

## ***LOCATING GENDER IN THE GOVERNANCE DISCOURSE***

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In the recent history of the idea of governance, there has occurred an observable shift from a state-centric notion of governance to a more catholic one that encompasses the three major domains of social action: the state, the market and the civil society. The emphasis on governance in recent development discourse attempts to redress the excesses of the swing away from the state to the market as the premier agency for achieving the goals of development and poverty reduction. The market - which was till recently offered as the definitive panacea - is no longer seen as unambiguously good, and the state is no longer viewed as unequivocally bad. Current notions of governance thus seek to embrace both state and market simultaneously. It is also not altogether accidental that the new emphasis on governance coincides with a renewed appreciation of the virtues of civil society and, in some accounts, of social capital as a factor enabling development.<sup>1</sup>

The recognition of this plurality of domains - state, market and civil society - is arguably the most distinctive feature of the new definitions of governance that have emerged in recent years. But it is worth noting that they also recognise a multiplicity of levels. As such, they include, in addition to the institutions of national government, a focus on institutions of local and global governance, and indeed frequently suggest an emphasis on these two levels at the expense of the national. This displacement of the national is an unsurprising corollary of the interrogation of the centrality of the

<sup>1</sup>*Ben Fine has argued that the promotion of the concept of social capital is of a piece with the economics of the post-Washington consensus, in its search for the role of non-economic factors in economic performance. (Fine, 1999:13)*

state in the new governance discourse.

Altogether, therefore, governance is now viewed as a more broad-based process which encompasses state-society interactions and partnerships. The empirical referents of this process-based, rather than structure-based, definition of governance include a range of organizations, as well as the complex relationships between them. Institutions of local government (such as *panchayats*); civil society organizations (ranging from social movements to non-governmental organizations, and from co-operatives to civic associations); and private corporations as well as other market institutions, are all relevant actors in the new lexicon of governance.

It is, however, worth noting the fact that the shift from government-speak to governance-speak has had quite distinct imperatives in the North and the South. In the North, the policies of deregulation and cutbacks in social spending were substantially the result of a fiscal crisis in the advanced capitalist democracies, leading them to search for new strategies of public management to replace the inefficient and gargantuan welfare-state bureaucracies, even if these meant reorganizing the state itself along the lines of private industry. Privatization and liberalization have not meant a reduction in the role of the state, but rather a process of 'reinventing government' in a way that entails "the replacement of bureaucracies which directly produce public services by ones which closely monitor and supervise contracted-out and privatized services, according to complex financial criteria and performance indicators." (Cerny, 2000:129). Simultaneously, the wave of new social movements—including the women's peace and environmental movements – signalled new assertions, independent of party politics, in civil society. The resurgence of civil society was particularly marked in the erstwhile socialist states of eastern Europe. The retreat of the state effected by the new emphasis on the market and civil society was arguably accentuated, in the 1990s, by the processes of globalization, expressed in diverse institutional forms, from the spatially limited economic and political federation i.e. the European Union, to institutions like the WTO and others, seeking to inaugurate global regimes in trade and environmental regulation. Together, these tendencies have effected a truncation of the state's role as the regulator of economic activity, as also its role as a provider of social services, but not arguably its role as the

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“orchestrator of social consensus” (Hirst, 2000:26).

In the South, by contrast, governance discourse did not merely recognise and justify an existential reality. It landed on Southern shores as medicine prescribed by the good doctors of the Bretton Woods institutions, to remedy the laggard and inefficient development performance of these states. It is well known that governance was first problematised in a World Bank document of 1989 on sub-Saharan Africa, which suggested that the Bank's programmes of adjustment and investment in that region were being rendered ineffective by a 'crisis of governance'. Good governance soon came to be equated with “sound development management”, and was defined as “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development” (World Bank, 1992:3). Its four key dimensions were specified as public sector management (capacity and efficiency); accountability; the legal framework for development; and information and transparency. The OECD drew upon this definition, and proceeded to link it with participatory development, human rights and democracy. The convergence between these definitions of governance and neo-liberal economic policies was unmistakable, as both made a case for democratic capitalist societies, governed by a minimal state. Notably missing from this definition of governance was the idea of politics. It made no allowance for citizens of democratic societies to determine their particular concepts of governance through the political process. In this way, it ruled out the generation of a governance agenda that is a product of democratic politics, rather than a condition of it (Jayal, 1997).

Happily, this definition of governance has, in subsequent years, been transcended and alternative conceptualizations have emerged which are not driven by donor interests or tied to aid conditionalities. Not merely do the newer definitions recognize the *plurality of actors* involved in the process of governance, they address themselves also to the *substance* of governance. This means that governance is no longer simply equated with civil service reform, or with the application to public organizations of management strategies devised in the private sector. Instead, there is now a greater emphasis on participation, decentralisation, accountability, governmental responsiveness and even broader concerns such as

those of social equality and justice. This new emphasis has been facilitated by a parallel process: the discrediting of the conventional definition of development as economic growth, and the adoption by international agencies, of the human development perspective associated with the writings of Amartya Sen and Mahbub-ul-Haq, most recently linked also with the agenda of human rights (UNDP, 2000). Of course, it must not be forgotten that the redefinition of development has been at least partly a consequence of social and political struggles the world over, but especially in the countries of the South, against unsustainable and inequitable forms of development.

An understanding of governance thus requires that we study domains other than that of exclusively formal institutionalized political and administrative structures, and recognise that governance concerns encompass a variety of spheres. These include the political (e.g., equal application of the rule of law, accountability and transparency, the right to information, corruption in public life); the economic (e.g., corporate governance, the regulation of the private sector and financial markets); and civil society (in its various manifestations, not excluding uncivil associations). However, the degree to which the activities in these varied domains reflect the substance of the concern for governance varies. For instance, initiatives in some of these areas - e.g., social movements are participatory, but in many others they are manifestly not. Similarly, while some non-governmental organizations potentially offer more effective delivery even of public goods or services, they are not necessarily accountable or transparent, and several even begin to resemble the state and replicate statist models.

A gendered perspective on governance must encompass all the realms that the new discourse of governance recognises, and more. Indeed, the three domains of governance should not be seen as unproblematically hospitable to gender issues. In fact, there is nothing inherently gender-friendly in this widening of the ambit of governance beyond the state. Even if the need to go beyond the state is indisputable, the importance of state intervention for disadvantaged social groups can not be underestimated. Ultimately, it is unlikely that social provisioning can or will be done by any agency other than the state. Even in advanced capitalist societies, the role of the state as the 'orchestrator of social consensus' remains

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relevant. Markets are notoriously hostile to the poor, and given the gendered nature of poverty, to women belonging to these sections. Civil society is not definitionally gender-neutral, either. Even as women's movements are located on this site, we cannot ignore the fact that many civil society organisations - such as religious fundamentalist groups - are neither civil nor democratic nor empowering, and frequently conservative in the way they define women's roles.

What then does the project of 'engendering' governance entail? In 1995, the UNDP committed itself to the view that improvements in "the public sector management aspects of governance...might promote the realization of objectives of sustainable human development" (UNDP, 1997:1). Here, sustainable human development was posited as the objective, and governance (as public sector management) as the appropriate instrument for its achievement. The normative weight of the definition was unmistakably on sustainable development. Two years later - recognizing that this definition (a) was not adequately critical of the idea of economic growth as a panacea for development; (b) presented an incomplete picture of the major realms of governance; and (c) did not sufficiently account for future challenges to governance, arising out of globalisation processes and environmental degradation - the UNDP redefined governance as follows :

The exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs. It is the complex mechanisms, processes, relationships and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations and mediate their differences (UNDP, 1997:9).

This definition retains vestiges of the instrumentalist view, for though the larger document explicitly recognises that governance encompasses every institution and organisation in society, from the family to the state, the definition pointedly isolates only the three important domains of governance which, it claims, directly contribute to sustainable human development: the state (political and governmental institutions), civil society organisations and the private sector (ibid). This *focus on essentially public institutions carries an implicit endorsement of the public-private divide.*

Two cautionary arguments may therefore be ventured. First,



the very definition of governance needs to be engendered before we can embark upon the project of engendering governance itself. This implies a recognition of the fact that, through their emphasis upon public institutions of authority, current definitions reinforce the public-private divide, and make little or no attempt to recognize the private sphere as an arena of governance – e.g., the family – or as an arena influencing the exercise of social power and modes of governance. The interaction of public and private arenas of governance is important because the ways in which these spheres are distinguished and constructed affects women profoundly. Is it then unreasonable to expect the idea of governance to explain or interrogate the mutually reinforcing relationship between what Sylvia Walby has called public and private patriarchies?<sup>2</sup> Standard conceptions of governance are arguably also less than attentive to arenas of resistance, traditional methods of self-governance, or even alternative models, such as informal institutions for the collective management of natural resources.

Secondly, the project of engendering governance should be viewed in terms more exacting than simply placing women at the higher echelons of governance – of the state, the private sector and NGOs. This may be an important objective, but it is no guarantee of genuine participation or equal voice in decision-making. Historically, early feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft had invoked essentially liberal notions of equality and universal individual rights to buttress the claim of women to equal rights of citizenship. Today, almost a century after female suffrage was first granted, it is clear that franchise alone had a limited potential to transform women's lives, leading 'second-wave' feminists to question the apparent gender-neutrality of the liberal conception of the individual citizen (Voet, 1998). This concept has been found wanting precisely on account of its universalism, which precludes it from recognising the importance of difference, one response to which deficiency has been Iris Marion Young's argument for group-differentiated citizenship (Young, 1990).

In the same way, while engendering the uppermost echelons

<sup>2</sup>"Private patriarchy is based upon household production as the main site of women's oppression. Public patriarchy is based principally in public sites such as employment and the state." (Walby, 1990:24)

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of governing institutions may be regarded as an important task, it should be seen as no more than one of the multiple strategies required to achieve substantive gender equality. This is so because the engendering of the higher levels of governing institutions frequently achieves little more than the engendering of elites. Any top-down conception of governance has only a limited potential for empowering women, for even as it recognises the plurality of areas of governance (outside and beyond the state), it remains preoccupied by the uppermost layers of structures in these. The important task is surely to address the many different ways in which women are unequal, disadvantaged, oppressed and exploited : within the household, in the labour market, and as members of particular classes, castes, races, and religious communities. Women need to be empowered to interrogate their oppression in all these spheres, from the family to the state. A wider definition of governance alone can enable us to do this, though the question of how limited or how wide that definition can legitimately and usefully be is not easily resolved.

Such an interrogation suggests the possible efficacy of expressing governance concerns, and especially those of gendered governance, in the vocabulary of rights. What sort of rights theory is most hospitable to such claims? Clearly, a negative conception of rights (in terms of liberty or 'freedom from') alone is an inadequate instrument, because the principle of freedom from the state has often (from the liberal political philosopher John Locke to the contemporary libertarian philosopher Robert Nozick) been invoked to assert the indefensibility of state interference in the private sphere. From a feminist point of view, negative rights are suspect because social practices are often oppressive and patriarchal, and the absence of state interference may give license to such forces. A positive conception of rights, on the other hand, has the merit of providing not just a formal structure of rights, but also enabling conditions that make their fulfilment possible. A gendered view of governance must be a rights-based view in this latter sense, because it has to engage with and address long histories of exclusion, marginalisation and invisibility. Women's claims to voice, and to a recognition of their contribution to the productive life of society, have therefore to be couched in the language of rights for at least the following reasons :

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1. Despite ostensibly universal and gender-neutral categories of citizenship, women have continued to suffer subordination and exclusion, both within and outside the family.
2. The availability of rights is severely compromised for those belonging to subordinate social groups (e.g., racial or religious or linguistic minorities or lower castes in India), and especially so for women belonging to these groups.
3. Even in their most minimal and negative conception, rights are frequently not available to large numbers of women. Let alone the right to make meaningful choices about one's life in accordance with one's conception of self-realization, basic civil and political liberties are routinely denied or severely curtailed. These include, variously, the free exercise of the right to franchise, freedom of association and movement, the right to be elected, reproductive rights, etc.<sup>3</sup>

Let us examine more closely some dimensions of these three issues. First, the question of the universal rights of equal citizenship. Since 1895, when New Zealand became the first country to give the vote to women, most countries<sup>4</sup> in the world (which have elected assemblies) recognise the right to universal adult franchise. Most states have also ratified the major international instruments relating to gender equality, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Fewer have ratified the Convention on the Political Rights of Women. Some countries have also formally referred the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) - which interprets women's rights as human rights - to parliament. Most democracies, and even some non-democracies, extend the same constitutional rights to men and women, and few legally discriminate between the sexes. Nevertheless, the formal existence

<sup>3</sup>In Zaire, a woman cannot open a bank account without her husband's permission. In France, women obtained this freedom only in 1965. It was as recently as 2000 that Egypt made it possible for a woman to get a passport without her husband's written consent.

<sup>4</sup>Kuwait, the only country in the Gulf to have an elected assembly, has not yet given women the right to vote or to stand for election. The Amiri decree of May 1999, which proposed to give this right to women for the 2003 election, was rejected by a close vote in the new parliament in November 1999. (Tetreault and al-Mughni, 2000)



of equal rights of citizenship is no guarantee of their equal availability in practice, or of their being realisable to anything like the same degree by different sections of society. In real terms, for instance, they may be available to those who are well-off but denied to the poor. Likewise, even as they are constitutionally available to both the sexes, men may enjoy the meaningful exercise of these rights while women may not. The fact that rights may be legally provided, but effectively unavailable or denied, has led some feminists to argue that the real problem lies not with rights but with participation. In modern western liberal democracies, for instance, it is argued that women have enough equal rights and the possibilities for their realisation; what they need is to use them. However, participation surely is premised on the prior existence of rights, whose foundational importance is therefore irrefutable.

Secondly, the meaningful exercise of rights is particularly difficult – for men and women alike - in contexts of extreme social and economic inequality. Cultural minorities - whether racial, religious or linguistic - or numerous but historically oppressed groups, like the *dalit* castes, are examples of subordinate social groups whose rights are honoured more often in the breach than in the observance. The situation of women belonging to these groups is decidedly worse. To be black, working-class and female, as Sheila Rowbotham once wrote, is to be at the lower-most rung of the social ladder whose top is occupied by the white, upper-class male. In India, the extreme burden of the exploitation and poverty that characterise the situation of landless agricultural labour fall on women. Thus, *adivasi* and *dalit* women account for the highest female work participation rates of 45 per cent and 38 per cent respectively, in comparison with only 30 per cent for the rural population as a whole. They are routinely subjected to violence and sexual abuse by upper castes, receive less than the officially prescribed minimum wage, and are, in economic terms, the mainstay of the household, within which disparities in the nutritional intake and educational opportunities of boy and girl children are marked. Likewise, women belonging to religious minorities are, in matters such as divorce, maintenance and inheritance, governed by religious (rather than civil) codes of law, which are frequently discriminatory in their social practices, and often even contravene the minimal standards of gender justice.

Likewise, basic civil and political liberties, such as the free exercise of the franchise or freedom of expression, might obtain in law, but be elusive in practical terms. Illiteracy, inadequate information, and a lack of awareness about rights, are common deterrents to women exercising their franchise, freely or at all. In Pakistan, women in some rural areas are reportedly prevented from casting their vote, on account of 'cultural' sanctions (Human Development in South Asia, 2000:149). More generally, the recent pre-eminence of the issue of reproductive rights correctly indicates the lack of control of women over their own bodies and reproductive decisions. This is clearly violative even of the classical liberal (natural rights) view of the individual as the owner of her/his person.

All the rights mentioned above could arguably be considered as a part of the so-called first generation of rights - civil and political - that were achieved in the course of the bourgeois revolution in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, working-class struggles in industrial societies saw the beginnings of demands for social and economic rights, in the form of minimum wages, decent conditions of work, and so forth. Many of these rights were, at least in the western world, secured by the welfare states of the mid-twentieth century. The assertions of cultural identity - by ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples and others - have, most recently, given rise to the demand for the third-generation of cultural rights.<sup>5</sup>

In many parts of the world today, the task of accomplishing all three generations of rights is necessarily telescoped into one single and simultaneous project. It is ironical that while the language of first-generation rights is today being extended even to species in nature, there are categories of human beings to whom these are formally available but substantially denied. The recognition that even the achievement of first-generation rights is an incomplete project for many women, suggests that an enabling vocabulary of

<sup>5</sup>*It has been suggested that the classification of rights in three generations - civil and political rights in the first, social and economic rights in the second, and cultural rights in the third - is a Cold War legacy, and as such flawed (UNRISD, 2000: 4). Apart from the fact that the ancestry of this conception can actually be traced back to T.H. Marshall's theory of citizenship, it is an analytically useful classification of the important phases in the evolution of rights practice. It has the additional merit of reminding us that every successive generation of rights was achieved through social struggle.*

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rights is required, which covers the entire gamut of rights, from negative to positive and from freedom to entitlements.<sup>6</sup>

Human development too has increasingly, in recent years, come to be conceptualized in terms of human rights. A human rights approach to development is seen to possess greater moral force, than a needs-based one, because needs-based arguments project the poor as objects of charity and benevolence, or at best welfare, rather than as citizens with equal claims upon society. But rights can also be seen as a 'codification of needs' (UNRISD, 2000:5), such that from the recognition of basic needs as requiring redressal by public authority, it is but a short step to the articulation of these needs in the form of rights. However, the assertion of a moral or natural right is not as practically efficacious as the assertion of a legally enforceable right, and the superiority of rights lies in the fact that they carry with them the mandate of enforceability.

The advantages of a rights-based conception include the following:

- A rights- or entitlements-based approach places *obligations* upon government and society to protect and promote the realization of rights. The legal and constitutional availability of rights, along with provisions guaranteeing the rule of law and equality before the law, are principles which can be invoked in a court of law when a right is violated. Commissions on human rights, and offices such as those of the ombudsman, have been proliferating in recent years, as part of the effort to make the realisation of rights for the average citizen more effective.
- A rights-based approach mandates governments to provide *enabling conditions* within which existing rights may be

<sup>6</sup>Martha Nussbaum argues that rights language obscures many important questions relating to the basis of rights claims, the sources of rights, the pre-eminence of certain rights over others, the relationships of rights and duties and, above all, the question of what these are rights to. It is in clarifying this last question that Nussbaum's capabilities approach has greatest merit, because it specifies the capabilities which are sought to be enhanced. In the end, however, there appears to be some convergence between the capabilities approach and the idea of positive rights, and indeed Nussbaum identifies the particular features of rights language which have an important role to play in public discourse, a role which is complementary to the language of capabilities (Nussbaum, 2000: 96-100).

claimed, and potential rights-claims may be articulated and advanced. Thus, literacy and access to information may be viewed as enabling conditions for the meaningful exercise of political rights. Similarly, economic security may be seen as an enabling condition for the meaningful enjoyment of the right to choose one's conception of the good life.

- A rights-based view of governance encourages us to identify the *obstacles* which prevent the realization of rights, as a prelude to addressing and redressing these. The mere stipulation and codification of rights is manifestly insufficient, and any government which is cognisant of its responsibilities to protect and promote the rights of its citizens, can only do so by first identifying the social, economic and cultural factors that prevent the realization of rights for the disadvantaged.
- A rights-based approach engages with *both processes and outcomes* such that it is not enough simply for outcome to be equitable, but decision-making should be participatory as well. For instance, the policies formulated by a benevolent patriarch may be unexceptionably gender-equitable, but it would surely be appropriate to object to these on the grounds that the processes by which they were arrived at were undemocratic and excluded participation by women.<sup>7</sup> A purely needs-based approach, likewise, would be concerned only with the fulfilment of needs, regardless of the processes by which this is achieved, but only a rights-based approach to governance can insist on the importance of treating voice as a significant criterion of legitimacy in processes of policy-formulation.

<sup>7</sup>As mentioned in footnote 4, the issuance of an amiri decree conferring full political rights on Kuwaiti women was subsequently voted out by Parliament. Indeed, in Kuwait, secularists have opposed political rights for women on the grounds that Islamists have several wives and therefore enfranchising them would tilt the political balance in favour of the Islamists! In Iran, the post-revolutionary regime has introduced a law decree by which divorced women are entitled to not only alimony, but also a compensation for their housewifely functions. In India, feminists and Hindu fundamentalists found themselves taking uncomfortably similar positions on the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights in Divorce) Act in 1986, though from very different premises. There is reason, therefore, to be cautious about the varied political appropriations of issues of women's rights.

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The next section surveys the extent to which the higher echelons of the major institutions in two domains of governance, viz. the state and market, have been engendered in a variety of country-contexts across the world. There are few surprises here, but it is surely instructive for intuition to be backed by statistics. It is, however, useful to bear in mind two caveats. The first of these is that the appointment, election or recruitment of women does not necessarily imply that an institution is engendered in any significant sense of the term. Institutional norms, practices, styles of functioning, systems of rewards and incentives, etc. may continue to be androcentric even where there is a reasonable presence of women. Engendering institutions in this sense is generally also inadequate because women's voices need to be heard not merely at elite levels of governance, but at every level and in all their diversity. Nevertheless, the extent to which women are at all present in leadership positions in politics and the state, in corporations and in civil society organizations are indicative of the progress made by a society in the direction of greater gender equality, and comparisons with the situation that obtained five or ten years earlier are also good measures of the usefulness of international instruments, and the effectiveness of the feminist movements, both within countries and across them.

The second caveat - in consonance with the newer definitions of governance - reminds us of the importance of addressing the *substance* of governance, as opposed to merely its *structures*. It cautions us, therefore, against training our eyes exclusively on the upper echelons of state, market and civil society, because while doing so has the undeniable merit of covering more spheres of governance than was traditionally done, it still says nothing about the substance of governance. To disengage the top from the bottom, and focus only on the first, can be misleading in situations where women are preponderant at the base of the pyramid, providing its backbone, but are alarmingly invisible in decision-making situations. The illustrative survey of state and market institutions that follows shows just such a numerical preponderance of women at lower levels of these structures, a preponderance that is not reflected either in the processes of decision-making, or in the policy outcomes in these spheres.



***Engendering State Institutions :***

Given the traditional equation between government and governance, the project of engendering governance has, more often than not, been interpreted in terms of the presence of women in positions of decision-making in political institutions. This has customarily included the representation of women in national legislatures, in the executive bodies of political parties and, above all, the number of women ministers and heads of government. An important corollary is the issue of women's representation in administrative positions in the structures of the state. While it is surely important to record the under-representation of women in decision-making positions in politics and government (and to grasp the obstacles that explain this), it is also worthwhile to remember that *such engendering of state institutions frequently represents no more than the gendering of state elites*. It is, therefore, no surprise that the presence of women among state elites does not invariably translate into gender-equitable policy initiatives.<sup>8</sup>

The under-representation of women in high offices in politics and government is well documented. While there have been some women heads of state or government (24 Presidents and 30 Prime Ministers from 1954 to 1999), and the number of women ministers across the world doubled between 1987 and 1996, this represented an increase from 3.4% to 6.8%, on no account an impressive figure. Moreover, 48 (out of 187) countries had no women in ministerial positions at all. In fact, in the Asia-Pacific region, and Eastern Europe, the proportion of women ministers has been under 5%. There is also an unmistakable pattern in the nature of portfolios held by women: in 1999, the most substantial concentration of women ministers worldwide was in ministries of social affairs, health, women's affairs, family/children/youth, culture and

<sup>8</sup>In Kuwait, for instance, though women are denied political rights, elite women are visible in many public arenas, such as universities, corporations and even government agencies (Tetrault and al-Mughni, 2000: 157-58). However, these elite women have tended to use their status to maintain their own class privileges, and such benefits have not trickled down to other Kuwaiti women.

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heritage, education, environment and labour. Very few ministers held portfolios related to defence, finance and trade, and only one country had a woman minister of home affairs (IPU, 1999:50-52).

This bias is reinforced by a recent study of women in several levels of decision-making positions in politics in 27 industrialised societies, which found inequalities in the distribution of "political areas of responsibility: women are more prevalent in 'social' or 'female' issues" (Carrilho, 2000:75). If men were involved in policy areas such as internal affairs, economic affairs, fiscal policy, defence and international affairs, industrial policy and agriculture, women were involved in labour, health, education, welfare and family (Drew, 2000:56). Sometimes, when issues such as the "advancement" of women are mandated by the United Nations, and have to be accommodated in administrative arrangements, these are suitably structured to avoid politicising the question of women's status. In Morocco, this has taken the form of allocating these agendas among one division, one service and two bureaux within four of the least prestigious, least politically influential and least funded ministries, viz. Agriculture, Labour and Social Affairs, Health and Youth and Sports (Naciri, 1998).

So far as the representation of women in national legislatures is concerned, only 8 countries have achieved the so-called 'critical mass' of 30%.<sup>9</sup> An assessment of "the Beijing Effect" on women's representation in parliament suggests that the percentage of women parliamentarians worldwide increased from 11.3% in 1995 to 12.9% in 1999, a rather meagre increase of +1.6%. In the same period, the percentage of female presiding officers of a house of parliament registered a marginal decline (IPU, 1999:27). In the countries of Eastern Europe, the percentage of women in national parliaments has actually declined in the last decade<sup>10</sup>, partly as a backlash to the perception that participation under Communist regimes was forced. In terms of region, however, it is notable that female representation is lowest in the Arab countries, followed by the countries of South Asia (with the notable exception of Bangladesh) where such representation is even lower than in East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (Human Development in South Asia, 2000:137).

<sup>9</sup>These are Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Netherlands, Germany and South Africa. (UNIFEM, 2000)

<sup>10</sup>figures from Wolchik, pp.7-8.

It is in these regions also that women comprise only a small percentage of the membership of political parties. From Austria and Canada to Japan and Korea, between 30 and 50 per cent of members of political parties are reported to be women. In Pakistan, by contrast, women account for less than 5 per cent of the membership of any political party. Party leaderships reflect the same pattern. The Nordic countries, Australia, and Green Parties in Europe, have 40 to 50 per cent women in their governing bodies. Even Zimbabwe and Nicaragua report 20 to 30 per cent women party leaders. In India, women constitute only 9.1 per cent of the membership of executive bodies in the main political parties. It is hardly surprising then that the proportion of women candidates sponsored by political parties should be low. Only 6.5 per cent of the 4000 candidates who contested the 1999 parliamentary election in India were women. Of the 78 women who stood as independent candidates, only one was successful. This clearly suggests not only that party support is critical, but also that political parties have on the whole treated the issue of women's representation in a cavalier manner.

The main policy response to the under-representation of women in the formal structures of politics has been the attempt to enhance representation through quotas, whether in political parties or in legislatures. The case for quotas is often justified by an appeal to Anne Phillips' well-known argument that a politics of ideas (political choice between the policies and programmes of political parties, rather than on the basis of group concerns and interests) does not ensure adequate policy concern for groups which are marginalised or excluded. This suggests the importance of a politics of presence, in which women, ethnic minorities and other similarly excluded groups are guaranteed fair representation (Phillips, 1995).

The issue of quotas is contentious for at least two sets of reasons: the first relates to the lack of genuine commitment in the political parties to increasing women's representation. There are ways in which political parties may effectively circumvent the quota by, for instance, putting up candidates in constituencies where the party is weak and unlikely to win anyway; or treating the quota as a ceiling rather than a minimum to be improved upon; or nominating women candidates who would be pliable because dependent on the male party leadership. Of course there are

exceptions like the ANC in South Africa which adopted a self-administered quota of 30%, even if many of the women candidates were clustered at the bottom 15% of the list. Other parties in that country followed the ANC's example, with the result that women comprise 27% of the national legislature.

The second argument draws our attention to the fact that policy outcomes are not necessarily superior (in feminist terms) in countries where quotas have been implemented. The symbolic representation of women, it is argued, is no guarantee of a qualitatively better representation of women's interests. The evidence is clearly mixed, both across countries, as well as across levels of government (local or national). Thus, for instance, a Nordic woman politician laments that even where women account for 43% of parliamentary representation, politics is still led and shaped by men (IPU, 1999:71). The historical origins of the quota system also seem to matter. Where quotas have been successful, as in Scandinavia, two conditions have obtained. Quotas have been the result of pressure from strong women's sections within social-democratic political parties, and social democracy itself has attempted to change the public-private relationship through the institution of the welfare state, justifying intervention in the market on behalf of women (Razavi, 2000.:42). On the other hand, the emphasis on formal equality in the erstwhile socialist states of Eastern Europe ensured greater representation for women, but did not succeed in policy terms, because it was largely symbolic. This is not dissimilar from the experience of Uganda, where affirmative action was imposed from above, rather than struggled for and wrested from the state, making women MPs reluctant to voice criticism or dissent of the government, to which they feel they owe their loyalty (ibid:20).

With or without quotas, then, the role of political parties appears to be critical to the issue of women's representation. Political parties (like the ANC or the social-democratic parties in Scandinavia) may proactively seek to ensure higher representation for women. Conversely, political parties may provide for symbolic representation without substance. In Czechoslovakia (before the split), the reasonable representation of women in the symbolic structures of power – such as governmental elites – was actually misleading, because they were seldom found in positions of real

power in the Communist Party hierarchy (Wolchik, 1994:4). Because they were less represented in the party hierarchy, they enjoyed little access to the policy-making process. In post-Communist societies, quotas are regarded with suspicion, as they are reminiscent of the politics of the communist past. Sometimes, political parties are also criticised for fragmenting the putative unity of women *qua* women, by their prior claims on the loyalty of their women candidates (as in Morocco).

On the whole, quotas appear to be more efficacious at the local level than the national. The Indian experience of 33% reservation for women in the new panchayati raj institutions is not unambiguously positive, but there are undoubtedly signs of a slow, but on the whole cheering, process of empowerment taking place. A cynical caveat is inserted by those who argue that men do not oppose women's representation in local-level institutions so long as women are kept out of national level institutions where real power is concentrated (Rai, 1999:96). However, the greater success that attends women's involvement in local politics may, in some social contexts, be unrelated to quotas. Thus, till 1980, the municipal councils in Turkey showed an increasing percentage of women because the routines of municipal politics fitted in better with their domestic duties, and because the women's sections of political parties (especially the ruling RPP) started becoming influential in election primaries. In 1980, when the activities of the women's sections of the political parties were closed down, the participation of women in even this limited sphere of institutional politics diminished, as women could henceforth participate only by directly competing with men (Gunes-Ayata, 1995:243). However, though fewer in number, those who entered politics by competing with men rather than as symbols, have tended to behave more independently and are often more sympathetic to women's issues (ibid.:248). In Israel, without quotas, the number of women participating in local politics has been steadily rising, even as the number of those taking part in national politics has remained stable. This is apparently because the parties believe that the inclusion of at least one woman on every local council is a political necessity (Chazan, 1997).

The phenomenon of under-representation in legislative bodies tends to be replicated in international and national bureaucracies.



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A look at the gendered pattern of employment in international agencies (the United Nations, the World Bank and USAID also suggests the virtual invisibility of women from the top management of these organisations, and a preponderance - even over-representation - of women at the secretarial and clerical levels. Thus, women constitute 3.6 per cent of decision-making elites in the United Nations, but 85 per cent of the workers at the clerical and support staff levels (Peterson and Runyan, 1993:55-56).

National bureaucracies reproduce many of the biases of political institutions, especially the concentration of women employees at the bottom of the pyramid, and the confinement of even senior women officials to the 'softer' portfolios. It has been suggested that this is at least partly because salaries being lower in the public sector than the private, do not attract men. In Denmark, Finland, Sweden and the Philippines, women account for about 50 per cent of public sector employees, and for a sizeable proportion in many more countries. In Israel, for instance, almost 60 per cent of employees in the civil service and the public sector are women. But, while 92 per cent of the positions at the lower levels of the civil service are occupied by women, some of the top positions include no women at all. An Affirmative Action legislation, followed by a petition to the judiciary, succeeded in redressing this imbalance, resulting in the number of women departmental heads (in government ministries) increasing from 14% in 1984 to 30 per cent in 1995, and women directors of government corporations from 1.5 per cent to 19 per cent.

Some countries have experimented with quotas in the civil service, though with ambivalent results. In 1976, Bangladesh introduced a 10 per cent quota for women in government, but it took two decades for female participation to rise to this level, so that women are still concentrated at relatively lower-level positions. Sri Lanka institutionalised quotas which, over time, varied from 10 to 25 per cent, but were eventually abolished when the country became a signatory to CEDAW. The fact that women are making greater headway worldwide in the matter of parliamentary representation than in civil service recruitment may also be viewed as a matter of concern, as parliamentary power declines and that of technocrats increases.

It has further been observed that women in higher level administrative positions tend to be less receptive to the voice of women's movements. In the industrialised societies, this is partly so on account of the social (class) backgrounds of such women, and partly because they tend to adopt masculine characteristics and styles of behaviour.<sup>11</sup> In other contexts, notably where democratic transitions are underway, the state may co-opt women and their struggle. Women bureaucrats however are liable to either find themselves in a 'disabling' policy environment, or else are unable to formulate policies in the absence of effective pressure from the women's movement. The institutionalisation of women's issues in state institutions can adversely impact the feminist cause in at least two ways, both of which are illustrated by the example of Brazil: firstly, because the creation of separate spaces for women within the state apparatus tends to make autonomous feminist groups less energetic, and sometimes even complacent as they begin to see the state as collaborator rather than adversary; and, secondly, because the more ambitious project of feminism loses its radical edge as it is translated into official categories and policy prescriptions (Razavi, 2000:31).

A notable exception to the trend of women bureaucrats being coopted by state institutions may be the phenomenon of the 'femocrats', the Australian term invented to describe feminists recruited to fill women's policy positions in government. The femocratic model was self-consciously non-hierarchical. It was centered in the department of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, with departmental units monitoring all policy initiatives for their gender equity implications. It claims to facilitate the necessary links between feminist bureaucrats and the wider feminist movement outside the government (Sawer, 1999:82-83), even though the feminist movement continues to attack femocrats for being corrupted by power and prestige. Nevertheless, the efforts of the femocrats have, over the last decade, borne fruit in the form of policy reforms, legislative changes, market policies, policies on childcare and the introduction of legislation for Equal Employment Opportunity (Watson, 1992:196). It has, above all, encouraged the

<sup>11</sup>*This argument is encountered in every arena of governance, from NGOs to markets and the state, and in many country-contexts.*

work of scrutinising budgets from the standpoint of women, and thereby provided an exemplar for other countries, such as South Africa.

Two significant areas which remain substantially male preserves are the judiciary and the military. The importance of these spheres is self-evident: the first is concerned with upholding and interpreting the law, while the second is an area traditionally closed to women on account of the gendered division of violence, stereotyping men as aggressive life-takers and women as peace-loving life-givers. In South Asia, women do not account for more than between 5 and 10 per cent of the judiciary, combining positions at the higher and subordinate levels. Though both Bangladesh and Pakistan have established quotas for women in the subordinate judiciary, neither has ever had a woman judge at the Supreme Court. Significantly, no woman has been appointed to the Federal Shariat Court in Pakistan. India has had precisely 3 women on the bench of the Supreme Court, and presently has about 15 women High Court judges. In Sri Lanka, the women judges are mainly concentrated at the lower levels, where almost 25 per cent of the judges are female. In Israel, where women's participation in politics has remained static (at about 7-9% of the 120-member Knesset), 3 women sit on the Supreme Court bench, one serves as State Comptroller and one as State Attorney. Half of the country's judges in the magistrate courts and district courts are also women.

Participation of women in national military forces has been increasing. In 1973, women accounted for only 2 per cent of the military in the United States, but by 1991, this had gone up to 11 per cent, with 35,000 women serving in the Gulf War. Now, 80 per cent of job categories in the military are open to women. In some countries today, women are actively deployed in battle, i.e. in roles other than the traditional ones of nursing and housekeeping. As women's enrolment in the armed forces has increased, so have incidents of sexual harassment and assault. It has been argued that this is partly because of the gendered nature of citizenship in the US, where first-class citizenship is equated with self-sacrifice, and the willingness to engage in violence and risk one's life as a duty to the state. Because women are seen as having been historically 'exempted' from this 'obligation' of citizenship, they are perceived as second-class citizens, with fewer rights (Sparks, 2000). Canada

and Israel also have comparatively high rates of female participation in the armed forces. By and large, as in state bureaucracies, the concentration of women is in the lower echelons of the armed forces (with sexual harassment of female soldiers being fairly common); or in defense contracting firms. The incorporation of women in the military is thus done in typically gendered ways, which reinforce instead of interrogating dichotomous gender stereotypes.

This section began with the claim that the engendering of state institutions of governance mostly represents little more than the gendering of state elites. This claim has been justified with reference to the legislature, executive, judiciary, bureaucracy, and military. In all these spheres, further, we observed a concentration of women at the lower levels of structures of governance, with however little impact on decision-making processes and outcomes.

It is, further, arguable that the engendering of state *personnel*, and the engendering of *policy*, should be, but rarely are, parallel processes. It is evident that even where the first (engendering of personnel) has been promoted by states - as, for instance, through quotas and reservations - it has resulted in personal empowerment, rather than in more generalised emancipatory outcomes. State responses to the second, viz. the engendering of policy, have been positive insofar as the gender dimensions of development have been emphasised, but far from adequate in areas which call for structural change. Thus, states and international agencies have willingly invested in micro-credit schemes, poverty alleviation programmes, income- and employment-generating projects, though - some would argue - on grounds that these have demonstrable economic returns or are linked to other developmental objectives (Jahan, 1995:125). However, where the redistribution of resources and power is at issue, as in giving women a voice in decision-making or bringing about gender equality in rights to land and property, institutional responses are much less forthcoming. Some engendering of *policy* - through, for example, institutionalizing gender concerns in policy-making departments or integrating gender into mainstream development planning (WID/GAD) - has, in this limited sense, taken place, and has generally been prioritised over the engendering of the personnel of the *institutions* themselves.

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It is in situations where women themselves have wrested the initiative with regard to engendering policy, that more dramatic results are visible. Possibly the most effective of such attempts have been those in Australia and South Africa, showing that budgets are not the gender-neutral instruments they purport to be. The South African Women's Budget Initiative, which was inaugurated in 1995, drew upon the 15-year Australian experience of gender budget analyses. Gender budget analyses typically focus on gender-specific expenditures (e.g., economic empowerment for unemployed mothers); expenditures that promote gender equity within public services (e.g., affirmative action policies); and, above all, on mainstream expenditures from education to defence (Budlender, 2000:50). In India, the Economic Survey for 2001 has, for the first time (as a result of intense lobbying by women's groups) recognised that the impact of budgets is gender-differentiated.

#### *Engendering the Private Sector*

In business organizations, women tend to be even more marginalized than they are in representative political bodies. The 2000 census of the 500 largest corporations in the United States (Fortune 500 companies) showed that women held just 12.5% of all corporate officer position, and 6.2 per cent of the most senior positions ('clout titles'), such as chairman, vice-chairman, presidents and chief executive officers. Women comprised 46.5% of the US labour force, but there were only two women CEOs in these companies. Nevertheless, these figures represent an advance over the situation in previous years. Thus, if women represented 3.3% of top earners in 1999, they were 4.1% of top earners in 2000. The number of board seats held by women was up from 23% in 1994, but while women were found to hold 11.1% of board seats, they represented only 1.1% of inside directors. Conversely, 90 of the Fortune 500 companies (18%) counted not a single woman among the ranks of their corporate officers. Women of colour were appreciably more disadvantaged. Of the 400 companies for which data is available, coloured women accounted for 1.3% of corporate officers, and only six corporate officers of this category were top earners.



A similar census of the 560 largest corporations in Canada found that women held 12 per cent of all corporate officer positions, and only 3 per cent of the highest positions, which included 12 presidents and CEOs. An ILO survey in Brazil presents a comparison between the 300 largest private corporations, in which 4% of top executives were women, and state-owned and foreign-owned companies where only 1% of top executive were women. In 1995, only 3% of members of the boards of directors of 300 companies in Britain were women. In the 70,000 largest companies in Germany, likewise, between 1 and 3% of top executive positions and board directorships were held by women. Even in Scandinavian societies, where women's representation in national legislatures reaches or crosses the so-called critical mass, women holders of elite positions are few.

These data indicate that women are largely excluded from positions of decision-making in business. Given that this is a domain in which immense power is concentrated, and given the considerable traffic between this and the domain of the state, such marginalisation is surely significant. In the media, likewise, women's share of media jobs nowhere exceeds 50%, and outside Europe is well below 30%. A study of 200 media organizations in 30 countries found that only 7 were headed by women, and another 7 had female deputy directors (Gallagher, 1995:4-5).

The phenomenon of women in positions of political and administrative leadership being given 'soft' portfolios, has historically had parallels in the private sector. Thus, a study of Swiss women in management in the 1980s found that the highest proportion of women managers were to be found in sectors like health and health care, social services, hotels and restaurants, and education, all considered female domains (Blochet-Bardet et al, 1988:159-61). Recent evidence from the US and the European Union, however, suggests that women's share of financial management has gone up slightly, though decision-making still remains male-dominated.

Can legislation and policy innovations change this? A study of the impact of the Japanese Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Law compared the position of women in the Seibu Department Stores in 1984 and 1988 (i.e., before and after the company policy changed in accordance with the new law). Though Seibu has a pro-

woman corporate image, and has actively initiated policies to promote women to senior positions, the study indicates that the career system remains 'male-oriented' and that management-initiated change programmes have limits. A small number of elite women have benefited from the changes, but the great expansion of women's employment has been in low paid, non-regular jobs (Lam, 1997:228-29).

This predisposition - seen even in reformed institutions, whether public or private, and extending to NGOs as well - has been called the deep structure of organizations. Case-studies of local government organisations in Britain have pointed to the gendered structures and cultures of these, reinforcing the argument that gender relations - like those of class and race - are embedded in state institutions, and do not only exist somewhere else in society, i.e., outside the state (Halford, 1992:160). Many organisational practices which appear to be gender-neutral in fact have different impacts on men and women. These include: formal procedures of job evaluation, work and family benefits, system of rewards and incentives, norms about when meetings are to be held, time spent at work (persons who have responsibilities outside work being systematically disadvantaged), etc. (Kolb and Meyerson, 1999:140-41).

Women generally occupy lower positions in the occupational hierarchy, and also tend to be concentrated in occupations which are typically low paid, have little security of employment, and fewer authority or career opportunities. Apart from the agricultural occupations, where the concentration of women is notoriously high, gender-based segregation is found even in non-agricultural occupations. Thus, there may be a preponderance of women among primary school teachers, but this is unlikely to be reflected in a corresponding preponderance among university teachers in the same country e.g., Finland. In factories, too, the change in the pattern of manufacturing - from heavy to light, assembly-type manufacture, and the growth in the information technology industry - has generated a great demand for women in jobs which are low paid, non-unionized and typically not adequately covered by safety and health regulations. Women workers in the export-processing zones, for instance, are overwhelmingly female, earn 20 to 50 per cent less than men who do comparable work, and are

subject to health hazards as a result of toxic chemicals and long hours of work e.g., Mexico (cited in Peterson and Runyan, 1993:100-01). It is hardly surprising, then, that women are the first victims of job loss when enterprises are forced to shut down.

In trade unions, women typically constitute a large percentage of the membership, but are largely excluded from decision-making roles. Thus, women account for less than 10% of trade union officials worldwide. It is notable that, even in countries where women have achieved the 'critical mass' in parliamentary representation, their participation in the leadership of trade unions lags. In Denmark and Sweden, for example, women held 30 per cent of parliamentary seats in 1990, but only 17 and 20 per cent respectively of leadership positions in trade unions. Though the first trade union in India was founded in 1917 by a woman, Anasuyaben Sarabhai, the number of women in the national offices of the major trade unions in the 1990s, ranged from 0 to 3. In Sri Lanka, women comprise less than 20 per cent of trade union members, but less than 1 per cent hold leadership positions in the unions. An important exception has been the Histadrut, the federation of labour unions in Israel, which has adopted a resolution stating that 30 per cent of its leadership must be women. Women already account for 19 per cent of the membership of its Executive Committee, and 25 per cent of its Deputy Chairpersons.

Men dominate leadership even in those unions – such as those of the tea plantation workers or secretaries, nurses and clerks - where the majority of workers are women. This domination is reflected in the reluctance of unions to highlight women's issues. Sometimes, this may lead women to organize independently. As the early experience of SEWA (vis-à-vis the Textile Labour Association from which it was expelled in 1981) in India testifies, women workers face strong opposition from men when they attempt to do so. In South Korea, similarly, the failure of trade unions to take up women's issues led to the establishment of the Korean Women Workers Association in 1987.

As in other spheres, cultural differences are relevant. Thus, a study of the banking sector in India shows that multinational banks, in contrast to nationalized banks, are eager to hire more women. Women comprise 35 per cent of the workforce in Grindlays Bank, but this, according to a union official, is because they are "more

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submissive, overworked, and have less time for union work.” (Gothoskar, 1995:165). Women’s disinclination for union activities and the reluctance of unions to take up gender issues may frequently reinforce each other.

Even where women are employed in jobs at the same level as men, and despite the principle of equal pay for equal work being embodied in labour legislation in many countries, the earnings gap between men and women remains significant. In the United States, for every \$1.00 earned by white male managers, the earnings of various subgroups of managers was found to be as follows:

- White women : 59 cents
- Asian/Other women : 67 cents
- Asian/Other men : 91 cents
- African-American women : 58 cents
- African-American men : 65 cents
- Hispanic women : 48 cents
- Hispanic men : 65 cents.

*(catalystwomen.org : Factsheet : Women of Color in Corporate Management)*

This pattern is echoed in manufacturing and management alike, from Uruguay (where women managers in the banking and manufacturing sectors in 1995 earned 47% of what men did) to the United Kingdom (where women managers earned 27 per cent less than men).

As in state employment, the corporate sector also reflects the pyramidal structure of a small percentage of women in the higher echelons, and a preponderance of women at the base. Women are generally employed in lower-status jobs, if not gender-stereotyped ones. They are, almost regardless of the level of employment, paid less than men doing comparable work. Race and other cultural differentials also appear to be more marked in relation to women workers. It is therefore no surprise that women’s presence should

be overwhelming in the unorganised sector. The last two decades have seen an increase in the proportion of women in part-time employment, who sometimes account for as much as 80 per cent of all part-time workers. As is well-known, part-time work generally implies lower levels of pay, low professional status, and next to no career opportunities.

### *Engendering Governance Through Rights*

The first section of this paper argued that the recognition, in recent conceptualizations, of a plurality of domains of governance, constitutes an improvement upon earlier state-centric notions. However, it argued also that there is nothing inherently gender-friendly in this widening of the ambit of governance, because the focus, in these new definitions, on the essentially *public* institutions of state, market and civil society, implicitly endorses the divide between public and private institutions, keeping the latter firmly outside the realm of governance concerns. The second section of this paper focused attention on the two domains of state and market, and the extent to which higher levels of institutions in these arenas have been engendered. There is little that is surprising or unexpected in the conclusion that the proportion of women in the top echelons of state or business is small. However, the contrast between this small proportion at the top of the pyramid and the overwhelming preponderance of women employees at the lower levels in both state structures and corporations, is notable. It compels us to recognize that the engendering of institutions of governance is, more often than not, just the engendering of state elites, and that it tends to reproduce other social biases of class, race, etc. If, further, this preponderance of women at the lower levels of state and corporate institutions does not translate either into greater voice for women in decision-making processes, or into gender-equitable policy outcomes, this is surely a strong enough argument for interrogating the narrowness of this view of governance, and its emancipatory possibilities from the point of view of gender.

While it is difficult to posit a definitive criterion for judging the extent to which governance is gendered, it is arguable that the



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engendering of institutions (especially state institutions) should be tested against the twin criteria of processes (participatory) and outcomes (gender-equitable). Molyneux's (1985) distinction between strategic and practical gender interests<sup>12</sup> may also be usefully employed here. The Indian experience of quotas for women in panchayats, for instance, would suggest that these provisions enable a larger number of women to participate in the deliberations and decision-making processes of the institutions of local self-government. The policy outcomes could be assessed in terms of the extent to which their practical gender interests are often advanced, even if their strategic gender interests are usually not.

A regime of positive rights has been suggested as a possible instrument of achieving these objectives. The challenge, before a rights-based view of governance, is that of ensuring all three generations of rights simultaneously : seeing them as interdependent and equally important to effectively accomplish. This would encompass not merely the formal structures of power in the three realms of governance, but the informal structures of power, and the family and household as well. A rights-based view of governance also implies, most crucially, that we forsake the top-down approach to governance which predisposes us to emphasise the greater representation of women in the hierarchical structures of the top institutions of governance. Contrary to this, we should treat as instructive the presence - and indeed the preponderance - of women at lower levels, in every arena of governance, to suggest forms of governance that are more participatory. A rights-based view of governance encourages this, as it endorses the making of claims, rather than the passive receiving of quotas/welfare.

<sup>12</sup>A useful discussion of such a differentiated view of women's interests may be found in Caroline O.N. Moser (1993).

*Paradoxes and Challenges*

**I. Democracy and Representation :**

Though state institutions have been sought to be engendered through enhanced representation for women in representative as well as executive bodies, several apparently intractable questions remain.

1. *Does better representation, with or without quotas, necessarily translate into gender equality?* How may we balance the legitimate claim to higher representation with the recognition that representation frequently accomplishes only the engendering of state elites which cannot adequately impact the profoundly gendered structures of power? What are the conditions under which women's representation - as process - and gender equality - as outcome - can be most optimally linked?
2. *Does engendering the state lead to the weakening of the women's movement?* The danger of the co-option by the state of the participants and the slogans of the women's movement. In the medium to long run, this could result in severing the link between women in the state and the grassroots movements which alone can supply the criticism and fresh ideas, and prevent the ossification of token feminist goals in the state apparatus. Do the models of the 'femocrats' in Australia and the 'state feminists' in Norway provide good and replicable exemplars?
3. *Is the feminist cause best advanced by non-party, non-institutional politics?* The evidence relating to political parties is fairly mixed, as parties are known to keep women out of internal decision-making mechanisms, put up women candidates in ways suggestive of tokenism, and even effect the fragmentation of a putatively united feminist movement. Thus, because the

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Moroccan electoral system discourages independent candidates, women have to run for election under a party banner. This has resulted in the fragmentation of the women's movement which, instead of closing ranks for better female participation, tends to simply carry forward the quarrels of various political cliques. Also, as in Uganda, where the representation of women is perceived as a gift from the ruling party, there is reluctance to express dissent.

4. *Does democratization contribute to the advancement of gender equality?* Here again, the evidence is mixed, especially if only formal institutions of democracy are considered. Democratic transitions may provide a good opportunity because of the fluidity of state structures and the availability of spaces, but the links with democratic movements remain crucial. How do we reduce the contingency in the relationship between feminism and democratic governance? Can the empowerment of women be incorporated as a criterion/test of democratic governance? What kind of democratic politics are best suited for women's rights and gender equality/justice?
5. *What accounts for the decline in the political participation of women?* In Turkey, institutional change in the form of the banning of women's sections in political parties caused a decline in political participation by women. In Chile, right-wing women candidates who did not raise women's issues received greater support from women voters, while left-wing women candidates who did raise women's issues got more support from male than from female voters. The decline in the political participation of women in Eastern Europe is seen as a backlash to the communist past. In post-Communist Hungary, for instance, apart from the hardships caused by economic crisis, this is seen as part of the new questioning of the traditional equation between private=oppressive, and public=liberating/emancipatory. On the other hand, it has been argued that the social policies of the Communist period – such as free day care and long maternity leave with no loss of job prospects – actually enabled greater participation by women, while the labour market and political institutions in post-Soviet Russia,

for example, have been discriminatory against them. The fact that the benefits available to women under communist regimes could be so easily withdrawn leads to the inescapable conclusion that what is won through struggle is likely to be more enduring than state handouts.

## II. The Public and the Private : Historical and Social Contingency

A survey of country experiences from across the world suggests that the boundaries between the public and private spheres - as also the extent of their permeability - are historically and socially constructed and contingent. Advances in women's status at some historical moments are frequently reversed at other times. Similarly, cultural forces can be sources of oppression at one time, and resources of resistance at another.

1. *From Private to Public and Back Again* : Though women enter the public sphere (through nationalist struggles or revolutionary movements, for instance) and actively participate in it, there is nothing immutable about this. They frequently retreat back into the more cloistered private sphere - either because the state and the law force them to do so, or because patriarchal ideology in society reasserts itself. Three very different experiences validate this point. (1) In East Europe, as already mentioned, the communist project of gender equality was perceived as forced emancipation, while the democratic transition was perceived as providing freedom for women to retreat into the private sphere. Further, even where women want more time for child-rearing and family than a career permits, this is because the rules by which the public sphere is constituted are male-oriented : concepts of work, time and the usual indicators of these, e.g., late night meetings, long hours, etc. (2) In Iran, the modern secular - albeit elite - woman of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century was transformed by the Islamic revolution into the modern militant Muslim woman. Women's employment came to be confined to those professions which were seen to be 'feminine' in

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nature (such as teaching or nursing) or compatible with family responsibilities. A survey of government recruitment agencies in 1985 showed that only 6% of public sector jobs were open to women, and the remaining 94% were open exclusively to men (Paidar, 1995:331). (3) A study of women's politics in North Bihar, India, contrasts the role of women in politics in the 1930s with that in 1989. The participation of women in the freedom movement in the 1930s was critical (albeit in clandestine activities, because they were less likely to be searched by the police), but in 1989, a kind of 'political purdah' had come into being, so that women experienced and participated in local politics through a system outside the electoral arena (Singer, 1993). Hence, whether women move from active participation in an anti-colonial nationalist movement, or in an Islamic revolutionary movement, or indeed a post-Communist transition to democracy, the results appear not to be markedly different.

2. *Universalism or Historical and Cultural Specificity?* The variability of women's lives and experiences, depending upon history, cultural and social practices, and political trajectories, is well-known, as is the fact that patriarchy is experienced differently - depending upon and filtered through, caste, class, race and ethnicity. Is it, therefore, possible to have a conception of women's interests and strategies to advance these, which can be couched in universalistic terms? There are certain undeniable similarities in terms of both private and public patriarchies. (a) The sexual division of labour within the household suggests that private patriarchies are not irreducibly specific to cultural contexts. (b) There are broad similarities of public patriarchies, too, in terms of gender stereotypes of female politicians (either the ultra-feminine mother model or the masculine/androgynous model of leadership). Indeed, across all the three major domains of governance, we observe a concentration of women at the middle or bottom rungs, rather than at or near the top. (c) Even among the matrilineal tribes of Manipur in north-east India, for



instance, while women dominate in the sphere of material production and the economic life of the community, political decision-making is inevitably 'delegated' to men (Mahanta, 1999). (d) Across North and South, class, ethnicity, social, educational, economic and cultural background play a crucial role in determining women's representation (Vianello and Moore). How then do we balance our universalist goals with cultural particularity in the way in which we design and advance feminist agendas?

3. *Culture : Source of Oppression or Resource of Resistance ?* Culture, and especially religion, has been seen both as "a strategy of exclusion" and as "a strategy of resistance". In Morocco, women have used the Islamist movement in the latter sense, arguing that obedience to God frees them from the ascendancy of men, including husbands and fathers. Even the veil has been interpreted as a feminist gesture, because it conceals women's bodies from men, so that they are no longer perceived as objects, and gender loses its decisive role in negotiating the relations between men and women (Naciri, 1998).
4. *The impact of globalization and structural adjustment :* The implicit universalism of the project of globalization provokes the question of how relevant cultural specificity will be in the decades to come. Already, studies have shown that working-class women in the Third World bear a disproportionate share of the burden of structural adjustment policies, especially as these typically lead to cutbacks in welfare and social sector expenditure. In Eastern Europe, too, unemployment and price rises in the period of economic crisis have increased the burdens of family responsibility. However, it has been argued - in the context of Uganda, Mali, Chile, Morocco, Jamaica and Bangladesh - that rising male unemployment in urban areas following structural adjustment or the shocks in trade in the export of primary commodities, have undermined the model of the male bread-winner, and led to greater

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visibility for women (Goetz,1995). The community kitchens of Lima, Peru, which grew in the economic crisis of the 1980s' actually facilitated and encouraged the participation of women, as they were linked in a loose federation, with elected representatives who could negotiate the provision of cheap food with government and NGOs. Many of the local leaders thrown up at this time came to stand for assembly and municipal elections.

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The essays in this volume are the outcome of a year long collaborative exploration of the multiple factors that influence the process of engendering governance in complex societies, in particular the changing roles of various actors including women's movements, the state and civil society.

Amrita Basu, Yasmin Tambiah and Niraja Gopal Jayal, all notable scholars and strong proponents of a gendered vision of governance, have contributed thought-provoking papers that break new conceptual ground and add new dimensions to ongoing debates on key issues of governance.

Professor Martha Nussbaum, an active participant in the process of bringing a gender and human development perspective into global debates on governance, has written an insightful introduction.

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ISBN No. 81-88788-04-X