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FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS:

GENDER AND THE CAPITALIST WORLD-ECONOMY;

A CASE STUDY ON INDIA

by

Andrea Lynn Leppart

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ABSTRACT

The evolution of international relations as a discipline has until recently been oblivious to the experiences of most women. This entailed a need for the deconstruction of prevailing theoretical constructs in order to acquire an insight as to how the field is gendered. By considering the Indian experience, I seek to focus on how international processes impact on the position of women and men in society. Examined are effects capitalist penetration had on Indian society, both during the colonial and post-independence periods, specifically as regards the roles and positions of women. While capitalist penetration superimposed its structures on the prevailing social order, it accentuated the gender problematic and the social and power relations involved. It follows that until theoretical constructs of international relations include experiences of women such as these, the field will remain distorted inasmuch as it is being denied the tools of proper comprehension and analysis.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines women's exclusion from the field of international relations and points to suggested directions for remedying this lapse. I propose to make women's activities and experiences more visible, pointing to a variety of ways in which gender relations have contributed to the construction of the field. By focusing specifically on women as actors and subjects, the extent to which international relations is gendered becomes evident; gender has formed the main concepts, categories and purposes of the field, while international processes, far from being gender-neutral, have specific effects on the positions of women and men in society as well as on their relative placings.

The first chapter addresses the epistemological and methodological implications of examining issues of gender in international relations. In this sense, I examine the extent to which gender has shaped the main concepts and categories of the field. Inasmuch as international relations has borrowed many of these concepts and categories from political science, it has tended to ignore gender. Even though international relations has become more complex, multi-disciplinary and inclusive during the last thirty years, it has perpetuated - albeit in new forms, the politics of exclusion. As will be demonstrated later, international relations has failed to develop a systematic framework sensitive to gender - one that includes the experiences and

perspectives of most women. For this reason, I address the need for a feminist epistemology of international relations.

Chapters two through four examine some ways in which gender in turn was, and continues to be, affected by developments in the international arena, particularly as regards the various effects of the capitalist world economy on the roles and positions of women in India. India was chosen because, despite the fact that major progressive legislative changes have taken place, the social reality of women vis a vis men remains basically flawed. Moreover, India has two communist parties and a legacy of liberal and social democratic philosophy in the ruling Indian National Congress yet has failed to alleviate the continuing disempowerment of Indian women. While the Hindu caste system that has governed social relations historically had a decisive role in determining and perpetuating women's subordination, it is my assumption in this thesis that many religious and cultural traditions, particularly in developing societies have, to a large extent, arrested the dynamics of empowerment. The issue that arises is how capitalist penetration sustained or altered these traditions in the colonial and post-colonial period. My focus in chapters two through four will show that the pretenses of capitalist penetration have reinforced traditional social structures. While minimal advances were made, especially in post-colonial legislation, capitalist penetration reinforced, in most instances, the prevailing patriarchal norms. These chapters thus attempt to look beyond the many factors at the national level, focusing instead on the dynamics of the global system, or the capitalist world-economy as referred to in this thesis.

Chapter two addresses India's integration into the capitalist world economy during colonial rule and the impact this integration has had on gender relations. In the case of India, the nature of its colonial relations with Britain engendered co-opting the Indian economy into the global capitalist system. What followed was a monetizing of the economy. Large-scale economic changes brought on by colonial rule could not be decoupled from changes in gender, family and kin relations; capitalist infiltration permeated gender relations - even the most intimate and supposedly 'natural' parts of these relations. While the sexual division of labor existed in pre-British India, it was during India's integration into the capitalist world-economy that it became institutionalized in the form of the nuclear family. Simultaneously, the ensuing relationship entailed assigning wage work to men. This led to a devaluation of the worth of women's work - as it did not fetch a cash income - and the beginning of women's economic dependence on men. In other words, women's contribution to the household became treated as her natural function rather than as a productive economic input. The outcome was the further disempowerment of women and the institutionalization of capitalist values and relations.

Chapter three attempts to throw light on how continued capitalist dominance of the Indian economy was facilitated by development programs which in turn were promoted by multi-lateral lending institutions. These programs tended, whether deliberately or not, to sharpen the existing inequalities in class and gender relations. Even among the middle and upper classes, the main beneficiaries of these programs tended to be men.

In the field of agricultural development, post-independence policies had little impact on alleviating poverty, especially in regards to poor rural women. In fact, they actually increased malnutrition and mortality among women and female children besides increasing male-female differentials in employment and leading to further degradation of the environment. This chapter examines the impact of agricultural commercialization as a manifestation of capitalist penetration into the agrarian sector in post-independence India. In this sense, the Green Revolution and deforestation policies are examined, especially in regards to their implications for gender relations.

Chapter four examines India's New Economic Policy of 1991 and its implications for women. By the end of 1990, India was heading toward a serious balance of payments crisis. Rather than default on its foreign debt, India directed its New Economic Policy towards compliance with the patterns determined by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, known as structural adjustment.

The effects of structural adjustment programs on women have been dramatic. Two of these effects can be seen in women's employment in industry and in their access to social services. For instance, while women's overall employment has increased in the non-farm sector, it has been in the informal sector, where pay is low and job security even lower. Furthermore in order to service the debts, social service expenditures, of which women tend to be the primary beneficiaries, have become low priorities on the governmental agenda. This is evident in the 1992-93 budget proposals that show a steady decline in public/social service expenditure allocations. Thus it becomes clear that the aided programs of international financial organizations,

and their respective conditionalities, are likely to have a devastating impact on the poor in general and on women in particular.

In conclusion, if one attempts to describe the world, let alone understand and change it, from non-elitist perspectives, it becomes evident of how the prevailing theoretical constructs are unable to do so. In other words, trying to understand the world from outside positions of power often times offers differing representations of reality. That is, understanding social and power relations that determine unequal relationships becomes the main objective. In attempting to offer a perspective of international relations from the standpoint of Indian women, the integration of India into the capitalist world-economy becomes a central feature insofar as the results of such integration have constituted some of the most potent determinants of their disempowerment. Hence understanding social and power relations that define women's subordination with the objective of changing them becomes the *raison d'être* of the field.

CHAPTER ONE  
GENDER BIAS AND THE POLITICS OF EXCLUSION

International relations, like all academic disciplines, has been selective in its discourse, purpose and choice of study. It is concerned, as Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland note, "with affecting policy, clarifying the major struggles of the world, understanding international conflict and assisting decision-makers in national governments and international institutions."<sup>1</sup> For the most part, the central realities of women's day-to-day lives have been absent from this agenda.

For instance, very few journals in the field have carried articles with women, family, household, reproduction or gender in their titles. Even fewer have sought to explain women's role in social, economic or political development. Nor is it addressed why the number of illiterate women increased 10%, from 543 million to 597 million from 1970-1985 while the number of illiterate men saw an increase of 1%, rising from 348 million to 352 million.<sup>2</sup> Or why, between 1970-1988, the

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<sup>1</sup>Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland, "Introduction," in Gender and International Relations, ed. Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 3.

<sup>2</sup>United Nations, The World's Women: Trends and Statistics, 1970-1990. (NY: United Nations Department of Public Information, 1991), 31.

number of women living beneath the poverty line rose by 47%.<sup>3</sup> Similarly excluded is any discussion as to why, of the 8,000 abortions performed in Bombay after parents learned the sex of the foetus through amniocentesis, only one would have been a boy.<sup>4</sup> Silence on such issues assumes that they are not relevant to the discourse of international relations.

The theory and practice of international relations have erroneously taken for granted that women's accumulative experiences are invariably included. This presumption, as will be shown, contradicts the reality of the historical evolution of political science and consequently of international relations. The following endeavor is an attempt to deconstruct the prevailing epistemology inasmuch as it is androcentrist and masculinely biased; which in turn indicates the necessity for a feminist epistemology of the field. Furthermore a feminist epistemology, while generally constituting a much needed corrective, is crucial as an implement of analysis of women's condition in the poorer countries of the South.

The exclusion of women from international relations has operated through two inter-related processes. The first is discrimination in which women are not seen as capable actors in the field. This is due, for the most part, to how the field has been defined. Traditionally, international relations has focused on the 'high politics' of interstate relations, those of diplomatic and strategic concerns. Yet as some feminist

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<sup>3</sup>Idriss Jazairy, The State of World Rural Poverty: An Introductory Summary (Washington, D.C.: International Fund for Agricultural Development, 1992), 8.

<sup>4</sup>United Nations, The World's Women, 1.



scholars note, nuclear strategy, with its vocabulary of power, threat of force and deterrence, has a distinctively masculine ring.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the characteristics associated with foreign policy (strength, power, autonomy, independence, rationality, etc.) are in this country and in many others, associated with masculinity.<sup>6</sup> Thus heads of state, diplomats and military officials have predominantly been men. For instance, at the end of 1990, only 6 (3.8%) of the 159 member states of the United Nations were headed by women.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, only 3.5% of the world's cabinet ministers are women, while in 93 countries they hold no ministerial positions at all.<sup>8</sup>

The second process occurs through the selectivity of international relation's discourse. Since military and foreign policy arenas are those that are seen as least appropriate for women, it is men's experience and knowledge that forms the thrust of the subject matter of the field. That is, women's place, roles and activities in society are not treated as significant constituent elements of the field's proper subject matter.

In this sense, women's productive, reproductive and 'servicing'<sup>9</sup> roles appear to have

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<sup>5</sup>Carol Cohn, "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals," Signs: Journal of Women, Culture and Society 12 (Summer 1987):687-718.

<sup>6</sup>Ann Tickner, Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security (NY: Columbia University Press, 1992), 3.

<sup>7</sup>These were Iceland, Ireland, Nicaragua, Norway, Dominican Republic, and the Philippines.

<sup>8</sup>United Nations, The World's Women, 31.

<sup>9</sup>Following V. Spike Peterson: "The characterization of women's work as 'servicing' applies to paid as well as unpaid labor: Not only are women the majority of workers in the service sector, they also do 'servicing' (emotional caretaking, appearing submissive, working overtime and without benefits) when they are employed in other sectors. In the global economy, women also do the 'servicing' work: as fuel, food, and water suppliers in developing countries, as

little apparent place in the hierarchy of high politics policies of security and macro-economic management. Yet, while poorly represented in the upper echelons of government, it is clear that women are affected by decisions regarding military policies and expenditures. For instance, when defense is a priority expenditure, domestic programs tend to suffer; cuts in education, food subsidies and health and family programs tend to affect women disproportionately.<sup>10</sup> Thus as international relations has focused almost exclusively on 'statesmen' and the relations among them, it has precluded a discussion of women as actors in the field as well as of women's place, roles and activities in society as constituent elements of its subject matter.

This chapter examines the gender bias in international relations and the politics of excluding the experiences and perspectives of most women. The first part addresses the extent to which gender relations have shaped the main concepts and categories of the field. Inasmuch as international relations has borrowed many of its concepts and categories from political science, it has perpetuated a tradition of gender bias learned from political theory and history. The second part examines the gender bias in its contemporary manifestations. While international relations has become more complex, multi-disciplinary and inclusive, it has perpetuated - albeit in new

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'docile' and dexterous assemblers in offshore industries, as part-time and nonunionized labor in industrialized countries, as sources of emotional and sexual gratification in tourist enterprises, and as caretakers and crisis mediators worldwide." (V. Spike Peterson, "Introduction," in Gendered States: Feminist (Re)Visions of International Relations Theory, ed. V. Spike Peterson [Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992], 11-12).

<sup>10</sup>United Nations, The World's Women, 36.

forms - the politics of exclusion. As will be demonstrated, international relations has failed to develop a systematic framework sensitive to gender - one that factors the experiences and perspectives of most women. For this reason, the last part addresses the need for a feminist epistemology of international relations. This in turn enables us to relate the particular experiences and needs of women in India as an integral part of a more comprehensive understanding of the field.

### Historical Expressions

The field of international relations has drawn heavily from the concepts and categories employed in political science. These concepts are gendered inasmuch as they have historically been masculinely defined. As Joan Tronto argues, "political science insists upon a narrow and exclusive definition of politics which limits political activity to a set of roles which are in this society, and many others, stereotyped as male. Since society assigns roles by sex, this differentiation is carried over into political roles. Thus, what women do is conceptually excluded from the purview of political science".<sup>11</sup> This exclusion can be seen most explicitly during three political moments: the centralization processes of the Athenian polis, the period of the enlightenment during which the modern classics in political theory were produced, and when international relations was introduced as an academic discipline in Western universities. By reviewing the processes and substance of political science discourse

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<sup>11</sup>Joan Tronto, "Politics and Revision: The Feminist Project to Change the Boundaries of American Political Science," in Revolutions in Knowledge: Feminism in the Social Sciences, ed. Sue Rosenberg Zalk and Janice Gordon-Kelter (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 95.

highlighted in these moments, one can conceptually grasp the exclusion of women in its contemporary manifestations.

### The Greeks

It was with the polis life in Greece that there first developed a rigid system of gender. As Spike Peterson argues, the formation of the Athenian polis marked a move away from autonomous, kin-based systems of societal organization to more centralized and permanent authority structures. Insofar as kin communities did not distinguish 'domestic' activities as separate from other societal practices, it was during the formation of the polis that this shift occurred.<sup>12</sup>

The character of the polis depended on the sexual division of labor. In this sense, women were relegated to the private sphere of the household and family while men were maintained in the public sphere of citizenship and soldiering. This gendered process of centralization not only relegated women to the private sphere but, as Peterson argues, made her subordinate within it. For example, women lost all prior claims to property inheritance and were thus systematically excluded from the public sphere of collective decision-making. Simultaneously, soldiering - to which women were also excluded - became the greatest definition of citizenship, as the Homeric epics testify.<sup>13</sup> Thus it was during the centralization processes of the

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<sup>12</sup>V. Spike Peterson, "Security and Sovereign States: What Is at Stake in Taking Feminism Seriously?" in Gendered States: Feminist (Re)Visions of International Relations Theory, ed. V. Spike Peterson (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992), 33-7.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 35.

Athenian polis that gender stratification was first institutionalized in the form of separate and unequal spheres of activity.

The classical Athenian texts simultaneously established politics as the study of 'public' rather than 'private' life. In this sense, political philosophers of the time further reified the public/private split by denying its political nature. This distinction, as Elizabeth Meehan argues, "has been a powerful influence in thinking about what constitutes politics and, hence, political science....[it] has led to an emphasis on state institutions as the proper units of analysis in political science, defining the private as personal and non-political."<sup>14</sup> Thus while the sexual division of labor shut women off from the functions of the state, the conception of politics as handed down from the Greeks precluded women's participation from the start. In other words where politics was, women were not. These precepts and ideas became embedded in society and were subsequently carried through to the next important stage in the development of the discourse.

### The Moderns

The second stage of political discourse that excluded the experiences and perspectives of women most explicitly was during the period of the Enlightenment. During this period, changes in the modes of production, the emergence of modern European states and the rise of science profoundly influenced societal organization

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<sup>14</sup>Elizabeth Meehan, "Women's Studies and Political Studies," in Feminism and Political Theory, ed. Judith Evans and others (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1988), 128.

and relations. As John Ruggie argues, the transition from the feudal order to the modern period, characterized by the transition from 'conditional' to private property and from private authority to public authority, brought with it a 'crisis' in legitimacy inasmuch as 'authority' was no longer solely invested in custom and tradition. It was in direct response to this 'legitimation crisis' that the modern classics in political theory were produced.<sup>15</sup>

John Locke was one of the most significant modern political theorists to respond to this crisis. His theory of liberal individualism sought to justify, as Peterson notes, "absolute individuation (of persons, of property, of territorial states) while providing a basis for political community".<sup>16</sup> This 'political community' was dependent upon a type of 'social contract', which served to ensure each individual's existence and interest. Without a social contract, it was argued, one would confront the perpetual uncertainties of a war of all against all.<sup>17</sup>

Locke's conception of the social contract applies, however, only to those transactions taking place in the public sphere. The private sphere of the family was seen as a precontractual institution, existing outside of history in general and politics in particular. While the private realm existed outside of social arrangements and of

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<sup>15</sup>John Gerard Ruggie, "Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity," World Politics 35 (1983):475-6.

<sup>16</sup>V. Spike Peterson, "Security and Sovereign States," 41.

<sup>17</sup>Anna Yeatman, "Despotism and Civil Society: The Limits of Patriarchal Citizenship," in Women's Views of the Political World of Men, ed. Judith Hicks Stiehm (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Transnational Publishers, Inc., 1984), 155.

civil society, its existence was seen as unchanging, timeless and hence natural. As Jean Bethke Elshtain argues, that while Locke "ridicules naturalistic arguments for political society which ground patriarchy in history, scripture and tradition...[he] slips in via the Garden of Eden the notion that women's subordination within the original, not political, society of marriage may be understood and defended on the basis of nature."<sup>18</sup> By bracketing the family out of his conception of civil society, Locke further insulated the private from the public and hence from political relations.

Just as the polis was the substance of politics for the classical philosophers, it was the state that became its substance during the modern era. Political science thus became a science of the state, taking governmental institutions and their officers as the proper objects of analysis. As the field of international relations borrowed many of its concepts and categories from these earlier traditions, it perpetuated a tradition of gender bias learned from political theory and history. In this sense, it continued to be concerned above all with the behavior of states, especially with relations among them. Thus the third political moment that reified the exclusion of women's experiences and perspectives from the discipline of international relations came as the field was introduced in the curricula of Western universities.

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<sup>18</sup>Jean Bethke Elshtain, Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought (NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 125.

### The Cold Warriors

International relations was introduced in the curricula of Western universities in the period between the two world wars. Increasing need to avoid war served as the principal incentive for its study. As Steve Smith argues, the discipline of international relations was, "concerned above all with devising procedures and techniques to assist rational decision-makers to avoid war...The way the First World War had started loomed large. International relations developed as a response to events in the real world and defined its purpose as preventing their repetition."<sup>19</sup> International relations has thus been concerned with how to avoid war and in this sense, its focus has been on enhancing state security.

Political realism was the dominant theoretical construct of international relations during the Cold War era. Following the publication of his Politics Among Nations, Hans Morgenthau emerged as the preeminent theorist within the field. In formulating his six tenets of political realism,<sup>20</sup> Morgenthau attempted to provide an

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<sup>19</sup>Steve Smith, "Paradigm Dominance in International Relations: The Development of International Relations as a Social Science," in The Study of International Relations: The State of the Art, ed. Hugh Dyer and Leon Mangasarian (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 7.

<sup>20</sup>These tenets are summarized as follows: the international system is dominated by sovereign nation states; the national interest is defined in terms of power; nation-states behave purposively in the pursuit of power; since the main components of power constantly change throughout history, power factors and the national interest change as well; since interest - and the primary national interest being survival - should be the only guide to action, morality should not serve to weaken practical political action or will; and, since each nation and culture is based on different moral claims, national moral aspirations should not be treated as universal moral laws - the realities of interest and power are the proper criteria by which foreign policy should be guided. (Hans Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations 5th ed. [NY: Alfred Knopf, 1973], 3-17.



'empirical' account of international affairs, based on precepts derived from the writings of Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Rousseau. By synthesizing these works, Morgenthau postulated his 'theory' of international relations, influencing significantly the ways in which the majority of scholars have thought about international politics, which in turn has had a profound effect on American foreign policy.

This theory rests on the belief in the centrality of the sovereign nation-state in world affairs and is concerned with the political relations among them. To political realists, war was seen as the biggest threat to a state's continued existence. The causes of war and the conditions for peace among nation-states, as defined by diplomatic and military/strategic concerns, have been of primary importance. Thus as international relations as an academic discipline developed, it had states and the state system as its almost exclusive focus. In this sense, the field has continued to be concerned with the realm of institutionalized politics and the behaviors of formally recognized actors.

As mentioned earlier, the selectivity of the field's discourse, purpose and choice of study confirmed the preclusion of women as actors in the field as well as of women's place, roles and activities as constituent elements of its subject matter. This is due to the field's uncritical acceptance of the public/private split handed down from its predecessors. Yet as Rebecca Grant argues, "the gendered role of the female in the private sphere is a social construction, not a natural one, just as her absence from the political sphere was based not on physical qualities but on the meaning assigned to

them."<sup>21</sup> By reducing the study of international relations to the study of one activity - the politics of the public sphere - the academic discipline has made invisible the extent to which international processes affect, and are affected by, our understandings of gender.

### Contemporary Manifestations

Since its inception, the field of international relations has gone through many challenges and transformations. Within the last thirty years, the field has become more complex, multi-disciplinary and inclusive in its emphasis. No longer does the discipline merely seek to explain political activities across state boundaries or political relations among governments. Although it does not discard traditional theories upon which the field was built, there is a general consensus among scholars of their inability to accurately portray, describe and understand world affairs. As K.J. Holsti argues, the field of international relations is beginning to show signs of maturation, "[n]ot just because there is a debate...but because the substance of the field has begun to catch up with reality...The field is maturing because there is an increased recognition and acceptance of multiple realities, and hence of multiple theories."<sup>22</sup>

Yet at the same time, scholars of international relations have failed to develop a

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<sup>21</sup>Rebecca Grant, "The Sources of Gender Bias in International Relations Theory," in Gender and International Relations, ed. Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 12.

<sup>22</sup>K.J. Holsti, "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Which Are the Fairest Theories of All?" International Studies Quarterly 33 (September 1989):260-1.

systematic framework sensitive to gender - one that includes the long neglected experiences and perspectives of most women.

"Gender," according to Sandra Whitworth, "refers not to women or men *per se*, but to the ideological and material relations between them, which historically has been an unequal relationship. Additionally, gender is not given biologically, as a result of the sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially."<sup>23</sup> Gender in this respect, is socially constructed so as to render inherent the inequality between women and men. Thus, a theory sensitive to gender does not consider social and power relations as given. It is basically concerned with the unequal relationships between women and men and questions the 'naturalness' of this equation. As the following discussion demonstrates, the field of international relations has perpetuated - albeit in new forms - the politics of exclusion.

### Pluralism

Changes in the international system has brought changes in theorizing about international relations. For instance, the OPEC crisis of the early 1970s and the rise of power in Germany and Japan brought new challenges to national security, challenges based more on economic dimensions than on military capability. Pluralist approaches, which include the study of issue-regime politics,<sup>24</sup> theories of

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<sup>23</sup>Sandra Whitworth, "Gender in the Inter-Paradigm Debate," Millennium 18 (1989):265.

<sup>24</sup>J. Vasques and R. Mansbach, In Search of Theory (NY: Columbia University Press, 1981).

interdependence,<sup>25</sup> and regime theory,<sup>26</sup> were formulated as a reaction to the edification of an international order founded on political realism. Political realism was deemed as too restrictive an approach for describing and predicting an increasing complex and interdependent world.

Pluralist approaches argue that survival of the nation-state is no longer a sufficient goal in itself. Rather, an improved quality of life has become an objective of international relations. Inasmuch as the nation-state has proven unable alone to fulfill these objectives, the field has seen the emergence of a plethora of non-governmental organizations, multi-national corporations, human rights advocates, environmental, religious, and women's groups and organizations. These organizations challenge state sovereignty by restricting its freedom to make exclusively unilateral decisions, resulting in an important shift from the state and its power as the exclusive unit of analysis and policy-making.

While the pluralist approach begins to look at non-state actors and is more concerned with economic power configurations, it remains incapable of developing a theory sensitive to gender. This is due, in part, to its implicit goal as the continued enhancement of state capabilities. As Mark Hoffman argues, this approach still seeks "an understanding of these new phenomena in the international system in order to enhance the capability to cope with, control and manipulate them in pursuit of the

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<sup>25</sup>Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, Power and Interdependence 2nd ed. (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresmann and Co., 1989).

<sup>26</sup>Stephen Krasner, ed., International Regimes (NY: Syracuse University Press, 1983).

national interest."<sup>27</sup> In this sense, national security, whether defined militarily or in economic terms, has continued to take precedence over the social security of individuals. By failing to understand and be concerned with the unequal social and power relations between women and men, the pluralist conception of security does not encompass the concerns and reality of most women. Pluralist approaches are thus incapable of developing a theory sensitive to gender.

A theory sensitive to gender would recognize that the definition of what constitutes economic power configurations, economic challenges and hence economic security is different for different people. Poverty, to the majority of the world's population, represents the biggest threat to one's continued existence. For instance among women in developing countries, malnutrition is a major cause of death.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, in parts of South Asia maternal mortality is a continuing large threat to women's existence inasmuch as 1 out of every 2 deaths among women of reproductive age is pregnancy related.<sup>29</sup> A theory sensitive to gender would therefore recognize the need for a broader construction of what constitutes common security.

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<sup>27</sup>Mark Hoffman, "Critical Theory and the Inter-Paradigm Debate," Millennium 16 (Summer 1987):241.

<sup>28</sup>United Nations, Women: Challenges to the Year 2000 (NY: United Nations Department of Public Information, 1991), 21.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 19.

## Globalism

More recently, scholars of international relations have begun to adopt more of a normative approach to the field. This approach, often broadly referred to as 'Globalism',<sup>30</sup> includes the efforts of the World Order Models Project (WOMP)<sup>31</sup> and that of the 'world society' as put forward by John Burton.<sup>32</sup> Globalism is primarily concerned, according to Holsti, "about fundamental transformations occurring at the global level, a wide range of problems being created by those transformations (not just war), a conviction that nation-states are not appropriate agencies for adapting to or managing those problems, a rejection of the nation-state paradigm as offering an adequate analytical platform for either empirical or future-oriented studies, and a fundamental concern for values in addition to peace. The measure is man [sic] - the development of the human-being."<sup>33</sup>

Proponents of WOMP seek the development of a new global culture and community through the inculcation and reinforcement of world order values in

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<sup>30</sup>Ray Maghroori and Bennett Ramberg, Globalism Versus Realism: International Relations Third Debate (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982).

<sup>31</sup>See: Saul Mendlovitz, "The Program of the Institute for World Order," Journal of International Affairs 31 (Fall/Winter 1977):259-66.

<sup>32</sup>See, for example: John Burton, "World Society and Human Needs," in International Relations: A Handbook of Current Theory, ed. M. Light and A. Groom, 46-59. (London: Pinter, 1985); John Burton, Conflict: Resolution and Provention, (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1990); John Burton, Conflict: Human Needs Theory, (Basingstoke, MD: MacMillan, 1990).

<sup>33</sup>K.J. Holsti, The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory (Boston: Allenheld and Unwin, 1986), 47.

society. These values, as described by Richard Falk, are: "the minimization of collective violence; maximization of economic well-being; maximization of social and political justice; and maximization of ecological equality."<sup>34</sup> WOMP seeks the development of more effective laws and more responsive governmental and non-governmental organizations. These organizations, they argue, serve to develop and project global norms on subjects such as human rights, ecological balance, income inequality, disarmament, and so on. WOMP thus seeks a disruption of the current world order through an injection of a new set of values, which eventually replaces the old order with the new one.

The 'world society' approach put forward by Burton, is similar to the approach of WOMP in that it seeks to delegitimize war as a means to resolve conflicts as well as the current inequitable distribution of wealth. Furthermore, it seeks to achieve social justice and freedom from human rights abuses, to redress ecological imbalance, and expunge human practices that threaten the continued existence of the earth and its species. Yet to Burton, these goals are to be achieved through enhanced conflict resolution skills and the satisfaction of basic human needs. Burton believes that the underlying causes of conflict lie in the inability of the body politic's institutions to meet basic human needs. In this sense, enhanced conflict resolution skills serve to identify and then eliminate these underlying causes of conflict, going beyond traditional approaches of conflict settlement and management.

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<sup>34</sup>Richard Falk, "Contending Approaches to World Order," Journal of International Affairs 31 (Fall/Winter 1977):187.

Theories of Globalism challenge the primacy of politics of the nation-state, thereby broadening the scope of the field. By rejecting state activity as solely sufficient to study international relations, Globalism demonstrates a capability to render an analysis of international relations sensitive to gender. Yet as Whitworth argues, this approach "forecloses any possibility of discussing *gender* and international relations because it is ahistorical and denies the material bases of conflict, inequality and power."<sup>35</sup> That is, it does not concern itself with the origins of social and power relations - specifically those between women and men.

The WOMP perspective is ahistorical, for instance, in that the values which provide the criteria for evaluating the present and future are posited as given, irrespective of the context of the present or future society to be created. Similarly, Burton's approach is ahistorical in that human needs are not the same for all societies and can change over time. As Alison Jaggar argues, "Real human beings are not abstract individual's but people of a determinate race, sex or age, who have lived different histories, who participate in different systems of social relations, and who have different capacities and different needs."<sup>36</sup> As these approaches fail to recognize the emboldedness of their own assumptions within a specific historical context, they fail to address the material conditions of the various social, economic, and political contexts that in turn gave rise to these values and needs. As a

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<sup>35</sup>Sandra Whitworth, "Gender in the Inter-Paradigm Debate," Millennium 18 (1989):269.

<sup>36</sup>Alison Jaggar, Feminist Politics and Human Nature (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld, 1983), 46.



consequence, they run the risk of denying marginalized people - those who are not part of the ruling gender, race or class - the right to participate in defining the most desirable values and needs.

As Globalist approaches neglect the structural sources of inequality, of influence, and of the resources and power bases among competing groups, they are unable to conceptualize gender relations. For instance, the WOMP perspective starts from a desirable future and works back to the present. In this sense, as Harry Targ argues, emphasis is placed on the scholar as the agent of social change while unconsciously marginalizing the masses. This type of 'trickle-down' theory assumes that the values underlined have not been realized earlier due to an 'accident of history' rather than an expression of it. The 'world order movement' is thus confined to purely educational elites - however well motivated - underrating the functional aspects that can fulfill the objectives, while removing interest, profit and power as the undercurrent of political behavior and thus as forces of historical change.<sup>37</sup> A more thorough understanding of the exploitative features of social relations is required if Globalism is to be up to the challenge of including issues of gender.

A theory sensitive to gender, for instance, would not be satisfied with articulating and amplifying the stated values and needs alone; it would also concern itself with the problematic of realizing them. In other words, it is not only the values and needs that must be delineated and underlined but equally important are the

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<sup>37</sup>Harry Targ, International Relations in a World of Imperialism and Class Struggle (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing, 1983), 188-90.

material conditions for their existence and a more thorough understanding as to why they have not been realized earlier. In this sense, a theory sensitive to gender must examine the sources that created and accentuated the current inequitable distribution of wealth, ecological imbalance, militarization and barriers to political and social justice. In its analysis, parallels would have to be drawn, therefore, between the colonial heritage and current inequalities both among nations as well as between classes, races and genders within nations; between ecological imbalances and the multi-national corporations that help create them; and between 'macho-ness', militarization, and violence.

### Structuralism

More recently, the challenges of OPEC and the New International Economic Order (NIEO) put relations between North and South more centrally on the international agenda. Consequently, scholars have begun to theorize about the impact of modernization upon the structures of world politics and the conduct of foreign policy. In this sense, contemporary Marxist theories have begun to be taken more seriously within the field.

The structural approach takes as its point of departure the dichotomy of the haves and the have nots, where the struggle between classes rather than interstate conflict constitutes the focus of attention. The structural approach, while originally developing in the social and political fields, began to be incorporated in the 1970s, in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and the concomitant hardening of American foreign

policy. Moreover, multi-national corporations were becoming more visible both as international actors and as cross-national bourgeois class formations.<sup>38</sup> One of the most widely known structural approaches to international relations is the 'world systems' approach, which emerged under the leadership of Immanuel Wallerstein.<sup>39</sup>

The world systems approach emerged as a challenge both to the 'modernization' and the 'dependency' schools of development. It criticized the modernization school's evolutionary assumptions of unidirectional development, its singular focus on internal factors and consequent failure to include the crucial element of foreign domination in explaining stratification. The world systems approach criticized the dependency approaches' inability to explain a variety of new activities in the capitalist world economy, such as the economic growth of East Asian countries within the context of 'dependent development', and the bankruptcy of revolutionary Marxism as countries proved unable to separate from the capitalist world-economy.

Contrary to previous approaches, Wallerstein directs researchers to examine global dynamics inasmuch as the whole world should be taken as the unit of analysis. To Wallerstein, there exists only one world system in the twentieth century and all states, both capitalist and socialist, operate within the confines of the capitalist world-economy. By taking the structural characteristics of the global economy, defined as

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 107-8.

<sup>39</sup>See, for example: Immanuel Wallerstein, The Modern World-System, 3 vols. (NY: Academic Press, 1974); Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Rise and Future Demise of the World-Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis," Comparative Studies in Society and History 16 (September 1974):387-415.

core, semi-periphery and periphery as its focus, the structuralist approach refutes traditional international relations approaches of decoupling domestic from international politics, incorporating a political economy approach of the world system.

By taking the struggle between classes and hence the structure of exploitative social relations as its point of departure, the structural approach appears to develop a conceptual framework sensitive to gender. Yet to the extent that this approach does focus on social relations, the distinctive forms of subordination women experience in contemporary society are excluded. In this sense, the structural approach failed to recognize women's production, reproduction, and 'servicing' roles as factors determining exploitation. This is due, in part, to the fact that Marxist class-based analysis ignores two interrelated factors: that women are oppressed in specific ways attributed to patriarchy rather than capitalism, and that class analysis ignores women's role in the family.<sup>40</sup>

A theory sensitive to issues of gender, on the other hand, would recognize that in most cultures, different activities are coded as male or female, and will function as such within the prevailing system of gender-power relations. It would seek to examine the effects of the capitalist world economy on the positions and roles of women and men in society and on the relations between them. In other words, it would seek to conceptualize why it is women who do 'women's work' and thus the

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<sup>40</sup>See, for example: Heidi Hartman, "The Family as the Locus of Gender, Class, and Political Struggle: The Example of Housework," in Feminism and Methodology, ed. Sandra Harding (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 109-34.

consequences of the sexual division of labor in both public and private spheres.

For instance, while both women and men work, many aspects of their work differ: total hours, the kind of work, pay rates, the age of participation and their subsequent domestic responsibilities (which women generally have considerably more of than men). Moreover, the segregation of women into low-paying, 'feminine' service occupations is increasing, leading to a big gap between what women produce and what they earn.<sup>41</sup> Although women spend less time in activities officially counted as economically productive and make less money, they spend far more in home production and family care; sacrificing their time for sleep and leisure. A theory sensitive to gender would further seek to identify and explain the exploitative social relations of prostitution, sexual harassment, negative sex-stereo-typing by the mass media, rape, and domestic violence inasmuch as they are all present in every region, in every class and in every culture. Thus in its failure to acknowledge let alone analyze the social stratification of women both within countries and on a global level, the structural approach has also failed to develop an account of international relations sensitive to gender.

#### The Need for a Feminist Epistemology

"An *epistemology* is a theory of knowledge. Sociologists of knowledge characterize epistemologies as strategies for justifying beliefs: appeals to the authority of God, of custom and tradition, of 'common sense,' of observation, or reason, and of masculine authority are all examples of familiar justificatory strategies. Feminists have argued that traditional epistemologies, whether

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<sup>41</sup>United Nations, The World's Women, 81.

intentionally or unintentionally, systematically exclude the possibility that women could be 'knowers' or *agents of knowledge*; they claim that the voice of science is a masculine one; that history is written from only the point of view of men (of the dominant class and race); that the subject of a traditional sociological sentence is always assumed to be a man."<sup>42</sup>

As the previous discussion demonstrates, the majority of theories put forward to describe international relations do not incorporate an analysis of gender. In this sense, there exists an underlying assumption that the theory and practice of international relations is gender-neutral. It is argued here, by contrast, that international relations *is* gendered, both in the sense that gender has formed the main concepts, categories and purpose of the field; and in the sense that international processes, far from being gender-neutral, have specific effects not only on the positions and roles of women and men in society but also on their relative placings. Failure to understand the extent to which the theory and practice of international relations is gendered yields less adequate explanations of how the world we live in was made and how it is reproduced. Inasmuch as women's production, reproduction and 'servicing' roles are essential components of the world we live in, excluding them from our theoretical frameworks, and by consequence the experiences and perspectives of most women, not only distorts our understanding of reality but is potentially ideological. In this sense, the failure to develop an analysis of international relations sensitive to gender has negative consequences not only for the academic discipline but also for the majority of the world's population.

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<sup>42</sup>Sandra Harding, "Introduction: Is There a Feminist Method?" in Feminism and Methodology, ed. Sandra Harding (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 3.

A theory sensitive to gender on the other hand, must insist not only on the relevance of women's experiences and perspectives but also on their validity as constitutive elements of international relations. Yet as this chapter has attempted to demonstrate, most schools of thought in international relations have neglected to ask the questions that are vital for women. Thus our understanding of how the world was made, works and is reproduced has been incomplete, leading to a vision of the world that is distorted and inaccurate. Furthermore, systematically excluding various issues from serious consideration by the political system suits certain groups better than others insofar as they serve to legitimate and sustain a given inequitable order. In this sense, these theories perform an ideological function.

Following Alison Jaggar, "all systems of conceptualization reflect certain social interests and values. In a society where the production of knowledge is controlled by a certain class, the knowledge produced will reflect the interests and values of that class...Because the ruling class has an interest in concealing the way in which it dominates and exploits the rest of the population, the interpretation of reality that it presents will be distorted in characteristic ways."<sup>43</sup> What is needed, then, is an examination of the world from perspectives not of elite decision-makers, but of those outside positions of power, from positions that can offer different representations of reality. Since women in contemporary society experience a distinct form of subordination, their position allows them to have a distinct epistemological

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<sup>43</sup>Alison Jaggar, 370.

standpoint.

The following chapters attempt to offer a perspective of international relations from the standpoint of Indian women. It is evident, particularly after the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union, that the global market economy is emerging as a dominant fact in international relations. How this is going to impact or affect the developing countries of the South is bound to be a major concern and priority for international institutions, especially those in the financial and developmental arena. In light of these emerging realities, India, with a parliamentary democratic system of government, is a major test case as to whether a market economy will be able to address not only the overall issue of development, but more particularly its consequences for gender relations. While many of international financial institutions are showing signs of awareness of the gender dimension in development policies, the Indian experience, as indicated in the following chapters, will show the flaws that are inherent in continuing capitalist penetration in the form of a market economy. In this sense India's integration into the capitalist world economy becomes a central feature inasmuch as the results of this integration have been some of the most potent determinants of women's disempowerment.



## CHAPTER TWO

### THE INTEGRATION OF INDIA INTO THE CAPITALIST WORLD-ECONOMY

As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, gender affects international relations inasmuch as the field has been based on gendered concepts and categories. This chapter examines a number of different ways in which gender is in turn affected by the workings of international relations, specifically in regards to the roles and positions of women in India.

In the case of India, the nature of its colonial relations with Britain engendered co-opting the Indian economy into the global capitalist system. What followed was a monetizing of the economy. While the sexual division of labor existed in pre-British India, it was during India's integration into the capitalist world-economy that it became institutionalized and reinforced in the form of the nuclear family. Simultaneously, the ensuing relationship entailed assigning wage work to men. This led to a devaluation of the worth of women's work - as it did not fetch a cash income - and the beginning of her economic dependence on men. In other words, women's contribution to the household became treated as her natural function rather than as a productive economic input. The outcome was the further disempowerment of women and the institutionalization of capitalist values and relations. This in turn reinforced and perpetuated the legacy of the patriarchal Hindu caste system and sustained it as

the predicate of economic policies.

What follows is an attempt to delineate some of the ways in which these transnational processes have affected gender relations and the status of Indian women vis-a-vis Indian men. Since India underwent fundamental transformations in its social, political and economic processes during the colonial period, any meaningful understanding of gender relations in India in their present context requires a fuller understanding of the mechanisms of colonialism. In other words, the integration of India into the capitalist world-economy during the colonial era had, and continues to have, specific effects on gender. While both women and men have been affected by this integration and by the social, political and economic structures inherited from colonialism, they have been affected differently. This chapter examines India's integration into the capitalist world-economy and then analyzes its specific impact on gender relations.

#### Capitalist Integration: The Colonial Era

Capitalism as an economic system, as Linda Lim defines it, "is a mode of production based on private ownership of capital (the means of production), employment of wage labor, and production for exchange on a free market to earn

private profit that is accumulated and reinvested for growth and further profit."<sup>1</sup>

India began its integration into the world of modern capitalism from about the mid-eighteenth century, and especially during the beginning of the nineteenth century. According to Immanuel Wallerstein, "There are two kinds of qualitative change that may be said to constitute incorporation into the capitalist world-economy: the reorganization of productive structures such that they participate responsively in the social division of labor; reorganization of the political structures such that they facilitate this economic participation."<sup>2</sup> Reorganization of economic and political structures is necessary in order to facilitate capitalist accumulation. Prior to 1750, the Indian village was self-sufficient, self-contained and self-perpetuating. In this sense, though India was involved in agricultural production for distant markets, it did not form part of the capitalist world-economy. According to Wallerstein, incorporation takes place when a country is deemed no longer to be self-sufficient - self-sufficiency occurs only at the level of the whole world system.<sup>3</sup>

It was during the mid-eighteenth century that India's self-sufficiency began to be eroded as Britain alternated the land revenue system and imposed on India the

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<sup>1</sup>Lim, Linda, "Capitalism, Imperialism, and Patriarchy: The Dilemma of Third-World Women Workers in Multinational Factories," in Women, Men, and the International Division of Labor, ed. June Nash and Maria Patricia Fernandez Kelly (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983), 71.

<sup>2</sup>Immanuel Wallerstein, "Incorporation of the Indian Subcontinent into Capitalist World-Economy," Economic and Political Weekly 21, Review of Political Economy (25 January 1986):pe30.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

economic doctrine of laissez faire and free trade. In this sense, the integration of India into the capitalist world-economy can best be demonstrated by reviewing two simultaneous and interrelated processes: dismantling of nascent industries and the rise of export oriented cash-cropping.

The dismantling of nascent industries resulted in the breakdown of Indian handicrafts and began the process of pauperization of the countryside. The decline of domestic cottage industries in India, in which most of the artisans worked, was adversely affected by the results of the Industrial Revolution in England and the enhancement of the means of transportation and communication. The production of cotton textiles, for instance, was a vigorous industry prior to the nineteenth century. Yet throughout this time period, the position of the Indian weaver vis-a-vis its British counterpart was weakened. The decisive factor in destroying the Indian cotton industry, as Wallerstein argues, was the non-reciprocity in tariff barriers imposed by the British Raj. Thus while duties were placed on Indian textiles going into Britain and even into China, no corresponding tariffs were permitted for British textiles coming into India.<sup>4</sup>

The process of dismantling nascent industries and the subsequent decline of handloom exports resulted in the loss of livelihood by hundreds of thousands of weavers in most parts of India. This process virtually transformed the weaver into a wage worker. The rise of export oriented cash-cropping imposed by the East India

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

Company and later by the British Raj succeeded in converting India from a manufacturing country into a country exporting raw produce and material. Rural artisans, forced to leave their crafts due to the importation of foreign or factory made cotton goods, were encouraged to bid for land as tenants-at-will and share-croppers. Simultaneously, as Bipan Chandra argues, the British government introduced cinchona, tea and coffee plantations in India. The British government actively promoted the cultivation of these lands by passing penal legislation that forced Indian labor to work on such plantations.<sup>5</sup> By 1931, one-third of the rural population was landless while most of the remaining two-thirds were tenants-at-will, sharecroppers and petty proprietors.<sup>6</sup>

The overwhelming bias of channeling exports towards raw materials and of imports towards manufactured goods imposed under British rule marked India's entry into the capitalist world-economy. Yet as Chandra argues, while India was integrated into the capitalist world-economy, it was not integrated on equal terms with the West; the Indian economy became a complement to the British economy yet subservient to the interests of British trade, industry and capital. This process of converting India from a manufacturing country into a country exporting raw produce transformed the Indian economy into a colonial economic dependency. Increasing imports were making and keeping India an agrarian appendage of Britain. The increasing exports

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<sup>5</sup>Bipan Chandra, Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India (New Delhi: Orient Longman limited, 1979), 63.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 328.

of raw materials represented an increasing drain of wealth, of unilateral transfer of capital, and payment for the increasing imports. They represented the ruralization of the country and its economic exploitation. Even the direct benefits of agricultural exports did not reach the cultivator; they were skimmed off by the merchant, money-lender, landlord and government. On the other hand, the resulting price increases left the poor peasants and agricultural laborers worse off.<sup>7</sup> In this sense, India's underdevelopment at the end of the nineteenth century was of recent origin and not a mere carry-over of its 'traditional' past. Thus the integration of India into the capitalist world-economy marked the beginning of the underdevelopment of India or the 'development of underdevelopment'.<sup>8</sup>

#### Gender-Specific Effects

Social organization and structures mesh with, allow for, and reinforce beliefs about gender and the 'proper' conduct of women. In this sense, large-scale economic change brought on by colonial rule cannot be decoupled from changes in gender, family and kin relations; capitalist infiltration permeates gender relations - even the most intimate and supposedly 'natural' parts of these relations. As Carla Risseuw argues, "Colonial rule established its brand of capitalism, which reallocated land ownership and reshaped avenues of social mobility, through its redistribution of existing and the creation of new resources. In the process, families, family members

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 107.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 3.

and men and women found themselves confronted with differing opportunities and developed different strategies in response. The imported economy and ideology affected the access to resources such as land and labor, but also the women's degree of participation in decision-making structures within their marriages, families and communities."<sup>9</sup> This section examines some of the specific effects the integration of India into the capitalist world-economy has had on gender, specifically on gender ideology.

The effects of two centuries of colonial rule on India disintegrated and disorganized the pre-British social fabric. Under capitalism 'work' is divided into two categories; that which produces a wage income and that which does not. This sexual division of labor, or the separation of general economic processes into 'productive' and 'non-productive' units, has defined women's position - both economically and ideologically - within the capitalist sphere of production. In this sense, women's position is predicated on their role as reproducers of labor within the family. As Padmini Swaminathan argues, while the sexual division of labor pre-dates capitalism, it is under capitalism that it becomes increasingly institutionalized and specifically defined in terms of the nuclear family. During this process, males become the primary breadwinner while females, if they do enter the economic realm,

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<sup>9</sup>Carla Risseuw, "Gender, Kinship and State Formation: Case of Sri Lanka under Colonial Rule," Economic and Political Weekly 27, Review of Women's Studies (24-31 October 1992):ws46.

enter as secondary contributors.<sup>10</sup> Simultaneously, it is 'work' that is done outside the home that earns a wage while that done inside the home does not.

Maria Mies refers to this process as 'housewifization', where women are classified housewives first and foremost and thus are recognized solely as supplementary earners. "Although many subsistence societies, in India as elsewhere, had a very clearly defined sex-specific division of labor, capitalist penetration invariably upsets this pattern in the direction of enhancing male domination and power. When production for exchange is introduced, men are recruited as laborers, whereas women remain responsible for subsistence or household productions."<sup>11</sup> This process occurs in both industrialized and industrializing countries regardless of marital status or contribution to household survival. Moreover, this ideology of gender, with males in the economic world of wage labor and females responsible for the unpaid domestic labor, has been propagated as a symbol of progress - something to work towards and look forward to.

Capitalism invariably defines specific roles for women and men. These roles place men in the economic world of wage labor and women in the non-economic realm of subsistence labor and unpaid housework. Thus while women may work longer hours, their perceived contribution to household income starts to decrease. As

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<sup>10</sup>Padmini Swaminathan, "State and Subordination of Women," Economic and Political Weekly 22, Review of Women's Studies (31 October 1987):ws34.

<sup>11</sup>Maria Mies, "Capitalist Development and Subsistence Production: Rural Women in India," in Women: The Last Colony, ed. Maria Mies, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, and Claudia von Werlhof (London: Zed Books, 1988), 41.



the economy becomes more and more dependent on capital and hence monetized, women's contribution to the household is viewed as less important. In this sense, as Narendra Gupta et al., argue, "the introduction of relations of exchange in the sphere of production has led to a redefinition of the notion of 'productive' work itself, a notion that excludes all such activities that are aimed at subsistence or creation of use-values...this shift to production of exchange values as the dominant type of production has increasingly forced women out of the 'productive sphere' itself."<sup>12</sup> Thus while women of poor rural households bear a significant responsibility for family subsistence, the work that they do is given less value.

Moreover, as Mies argues, this process has played a significant role in the physical reduction of women and is expressed in the growing number of dowry deaths, in increased female mortality rates and malnutrition, and in female infanticide. "The growing deficit of women vis-a-vis men, their growing mortality rate, their deteriorating health and nutritional standards cannot be explained only by referring to a sexist ideology or the current family structure. Both factors were no less dominant in earlier years. What needs to be explained is the relationship between the declining sex ratio and the development processes that have taken place in India."<sup>13</sup> Mies goes on to argue that the proportion of females to males in the population of India is directly related to the employment of women in production. As table 1 shows, both

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<sup>12</sup>Narendra Gupta and others, "Health of Women and Children in Rajasthan," Economic and Political Weekly 27 (17 October 1992):2325.

<sup>13</sup>Mies, 31.

have been decreasing since the turn of the century. As women's ability to find employment in the paid sector has decreased, so has their realized contribution to household survival. In this sense, while women's unpaid workloads have increased (as will be discussed in the next chapter), their realized contribution has decreased and thus are seen as less socially productive. The impact of capitalism thus has led not only to a change in women's work status but also to a change in society's perception of their work, its devaluation of it in terms of fair compensation and of its appreciation of their contribution.

TABLE 1

FEMALES PER THOUSAND MALES OF TOTAL POPULATION,  
ALL INDIA WORKERS AND NON-WORKERS, 1901-71

Year	In Population	Total Workers	Non-Workers
1901	972	504	1,707
1911	964	525	1,676
1921	955	516	1,629
1931	955	453	1,656
1951	947	408	1,580
1961	941	460	1,581
1971	930	210	1,726

Source: Maria Mies, "Capitalist Development and Subsistence Production: Rural Women in India," in *Women: The Last Colony*, ed. Maria Mies, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, and Claudia von Werlhof (London: Zed Books, 1988), 33.

This type of gender ideology, or housewifization, is not a natural one but is specific to particular historical periods, classes and nationalities. The creation and reinforcement of this ideology becomes evident during the first phase of capitalist penetration of the colonial era. As Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock sum up the process:

In settlement colonies, expropriation of land limited people's access to strategic resources and forced them into wage labor. Where land was not expropriated, cash crops created pressure on resources and diverted economic activity from subsistence agriculture and craft production. Whether as wage laborers or as landholding producers, people were drawn into the cash economy by a growing dependence on goods which replaced goods they no longer produced or which had become new necessities. The self-perpetuating process of transforming colonized people into producers and consumers of commodities served the colonial powers' need for both raw materials and markets. In pursuing this transformation, the colonists addressed their demands and their technical innovations to men, thus favoring men's access to cash, the economic dependency of women and as a result the emergence of the patriarchal nuclear family.<sup>14</sup>

The inculcation of specific norms for women's and men's activities and the ideology of the nuclear family is evident in the social reform movements under the colonial regime as well as the Indian nationalist movement and is discussed in the following paragraphs.

### Social Reform and Gender Ideology

The social reformers and cultural revivalists of the nineteenth century and the nationalists of the early decades of the twentieth century had as their goal the

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<sup>14</sup>Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock, "Introduction," in Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives, ed. Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock (NY: Praeger Publishers, 1980), 19.

education of women, presumably to improve their status in society. Yet when one examines what kind of education was offered and the goals women's education sought to reach, it becomes evident that the reformers were interested in making women more capable of fulfilling their traditional roles in society as wives and mothers rather than rendering them more efficient and active units in the process of socio-economic or political development. For women, a kind of 'hierarchy of labor' was imposed, with conventional domestic work for the family at the highest level and any type of wage work at the bottom. As Madhu Kishwar argues, "education for girls was not meant to equip them for professions or for government service; the introduction of schools for girls was an attempt to transplant into Indian soil the Victorian ideal of the woman as 'housewife', as the presiding deity of home and hearth, whose business in life was to create for her husband a pleasurable haven when he returned home from each day's tiring business in the harsh, competitive outside world."<sup>15</sup>

A good example of the importation and subsequent inculcation of this gender ideology into India can be taken from the journals published by reformers during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As will be evident, these journals were published with a view to educate women and prepare them for the roles the reformers expected women to play in their scheme of things. If one examines the content and style of some of these journals, such as Streebodh, a Gujarati women's magazine published from the 1850s through the 1950s, the hidden agenda of social reforms becomes

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<sup>15</sup>Madhu Kishwar, "The Daughters of Aryavarta," in Women in Colonial India, ed. J. Krishnamarty (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 86.

clear. As Sonal Shukla argues, social reform is implemented not so much for raising the status of women as for the construction of an indigenous version of the ideal Victorian woman as perceived by modern Indian men. "When the readers are not being taught gender knowledge, they are being asked to be receptive to change and become modern in matters of dress, housekeeping and marital relationships. Arguing that home is the realm of the woman on the one hand and actually cutting down her power and autonomy within the home and family is achieved by creating a fear of losing husband's love and affection and being called a shrew. It appears that powerful women were being tamed into becoming sweet and docile wives catering to the real and imaginary needs of men."<sup>16</sup>

In most instances, women's educational programs and magazines were almost always devised in terms of social and moral betterment during India's colonial period. Moreover, the totality of this betterment is consistently expressed in terms of the welfare of the family. The arguments of the social reformers was that a woman's role as housewife followed from her role as mother and hence is both universal and biologically based. Yet as previously discussed, the assumption that a woman's primary role is that of wife and mother is historically conditioned. As Himani Bannerji argues, not only do these journals make it clear that the main purpose of women's education is in the private realm, they also elaborate appropriate social norms for women while creating "social individuals, identities and subjectivities

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<sup>16</sup>Sonal Shukla, "Cultivating Minds: 19th Century Gujarati Women's Journals," Economic and Political Weekly 26, Review of Women's Studies (26 October 1991):ws65.

within historically constructed relations".<sup>17</sup>

Thus what becomes apparent during this period is the extent to which women's and men's roles in society were newly prescribed and reinforced specifically to fit the needs of capitalism. This contrived equation, although not natural, became the governing norm. When India achieved independence, these norms - of woman as housewife and man as wage earner - persisted. Thus when the Committee on the Status of Women published Towards Equality in 1974,<sup>18</sup> its first comprehensive overview on the status of women, it found that the majority of Indian women, far from benefitting from the country's material gains, were actually worse off in significant ways than before independence. It seemed as if social change, development and other trends under the heading of 'progress' made the lives of women worse. As development projects continued to ignore women's productive role, they have contributed to the massive displacement of women from agricultural and industrial occupations and have also limited their access to basic resources. In other words, as development programs are based on the gender ideology imported during colonialism, they have tended to adversely impact the lives of Indian women. The extent to which a few of these programs ignore women's productive role is examined in the following chapter.

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<sup>17</sup>Himani Bannerji, "Fashioning Self: Educational Proposals for and by Women in Popular Magazines in Colonial Bengal," Economic and Political Weekly 26, Review of Women's Studies (26 October 1991):ws52.

<sup>18</sup>Committee on the Status of Women, Towards Equality (New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Department of Social Welfare, 1974).

## CHAPTER THREE

### CAPITALIST PENETRATION: POST-INDEPENDENCE

The transition to Independence was painful and in certain parts of India devastating. The partition of India and the ensuing transfers of population along with the various communal riots that took place rendered the government of India constrained in developing a coherent plan for more equitable development. This undoubtedly rendered India disposed to accept the governing norms inherited from the colonial period. As a result, the expectations for social and economic change promised for the post-Independence period were not met but in most instances the socio-economic dislocations were rendered more acute, especially those between women and men.

This chapter attempts to throw light on how the continued capitalist dominance of the Indian economy was facilitated by the development programs which in turn were promoted by multi-lateral lending institutions. These programs tended, whether intentionally or not, to sharpen the existing inequalities in class and gender relations. In terms of class, the main beneficiaries of these programs tended to be concentrated in the existing middle and upper classes. In terms of gender, most wage-labor created

by the programs went to men.<sup>1</sup> This entailed perpetuating the prevailing gender ideology which led those programs directed towards women to seek enhancing her primary role in reproduction.<sup>2</sup> Thus as planners ignored women's productive role, they were mostly viewed as passive beneficiaries of social services and anti-poverty programs.

In the field of agricultural development, post-independence policies have had little impact on alleviating poverty, especially in regards to poor rural women. In fact, they actually increased malnutrition and mortality among women and female children besides increasing male-female differentials in employment and leading to the degradation of the environment.<sup>3</sup> This chapter examines the impact of agricultural commercialization as a manifestation of capitalist penetration into the agrarian sector

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<sup>1</sup>It must be noted, however, that in a recent report the World Bank disputes these conclusions, stating: "Modern agricultural technologies appear to have increased the per hectare absorption of female labor....[while] the increase in female labor use associated with technological change has been greater than the increase in male labor use." (World Bank, Gender and Poverty in India [Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1991], 33). However, the compelling evidence tends to challenge and at times disprove the World Bank conclusions. See, for example: Bina Agarwal, "Neither Sustenance Nor Sustainability: Agricultural Strategies, Ecological Degradation and Indian Women in Poverty," in Structures of Patriarchy: The State, the Community and the Household, ed. Bina Agarwal (London: Zed Books, 1988), 83-120; Bina Agarwal, "Rural Women, Poverty and Natural Resources: Sustenance, Sustainability and Struggle for Change," Economic and Political Weekly 24, Review of Women's Studies (28 October 1989):ws46-ws65; Sheila Bhalla, "Technological Change and Women Workers: Evidence From the Expansionary Phase in Haryana Agriculture," Economic and Political Weekly 24, Review of Women's Studies (28 October 1989):ws67-ws78; and, Neera Desai and Vibhuti Patel, Indian Women: Change and Challenge in the International Decade, 1975-85 (Bombay: Popular Prakashan Private Limited, 1985).

<sup>2</sup>World Bank, Gender and Poverty in India, 4.

<sup>3</sup>Agarwal, "Neither Sustenance Nor Sustainability," 113-15.



in post-independence India. In this sense, the Green Revolution and deforestation policies are discussed, especially in regards to their implications on gender relations.

### Commercialization of Agriculture

#### Green Revolution

Capitalist penetration into the Indian economy is facilitated further through technological innovation. The Green Revolution, a United States' sponsored technological package for agricultural development, has been the prescribed orientation for rural development programs in India since 1967. The Green Revolution can be defined as a large-scale application of modern science and technology to agriculture. According to D. N. Dhanagare, the Green Revolution technology involves extensive use of farm machinery as efficient labor-saving devices, hybrid (high yielding variety - HYV) seeds, energized well irrigation, high fertilizer doses and pesticides, and the like.<sup>4</sup>

The strategy of the Green Revolution sought to increase food grain production and daily wages for agricultural labor while at the same time decreasing unemployment. This approach was similar to many of the programs promulgated by multi-lateral lending institutions at the time. It was believed that the wealth created from market integration and expansion would eventually 'trickle-down' to the poor. Yet in practice, the poor are still waiting.

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<sup>4</sup>D. N. Dhanagare, "Green Revolution and Social Inequalities in Rural India," Economic and Political Weekly 22, Annual Number (May 1987):an137.

On the positive side, food grain production did show an increase of 19.1% between 1967-73.<sup>5</sup> Yet according to the Centre for the Study of Social Change in Delhi, the Green Revolution, as enunciated by the government, was really not taking place at all; the new high cost/high yield agricultural technology called for substantial capital investments generally beyond the means of the majority of small and marginal farmers. In this sense, the prosperity unleashed by the Green Revolution was distributed unevenly to different categories of farmers, putting the small and marginal farmers at a relative disadvantage.<sup>6</sup> A second report by the London-based Halslemere Declaration Group reported similar findings. While this report admitted that the trickle-down effect of the Green Revolution did improve daily wages by 89% during 1961-68, this so-called gain was offset by the subsequent rise in prices of about 93% during the same period.<sup>7</sup>

Based on available evidence, it can be argued that the Green Revolution has tended to accentuate rural class differences insofar as the rich have grown richer while the poor have become poorer. In the throbbing heartland of the Green Revolution, the percentage of the rural population below the poverty line had nearly quadrupled between 1960-1 and 1967-8.<sup>8</sup> In this sense, growth in and of itself did

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 142-3.

not necessarily percolate down to the poor nor did it resolve the many problems of unemployment and poverty in rural India.

### Gender-Specific Effects

In rural India, capitalist penetration led to the pauperization of large masses, mainly of subsistence producers. One of the main consequences of capitalist development in agriculture has been the marginalization of far more women than men. Thus while the Green Revolution has accentuated rural class differences, it has also had direct and indirect implications for women, especially those of poor rural households. Two such implications are hereby discussed: the impact of Green Revolution technology on the demand for female labor and on women's access to available basic resources.

#### Demand for Women's Labor

Development models by the first world theoreticians have not addressed themselves to domination relationships between the first world and the third world nor to unequal class and gender relationships....They perpetuate patriarchal norms by classifying women workers as supplementary earners (though 1/3 of the total households in South Asia are female-headed households). To justify lower unequal wages for female labourers and to give them temporary jobs they call women secondary earners. Whenever it suits their interest they hire women, mainly at the time of economic expansion, to do the most back-breaking, monotonous, unskilled job. Whenever they want to fire women, they make use of obscurantist values that see women as 'child-bearers' and 'child-rearers.'<sup>9</sup>

According to Sheila Bhalla, there are two distinct phases in the adoption of Green Revolution technology that need to be examined. The first phase was

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<sup>9</sup>Desai and Patel, 7.

principally a bio-chemical revolution and included the introduction of new labor-using technology such as the tubewell with a motorized pump and chemical fertilizers.

During this phase, the motorized tubewell enhanced farm business income as well as total labor absorption. The second phase of the Green Revolution was associated with the introduction of equipment like threshers and mechanical plowers. This phase saw an expansion in the area under remunerative crops as well as a continued growth in yields. Yet despite these accomplishments, the technology introduced was labor-saving. Total demand for labor thus stagnated while labor absorption per hectare declined.<sup>10</sup>

In terms of women's employment, almost all the new employment generated during the first phase went to men. Furthermore, according to Bhalla, the new technology increased the amount of family labor that is unpaid - namely that done by women. While hired labor intensity did increase, it did not have any noticeable impact on per acre absorption of women - except where male labor was in short supply. "It is only in regions with a less adequate supply of male laborers that the hired female labor days per acre rose...cross-section evidence suggests that in the initial phase, the adoption of the Green Revolution technology reduced women's share in employment except in special circumstances. By 1972-73, the share of female labor days was inversely related to the proportion under HYV technology."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Bhalla, 67-8.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 68.

The second phase of the Green Revolution has thus decreased demand for labor. The employment created with the technology was not adequate to absorb the growing numbers seeking agricultural work - especially women. For instance, as Agarwal notes, in both 1964-65 and 1974-75, the average number of days of annual employment were lower for women than for men while the average number of non-working days during the year due to want of work were higher for women than men. Over the ten year period and as listed in table 2, the average number of days of employment decreased for both women and men at the all-India level. Moreover, in most states and as illustrated in table 3, while the days of involuntary unemployment increased for both sexes, the increase was higher for women than for men.<sup>12</sup>

Capitalist penetration in the form of development programs in general and of the Green Revolution in particular impacted female labor force participation in mainly negative ways. While both sexes experienced different forms of marginalization, women continued to remain an auxiliary to the main agricultural labor force, rendering their access to available productive opportunities reduced. In this sense, the gender ideology of capitalist penetration as expressed in the process of housewifization, sustained and at times perpetuated women's dependence on men. As will be demonstrated, this becomes even more acute when women's access to traditional sources of sustenance and sustainability, such as food, fuel and water, is further eroded.

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<sup>12</sup>Agarwal, "Rural Women, Poverty and Natural Resources," 49.

TABLE 2

EMPLOYMENT OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN  
AGRICULTURAL LABOUR HOUSEHOLDS BY STATES

Region/State	Average Annual Full Days of Agricultural Wage Work					
	Women			Men		
	1964-5	1974-5	Change	1964-5	1974-5	Change
<b>North-Western</b>						
Haryana		131	-42		203	-79
Punjab	173	170	-3	282	233	-49
Rajasthan	153	163	+10	210	239	+29
Uttar Pradesh	102	124	+22	189	200	+11
<b>Western</b>						
Gujarat	240	160	-80	278	206	-72
Maharashtra	183	180	-3	239	221	-18
<b>Central</b>						
M. Pradesh	147	125	-22	212	198	-14
<b>Eastern</b>						
Bihar	127	114	-13	198	186	-12
Orissa	165	111	-54	224	164	-60
West Bengal	216	147	-69	269	210	-59
<b>Southern</b>						
A. Pradesh	104	138	+34	204	193	-11
Karnataka	192	175	-17	228	204	-24
Kerala	147	108	-39	173	138	-35
Tamil Nadu	146	118	-28	194	148	-46
<b>All India</b>	149	138	-11	217	193	-24

Source: Bina Agarwal, "Rural Women, Poverty and Natural Resources: Sustenance, Sustainability and Struggle for Change," Economic and Political Weekly 24, Review of Women's Studies (28 October 1989):ws49.

TABLE 3

UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN  
AGRICULTURAL LABOUR HOUSEHOLDS BY STATES

Region/State	Average Annual Days Not Worked Due to Want of Work					
	Women			Men		
	1964-5	1974-5	Change	1964-5	1974-5	Change
<b>Northwestern</b>						
Haryana		88	+29		88	+61
Punjab	59	111	+52	27	64	+37
Rajasthan	81	97	-16	41	49	+8
Uttar Pradesh	108	114	+6	35	57	+22
<b>Western</b>						
Gujarat	82	111	+29	44	67	+23
Maharashtra	44	90	+46	32	57	+25
<b>Central</b>						
M. Pradesh	75	141	+66	27	70	+43
<b>Eastern</b>						
Bihar	133	105	+52	70	90	+20
Orissa	105	158	+53	40	92	+52
West Bengal	73	166	+93	37	88	+51
<b>Southern</b>						
A. Pradesh	99	103	+4	16	61	+45
Karnataka	8	81	+73	44	58	+14
Kerala	120	162	+42	106	126	+20
Tamil Nadu	155	142	-13	106	98	-8
<b>All India</b>	96	124	+28	48	76	+28

Source: Bina Agarwal, "Rural Women, Poverty and Natural Resources: Sustenance, Sustainability and Struggle for Change," *Economic and Political Weekly* 24, Review of Women's Studies (28 October 1989):ws49.

### Access to Basic Resources

The process of agricultural modernization and commercialization has also led to a decline in access to basic resources. Decreased availability of fuel is a direct result of agricultural modernization according to Nata Duvvury. In terms of the Green Revolution, the cultivation of high-yielding dwarf varieties has yielded less crop residue. At the same time, mechanical harvesters have also reduced the crop residue available. Moreover, payments to agricultural laborers in terms of straw and grass have declined as has the right to crop residue in the case of commercial crops such as cotton and tobacco. Common property resources have also declined as an increasing proportion of them have been appropriated by rich peasants and landlords.<sup>13</sup>

For instance, in a survey of two Indian villages, Roger Jeffrey et al., note how older residents remember when most cooking was done with wood gathered from the scrub-land. Yet today, most of that land is under sugarcane. Thus, they argue, "Foodgrains have been granted such a dominant sway over indicators of agricultural growth in India that the loss of jungle land goes almost unnoticed...the long-standing advice to the Indian government to preserve land for grazing and fuel had no impact on commercialization processes in this part of India. All the effort of the government and industry in expanding credit, fertilizer seed, and water supply have undoubtedly commercialized important aspects of agriculture and increased the output of grain and

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<sup>13</sup>Nata Duvvury, "Women in Agriculture: A Review of the Indian Literature," Economic and Political Weekly 24, Review of Women's Studies (28 October 1989):ws104.



cash crops, while equally important areas of economic activity which women's roles are more significant have been ignored."<sup>14</sup>

Women and female children bear the main brunt of this diminished access to valuable basic resources. For example, as the main gatherers of fuel, fodder and water, women have had to travel longer distances to collect fuelwood and as a result their working day has lengthened. Some estimates of the amount of time spent collecting household fuel are noted in table 4. This in turn has further exacerbated their already weakened economic and social situation. In addition, increased time of collection and declining quality of fuel has resulted in the reduction of the number of cooked meals consumed. Moreover, for women of the poorer sections of the agrarian population, this has meant a greater burden of housework and a lesser ability to maintain minimum standards of cleanliness. This in turn affects their own health as well as the health of their children.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Roger Jeffrey, Patricia Jeffrey, and Andrew Lyon, "Taking Dung-Work Seriously: Women's Work and Rural Development in North India," Economic and Political Weekly 24, Review of Women's Studies (29 April 1989):ws35.

<sup>15</sup>Duvvury, 104.

TABLE 4

## TIME SPENT BY RURAL WOMEN COLLECTING HOUSEHOLD FUEL

<u>Location</u>	<u>Hrs./Day</u>	<u>Date of Estimate</u>
Dwing (Uttar Pradesh hills; depleted)	5	1984
Pakhi (Uttar Pradesh hills; depleted)	4	1984
Garhwal	5	1985
Malari (Uttar Pradesh plains; cow dung and agricultural wastes)	0.81	1986
Gujarat (depleted plains)	4-5	1983
Deokhop (Maharashtra; hilly forest area)	4.13	1986
Sehar (Madhya Pradesh)	2.48	1986
Karnataka (plains)	1	1983
Pura (Southern India)	2.6	1983
N. Suriyan (Himachal Pradesh; animal dung)	0.7	1986
Rajpara (Assam; forested)	0.86	1986

Source: The World Bank, Gender and Poverty in India (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1991), 324.

## Deforestation

Aside from women's diminished access to basic resources brought about by the Green Revolution, the commercialization of forestry has further compounded the distortion in gender relations. Inasmuch as profit became a primary impetus in commercial enterprises, indiscriminate forest exploitation during British rule became the primary thrust of state policy during both the colonial and post-colonial eras. While the objective was ostensibly to improve the infrastructures during the mid-nineteenth century, such as expanding railways, building bridges, etc., during the inter-war years, large tracts of land were also given to favored individuals for setting-

up coffee and tea plantations. Simultaneously, land clearing for crop cultivation was encouraged so as to augment land revenues.<sup>16</sup>

In post-colonial India, the policies adopted and implemented, for the most part, mark little to no shift away from the view of forests as primarily sources of commercial use and financial gain. This is evident in the estimate that, between 1974 and 1984, India lost 34% of its forest cover.<sup>17</sup> Such extensive forest depletion can only be the result of extensive commercialization.

Deforestation due to commercialization is evident in many of the policies adopted by the government and implemented with the assistance of foreign aid agencies. This becomes evident in the designation of the projects and donor agencies as listed in table 5. As Bharat Dogra demonstrates, the projects most encouraged by the World Bank and by national and international aid agencies are all designed in some way to facilitate and indeed accelerate the process of further destruction of native forests; replacing them with more commercial plantations of fast growing exotics. For example, one project seeks to replace natural forests with monocultures of commercially lucrative species such as the pine and the eucalyptus. Another project seeks the setting-up of monocultures on good agricultural land - land that is necessary for feeding the already undernourished local population.<sup>18</sup> While many of

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<sup>16</sup>For a more elaborate analysis, see: Agarwal, "Rural Women and Natural Resources."

<sup>17</sup>World Bank, Gender and Poverty in India, 57.

<sup>18</sup>Bharat Dogra, "The World Bank vs. the People of Bastar," The Ecologist 15 (1985):44.

TABLE 5

## INDIAN FORESTRY PROJECTS RECEIVING FOREIGN AID, 1980

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<u>Name of Donor</u> <u>Country/Agency</u>	<u>Name of the Project</u>
FAO/TCP	Modernization of plywood industry in India
TAO/TCP	Preliminary assessment of utilization of Andaman Hardwoods for manufacture of paper and pulp
FAO/TCP	Transfer of Economic Model of FAO for use in India
UNDP	Integrated saw milling and wood working
UNFPA/FAO	Slash & Burn (Study on population in Asian Forestry Communities)
WFP	Social & Economic Development through Forestry Activities, Maharashtra
World Bank	Gujarat Community Forestry
World Bank	Madhya Pradesh Forestry Technical Assistance Project, Bastar, Madhya Pradesh (Pines in place of natural forests)
World Bank	Uttar Pradesh Social Forestry
Ford Foundation	Community Forest Project
Denmark/DANIDA	Development of seed Procurement and Tree Improvement Centre
FRG	Development of Conifers Research Centre, Simla
FRG	Project for Erosion Prevention, Dhahladhar Range, Himachal Pradesh
New Zealand	Establishment of Fire Fighting Depots
New Zealand	Seeding and Spacing trials of Conifers
Sweden/SIDA	Forestry Programme Co-ordinator
Sweden/SIDA	Support of the large scale afforestation of Giant Inil, by import of seed from the Philippines
Sweden/SIDA	Support to the establishment of Indian Institute of Forest Management
Sweden/SIDA	Support to the Indian Logging Training Project
Sweden/SIDA	Support to West Bengal Forest Development Corporation

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Source: Bharat Dogra, "The World Bank vs the People of Bastar," The Ecologist 15 (1985):45.

these schemes are promoted under the banner of social forestry, they are primarily concerned with wood for commercial use and with monocultural plantations and not with the preservation of the forests.

Moreover, as evident in one of its sector policy papers on forestry, the World Bank basically demonstrates its support for forest destruction inasmuch as it argues that Third World countries have a comparative advantage in tropical hardwood which can provide valuable foreign exchange. Income earned from this comparative advantage is expected once again to eventually 'trickle-down' to the masses. While in theory the World Bank remains sensitive to the needs of the poor, in practice its deeds fall short.

For instance, in the newly deforested areas the World Bank has sought to supply alternative sources of wood and wood products to the people affected. Yet, as Dogra emphasizes, "Social forestry programs designed to provide fuelwood and fodder for the poor are instead becoming a source of quick money for big farmers. The Uttar Pradesh government's World Bank assisted social forestry program has overshot its farm forestry targets by 3430%, but fallen short of its targets for creation of community self-help woodlots by 92%. Judging by the World Bank's own mid-term review of the social forestry projects in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat, big farmers and the paper mills they supply with wood for pulp are emerging as the primary beneficiaries of these multi-care schemes."<sup>19</sup> Again the poor remain waiting.

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 45.

### Gender-Specific Effects

The effects of deforestation on women obviously are many. India's forests have traditionally provided a wide variety of essential items. These include food, fuel, fodder, fibre, small timber, manure, bamboo, medicinal herbs, oils, materials for house building and handicrafts, resin, gum, honey, spices, etc., both for personal use and for sale.<sup>20</sup> The gathering of these essential items for daily use has always provided rural women and children, especially poor and landless households, with an ensured source of subsistence. The forests are a source of all sorts of edible fruits, roots, shoots, etc., which are collected when required. As Dogra notes, the availability of this food is at the maximum during the lean period of the year from March/April to August/September, when people's needs for an alternative to their diet of cereals is greatest.<sup>21</sup> In such a situation where millions of people are heavily dependent upon biomass resources for their daily existence, destruction of the forests and hence the reduction of these resources has an extremely adverse impact on the daily lives of the people.

Women and female children bear the main burden of deforestation in the same manner as they do in the decreasing access to basic resources. Insofar as water collection is highly interdependent with fuel collection, the more time a woman must spend on collecting fuel, the less time she will have on securing a necessary supply of

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<sup>20</sup>Agarwal, "Rural Women, Poverty and Natural Resources," 55.

<sup>21</sup>Dogra, 46-7.

water. Moreover, massive deforestation has lowered the water table and increased the frequency of draughts.<sup>22</sup> Once again, as predominant fulfillers of these needs, this has further strained women's ability to ensure the minimum level of a decent existence. Therefore, the context of the whole commercialization of forestry - or what is called social forestry - tends to obstruct any opportunity for serious alleviation of women's already depressed condition.

The prevalent gender ideology, as previously discussed, excludes women as the main providers of family sustenance. This ideology ignores women's role in the household as a productive worker in development plans and aid programs. As a result, women's contribution to the family is devalued. In essence, what women do in the household is firmly denied the attributes of 'work'. In other words, the central function of women in rural India, though critical for household and family survival, is rendered peripheral. This in turn disables many aid and development planners from factoring in the potential contribution of the household unit for overall development. By being oblivious to the central productive function of women in the family, development plans, however well devised and motivated, have had and continue to have, devastating consequences on the well-being of society.

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<sup>22</sup>Duvvury, 104.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CAPITALIST PENETRATION: CURRENT TRENDS

In 1947, at the time of independence, the Indian economy remained generally backward and structurally colonial. It was still an externally oriented economy with a very weak infrastructural and industrial base, especially in the production of capital goods. A large and stagnant, if not declining agricultural base, continued to dominate it. Following independence, a major concerted effort was made to dismantle the inherited colonial structure.<sup>1</sup> In its plans for industrialization and development, significant efforts were made to bolster its continued independent status. It followed that the government of India took many precautionary measures to avoid falling back to a neo-colonial condition typical of other newly independent countries seeking to industrialize. This was evident in India's development policies and on the role allowed to foreign trade and capital.

#### Economic Policies: 1947-1991

In the years immediately following independence, India became increasingly less dependent on foreign trade and in this sense was able to transform its economy. As mentioned earlier, colonial rule distorted the trade balance between agriculture and

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<sup>1</sup>Aditya Mukherjee and Mridula Mukherjee, "Imperialism and Growth of Indian Capitalism in Twentieth Century," Economic and Political Weekly 23 (12 March 1988):536.



industry and turned the country into an exporter of raw materials and food and an importer of manufactured goods. During this period, India's economy was, to a large extent, dependent upon changes occurring in the Western economies as well as conditioned by the vulnerabilities and vagaries of international trade, prices and capital flows. By increasing trade with socialist and developing countries, India was able to decrease substantially its dependence for foreign trade on Western countries. Furthermore, India's export sector was developed preponderantly by indigenous capital, and in the 1970s, the contribution of trans-national corporations to India's exports was less than 5%.<sup>2</sup>

Until the late 1970s, the anti-imperialist ideology which permeated the nationalist movement laid the foundation for independent India's policies on the role of foreign capital. While needed for industrialization, foreign capital was curtailed in the traditional areas preferred during colonial rule. These included the extractive and other export industries, plantations, foreign trade, banking, insurance and consumer goods industries within the home market.<sup>3</sup> With firm roots in anti-colonial sentiment, the Indian government's policies were geared, above all, towards ensuring that foreign capital did not re-acquire a dominant position in the national economy.

While the national government of India was assiduously seeking to integrate the country as an economic unit, the thrust of its planning led, in large measure, to

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 536-7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 537.

the continuation of the gender gap that existed during the colonial period. This result was a carry-over of a legacy of obliviousness to household dynamics in general and to the value of women's work in particular. As mentioned earlier, it is this 'traditional' attitude towards women's labor that rendered development plans and reforms flawed in terms of women's rights to autonomy, equity and empowerment.

Up until the late 1960s, the Indian government was able to maintain its development policies of planning and secure an eminent role for the public sector without becoming dependent on foreign capital. Following a series of draughts and two costly wars, one with China in 1962 and the other with Pakistan in 1965, the country was drifting towards a major balance of payments crisis. In turn, the Indian government was forced to loosen its earlier economic priorities in order to steer it towards an export oriented growth. The urge to secure foreign exchange earnings in a competitive world market meant an increasing pivotal role for trans-national corporations. Furthermore, the economic changes therefore had to be directed towards compliance with patterns determined by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, known as structural adjustment programs.

According to the World Debt Tables published by the World Bank, India increased its rate of borrowing over the last decade and, by the end of 1990, its external debt had gone from \$20 million to over \$70 million.<sup>4</sup> The reasons for over borrowing are many. T. Krishna Kumar argues that in the mid-1980s India stepped

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<sup>4</sup>World Bank, World Debt Tables, 1991-92, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1991):186

up its defense imports<sup>5</sup> while increasing other imports. To cover its revenue debts, India borrowed funds from abroad at high interest rates. The Gulf War in 1990-91 further aggravated the balance of payments situation worsened by the hike in oil prices, the decline in India's exports to the Gulf countries, and the fall in foreign remittances, etc.<sup>6</sup> This placed India in a crisis balance of payments situation in the first half of 1991, meaning India had either to default on its debt and face the serious consequences that would follow or accept the supply side strategy of structural adjustment and stabilization.

#### The New Economic Policy: 1991-Present

In July 1991, India signed the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF). This entailed correcting imbalances in the budget and external payments account and the devaluation of the rupee. This led the Indian government to cut back government expenditures and focus on long-term systemic changes built around deregulation, liberalization of import policies, marketization and privatization of the national economy.<sup>7</sup> In this sense, the structural adjustment program promulgated by the IMF were supposed to bring the fiscal deficit under control, boost exports and

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<sup>5</sup>For instance, India's military expenditure as a percentage of its Gross Domestic Product increased by 73% between 1960-1989 as it went from 1.9% to 3.3%. (United Nations, Human Development Report, 1992 [New York: Oxford University Press, 1992], 167).

<sup>6</sup>T. Krishna Kumar, "Forgetting To Remember," Economic and Political Weekly 27 (17 October 1992):2299.

<sup>7</sup>Rehman Sobhan, "Rethinking the Market Reform Paradigm," Economic and Political Weekly 27, Review of Political Economy (25 July 1992):pe66.

deregulate the private sector ostensibly to improve productivity.

As Dilip Mookherjee points out, structural adjustment programs can be extremely painful, especially in the short-run, because stabilization in a recessionary period means tighter fiscal controls while traditionally protected sectors receive lower subsidies. Inevitably, the poorer sections of the population would suffer from an increase in the inflation rates as well as from increased unemployment and a decrease in social welfare expenditures.<sup>8</sup> While structural adjustment policies reinforce the globalization of the economy and put into effect a program unconcerned with revitalizing the rural economy, only the upper 10-15% of the already affluent population benefits while further pauperization occurs among the rest.<sup>9</sup> This is due mainly to the fact that structural adjustment programs privilege investment should be in the industrial infrastructure at the expense of agriculture, village industry and social expenditures.

#### Gender-Specific Effects

The effects of structural adjustment programs on women have been dramatic. Two of these effects can be seen in women's employment in industry and in their access to social services. For instance, while women's overall employment may increase in the non-farm sector, it will be mainly in the informal sector, where pay is

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<sup>8</sup>Dilip Mookherjee, "Indian Economy at the Crossroads," Economic and Political Weekly 27 (11-18 April 1992):792.

<sup>9</sup>Arun Ghosh, "Management of Economy and IMF Conditionalities," Economic and Political Weekly 27 (4-11 January 1992):15.

low and job security even lower.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore in order to service the debts, social service expenditures, of which women tend to be the primary beneficiaries, become low priorities on the governmental agenda. In turn, cuts in welfare programs drive even more women into the informal sector to enable them minimum subsistence.

### Women's Employment and the Globalization of the Economy

As discussed earlier, the supply-side strategy of stabilization followed by structural adjustment entails also opening up economies through trade liberalization ushering in an era of deregulation. As cost-effectiveness becomes the primary objective, the 'costliness' of labor market regulations are viewed as 'rigidities' and thus harmful to the growth of future employment. In turn, protective labor legislation and social security measures are reduced, making labor markets more flexible and the nature of employment more disposable. As Deshpande and Deshpande describe the process, "increased use of casual, temporary, contract and other types of non-permanent labor are some of the dimensions of this flexibilization of labor markets. Though employment increased in most countries that expected the export-led growth

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<sup>10</sup>"The term 'informal sector' (IS) broadly refers to an economic environment in which actors are unprotected (insofar as protection derives from the state) and therefore presumed to be insecure. It is also an environment in which actors are virtually unregulated and therefore free to respond to market forces -- and to be buffeted by them. For the majority of informal sector workers, and especially those who are women, their low initial skill and asset endowments and the asymmetrical power relations they confront mean that the freedom to respond to market forces encompass only a very limited set of choices." (World Bank, Gender and Poverty in India, 91-2).

strategy, it was increasingly employment that was low-paid and insecure."<sup>11</sup> Trends in female labor force participation that have taken place in India, including the 'feminization of labor activity' introduced in the 1970s and the implications for women's labor imposed by the structural adjustment programs of the early 1990s need to be further examined.

According to Nirmala Banerjee, from 1911-51, women's role in manufacturing had been steadily declining.<sup>12</sup> In this sense, it seemed as if growth in the modern sector contributed largely to the marginalization of women as workers. Yet during the decade between 1971-81, this declining trend had been arrested as women's share in manufacturing employment had gone up by 60%. This is due to the feminization of labor activity that has occurred in India during this time period. Feminization of labor activity is defined as a process wherein female labor force participation rises perceptibly while male labor force participation falls.<sup>13</sup> This process is evident in many urban areas of India during the 1980s. In Bombay, for example, women's participation rates increased from 9% to 11.6% between 1981-91, while that for men decreased from 55.4% to 54.9% over the same period of time. As a result, the number of women workers per 1,000 working men improved substantially from 125

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<sup>11</sup>Sudha Deshpande and L.K. Deshpande, "New Economic Policy and Female Employment," Economic and Political Weekly 27 (10 October 1992):2248.

<sup>12</sup>Nirmala Banerjee, "Trends in Women's Employment, 1971-81: Some Macro-Level Observations," Economic and Political Weekly 24, Review of Women's Studies (29 April 1989):ws16.

<sup>13</sup>Deshpande and Deshpande, 2248.

in 1981 to 197 in 1991.<sup>14</sup>

The thrust of the increase of women workers was in the more modern sectors of industry or towards the manufacturing of newer products, the same areas where most deregulatory policies were passed. The informalization of employer-employee relations that occurred during the 1970s and 1980s has meant that even when women work for larger formal sector firms, they themselves often remain in the informal sector. According to a World Bank study, two phenomenon explain this seeming contradiction. The first is that when women are hired in the formal sector, they are typically hired as casual laborers, where the work environment remains typical of the informal sector. Secondly, "large and medium-scale industries have increasingly adopted the 'putting out' system: certain steps of the production process are contracted out on a piece-rate basis to home-based or micro-enterprise workers who, since they are not covered by the labor laws, can be paid less and do not entail long-term employment obligations."<sup>15</sup> In this sense, the employment created has meant a new type of exploitation of women in garment, electronic, food processing and other export-promoting industries.

As previously mentioned, the structural adjustment programs are likely to increase women's labor force activity. Yet most of this labor will be flexible in the form of contract, temporary or casual labor and thus will be intermittent. This is due

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 2249.

<sup>15</sup>World Bank, Gender and Poverty in India, 87.

to the emphasis placed on export-led growth and trade liberalization. Deshpande and Deshpande argue that part of the National Economic Policy put forward in July 1991 by the Indian government and in line with World Bank and IMF guidelines, involves devaluation of the rupee and deregulation of trade. Devaluation combined with trade liberalization means that production for domestic markets will become less profitable. Since export led industries are typically more labor intensive, the total demand for labor in the economy should increase.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, female labor force participation rates are likely to increase faster than that of males for a variety of reasons. Wages paid to female workers are considerably lower than those paid to males. This is due to the gender ideology imposed by capitalist penetration insofar as it tends to reinforce the notion that women's wage labor is 'supplementary' to family income, and in this sense, women do not need to be paid as much.

In 1983 for example, in urban India a regularly employed female worker earned at least 25% less than a regularly employed male worker while a female casual worker earned about half the wage of a male casual worker.<sup>17</sup> A more specific example exists in Bombay. In the Santa Cruz Electronics Export Processing Zone (SEEPZ), women constitute about 91% of the total workforce and work as unskilled or semi-skilled assembly operators. In the same factory, men work as supervisors, engineers, scientists, maintenance and security personnel. About three blocks away

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<sup>16</sup>Deshpande and Deshpande, 2251.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.



from the SEEPZ is a large-scale electronics factory (NELCO), where about 20% of its workforce are women. Also close to SEEPZ is another huge factory, Larsen and Toubro. This multi-national corporation employs over 10,000 people, with about 1% of its workforce being female. The average pay rates of each of these factories respectively is: Rs. 450 per month, Rs. 1,000 per month, and Rs. 2,000 per month. This demonstrates further that the pattern of women's employment facilitates their access to work where wages are at the lowest and drastically restricts employment where the wages are higher. Thus the jobs created for women by the National Economic Policy are likely to be underpaid, insecure and intermittent.

The feminization of labor activity takes place not in the high-paid, modern industrial processes however, but in the low-paid, traditional processes in manufacturing. The supposed docility and natural agility for repetitive and menial jobs has led to the increasing employment of women in the export processing units set up by multi-national corporations in free trade zones. Yet labor docility is created by coercion. Given the massive unemployment, the income women earn is precious for their own subsistence and for that of their families. Thus, as Deshpande and Deshpande conclude, women suffer a double disadvantage inasmuch as both their poverty and their gender restrict their options by confining their access to education and training. Poor women are forced to accept any work on any terms either at home or outside it.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Tbid., 2250.

### Gender and Cuts in Social Spending

Cuts in social welfare spending are also likely to affect women more adversely than men. As Diane Elson notes, the public sector is one of the largest employers of women. As employees are laid-off due to downsizing in the public sector, women are most likely the first to be let go because, as we have learned, it is often falsely assumed that 'women do not need jobs as much as men'.<sup>19</sup>

As evident in the 1992-93 budget proposals, the economic policy currently being followed by the Indian government leads to a steady decline in public/social service expenditure allocations. This is clearly demonstrated in table 6.<sup>20</sup> For example, rural development for irrigation and flood control is budgeted for less. Moreover, allocations for social expenditures, such as those on education, are also curtailed for less. Total expenditure for the Ministry of Agriculture is further decreased while the provision for food subsidy goes down. The neglect of investments on economic infrastructure is likely to slow down the growth of both agriculture and industry. This neglect of infrastructure is likely to impede even the private sector efforts at development.

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<sup>19</sup>Diane Elson, "From Survival Strategies to Transformation Strategies: Women's Needs and Structural Adjustment," in Unequal Burden: Economic Crises, Persistent Poverty and Women's Work, ed. Lourdes Beneria and Shelley Feldman (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 45.

<sup>20</sup>Although the allocations for health, family welfare and welfare are increased, those for both rural and urban infrastructural development are less. This policy appears to continue to treat women largely as passive beneficiaries of social services and anti-poverty programs; targeting them for various outputs such as food, shelter and family-planning. At the same time, women's access to inputs such as education, training, etc. are budgeted for less. This in turn tends to ignore women's role as an economic actor.

TABLE 6

## EXPENDITURES ON SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

	(Rs crore)		
	1991-92 (Budget)	1991-92 (Revised)	1992-93 (Budget)
Rural Development	3,521	3,021	3,113
Education	1,750	1,679	1,725
Health	548	525	560
Family Welfare	759	867	1,010
Welfare	508	507	559
Urban Development	743	717	732
Small-Scale ind. and agro-rural ind.	598	547	517
Water Resources	346	322	330
Non-conventional energy	150	135	129

Source: Arun Ghosh, "1992-93 Budget and Economic Policies," Economic and Political Weekly 27 (11-18 April 1992):829.

Inevitably, the decline in public/social service expenditure allocations is bound to have more adverse effects on women than men because women normally are the primary beneficiaries of these programs. For instance, in India as in most countries, women fulfill a multiplicity of roles. While most men confine themselves to mainly being producers, women's work falls under two categories; one that produces an income and the household work that does not. Cuts in social welfare add to women's burden in the unpaid sphere by shifting costs from the paid sphere to the unpaid sphere. At the same time, decline in individual and family incomes means that women must work harder and devote more time to earning an income. As the Commonwealth's Report asserts:

...women almost always face more severe constraints and harsher choices in their use of time than do men, and this difference has been magnified by economic recession and structural adjustment. With falls in individual and family incomes, women are obliged to devote more time to their role as producers, i.e., to earning incomes in cash or in kind. This, in turn, requires an intensification of effort by women in other directions because their other roles have to be carried out in less time, while often becoming more difficult to accomplish. Greater effort is needed to provide for their families on lower incomes - to purchase basic goods from the cheapest sources, and to safeguard their children's health and education at a time when structural adjustment is causing a fall in the 'social wage'...the adjustment programs being pursued diminish the services available to women in their non-producer roles, without assisting them in their role as producers.<sup>21</sup>

Women need access to public sector services such as water supplies, electricity, sanitation facilities, etc., to lighten their burden of unpaid work to enter the market. Thus cuts in social welfare programs further reduce the chances women have for any minimum improvement in the quality of their lives and in their rights for some leisure.

Structural adjustment programs are likely to exacerbate the burden placed on women by failing to take into account women's unpaid workload and cuts in social welfare. In this sense, the problems these policies seek to resolve are bound to worsen. Rather than seeking to correct the gender ideology, they compound women's burden. Peggy Antrobus sums up this process adequately, stating that:

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<sup>21</sup>Commonwealth Secretariat, Engendering Adjustment for the 1990s: Report of a Commonwealth Expert Group on Women and Structural Adjustment (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1989), 3-4.

...far from reflecting a failure to take account of gender roles, these policies are actually based on a deeply gendered ideology which simultaneously minimizes the value of the tasks necessary for social reproduction and promotes a pattern of economic production based on the exploitation of the socio-economic vulnerabilities of a female population, which often bears major responsibility for both nurturance as well as the financial support of children, indeed often whole families. In fact, the failure to recognize the vital link between reproductive and productive roles leads to the institution of policies which have a devastating effect on the whole society in the short-run and threaten the long-term social, economic, and political development of Third World countries...Ironically, the 'super-exploitation' of women may be, in fact, the logical consequence of all our efforts at drawing attention to the important role of women in development. For in the name of 'efficiency,' governments now plan to save money on services in the knowledge that women will somehow cope.<sup>22</sup>

It is clear that the aided programs of international financial organizations, with their respective conditionalities, had a devastating impact on the poor in general and on women in particular. Whatever might be the need for such structural adjustments in developing societies and whatever advantages they might introduce in the long-run, they will continue to be outweighed by the unending disempowerment of women.

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<sup>22</sup>Peggy Antrobus, "The Empowerment of Women," in The Women and International Development Annual, Volume 1, ed. Rita S. Gallin, Marilyn Aronoff, and Anne Ferguson (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), 191-2.

## CONCLUSIONS

As I have sought to demonstrate, the whole realm of theoretical formulations of international relations has, either consciously or unconsciously, been unable to give an account of how the global system functions that has included women.

It was during the centralization processes of the Athenian polis when the public was first decoupled from the private and when gender stratification was first institutionalized in the form of separate and unequal spheres of activity. Subsequent theoretical formulations had women's exclusion built in. Bringing women's concerns into center stage became difficult, complex and at times impossible. Although certain modifications in the degree of insensitivity to gender relations did take place as spill-over, such as in the Globalist and Structuralist schools of thought, the role of men remained in the commanding heights in all conceptual and methodological instruments of analysis. This flawed approach to understand the world undermined the ability to change it in a manner that is inclusive of those outside of power in general and of women in particular.

This problem becomes even more acute and painful when women's condition in the developing countries continues to be addressed. The experience in India, a parliamentary democracy which has on its books reformist legislation, appears to have a propensity to accommodate women's concerns. Yet because of the dynamics of the

global system, and the imperative to adjust to it - even with these relatively favorable conditions - the disempowerment persists. It is in the light of this predicament where the conditions described in chapters two through four continue to prevail despite the wealth of literature, the growing activities of non-governmental organizations, and the legislative intent to enhance women's status.

That is why it is my view that correcting the historic imbalance in women's status in India - as throughout - requires restoring a balance in the theoretical guidelines that determine the direction of analysis. What has been brought to light is how various schools of thought in international relations failed to contribute to improve the position of women due to their inability to conceptualize or even directly address social and power relations that determine women's and men's respective positions.

For instance, What is defined as economic activity, and why? What kinds of actions are termed political, and why? Maithreyi Krishna Raj argues that, if political science cannot explain the political actions of women because of its narrow construction of what is political, then it needs to redefine its frontiers, its methodology and its theories. If sociology cannot deal with the issue of why the crucial function of human regeneration done by women receives no recognition, it needs to examine its concerns, its questions and its answers. If economic theory is unable to explain women's work and the inferior returns to it, that theory needs either

repair or complete overhauling.<sup>1</sup>

A theory of international relations that excludes the situation of women - i.e., of how gender effects, and is in turn affected by the workings of the international arena - does not therefore seek to understand women's subordination and thus is unable to change it. Since women make up the majority of the world's population, until a theory of international relations conceptually grasps the effects of capitalist integration on gender, it will be impossible to understand how the world was made, works and is reproduced. As policies are a product of theoretical understanding, then flawed formulations contribute, inadvertently perhaps, to a failure in bringing about positive social transformation.

It is worth mentioning that since the late 1970s, the contemporary feminist movement in India focused largely on economic and demographic issues. The issue of sexual violence was given little attention until the early 1980s when the feminist movement shifted its strategy and brought issues of gender violence to the forefront of its agenda. This movement can become a significant catalyst for change and a corrective to the dislocations that have marginalized women in society. It is expected that in the coming years, while preparations for the international women's conference are taking place, consciousness-raising on a global level, on the rights and roles of women, will embolden a political determination to bring about changes that have long eluded women's struggles in general and in developing societies in particular. This

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<sup>1</sup>Maithreyi Krishna Raj, "Introduction," in Women's Studies in India: Some Perspectives, ed. Maithreyi Krishna Raj (Bombay: Popular Prakashan Private, Limited, 1986):10.



undoubtedly will restrain the looseness that has brought about acute social problems as a result of the excesses and obliviousness of an unrestrained market economy. In this respect, the non-governmental organizations of India have taken steps in networking on a global level and are expected to expedite the process of a coherent discourse and the agenda of the priorities for women's empowerment. This undoubtedly is bound to have a substantive influence on the directions and purposes of international relations.

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