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GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT IN KARNATAKA

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To be or not to be:

Problems in locating women in public policy

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This paper discusses some of the problems women face in gendering public policy. It suggests that the impediments faced lie largely in the nature of women's location in the social landscape. It also suggests that despite considerable progress in the general understanding of this social landscape we now have, and despite women lobbyists' efforts at skillful strategies for a more responsive public policy, the value of these efforts have not been sufficiently recognized by policy makers. Nor have they made significant dent on them. One may wonder whether this failure is due to our inadequate tools to enforce our voices. Knowledge is not enough. The paper elaborates on how women's collective identity can be forceful politically when backed by knowledge and gives examples of this from Karnataka. New developments in decentralisation of governance, has opened possibilities for women's agency at local level. Paradoxically, developments at global level have the possibility of undermining this process. We can only therefore confront this not by integrating into the existing development paradigm and attempting small changes at local level but by evolving a different development paradigm that will ensure justice for the majority of the poor and women.

Women face three problems in incorporating their concerns in public policy. Firstly, how can we have "woman" as an exclusive category given the heterogeneity among women. Women, belong to all the classes, castes religions, political ideologies, and cultures in society. Thus to project an identity of 'woman' as defined by feminine experience to represent a collective point of view or opinion, is a challenge. Yet a case can and has been made for taking 'woman' as a specific category(as an imaginary) on the basis of the fact across these conventional divides various forms of discrimination converge. Indeed it was this recognition, namely, the experience of discrimination against women across all social groups that led the pioneers on women's rights, the founding mothers of the UN's conventions to craft the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The universality of discrimination against women gives them an identity across differences. But discrimination alone cannot overcome the other problems of gendering mentioned below.¹

¹ C. Morrisson, J P Jutting, 'Women's Discrimination in Developing Countries: A New Data Set for Better Policies', World Development, Vol. 33, No. 7, July 2005, pg 1065-1081

The second question arises from the flawed nature of inherited knowledge. Women Studies has demonstrated how knowledge of society and knowledge about women are constructed by patriarchal biases- that all knowledge is gendered.² A very typical example relates to women's work. What kind of work is called work, how work is valued, the measures used determine the value of their work are all determined by the perception of women's work by society, official agencies, and men. As a result, women's work is under counted, under estimated and often is invisible. There are dichotomies such as public and private space³ and hierarchies⁴ embedded in language and practice. For example, the large space occupied by the majority of women workers is called "informal" implying its secondary status to the so called formal sector. The non monetized sector is either accorded a lower value or no value compared to the monetised.⁵ – an approach totally invalid for a largely subsistence economy where the non monetised sector is substantial. Thus if a policy arises out of such inherited "flawed" knowledge, women advocates would not want to participate in it. They would not like to engender it. They would like to deconstruct it or challenge it or reject it.

Thus integrating into an existing framework has problems. If the formulation of public policy, that arise out of the accepted theories and frameworks and out of given data and analysis are unacceptable to say a group, like women, or dalits⁶ then their integrating into that set up, sitting at committees or negotiating tables is surrender. In so far as we start from a premise that is inaccurate and flawed, it can lead to undesirable results. But this staying away, also has its negative effects, i.e. exclusion. This is one of the dilemmas. In the language of the feminists this is often posed as: "do we want a piece of the poisoned cake⁷?" or another way of raising the same question, "do we want to swim in the polluted stream?" Hence ideas like integrating, gendering, mainstreaming, used now in current discussions, for inclusion of women in policy making efforts do not achieve desired results.

The third problem arises out of women's unhappiness over constructing "boxes", to contain phenomena within strict boundaries. To women, such boundaries are invalid especially where boundaries are fluid. They do not easily accept attempts at imputing a false identity and deriving judgements on that basis. If one defines the boundary of

² Devaki Jain, Women's Participation in the History of Ideas: The Importance of Reconstructing Knowledge for National Institute for Advanced Studies, INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE, Feb 6th, 2004, Bangalore; Devaki Jain, Power Through the Looking Glass of Feminism. Paper Presented in Symposium on Gender of Power University of Leiden, Netherlands 1986.

³ Devaki Jain, PRI impact on private structure (Domestic sphere) How Important is the private public dichotomy. The Case of the EWRS, Seminar Women in Panchayat Raj (27-28 April 2000, New Delhi)

⁴ Devaki Jain, Valuing women- signals from the ground, Opening Session For the University of Maryland, Broad theme: Cultural diversity and universal norms, June 1st 2001

⁵ Goldschmidt-Clermont, Luisella. Unpaid Work in the Household: A Review of Economic Evaluation Methods. Geneva: ILO, 1981

⁶ Gopal Guru. How Egalitarian Are the Social Sciences in India?, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXXVII No. 51 December 14, 2002

⁷ Devaki Jain, "The Role of Peoples Movement in Economics and Social Transformation", paper presented at the Opening Thematic Plenary for "Economic and Social Development", at 1999 Seoul International Conference of NGOs, "The Role of NGOs in the 21st Century: Inspire, Empower, Act", (October 10-16, 1999 Seoul, Korea)

identity as women's ways of doing things it is rejected as "essentialism". If one suggests that waged work for women empowers them it is called "instrumentalism". There is a tendency, amongst the women advocates themselves to question every notion or concept which attempts an arrival at a boundary for identity fixing. I call this the *nethi nethi syndrome*, borrowing from the Upanishads. It is definition by negation.⁸

But such an over critical viewing of identity that negates any bounding, impedes the participation of women in policy as a political presence drawn from a collective identity. An identity tag, (based on some markings, bodily or through the experience of subordination and exclusion), is crucial for claiming rights and special attention.⁹ Such a clear identity tag, which is more easily available to say dalits, or to "blacks" in Africa or other white nations, is difficult to forge for the woman- identity due to her presence in all these other categories with all their separate politics. Gendering public policy is intimately related to our answers to these questions.

In a book I have just completed called "**Women, Development, and the UN - A Sixty-Year Quest for Equality and Justice**,"¹⁰ I have reviewed the historical struggle of women to be understood and included and given space and citizenship on an equal basis in the international arena of justice. I found that whenever women did achieve some "success" by breaking through the male bastions of knowledge and power, it was through strategizing on collective identity as woman, as well as by inclusion of even one woman in a drafting committee. I call this strategizing space a *place of one's own*¹¹ or *the women's tent*¹². While *the place of one's own* is needed to develop self-confidence, to face the bigger world, it also made the "outside" see the "tent", as a separate entity. This perception perpetuates the *Women for women by women to women syndrome*, a syndrome which is excluding women not only from recasting and reordering development, but also denying the course of development to reflect the lived experience of women. Policy issues are not only about women's issues. Women need a say in all issues as co partners in the development of society. Thus *the place of ones own* can be a power house or a ghetto, or both.

The 60-year review referred to above does point to some useful directions for women's participation in social change. First, there is value and usefulness in bonding across differences on the identity of woman, and strategizing in meaningful ways for inclusion in public affairs. Hence an organized voice represented by the women's tent, is a crucial brick in this effort. Such an inclusion is necessary for instance, if we have to stem militarisation. Then women's tent can also be a peace tent.

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⁹ Devaki Jain, Globalism and Localism: Negotiating Feminist Space, Rethinking Gender, Democracy And Development: Is Decentralisation A Tool For Local Ownership Of An Effective Political Voice?, Ferrara University and Modena University, 20-22 May 2002, Italy

¹⁰ 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 or book can be ordered from IUP by email: iupress@indiana.edu)

¹¹ Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own_ (Granada, 1977 Published: 1929)

¹² In many international conferences women organized a separate 'tent' where many activities were carried out- with an autonomy not available in the general conference schedules.

Secondly we need knowledge that the delineates concealed details regarding differences within households and families, between the sexes, and in the various processes of reproduction, production, exchange. We may call this mapping the social and economic location of women in the above landscapes. Knowing can be a first step

Thirdly power, claimed through some semblance of a collective identity, a USP [?] or flag. There has been much discussion on this issue,¹³ of building a maintainable unity, a united stand. This continues to be a quest. However it is suggested here that it is increasingly being argued that participation in leadership, in formal politics,¹⁴ can provide the turning point. Bonding across difference on the identity of woman, and strategizing for inclusion as a collective voice can redress all aspects of gender derived discrimination: whether it is the demeaning gaze, the mind set; the stereotypical perceptions of women's roles and capabilities, or the embedded discriminatory practices – all these are linked elements of gender relations. The recent conference in New York called Beijing +10¹⁵ revealed again the continuing disjunction between the reality on the ground and the sense of progress created by the “visibility”¹⁶ level, achieved by gendered analysis.

This disjunction can be seen in two opposite trajectories relating to women and development. 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 their 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?

Two examples from Karnataka of gendering policy will be discussed to illustrate these problems- the problem of differences between women, need not be a hindrance; one can

¹³ Longino, Helen E. (1993), 'Feminist Standpoint theory and the Problems of Knowledge', *SIGNS* Autumn vol. 19 no. 1, 201-212

¹⁴ UN Economic and Social Council, 2000, Assessment of the Implementation of the System-Wide Medium-Term Plan for the Advancement of Women 1996-2001; Report of the Secretary-General, Commission on the Status of Women, Forty-fourth session, 28 February – 2 March 2000; Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995; Including the Agenda, the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action (Extract), in *The United Nations and the Advancement of Women*, 649-735

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

¹⁶ Devaki Jain, “Spaces and Hopes”, *The Hindu*, April 3, 2005

address the common experience of discrimination and inequality by women as a group. We can build adequate knowledge of the social embeddedness of gender roles then intervene in policy by studying the impact of gender insensitive formulations and identifying areas where interventions are possible.

The first is drawn from an attempt made in **Karnataka** to *Integrate Women's Interest into a State Five Year Plan (1983)*¹⁷.

Before we discuss the actual study it is pertinent to recall the tremendous advances made in understanding women's work. Without this background knowledge one would not have been able to evaluate any policy or program.

The field of women's work became one of the major research domains both nationally and internationally. It was one of the most creative pursuits, influencing international organizations like the ILO. This focus helped to underline the ground realities in the developing countries. Women's movement then began to address the core issue of survival security for the principal defender of the family, namely the woman. This generated discussion on issues such as measurement and inclusion of invisible unpaid work of rural women work, discrimination in wages, job security and revaluing what was called the "informal" sector.

This new research about women as workers entered the development discourse. They looked at practices of national data collecting agencies that list women engaged in domestic work as unemployed. Concern and analysis about unequal wages, discrimination of women in the workplace, women's double burden of work for wages and work at home, the role that the tasks women perform to make possible other members' involvement in marketable production or service, 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 study was initiated in the 80's by ISST partly, because of the impetus of the overall 'ideology' that was developed in international fora, of bringing women into development; and partly due to our interest in finding ways to enable women move out of poverty. It should be recalled that it was around nineteen seventies and nineteen eighties that women's studies and women's advocacy were emerging as major players in the struggle for women's equality. There was now a recognition that the "household" needed to be broken open – as it was not as believed, a "benign" shelter for all its inhabitants.¹⁸

Individuals within households had highly disparate locations in power, apart from inequalities in occupations, health and education. This disparity amongst individuals

¹⁷ "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.

¹⁸ *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

seemed to be more enlarged the lower one went down in the asset/ income scale. Inspired by the international efforts at documenting 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 that the household was not benign and definitely not a level playing field for men and women. In the poor households women had a different source of income from men. The study came up with the idea that women within poverty household should be independently identified and reached out to with anti poverty programs such as IRDP. We found setting a target for women within such programs was flawed on many counts, not the least by inappropriate development offers and 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 Development¹⁹. 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 limiting contraception to more advanced health care.²⁰

Planned development appeared, as it does even now, as blind rubber stamping of schemes. An even more significant lesson was, 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.** It transpires **that method** adopted for stimulating development was critical, even superseded the task of gendering or integrating women into development.

The second is a project undertaken in Karnataka by the World Bank²¹ to improve the quality of the cocoon in the sericulture industry. The project did not use the available knowledge about women's work.

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. They were seen as not engaged in the basic chain of production and the sale of cocoons. An actual investigation that sought to break down 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 but looked after the trays in which the silk worms

¹⁹ District Level Planning for Social Development, Devaki Jain, Chairperson of Sub Committee, Karnataka State Planning Board (1994), Government of Karnataka

²⁰ Report from Dakshina Kannada by Shalini Rajaneesh, IAS

²¹ 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

were nursed or nurtured. The silk worms are usually kept in trays called chandrikes 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 and the unrelenting labour of cocoon rearing.

Despite their being the main rearers of worms, the women were not at all brought into the project. They were not given the training on better rearing on what were the special characteristics of feeding and health for the new worms that were introduced; they did not receive information about the new fodder; not shown how to upgrade the quality of the yarn they spent time on. Thus women's contribution to the process of silk manufacture was unrecognized with consequences for policy. It appears that the old Ester Boserup²² story of the nineteen seventies where she bemoans the non recognition of women as farmers continues.²³

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. All the relevant agencies were around the table and the meeting was to show that there needs to be greater inclusion of women as workers in the sericulture development programmes. It was found that this classical invisibility of women workers, especially when the productive work is within the home had deprived them of being engaged in the training for improved rearing practices as well as marketing

There was no hostel accommodation for women at the Sericulture Training Institute, a state government institution. 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 concerns of women in the sericulture project.

A similar experience is recorded of the matching study that ISST took up with the Tasar²⁴ industry in Maharashtra. Again women were major workers but unrecognized and nothing that was done. The report funded by the Swiss development corporation tried to change this perception but it had no impact. The studies undertaken by Institute of Social

²² Boserup, Ester. *My Professional Life and Publications 1929-1998*. Copenhagen Press, 1999.

Oral communication: Maithreyi Krishnaraj's study of Women in Agriculture- a millennium study for the government of India, which she had titled "women farmers of India" on publication was retitled 'women in agriculture' by the publisher in 2004!

²³ 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

²⁴ Inter-state Tasar Project, Report on a field survey Chandrapur District of Maharashtra, Institute of Social Studies Trust, 1982

Studies Trust (ISST) in various parts of India, and in Karnataka.²⁵ presented information on women's productive roles, and argued that the projects were losing out on success by not recognising this. While this resulted in gendered analysis, it did not change the project

Some new opportunities are emerging in India, and more strongly in Karnataka. These may help us incorporate the lessons learnt from history, mentioned earlier in this essay. To reiterate: we had talked of i) the usefulness and value of bonding across difference on the identity of woman, and strategizing for inclusion ii) the need for knowledge about women's various productive and other roles and their location within household, families and community .iii) power claimed through a collective identity

An aspect of the Karnataka landscape of governance and development, which offers some niches, some conduits for affirming these views is the long standing, and politically well supported decentralized management of development, especially the economic and social justice agendas.

For example as far back as in 1994-95, Karnataka's State Planning Board (earlier called Economic Planning Council (EPC)). set up two subgroups in 1994, one for **District Level Planning for Employment**, and other for **District Level Planning for Social Development**. The main task of the sub group was to provide effective social and economic security to the poor, improve the quality of administering these services. , all at the district and sub district level of accountability .Interestingly, in 2005, the Planning Commission has set up an Expert Group, to draw up guidelines for the States on what they call grassroot planning for development, and the thrust is to reduce if not efface the state dictated schemes, the pre packaged development bundles that are handed out, and leave planning to local communities to design the use of untied funds.

The sub group working with secretaries to government of each sector and some CEOs or Chief Secretaries of Districts as they were called at the time, was able to rationalize the 75 schemes into 15 bundles. And suggested that instead of having 15 schemes coming out of 15 departments even these could be bundled into a Social Development Service, as **one sector** and the fund could be used for ***“Provisioning of social development services to the poor”***. **with** the functionaries attached to the service coming under one nomenclature called **social development services providers**. Thus the departmental lines would be liquefied, and the multiple schemes, would be consolidated without losing the overall intention.

One of the suggestions made by the sub group was that there should be social mapping of the state, to show variations in human development indices between districts in order to identify gaps in performance and to spot inter-district variations, was not implemented. However this compliance came later. During the 1995 –97 Karnataka developed a Human Development report that put together district level indicators and indices (Human Development in Karnataka 1999, Planning Department, Government of Karnataka, 1999) – a first in State Level Human Development Reports in India.

²⁵ Impact of Sericulture pilot project in Karnataka- An Evaluation, ISST, 1989

In neither of the illustrations from Karnataka, given above was this opportunity for intervention yielded a clear ‘tool’ to tell us what to do and how to intervene. However there is now, as we write this article an opportunity to engage with political power due to the clearer, more firm legally and politically ordained devolution of economic planning power and funds to the locally elected bodies, in Karnataka.

Significant changes have been brought about in the State fiscal 2005-06 (embodied in the State Budget). State sector schemes pertaining to the 29 subjects in schedule of XI of the 73rd amendment, have been merged in the district sector schemes to be implemented by the panchayat institutions. From 1.4.2005 about Rs. 3500 crore have been thus devolved to panchayat institutions at grama, taluka and zilla levels. The Departments have been asked to amend and issue afresh all government orders, notifications, circulars etc. in accordance with these charges.

Most importantly some of the negative features in administration have also been removed. Departments are directed not to establish parallel bodies which were scuttling devolution intended by the 73rd Amendment. Existing parallel bodies are to be now reconstituted under the chairmanship of the adhyaksha of the Zilla Parishad. Besides, World Bank or external aided projects are to be implemented through PRIs only.

Right from the beginning when the Ramakrishna Hegde Government in Karnataka, in collaboration with Nazeer Saab,[?full name] the Minister for Rural Development brought in legislation not only to set up elected local councils but also reservation for women. Women elected to Councils have been invited to meetings held by women’s organizations and attempts are made to give them a collective identity and give them a sense of knowledge based confidence. As the panchayat raj movement grew and broadened with the introduction of the 73rd and 74th amendments by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, the SS Foundation, for example, got even more deeply engaged in strengthening those women who had been elected to serve on these councils.

One of the first initiatives that they took was to bring them under one organisation namely “An Association of Elected Women Representatives”. While this may look baffling since the representatives come from different parties, in Karnataka it was found that women were willing to join an association of themselves across party lines. They seemed to need that collective strength in order to generate the self confidence to bring voice into the meeting. The women’s collectives and collectivities also have an additional glint, namely they are united across class, where poor and non poor women engage in issues which impact women like domestic violence or water, or reproductive health, especially in urban slums and rural areas.

Using the collectives especially at the level of gram panchayats, the Foundation then built three other programmes on these groups – The Foundation then initiated similar projects in three of the other southern states, Kerala, Andhra and Tamil Nadu and is now co-ordinating a net work of agencies in these four states all of which are engaged in creating collectivities of these elected women and enabling them to strengthen their technical skills as well as their political presence in the local self government institutions.

Rather than “train” them they have been formed into groups and these groups engage with themselves to create their own space, debate among themselves and devise programmes instead of being in mixed councils. Women’s capability for collective action, and their women’s capability to form collectivities are transforming many programmes, processes and outcomes.

Currently, many women’s organizations are partnering with State governments, to strengthen the capability of women elected to these Local Self Government’s to participate if not lead development in their areas. For example, Singamma Sreenivasan Foundation has made a novel endeavor, to enable women (EWRs) to construct budgets, such that the interest of women and other subordinated groups is safeguarded. It is not just a programme to raise awareness about budget amongst local women politicians but to enable women to direct the economy from a space available to them. This helps them to understand, participate and transform local budgets.

The design of the effective participation has been enabled by collaboration with Janaagraha - an urban NGO which uses three cornered stakeholders meeting - namely the civil servant who is the commissioner of the municipality, the ward committee and the elected corporators to have a transparent process of understanding and influencing revenue collection and expenditures and monitoring outcomes. This method has been tried in two municipalities – Mysore and Tumkur. The municipalities have changed their budget allocations as a result of collective lobbying by the elected women corporators across party lines. Similar experience has been found in two other pockets of Karnataka – Bijapur and Bellary

Another project that they were “exposed to, was to use their kitchen gardens for growing medicinal plants. This has now caught the imagination of the gram panchayats and at least four districts will be engaged in a movement for environment security, health security and livelihood security through the growing of medicinal plants.

The outcome of these exercises is that in the Mysore City Corporation: women’s issues were not only included, but allocations to certain women’s schemes were increased in the Budget 2005-06.

To day, the situation and character of the various actors in governance have shifted quite dramatically and in significant ways. The State is receding from its earlier role as being responsible to the citizens for their well being especially provisioning of basic securities. Civil society including the women’s movement is becoming stronger on the one hand but also paradoxically more fragmented. International configuration of power is changing, with the UN’s influence receding and the other world organisations like World Bank and other multilaterals like the WTO occupying centre stage. The market economy, signified by the corporates are playing a larger role in national and international governance than before, including the provisioning of public goods. There is also a return to conservative politics, and various forms of fundamentalism, across the globe.

Simultaneously there are the usual paradoxes in women's domain. There is an increase in the political participation of women in governance, especially at the local level. There is an increase in the capabilities and power of the women's movement, in knowledge and organizational capacities in informal economy as workers and traders. and to contest violence against women. There is a shift in the nature of employment opportunities. There is increasing absorption of female labour into the new opportunities for earning income like in export processing and simultaneously a decline in the opportunities for men. This arises because of the nature of the growth poles and the nature of the organisation of production and trade. Women are on the move, selling either their bodies or their time into earning income for their families. . The UN report on women and development for the year 2004²⁶ shows how the largest group or proportion of workers uncovered by any protection are women, and women migrants. The demand for women as workers in the flesh trade has made the flow of women across borders jump by leaps and bounds. The value of the flesh trade is now greater than the value of the trade in narcotics

At the very beginning, women's quest was for equality or for overpowering, if not efface 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 non-recognition of women's value as citizens, workers and providers. Their contribution to society is 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

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 .to a corresponding extent. The old method of "integrating " through women only packages, mainly social development package schemes for women continues.

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. Decentralisation with a quota of 1/3 seats of women has opened a new gateway in India and especially in Karnataka. But it is not enough.

The first need is to reconsider the paradigm of development itself, the identification of the engines of growth. Instead of seeing the poor as a target group who need special ladders within a framework of economic development, enabling them to become economic and political agents could itself become the engine of growth. Thus, from a "trickle down," or social safety net

²⁶ Department of Economic and Social Affairs, DAW, 2004 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development – Women and International Migration, UN, New York, 2005.

approach, it would be useful to look at what can be called the "bubbling up" theory of growth. This alternative theory argues that putting incomes and political power in the hands of the poor could generate the demand and the voice that would direct development. The purchasing power and the choices of the poor could direct the economy to a pro-poor or poverty-reducing economy. The review of the past seems to suggest some dramatic reversal of the current theories of where the engine of growth lies if the interest is in poverty eradication.²⁷

Mahatma Gandhi in fact had designed such a theory and a proposal for its practice. To some extent it could even be said that such a theory is close to, though not the same as, Keynes's theory of stimulating an economy by generating effective demand. Here the further detailing is, Whose effective demand? Whose purchasing power? Gandhi's talisman, his test for action, was this: "Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test: Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man/woman whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him."²⁸

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 upon belatedly, recognition of the intellectual and leadership powers of women has remained in the ghettos. The *minds of men* have not changed.

And for that to happen, it seems that it is necessary to recast the development framework, to come out with a treatise, a theoretically stand alone development model which satisfies the external world changes and yet women's quest. The movement did some of this twenty years ago, at Nairobi, through DAWN, the third world network²⁹. But another such framework 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.

²⁷ Devaki Jain, "Enabling Reduction of Poverty and Inequality in South Asia," in Population and Poverty: Achieving Equity, Equality and Sustainability (New York: UNFPA, 2003), 99-100.

²⁸ Devaki Jain, Minds, Bodies and Exemplars: Reflections at Beijing and Beyond (New Delhi: British Council, 1996), 8.

²⁹ The Bangalore Report – A Process for Nairobi at Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi, 1984

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