself nor did it make for any transformation in the lives and the wages and concerns of women in the sericulture project.

A similar experience is recorded of the matching study that ISST took up in with the Tasar<sup>27</sup> industry in Maharashtra. Again women were major workers but unrecognized and nothing that we did, including a report funded by the Swiss development corporation changed that perception.

**The fourth** is from current efforts at influencing public policy ... the CMP and gender sensitive budget making. As the Manmohan Singh Government came into power two opportunities for influencing macro level policies offered them selves .One the Common

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<sup>26</sup> Devaki Jain, "Are we knowledge Proof? Development as Waste", speech delivered at Lovraj Kumar Memorial, Lecture, New Delhi, 26 September 2003 (Reprinted in *Wastelands News*, Vol. XIX, No. 1, August-October 2003, Society for Promotion of Wastelands Development, New Delhi, pg. 19-30

<sup>27</sup> Inter-state Tasar Project, Report on a field survey Chandrapur District of Maharashtra, Institute of Social Studies Trust, 1982

Minimum Programme and the other the Mid Term Appraisal of the 10<sup>th</sup> Plan. It will be argued in the detailed section of this paper that despite knowledge as well as historical experience within the Planning Commission, neither the CMP, nor the MTA reflected its values . The CMP had an atrocious reference to women in its section on population and the MTA continued to look at “gender”(read women) in the usual **for women by women, to women mode.** (More on this in the detailed section II)

With the fashion being to do gender sensitive budgeting the finance ministry has been persuaded to call for all ministries to reveal their gender sensitivity . The women’s lobby has now argued that fiscal policy is where the crunch is felt and women must be included. However most of the efforts including studies continue to look at the impact of schemes or the needs of women (including in the. State level HDR’s of the UNDP, India). The real challenge has been posed by one of the officials of the planning commission at a national consultation held at the Planning Commission on April 8<sup>th</sup> 2005. If women are to direct fiscal policy , they should list out what they deem as their plan and then demand that the structures, laws , funds are deployed to reach that agenda . This suggestion reminds of the first women’s plan prepared in 1937 by an eminent group of women – revolutionary in character, which was left behind.<sup>28</sup>

However at the gram panchayat and municipality level, a pilot project funded by UNIFEM and being implemented by the Singamma Sreenivasan Foundation is revealing that women can design fiscal policy, not merely gender the budget. Women can claim agency. (more on this in the details).

## Section II

### Elaboration of Illustrations

**Example one** learning from the international, mainly UN discourse. Over the so called development decades, the perception of women’s role in the economy, and then the responses, changed not only over time, but it was also very specifically re defined by women of the South. Though Ester Boserup is often invoked as a path breaker in moving the perception of women as homemakers, to crucial contributors, for example, to Africa’s agricultural product,<sup>29</sup> women leaders emerging from the liberation struggles in their countries, and going as delegates and experts to UN bodies, had already challenged the Anglo Saxon perceptions of women’s location in the economy and the political landscape. However the language and concepts related to it, began to emerge mainly from the discourse from the North even for the South, defined as the region that needed development. WID WAD GAD<sup>30</sup> is how the evolution is described – moving the approach from integrating women into development, to seeing women as one of the actors in development, to using a more comprehensive analytical tool, namely gender, a social construct containing elements

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<sup>28</sup> Devaki Jain, How women’s leadership can transform the Nation: Durgabai showed the way, Lecture in honour of Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh, July 15<sup>th</sup> 2004, Hyderabad

<sup>29</sup> Ester Boserup, Women’s Role in Economic Development\_(London: Allen and Unwin, 1970)

<sup>30</sup> WID: Women in Development; WAD: Women and Development; GAD: Gender and Development;

of power, hierarchies, culture, suggesting that development has to be analysed on the basis of gender in order to ensure equitable results

By the Beijing conference, 1995 a unified political will and greater fragmentation had simultaneously emerged within the movement. Multiple identities, diversity, and questions of difference had overwritten the earlier simplistic identity of "woman" or "the feminine."<sup>31</sup> The concept of gender, which played a valuable role in showing that the analysis of female subordination within various realms of the development experience was complex, was distracting or muting the political identity of "woman." Feminist thought had not produced an alternative definition; by the 1990s many feminisms had developed. The feminist ethic of emphasizing participation and democracy, inclusion and multiple identities offered a space for such flowering. The setback of the emergence of a strong right-wing presence at the Beijing +5 conferences also added to this concern about the loss of a political identity.<sup>32</sup>

Some argued that gender as a term and an analytical tool had played a significant role, but the time had come to revert to the identity "woman" and reclaim its politics. Many movements within countries and the worldwide women's movement started with the use of the term "women" as the form of identity for its political endeavours, moving to "gender" as a necessary analytical tool for understanding inequality, discrimination, and subordination. While affirmation of diversity was the trend, there was also concern that a unifying thread needs to be used to keep the momentum of a global actor. Many UN agencies were eliciting suggestions for pegs on which some form of solidarity in the international women's movement could be hung.<sup>33</sup>

Yet as deeply as some UN structures absorbed these new ideas, they did not permeate the consciousness of the world body. Despite great leaps forward in intellection about development that moved women from the periphery to the center, that began to see them as the holders of solutions to global problems, the poverty of the world's women increased and intensified. It seems the time has come to take a step back and ask some larger questions about why this is so.

The gender emphasis on economic concerns at a macro-level also has a longer history that originates in different ways of thinking about women's productive and reproductive roles in the context, for example of Africa's "development". WID, WAD and GAD paradigms have had an important impact in establishing models for teaching, research and gender training in Africa largely because they offer functionalist models for practical and, in many cases, well-financed, gender work. Despite the volume of critical work on gender and social process, and the radical scholarship that critiques modernization theory, the WID thesis, first enunciated in Ester Boserup's *Women's Role in Economic Development* (1970) **continues** to influence policy-making and activism attentive to women's needs in Africa. The fact that international

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31 Radhika Coomaraswamy, "Identity Within: Cultural Relativism, Minority Rights and the Empowerment of Women." *George Washington International Law Review* 34 (July 2001): 483-513

32 Devaki Jain, "Feminism and Feminist Expression: A Dialogue" in Kamala Ganesh, ed., 'Culture and the Making of Identity in Contemporary India', (Sage Publications, May 2005) .

<sup>33</sup> Leading to change: Eliminating violence against women in Muslim societies, Symposium Report of 1 March 2005 at New York, (Bethesda, Women's Learning Partnership, 2005)

donor organisations like the World Bank, the United Nation and the European Union, together with donor organisations based in Canada, Sweden and the United States persistently use the WID approach, is an index of the disparity between the liberal and even often conservative politics of funding sources for women in development on one hand, and the critical political direction currently being taken by gender research, both in the west and in Africa on the other.<sup>34</sup>

However by 1995 there was dissatisfaction with the results of such tools and ideas, new ideas or strategies such as empowerment, mainstreaming emerged, culminating around 2000 in women's agency,<sup>35</sup> dealing with choice, the right to choose, and power to exercise it, as one key to equality emerged. Thus the language of rights became the principal framework for women's journey with development.

But the language of rights was a problematique too<sup>36</sup> as it cannot be encashed unless there is an institutional framework for its operation. Redefining development as freedom, as done by Amartya Sen neglected the financial and political requirements for the exercise of those freedoms that Sen<sup>37</sup> talks about. The language is sexy but the operation requires a whole lot of necessary conditions, as argued by me in a paper that I wrote for a Seminar on his book, held in New Delhi in 2003<sup>38</sup>. An attempt was made in Karnataka to link the "encashment" of reproductive rights by linking it to the Panchayat Raj Institutions.<sup>39</sup>

**Two** A more recent effort in Karnataka where the government wanted to prepare what is called a policy document, a policy on women (it had become a fashion to have state level documents called policy on women as a pledge or a show that there was a policy from which programmes could be drawn) In order to get out of this strap of a "for women by women, to women" and only leading to a demand for more money to departments of women and child welfare", it was decided to innovate and create a report called "Women's right to development". SEE ANNEX 1The chapters are called: women's right to health, right to work, right to education and right to life (nuanced because right to life brings all the

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<sup>34</sup> Desiree Lewis, A Review Essay for the African Gender Institute's "Strengthening Gender and Women's Studies for Africa's Social Transformation" Project, Edited by Barbara Boswell, African Feminist Studies: 1980-2002, (<http://www.gwsafrica.org/knowledge/africa%20review/labour.html>)

<sup>35</sup> Bina Agarwal, Jane Humphries, Ingrid Robeyns, 'Exploring the Challenges of Amartya Sen's Work and Ideas: An Introduction', Feminist Economics, Vol. 9, Numbers 2 and 3, July/November 2003, pgs 3-12

<sup>36</sup> Devaki Jain, Enabling Reduction of Poverty and Inequality in South Asia, for Population and Poverty Achieving Equity, Equality and Sustainability, UNFPA, Number 8, 2003, New York 'Children's Rights and Women's Rights: Some connections and disconnections', Development, Vol. 44(2), 2001, pg. 58-62; Women's Rights between the UN-Human Rights Regime and Free Trade Agreements, paper prepared for Globalising Women's Rights: Confronting unequal development between the UN rights framework and WTO-trade agreements, Bonn, 19-22 May 2004;

<sup>37</sup> Sen, Amartya, Development as Freedom, New York, Anchor Books, 2000; 2000 Human Development Report, "Human Rights and Human Development", UNDP, New York

<sup>38</sup> Devaki Jain, 'Testing the Ground in a District in India for Its Capacity to absorb Sen's Formula', in J S Sodhi, ed., 'Development As Freedom – An Indian Perspective', New Delhi, Shri Ram Centre for Industrial Relations And Human Resources, 2004, pgs 124-137. (Proceedings of the Seminar on Amartya Sen's "Development As Freedom" in New Delhi on 31 July – 1 June, 2003)

<sup>39</sup> V.S. Elizabeth and Devaki Jain, Enabling Population Stabilisation Through Women's Leadership In Local Self Government: A proposal for the department's new scheme, 17-18 February 2003, New Delhi, published by Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi, 2003

problems of the anti abortionists). The hope was that it would get a better entry into the legislative processes, invoke the Constitution and shift from asking for more money to asking for equal rights. However, this did not take off, and the old approach of schemes for women re-emerged.

### **Example three women's work**

While it is well known and argued that work, employment by itself is not a sufficient condition for redressing the oppression of , discrimination against , women<sup>40</sup>; that such policies are often instrumentalist, seeing women as means to tangible ends , and not as persons deserving of support systems as an end in itself, - when seen from the location of women and girls who are in extremis, faced by a NO EXIT except into sale and other punishing options, income earning work seems a life line in the first round . The surveys of sex workers as well as victims of disasters like earth quakes and communal conflicts, ( SEWAs experience as told by Ela Bhatt to author ) seem to indicate that the first need is to access income earning opportunity . It is such a drive that explains why women take on jobs which are cruel, less paid etc which is the story from most of the surveys.

A time use study and other studies which ISST and many other centers of women studies undertook have been the pillar of gendering public policy . ISST's time use study undertaken between 1974 and 1977, in six villages – 3 in Rajasthan as the dry agriculture and 3 in West Bengal as wet agriculture, enlarged the picture of what was happening in rural households, especially the assetless households.<sup>41</sup>

That study and other field work done by ISST at that time such as a visit to the Kaira district to look at women dairy farmers across land classes, to the Madhubani district to look at Mithila painters and Sikki workers, again across land classes, and the field work done for a study of women workers on the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee sites (all studies done by ISST between 1975 and 1985) showed not only that women in poverty households were the major work force contributors to the household income, but also that they were the least enabled by public policy, apart from their own household.<sup>42</sup>

We have lessons like the experience of the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme, which, with all its warts and holes that are now being pointed out by various academics and policy makers, had not only provided a base rural labour but interestingly provided a lifeline to poor rural women. A study done by ISST<sup>43</sup>, with the cooperation of the late Shri Page, the father of the Employment Guarantee Scheme in Maharashtra, revealed that participation by women as a proportion of the total participation of labour ranged from 60 percent to 80 percent across the various districts of Maharashtra. A further examination of who comes for

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<sup>40</sup> Srilatha Batliwala and Deepa Dhanraj, 'Gender Myths that Instrumentalise Women: A View from the Indian Frontline', IDS Bulletin, Volumes 35, Number 4, October 2004, pgs 11-18

<sup>41</sup> Devaki Jain and Malini Chand, "Report on a time allocation study, its methodological implications", Paper presented at the Technical Seminar on Women's Work and Employment, New Delhi, ISST, 1982

<sup>42</sup> Devaki Jain, "Impact on Women Workers: Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme", a Study Sponsored by ILO, Geneva, December 1979 (Mimeo). MEGS and EAS Women on public work sites for ILO monograph

<sup>43</sup> Impact on women workers- Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme, a study sponsored by ILO, Geneva, December, 1979- ISST

the work from these poverty households revealed that it was usually the older women, not men, even though the men may also be unemployed; the men were loath to take on work which was so arduous and yet so underpaid. The late Prof Krishna Bharadwaj had affirmed this finding from studies she had conducted on famine related rural programmes.

Thus women's desperation to earn a livelihood against all odds was not only proven but the MEGS actually enabled them to find that livelihood outside of various forms of slavery. The Human Development Report for Maharashtra showed a more even Gender Development Index (GDI) i.e., disparities between men and women were less due to this wage-earning of women.

The study in Kaira District in Gujerat ,revealed that amongst landless households, when a buffalo was added in order to enhance the income of the household, women who were already stretching their hours of labour due to fetching water, fuel and doing some hiring out of labour, working already 16-18 hours, another 2 hours was added due to looking after the buffalo. This again seemed to account for the high mortality rate of women from the poverty households in Kaira district. It is interesting to recall that the study of milk producers in Khaira district conducted by ISST at that time and published in a book called “Women’s Quest for Power”, in 1979, led the NDDDB to focus on health via the Tribhuvandas Foundation, on especially to the milk producers of Kaira district.<sup>44</sup>

Thus in that era, the importance of individualising people within the households was further taken up theoretically to show that the household was not a benign place for women but contained in it a theatre for intra household battles not only for food, but against violence, death etc.<sup>45</sup>

This was an era of a flood of field level surveys, constantly revealing the condition of women in poverty, but also providing ideas on how to respond.

Thus, targeting female headed households came up as an idea since it was assumed that female headed households would be the poorest since usually they would not have either rights to assets or access to the public space. However, a study done at the same time by ISST<sup>46</sup> using 5 sites for survey, each representing a different cause for the outcome of female headedness revealed that for a country like India, with the diversity in culture, the association of female headedness with poverty was not accurate. In many parts of India, where men migrated for jobs in the city left behind a money order economy, women were deemed head of households, but in fact were not impoverished. In other places tradition like Alaya Santhanam in Dakshina Kannada District women heads of the household, land or property. Thus abandonment which was also a cause of female headedness was the only cause one could argue, where female headed households were poor.

#### **Four, Gendering Public Policy**

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<sup>44</sup> Devaki Jain, “Household Food Security: A Production Consumption Link”, for FAO, Rome 1983

<sup>45</sup> Amartya Sen, “Food Battles: Conflicts in access to Food Coreomandel Lecture,” New Delhi, 13 December 1982

<sup>46</sup> Devaki Jain & Mukul Mukherjee (ISST study): *Women and their Households- The relevance of Men and Macro Policies – An Indian Perspective* (1989), Paper prepared for the first ISST Study on “Indian Female Households, ILO – 1984

**The Plans:** From the very first plan 1951-56, the goals of development in India were specifically addressed to removal of poverty, unemployment and historical inequalities. Some of the virtues as well as defects in these approaches with special reference to women have been noted by Vibhuti Patel<sup>47</sup>.

For Example I quote a summarized version of her text, “The Central Social Welfare Board was set up in 1953. During the First Five Year Plan (1951-1956) to promote welfare work through voluntary organisations, charitable trusts and philanthropic agencies.” This matches with the international approach at that time that women were a social welfare subject. But curiously and somewhat unsurprisingly prior to this five plan, when in 1938, a National Planning Committee (NPC) was set up to chart the course of future planning in India, a sub-committee on women called Women’s Role in Planned Economy (WPRE), was established in 1939 to examine and make recommendations on women’s role in the planned economy.<sup>48</sup>

The report covered seven areas: civic rights, economic rights, property rights, education, marriage, family and miscellaneous issues like widowhood, caste, prostitution etc. “The Report of the WPRE is worth our notice,” says Nirmala Banerjee in a paper “if only because of its historical relevance: it shows that, even then, Indian women were by no means the icons awaiting male handouts as has been visualised by many scholars. In the final report, they did demonstrate a clear understanding of the issues at stake and an ability to put them in the framework of contemporary national and international thinking. They could also set up a network of working groups in different parts of the country in order to get region wise inputs.”

The Sub Committee insisted that the traditional vision of the man in front carving out new paths, and the woman trailing behind with the child in her arms, must be changed to “man and woman, comrades of the road, going forward **together**, the child joyously shared by both.”<sup>49</sup> **However these radical and appropriate visions and approaches were totally neglected !**

#### **Illustration four**

However neither this experience of gendering policy, nor the extraordinary knowledge generated by ground level initiatives or women studies scholarship was given its “rightful” place in the CMP or MTA or national policy making ventures of the UPA.

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<sup>47</sup> Dr. Vibhuti Patel, “*Gender in State and National Policy Documents – A case study of India*”, Paper presented at a Conference on Grassroots Participation in Governance “Reconstructing Governance: The Other Voice” on February 20-21, 2004 organised by Karnataka Women’s Information and Resource Centre in partnership with United Nations Development Programme, New Delhi and Gender Studies Unit, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore

<sup>48</sup> Ref. K.T. Shah’s Introduction, (pg. 27) of “Woman’s role in Planned Economy”. Report of the Sub-Committee, National Planning Committee series. Bombay: Vora & Co. Publishers, 1947. The chairperson of the Committee was Rani Lakshmbai Rajwade, and the committee included prominent women of that time : Sarla Devi, Vijaylakshmi Pandit, Begum Zarina Currimbhoy, Sarojini Naidu, Durgabai Joshi and Dr (Smt) Muthulakshmi Reddy.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. Introduction, p.33, emphasis added.

**CMP.** While women have been mentioned and many schemes are there, their ideas both on the design as well as implementation (not only of the WOMEN oriented schemes but the whole package,) are not taken into consideration. This is an area, ie removal of poverty, or working with the poor to enable them to get out of poverty, enabling reduction in inequality through inclusive thinking, in which the women's movement in India have been really brilliant.

Women occupy separate roles in the economy and have innovated separate or different kinds of Trade Unions with different kinds of demands than the OLD and established unions. (notably SEWA). It would have been useful to bring their experience and ideas into both the consultations with UNIONS as well as design and delivery of CMP

Women are interested in the lists of items being freed of trade barriers, (take the milk producers of Kaira); or the gum or cotton pickers of Gujarat or the tea shop keepers in Meghalaya. They have views on location of infrastructure projects – take the Airport and the SUN CITY or Casino and fun city planned in Arunachal Pradesh against the wishes of the women. Or the modernization of the Keithel Market in Imphal and similar infrastructure projects, Forest and Tourist management in Uttaranchal, Urban design and curriculum for schools of architecture in Ahmedabad, taxation policy especially sources of revenue collection in Bijapur District and so a million such examples of brilliant engagement of women, citizens in rebuilding an India that can live in peace with itself.

#### Feminisation of Work

Data on women's employment in the developing world reveals leaps forward in their absorption into the labour force over the period 1970 to 1990. Some regions like South Asia show a leap from 25 percent to 44 percent, and Latin America from 22 percent to 30 percent, while in the same regions, the male percentage declined from 88 to 78, and 85 to 84, respectively. Most of this addition is in the service sector, but also in the informal economy. The nature of the expansion in employment opportunities globally is such that women are preferred as workers in many of the fast-growing sectors of production and export.<sup>50</sup>

However research reveals that the flip side to this “absorption” is that the work is usually under the most exploitative, unprotected, underpaid schemas. A UNICEF study of five Asian countries found that often the job slots that emerge for home-based women workers are a result of the retrenchment of men from what is called the low end of the production pyramid. Informal occupations provide the livelihood (paid or otherwise) of more than 80 percent of women in low-income countries and 40 percent of those in middle-income countries; these countries combined account for 85 percent of the world's population.<sup>51</sup> Yet, it is sought and

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<sup>50</sup> Devaki Jain, "Are we knowledge Proof? Development as Waste", speech delivered at Lovraj Kumar Memorial, Lecture, New Delhi, 26 September 2003 (Reprinted in *Wastelands News*, Vol. XIX, No. 1, August-October 2003, Society for Promotion of Wastelands Development, New Delhi, pg. 19-30

<sup>51</sup> Chen, "Women and the Informal Sector: Realities, Statistics and Policies," paper presented at the Economic Policy Forum, International Center for Research on Women, Washington, D.C., 15 March 1996, as quoted in "Rural Producers: Trends, Issues and Challenges for Socio-Economic Development," in Statistics Division, Economic and Social Department and the Women and Population Division, Sustainable Development

taken by women, because of their drive to sustain families as we saw in the case of Sonagachi.

A study conducted by the World Bank in Uttar Pradesh, which, with 160 million people, is India's most populous state, reveals that a higher proportion of female workers than male workers is involved in low-paid casual work, primarily in the agriculture sector. Consequently, there has been a *feminisation* of the agricultural workforce, as the relative proportions of both female cultivators and female agricultural labourers have grown. Three-quarters of women's employment days were spent doing agricultural work, as compared to only 40 percent of men's. Women were also three times more likely than men to work as agriculture labourers--work that is backbreaking, insecure, and low status. In contrast to men, women rarely held regular jobs or jobs in the non-farm sector; these activities were left to the men. When they did obtain such employment, women were again relatively underpaid and confined to unskilled activities.<sup>52</sup>

Further explorations of various other field situations in which women find themselves point to an increasing degree of feminisation of many processes. Illegal migration is being feminised (See note 2). Abortion is being feminised (See note 1). HIV/AIDS is on its way to being feminised (See Note 3). And now certain areas of the labour force are becoming feminised. The term is used not only to point to the increasing proportion of women in various situations, including poverty and work, but also a lowering of standards in that realm of work or that space.

### **Focusing on employment:**

At the Consultative committee on gender and development called by the Planning Commission on 27 September 2004 most of the experts argued for a new approach, and a focus on employment.

First they emphasized that instead of having specific schemes for women, existing schemes need to be dismantled. Instead we have to design ways in which other sectors can be gendered. Other sectors such as infrastructure development, construction industry, the agriculture policies, the attempts for rural agro industry hubs, small scale industry, handicrafts and so on. Thus almost all the existing training programmes need to be dismantled and new programmes designed, which would enable women to engage with the growth poles. In construction one of the fastest growing sectors and highly job creating efforts must be made for women to participate and if necessary the skill to be upgraded.

Second that it was crucial to locate women's actual roles in a production and sale or marketing process. Once we locate their position, it is possible to assess whether the design

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Department, FAO, *Filling the Data Gap: Gender-Sensitive Statistics for Agricultural Development* (Rome: FAO, 1999), available online at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/X2785e/X2785e00.htm>; Mehra and Gammage, "Trends, Countertrends, and Gaps in Women's Employment"

<sup>52</sup> Valerie Kozel, and Barbara Parker 'A Profile and Diagnostic of the Poverty in Uttar Pradesh', World Bank, 2001., Paper presented at a Poverty Monitoring and Evaluation Workshop in New Delhi, hosted by the Government's Planning Commission and the World Bank, 11 January, 2002

of the programme will enhance women's roles or cut them... A recent review of the marine fishing industry and women's economic and social location in those communities revealed the extraordinary invisibility or lack of public knowledge of women's participation including their knowledge and their views,<sup>53</sup> It was heartbreaking to realize that if women had been listened to, much of the devastation of the industry, and its scope for generating sustainable livelihoods could have been avoided . In the enterprises and sectors, the role of women in a particular production needed to be identified and efforts needed to enhance it. It seemed necessary to ask questions such as - in agriculture, how does irrigation of land affect the utilization of labour? For example, it is often argued that when land is irrigated, the crop changes from a food crop to a cash crop and this affects the nutrition of women and female children.

Third was that in every infrastructure project, water and sanitation should be built in and this would directly benefit women's lives.

Fourth was to re package schemes. For example, a scheme which would package together mid day meal which can offer in any State up to 1 lakh jobs for women as cooks and carers to be integrated with a crèche for working women, the ICDS and the self help groups. All these can be made into one fund, with the idea that they are support services for poor women and this fund given to the elected PR system for them not only to expend it, but that all those in the area can hold the system accountable for the delivery. It could be a transformatory experience for poor women.

### **Employment: a first lifeline for the poor.**

While it is well known and argued that work, employment by itself is not a sufficient condition for redressing the oppression of, discrimination against, women<sup>54</sup>; that such policies are often instrumentalist, seeing women as means to tangible ends , and not as persons deserving of support systems as an end in itself, - when seen from the location of women and girls who are in extremis, faced by a NO EXIT except into sale and other punishing options, income earning work seems a life line in the first round . The surveys of sex workers as well as victims of disasters like earth quakes and communal conflicts, ( SEWAs experience as told by Ela Bhatt to author ) seem to indicate that the first need is to access income earning opportunity . It is such a drive that explains why women take on jobs which are cruel, less paid etc which is the story from most of the surveys.

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<sup>53</sup> Chandrika Sharma, "*Women of coastal fishing communities in the Asian region: An agenda for research*", Background paper prepared for the seminar on Women's livelihoods in coastal communities: Management of the Environment and Natural Resources, organized by ISST at UTC, Bangalore, June 6, 2005; Dr. Ramachandra Bhatta, "*Natural Resources Management and its implications on Gender Equity in Karnataka*", paper prepared for the seminar on Women's livelihoods in coastal communities: Management of the Environment and Natural Resources, organized by ISST at UTC, Bangalore, June 6, 2005; Nalini Nayak, "*Sharpening the interlinkages: towards feminist perspectives of livelihoods in coastal communities*", Background paper prepared for the seminar on Women's livelihoods in coastal communities: Management of the Environment and Natural Resources, organized by ISST at UTC, Bangalore, June 6, 2005

<sup>54</sup> Srilatha Batliwala and Deepa Dhanraj, 'Gender Myths that Instrumentalise Women: A View from the Indian Frontline', IDS Bulletin, Volumer 35, Number 4, October 2004, pgs 11-18

We have lessons like the experience of the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme, which, with all its warts and holes that are now being pointed out by various academics and policy makers, had not only provided a base rural labour but interestingly provided a lifeline to poor rural women. A study done by a research centre, ISST<sup>55</sup>, with the cooperation of the late Shri Page, the father of the Employment Guarantee Scheme in Maharashtra, revealed that participation by women as a proportion of the total participation of labour ranged from 60 percent to 80 percent across the various districts of Maharashtra. A further examination of who comes for the work from these poverty households revealed that it was usually the older women, not men, even though the men may also be unemployed; the men were loath to take on work which was so arduous and yet so underpaid. The late Prof Krishna Bharadwaj had affirmed this finding from studies she had conducted on famine related rural programmes.

Thus women's desperation to earn a livelihood against all odds was not only proven but the MEGS actually enabled them to find that livelihood outside of various forms of slavery. The Human Development Report for Maharashtra showed a more even Gender Development Index (GDI) i.e., disparities between men and women were less due to this wage-earning of women.

Equally important task is to create the kind of detailed plans that could be support systems to gram panchayats and other PRI institutions. To prepare plans where work would be available. In other words what is called employment planning at local level Mapping what would be sustainable in a particular area.

Thus planning these job creating projects when has both to be aware of the macro ideas as well as create the communities collectivities and organizations which would resist the macro idea.

**On “gender budgeting, “- what I would prefer to call as “*Women design fiscal policy* “or *building budgets from below.(BBB)***

The interest in what is now called gender budgeting has been translated into practice or advocacy in various ways across the world. From looking at economic spaces which are meaningful to women predominantly and how far funds are allocated to those spaces, it has taken on specific development initiatives and looked at how far these initiatives have understood the role women play in these initiatives and the benefits women might or might not have received. In other words, there is also a participatory investigation of the implementation of budgets. Have budget allocations been utilized? Have budgets intended for a specific objective reached the intended beneficiary? Has sufficient budget been provided to areas in which it is often assumed women have the largest interest, viz. social development services?

While an exercise indicated in Karnataka 2002-2004 described here has benefited from the learnings of these gender budgeting experiences, this exercise is an attempt to enable women politicians, who are plugged into an accountable elected state apparatus, viz. local self

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<sup>55</sup> Impact on women workers- Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme, a study sponsored by ILO, Geneva, December, 1979- ISST

government, to actually determine the revenue and expenditure sides of a budget, apart from tracing its final outcomes. The exercise is possible because of the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the Indian Constitution, which set up these locally elected institutions with 33.33% reservation for women and a slightly smaller percentage reserved for other traditionally excluded communities such as scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

The idea that I have been putting forward right from the very beginning of the involvement with gender budgeting by UNIFEM. That we should call it *women design fiscal policy* giving women agency and making fiscal policy something in which excluded groups like women, and their gendered experience of development, is to be notified or noticed.

Such a method can transform economic policy. Women's experience of development has many lessons to teach development, as it not only brings benefits to themselves but to the whole society, especially those placed unequally. Women's critique of development and experience of development in my view is the best school of learning for building equitable development as women's preoccupation with fighting inequality has brought the entire kaleidoscope of issues: legal, institutional theoretical, programmatic, political, social, and philosophical into developing the package. So it is an illumination which should be used on any kind of development design.

The approach would be of supporting a women's plan, rather than attempting an integration of women into an existant fiscal programme,

The work that SSF has done in Karnataka with UNIFEM funding, especially in the last 6 months has really proven that you can do it this way: namely women elected to local self government not only pulled apart the budget as designed by the traditional leaders but by participating in the debates and learning ... about their area and its needs as articulated by the ward committees i.e. the sub constituencies, neighbourhood groups, were able to actually change the budget in an official meeting and have a government order issued to accommodate their views. Elected women from different political parties joined together as women, worked out what they thought the municipality / gram panchayat should do in their area, put a tag of money on to it and had the government sanction that and also made sure that money comes into their hand i.e. **a women's committee** of elected persons in the elected council They would then implement this fund "as women want it". Thus, they in one move **emancipated themselves** from becoming a "for women, by women and to women scheme implementers simultaneously that they were just dummies who has just had to be for beneficiaries", who have to be "integrated" into the financial plan, through finding out what women should have in some particular sector scheme. **They claimed agency.**

The process took 18 months to get it this far, of constant participation mobilization information gathering analysis which was provided by the team at SSF. This is a UNIFEM funded project on which it has reached what is called final phase. The transformation has been made in just in two places one rural and one urban because it was an intense activity.

Now that India is seriously moving towards devolution of finance to local self government especially at the gram panchayat level, getting the women mobilized to be this kind of

organized voice with clear capacity to actually budget, it would be most useful and prevent women from getting marginalized as they normally do even when funds come down to the local level.

Therefore the Planning commission called a consultation “Gender Budgeting and the Union Budget 2005-06” on 6 April 2005 at New Delhi. I have already referred to the idea that was given by an official, that the valuable approach would be to turn the process upside down, i.e. get the women’s agenda on stage first and then examine what changes in funding, in law in structures are necessary to implement them ... going back to 1937, where women gave a sub plan and demanded that it be incorporated .

Such a debate, or idea, resonates what I said at the beginning , namely that women’s intervention has this dilemma, to ask for a piece of what we may see as the poisoned cake, ie the current macro policy, or to turn it around to deliver a more equity building development funded plan ??? The **BBB** exercise in Karnataka revealed clearly that women can define and design fiscal policy at the Gram Panchayat level, and a summation of their GP budgets could become the **ZP Budget** and so build it up to a state level budget, serving the needs from below and implemented through their **accountable mechanisms**.

### **Poverty converges – and women are worst hit**

A closer look at “backward” districts and regions of India would reveal what is now a very well-established connection--the connection between high maternal and infant mortality, poor water and sanitation facilities, low literacy for women, high rates of unemployment, and, most important of all, high proportion of households living in extreme poverty and high fertility. If one shaded India in terms of these "negative" indicators in increasingly dark shades of grey, as the proportions under them increase, and a circle is drawn in the very centre of India, cutting across the four BIMARU states the circle would be black. All "bad" roads lead to this black hole. I once called this configuration of states "**the black heart of Mother India,**" as it was right at the center of the map of India, and data reveals that **women are at the bottom of this black hole.**<sup>56</sup>

## **Section III**

### **Reflections on the past for the future**

What we have seen is that while knowledge has increased and been funnelled to the policy spaces, the advice of women, their leadership in directing public policy has not happened . The old method of “integrating “ through women only packages, mainly social devt packages schemes for women continues.

The quest for how to gender public policy, how to ensure that women’s lived experience, women’s intellectual and programmatic capabilities are included in development design, has not yet materialized. The recognition of both the capabilities of women as well as their

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<sup>56</sup> Devaki Jain, Enabling poverty and inequality reduction in South Asia, UNFPA Retreat, New York, 30 September – 2 October, 2002

deprivations, their special concerns apart from their special contribution was neither visible nor included into the policy making, programme designing aspects of India's development experience.

The emerging idea is that only when women actually participate, even lead a policy making effort, does it take note of "gendered values". The old story of Frene Ginvala is really the reality. Yet currently, none of the Commissions that have been appointed to give thoughtful advice on important issues like unorganised labour, like agriculture including the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council include women as members. Knowing that women are the major proportion of unorganized labour, and there are more women who have worked on informal economy, trade unionism, garment workers and so on. It was surprising that the Commission on unorganized labour did not have a majority of women members and the same would go for the Commission on Farmers, which should have been called farmwomen.

Putting a woman or a dalit on every technical advisory policy making, information gathering body, may look cosmetic, but in my recent book that I was moved to find that when groups that have been excluded from equality and power, whether they are rich or poor, Brahmin or dalit, are included in debates, they do bring that concern of their identity as well as extraordinarily important knowledge of the "Other" into the outcome.

It is not only advocacy for themselves that women have made, but it is advocacy for the knowledge they have generated by being women with the kind of roles they play, both traditional and non traditional. It is an amazing flow of practical constructive knowledge, especially when it comes to landing economic and social justice through democratic processes.

Ela Bhatt is an example of that kind of point I am making that if she is present, it makes a difference. She in turn had her ears to the ground and listened to the poor women of Ahmedabad. And there are 100s if not thousands of Ela Bhatt's scattered across this country... not Amartya Sen's missing millions but perhaps the one million women in the PRIs in India !

I was disappointed when I saw that the P M 's Economic Advisory Council had no women in it. There are many professional women economists who may not openly speak about women, but who know about women's experience of development, of finance etc. instead of including one woman in the Planning Commission, two or three women could have been included each representing different skills – one scientist, one economist, one social activist – then they become something more than a symbolic woman's face. The change in society's perception of women's values will come when they see more of them leading intellectual areas and in all kinds of leadership. Something happens to masses of women when they see a woman in power and leadership,

**A major fault line that runs through narrations of history and their knowledge base--whether it is political, economic, or social history, is the failure to take note of, to understand and respect and absorb, women's ideational and intellectual skills and**

**outputs in the area of theoretical and analytical knowledge. While some of the values emerging from the understanding of poverty, inequality, discrimination, conflict resolution, deepening participation, method, politics that this interaction or partnership generated has been applied or followed on belatedly, recognition of the intellectual and leadership powers of women has remained in the ghettos. The *minds of men* have not changed.**

In the current global context of increasing disparities, dreadful pandemics such as AIDS and the widespread recognition of the scourges of persistent hunger and unemployment all seem to converge in women's location in poverty. It seems crucial to make a quantum leap in ideation to fulfill women's aspirations and struggles for justice. Thus, the argument of this paper is to suggest that new insights into how to redress this unacceptable situation has to come from women. The revelatory aspect of this story can be summarized in the importance of space not only in funds but at the level of the intellect , for the excluded to claim their rights .

Therefore the mission now has to be to think how to use the at least of knowledge and self-strength to really move forward. In my reflections on the journey of the last 20 years especially, what has been clear is that we did not come out with a treatise., a theoretically stand alone development model which satisfies the external world changes and yet our quest . We did some of it 20 years ago, at Nairobi, as for example the framework developed and presented by DAWN, the third world network <sup>57</sup> But that is what is needed now and it can be done if women put their minds together. Women's brilliant struggles, need to be treated as a BODY of knowledge, chiseled into **theory**, into an intellectual challenge to what "is" i.e. the currently dominant ideas for national and international advancement. The importance of an **intellectual theoretical construct** out of the ground experience, which can claim **space** in the world of theoretical discourse, cannot be minimized. A new Das Kapital or Wealth of Nations, is the only bomb that can explode the patriarchal mind set and exclusion of the real agency of women in public policy.

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<sup>57</sup> The Bangalore Report – A Process for Nairobi at Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi, 1984

## Note 1

### Infantile Sex Ratio

We start with the startling information from the Registrar General on the drop in the infantile sex ratio between 1991 and 2001. It is noticed that there is not only an increase in the killing of the female foetus in the traditional killing fields, namely Punjab, Haryana and Salem, but that other supposedly more "equal " societies are adopting this practice. I call it the *bloodstained nails of Mother India*, clawing away at the wombs and dripping blood down to Southwest India. (See maps where the colour red describes areas where the infantile sex ratio drops by more than 50 points.)

Further analysis of this data across class suggests that it is not poverty driven; Haryana and Punjab, where it is intensely prevalent, are relatively better-off States relative to the BIMARU (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh) States. Interestingly, the idea has not caught up as much in these states which have the lowest rank in any other set of indicators of progress, such as literacy, infant and maternal mortality, percentage of persons below poverty line, percentage unemployed. Nor is the killing related to proclivity to any religion or caste. Analysis across religions shows that the highest prevalence is amongst the Jains, followed by Sikhs, but that all others Muslims and the SCs are part of this prejudice. This sex-selective abortion of the female homogenizes women as the target for removal: a clear identity.

## Note 2

### Trafficking in Women

We then move to another area where again none of the usual classifications--whether ideological or social--operate. This is the case of trafficking in women, young girls, or girl children.

A 2003/2004 report on trafficking in women and children prepared by the Institute of Social Sciences in collaboration with the National Human Rights Commission and the UNIFEM interviewed 4,006 persons involved in trafficking. The study presents the following findings under the rubric Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

- 68 percent of the victims were lured by promises of jobs and 16.8 percent by promises of marriage and 70 percent of the victims were from deprived sections of society.
- 198 brothels had 615 girls who were 17-18 years of age, 82 brothels had 245 girls who were less than 16 years of age and the highest demand is for virgins.
- At the time of interviews, 860 children were being exploited in the brothels.

Children make the most money for their exploiters in this profitable business. 44.3 percent of those in brothels started their life there when they were less than 18 years, 22.9 percent when less than 16 years, and 60.6 percent were married as children!

Here is another way of looking at Amartya Sen's "missing women": An average of 22,480 women and 44,476 children are reported missing in India every year, out of which 5,452 women and 11,008 children continue to remain untraced. It is suggested that these are the *people* who are trafficked, as they are sucked into untraceable brothels.

The 2004 UN "World Survey on the Role of Women in Development" says:

"The number of international migrants has risen to about 175 million in 2000, or 2.9 per cent of the world's population, from about 75 million, or 2.5 per cent of the world's population, in 1960. The proportion of women migrants during the same period rose to 49 per cent, from 46.6 per cent. . . . Women may believe that they have legitimate jobs in the new country, only to find that they have been trapped into prostitution, sweatshop work or what are considered other contemporary forms of slavery. The survey notes that "the trafficking of people for prostitution and forced labour is one of the fastest-growing areas of international criminal activity and one that is of increasing concern to the international community."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> 'International Migration May Empower Women By Providing New Roles, UN Says', UN Weekly Newsletter, Volume 59, Number 51, 18-24 December 2004, United Nations Information Centre, New Delhi, pg. 2

Like the practice of aborting female fetuses, trafficking in women cuts across caste and religion, as surveys of sex workers show, for example in Sona Gachi in Kolkata.

### **Note 3**

#### **HIV/AIDS**

Another area where women are the citizen group that has suffered disproportionately is as contractors of HIV/AIDS. The research of Madhu Bala Nath, former advisor to UNIFEM on HIV/AIDS, helps us see the picture through the lens of gender. In 2000, 36.1m people were living with HIV/AIDS. 16.4m were women and 18.3m were men. Yet more women than men died of the disease that year--9m women as against 8.5m men. The stark reality is that women are finding it harder to survive the onslaught of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.<sup>59</sup>

At the turn of the century, 55 percent of all the people living with HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa were women, and the global prevalence profile at that time recorded that women formed 47 percent of the people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHAs).

The disease hits female children who are sex workers especially hard. Estimates of the number of child prostitutes in Thailand range from an optimistic 100,000 to over 800,000. Fifty to eighty percent of these children, it is estimated, are already infected with HIV. Other evidence suggests that the epidemic is contributing to a downward trend in the age of marriage for young women as men seek younger wives to protect themselves from HIV infection both because virgins cannot already be infected and the myth that penetrating a virgin can "clean" out aids infection. Families seek the economic protection of marrying off their daughters to economically stable men. This phenomenon has far-reaching consequences in terms of access to education by young girls, diminished access to productive resource, and poor reproductive health.

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<sup>59</sup> Looking at HIV/AIDS and Global Governance from the eyes of women of the Third World, A note by Madhu Bala Nath, former Adviser to UNIFEM on HIV/AIDS, 2002

**Women's Right to Development: A Policy Framework - Government of Karnataka**

The report shall consist of the following sections:

11. Preamble

See the Draft Preamble already available

12. The document is divided into seven sections on Right to Life, Health, Livelihood, Education, Dignity, Representation and Information. Each of these sections will be presented in the following framework;

- a. Situational analysis based on existing data.
- b. Identification of road blocks
- c. Bridging the gaps, suggesting innovative structures, organizations, legislations etc.

13. Each of the issue raised in the above seven sections will be presented in the following format.

- i. Issue
- ii. Existing Scheme or legislation
- iii. Agency/organization/ structure
- iv. Resources allocated
- v. Improving implementation of existing scheme or legislation
- vi. New legislation or scheme proposed
- vii. Agency/organization/structure
- viii. Resources needed (human/financial etc)

11. The third part of the report will deal with how macro economic policies affect women. Each section mentioned in Para 2 above will deal with the policies of the particular issue. The linkages between these and the broad overview will be delineated in this section. It will also be linked to international debates on gender and development.

This part of the report will also deal with the changes required in financing development, planning, training methodologies, gender audit, evaluation and follow up of policy interventions for women. This section will also include strategy for inter agency coordination, institutional mechanisms, administrative structures etc. Also included would be the implications for gender sensitive data systems, qualitative and quantitative indicators etc.

## **5. RIGHT TO LIFE**

### **Issues**

11. Female Infanticide
12. Foeticide
13. Child Marriage
14. Violence against women - Physical  
- Mental
15. Quality of life - access to amenities, etc.
16. Legislations inimical to women - proactive/preventive

### **Data Needed:**

Sex Ratio, MMR, IMR, Morbidity, Female Infanticide/Foeticide, crimes against women, graphs, and legislations inimical to women

### **Sources:**

HDR, South Asian HDR, NFHS recent surveys, NIAS, Pramila Nesargi's Report, NAVO (Ruth Manorama), Vimochana, Public Hearing, Vanita Sahayavani

## **6. RIGHT TO HEALTH:**

### **Issues:**

17. Women's Health Status
18. Reproductive Rights
19. Life cycle approach to women's health
20. Nutrition
21. Food Security - Agricultural Policy
22. Occupational Health Hazards
23. Access to Safe Drinking Water
24. Chulhas/drudgery reduction

### **Sources/Data:**

HDR, Health Task Force Report, Education Task Force Report, Thelma's Paper, NNMB Surveys, FPAI, CHC (Distr.level preparation for PHA), PHA booklets on Health and Globalisation, Agricultural Policy, RDPR data on water and biogas

## **7. RIGHT TO LIVELIHOOD**

### **Issues:**

25. Women and Work
26. Assets - Land, house, cattle, etc. - Legislations
27. Access to Credit - Ind and Group  
(SHG's - Schemes)
28. Economic Independence - Employment Income Generation
29. Control over what she earns
30. Conducive working conditions
  - a. Formal - Sexual harassment, creches, hostels, toilets, etc. - Flexi hours night shift
31. Informal Economy
32. Recognition as workers
33. Access to social securities
34. Linkages
35. Contract labour laws
36. Security at workplace - street vending/market place

### **Sources:**

ILO, Convention for Home based workers (DJ) Social Security Association of India, (DJ) NLSUI, Janodaya, Women's Voice, Women across occu (oce. Classifieds-Ref.Ahalya Bhat), Rural Artisan Survey, Pay Commission, Reco. For women, Link this argument to Home based workers Rights – Renana.

## **8. RIGHT TO EDUCATION**

### **Issues:**

- Enrolment
  - Drop Out Rate
  - Child Labour
  - Access to Schools - distances to school
  - Hostels
  - Early marriage/creches
  - Vocational & profession & Higher Education & IT
- Cross-link to occupational clustering  
“To allow women to work in night (recent move in Karnataka for women in IT)

### **Sources:**

Education Task Force report, HDR, CACL reports, NLSIU, MP Right to Education report (DJ), EPW article by LC Jain on ‘Unbundling the State’

## **9. RIGHT TO DIGNITY**

### **Issues:**

37. Violence against women
38. Child Marriages
39. Dowry System
40. Devadasis/prostitutes/child
41. Widow re-marriage
42. Nude worship
43. Marital issues - Divorce  
- Maintenance
44. Perpetration of indignities on women – and DJ’s flow chart. (Revathi)
- 45.

### **Sources:**

Pramila Nesargi’s report, Krishna Kumar’s paper on Pedagogy for “Unfixing” stereotypes of caste and gender. (DJ)

**Ideas discussed:** New legislation for Social Justice committee of Panchayats, State Commission of Women with district level branches, Think Tank or Advisory Committee comprising EWRs, defining SCWs powers, educational response to violence against women, formal and informal education, text book and curricula changes, media portrayal -?, literacy programs

## **10. Right to Representation:**

### **Issues:**

In political spaces  
Workplace, factory, offices  
Decision making bodies  
Parastatals  
Policy making at all levels

### **Sources:**

HDR, RDPR, CP Sujaya and DJs study, ISEC study,

## **11. Right to Information:**

To look at Karnataka Right to Information Act, and critique it from women’s point of view. Perhaps Madhyam may be asked to us (to decide)

Information – from women’s point of view.

12. The concluding section of the report shall include the following  
How the implementation of the above policy framework will lead to the strengthening of women’s political constituency, organizations, women as stake holders, political and social empowerment.