Nivedini

A Journal on Gender Studies

The weeping woman of Pablo Picasso Whose tormented face denounces the horrors of war, is also our symbolic message.

WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND RESEARCH CENTRE

Our Objectives

To study and research the various aspects of women's subordination in Sri Lanka in order to sensitize men and women on gender issues.

To establish a forum for women to express themselves as writers, researchers, poets, and novelists; to publish their works in Sinhala, Tamil and English.

To disseminate information relating to women and create awareness and increase consciousness on feminist issues.

To strengthen the women's network locally and internationally.

To extend co-operation to and solidarity with other oppressed and marginalised groups in Sri Lanka (such as refugees, unemployed and slum dwellers) with projects for rehabilitation and general upgrading of their lives.

To serve as a resource and documentation centre in Sri Lanka that will become part of the network of research and study centres on Women's Studies in the Third World.

What does 'Nivedini' mean?
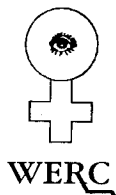
WERC Nivedini derives from a Sanskrit verb. It could mean either, that which is placed before you ritually and reverentially, or a carrier of knowledge with a female gender suffix 'ni' (derived from the verb vid, to know.) We use it with the second meaning.

> *Dedicated to Krishanthy, Koneswary and other victims of Rape, by the soldiers and to all those who have died violent deaths, in the ethnic war.*

Contents

From The Editor........

While writing the editorial to this issue of Nivedini I
am aware of the unprecedented crisis that our country is
confronted with politically and socially. Violence is the
theme of the day in our social and political lives. Violence
at the battle ground, violence within the home, violence
within the school premises, violence at the beach when one
goes for a stroll, violence within the walls of prison, vio-
lence against children, violence in the estates among the
workers and against the working class, self-inflicted vio-
lence on one's personal body (suicides), you may name and
term them in legal parlance or rhetorically as state terror-
ism, armed struggle, domestic violence, teenage violence,
sexual violence (rape), violence against woman and chil-
dren (child abuse) but they are violence which hassle hu-
manity against humanity. They infringe on human rights.
The state apparatus stares helplessly or becomes collabora-
tive in the violence of either taking part or remaining in-
active. The high human cost of these various types of vio-
lence are many. Pain inflicted on the body has left thou-
sands maimed, butchered, deaf and blind, pain inflicted on
the psyche has left many more as victims of trauma. They
are the psychologically maimed.

The pain and trauma of the sick and the maimed na-
tion have been captured by social scientists in their recent
publications. Violence has become the collective theme
for the social scientists to write on. Daya Somasundaram's
recent publication Scarred minds: The Psychological Im-

pact of War, on Sri Lankan Tamils and E.V. Daniel's Book Chapters in an Anthropolography of Violence : Sri Lankans, Sinhalas and Tamils and the two forthcoming publciations of Sasanka Perera and Thiruchandran The Victims of the Female Headed Households in Post Terror Southern and Women Victims of the Female headed Household in Post Terror Eastern Sri Lanka, A Study in Socio-Political Contexts bear recorded testimony to the results of violence.

However, little is talked about the wives and children of the soldiers who have died in the war. The State treat the soldiers as national heroes and diminishes the public sympathy for the wives and children and the due attention that is needed for their, social and psychological deprivations by doling huge sums of monetary compensation.

The Politicians wax eloquently of their bravery, of their "nationalistic spirit" and the "national sacrifice" they have made. One wonders what is the role of poverty, the class factor that draw them to the battle ground to kill and maim or get maimed and killed. The nationalist, politicians' children are neither nationalist nor brave like the young soldiers, who have sacrificed their lives. They are in private realms (not national) seeking professional and academic careers perhaps on a later day to inherit positions of state power.

Has any one done a study on the psycho of the so called "deserters" who have fled from violence and thereby have become "traitors" in the language of nationalism. The inability to bear, and witness or take part in violence, despite the monetary or economic bonus they got, need to be considered, need to be studied. King Asoka became pacifist having seen the horrors of war and he is celebrated as someone who followed the Buddhist ethics. We will

come across many Asokas among the deserters, if one undertakes a study. But will history honour these as it did Asoka? Or use nationalist terminology and brand them as "traitors".

And what have the women done about all these? The two statements which are an expression of women's sentiments are published in this volume. However, women's agenda has a wide spectrum of activities and an emerging new ideology that is in consistent with a feminist perspective is the formation of Women's Coalition for Peace.. Women have directed their energies to identify a set of principles that should be the guidelines for good governance. The new social transformation that is envisaged by the women, is based on a wider principle of democracy, recognition of minority rights and aspiration from a people's point of view and rejecting violence per se. The principles will be based on consociation and de-centralization and taking into consideration the fundamental principle of power sharing and sharing of responsibilities and accountabilities.

Four papers in this issue on good governance deals in general with political restructuring and social transformation. Women in Sri Lanka, gaining from the experience of both Ireland and South Africa have formed a Women's Coalition for Peace in Sri Lanka.

Will women make a difference in politics is rhetoric and many even appear naive. With the assumption that women will make a difference, we women have strategised on two counts, one making women enter the electoral process, and taking part in Parliamentary elections. Training programmes in political participation, electioneering and the art of canvassing have become part of a new

programme in the feminist agenda. Political empower-
ment is the code word that has gained feminist currency.
The second is to directly impact on the peace negotiations
as part of the civil society members. The formation of the
Women's Coalition for Peace is the latest strategy to mo-
bilize women and to enlarge the platform. We have begun
and are working towards results.

This volume also carries related themes such as
armed conflict, refugees ethnicity and gender and reli-
gious nationalism. One paper looks at the marginalisation
of a gender group that has not merited feminist attention.
One paper deals with an entirely different topic of the
politics of gender representation in folk paintings.

We apologize to the readers that our June issue, of
Nivedini could not to brought out. We were busy organiz-
ing the South Asian Conference on gender issues. The
work load together, with the excitement of meeting the
women scholars across the region have prevented us from
working on the Nivedini. Hence the reason for this dou-
ble issue as a compensatory measure.

REPRESENTATION OF GENDER IN FOLK PAINTINGS OF BENGAL

Ratnabali Chatterjee

*There is a mortality of the people understood as a de
terminate set of principles for practical conduct and
of customs that derive from them or have produced them.
Like superstition this morality is closely tied to religious
beliefs. Yet this concept of morality is not unilinear.
Within the complex strata exist the fossilized ones which
reflect conditions of past life and are therefore conservative
and reactionary and those which consist of a series of in-
novations often creative and progressive determined spon-
taneously by forms and conditions of life which are in the
process of developing and which are in contradiction to the
morality of the governing strata(Gramsci, 1985).*

In the lived experience of the contemporary Bengali folk
artist, the mutually opposing strands of this morality run par-
allel, moulding and controlling his power of expression. On
the one hand his depiction of religious myths holds him
grounded in the static moral order of medieval times, on the
other hand, his participation in the peasant struggle against
colonial rule impels him to move away from the older narra-
tive structure through formal and thematic innovations. It is
in this context that we will attempt to study the folk artist's
construction of the woman image which, more than any
other, allows us to enter and analyze the schema of his frac-
tured perception.

The human form in Indian classical art is derived from a religious iconography. As cult goddesses, mother and consort, the female deities were easily identifiable to the viewers through the myths which upheld them. Nature provided the major metaphors for the structuring of an anthropomorphic form; both male and female images were conceived as participants in the mythic narratives.

The visual renditions of the Buddhist myths in Ajanta and Bagh serve as some of the best examples of the classical artistic formula. In the Ajanta murals the human figures press to the surface emerging with a dramatic force from the dark background as the narrative unfolds in a serialized fashion across the walls of the cave temples. Here, fantasy is wedged in with daily incidents, as familiar figures, landscapes and architecture situate the myth in the viewers, imagination as part of a lived experience.

This classical formula finds an affirmation in the popular scroll paintings of Bengal. Here the images float up to the surface from a shallow background allowing human forms and mythic beings to be packed into a visual design through spatial adjustment. In both, the visual schema evolves slicing the picture space into separate units allowing the viewer to enter each specific incident of the story. While the Ajanta murals draw in the audience encompassing them in the procession of images, the scroll painting, monitored by the artist-narrator, arranges a specific rhythmic entry for the viewer by the repeated motions of the rolling and unrolling of the painted scroll. Viewing the paintings forms a part of the ritual function which transforms the viewers into devotees.

In contemporary Bengali paintings local cults replace the Buddhist myths. Most of these local deities originate from a pre-Brahmanical religious system and are rooted in the totemic functions of snake and tree worship. The narrative

scheme adopted by the folk artists, however, spans the entire range of *puranic* contents, from which the oral and, later, written myths assume a specific form. Most of these folk deities came into prominence in the thirteenth century, when under the impact of Islam the moribund Hindu society took refuge in every kind of propitiating ritual to save itself from complete deseutude. Interestingly, these cults were nurtured mostly by the lower orders of the Hindu society and by women in uppercaste households. So from the beginning these folk deities remained outside the iconography of the official Brahmanical or Buddhist orders. The oral recitations which kept these local myths alive were found in the *bratageet* (ritual songs) sung by women mainly to ward off evil and ensure the well-being of the household.

Another form of narration was through the *panchali*. these were recited by men in a social gathering usually after a day's work in the portals of the temple. The themes of the *panchalis* were derived mainly from the *puranas* and the epics. A syncretic characteristic was infused in them when, following historical demands, the *Puranic Narayans*, the *Buddhist Sunya* and the *Islamic Pir* merged into the icon of *Satyanarayan*. The ritual worship of this deity in Bengali Hindu families even today marks the continued popularity enjoyed by this cult.

In the written form of *Mangal Kavyas*, these local myths assumed a definite literary importance after the advent of Vaishnavism in the fifteenth century and the subsequent growth of a *vernacular* Bhakthi literature. These mythic tales were therefore brought before the Bengali audience continuously through daily rituals and subjected to constant re-interpretation in each historical moment of their lives (Bhattacharya, 1980).

Literature speaks of bards carrying around scroll paintings from the first century onwards, and evidence of artistic schema datable from the same period can be found in the ceiling decorations of Bhạrhut and Sanchi. But no example of engraved scroll has been discovered in Bengal prior to the late eighteenth century. The persistence of this visual narrative scheme however, testifies to collective artistic memory. Indian artists seemed to be engaged in perfecting a visual design through various experiments of space and volume to reach a comprehensive style in the Ajanta murals. The common central theme of a flowing river of winding road linking the separate moments of the narrative also finds an echo in Rajasthani memories dealing with more secular themes. Here, as in the Bangal scroll paintings an element of humour is introduced through the quick juxtaposition of imaginary incidents with the actual. The usual narrative structure thus constructed allows what has been aptly described as 'a quick transcendental element of play implicit in folk culture to flourish alongside the grander manifestation of mythology' (Kapur. 1981).

The woman image is constructed within this visual format in accordance with the historical needs of the artist-narrator. Both as the cult icon and as the main protaganist the feminine form is projected as the aesthetic core of the visual structure.

To take an example, in the Manasa Mangal Patas, the woman image is first projected as the cult goddess. As the scroll unfolds and the first scene is revealed, one gazes in awe at the fearful visage of a woman crowned by a snake, seated on a throne made of coiled bodies and framed by an arc of hissing snake-heads while the patuā (the folk artist/singer) sings:

Manasã hey jagat gouri jai bishahari
Ashtam nãger mãthãy paramã sundari.

(Hail to thee Manasa, the fairest in the worlds, glory to thee, conqueror of poisons. The great beauty sits on the hoods of eight snakes.)

Even as the venomous snakes proclaim her power of destruction Manasa's smiling countenance assures the devout viewer of a benevolent protection. The perfection of her plaint form is recognized as a sign of her divinity, while her clothes, ornaments and gestures depicted in accordance with the canonical injunctions transform Manasa from a totem to a proper icon. The snakes, emphasizing her inseparable association with a primitive cult, are here utilized to project an anthropornorphic form symbolizing both preservation and destruction.

As the scroll unfolds further the singing artist shuts off the first scene by folding it in and the audience is faced with the familiar setting of a Bengali *Zamindar's* houshold. Chand, a merchant in the story, is presented here in the garb of a nineteenth century Bengali landlord. The architectural setting with its gothic pillars, stained glass windows and ornate Victorian chairs proclaim his social status. He represents that secular authority which is to be coerced and persuaded to bend to the divine will. But even as the rural audience recognises Chand's authority, a shift occurs in their perception as they incorporate the actual incidents of their life within the mythic formula. They now situate this myth within the specific historical period of colonial rule.

With the slow repeated motion of rolling and unrolling the scroll, the artist-narrator relates the vengeance of the goddess who punishes Chand for refusing to pay her homage. One by one his sons are killed by snakes on their wedding

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nights and he is left with the sad sight of six widows. The folk artist by herding them together innovatively projects a single motif of misfortune. Chand's hopes are, however, revived through the birth of the seventh son Lakhindar. In the painting, the boy's small figure is flanked on both sides by the larger ones of his parents, as if a human barrier is constructed to protect this frail child. The narrative gathers momentum with Lakhindar's marriage to Behula. The singer goes on to relate how young Lakhindar and his bride are placed in a room of steel, how he falls a prey to Manasa's schemes and dies. Here the narrative takes on a dramatic turn as Behula unlike the other widows refuses to give up her dead husband; she now sets out on a journey towards the land of the gods to bring him back to life.

As Behula's raft floats down the swirling waters, the river perceived as a stream of life is projected by a central connecting design, incorporating through spatial adjustments a multitude of figures. The dramatic element of the narrative is highlighted through their interactions. The woman image as that of the main devotee assumes significance through her situation in the pictorial site. The erect sitting posture of Behula with the dead man on her lap is repeatedly placed in each separate pictorial unit. Her expression, at one sad and dignified, is invested with a spiritual meaning as the audience remembers the numerous anecdotes of women burning themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands.

In the major acts of the drama, Behula springs to action spurning the advances of the lecherous gout-ridden gods; warding off the shark, making her entry into the presence of the gods with the help of a woman called Neta. Yet within this spurt of movement the image of Behula is transfixed as a symbol of moral strength. She remains that chaste moral being who alone has the miraculous powers to bring back to life

not only her dead husband but all the significant male members of the family who form her husband's *Kula*. This insistence upon lineage and family provides the ideological background to the formulation of Behula's gender identity.

Visually, gender is structured through the depiction of clothes and gestures. Behula is usually presented in bridal red, or in a white sari with red border, her forehead and parted hair marked by vermilion. She can thus be recognized instantly as the 'wife' from the family of rural gentry. Here both class and gender are projected together through the visual construct of Behula's social image.

In the last scene we have the unwilling Chand forced to pay homage to the victorious Manasā. The entire picture surface is now covered by the coiled figure of the snake. Within these undulating lines forming a decorative design are placed the seven boats, frail and puny, bringing back their cargo of dead men to the realm of the living. Against this background the iconic image of Manasa is presented as a symbol of cosmic energy containing both the powers of creation and destruction within herself.

Behula as the chief agent of this divine will is entrusted with the task of upholding the moral order. Empowered by her chastity Behula, like the *puranic* Savitri, now claims a semi-divine status. Her departures from the usual social norms which hem in a Bengali housewife are approved in the narrative. Her ability to defend herself from dangerous beasts and lecherous men indicate her ability to step out of her gender roles of the dutiful daughter-in-law and the shy newly-wed bride. Even her dance before the gods, the final act of departure from the social norms of the Bengali housewife, is valorized as the unusual act of a *sati*, so that the gender roles of the good wife and good daughter-in-law can be mythologized in this single stereotyped image.

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Constructed as binary opposites to the *devi* (goddess) and *sati* (the chaste woman) are *rākshasis* (she – demons), *alakshmi* and *asati* (the fallen woman). These images of the 'other woman' are also gleaned from the mythic narratives. Since Indian art has to deal mainly with the narration of supernatural events, the mythic characters are also invested with a great deal of versatility. Hence, *Putana* in *Krishnaleela* paintings, a demon who tried to kill the infant Krishna by suckling him at her breast, is transformed by this act into a bad mother who departs from the given role of the nurturer. Surpanakha is the other rakshashi whose demands on Rama and Lakshmana are presented as aggressively sexual.

In contrast to the smooth pattern of flowing lines building the perfect feminine form of the goddess are the images of the demons. Both Putana and Surpanakha are portrayed through the depiction of huge female bodies with thrashing lines, their energies uncontained within a pliant feminine contour. These figures fill the pictorial frame and almost fall out of it; the anarchy in the visual structuring indicates the anarchy which their presence brings to the moral order.

The world order, structured by the contemporary Bengali *Patua* is historically rooted in the nineteenth century. It rests on the relationship of the peasants and artisans with the landlord which in colonial India operated within the semi-feudal norms of domination and subordination. It has been aptly described as a 'relationship which derived its material sustenance from pre-capitalist conditions of production and its legitimacy from a traditional culture still paramount in the superstructure"(Guha, 1983).

The authority of the colonial state, by infusing new blood into the older existing landlord system through the permanent settlement, merely revitalized the quasi-feudal structure which prevailed in Bengal from the medieval period. The colonial state in order to facilitate the extraction of the peasant surplus perpetuated the *Zamindar's* traditional rights to coerce even when they infringed on the governmental authority over criminal jurisdiction. The constant element in the peasant's relationship with the landlord therefore lay in the *zamindar's* continued powers to coerce and punish both as agent of the British and as upper caste member of the village panchayat.

A florishing land market which came into existence after the permanent settlement caused large scale peasant eviction and the pauperized peasants now turned more and more to landlords who had virtually become money lenders. Thus in the perception of the rural artist and his audience the three agents of coercion were compounded in the person of the nineteenth century Bengali *zamindar*, who alone could be represented as the symbol of secular authority. Hence Chand, a merchant in the *Manasa Mangal* narrative, is portrayed as a nineteenth century Bengali *zamindar* in the scroll paintings. It is in reference to this concept of authority that the artist structures the woman image as the upholder of the moral order and his own social role as that of the ideal subject.

A clue to the patuā's perception of self is to be found in the origin of their myth. While all artisans trace their origin to the Lord Viswakarma, the patuās lament that they were thrown out of the caste order due to a curse laid on their ancestors by an angry shiva. Their acceptance of this outcast status logically follows from what Ranajit Guha describes as their 'subalternity' whereby the peasant/artisan learns to recognize himself through the identity imposed on him by the dominant class. The sum total of ruling ideologies expressed through religious myths re-enforces this subordinate position of the peasant by eulogizing loyalty and subservience to all authority, secular and religious, as a matter of spritual commitment (Guha, 1983).

Contemporary research shows that the *patuās* are now settled mainly in Medinipur and Birbhum districts of West Bengal. Though forced to move into diverse occupations they still have a preference for bardic narration and for the unusual occupations of snake – charmer or quack. This fits in with their roving tendencies, and their claims to the special position which they had traditionally enjoyed. The primitive equation of the artist with the magician seems to have held for the *patuās* long after the Brahmanical society had moved into complex religious rituals (Bhattacharya, 1980).

This firm entrenchment in the caste occupation contrasts sharply with their actual social position. Most of the *patuās* coming from Medinipur and Birbhum still bear two names, one Muslim and the other Hindu. Oscillating between these two religious cultures, the *patuā's* actually inhabit a twilight zone. Yet, simultaneously, his identity as an artisan or performer is defined by both religions in relation to those of his patrons. This mythic order in which the *patuā* situates himself as the ideal *prajā* (subject) rests on three pillars; the cult deity, the secular authority (king or landlord), and the moral agent, often a woman as in the *mangal Kavyas*. The rural artist by his own definition is the recipient subject, who flourishes in the region of the good king and suffers under an immoral one;

Rājār pāpêy rājya nashto, prajā kashto pae.
(The subject and the kingdom suffer due to
the sins of the king.)

In the consciousness of the rural artist this moral order breaks down in the nineteenth century as the colonial experience transforms the rural *zamindar* into *babu*. This coincides with his own dislocation from the village to Calcutta's bazaars. The satirical Kalighat paintings, also known as the 'bazzar art' of Calcutta, visualized this disruption in their traditional occupational pattern.

An apt literary description reflecting the ideological stance of the contemporary intelligentsia is to be found in the writings of Kaliprasanna Sinha.

The Nawabi age disappeared like the winter's sunset while the power of the British increased as the released sun from behind the clouds ...... Nabo Munshi, Chhire merchant and Pute oil-maker became the Rajas,......Krishna Chandra, Rajballov, Man Singh, Nanda Kumar and Jagat Seth fell from grace and with them disappeared the Hindu religion, charity to the poor, the poet's honour, interest in learning and good plays, half akhrai, full akhrai, panchali and jatras came into being. The youth of the town are divided into different groups. Money has gained a higher status than aristocratic birth(Sinha, 1991).

The *patuas* coming to Calcutta during this period of transition absorbed the ideology of the dominant Hindu conservatives. They added their own social comments through the modification of a traditional art form which struck at the colonial roots of the new bourgeois culture. It, however, upheld most of the values which continued to be oppressive alike to the peasants and the rural artisans. On the basis of the Kalighat paintings reserved in various museums it is now generally accepted that as a particular artistic form it flourished in Calcutta between 1830 and 1930. After this the two last artists Nibaran Chandra Ghosh and Kalicharan Ghosh died and the form disappeared. While the first stylistic phase which began in 1830 shows an attempt at continuing the traditional form, Kalighat painting is known mainly through its break with the format of bardi narration and scroll paintings. Interestingly, this struggle to cling to a given artistic schema and at the same time bring about an innovation required for the depiction of the actual incidents, are best expressed in the Kalighat painter's projection of the woman image.

A number of paintings known as *rasaraj* and *rasamanjari* form the first group. Here an attempt is made to link the forms to the medieval court paintings of *nayaka-nayikabhed* found profusely in *Rajasthan*. Common to both Kalighat painting and woodcut prints of the nineteenth century, we see these women figures, engaged in playing a musical instrument, smoking a *hookah* or holding a peacock. Their long ornamented robes, heavily bejewelled figures and graceful stance refer to the courtly tradition which was rigorously contained within an aesthetic code. In sharp contrast to these images are structured the images of shrews, be they prostitutes or wives; their aggressive sexuality expressed in terms of a voluptuous form.

The common experience which the Kalighat painters was drawing upon also served for the satirical plays of the time known as *prahasan*. These were written, read, watched by a literate lower middle class, who are rarely mentioned in any study of nineteenth century Bengal. The similarity of the literary satires and the Kalighat paintings lay in focussing upon social incidents which had attracted recent popular attention. One such incident was the seduction by the *Mohānto* (religious chief) of Tarakeswar of a woman called Elokeshi. Elokeshi's husband Nabin lived in the city, and on his return home he became aware of the situation. The couple tried to run away but was thwarted by the *Mohānto's* men; in anger Nabin killed his wife and surrendered to the police. This resulted in implicating the *Mohānto* who was finally imprisoned. This theme was taken up by a number of writers of satires and lampoons. It was also taken up by the *patuās*.

In the paintings the three incidents, of Elokeshi's meeting the *Mohānto,* of Elokeshi being murdered by Nabin and of the *Mohānto* serving his sentence in prison carefully depicted. In the visual narrative the image of Elokeshi under-goes a change from the innocent victim of the early Kalighat painting to a coy seductive woman in the later works. While the viewer's sympathy for Nabin as the wronged husband remains to the last, this slight shift in the focussing of the story gives an index into the *patuā's* ideology.

With the entrenchment of colonial rule in nineteenth century Bengal the dominant social code embodied in the *Manu Smriti* continued to be, as it had been from the medieval times, the most important frame of reference for Hindu social relations of authority where men were granted a commanding position over women as fathers, brothers, husbands and sons. Without any hope of independence the women were mainly to be treated as necessary evils, for *Manu* warned that given the slightest indulgence her sexual appetite, always insatiable, will devour the man. This view of woman was internalized by the popular artists; in both popular literature and popular art of the period, women were used as images to project the 'other' of man. Kalighat artists, by reserving the moral order, introduced and element of satire against the society which was denying them their subsistence. So in a number of paintings (the *babu patas*) we see men servile before women, sitting at her feet massaging her feet, bowing before her, while the woman, large and obese, is chastising him or even trampling on him in a gesture of rejection. The women in these paintings have been denied that tender grace which a secure feudal order, keeping the woman contained within its male-dominated enclosure, could bestow on them. The energy which the smoothly flowing lines of Kalighat painting enclosed in the female form was not released for the erotic gratification of men; here they were often used to project a reserved situation. The woman in her sexual aggression became a punisher. Her physical strength provides a contrast to the man's weakness. In painting after painting of the fallen *babus* we see the logic of the reversed

world order gaining ground, as the erotic is transformed into the obscene(Chatterjee, 1990).

This reversed world order is best expressed in the structuring of an iconography of *Kōli Kāl* or *Ghōr Kōli*. In the Hindu mythic concept of time *Kōli Kāl* comes last. It is the period when men are steeped in sin, when the low born acquire power over Brahmans and women dominate men. The rural artisan, feeling totally alienated in Calcutta, devised a visual design of this *Kōli Kāl* . The painting shows a man leading by a halter around the neck of a devout old woman. The bent figure with her sandalwood paster mark and the rosary bag is undoubtedly able to arouse the viewer's sympathy. On the man's shoulder sits a bejewelled young woman holding a parrot. With his right hand the man holds her feet steadying her. The woman resting on his shoulder is his wife, while the woman being led by a rope around her neck is the mother. Through these images are recreated not only the fall of the *babu;* i.e. the lost patron, but the breakdown of all authoritarian structures, the parent and the child, the man and the woman, the *guru* and the disciple. Through the three tier division of space where the woman with the parrot rides high on the man is shown the reversal of the erotic schema of the high art tradition where the presence of the man determines the woman's sexual role.

In a period of transition, a social order can break down, rupturing the hierarchical relations which form its core. When this happens, the breakdown of any one of its elements can serve in art as its major metaphor. In nineteenth-century Bengal the crisis in the arts was created by the reappraisal of the new middle class of its indigenous culture. The colonial education which declared this to be inadequate urged them to social reforms. While this broke down the traditional patron-client, relationship existing between the *patuās* and their

landlords or *babus,* it also impinged on interpersonal relations within the family. Women were now granted a presence in public debates unprecedented in Indian history. But the marginalized *patua* using his own self-perception as an index for the structuring of a new woman image, merely saw her as an agent of destruction.

> *Rājar Pāpey rājya nashto prajā kashto pāe*
> *ār ginnir pāpey gerasti nashto gharer lakshmi urey jāe.*
>
> (The subjects suffer due to the sins of the king but the household is destroyed due to the sins of the housewife as Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth leaves the hearth.)

A shift occurs in popular perception when the peasant turns into a rebel. His actual experience helps him to locate the oppressors and build, what Gramsci has termed a 'counter – ideology to destroy the ruling class's hegemony'. The process through which the peasant and artisan are able to formulate their counter ideology is certainly not unilinear and even in historical moments of rebellion. The peasants often hark back to older social sanctions of religion. In the *Saheb Patas* from Medinipur, the oppressors are rightly located as the British police, the planters and the comprader *zamindars.* The narrative now moves to the usual serialized motion, but here the human images no longer assume a mythic form. The clothes, gestures and particularly the image of the peasant rebel assumes a realistic significance which refers to the lived experience rather than the fantasies of a mythic world. The narrative progresses by discarding the earlier logic of a tripartite power structure and the heroes no longer lay claim to a supernatural agency.

A feeling of solidarity operates between the rebels and the rural artists as they recognize the legitimate demands of the peasants of their own land. In the *Santhal Bidroha Patas*

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the *patuā* approvingly upholds the tribals' rights as the just demands of a good people:

Santhalra baro bhālõ chāsh bāsh niye chhilo
ār Sahebrā eshey tā der jami kere nilo

(The Santhals were good people who lived by cultivating their land, but the white men came and took it away.)

In the context of the *patuas'* earlier relations with the Santhals, this representation of the Santhal rebellion points to a new awareness of self and community.

The *patuās* even today act as priests for the Santhals. Whenever one of them dies the *patuās* come and persuade the relatives to have the dead person's portrait drawn. Then they coax the family to have the eyes put in the portraits, in exchange of rice, vegetables and metal utensil, the argument being that the dead relative was roaming round blindly and ·uld proceed straight to heaven after gaining his/her sight.

Perceived from a Brahmanical stance, this is an act whereby the *patua* is recruiting the tribal into the Brahmanical system. Looked at from the tribals' point of view this is a subversive act through which the Santhals are being brought under a form of systematized exploitation.

In the representation of the rebellion, the rural artists provide a sympathetic rendition, projecting Kanu and Sidhu as immortal heroes. While the final scene shows the death of the rebel leaders and the torture of the people following the failure of the rebellion, the artists valorize Sidhu and Kanu as martyrs, and realistically project this tragedy as a defeat for the entire peasantry.

Interesting enough it is in these paintings of rebellions that we see the artist's attempt to structure an alternative woman-image. In these paintings she is rebel partner and hence present in the public space. The artist deliberately removes her shackles, so that she is free of the mother daughter roles played out by women at home. Her participation in the rebellion offers her the exit points form the hitherto stereotyped roles so long thrust upon women.

It is tempting to read in these visual renditions of the rebellions a greater revolutionary project than is obviously apparent, but this would merely divert our attention from those links that still exist between the dominant and popular ideologies. The artist-narrator of these paintings when speaking of the revolutionary woman used the metaphors of 'brave mother', 'brave sister' and 'brave wife' so that the women in these texts are once again deified as *biranganas*. The centrality of the woman question in the nationalist discourse pointed out by contemporary research (Sarkar, 1985) opens up new readings of the representations of women-figures like Matangini Hazra in the scrolls. The *patuas* refer to her as a freedom fighter who not only took up the cause of the peasants but organized women who came out of their kitchens and participated in political meetings and marches. One should note that the scrolls still retaining the visual narrative schema are divided into separate pictorial units. In the first scene where there used to be the cult image of the god-goddess is now placed a huge national symbol of the three Asokan lions, while from the sides, rushing to the centre Matangini Hazra appears dramatically, her white sari billowing behind, a white cap on her head, one hand holding the national flag, the other raised in a closed fist of protest. The *patuā* now sings –

Prati Grāmey giye Mātangini bolite lāgilo / grāmer meyed√r Mātangini jarõ je korilo/ bolite lāgilo, amrā bideshi jinish chhobonā/Amrā suto kāttbo /nijeder kāpor boonbo/āmader desher jinish āmrā vyabahār koorbo.

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(Matangini went to every village, she brought out the women, she told them we will not dress like foreigners, we shall spin our own cloths, we shall make our own clothes, we shall only use the goods of our country.)

In the climax of this narrative Matangini is shown demonstrating before the Magistrate's gate, while a huge crowd, mostly of women, follow her. The *patuā*, however, relates her sufferings; how the British officer ordered the police to shoot, so that she first lost her arms, then her voice. But before she died, she prophesied that she would be born again and when India is independent in each home there will be born a Matangini.

In the words of the song more than the visuals we hear the resonance of the voice of other martyers, like Khurdiram who had also promised to be born again in an independent India (The *Khudiram* song was extremely popular even in the villages). By equating Matangini with the male martyrs the rural artists have here accorded her a public space. She is now freed from the role of the chaste woman who is empowered like Behula by her ties with her family and her *sati* status to step out of the confines of the *gerāsti* (household) which creates an inner sanctum for the colonized male within the home. Matangini is released from this structure; in fact, she transforms this home into private space from which she leads the women out into the public space projecting them as equals of men. It is here that we find a new construct in the woman-image.

But unfortunately the *patua*'s perception is not completely riveted to this new image of woman altering his semi-feudal perspective. So he returns to a contemporary version of the *Koli Kal patas.*

The myth of *Kaliyuga* mainly structured in the epics expressed the male anxieties of the period. Textually the *Kaliyuga* or the period of moral doom is supposed to have begun soon after the Mahabharata War, when existing power relations were subverted. The *mlechha* alien rulers replaced the rightful kings. Shudras appropriated the authority of the Brahmans and, most important of all, sexually deviant women wielded power over men.

In the popular paintings of Bengal, the central image is of the deviant woman. Continued from the nineteenth century the images of sexually aggressive women are depicted as wearing revealing clothes and indulging in exaggerated gestures. The narrative related through certain incidents serialized these figures, situating them in different scenes. The blown up figures of the deviant woman contrasts sharply with male figures of husbands and fathers wedged into the crowded picture space. Even when depicted as men of authority the male characters appear secondary in the drama which unfolds before us.

The narrative of moral doom in contemporary scrolls refer to present day social events affecting women — divorce, remarriage, women having multiple sexual partners even when she has a husband, and women shunning domesticity. The peak of the narrative is structured through scenes of revelry as women are seen rushing to the cinema hall. As the picture space gets crowded by images of women on cycles, packed in autos, vans, falling out of crowded buses, a humorous note is struck by the artist. With the recognition by the audience of the images and the events depicted, the artist is able to contextualize the painting within the scheme of daily existence.

The narrator's voice at once morally indignant and satirical relates how the modern woman shuns her traditional

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role. Today's women, the bard tells us, marry as soon as their husbands die, even an old woman these days demand a young and handsome lover. Clearly the roles are reversed. The painting assumes a special significance when placed in the perspective of nineteenth century male projects of reform; the latter had in fact, placed abolition of *Kulin* polygamy and widow remarriage in the centre of their demands.

The final scene shows a woman wearing a sleeveless blouse and high heeled shoes looking over her shoulder at the trailing group of men following her to the cinema hall. The chaos left behind is depicted through images of crying children, an old mother-in-law carrying on the household chores and a gaping husband staring at the departing figure of his spouse. With the suggestion of the cinema hall as the centre of moral doom the artist communicates to the audience his views on the media that has robbed him of his daily bread. The audience's expectation is fulfilled as humour is used as a weapon by the frustrated *patuas* who retreat to the shelters of moral values stemming from a medieval past. The *patua* allowing the images of a reversed world order to once again gain ground, projects the typical patriarchal norms and their deeply ingrained hegemony. Men in the scheme of the *patuas* are always protected by the *sati* or punished and subjugated by the *asati*. To both he denies human identity.

(The contemporary scroll paintings discussed are the works of patuas from medinipur. The Manasa Pata is the work of Bahar Chitrakara who is also known as Ranjit Chitrakara)

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GENDER CONCEPT: ANOTHER DIMENSION OF UNDERSTANDING

Meerachakravorty[1]

The question that perplexes one is whether the understanding of gender as theorised by women's struggle/studies could be applied without friction to the comprehension of people who transcend it. Since it appears to me that if could not, the question became what is the alternative understanding.

The general theory set forth in women studies is that if sex is physical then gender is the psychosocial and cultural dimension to understand women's discrimination. While my interaction with people transcending, gender has found that, this 'transcendentalness' has brought multidimensional discrimination to these people.

It is well known that the great theorists in different areas of social science have never described their philosophy based on gender and this may be symptomatic of the problem, that will concern us. Students of women's studies may

claim that they have systematically and methodologically treated, the gender

concept, but it is important to note that we have failed to systematize adequately the ideas and practices to those community/people who have been conspicuous by their absence in the concrete analysis of history and society since, either they do not belong to a particular gender, or belong to both or transcend the genders. Accordingly, the present study may be considered as a response to the disparity, since it takes an epistemological gap between practice and concept as a context to reflect on the adequacy of an alternative perception.

This reflection may help to develop an internal critique of the gender theory as well. I believe that the encounter with 'gender transcending people' or the people belonging to 'non mainstream consciousness'(as I would term it for the time being), can generate something different and authentic to the perspective to women's studies. It would be inadequate and incomprehensible comment on our supposed knowledge, if, the gender theory as developed in our studies could be applied without problem to the Gender Transcending People(G.T.P.). And beyond its contribution to the spread of another ideology and polity, it would reveal itself as a "grand intellectual distraction".

The resistance of Gender Transcending people to gender theory has had many expressions. There were clear anticipations of the people, both in literature and in actual life situations where it has to confront the alienated forces in the so called mainstream society and its immutability. We ought to be aware of the fact that for our claim on universality of the gender interpretation. There would be counterclaims of its relativity. For every assertion of its applicability to all women, there is reservation of its specificity to the ones belonging to G.T.P.

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It would be wrong on the feminist part to dismiss G.T.P. arguments as naive. Instead, it should necessarily help develop into an internal critique of a theory. Since, women, are not a homogeneous group, arguing in favour of a so called 'mainstream' society of women, would be an immense detour into the uncharted hinterlands that merely would bring us back to the starting point.

What an alternate perspective seems to offer is an explicit statement of the culture, It may not offer an explanation where the means of production do not confront the producers as reified and alienated forces. And a circumspection about the formative powers of the economic base. Human beings have conceived, their existence in many ways. One among them is social existence. Marx's emphasis on social existence is much against Hegelian idealism. He claimed that it is not consciousness which becomes aware of its existence as Hegal had thought but it is 'man', who shapes his consciousness on the basis of his existence. Man recreated himself including his consciousness by his activities in the world. Because of his varied needs, he necessitated the relations of production between him and others, bringing further transformation in his nature. In due course, as his wants increased, his productions grew more rigid and complex, altering his conditions and objectives. He altered his conceptions about himself, in so far as they followed from the consciousness of his being as objectified in the changes produced as well as from the relations to others entangled in that production.

Carrying himself through new productive forces and relations of productions man claimed and categorized himself as the historical subject which determined for him the cultural, spiritual and political character of society obviously ignoring and excluding both those who belonged to the feminine gender and those who transcended genders.

But can the idea or consciousness for that matter, be taken as a representation of an experience or a simple reflex or perception? Is it not necessary to have a human condition for the existence of a social form? A social structure is thus a kind of crystallization of some subjective value. One way of seeing this incompleteness is to note that by determining materialistic process as an apriori position Marx generated a meaning or a condition which is an intervention in human nature. For, meaning would then turn into a variety of branding, and cultural concepts would be referred to a logic of serious defect. This folly is repeated by women's studies in its gender analysis. As far as G.T.P. was concerned, it was anti-speculative. It never occurred to those engaged in the studies that the dimension of GTP could provide a fundamental theoretical basis for understanding cultural behaviour.

Earlier, the historical variability of the culture became a complex issue to be explained, and attained the position of predicate instead of subject. At certain given moments, human beings appeared as beings in need and acted with the material means in a state of productive forces. Thus, the state of production got naturalized and it soon overlooked the objective logic of the cultural situation, rendering it neutral and inert.

The dimension of nature in culture, its direct or indirect realization had been totally ignored by Marxist ideology. This had its effect on women's studies. For, it, likewise, does not refer to the apriori essential and structures of experience in which beings attributed under the category of gender and beings said to be transcending gender are given.

A description of inner experience and structure of intentionality of the latter are not considered important. Indeed, any attempt to justify validity claims by means of a turn to the subject without explicitly accounting for the gender tran-

scending stage is only an experience of 'some sort'. If only an investigation were performed in the structures of experience, then the investigation would not be the mainstream experience but rather a non mainstream experience, or a mainstream transcending experience, to use a different connotation. But as there is no acceptance of this kind of transcendental experience it is pretended as if it does not exist, in the world, though the beings of such experience would still be the beings in the world.

The relation of the mainstream experience and the non mainstream experience (of the gender transcending people) is by no means a negative relation of mutual exclusion. On the contrary, all the contents of the non-mainstream experiences are without restriction, valid. The only difference is the attitude with which these contents are considered. The mainstream experience are considered natural and mundane and the non mainstream as the result of reduction. What is necessary is through critical reflection on the presuppositions of the descriptions of the non mainstream experiences (NME) and an intentional analysis of the cognitive activities of NME.

On the one hand the world and all its contents are given as the correlate of experiences, on the other hand, we can think of being of experiences only as being in the world. The how, why and where of the being can be apprehended only in the world. Therefore, a self apprehension is necessarily infected with relativism. To be in the world is to be in one specific situation and is one specific context in the world. Whatever is in the world in a specific context, is in turn, determined by that context. The problem is that the way in which this determination is thought depends upon the general understanding of the world behaviour. The other different ways are not taken into account, as they do not satisfy the said view. It is thus obvious that the decision to deny the

motives for accepting realistic positions can hardly be challenged.

An alternate vision of this context can be seen in the 'paradox of subjectivity'. Where the being of subjectivity is the being in the world. Ontologically, this being is taken for granted. But the problem is that in certain cases the nature of being is not asked, for instance in the case of G.T.P. also, the nature of gender transcendence is not grasped properly. What is important to note is, that what the gender transcendence allows in principle is that it is possible to make the other' non-mainstream consciousness in general presupposes this inter subjectivity. The consciousness of the mainstream is also in a sense transcendent for the consciousness of the non mainstream. It seems, therefore, that without such an assumption, it is impossible to give an account of the one as independent from the constitutive activity of the other and hence, of transcendence in general.

There will be, however, no difficulty for such an interpretation if this phenomenon is understood as epistemic. To bracket the mainstream attitude, does not mean that the transcendence of the other has been bracketed. It only points out that the world, in whatever understanding it presents itself, is the first evidence, underlying all other evidence. The mainstream including its transcendence remain a phenomenon. The task is to analyse the meaning of this transcendence. The relevant point is not thinking of the transcendence as non existent but it is in an attitude of being concerned with, which also has the character of checking what is the case. It is certainly not the attitude which dismisses the transcendence as elementary, primitive and culturally and historically non relative. There has to be a primacy of perception. The perception that the nonmainstream also is as meaningful, its characteristic qualities and relations and structures emerge why like

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any other mainstream and has been all along as typical and thus, implicitly at least, as the way, the world will be at other places and times.

The gender transcending people are out there, from the common sense standpoint branded as ugly and ignorant. But are they really out there in the form in which we perceive them? Let us suspend our Judgement. We simply suspend judgement about their appearance and behaviour, we do not make any judgement positive or negative. It will not be wrong to suppose that they have their own epistomology which need not be in our terms. If we want to know it we ought to know it from the transcendental perspective.

The way of perceiving people and their world in a traditional or statusquoist way must be rigorously criticized. In my interaction with them they called in question the fundamental error of our thought resulting in our surreptitious substitution of equally comprehensive world of idealities, for our so called only real world, the world which we perceive and experience, the world which is historical, general, ideal and only indirectly related to the particular instances of some people.

The world of gender transcending people is a world of experience not just of some discreet things existing somewhere. If lay bare the world of experience in consciousness quite apart from what is there in the traditional world. Standing there, at the gates of this enormous complex, unexamined world, one must plan to enter cautiously, so as not to loose one's way, misdirected by habits, and prejudices acquired in the process of dealing with the traditional world.

The concept of Gender should be applicable to and related to all traditions and not just to specific group. It should not find its access to other traditions blocked. On the contrary it should face the challenge of understanding these other traditions, the other culture, the other person. It might be a long and arduous process trying to understand the other, but one might ultimately succeed in being related to the thoughts of the others. While exploring in the gender studies the dimension of its complex internal structure on the one hand and going beyond it in order to lay bare the experiential phenomenon on the other hand may render valuable insights.

INTERNAL REFUGEES IN SRI LANKA: THE INTERPLAY OF ETHNICITY AND GENDER

*Joke Schrjvers**

*T*his article** focuses on internal refugees in camps in Co lombo in 1993. State policies have increased their dependency, a condition which is aggravated by forced resettlement programmes. Rather than reducing conflict, the policies pursued have fuelled ethnic polarization. Although 'institutionalized' by the state and extremely dependent and vulnerable, most internal refugees are not passive victims but survivors who tried to regain some control of their lives. The interaction of ethnicity and gender appeared to be crucial constructs in their daily struggle to recapture a sense of human identity and dignity. Men in particular reacted by stressing ethnicity as the core of their identity, which was marked by gender attributes. The anthropological research methodology adopted aimed to capture the experiences and views of the refugees themselves; views which seriously questioned official state discourse.*

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Introduction: Regaining A Sense of Self

The world as a whole is faced with an enormous growth of forced migration arising from internal conflicts and violence. Inadequate economic resources and ongoing environmental destruction force people to seek refuge elsewhere. The 'classical' distinctions between political and economic refugees and between forced and voluntary migration no longer make sense. In the near future, a large percentage of the world's population could be on the move for much of their lives, making a 'generalized condition of homelessness' the rule rather than the exception [Malkki, 1992: 37]. Rather than the political conditions which give rise to massive territorial displacements or the politics of space by which people are fixed in or cut off from geographical places, it is the conditions of 'uprootedness and 'displacement' which are seen as abnormal, disturbing and threatening, both in everyday discourse and in the study of refugees [*Malkki, 1992: 37; Stepputat, 1994: 176}*.

The 'internally displaced' is a UN term for refugees who have not left their countries. Although comprising the majority of people who are forced to migrate, they are excluded from the UN definition of a 'refugee', and are not thereby entitled to legal protection. Instead of using the term 'internally displaced', I prefer to speak of 'internal refugees' so as to stress that they are *refugees* entitled to protection and support, and active subjects rather than passive objects of an abstract fate. By this term, I also want to avoid the image of a 'natural identity between people and places'*(Stepputat, 1994: 176}*, an image which is evoked by the term 'displaced people' .

An analysis of the global situation, with the increase in protracted intra-state conflicts often expressed in ethnic antagonisms, gives little hope that resettlement will be the

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normal solution to forced migration. Most (internal) refugees continue to be physically, politically and/or economically unsafe in their areas of origin and, for good reasons, unwilling to return. However, they are also unwanted guests in those areas and countries which have granted them 'temporary' asylum. It is therefore urgent to gain more insight into the politics by which people are removed from or fixed to places - also in the imagination *(Anderson, 1983)*. How do (internal) refugees reconstruct their identities in their new environments, and how is this influenced by outside politics of space and control?

Identity is a rather 'troubled conceptual vehicle' *(Malkki, 1992: 37)*. The term suggests a static, uni-dimensional condition whilst in reality identities are dynamic, multi-dimensional and multi-layered social constructs, 'always mobile and processual' *(ibid.)*. Identity is a challenging concept for the study of refugees, who more than any others have experienced dramatic changes, which often imply spatial as well as social and cultural ruptures with the past. In cases of conflict between groups from different backgrounds, 'ethnicity' has become one of the primary vehicles for (re)constructing a sense of 'self', of identity in hierarchical opposition to 'others'. Ethnicity is a social construct that can be moulded and transformed in subtle or more radical ways, and the representations and practices around gender are crucial in this process. Like ethnicity, gender is socially constructed, and underpinned by a supposedly 'natural' relation. The boundary of the ethnic group is often dependent on gender relations, which are felt to specify ethnic identity. 'Much of ethnic culture is organized around rules relating to sexuality, marriage and the family ... Communal boundaries often use differences in the way women are socially constructed as markers' *(Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1993: 113)*. Gender discourses, like ethnic ideologies, contain profoundly contradictory elements that can be stressed or suppressed, and are tied

up with nationalist projects *(Moghadam, 1994: 17; Schrijvers, 1995: 72-5)*.

In the latter half of 1993 I had the opportunity to carry out anthropological research in Sri Lanka, which was just recovering from one of the most violent periods known in its history. This article focuses on the experiences and conditions of internal refugees. They survived the violence in the north and east of their country during the height of the civil war between the government and the *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam* (LTTE). The majority were accommodated in refugee camps, which from one day to the other turned them into an institutionalized, undifferentiated mass of people ruled by a 'technology of "care and control" ... a technology entailing the management of space and movement - for "peoples out of place"' [*Malkki, 1992: 34*]. An anonymous, poverty-stricken mass packed together in public buildings or temporary sheds, they became an 'underclass' not only in the society at large, but also among the category of refugees themselves *(Clifford, 1992)*. Many were seriously traumatized; they lived in extremely vulnerable circumstances, their future was uncertain. Yet the majority of them were determined to struggle on, to create a life with more dignity and security - if not for themselves, then at least for their children.

The experiences of these ordinary men and women are crucial for understanding how they managed to survive as human beings. How did they regain their sense of self in environments that had become increasingly 'ethnicized'? The main questions addressed by this article concern how refugees in camps in Colombo reconstructed their identities, how they drew on both existing and novel notions of ethnicity and gender to 'normalize' life, and how their situation was influenced by government policy - including the policy of forced resettlement. The article introduces the reader to different camps

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and to refugees from different backgrounds. I did not perceive these people as an undifferentiated 'mass of passive victims', nor as 'dangerous problem-makers'. I perceived them, first of all, as human beings whose primary need was to regain a sense of human dignity. It was precisely this need which was most undermined by Sri Lankan state policy and the official discourse on refugees.

My research methodology enabled me to listen at length to the refugees themselves, and to use their experiences and views as the basis of my analysis - an approach continued in this article by combining my research narrative with an analysis of the findings. In this way, I could bring in a critical counterpoint to the dominant representations of refugees which bypass their own feelings and views. Before this, however, I will first present some background information on Sri Lanka's recent history.

Violence in Sri Lanka: Historical Notes

Sri Lanka gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1948. The main communities are the Sinhalese, mostly Buddhist (74%), the Tamils, mostly Hindu (18%), and the Muslims or Moors, all Muslim by religion (7%). The Tamils comprise 'Ceylon' or 'Jaffna' Tamils (69%) who have lived in Sri Lanka since times unknown, and 'Indian' Tamils, who are the descendants of a plantation workforce imported from South India by the British, in the 19th century. The majority of the Ceylon Tamils and Muslims live in the northern and eastern parts of the island, which have much less favourable conditions than the central and southern parts.

Ideas of exclusive communal identity and of hostile competition over scarce resources were formed in the colonial period. All groups suffered from discrimination during colonial rule, and all gradually adopted some of the rulers' ideas of ra-

cial superiority, religious radicalism, violent competition and nationalism. On the whole, the Tamils were given access to better education during colonial rule and consequently spoke better English. This reinforced existing feelings of inferiority and vulnerability among the Sinhalese [Deng, 1994: 4-7].

After independence, successive Sinhalese-dominated governments (organized according to the Westminster parliamentary model) systematically aimed to strengthen their political and economic position by overtly discriminating against the two Tamil communities. The Indian Tamils were disenfranchised immediately after independence, losing their citizenship rights. Subsequently, in 1957, Sinhala was made the official state language, a measure which deeply offended the Tamils and blocked their access to higher education and employment. Buddhism gradually gained the status of a state religion. Large-scale, state-controlled colonization-cum-settlement schemes, mostly funded by foreign donors, were established in the north-central and eastern regions. Under the guise of an employment policy, hundreds of thousands of poor Sinhalese settlers were transferred as civilian 'shock troops' to what had been predominantly Tamil-inhabited areas at the time of colonization [Rodgers, 1992: 47]. Incidents of violence increased. As Tamil political parties failed to prevent discriminatory legislation in Parliament, Tamil youth began to radicalize. Among the numerous groups the Tamil New Tigers (later renamed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the LTTE) stand out as the most violent. The situation became more grim after the LTTE was banned by the conservative government (the UNP) which assumed office in 1977. Having more or less eliminated the other Tamil groups, the LTTE is now the only Tamil movement still fighting for an independent Tamil state.

The situation of the Muslim community differs considerably from that of the Tamils. Their once harmonious rela-

tionship with the Sinhalese majority became tenuous after the 1915 riots, and more openly so after the Sinhala-Buddhist project revealed itself through land-settlement [*Sivathamby, 1987*]. Their small community is widely scattered geographically, except for in the east and Mannar in the north. Although the Muslim leaders opted to maintain good relations with both Sinhalese and Tamils, in times of conflict they tended to side with the strongest party. In the western, southern and central regions which were closer to Sinhalese national politics, they supported the 'Sinhala only' policy, neglecting the Muslims of the east and north who did not speak Sinhala. In the north and particularly the east, the Muslims displayed divided loyalties to both the LTTE and the government.

Although not a simple case of cause and effect, the economic 'open-door' policy adopted in 1977 by the UNP ruined the Jaffna middle peasantry [*Bose, 1994: 107*] and contributed substantially to the erosion of basic human rights, such as employment, health, education and political participation of the majority of Sri Lankan citizens. This led to a situation of total chaos and violence in the 1980s and 1990s [Wilson, 1988].

During the initial years of independence Sri Lanka was one of the most affluent countries in Asia. It was self-sufficient in rice, it had enough foreign currency thanks to its tea, rubber and coconut plantations, education and medical services were free, and there were food-subsidies for the poor. It was often seen as a model of Third World democracy. Owing to the welfarist approach of successive governments, literacy rates reached 90 per cent, and life expectancy rose to 70 years. With the aim of stimulating economic self-reliance, a strict policy of import-substitution was adopted in the 1960s by the then ruling socialist party (the SLFP). However, this

measure was not enough to stem the rising unemployment problem, and in 1971 the Insurgency broke out by the JVP (*Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna*), a leftist, nationalist movement of educated and largely unemployed Sinhalese youth.

Following a major political and economic shift in 1977, the problems arising from the unemployment and poverty of an increasing number of well-educated youth became worse. The open-market policies pursued, together with the structural adjustment programmes of the World Bank with their steep reductions in social spending particularly on food subsidies, education and health, and the conditions set by the IMF, have increased disparities between rich and poor [*Bose, 1994; Deng, 1994: 7-8; Schrijvers, 1993: 14-16*].

In the late 1980s, Sri Lanka became one of the 36 poorest countries in the world - a sad example of the failures of adjustment policies. It had turned into a state of terror ruled by a dictatorship, in which civil rights were grossly violated. In the north and east the violent Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) was fighting the LTTE, in the south-west the JVP was attacking the political establishment.

Relations between the Tamils and Muslims in the east also became more than tense. During the IPKF occupation, the LTTE smoothly collaborated with the Muslims, who politically strengthened themselves particularly in the east. Between late 1989 and early 1990 the LTTE took control of the north-east after the IPKF left. Their attitude towards the Muslims then changed dramatically as seen in a series of massacres of Muslim communities. In June 1990 after a short armistice the LTTE took up arms again and '*Eelam II*' started. Government forces marched into the east, setting fire to Tamil houses and killing Tamil civilians as they went. The escalation of communal violence in the east was expressed in the LTTE's antipathy to Muslim political groups, the massa-

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cre of Muslim policemen, the government's use of Muslim 'home guards', further massacres of entire Muslim villages by the LTTE, and counter massacres by Muslim home guards at the government's instigation. In short, there was a complete breakdown of communal relations in the east between 1990 and 1992, with ten thousands dead, thousands widowed, and at least 80 per cent of the population displaced [*Schrijvers, 1996*].

Internal Refugees 'On Paper'

During 'Eelam II', between 1990-1992, countless numbers were killed and officially around 1.6 million - over a tenth of the total population - fled their homes. One third of these people fled to other countries in the region or to Europe. In 1991, 250,000 refugees were living in India and in 1992, almost 200,000 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees were in Western Europe [*Hensman, 1993; Rodgers, 1992*]. In October 1990 the LTTE unexpectedly expelled all 75,000 Muslims living in the north. Most of them stayed in the country, crowded into refugee camps situated all over the south-west and in Colombo.

What were the conditions of internal refugees in Sri Lanka? From policy documents and interviews with government officers one has the impression that the state looked after the victims well, spending lots of money. According to government statistics, in March 1992 there were 531 'welfare centres', situated in the war zone in the north, all along the north-east frontier and in the south, housing a total of 256,598 persons. The total number of registered displaced persons was 613,363. A Dutch report of the International Red Cross [*Het Nederlandse Rode Kruis, 1993*] for the same month refers to 560 camps, with 275,500 inhabitants (and a total of 1,2 million people displaced in Sri Lanka). Whatever

the 'real' figures, one thing is clear: statistics on the displacement, as in so many others areas, are not neutral. They are used as political weapons, whether be it to show to the outside world that everything is under control, or to emphasize the urgent need for more relief aid from foreign donors. On paper efforts for the Sri Lankan refugees seemed well-organized: the statistics, the mobilization of sufficient national and international funding, housing, food, resettlement and rehabilitation programmes. Apart from government relief there was an impressive array of non-governmental organizations active in the Colombo camps as well as outside the capital.

'Welfare Centres' in Colombo

During the time of my research, eight of the original twelve camps set up in Colombo were still open; three for Tamils and five for Muslims. We[1] established contacts with people in three camps, two inhabited by Tamil and one by Muslim refugees. Our first visits showed a less rosy picture than that suggested by official descriptions. A few hundred people occupied a large hall. Most families had only a few square metres to themselves, screening themselves off from others with cartons, suitcases and clothes hanging from a rope. The luckier families had an uncemented 3 x 2 metre cadjan hut of their own. While Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese were accommodated separately in ethnically homogeneous camps, within each camp people differed according to socio-economic and caste background, to the regions they came from, and to their age and gender. According to estimates, women and children tend to outnumber men in refugee camps (estimates speak of 65-70 per cent being women the world over; Sri Lankan statistics did not differentiate by sex). However, in Colombo the number of men and boys equalled or outnumbered women and girls. I was told by dif-

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ferent people that the camps offered greater anonymity to men who were politically at risk of being 'recruited' by the LTTE. It was also far easier for men to find work in Colombo.

In all camps there was a general lack of minimal living space, sanitation, water, food, cash, health care and education.[2] The relief, which looked so impressive on paper, did not routinely reach the people, and supplies were always poorer in quantity and quality than implied by official rules. Although the budget of the Ministry of Rehabilitation came second to that of the Ministry of Defense, its continuous lack of liquidity was a well-known problem.

Governmental and non-governmental relief was top-down and mostly unconnected with the primary needs of the refugees. For instance, there had been no consultation about which items of food to provide, and people told me they would have preferred money rather than bad quality food. The refugees self-organizations were bypassed when taking decisions about the kind of relief and support given, and there was little encouragement for women to formulate their specific needs, such as the need for private space.[3] Some NGOs provided sewing and handicraft classes for girls and women as a so-called income-generating activity. After the courses were over, however, no support was offered for selling their products or for entering some form of employment. We spoke with a group of Muslim girls, who had enjoyed going out to the classes and learning new skills. Once back in their camp without any activity or prospect of a better future, they had become rather depressed. Women who had attended such classes without any follow-up were in a sense worse off than before.

Living in inhuman circumstances, the refugees needed not merely material support to survive but the chance to re-gain confidence in themselves and recover a sense of identity and human dignity. This entails their active involvement in shaping a new life. However, relief aid created passivity and dependency rather than encouraging participation or self-reliance. Having lived in these circumstances for at least three years, most refugees had developed habits of dependency. Harrell-Bond [1986] suggests that this 'dependency syndrome' is mainly the result of the anti-participatory manner in which humanitarian aid is provided. At first sight, people in the overcrowded camps did indeed look like an institutionalized, pathetic, passive mass of victims. They themselves tended to stress this image towards outsiders, using it as a resource they could draw on to elicit help. This was the main reason why I refrained from providing any material help. By noticeably becoming involved in welfare I would have been labelled as a relief worker, rather than researcher, and relations would have become firmly hierarchical, thereby closing off the possibility of developing more open and creative relations with the refugees [Schrijvers, 1995: 25-9].

Gendered Divisions of Labour

My image of the refugees changed substantially after revisiting some camps, meeting the same people several times and sitting down and talking with them at ease without a list of predetermined questions. We gradually established a relationship, and after a while some women offered us lemonades. Initially I felt very awkward. How could I accept hospitality from people who had so little? But I also realized that it was precisely through such gestures of hospitality that people in the camps could restore 'normality' and reciprocity, thus strengthening their sense of identity. We showed a sincere interest and respect for what they had to say; they gave us their time and hospitality, taking in turn a real interest in our research.

Gradually I started to understand the pattern of social and cultural life in the camps, patterns which were invisible to the casual visitor who saw mainly chaos. In both Tamil and Muslim camps, families had their own, fixed spaces according to their socio-economic and caste background. Informal pre-schools were held, religious rituals celebrated, and parties organized for those girls who attained age. Gender was one of the primary organizing principles, and it was interesting to notice how people had reconstructed gendered divisions of labour. Domestic work in the camps, for instance, such as cleaning and cooking, was mostly carried out by women, but men were responsible for cleaning their own toilets. Where possible, there were separate lavatories and toilets for men and women, and women changed clothes in the toilets. In one camp of 515 people (292 males and 223 females), rations were combined and cooking was done collectively by the men according to a rota. The women were considered unfit to carry the huge pots; they cleaned the rice and vegetables. There was a lot of dissatisfaction, however, with the quality of the food, the lateness of meals, and the distribution of food.

In another camp of about the same size, people had shifted back to individual cooking arrangements. Each household used its own rations and additional food items. In this case, it was women who prepared the meals, using purchased kerosene cookers in their own demarcated spaces within the big hall. People had more cash in this camp, as it was close to an urban area where some found jobs in the informal sector. In a third, much smaller camp, a separate 'kitchen' had been arranged, with 14 fireplaces that were used in turn by the women belonging to the 29 families living in the camp. There was no evidence of conflicts arising over these facilities; the cooking seemed to go smoothly.

Whereas most Tamil families came from the lower socio-economic strata, the Muslim camps were more mixed, containing both poor fishermen from Mannar and once fairly prosperous Jaffna Muslims. In one of these Muslim camps space had been divided according to regional, caste and socio-economic background. The families from Jaffna were regarded as being of higher status than those from Mannar; the men had worked in trade and business or as shopkeepers, and most of their wives had been housewives. They were given the more spacious and airier hall downstairs, where the two toilets were also located. The men from Mannar had been fishermen or agricultural labourers. Many of their women had also worked outside their homes for an (additional) income. These families were given the smaller and hotter upstairs room, which only had water during the night.

Ethnicity and Gender

Whether affluent or poor, male or female, no Muslim family had been allowed by the LTTE to take their movable property with them. When all 75,000 Muslims from the north had been forced to leave immediately, all their property had been confiscated by the LTTE [*Hasbullah et al., 1992; Hasbullah, 1993*].

> Within two hours we had to leave, we were told. With guns the LTTE knocked at the door and told us we had to go for an urgent meeting. Then, when we came, we were sent in the opposite direction of the meeting hall. We also could not go home. We had wanted to sell our goods at least, but were not allowed to do so. We left on the 29th of October and reached this place on the 2nd of November. We came in a lorry up to K., and after that walked all

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the way to Vavuniya. There Muslim businessmen from Colombo were waiting for us and brought us here.

In some cases, the personal history of Muslim refugees was determined not only by national and regional Sri Lankan politics but by international affairs, such as the Gulf War, as well.

> One family in the downstairs room had fled from Kuwait when the Gulf War broke out. The woman we talked to had been working there as a housemaid. Her husband and one son were staying with her while the other six children were living with her parents in Jaffna. Before the Gulf War broke out, her husband had gone back to Jaffna for an operation. She fled from Kuwait with her son, to be told at the airport in Sri Lanka that they could not go back home as the LTTE had chased out all the Muslims from the north. She stayed with her son at the house of a Sinhalese family they knew. Then somebody told her that her husband and the other children had arrived in the camp where they are still living, and she joined them on the 30th October 1990.

'Talking politics' was mostly men's business: men were associated with 'the outside world' as before. They were expected to have 'courage' (*thunivu* in Tamil) and to protect their families. Women, just like in 'normal' circumstances, were responsible for the day-to-day survival of their families. They talked about their daily needs: food, water, health, the children, relations with other families. When asked, they related their experiences of how they had come to this camp. Their stories expressed fear, suffering, and chaos: husbands and sons who were killed before their eyes or had 'disap-

peared'; weeks and months of hiding in the forest without sufficient food while the shelling and artillery were going on; violence and attacks from all sides; neighbours who had turned into enemies overnight. Many could not remember exact places or dates and it was extremely difficult to reconstruct an orderly history from their accounts.[4] Life within the camps hardly provided the security which people needed. In the first place, inhabitants easily got into fights over scarce resources such as food, living space and personal belongings. Second, in order to reduce the risk of LTTE cadres hiding in the camps, the government initially appointed committees in Tamil camps, consisting exclusively of male refugees belonging to the EPDP, a political party which was at that time close to the government and violently opposed to the LTTE. This measure created tremendous insecurity as at least one child in a family was normally sympathetic to or an outright member of the LTTE. Third, the high level of male alcoholism contributed to the often tense and at times violent atmosphere at night. However, fights did not only concern material things, but shame and honour too. For the men in particular to recover their identities, it appeared crucial to redefine and guard the honour of their families and, as before, gender relations were a significant vehicle for this.

> One evening we felt an enormous tension in the camp. We heard that a 14 year old girl had run away the night before with a boy. While we were talking a man came in shouting and cursing aloud. We asked what was wrong and were told that this was the girl's father who was drunk. 'He is the only one in the camp who has not done any shouting for the past three years. He was so silent that you would never know he was in the camp. He has three boys and only one girl, and he bought everything she desired. And the TV on the high shelf that can

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be watched by everybody was donated by him. Once in a while he would hire a video and show Tamil films for the whole camp. When his daughter attained age he gave a grand meal for the whole camp and he also videoed the whole ceremony. He still feeds the girl and I'm telling you she is still a child; she doesn't even know what love is. I'm sorry for the girl; after four months she will be left on the road. The boy's friends and his mother put this into her mind. Her father knows they were all into this. In the morning he hammered his wife and now she is hiding in the toilet. If she dares to come out she sure will be dead. Look at him, he is shouting because he is sad. The man, still shouting, screamed to all the boys sitting around: 'How could you do this to me, why did you all get together and put this idea into her head?' He then turned to the women who were sitting here and there: 'Can anyone here get up and say that my daughter ran away of her own free will? Anyone who thinks so put your hand up.' He was almost crying. Then he went to the camp leader, shouting at him to find him his daughter. At that moment two other men started fighting, one of them young, the other old. The young boy had been sitting in his place, talking with friends, and as he leaned on the boxes that separated the old man's place from his the boxes moved and then the old man started shouting that the boy was taking his space as well, and went to hit the boy. A woman commented: 'He must have forgotten that these are not our boys; they are the Pillayar Kovil boys (i.e. from another camp) and they won't stand any nonsense, it's a wonder they didn't hit the old man.'

When we left, we asked the camp leader at the entrance what was going on. He smiled and said that we had chosen a bad day to visit. 'You see, it is all the father's fault that the daughter ran away. He found out about the affair last year and sent her to some relations in M. But some time later he found that he could not live without her and called her back. Then she again started and he took her somewhere and beat her up and told her not to speak to him again. I'm telling you: the mother and the brothers were helping her like anything. He knew the mistake was his and to forget that he is shouting at us.' We asked why the father was so much against the affair? 'Because they are from Jaffna and the boy is from Batticaloa, so no father would agree, that's why.' (Tamils from Jaffna and Batticaloa are regarded as distinct and very unequal communities, those from Jaffna looking down upon the Batticaloa Tamils.)

In itself, the interplay of gender, class, caste and ethnicity was nothing new. The organizing principles which had been crucial in shaping people's lives had re-surfaced in the camps, but they were negotiated afresh, gaining new weight and expression. Ethnicity and gender in conjunction were used to distinguish one's own group from communities conceived of as the 'other', the 'inferior' or 'the enemy'. The men tried to regain power and authority, whereas women and youngsters tried to increase their social space - all being engaged in (re)constructing their identities as respectable human beings. In the above case, the father, being the male head of household responsible for the protection and honour of his family, carried out this responsibility by violently trying to prevent his daughter from having an affair with a boy from another community regarded as 'lower'. The mother and the

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brothers of the girl 'were helping her like anything', demonstrating that age as well as gender had a bearing on defining loyalties in the conflict.

The longer the refugees were forced to live dependent lives, packed together in the camps like animals, the greater was their urge to (re)create structures and symbols which expressed their identity as human beings. Ethnicity and gender were the discourses most readily at hand and most easily moulded into organizing principles. In the above case, Jaffna and Batticaloa Tamils already regarded each other as distinct and unequal communities, but the men more than the women stressed these communal distinctions in order to restore their sense of self.

Gender Hierarchy

In line with pre-existing gender ideologies according to which men are associated with public life, male refugees tended to identify with the politics of external relations, using the language of communality to express their identity and differentiate themselves from others. Women's major concerns were day-to-day care and survival, not politics. They were fully occupied with domestic chores and child care in very primitive circumstances. This was an onerous task, but after the dramatic rupture with the past it also provided an element of continuity in their lives. Unlike the men, the women had not lost the core of their gender identity; they could still act as mothers and 'house'keepers in the 'domestic' sphere.

Many women who had previously depended financially on their husbands took on paid work outside the camps, as domestic workers and in the informal sector. Two women from the Muslim camp, for instance, went out every day to cook for Muslim families, earning Rs.25 per day as well as receiving a meal and old clothes. Before the war, gender prescriptions for all Muslim families and middle-class Tamil families would have restricted these women to a respectable but home-bound existence. Now gender prescriptions were stretched and as co-providers for the family, they gained some economic autonomy and control of their lives, which according to their own evaluation strengthened their position vis-a-vis their husbands and increased their self-confidence. By contrast, men lost the responsibilities, work, property and status they used to have and were confronted with a complete rupture with the past. Taking to drink - which in line with earlier gender prescriptions remained a 'privilege' only for men - was some sort of escape. Another option for restoring an element of 'maleness' was to engage actively in the politics of ethnic relations.

At first I tended to think that the greater sense of continuity in women's gender identity meant that they had been able to retain their self-respect better than the men. Their gender-ascribed domestic tasks kept them busy and gave them a sense of meaning and identity. In addition, many undertook part-time work to escape from the depressing atmosphere in the camp. They controlled their own income which went on direct family needs such as food and clothing. By contrast, men who had not found work in the informal sector hung around or slept most of the day. For them, the rupture with the past - the loss of work, property and socio-economic position - meant a complete breakdown of all that had formed their identity as men.

However, after becoming more familiar with the camps, I felt that in terms of power to control their own lives and community life in the camps, women were still on the losing end. Gradually I learned how vulnerable women were when

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it came to physical autonomy, especially when men were drunk. Wife-beating, rape and forced pregnancies were not uncommon; in fact, all refugees who talked about this remarked that male 'domestic' violence linked to alcoholism was much more serious than it had been before. The men, even more than in 'normal' circumstances, tried to confine women's mobility and reduce their space of action in order to 'protect' and control them, especially if they were young and unmarried. In addition, socially and politically women's ability to take the lead and control their own situation was very restricted. Both formal and informal camp organizations were exclusively male. Women were concerned about and often frightened by the way in which the men engaged in politics, stressing their communal identity by differentiating it from ethnic 'others' whom they had come to regard as their enemies. Ironically, the very circumstances which had forced them to flee - inter-ethnic violence - became the main basis for men in the camps to reconstruct their identities. They 'masculinized' themselves again by trying to control women, and by adopting a more polarized discourse of ethnic politics. In this way, gender was a crucial element in the process of further ethnic polarization.

Gender As an Ethnic Marker

In the Muslim camp which we visited several times, the core of the group's identity as a distinct community was expressed primarily through a discourse on gender. This camp was established in a two-storey building which had served as a wedding hall and community centre. The library in a separate room upstairs was still in use at certain times. On our first visit we were received by the leader, an elderly man who wanted us to sit down and have a thorough look at his administration before we talked to the people. There were 29 families in the camp with an equal number of adult men and women, a total of 143 according to his statistics (129 according to other sources). Age classifications differed for males and females, females being counted as adults at 20 and males at 17. Boys became 'young men' at 11, girls 'young women' at 13 years. Children under nine were not distinguished by sex but by such classifications as 'milk drinking' and 'nursery'. When we discussed these statistics with the camp leader, some women who were standing behind the door corrected the leader from time to time. There was for instance disagreement about the number of babies born in the camp. The women counted six but the leader insisted that it was lower. He explained that men and women slept separately in this camp. Women who were going to have babies moved out to friends (implicitly also meaning that couples who wanted to have intercourse temporarily moved out). He went on:

> You see all the people in this camp are Muslims, and therefore we are very strict that the two sexes don't stay together after nine at night. It would be indecent if the men had to stay in the same room with women and girls from other households. For us as Muslims this is very important and we keep to this rule. After nine all the women and children go to the big room upstairs, the door is locked, and all the men sleep in the corridor in front of the door.

In this gendered way, the honour of the group was guarded, and their identity as Muslims emphasized to the outside world.

In the two Tamil camps we visited more often, such apparent gender rules and distinctions were not used as signifiers to stress Tamil identity. On the contrary, there was a tendency among the women to hide their ethnic identity when going out of the camp: many avoided wearing clothes

and colours that immediately distinguished them from the Sinhalese, and some even avoided putting the dark dot (*pottu*) between their eyebrows which indicated their status as a Tamil married woman. (The Sinhalese and the Muslims do not do this.) 'Now we look like widows', they said, 'but too obviously labelling ourselves as Tamils is too dangerous, you can be picked up by the police any time.' Indeed, Tamil people in Colombo, and particularly young Tamils of either sex, were regularly picked up and questioned for one or two days, merely on the grounds of being Tamil and therefore 'suspect' citizens. Tamils still just 'disappeared'.

Even if outright ethnic markers were avoided outside the camps, inside coming of age ceremonies, rules relating to sexuality, marriage, and family relations - in short, gender relations - were important identifiers of their community's culture, but negotiated afresh by women and youngsters who could benefit from change.

Politics of Space and Control

During the period of my research it became obvious that government policies towards the refugees differed according to their assumed ethnic background. There was no state interest whatsoever in the fate of the Muslim refugees who had been evicted from the north by the LTTE, or who had escaped LTTE-instigated massacres in the east. Politically, the Muslim minority, who made up 7 per cent of the population, formed no threat (as yet) to the rule of the Sinhalese majority. Tamil refugees in Sinhalese-dominated areas, in contrast, were regarded as (potential) state enemies. A Tamil concentration in the capital was considered a threat to political stability and the peace process - a 'stability' characterized by the political hegemony of the Sinhalese majority and discrimination of the Tamil and Muslim minorities. Furthermore,

elections were shortly to be held and all refugees defined as 'Tamil' were to be removed from the capital and sent back to the north and east. Apart from these internal politics, the government was not keen on continuing the camps in the capital. The presence of refugees in the heart of the state was probably felt to present an embarrassing image of war at a time when new donor aid was sought.

Paradoxically, however, the camp enclosure had become a form of protection and security for most of the refugees. Being unable to rent a room, stay with relatives, or leave the country, they were the lowest of the low among the refugees, an 'underclass'. Many of them had lived in camps for long periods - varying from three to over ten years. The majority were from rural areas and had undergone a rapid urbanization process, having experienced some benefits of life in the capital, such as work in the informal sector, educational and health facilities. For many children 'normal life' meant living in a refugee camp in the city.

When the government closed a Tamil 'Welfare Centre' in Colombo, the inhabitants resisted and there was a stream of negative publicity by human rights activists. During my research a second 'Welfare Centre' was about to be closed and the refugees were to be resettled near the northern frontier and in the 'cleared' areas in the east. One of the many petitions sent to the Ministry of Rehabilitation contained the following plea:

> We, the undersigned inmates of x Refugee Camp have our origins in Colombo and suburbs. Due to the ethnic conflict in July 1983 we were displaced from Colombo and rehabilitated in the north and east, which lands were strange to us. The only reason to take us there was that we belong to the Tamil community. We lived as refugees from 1983

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up to 1990 in various welfare centres and colonies, in areas where the people were completely strange to us. Due to this we faced various hardships and thus for a period of seven years we were unable to lead a reliable and peaceful life. Due to the ethnic conflict in 1990 we were again displaced and have got shelter in various welfare centres in Colombo, where we have spent three years up to 1993 as refugees. Altogether we have spent a miserable life as refugees for ten years. This means a considerable period of our entire life time .. Please consider our pathetic situation and be good enough to accept our S.O.S. and rehabilitate us in our native places where we were born and bred.

This petition represented the opinion of the majority of the Tamils who lived in this camp, and of a group living in another camp which was one of the next to be closed. Why did these people so strongly resist the government programme of resettlement in the east of Sri Lanka? They were Indian Tamils, whose origin and identity were completely different from the Jaffna and Batticaloa Tamils. Although their parents came from the plantations in the hill areas, they had grown up in Colombo and suburbs and considered themselves as 'Colombo people'. Before being displaced for the first time by ethnic violence in 1983, they had been living from petty trade and other work in the informal sector in Colombo. They had taken up similar activities again in 1990 after they were brought to refugee camps in Colombo. For the government, however, Tamils were Tamils and therefore they had to go.

After the 1983 riots these urban people had lived in refugee camps for two to three years. They were subsequently more or less forced to accept plots of land in the east and make a new living as dry-zone cultivators. Contrary to the expectations raised by the government, however, once transported to the east they discovered that the land was too dry for cultivation. They told me that the wells, constructed on their plots of land, had been artificially filled with water from a big tank on a lorry, to create a good impression on arrival. They discovered that there was hardly any educational or health provision and that people in the east – Ceylon Tamils and Muslims who saw them as an alien community – received them with suspicion. Owing to the primitive living conditions, some families had lost children. A fresh outbreak of war in 1990, in which government forces marched into the east killing all Tamils in sight, forced them back to Colombo where they had been staying in camps for the last three years. Their children now went to school again, medical facilities were close by, and they were earning money again in the informal urban sector. These traumatic memories led them to resist being 'resettled' again in the east where they did not belong. 'We don't want to be refugees, we don't want charity or relief, we only want a piece of land in Colombo where we belong and where we can build a simple house, live in peace and earn our living', they explained. Like the Hutu 'camp refugees' described by Malkki [1992: 35], they refused to 'put down roots in a place to which one did not belong', but unlike them they did not value their status as refugees but wanted rid of it – and were not allowed to. The government did not accept their self-defined non-refugee identity. Refugees – and particularly Tamils of whatever origin – were considered a stain and threat to the nation, and as such had to be controlled and processed according to state politics. Uncontrolled self-reliance, which they could have attained in Colombo with only minimal support, was the last thing the government wanted for them. The army and police came at night to close the camp, displacing the displaced even from their refugee camp. A group of 125 people – men, women and

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children - refused to accept the government's 'resettlement allowance' and to be taken away by bus to another refugee camp in the east. Despite the rainy season, they settled themselves and their belongings on the street in front of the camp. Being used to wield their dependency strategically, they demanded to be supported and fed by the non-governmental organizations which had earlier provided humanitarian aid to the camp. On the other hand, they displayed remarkable vitality and perseverance in standing up for their rights, given a decade's experience of being dependent, state-controlled pawns in the struggle between political parties which did not represent their needs.

Their protest created a fair amount of trouble for the authorities, the NGOs and the people living in the neighbourhood. The Sinhalese inhabitants in particular protested about the unwanted guests on their street. Although this action did not result in a recognition of their needs or any material support to re-establish a life of their own in the city, after about one month all these refugees had found at least temporary accommodation in Colombo. Some were given space in a refugee camp which had not yet been closed. Here, the self-organization of the refugees had successfully pressurized the government not to close their camp before the end of the secondary school exams.[5]

Politics of Fear

The above case makes clear why the refugees resisted forced 'resettlement' in an area where they did not feel themselves as belonging, and where they had experienced great hardship. But why did so many people who did belong to the east and who had lived there in relative peace and well-being until 1990 oppose resettlement there?

This was a period when parts of the Eastern Province were no longer directly involved in the war between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan forces. Officially the area had just been declared 'cleared' and I could go there and interview people about their views and experiences, although exercising great care. It was as if the whole society in the east was covered by a blanket of fear. I stayed in Batticaloa Town, talked with officials and citizens, with people still staying in refugee camps and with people who had very recently been resettled. People were allowed to move freely only along a narrow coastal strip. Towards the interior, across the lagoon, I could visit only a few villages with special permission from the brigadier in charge. Contrary to the official status of being fully 'cleared', all other areas were still part of the war zone. The economy in this region had consisted of agriculture, fisheries, business and trade, with the two main communities - Tamils and Muslims[6] - to a great extent depending on each other. As fighting between the LTTE and the army was going on, particularly at night but also during the day, people living there could hardly engage in any cultivation, and even if they could they had to hand over a substantial percentage of the crops to the LTTE. Fishermen found it equally difficult to survive: in order to prevent LTTE attacks from the sea, the government had banned fishing at night, the best time for a good catch. Deprived of their normal economic activities it was completely unclear how people survived. The economy had collapsed. Everybody was dead scared of 'the other' community. Muslims were packed together in their scattered villages, not daring to travel along the roads which connected their villages to Tamil-occupied areas. Tamils did not risk to approaching Muslim communities. Tamil parents feared that their grown up sons, and since a year or two also their daughters, would be pressed into joining the LTTE cadres.

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The refugees in the camps in Colombo knew all this from relatives and acquaintances who had stayed behind. Those who had been forced to 'resettle' but whose homes were still in war zones, were 'temporarily' kept in camps in or near Batticaloa. Conditions in these camps were much worse than what I had seen in the camps in Colombo, and income-earning opportunities for both men and women were minimal. Educational and health facilities were either lacking or of a much lower quality. No wonder most refugees wanted to stay in Colombo. It was clear that the flow of refugees to the capital and other towns had stimulated urbanization which in Sri Lanka, unlike in India, had until then been a slow and relatively unproblematic process.

Two and a half years later, in early 1996, when I had planned to continue my research and settle down near Batticaloa, war started again after a promising cease-fire[7], and the LTTE were actually setting the rules in the north and east. I might have been able to make visits under the protection of an NGO or humanitarian agency, but people would have been too scared to talk.

Conclusion

State policies of space and control to combat the 'threat' of internal refugees in Sri Lanka have increased the refugees' dependency. This has further undermined their sense of self and human dignity already crushed by the complete rupture with their past. The men in particular, having lost their former responsibilities, work, property and status, were confronted in the camps with a dramatic loss of personhood. Unlike the women who continued their gender-ascribed tasks, men could not maintain the core of their gender identity. By turning to the discourse of communal politics and exercising control of 'their' women, many were trying to recover their

'masculinity'. In a Muslim camp, the physical segregation of men from women and children at night was deliberately used as an ethnic marker. This was not the case in the Tamil camps, but here likewise sexuality, marriage and family relations were of primary importance for reconstructing the community's identity.

Female refugees in the camps continued their mothering tasks and domestic responsibilities, albeit under rudimentary conditions. Women - even those of higher-caste and middle-class background - stretched gender prescriptions by taking up extra-domestic labour where available. This contributed to their sense of self-confidence and to regaining some control of their own lives. They were much less engaged than men in the potentially disruptive politics of ethnic relations. Gender and ethnicity - as organizing principles which in 'normal' circumstances had been crucial in shaping people's lives - were resumed in the camps again but negotiated afresh, gaining new weight and expression. Men tended to regain power and authority, whereas women and youngsters tried to increase their social space. All were engaged in reconstructing their identities as respectable human beings. Given men's dominance in the organizational and political sphere, and their use of physical violence to control women, women's greater gender flexibility and lower interest in the politics of ethnicity did not positively influence the general social climate in the refugee camps. In this way, the interplay of ethnicity and gender was a crucial element in the ongoing process of ethnic polarization.

State policies on internal refugees in Sri Lanka have not encouraged any innovation in the dominant discourses of ethnic and gender relations, based on opposition, exclusion and hierarchy. The government and the NGO-sector (with one exception, see note 4) could have enhanced attempts by male

and female refugees to recapture their identities if they had taken the experiences and views of the refugees themselves into account. Refugees who wished to liberate themselves of their dependent state were not allowed to do so, and those who for good reasons wanted to remain refugees were forced to be 'resettled'. Instead of contributing to a climate of security and peace, state policies of 'space and control' which kept refugees in camps as dependent relief-receivers or sent them back to imaginary 'places of origin' fuelled resentment and ethnic divides.

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End Notes

** 1. In Colombo I worked with two Tamil assistants, a mother and her daughter, who prefer to remain anonymous.

2. The situation in camps outside Colombo was generally even worse.

3. There was one interesting exception: the NGO SURIYA, which consisted of young women from different ethnic groups who were mostly refugees themselves. This NGO developed its policy on the basis of the felt needs of the women refugees, to whom they related in a personal and respectful manner.

4. Yet constructing an orderly personal history is precisely what the Dutch government expects from refugees who request asylum, and a decision has to be reached within 24 hours.

5. In fact, this camp still existed when I returned to Sri Lanka six months later.

6. According to the 1981 census the Eastern Province had one million people: 40% Tamils, 32% Muslims and 25% Sinhalese (most of whom had been brought in after independence as settlers in the large-scale colonization schemes).

7. The peace process initiated under the new government of Chandrika Kumaratunge in 1994 came to a standstill on 19 April 1995 with the resumption of hostilities by the LTTE.

WOMEN AND RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM

By Gail Omvedt*

As I write this, a government controlled by the party based upon Hindu religious nationalism, the BJP, has come to power in India. This movement of "Hindutva" as a political force from a marginalized position with only 3-4% of the vote in the 1950s to a position of being the dominant party in a ruling coalition is a turning point for India — and a major threat to all the smaller countries of South Asia. Since women are one of the groups most socially victimized by religious nationalism, it is necessary to consider the implications of this BJP victory.

True, the BJP itself has won only 170 seats of the 543 in the Indian Lok Sabha and 25% of the total vote. It is forced to depend on a wide and wild variety of allies, most of whom are opposed to its "Hindutva" message. The "national agenda" formulated with these allies, therefore, omits the most controversial issues of Hindu religious nationalism. Building a Ram temple at Ayodhya in place of the mosque which the fanatic cadres of the Hindu right smashed, amending the Constitution to take away the special rights of state autonomy given to majority-Muslim Kashmir, and imple-

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menting a "common civil code" (which is seen by Muslims as an infringement on their religious rights) are BJP policies which the BJP in power will not be able to enforce. It is nevertheless still a dangerous government, This danger is due to the particular meaning of "Hindutva" in the South Asian context, which I want to discuss here.

In Sri Lanka, similarly, in very different ways the forces of religious nationalism are exerting their influence. While I don't feel so qualified to speak on these, they undoubtedly include some aspects of the influence of the Bhikku Sangha in Sri Lanka and much of the ideology underlying the Tamil Tigers, seem little influenced by the rationalism of the radical anti-Brahmanism in Tamilnadu.

What is the role of women in connection with all of this? How does religious nationalism (I see this term rather than "fundamentalism" or "communalism" as more appropriate)2 affect the status of women? These are questions that have troubled many for so long, and most feminist have taken very strong stands against it. However, their opposition has not been very effective, as we see more and more women joining (and some even emerging as leaders) the forces of religious nationalism. It seems necessary to go more deeply into the grounds of the feminist opposition.

Many feminists would now argue, and I agree, is that it is a mistake to oppose religion or spirituality as such, and simply to dismiss them with the belief that all national traditions are patriarchal. "All religions are patriarchal" is equivalent to saying that "all men are rapists (or potential rapists)." They may have tendencies in that direction — but it is an overstatement. What is needed today is to define the positive elements in cultural and religious traditions, and to show how these can be joined to the lib-

eration movement that feminists are trying to spearhead.

Everyone will have her own ideas about how this can be done. What I would like to do is suggest some insights linking India and Sri Lanka as part of a broader South Asian tradition involving, mainly, Brahmanic "Hinduism" and Buddhism. These come out of my research on caste and anti-caste movements in India, out of recent work and teaching in the field of sociology of religion, and out of work among rural women in Maharashtra. Only if we understand the contemporary linkages that are being made between nationalism and religious-cultural traditions, and only if we are more specific about religion — which religious/cultural traditions and which aspects of religious-cultural traditions are positive/negative for women- can we effectively confront the dangers of religious nationalism.

"Hinduism," Brahmanism, Buddhism and Patriarchy in South Asia

"Hinduism" is depicted today as the religion of the majority of people of India, with a tradition going back thousands of years (5000 years is the figure usually put forward). This is a mistake. First, most scholars will agree3 , that `there never has been such a thing as a "Hindu Religion" – in fact. The term "Hindu" itself is a geographical one, coming from the Indus river (called "Sindh" in the native language; thus the Indus civilization in Marathis or Hindi is "Sindhu sanskriti") Mispronuciation by "foreigners" turned Sindh into Hind and finaly to India. "Hindustan" was the term used by Muslims from outside India to refer to India(it was "al Hind" in Arabic), and "Hindustanis" were residents of India, including Muslims. It was only during the colonial period that something called a "Hindu religion" was constructed, beginning in the last half of the 19th century. It came to be taken to include all the various religions4 , sect, panths,

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sampradayas, etc. which had come into existence in India many of which saw each other as fundamentally different. A large part of the reason for this was simply that the term: Hindu" became limited to all non-Muslims and non-Christians in India.

Today the advocates of Hindutva will say that "Hinduism" includes all the religions formed on Indian soil. The official definition of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad is that Hinduism includes Sanatana Dharma, Arya Samaj, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. But Buddhists and Jains (as well as most Veerasaivites, many adivasis and others) argue that they are not "Hindus" in any religious sense, and that there is a fundamental gap between their "Dharma" and such Dharmas as Sanatana Dharma.

Sanatana dharma is what I call brahmanism. It includes a belief in the authority of the Vedas, a belief in the authority of brahmans, a belief in varnashrama dharma(the social order of varnas and ashramas), and a general tendency to advaida , a belief in an essential SupremeBeing. It is also extremely patriarchal; women are not suppposed to have the right to liberation; they are classed as shudras their role is to serve their husbands and so on. The essentials of this religion were formed not 5000 years ago but only about 2500 years ago in the middle of the first millenium BC, claiming the authority of the Vedas but very different in fundamental points, and they were formed in conflict with other emerging religions and philosophies of the time – including most notably Buddhism and Janinism, but also materialist philosophies of the Lokayatas, the original Samkhya system and so on5 . These latter, nonbrahmanic philosophical and religious systems were known collectively as the shramanic tradition. For over one thousand years in India there was fundamental conflict between brahmanism and shramanism, primarily between

brahmanism and Buddhism, before brahmanism achieved hegemony after the middle of the first millenium with the Guptas, Rashtrakutas and other kings.

Buddhism had very fundamental areas of difference, even 2500 years ago, with brahmanism. It insisted on the language of the people as opposed to Sanskrit, which of course was by then a language of the priestly elite. It was opposed to caste by birth though some of the most famous of ancient Indian Buddhists (and the majority of those we have records of) were from brahman or Kshtriya varnas. Buddism had no hesitation about admitting shudras or vaishyas, At least one Jataka story shows Buddha to have been a Candala, that is, one of those considred "untouchable", in a former birth. It was a cosmopolitan religion by principle, where-as brahmanism was by principle a chauvinistic one, treating lands outside the area of the practice of the proper rituals and respect to brahmans as mleccha lands.

Was Buddhism patriarchal? There has been a lot of discussion on this by feminists in India, with the most notable contributions by the historian Uma Chakravarty6 . The general agreement seems to have been that it was patriarchal but less so than brahmanism. Put in another way, the struggle between Buddhism and Brahmanism represented a conflict between a non-caste patriarchal class society and a caste-patriarchal class society, and this has made tremendous difference.

I believe a good deal of the difference between the position of women in India and in Sri Lanka can be linked to aspects of the culture of Buddhism as contrasted with brahmanic Hindusim (or for that matter, Islam). If we trace these differences, reflected in the Human Development Reports, we see that Sri Lanka is the one country in South Asia where woman have a good deal equality with men. These differences can be seen in education (brahmanism has discour-

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aged education for the masses), in work participation, in health measures, and in the sex ratio (937 women for every 1000 men in India in 1991 Census).

However, some questions also need to be raised about Sri Lanka Buddhism — Particularly in it relation with Indian Buddhism.

Buddhism in India and the Sri Lankan Connection

I am not going to say much about Buddhism in Sri Lanka today except indirectly — how Sri Lankan Buddhism is reflected in India itself. But I have a good deal to say about Buddhism in India today because the vast majority of Buddhists come from the area of India where I live, and they are converts from the former untouchable caste, the Mahars.

The great leader of the Mahars in India, indeed the leader of all India's ex-untouchables (now calling themselves dalits), one of the greatest social revolutionaries in India's modern history, the person who chaired the drafting committee for the Indian constitution, a man who deserves to be better known at a world level, was Dr. R. A. Ambedkar. Ambedkar was the man who led the conversion of untouchables to Buddhism, who is almost single-handedly responsible for the revival of Buddhism in India.

Why isn't he better known in Sri Lanka? I have felt almost no interest among Sri Lankans when I have mentioned Ambedkar and the work of the dalit Buddhists in India today.

There is some history of course, both to Ambedkar's conversion and to the role (or non-role) of Sinhalese Buddhists in this. In fact, it would have been natural at the time of conversation for Ambedkar to have the closest involvement with Sri Lanka of Burmese Buddhism; not only are these historically very close to India, but also Ambedkar (and the major-

ity of new Buddhists today) feel closer to Theravada Buddhism. Then why hasn't a more intimate connection developed between the growing Indian Buddhism and Sinhalese Buddhism? Why was it that after Ambedkar's death it was an English convert to Buddhism, Sangharakshita, and other members of the order he founded (in India, the Trailokya Bauddh Mahasangh) who took up most of the organizational task of nurturing millions of new Buddhist converts? In his book Ambedkar and Buddhism, Sangharakshita tells the story: at the time of his conversion Ambedkar did meet many Buddhist monks from Asian countries. In many cases he was frustrated by lack of social orientation of the Sanghas. In the specific case, though, of the Mahabodhi society, the major organizational representation of Buddhism of India, founded by the great Anagarika Dharmapala himself 7 , Ambedkar was totally alienated because of its then President Shyam prasad Mookherjee — founder of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, the first major political expression of "Hindutva" and the organizational ancestor of today's BJP8 . In other words, the Sinhalese monks who have apparently been the mainstay of the Mahabodhi society appeared to Ambedkar to be hand-in-hand with the caste-ridden brahmanic Hinduism that he hated. I have heard some reactions that many of the Sinhalese were simply not very interested in working with the "untouchable Buddhists of India.

It is also necessary to point out that Ambedkar did not simply convert, he also attempted to provide his people with his own, liberation theology version of Buddhism, in his major work. The Buddha and his Dhamma.9 Buddhists of other orders may find it hard to take some of this, because it shows some influence of Marxist thinking and because Ambedkar in his introduction specially rejects the notion of karma (in any traditional interpretation), the traditional version of the "going forth" of Siddhartha, and he insists that the Sangha

should be restructured to have a social welfare orientation. Today many are speaking of Ambedkar's Buddhism as a navayana.

Again, what does this mean for women? The dalit movement in this part of India, which is at least partly linked to the Buddhist revival in India, includes a magnificent tradition of dalit poetry. While both the movement and its literary expression are male-dominated, dalit women are beginning to emerge, and there are dalit women poets. Both men and women write of the bitterness of their Indian experience, condemning Indian culture and of Buddhism as an alternative. The following poem by Bhagavan Sawai is perhaps typical of many Buddhist poems;

> Then the primordial man within me wept bitterly
> Seeing the tattered sails of his own floating ship
> In the eyes of Tathagata
> Then
> the storm within his surged from the sea's being,
> peaks of blood standing high
> Tathagata
> Do not leave me shoreless
> Do not leave on the shores
> Because
> This ocean is dear to me
> My lifeblood mingled in every wave
> Tathagata
> I do not want you in your yogic postures as in the pictures
> Before who I could place my offerings of flowers and prayers
> Pardon the slaves of festishism
> Who created idols in your names and festivals.
>   (Translated by Radha Iyer)[10]

But in contrast consider the following by Hira Bansode, to Yashodhara:

> O Yasodhara!
> You are like a dream of sharp pain,
> Life-long sorrow.
> I don't have the audacity to look at you.
> We were brightened by Buddha's fight,
> But you absorbed the dark
> Until your life was mottled blue and balck,
> A fragmented life, burned out,
> O Yasodhara!
> The tender sky comes to you for refuge
> Seeing your matchless beauty,
> Separated from your love.
> Dimming like twilight.
> Listening to your silent sighs.
> I feel the promise of heavenly happiness is hollow.
> Tell me one thing, Yashodhara, how did you
> contain the raging storm in your small hands?
> Just the idea of your life shakes the earth
> And sends the screaming waves
> Dashing against the shore.
> You would have remembered while your life slipped by
> That last kiss of Siddharth's final farewell, those tender lips.
> But weren't you aware, dear
> of the heartmelting fire
> and the fearful awakening power
> of that kiss?
> Lightening fell, and you didn't know it.
> He was moving towards a great spendour
> Far from the place where you lay...
> He went, he conquered, he shone.
> While you listened to the songs of his triumph
> Your womanliness must have wept.

You who lost husband and son
Must have felt uprooted
Like the tender banana plant.
But history doesn't talk about
The great story of your sacrifice.
If Siddharth had gone through
The charade of samadhi
A great epic would have been written about you!
You would have become famous in purana and palm leaf
Like Sita and Savitri
O Yashodhara!
I am ashamed of the injustice.
You are not to be found
In a single Buddhist vihara
Were you really of no account?
But wait - don't suffer so.
I have seen your beautiful face.
You are between the closed eyelids of Siddhartha.
Yashu. Just you.

(Translated by Jayant Karve and Philip Engbloom)11

When I read this poem to a Thai Buddhist feminist scholar, she remarked. "In Thailand that poem would be considered blasphemous"! would it be considered so in Sri Lanka? It seems clear that the deep emotions wrought in the ex-untouchable new Buddhists of India challenge some of the aspects of established Buddhism elsewhere – and that the writing of woman strikes at some fundamental questions of ge

Religious Nationalism

What religious nationalism as social phenomenon does is to construct or reconstruct both traditional religion and national identity – in terms of the needs of the elite, not of ei-

ther the people of the presumed national or the majority of believers of the presumed nation or the majority of believers of the presumed religion. The "religion" itself, as in the case of Hinduism" may be almost an inverted one; or it may be so reinterpreted (as seems to be done in the case of Sinhalese Buddhism) as to identify with a people-nationally. The "nation" itself is constructed in the process, it is as scholars call it, an "imagined community".

When this happens in the third world, religious nationalism generally emphasizes an anti-western identity, and (like earlier forms of "secular nationalism") emphasizes military and industrial strength. (One of the dangers of the BJP-alliance government, in fact, is that while allies openly rejected the Hindutva" plank of the BJP, they were silent on its proposals for the "nuclear option"). One way these themes have been historically expressed, in so many third world countries, is to talk of "eastern morals and western science". That the religious nationalists will normally try to welcome and use, what they can of technology and science to make the country strong but seek to disentangle these from the decadent, individualist, anti-religious. "western morals". It is this that is particularly dangerous for women, because "eastern morals" are almost always constructed on the backs of women. Women are seen as both symbols and upholders of "eastern morals", their role is to maintain the family, give birth to and socialize children, their chastity – like that of the wives of traditional fisherman in Kerala – somehow serves to underline and guarantee the potency and survival of their community.

In this, religious nationalism takes a step beyond secular nationalism., Secular nationalism, born in the 17th – 18th centuries, found the legitimacy for the national-state in the consent of "the people"; it was the citizens as a whole who

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provided the foundation for the political realm and not divine will or any transcendental realm. In taking the "social contract" as the basis for the state, however, secular nationalism was patriachal; whether it was Locke, or Hobbers or Rousseau, the social contract was seen as being made between male heads of families. Women were excluded (as were slaves and other "inferior" groups – but significantly women were often excluded from the vote for an even longer time). For secular nationalism also, then, women symbolized the community and from an inferior position. It took a long time and processes of struggle to bring women into the realm of citizenship and turn the "rights of man' into "human rights".

Third world nationalism, whether "religious" or secular" found it easy to distinguish its own cultural foundation from "western morals" by pointing to the quality of family values and the role of women. Who should be covered and not naked, chaste not wanton, one man's supporter of the household not all men's plaything. As elites constructed a religious or cultural nationalsim in the countries of Africa and Asia, they often selected and emphasized the most sexually repressive aspects of traditional religions. In India, Hinduism was constructed as a modernised and updated version of brahmanic Vedanta but with a heavy infusion of Victorian Puritranism adopted from the British. Earlier brahmanism had linked social caste hierarchy with the chastity and seclusion of women, so that the sign of "Sanksitization or the "high" status of a caste often was attested to be the degree of subordination of women in the family, child marriages, the banning of divorce and remarriage, the enforced seclusion of widows. But this had at least given relative freedom to "low caste" women, and the elements of sexual expression in the culture were attested to be traditions of song and dance, the temples of Khajuraho, Konarak and so on. With the 19th century construction of a neohindunism, these became a sign of shame. Under the British "Hindu law"

was taken to be brahmanic law and these laws were applied to all "Hindu" women – with the general support of the "modernizing" nationalist elite. Today also this chaste, husband-worshiping, fully covered "Hindu woman" is used as a nationalist swadeshi contrast to the decadent, commercialized beauty contest culture of modern society – and a BJP woman minister, Sushma Swaraj, stands ready to enforce all the signs of the Victorian puritanical "Hindu woman" in the cultural sphere – at the same time as NGO-sponsored organizing of "commercial sex workers" voices the defiance of the lowest section of women! All this would be amusing if it were not so dangerous in being linked to the other side of the "chaste woman" syndrome, the macho male ready to wave the "nuclear option".

Buddhism, I would argue has greater potential for equality and a universal morality – and is much less inherently patriarchal than the otherwise equalitarian culture of Islam., Yet this gets lost when Buddhism (or any religion) gets identified with one people, one nation.

Here, a vigilant and conscious women's movement, which recognizes both the validity of sprituality and the need to struggle to ensure that religious traditions are true to their most equalitarian and liberating core, can play an important role, This I believe includes a fight against "religious nationalism" which is corrupting both politics and religion. The nature of these struggles and fights will vary from country to country, culture to culture – but all women have a common interest in the construction of liberated, equalitatian and prosperous societies in every section of the globe. "sisterhood" is global, even if its expressions and modes of acting are local.

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Notes

1. Fundamentalism is incorrect because in most cases the religious nationalism do not respect the fundamentals of their religion; they are more nationalist than religious. "Communalism" which is the favourite Indian word, is also not very accurate; true it seems to project Hindus and Muslims as communities but the "communities" are constructed ones. Whatever objection we might have to Communitarian theories, the need for community is a basic aspect of human life. On Religious Nationalism see Mark Juergensmeicr Religious Nationalism Confronts, the Secular State. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993)

2. This argument has been made for a long time by the opponents of the reconstructed "Hinduism" but for an extensive scholarly investigation of the construction of Hinduism, see the collection edited by Vasudha Dalmia and H. Von Stietencron, Representating Hinduism: The Construction of Religious Tradition and National Identity (New Delhi; Sage, 1995)

3. Translating "religion" as "dharma" also involves fundamental problems. Both "dharma" and "dhamma" do not quite coincide with the western term "religion. They correspond better with the sociological meaning of religion than with the dictionary definition which includes a belief in god.

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SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND ARMED CONFLICT: UNITED NATIONS RESPONSE

*S*exual violence during armed conflict is not a new phenom enon. It has existed for as long as there has been conflict. In her 1975 book Against our will: Men, Women and Rape, Susan Brownmiller presented stark accounts of rape and other sexual atrocities that have been committed during armed conflict throughout history. While historically very few measures have been taken to address sexual violence against women committed during armed conflict, it is not true to say that there has always been complete silence about the issue. Belligerents have often capitalized upon the abuse of their women to garner sympathy and support for their side, and to strengthen their resolve against the enemy. Usually, the apparent concern for these women vanishes when the propaganda value of their suffering diminishes, and they are left without any prospect of redress. It is true to say that the international community has, for a long time, failed to demonstrate a clear desire to do something about the problem of sexual violence during armed conflict. The turning point came in the early 1990s as a result of sexual atrocities committed during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, and it seems that, finally, the issue has emerged as a serious agenda item of the international community.

Introduction

Many of the steps taken to address sexual violence against women during armed conflict have occurred within the framework of the United Nations. This issue of *women2000* focuses upon some of these developments. Two points must be made at the outset. First, sexual violence during armed conflict affects men as well as women. However, it is clear that women are more likely to be subjected to sexual violence than men. Women are also targeted for different reasons than men, and they are affected by the experience in very different ways than men. For a woman, there is the added risk of pregnancy as a result of rape. In addition, women occupy very different positions in society than men, and are treated differently as a result of what has happened to them. Women are frequently shunned, ostracized and considered unmarriageable. Permanent damage to the reproductive system, which often results from sexual violence, has different implications for women than for men. Thus, while it is imperative to acknowledge and redress the trauma suffered by both men and women, it is important to recognize their different experiences when responding to the problem. Secondly, it must be emphasized that sexual violence is only one of the issues that arise when considering women's experience of armed conflict. For example, more women than men become refugees or displaced persons during conflict, and women's primary responsibility for agriculture and water collection in many societies renders them particularly vulnerable to injury from certain types of weapons used in conflict, such as landmines. Further, women's overall position of disadvantage within the community means that the general hardships accompanying armed conflict frequently fall more heavily on women that on men.

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Towards the end of 1992, the world was stunned by reports of sexual atrocities committed during the armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Newspaper headlines decried: "Serbian 'rape camps': Evil Upon Evil" and "Serban vergewaltigen auf obersten Befehl" (Serbs rape on highest orders)[1] The media reported that rape and other sexual atrocities were a deliberate and systamatice part of the Bosnian Serb campaign for victory in the war. A perception was generated that detention camps had been set up specifically for the purpose of raping women, and that the policy of rape had been planned at the highest levels of the Bosnian Serb military structure. Strong and persistent demands for a decisive response to these outrages came from around the globe.

Women who serve as combatants experience armed conflict differently than male combatants, and the culture of militarism impacts upon women in particular ways.[2] Although not within the scope of the present issue, the many other ways that armed conflict affects women warrant serious attention and concern.

In the first part of this issue, consideration is given to the failure of the international community to address the issue of wartime sexual violence during the early years of the UN. Developments are traced to the early 1990s, when the international community finally recognized that human rights violations committed against women during armed conflict including sexual violence, violate fundamental principles of international human rights and humanitarian law. In the second part of this issue, the manner in which sexual violence during armed conflict emerged as an item of serious concern within the UN is examined. The role of women's

NGOs in exerting pressure for change is highlighted, and the UN's response described. The concluding section examines how the issue may be advanced in the next century.

Sexual Violence During Armed Conflict: A Hidden Atrocity?

The nature of sexual violence during armed conflict

The term "sexual violence" refers to many different crimes, including rape, sexual mutilation, sexual humiliation, forced prostitution and forced pregnancy. These crimes are motivated by a myriad of factors. For example, a commonly held view throughout history has been that women are part of the "spoils" of war to which soldiers are entitled. Deeply entrenched in this notion is the idea that women are property – chattels available to victorious warriors. Sexual violence may also be looked upon as a means of troop mollification. This is particularly the case where women are forced into military sexual slavery. Another reason that sexual violence occurs is to destroy male, and thereby community, pride. Men who have failed to "protect their women" are considered to be humiliated and weak. It can also be used as a form of punishment, particularly where women are politically active or are associated with others who are politically active. Sexual violence can further be used as a means of inflicting terror upon the population at large. It can shatter communities and drive people out of their homes. Sexual violence can also be part of a genocidal strategy. It can inflict life-threatening bodily and mental harm and form part of the conditions imposed to bring about the ultimate destruction of an entire group of people.

Sexual violence and the Second World War

Historical records are largely silent about the occurrence of sexual violence during the Second World War. This is not because sexual violence did not occur, but for a variety of other reasons. Part of the problem is that sexual violence was perpetrated by all sides to the conflict. Consequently, it was difficult for one party to make allegations against the other at the conclusion of hostilities. Moreover, sexual violence had long been accepted as an inevitable, albeit unfortunate, reality of armed conflict. This was compounded by the fact that in the late 1940s sexual matters were not discussed easily or openly, and there was no strong, mobilized women's movement to exert pressure for redress.

Only in recent years have writers and others begun to reconsider the issue of sexual violence during the Second world War. At the centre of this has been the belated recognition of crimes committed against many thousands of Asian women and girls who were forced into military sexual slavery by the Japanese Army. They have become known as "comfort women". In 1992, the Japanese Government officially apologized for compelling these women into military sexual slavery, and has written to each surviving "comfort woman". The UN's special Rapporteur on violence against women has reported that these Women and girls endured:

> "... *Multiple rape on an everyday basis in the 'military comfort houses' ...Allegedly, soldiers were encouraged by their commanding officers to use the 'comfort women' facilities rather than civilian brothels 'for the purpose of stablizing soldiers' psychology, encouraging their spirit and protecting them from venereal infections' , as well as a measure to prevent looting and widespread raping during military attacks on villages"[3]*

The Special Rapporteur has stated that the tales of the "comfort women" are among the most horrendous she has ever heard. Yet the stories of these women remained buried for nearly 50 years.

Post-Second World war crimes trials

Following the Second World War, two multinational war crimes tribunals were established by the Allies to prosecute suspected war criminals, one in Tokyo and the other in Nuremberg. Despite the fact that rape and other forms of sexual violence had been prohibited for centuries by the laws of armed conflict, no reference was made to sexual violence in the Charters of either the Nuremberg or the Tokyo tribunals. Although some evidence of sexual atrocities was received by the Nuremberg Tribunal, sexual crimes committed against women were not expressly charged or referred to in the Tribunal's Judgement. Indictments before the Tokyo Tribunal did expressly charge rape, evidence was received, and the Tokyo Judgement referred to rape. For example, evidence of rape during the Japanese occupation of Nanking was presented during the trial of General Matsui, who had the command of Japanese forces there, Matsui was convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity based in part on evidence of rape committed by his troops. However, none of the women who had been raped were actually called to testify, and the subject of women's victimization was given only incidental attention.

Additional war crimes trials were held pursuant to Control Council Law No. 10, which was adopted by the Allies in 1945 to provide a basis for the trial of suspected Nazi war criminals who were not dealt with at Nuremberg. This document represented an advance over the Charters of the Nuremberg and Tokyo Tribunals in that rape was explicitly listed as

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one of the crimes over which the Control Council had juris-
diction. However, no charges of rape were actually brought
pursuant to Control Council Law No. 10.

The Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols

Although not a UN initiative, the four Geneva conven-
tions adopted in 1949 are relevant to the present discussion.
Following the horrors of the Second World War, these Con-
ventions were initiated by the International Committee of the
Red Cross in order to improve the situation of war victims.
In 1977 two Additional Protocols were adopted to extend
and strengthen the protection provided in the Geneva con-
ventions. These treaties form part of the law of armed con-
flict, and contain certain provisions that apply specifically to
women. Many of these provisions seek to protect women in
their capacity as expectant mothers, maternity cases and nurs-
ing mothers; others regulate the treatment of female prison-
ers. There are also provisions dealing explicitly with sexual
violence.

> **Control Council Law No. 10. Article II(1)(c),**
>
> *gave the Council jurisdiction over:*
>
> *"Atrocities and offences, including but not limited to
> murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, im-
> prisonment, torture, rape, or other inhumane acts com-
> mitted against any civilian population, or persecutions
> on political, racial or religious grounds whether or not
> in violation of the domestic laws of the country where
> perpetrated." (emphasis added)*

Problems with provisions of the law of armed conflict that prohibit sexual violence

In the 1949 Geneva Conventions and Additional Proto-
col 1, certain crimes are designated as "grave breaches". Clas-
sification of a particular crime   as a grave breach is signifi-
cant because States have a duty to search for persons who are
alleged to have committed grave breaches and, if they find
them within their territory, to bring them before their courts
or, alternatively, to extradite them for prosecution. The effect
of the grave breach system is to create a hierarchy, with some
violations of the law of armed conflict considered more egre-
gious than others. Sexual violence is not expressly designated
as on grave breach, although the view that sexual violence fits
within other categories of grave breaches, such as "wilfully
causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health",
and "torture or inhuman treatment", has gained acceptance.
Nonetheless, the absence of express reference to sexual vio-
lence as a grave breach is a reflection of the international com-
munity's historical failure to appreciate the seriousness of
sexual violence during armed conflict.

Another problem with provisions of the Geneva Conven-
tions and Additional Protocols is that they characterize rape
and other forms of sexual violence as attacks against the "hon-
our" of women, or at most as an outrage upon personal dig-
nity. The implication is that "honour" (or dignity) is some-
thing lent to women by men, and that a raped woman is
thereby dishonoured. Failure of these instruments to catego-
rize sexual violence as a violent crime that violates bodily in-
tegrity presents a serious obstacle to addressing crimes of
sexual violence against women. It directly reflects and rein-
forces the trivialization of such offences. In addition, as one
writer has pointed out, the provisions are protective rather
than prohibitive.[4] The only requirement is for particular care

to be taken, presumably by men, to protect women against sexual violence. Thus the provisions appear to be more about the role of the "male warrior" during armed conflict than about recognizing sexual violence as a violation of the rights of women and prohibiting it.

UN responses to sexual violence

One of the first major references within the UN system to women and armed conflict was in 1969, when the Commission on the Status of Women began to consider whether special protection should be accorded to particularly vulnerable groups, namely women and children, during armed conflict and emergency situations.

Following this, the Economic and social Council (ECOSOC) asked the UN General Assembly (GA) to adopt a declaration on the topic. The GA responded by adopting the Declaration on the Protection of Women and children in Emergency and Armed Conflict in 1974. The Declaration recognizes the particular suffering of women and children during armed conflict. It emphasizes the important role that women play "in society, in the family and particularly in the upbringing of children", and the corresponding need to accord them special protection. It also urges States to comply with their obligations under international instruments, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions, that offer important guarantees of protections for women and children.[5] There is no explicit reference to women's vulnerability to sexual violence during armed conflict. Yet, as the Special Rapporteur on violence against women has reported, there is evidence that, in 1971, rape was committed on a massive scale during the conflict in Bangladesh.[6] In the light of this, the omission of any explicit reference to sexual violence in the Declaration just a few years later is notable. Clearly, at the time the Declaration was adopted, concern over the situation of women during armed conflict was closely connected with their role as mothers and caregivers, and very limited recognition was given to issues affecting women in their own right. However, the Declaration does make a general plea for compliance with the laws of armed conflict. The fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 was in existence at the time and, as described above, this expressly addresses rape. The Declaration also stipulates that all necessary steps shall be taken to prohibit, *inter alia*, degrading treatment and violence, which may be considered implicitly to encompass sexual violence.[7]

Through out the 1980s, the UN continued to refer to the particular vulnerability of women during armed conflict, but still without any explicit reference to the prevalence of sexual violence. The practice of considering women and children as one category demonstrated a continuing preoccupation with women as mothers and caregivers. For example, commencing in the 1980s ECOSOC approved a series of resolutions on the situation of Palestinian women and children in the occupied Arab territories, as well as the situation of women and children in Namibia and women and children living under apartheid. These resolutions recognized the poor living conditions of women, but did not refer to their vulnerability to sexual violence. It seems unlikely that, in contrast to the majority of other conflicts throughout history, sexual violence was not a feature of these particular conflicts.

At the end-of decade Conference held in Nairobi in 1985, the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of women, adopted to provide a blueprint for the advancement of women to the year 2000, referred to the especially vulnerable situation of women affected by, *inter alia*, armed conflict, including the threat of physical abuse. The general vulnerability of women to sexual abuse and rape in everyday life was recognized, but sexual violence was not specifically linked to armed conflict.[8] Even in the mid 1980s, sexual violence during armed conflict largely remained unrecognized.

The 1990s: International Concern Over Sexual Violence During Armed Conflict

The Persian Gulf War and the creation of the United Nations Compensation Commission

Some of the first steps towards progress on the issue of wartime sexual violence taken by the UN have gone almost unnoticed. As in the case of other conflicts, when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, sexual violence was a frequent occurrence during the ensuing hostilities. A UN report documented the prevalence of rape perpetrated against Kuwaiti women by Iraqi soldiers during the invasion.[9] Although the UN Security Council did not expressly refer to sexual violence against women in its resolutions relating to the Persian Gulf conflict, it did not create the United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC) to compensate victims who suffered damage as a result of Iraq's unlawful invasion of Kuwait. The UNCC is funded primarily by a 30 per cent levy on Iraq's annual oil exports. Initially, Iraq refused to resume oil exports under the conditions imposed by the UN, thereby crippling the capacity of the fund to operate as intended. However, in 1995, an agreement was reached known as the "oil - for-food" arrangement, and money has subsequently be-

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come available for the payment of claims. The UNCC determined that it would compensate for "serious personal injury", which expressly includes physical or mental injury arising from sexual assault. Some claims asserting rape by members of the Iraqi military forces were field with the UNCC, and guidelines were adopted to facilitate proof of these claims, making it much easier for women to receive compensation. In one case, a woman claimed she had been subjected to sexual assault by Iraqi soldiers and suffered a miscarriage as a result. The woman requested that her name be withheld from her claim. The Government filing the claim on her behalf could provide confirmation of her identity and, recognizing the difficulties faced by sexual assault victims, the Panel of Commissioners recommended compensation for her claim despite the absence of her name.[10]

> "From multiple testimony and the witness statements submitted by the prosecutor to this Trial Chamber, it appears that women (and girls) were subjected to rape and other forms sexual assault during their detention at Sussica camp. Dragan Nikolic and other persons connected with the camp are alleged to have been directly involved in some of these rapes or sexual assaults. These allegations do not seemed relate solely to isolated instances.
>
> The Trial Chamber feels that the prosecutor may be well advised to review these statements carefully with a view to ascertaining whether to charge Dragan Nikolic with rape and other forms of sexual assault, either as a crime against humnity or as grave breaches or war crimes."
>
> Judge Jorda, Judge Odio benito and Judge Riad, In re Dragan Nikolic:
> Decision of Trail Chamber I, review of Indictment Pursuant to Rule 61 (The Prosecutor v. Dragan Nikolic) 1995 I. C. T. Y., No. IT-94-2-R61 (Oct. 20), para.33

The conflict in the former Yugoslavia

It was not until sexual atrocities were committed during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia that consistent references began to appear throughout the UN to the problem of sexual violence during armed conflict. Security Council resolution 798 of 18 December 1992 referred to the "massive, organized and systematic *detention and rape of women*, in particular *Muslim women*, in Bosnia and Herzegovina"(emphasis added). Similar resolutions followed. As part of its response to the conflict, the Security Council established a Commission of Experts (Yugoslav Commission) to investigate violations of international humanitarian law committed in the former Yugoslavia. In its Interim Report, the Yugoslav Commission listed systematic sexual assault as one of the priority areas in its ongoing investigations," [11] and it subsequently collected information regarding approximately 1,100 reported cases of sexual violence. Most of the cases had occurred in Bosnia and Herzegovina between April and November 1992. In its Final Report, the Yugoslav Commission concluded that, although all sides to the conflict had perpetrated sexual violence, the vast majority of the victims were Bosnian Muslims, that vast majority of the perpetrators were Bosnian Serbs, and Serbs reportedly ran over 60 percent of the detention sites where sexual assault occurred. According to the Yugoslav Commission, there was strong, although not conclusive, evidence of a systematic pattern of sexual assault by the Bosnian Serbs[12].

The UN Commission on Human Rights appointed Mr. Tadeusz Mazowiecki as Special Rapporteur on the situation of of human rights in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. In January 1993, the Special Rapporteur dispatched an international team of medical experts to investigate rape[13] and, in February 1993, he endorsed the team's findings that rape had

been used as an instrument of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Croatia, and that persons in positions of power appeared to have made no effort to prevent these abuses.[14]

The ad hoc war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

In 1993, the Security Council created an ad hoc war crimes tribunal (Yugoslav Tribunal) to persecute persons suspected of having committed violations of international humanitarian law during the war in the former Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav Tribunal is a subsidiary body of the Security Council, and is located in The Hague, Netherlands. At the time of its creation, it was clearly envisaged that the Yugoslav Tribunal would prosecute crimes of sexual violence, and this is reflected in the governing statute of the Tribunal, which expressly refers to rape as constituting a crime against humanity.

An effort has also been made to structure the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) of the Yugoslav Tribunal in a manner that responds to crimes committed against women. The position of legal advisor for gender issues was created to ensure that the large number of sexual violence allegations would be properly addressed. Patricia Sellers was appointed to fill this position. There is no doubt that the appointment of a legal adviser for gender issues has greatly improved the Yugoslav Tribunal's approach to prosecuting sexual violence, and also provided an important focus for international dialogue on the issue. In addition, one investigation team has been established specifically to investigate sexual violence,[15] and all investigation teams are comprised of both women and men. This is especially important because, as Ms. Sellers has pointed out, "teams that are gender integrated tend to look at the sexual assault component of investigations earlier and

with more profundity".[16] Even so, there have been some problems with sexual violence investigations by the OTP of the Yugoslav Tribunal. A case in point is the indictment issued against Dragan Nikolic in relation to events which took place at the Susica detention camp in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina.[17] Although the indictment contained no charges of sexual violence, during a reconfirmation of the indictment before the Trail Chamber, several witnesses gave evidence about sexual violence that had occurred at the Susica camp. On the basis of this evidence, the Trial Chamber invited the Prosecutor to amend the indictment to include charges of sexual violence. The question must be asked why these charges of sexual violence were not investigated earlier.

A commitment to prosecuting crimes of sexual violence is reflected in the Yugoslav Tribunal's Rules of Procedure and Evidence (Yugoslav Rules), which provide a series of measures designed to protect victims and witnesses testifying before the Tribunal. It was largely the anticipated prosecutions for sexual violence that prompted these provisions.

The Yugoslav Tribunal has been progressive when it comes to victim and witness protection. At the Prosecutor's request, a range of protective measures for victims and witnesses have been adopted, including the use pseudonyms; the redaction of court transcript to delete reference to the vitim's identity; the giving of testimony in camera had by one-way closed-circuit television; scrambling of victims; and witnesses' voices and images; and prohibitions on photographs, sketches or video-tapes of victims and witnesses.[18] The most controversial aspect of the protective measures granted by the Yugoslav Tribunal has been the decision to allow, provided that certain conditions are met, the identity of some victims and witnesses to be kept from the accused even at the trial

stage.[19] The Yugoslav Rules also provide for the establishment of a Victims and Witnesses Unit to recommend protective measures for victims and witnesses and to provide counseling and support.[20] This Unit became operational in April 1995. At the time of its creation, it was envisaged that the Unit would deal primarily with female victims of sexual violence, and a commitment was made to hiring qualified women wherever possible.[21] The Yugoslav Rules also regulate evidence in cases of sexual violence. Rule 96 deals with issues of corroboration, the defense of consent and evidence of the prior sexual conduct of the victim.

The OTP of the Yugoslav Tribunal has issued a number of indictments charging sexual violence committed against both women and men during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. In June 1996, the first indictment which deals exclusively with sexual violence was issued in relation to events that took place in the municipality of Foca, to the South-East of Sarajevo. This indictment alleges that when the area was taken over by Serb forces in April 1992, many Muslim women were detained in houses, apartments, schools and other buildings, and were subjected to repeated rape by soldiers. The indictment also alleges that women and girls were enslaved in houses run like brothels, where they were also forced to perform domestic work, such as washing the soldiers' uniforms.[22] Two months into the first prosecution brought before the Yugoslav Tribunal, the Tadic case, the Trial chamber heard the first testimony in history, at the international level, from women regarding wartime rape. Although Tadic had been initially charged with raping a female prisoner at the Omarska camp, the charge was withdrawn prior to the commencement of the trial. However, evidence of rape was still used as general evidence against Tadic. The *Celebicicase*, which is currently proceeding before the Yugoslav Tribunal and is expected to conclude in 1998, involves charges of rape.

Assessing the Progress

There is no doubt that the UN's response to sexual violence in the former Yugoslavia constitutes a long overdue acknowledgement that sexual violence during armed conflict is a crime that must be addressed. The problem has been formally recognized, but concerns remain about the extent to which women affected by sexual violence have actually been assisted as a result. More than four years have elapsed since the creation of the Yugoslav Tribunal, but no defendant has yet been convicted of rape. Part of the problem has been the initial inability to take defendants into custody, which frustrated the Yugoslav Tribunal's work for a number of years. This situation began to change in the second part of 1997, when several covert arrests by NATO resulted in suspects being transferred to The Hague. In addition, 10 Bosnian Croats surrendered to the Yugoslav Tribunal, in August 1997, approximately doubling the number of defendants in custody. In February 1998, two Bosnia Serbs surrendered to the Yugoslav Tribunal being the first Serb indictees to do so. As at 16 February 1998 there were 22 defendants in the Scheveningen detention facility in The Hague. As a result, the Tribunal's workload has increased dramatically, trigerring renewed hope regarding the utility of the endeavour as a whole. It also improves the prospect of bringing to justice those persons accused of committing sexual violence during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Some of the defendants recently taken into custody face charges of sexual violence. For example, Anto Furundzija, who was arrested in December 1997, faces those charges. It is alleged that he was a commander who was present while a prisoner was sexually assaulted, and that he did nothing to curtail the assault.[23] However, it is still the case that most of the indictees charged with sexual violence are not in custody.

Less encouraging is the likelihood that women who have been subjected to sexual violence will ever receive compensation for their suffering. The Yugoslav Tribunal can order the restitution of property acquired by criminal conduct.[24] This is an important power, because the misappropriation of dwellings, livestock and other valuables is a frequent and devastating component of conflict. However, the Yugoslav tribunal does not have Tribunal do constitute conclusive proof of criminal responsibility for the injury, but the victim is required to pursue compensation claims through domestic channels. This approach assumes that domestic systems have in place the appropriate structure to provide victims with compensation. This is frequently not the case, especially in countries recovering from armed conflict.

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, 1993

Article 38: "Violations of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict are violations of the fundamental principles of international human rights and humanitarian law. All violations of this kind, including in particular murder, systematic rape, sexual slavery, and forced pregnancy, require a particularly effective response".

Despite there limitations, there is now substantial evidence that the mindest of the international community has changed regarding sexual violence during armed conflict. Over the course of half a century, the issue of women and armed conflict has developed within the UN framework from a limited concern with the situation of women as mothers and caregivers to a recognition that sexual violence against women and girls is a violation of international human rights and humanitarian law that must be addressed. As described below, the issue has also been taken up in a number of other forums within the UN system.

The Vienna Conference on Human Rights, 1993

The 1993 UN World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna, was watershed for women's human rights. Of particular significance was the recognition that violence against women, such as domestic abuse, mutilation, burning and rape, is a human rights issue. Previously, these acts had been regarded as private matters, and therefore not appropriate for government of international action. Even the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Women's Convention), adopted in 1979, has no specific provision on violence against women. In 1985, the Nairobi Forward looking Strategies had acknowledged the problem of violence against women, and urged governments to respond, but there was no explicit recognition that violence against women is a human rights issue. In the years following Nairobi, the issue of violence against women received consideration within ECOSOC, particularly by the Commission on the Status of Women. In addition, In 1992 the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against women CEDAW), the body created to monitor the Women's Convention, adopted a general recommendation on "Violence against women".[25] These developments were due in part to intensified efforts by women's NGOs to draw attention to the problem. The International Women's Rights Action Watch, established to monitor the Women's Convention and the activities of CEDAW, was particularly active on the issue, as was the International League for Human Rights.[26]

At the Vienna Conference in 1993, a number of women's NGOs, including Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF), the Asian Women's Human Rights Coun-

cil and the Latin American committee for Women's Rights (CLADEM), coordinated their action under the umbrella of the Centre for Women" Global Leadership, and were responsible for highlighting the issue of violence against women.[27] At that time, reports of sexual violence committed against women in the former Yugoslavia had flooded the media. The accompanying worldwide outrage provided powerful support for NGO arguments that violence against women is a fundamental human rights violation, of concern to the international community at large. This convergence of factors is reflected in the text of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted at the 1993 conference. The vulnerability of women to sexual violence during armed conflict is explicitly recognized and condemned as a human rights violation requiring a "particularly effective response".[28]

At the Vienna conference, a Tribunal organized by NGOs heard testimony regarding violations of women's human rights around the world, including sexual violence during armed conflict. That testimony included statements from former "comfort women", Palestinian, Somali and Peruvian women, as well as women from the former Yugoslavia, who had been invited by the organizers to "testify".[29]

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women

Developments regarding the problem of violence against women coalesced in December 1993 when the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of violence against Women. The Declaration identifies three main categories of violence against women, namely physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, within the general community, and that perpetrated or condoned by the

state. It explicitly recognizes that women in conflict situations are especially vulnerable to violence.[30]

The Special Rapporteur on violence against women

In 1994 the commission on Human rights appointed a Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and Radhika Coomaraswamy of Sri Lanka was named to fill the position. The special Rapporteur has divided her reports to reflect the three main categories of violence identified in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against women[31]. In her preliminary report, the Special Rapporteur identified sexual violence against women during armed conflict as one of the areas to be given consideration in her future report under the third category, namely violence perpetrated or condoned by the State. The Special Rapporteur is due to submit this report in 1998. It will include information collected by Ms. Coomaraswamy during visits to Rwanda, Afghanistan and Haiti.[32]

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery-like practices during armed conflict

Consideration has been to the issue is sexual violence by the UN subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities. In September 1993, Ms.Linda Chavex, a member of the Subcommission, submitted a preparatory document on the "Question of Systematic Rape and Sexual slavery and Slavery - like Practices During Wartime."[33] She subsequently submitted a working paper of the topic,[34] and following this the Subcommission decided that the topic warranted further consideration. Accordingly, Ms. Chavez was appointed as the Special Rapporteur on the situation of systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery-like

practices during periods of armed conflict. In July 1996 Ms. Chavez submitted her preliminary report. [35] The final report on the topic will be completed by Ms. Gaye McDougal in 1998.

The Fourth world Conference in Women

At the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in November 1995, sexual violence against women during armed conflict was a major theme. This is reflected in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which identified women and armed conflict as one of the 12 critical areas of concern to be addressed by Member States, the international community and civil society.[36]

An NGO tribunal, similar to the one held during the Vienna conference, was held at Beijing, and one session dealt with human rights abuses against women in conflict situations. Among the stories told were those of the former "comfort women" and women from Algeria, Uganda and Rwanda.[37]

Sexual violence in Rwanda

It appears from these developments that sexual violence is no longer the forgotten crime of armed conflict. The world has expressed its determination that sexual violence will no longer be accepted as an inevitable byproduct of war. Women increasingly have a chance to have their suffering addressed. Or so it would seem. Yet in 1994, during the genocidal conflict in Rwanda, it is estimated, many thousands of women were subjected to sexual violence. According to the reports, women were raped, mutilated, forced into sexual slavery and taken as "wives" by their captors. There are also reports of women being bought and sold among the

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Interahamwe (the term used for collective militia groups in Rwanda).[38] However, for a long time, the international community remained silent. Neither the Security Council not the Preliminary Report of the Commission of Experts established by the Security Council to investigate violations of international humanitarian law during the conflict in Rwanda (Rwanda Commission) referred to sexual violence.[39] The NGO community was ultimately responsible for insisting that the international community place the issue on its agenda. Information about the rape and abduction of women and girls provided by African Rights was referred to in the Final Report of the Rwanda Commission. The Final Report states that rape is an egregious breach of international humanitarian law and a crime against humanity.[40] Overall, however, the issue was given minimal consideration by the Rwanda commission.

The ad hoc war crimes tribunal for Rwanda

Following the creation of an ad hoc tribunal to prosecute suspected war criminals from the Rwanda conflict (Rwanda Tribunal) in November 1994, very few steps were taken to address sexual violence, despite the fact that the Statue of the Rwanda Tribunal provides as much scope for addressing sexual violence as the Statue of the Yugoslav Tribunal. In fact, in addition to listing rape as a crime against humanity as the Yugoslav Statue does, the Rwanda Statue also expressly refers to "rape, enforced prostitution and indecent assault" as violations of Common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol II.[42] However, little attempt was made seriously to investigate sexual violence. Consequently, no indictments were issued charging rape or other crimes of sexual violence until 1997.[43]

"Under-age children and elderly women were not spared. Other testimonies mention cases of girls aged between 10 and 12. Pregnant women were not spared. Women about to give birth or who had just given birth were also the victims of rape in hospitals. Their situation was all the more alarming in that they were raped by members of the militias, some of whom were AIDS virus carriers (as was the case of the national chief of the militias, as several witness report). Women who had just given birth developed fulminating infections and died. Women who were "untouchable' according to custom (e.g. nuns) were also involved, and even corpses, in the case of women who were raped just after being killed."

Report on the situation of Human Rights in Rwanda
Submitted by Rene Degni-Segui
Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights
E/CN. 4/1996/68, 29 January 1996, para. 17

On 23 October 1997, a 35-year-old Tutsi woman known as Witness JJ took the stand and gave evidence in the trial of Jean Paul Akayesu, one of the first defendants to be tried before the Rwanda Tribunal. Akayesu was *bourgmestre* (mayor) of the Taba commune in Rwanda during the genocide. Witness JJ described events that had occurred while she was taking shelter in the Taba commune. She told how the *interahamwe* would come in and take young girls and women into a nearby forest and rape them. Witness JJ described a series of occasions on which she was raped multiple times. She also explains how, by pure chance, she narrowly escaped being massacred along with the other women in the commune, because she was out buying food for her baby when the killings began.

Despite the horrifying nature of the abuses that Witness JJ described, and the need for the international community to acknowledge and redress such suffering, her story very

nearly remained untold. The original indictment against Akayesu did not allege sexual violence. The trial commenced, and when other witnesses began to make consistent references in their . testimony to widespread sexual violence in the Taba commune it became clear that the issue could no longer be disregarded. At this time, there was also an *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) brief filed by the Coalition for Women's Human Rights in Conflict Situations,[44] which urged the Rwanda Tribunal to request an amendment of the indictment to include sexual violence.[45] There was a break in the trial, and when it resumed in October 1997, Akayesu was facing an amended indictment which included charges of sexual violence against displaced women who sought refuge at the Taba commune. It is not alleged that Akayesu personally committed any acts of sexual violence, but rather that he is responsible for acts of sexual violence committed by others because he was present and was in a position of authority, but failed to take any action to prevent them.[46]

Factors affecting the response to sexual violence during armed conflict

There are many factors that affect the extent to which sexual violence against women and girls during armed conflict is recognized and addressed. Between Nuremberg and Tokyo on the one hand and the former Yugoslavia on the other, a strong and mobilized feminist movement has emerged that is exerting pressure and demanding redress for atrocities specially directed at women and girls. Women's NGOs have been intrumental in insisting that steps be taken to address crimes of sexual violence.

However, as the case of Rwanda demonstrates, continued vigilance is required to ensure that sexual violence in all conflicts is addressed. One of the major reasons cited for the

failure to address sexual violence in Rwanda is that cultural attitudes inhibited women from talking about what had happened to them. Clearly, cultural factors do influence the way that women react to sexual violence and other traumatic experiences. In many cultures, particularly those in which sexual purity is highly valued, women frequently find it difficult to talk about sexual violence. However, many women in all cultural contexts want to tell their stories, provided that certain measures are taken to minimize the associated trauma. Women must be given a viable choice, and it is up to the international community to demonstrate that the situation of women really can be improved by coming forward. Necessary measures include the use of female investigators and interpreters, and guarantees of appropriate protection for women who testify in court.

The absence of adequate witness protection has been a significant impediment to women testifying before the Rwanda Tribunal. The Rules of Procedure and Evidence of the Rwanda Tribunal provide the same protection to victims and witnesses as the Yugoslav Rules, but witness protections is an extremely difficult issue, requiring cooperation between the local authorities and the Tribunal's witness protection programme. NGO reports suggest that many survivors of sexual violence in Rwanda are inhibited from coming forward due to fear of death, harassment and intimidation. A report titled Witness Protection, Gender and the ICTR has been prepared by the Centre for Constitutional rights, the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, the International Women's Law clinic and MADRE. It asks for the provision of trauma counsellors for women and support persons to accompany witnesses travelling to the seat of the Rwanda Tribunal in Arusha, together with consistent follow-up.[47]

Conclusions: future perspectives

There have been several signs that sexual violence against women during armed conflict will continue to be accorded attention within the UN framework. In addition to the upcoming reports of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, and the report of the Special Rapporteur on systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery-like practices during periods of armed conflict, there has been specific consideration given to the impact of armed conflict on girl children. In 1993, the GA requested

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NGOs assisting women in the former Yugoslavia include:

B.a.B.e. (Zagreb)
Centre for Women War Victims (Zagreb)
Humanitarian Law Fund
(Belgrade)
Kareta (Zagreb)
SOS (Belgrade)
Trenjevaka (Zagreb)

NGOs assisting women Ruwanda include:
Association de Soliderite des femmes Rwandaises
(Asoferwa)
Association des veuves
Du genocide d'avril (AVEGA)
Association des volontaries de la paix (Avp)
Benishyaka
Group Kamaliza
Isangano
Pro-Femmes/ Twese Hamwe

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that a study be carried out on the impact of armed conflict on children, and Ms. Graca Machel was appointed to head the study. Ms. Machel's Final Report reorganizes that children, and especially girls, are vulnerable to sexual exploitation in many settings during armed conflict. For example, girls who become child soldiers are frequently subjected to rape and other forms of abuse, as are girls who are refugees or displaced persons. The report states that "[c]hildren may also become victims of prostitution following the arrival of peacekeeping forces."[48] In September 1997 the UN Secretary-General appointed Mr. Olara Otunnu as his special Representative for Children in armed Conflict. Sexual violence perpetrated against children falls within the terms of his mandate.

Also of note are the negotiations currently under way for the establishment of a permanent international criminal court (ICC). Proposals for such an institution have been on the UN agenda for over half a century. It appears that, finally, the creation of an ICC is close to reality. In 1994 the International Law Commission delivered its proposed Draft Statute for an International Criminal Court, and further deliberations have taken place in various forums since then. It is anticipated that the statute for the ICC will be adopted during an international conference in Rome in June 1998. Efforts are being made to ensure that sexual violence is expressly included, in an appropriate manner, within the jurisdiction of the ICC. Efforts are also being made to ensure that the mechanisms for initiating investigations and prosecutions are responsive to the seriousness of crimes committed against women. In this respect, gender balance in all areas of the ICC's operation should be a priority. Once again, NGOs have been at the heart of efforts to incorporate a gender perspective into the negotiations surrounding the ICC. In particular, the Women's Caucus for Gender Justice in the ICC has worked extensively to put the issue of women on the agenda during deliberations.[49]

The inclusion of women and armed conflict as one of the 12 critical areas in the Beijing Platform for Action provides an important guarantee that the problem of sexual violence during armed conflict will be accorded priority into the next millennium. One recent initiative in the follow-up to Beijing was the Expert Groups meeting (EGM) convened by the Division for the Advancement of Women, in Toronto, Canada, in November 1997. The topic of the meeting was "ender-based Persecution". The threat of gender-based persecution, which includes sexual violence, is a risk shared by both women and girls in situations of armed conflict, as well as those who seek to escape armed conflict internally and via refugee flight. The EGM made recommendations, directed at national and international actors for addressing the problems of gender based persecution. The recommendations fall under four categories, namely legal definitions and standards training, dissemination and education; participation; and implementation, monitoring and accountability.[50]

The Toronto meeting was the first Expert Group Meeting convened by the division for the Advancement of women to consider the protection of women to consider the protection of women during armed conflict, and formed part of the preparations for the forty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in March 1998. Women and armed conflict was one of four critical areas from the Beijing Platform for Action which was reviewed by the Commission. The 45-member Commission adopted agreed conclusions on the issue of women and armed conflict. The meeting was also part of the division's contribution to the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of human Rights.

The conflict in the former Yugoslavia was the catalyst that brought the issue of sexual violence during armed con-flict squarely on to the international agenda, but must more remains to be done. Formal recognition of the problem is an important first step, but this must now be translated into a positive outcome for women and girls affected by sexual violence in all armed conflicts.

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Notes

1   The *Miami Herald*, 18 December 1992, and Die Welt, 1October 1992, cited in C. MacKinnon, "Crimes of War, Crimes of Peace", in S. Shute and S. Hurley, eds., *On Human Rights: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures 1993*, New York: Basic Books, 1993, p. 83.

2   Related issues were explored during an Expert Group Meeting on "Male Roles and Masculinities in the Perspective of a Culture of Peace", held by UNESCO in Oslo, Norway, from 24 to 28 November 1997. For further information contact UNESCO, <1.Breines@unesco.org>.

3   United Nations, *Preliminary Report Submitted by the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences* (E/CN.4/1995/42), 1994. paras. 288 and 290.

4   J. Gardam, "Women and the Law of Armed Conflict: Why the Silence?" *Internaitonal and Comparative Law Quarterly*, vol. 46, 1997, p.55.

5   United Nations, Declaration of the Protection on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict, General Assembly resolution 3318 (XXIX), 14 December 1974. See preamble, para. 9 and para 3.

6   United Nations, *Preliminary Report*, op. cit., para 271(a).

7   Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict, op. cit., para. 4.

8   United Nations, *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, held in Nairobi from 16 to 26 July 1985; including the Agenda and Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women* (A/CONF. 116/28/Rev.1), 1986, para. 41. See also Part III, Peace, para. 243(recognizing women as one of the most vulnerable groups affected by armed conflict), para. 258 (violence against women), para. 261 (the threat posed to women and children by armed conflict), para. 232 (the obstacle armed conflict poses to the advancement of women) and para. 262 (compliance with international treaties providing protection to women and children during armed conflict).

9   See United nations, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situa-tion of Human Rights in Kuwait under Iraqi Occupation* (E/CN.4/1992/26), 1992.

10   United Naitons Compensation Commission Decision No. 3, *Personal Injury and Mental Pain and Anguish*, reprinted in R. Lillich, ed., *The United Naitons Compensation Commission*, New York: Transnational Publishers Inc., 1995, p. 404; and United Nations, *Report and Recommendations Made by the Panel of Commissioners Concerning Part One of the Second Instalment of Claims for Serious Personal Injury or Death* (Category "B" Claims) S/AC.26/1994/4), 15 December 1994, p.10, para.17.

11   United Nations, Interim *Report of the Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992)* (S/25274), 10 February 1993, para. 66©. See also paras. 58-60.

12   United Nations, *Final Report of the Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Secuirty Council Resolution 780 (1992)* (S/1994/674), 24 May 1994 (Annexes, Summaries and Conclusions), 31 May 1995, annex IX, para 4(a), para. 10, para 21 and para. 26.

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13 United Nations, *Rape and Abuse of Women in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia*, Report of the Secretary – General (E/ CN.4/1994/5), 30 June 1993, para. 8.

14 United Nations, *Report on the Situation of Human Rights in the Former Yugoslavia, submitted by Mr. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, special Rapporteur of the Commission of Human Rights, Pursuant to Commission Resolution 1992/S-1/1 of 14 August 1992* (E/CN.4/1993/50), 10 February 1993, para. 84.

15 United Nations, *Report of the Secretary – General on the Rape and Abuse of Women in the Areas of Armed Conflict in the Former*

16 International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, *Bulletin*, No. 7, 21 June 1996, p. 5.

17 *In re Dragan Nikolic: Indictment* (The Prosecutor v. Dragan Nikolic), 1994, (I.C.T.Y.No. IT-94-2-1.

18 International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Bulletin, op.cit., p 5.

19 See *In re Dusan Tadic: Decision on the Prosecutor's Protective Measures for Victims and Witnesses* (The Prosecutor. V. Dusan Tadic), 1995. I.C.T.Y. No. IT-94-I-T (Aug. 10); and *In re Blaskic: Decision on the Application of the Prosecutor Dated 17 October 1996 Requesting Protective Measure for Victims and Witnesses* (The Prosecutor v. Blaskic), 1996, I.C.T.Y. No. IT-95-14-T(Nov. 5).

20 Rule 34, Yugoslav Tribunal Rules.

21 United Nations, *Report of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991* (A/49/342,S/1994/

22 *In re Dragan Gagovic and Ors: Indictment* (The Prosecutor v. Dragan Gagovic and Ors), 1996, I.C.T.Y. No. IT-96-23-1 (June 26).

23 International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Press Release (CC/PIO/277-E), Hague, 18 December 1997. Press releases for the Yugoslav Tribunal may be accessed at <http://www.un.org/icty/>.

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25 United Nations, Committee on the Eliminaiton of Discrimination Against Women, eleventh session, General Recommendation 19 (CEDAW/C/1992/L.1/Add.15), 1992.

26 J. Connors, "NGOs and the Human Rights of Women at the United Nations", in P. Willetts, ed., *The Influence of Non-Governmental Organizations in the U.N. System*, London, Hurst and Company, 1996, p. 165.

27 C. Bunch and N. Reilly, *Demanding Acountability: The Global Campaign and Vienna Tribunal for Women's Human Rights* (Rutgers University: Center for Women's Global Leadership, 1994) pp 4-6.

28 United Nations, *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna from 14 to 25 June 1993* (A/CONF.157/24), 13 October 1993.

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ship, for further information contact the Center for Women's Global Leadership, Douglass College, Rutgers University, 27 Clifton Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08903, USA, .tel (908) 932-8782, fax (908) 932-1180.

30 United Nations, Declaration on the Elimination of Violenceagainst Women (A./ES/48/104), 20 December 1993, preamble para. 7 and Article 2.

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32 Interview with Radhika Coomaraswamy. Libertas, Interna tional Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, December 1997, vol. 7:2, p. 7.

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34 United Natuions *Working Paper on the Situation of Systematic Rape, Sexual Slavery and Slavery-like Practices During Wartime, Including Internal Armed Conflict* (E.CN.4/Sub.2/1995/38), 13 July 1995.

35 United Nations, *Preliminary Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Systematic Rape, Sexual Slavery and Slavery-like Practices During Periods of Armed Conflict* (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1996/26), 16 July 1996.

36 United Nations, *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995, including the Agenda, the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action* (A/CONF.177/20), 17 October 1995.

37 N. Reilly. ed., *Without Reservation: The Beijing Tribunal on Accountability for Women's Human Rights,* Center for women's Global Leadership, 1996.

38 Human Rights Watch and Federation Internationale des Ligues des Droits de I'Homme, *Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence During the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath,* September 1996.

39 United Nations, Preliminary Report of the Independant Commission of Experts Established in Accordance with Security Council Resolution 935 (1994)(S/1994/1125), 4 October 1994.

40 United Naitons, *Final Report of the Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 935 (1994) (S/1994/1405),* 9 December 1994, paras. 136-137.

41 United Nations, *Report of the Situation of Human Rights in Rwanda submitted by Mr. Rene Degni-Segui, Special Rappoteur of the Commission on Human Rights, under para graph of 20 resolution S-3/1 of 25 May 1994* (E/CN.4/1996/68), 29 January 1996. para.16.

42 The jurisdiction of the Rwanda Tribunal differs from that of the Yugoslav Tribunal owing to the fact that Rwanda is classified primarily as an internal conflict, whereas the conflict in the former Yugoslavia has elements of both internal and international conflicts. Common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol ll apply specifically to internal con flicts.

43 An indictment charging sexual violence was issued secretly by the Rwanda Tribunal in May 1997, although it was not made public until several months later. See:

In re Pauline Nyiramasuhuko and Arsene Sholom Ntahobali: Indictment (The Prosecutor v.Pauline Nyiramasuhuko and Arsene Sholom Ntahobali), I.C.T.R.-97-24-1, 26 May 1997. .

44 This coalition is comprised of more that 100 organizations working on issues related to women's human rights in conflcit situaitons, and is coordinated by the International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development, in Montreal, Canada. For further information about the Coalition, contact Isabelle Solon-Helal via e-mail at <srousse@ichrdd.ca>.

45 *Amicus Brief Respecting Amendment of the Indicment and Supplementation of the Evidence to Ensure the Prosecution of Rape and Other Sexual Violence Within the Competence of the Tribunal,* May 1997. The amicus brief can be accessed online at<www.hri.ca/doccentre/violence/amicus-brief/shtml>

46 *In re Jean Paul Akayesu:Indictment* (The Prosecutor v. Jean Paul Akayesu) (1996) I.C.T.R. No. 96-4-1 (Amended June 1997). para. 12 (B).

47 Libertas, op.cit., p 4.

48 United Nations. *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, Report of the Expert of the Secretary- General, Ms Graca Machel, Submitted Pursuant to A/RES/48/157 (A/51/306),* 26 August 1996, para.98.

49 The Women's Caucus for Gender Justice in the ICC can be contacted at (212) 697-7741 or by e.mail at <iccwomen@igc.org>.

50 For further details, see United Naitons Expert Group Meeting on Gender-based Persecution, 9-12 November 1997, (EGM/GBP/1997/Report).

COMMUNICATING THE OTHER

Eliza Agnew[1], or
One Woman's Work in the Foreign Field

O ne day the teacher in a day-school in New York City, while giving a lesson in geography, pointed out to her pupils the heathen and the Christian lands, and she must have spoken some very earnest words to them, for then and there a little girl, eight years of age, named Eliza Agnew, resolved that, if it were God's will, she would be a missionary when she grew up, and help to tell the heathen about Jesus. She never forgot this resolve. Until she was thirty years of age she was detained at home, because there were near relations who needed her care. But when she had reached that age, and her dear ones had been called away from earth to heaven, she was free to leave her home, and she went as a missionary to Ceylon.

Some years before this, when the first missionaries reached North Ceylon, they could not find, among the more than 300,000 people there, a single native woman or girl who could read. There were a few man1 and boys who could read, but the people did not think it worth while to teach the girls. They said, "what are girls good for, excepting to cook food?" &c. "besides," they said, "they could not learn to read any more than sheep."

1. This article is from a book published in 1890 reprinted in 1993. By Navarang, New Delhi 1993 Titled *Seven Years in Ceylon Stories of Mission Life* By Mary and Margaret W. Lietch

The missionaries said to them, "You are mistaken. Girls can learn to read as well as boys." So they opened mission day-schools not only for boys, but for girls also.

Though the parents willingly allowed their sons to attend these schools, they were very unwilling to let their daughters remain long enough to receive an education, as it was common for parents to give their daughters in marriage when they were only ten or twelve years of age. Seeing this, one of the missionary ladies wished to commence a boarding school for girls. She wished to have the native girls separated from the influences of their heathen homes, and brought under daily Christian influence. But none of the people would send their daughters to her.

One day there were two little girls playing in the flower garden in front of the missionary's house at Oodooville. Ceylon is in the tropics only nine degrees north of the equator. In North Ceylon there are two seasons, the "wet" and the "dry" . The dry season lasts nine months, and during that time there is scarcely any rain; but in the wet season, November, December and January it rains nearly every day, and sometimes the rain falls in torrents — between nine and ten inches have been known to fall in twenty four hours. While these two little were playing, there came on a heavy shower of rain, and as they had not time to go home, they ran for shelter in the missionary's house. It continued to rain all that afternoon and evening, and the little girls became very hungry and began to cry. The missionary lady gave them bread and bananas. The younger girl ate, but the older girl refused to eat. After a time, when the rain ceased a little, the parents went to look for their daughters. They had supposed they would be in some neighbours' house but found them in that of the missionary. When they heard that the younger one had eaten, they were very angry, for they said. "she has lost caste". They found fault with the missionary lady, and the mother said, "You have given my child food, and it has broken caste and is polluted, and now we shall not be able to arrange a marriage for it, what shall we do? You may take the child and bring it up."

The missionary lady had been wishing for native girls to come to her, whom she might educate in a boarding-school, and here was a mother actually saying she might take her daughter, so the missionary lady thought that perhaps this was the Lord's way of enabling her to start the boarding-school. She took the little girl fed and clothed her and began to teaching her the 247 letters of the Tamil alphabet. She sprinkled a little sand on the floor of the verandah, and taught the child to write the letters in the sand. By-and-by some of the playmates of this little girl came to see her, and when they saw her writing the letters in the sand, they thought that this was some kind of new play, and they also wanted to learn. The Tamil children have good memories, and in a very short time they committed to memory the 247 letters of the alphabet, and were able to read. Their parents seeing this, and that the little girl was well cared for and happy, soon began to entrust more of their daughters to the care of missionary lady. This was the beginning of the Oodooville Girls' Boarding school, which was, perhaps, the first boarding school for girls in heathen land, having been commenced in 1824.

After Miss Agnew went to Ceylon, she became the head of this boarding school. She remained in Ceylon for forty-three years without once going home for a rest or a change. When friends would ask her, "Are you not going to America for a vacation ?" she would always reply, " No; I have no time to do so. I am too busy." Through all those forty-three unbroken years, during which God granted to her remarkable health, she was too busy even to think of going home.

In the Oodooville Girl's Boarding-school she taught the children, and even some of the grandchildren, of her first pupils. More than 100 girls have studied under her. She was much loved by the girls, who each regarded her as a mother, and she was poetically called by the people, " The mother of a thousand daughters." During the years she taught in the school more than 600 girls went out from it as Christians. We believe that no girl having taken its whole course has ever graduated as a heathen. Most of these girls came

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from heathen homes and heathen villages, but in this school they learned of Christ and of His great love, and surrendered their young hearts to Him.

Miss Agnew lived with us in our home the last two years of her life, when she had grown feeble and was no longer able to retain the charge of the boarding-school. We felt her presence in our home to be a daily blessing.

Near the close of her brief illness, and when we knew that she had not many hours to live, one of the missionaries present asked her if he should offer prayer. She eagerly assented. He asked, "Is there anything for which you would like me specially to pray?" she replied, "Pray for the women of Jaffna, that they may come 'o Christ." She had no thought about herself. All through her missionary life she had thought very little about herself. Her thought was for the women of Jaffna, that they might know Christ; that they might know that in Him they had an Almighty Saviour, a great burden-bearer, a friend that sticketh closer than a brother, one who had borne their grief and carried their sorrows and could give their troubled, hungry, sorrowing hearts His own peace. At the very time when she was asking prayers for the women of Jaffna, every room in our house was filled with native Christian women who, when girls, had been her pupils, and they were praying for her — that if it were the Lord's will to take her then to Himself, He would save her from suffering and pain. God heard their prayer, and she passed away like one going into a sweet sleep. The attendance at the funeral service was large. Many native pastors, catechists, teachers, lawyers Government officials and others, the leading men of Jaffna Peninsula, who had married girls trained in the Oodooville Girls' Boarding-school, came to the funeral service, bringing their wives and children. As we looked over that large audience and saw everywhere faces full of love and eyes full of tears, and knew that to hundreds of homes she had brought the light and hope and joy of the Gospel, we could not help thinking how precious a life consecrated to Christ may be.

In hundreds of villages in Ceylon and India there is just such a work waiting to be done by Christian young women as that which, with god's blessing, Miss Agnew accomplished in the Jaffna Peninsula. Heathen lands are open to-day as they have never been open before. The women of heathen lands need the gospel. The stronghold of heathenism is in the homes. Many of the men in India have to some extent lost faith in their old superstitious creeds, but the women, who are secluded in the homes, cling to the heathen worship. What else can they do? They must cling to something, and the majority of them have not heard of Christ. They are teaching the children to perform the heathen ceremonies, to sing the songs in praise of the heathen gods, and thus they are moulding the habits of thought of the coming generation. Some one has truly said, "If we are to win India for Christ, we must lay our hands on the hands that rock the cradles, and teach Christian songs to the lips that sing the lullabies, and if we can win the mothers of India to Christ, her future sons will soon be brought to fall at the feet of their Redeemer."

There are in India 120 millions of women and girls. How many lady missionaries are there working among these? In the report of the last Decennial Conference, the number is given as 480, counting those of all Protestant missionary societies. Might not more be sent to that great work? We are told that there are a million more women than men in Great Britain. Could not many of these be spared from their homes, and could not some possessed of private means go on a self-supporting mission to this great field?

Think of the 21 millions of widows in India. What a terrible lot is theirs! They are regarded as under a curse. They are doomed to innumerable hardships. It is deemed meritorious to heap abuse upon them, it is thought the gods are angry with them, and that the death of their husbands is a punishment on them for some sin committed either in this or in some previous life. Their lot is so hard to bear that again and again they have said to the missionaries. "Why did the English government take from us the right to be burnt on the funeral

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pyre with our dead husbands? For that were better that what we have to endure." But Christian women could give to these widows of India the Gospel with its message of hope, and before the brightness of its shining the darkness of their despair would flee away. The knowledge of the love of Christ would help them to bear their otherwise intolerable burdens. Let us remembers that Christ has told is that whatsoever service we render to the least of His little ones, He will regard it as done to Him, ad that whatever we leave undone of that which was in our power to do, He will regard the neglect and slight as shown to Him, Are there not many in darkness to-day who might have had the Gospel had Christians done what they could for them ?

Failure to realize responsibility does not diminish it. Zenanas which forty years ago were locked and barred are to-day open. Especially is this the case in towns where there are Christian colleges. Wherever the Hindu men have been educated in these mission colleges, they are now willing and even desirous that their wives, daughters and sisters should be taught. We have been told by Hindu gentlemen, that there are many educated men in India to-day who are convinced of the truth of Christianity, and would confess Christ, were it not that a wife or mother, who has never been instructed about Christ, would bitterly oppose their doing so.

Shall not Christian women, who owe so much to Christ, be foremost in doing the work allotted to them ? What a consummate blunder to live selfishly in this generation ! Are we giving the best we have to do Christ and to His cause? Christ says, "whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My Disciple." Did Christ only mean that for those who lived hundreds of years ago, or does He mean those words for us to-day ? In the presence of a thousand million heathens and Mohammedans needing the Gospel, with multitudes of heathen lands losing faith in their old beliefs and asking for the new, does He not mean those words to-day ? Does He not ask that our time, our money, our infleunce, our friendships

and our entire possessions should be laid at His feet, consecrated to His service, placed absolutely at His disposal ? Opportunities such as we have to-day, if neglected, may not come again.

It is said that when the decisive hour in the battle of Waterloo came, the English troops were lying in the trenches, waiting for the onslaught of the enemy. They had been ordered not to fire until the French were close upon them, and while they lay there in silence, Wellington rode up and down the lines saying over and over again, "What will England say to you if you falter now ?" One old officer declared that he said it a thousand times, but it is no matter how many times he said it, it was burned into those waiting troops till they were lying under the very walls of Parliament, and when the command was given, "Now up. And at them," every man felt that the honour of England was in his hands, and he was invincible.

Do we not hear the voice of a greater Leader saying, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" ? what will the result be if we falter now, if Christians are worldly now, if they are Christians only in name but not in deed, if they only say "Lord, Lord," but do not the things which Christ says ? What will Christ think of us if we are not brave and true now ?

Let us, at Christ's command, be ready to go forward, for the battle is not ours, but Christ's. Surely we will do well to place ourselves on His side, for we know that in the end His cause shall prevail. We know that all darkness and every evil thing shall be swept away, and that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ...........

This Chapter taken from the missionary writings is a bit of history or more specifically the history of the establishment of Uduvil girls' college, the first girls school in south Asia. Apart from bringing to the readers a historic piece, the main reason for reproducing it is to lay bare some of the hidden meanings signified through the use of language. The sym-

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bolic powers of a dominant culture, the power inherent in communication patterns and the display of particular type of culturally sanctioned meanings are present in the above narrative. Hayden, White[2] has referred to this point in a slightly different way as the impositionalist conception of narrative historiography (1987;42, 1989:26) which means since we have no access to knowing the past and have no recourse to actual truth, any explanation we attempt to supply linking facts, together, is an imposition (Kalle Pihlainen 1998:7)[3].

My first point of contestation is the word 'Heathen'. It appears that in the geography lessons in the West and in New York, the countries of world are classified as Heathen lands and Christian Lands. Heathen may be understood in two ways.

1. One who adheres to the religion of a tribe or nation, that does not acknowledge the God of Judaism Christianity or Islam the unconverted.

2. One who is regarded as irreligious, uncivilized or unenlightened uncouth or barbarous. Usually it connotes a collective identity.

In one strokes of writing a word the geography lesson has under-written all the other religions in the world as being irreligious – so it goes that the eight year old little girl Eliza Agnew has resolved under these circumstances of the geography lesson that she should tell the Heathens about Jesus.

Post colonial studies have identified the trends of the civilizing missions and the white man's (the woman's also) burdens. This process has also led to a legitimization of systems of knowledge as well. This narrative is a further pointer towards such an identification. Apart from overtly violent

conquests and governance, covert forms of expression which signify cultural dominance has become part of the colonial history. The new thinking in historiography as argued by scholars is that historical narrative has fictional elements and they are similar to the genre of literature and not to any science.

The authors states in this article that out of 300000 people the missionaries could not find a single native woman or a girl who could read. They are speaking of a period in the mid or later 18th century when the American missionaries first came to North Ceylon. Whether this is a fiction or fact has to be tested.

"What are girls good for excepting to cook food ?"
"Girls could not learn to read any more than sheep"

The parents were unwilling to let girls receive any education and that they were married at the age of ten or less than 12.

These are not part of a fiction but facts exhibiting not only the position of woman, but also gender-based ideological constructions of the Jaffna society.

The third point is about caste relations in Jaffna. The authors have stated that the girl by eating the food from the missionary has become polluted and has broken caste rules. Pollution occurs only if one eats with lower caste or eats food of the lower caste. The mother of girls has considered that missionary ladies as belonging to polluting low caste is strange. However, facts are sometimes stranger than fiction that the mother refused to accept the "polluted" daughter back and said "What should we do?" You may take the girl and bring up" is also stranger than fiction.

Eliza Agnew – an American native has mastered the 247 Tamil alphabet and was able to teach the Tamil children

but when the Tamil children committed to memory of 247, alphabet she marveled at them and says that *"Tamil children have good memories. Within a short time they were able to read.* Are these to be explained within a set of dichotomy such as civilized/being civilized, land of heathen land of Christ or narrative of improvement of the colonies a colonisers gaze at native children's ability to comprehend and study their own language... !

The use of the metaphor of battle of the Waterloo and Lord Wellington saying "what will England say to you if your falter now situates the argument for the conversion process - the battle of Christ to be fought by the missionaries, and the conquest is the conquest or conversions of the heathens.

Facts are not totally lacking in this narrative. The position of the widows in India is indeed a vivid picture where the reality is captured. The cry of the widows "why did the English government take from us the right to be burnt on the funeral pyre with our dead husbands...... to endure" (p121) resonate with poems of the sangam period in *Purananuru* . When the plight of the widows and their restrictive social behaviour patterns were mentioned, more specifically one of them says that it is better to mount the funeral pyre of the husband than to live in such inhuman conditions of social self deprivations. One sees a continuity in the social behaviour patterns for women and their marginalised position in the society.

Historical narratives, I want to argue, have to be subjected to a re-reading process and that is the purpose for reproducing this chapter from the book.

—*Editor*

Notes

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DID WOMEN MAKE A DIFFERENCE? THE NORTHERN IRELAND WOMEN'S COALITION IN THE PEACE PROCESS

Carmel Roulston

Women's Coalition in the Peace Process of Northern Ireland.

Still holding our breath...

Arriving in Northern Ireland to oversee the final stages in the completion of the Northern Ireland Peace Agreement, Prime Minister Blair spoke of feeling "the hand of history on our shoulders". During those days, all of Northern Ireland seemed to hold its breath, witnessing events which might allow us to begin to put behind us almost thirty years of civil strife, but which might also have resulted in failure, deadlock and continued conflict. In the event, on April 10th 1998, we took a step forward. In the few intervening months, however, we have had many more occasions to feel alarm and anticipate setbacks; even the most optimistic are not yet ready to celebrate the end of our conflicts. Mr. Blair has returned a few times, to console and encourage; at the time of writing this paper, he is once more visiting Northern Ireland, to sympathize with the victims of the Omagh bomb-

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ing and to propose the introduction of further emergency powers to make easier the arrest and imprisonment of its perpetrators.

This bombing and its after-math – like the violence and murders during the crisis over the Orange arch at Drumcree Orange march at Drumcree in July – have brought back into focus the dangers which still surround the complex but fragile structure which is still required for it to be transformed into a secure future for our country. Nevertheless the signing of the Agreement, and its endorsement by the overwhelming majority of voters in both states in Ireland, represent important steps forward on the path to reconciliation and partnership among the parties to the conflict. The issues on which it is possible to reach accommodation have been redefined and enlarged; new potential for compromise has been identified and new ways of working towards a settlement of differences have been identified and new ways of working towards a settlement of differences have been explored. It is possible to isolate the intransigent and uncompromising of both sides of the major divide; the popular endorsement of the Agreement provides a good basis on which to build new structures, In this paper, I will examine one of the parties which worked for, signed and campaigned for acceptance of the Agreement: the Northern Ireland women's Coalition. I will discuss its origin; its aims, its methods of work and its role in the peace process. I will try to assess its role in the peace process from 1996 to the present and to determine what, if any, difference its presence there has made for women in Northern Ireland.

Women, politics and society in Northern Ireland

As many commentators have pointed out, the conflict over national identities and allegiances in Northern Ireland,

with its dimension of sectarian aggression tended to reinforce the desire for community solidarity and therefore perpetuated "patriarchal" ideologies. "The traditional link between nationalism (both orange and green) and their respective churches has ensured that the ultra-conservative view of women as both the property of, and the inferior of, men, remains strongly entrenched in Irish society."[1] It is important not to exaggerate this tendency; changes in politics and society which were experienced throughout Europe from the 1960s also had their effects in Northern Ireland. The position of women is not uniformly subordinate nor entirely restricted to the domestic sphere. In 1961, less than 30% of married women were in paid employment; by the 1990s, this had risen to 60%. In 1959, only 12% of mothers with pre-school age children were in the workforce, by 1990, 43% of this group were employed, a figure lower than the UK average (53%), a disparity explained by fewer opportunities for part-time work rather than "traditional attitudes". There is still a marked sexual division in employment patterns, resulting in women being concentrated in a small number of – usually – lower-paid occupations. Women are, however, increasingly likely to take action, through bodies such as the Equal Opportunities Commission or trades unions, to seek redress for discriminations or harassment.

If, by the 1990s, it was accepted that woman had a place in the world of paid work, the same could not be said for that of mainstream politics. Of the 17 MPs sent to Westminster or the 3 members of the European Parliament, none are women, nor are there any women candidates likely to be elected in the near future. In the 1994 European elections there were 4 women candidates, including Mary Clarke-Glass, former chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland who stood for the Alliance party. Her share of the poll was 4.1%, representing a small decline on previous Alliance performances. In local government, councils have few powers but some of them include "women's concerns" such as playgrounds and environmental issues. Of 26 local councils, 3 have no women members, 9 have only one woman member and, overall, 12.4% of councilors are women.[2] some of the political parties, including the SDLP. Sinn Fein, the recently-formed loyalist; Progressive Unionist Party and the Alliance party began, in the 1980s, to construct programmes for increasing women's representation on executive committees and in lists of candidates, but women are very far from having significant influence or being close to leadership positions in most parties. Yet, large numbers of women have for many years, involved themselves in the work of grass roots and voluntary sector campaigns, often unrecognized and rewarded. The government of Northern Ireland through executive action, the limited democratic accountability and the continuing violent conflict compelled both men and women, especially from socially excluded groups, to find alternative ways of influencing policy decisions. Networks of community-based and voluntary organizations were created, pursuing goals of community improvement and dialogue across religious and political difference. This community-based channel of participation was seen by many as the basis for a revived civil society in Northern Ireland, which will be essential for future political stability, and as an important part of the process of achieving a durable settlement. Ruth Lister, for example, saw the work of groups in working-class communities as being "of value not only for its tangible achievements and outputs, but also for the less tangible impact it has on deprived communities and, potentially, the wider body politic." In her view, the work of the community groups would be part of an essential process of reconciliation and reconstruction, making a potentially important contributions to the "search for a settlement and the process of reconstruction which would need to follow"[3]. One of the most

striking features of women and politics in Northern Ireland has been the extent to which women's participation and representation has taken place within such community-based groups.

Since the mid-1970s, women's centres have been created in many rural and urban areas of Northern Ireland, initially as a result of the efforts of feminist groups. The numbers of centres grew in the 1980s, providing an invaluable space in which women could seek advice, meet other women, take part in leisure and educational activities and so on. However, many of them have been vulnerable to reductions in funding and in some areas they have been the target of the hostility of some local politicians. The increase in the number of centres stimulated the creations of campaigning groups of and for women. There is a wide variety of groups and centres, some of which have been established in response to demands from women in the area, but others of which have been the result of initiatives from local government community development officers or from charitable organizations. There has been little consistency in the funding of women's activities of any sort in Northern Ireland. The grants awarded are usually comparatively small; it is not clear which agencies are responsible for providing them and there is a lack of transparency in the criteria for making awards. Some funding bodies require that the group undertake some "cross community" or reconciliation activities if they are to satisfy the criteria. Given the conditions which prevail in many parts of Northern Ireland, such requirements can undermine the ability of groups and centres to provide the necessary safe space for women, given that some local politicians and paramilitary groups have been known to take action to prevent such initiatives.

While women's development is regarded as essential for community development in general, it appears often to be seen as means of allowing women to become a "resource" an influence for stability, rather than to encourage women to participate on equal terms in the formulations of goals and strategies for the community. Women's groups in working-class communities find themselves required to direct their attention towards a wide range of activities, including childcare, adult education classes, youth work and other support services. The preferred objectives and outcomes, then, are those that benefit families and the community in general, an extension of women's domestic, caring responsibilities. In other community groups, women are also often to be found performing many roles, given the tasks of fostering support services for other women but also expected to contribute to the wider aims of the group.

Nevertheless, it is clear that such groups, even given these constraints, opened up possibilities for women to change and improve their conditions of life. For many of those involved, the experience of such activism has been positive. As the principal vehicle for women's participation in Northern Ireland, they have provided a means by which women's interests and needs can be articulated and in which differences among women can be expressed and negotiated. Much of the support for the creation of the NIWC came from women active in such groups.

A Window of opportunity

What appeared at the time to be a potential obstacle to the peace process paradoxically provided a chance for women to make their way to the peace talks table. From 1993, when it became clear that the Irish and British governments were firmly committed to renewed efforts to open political dialogue, some groups of women activists began to feel alarmed at the possibility that new political structures would be cre-

ated which focussed on unionist and nationalist identities and interests, neglecting other needs and allegiances. The masculine dominance of mainstream politics and the suspicion with which the larger parties viewed community activism, seemed likely to mean that women and women's concerns, would be less likely to find representation in the future. To change this situation, however, appeared difficult. In the context of political violence and stalemate, as one writer observed , "nothing is more important than achieving a workable, peaceful political settlement. Hence it may seem to some political scientists, politicians or citizens of NI a political luxury or irrelevance to be thinking about the political representation of women."[4] Such dilemmas will be familiar to those concerned with women's position and status in other conflictual or crisis situations. It was also the case that women, too, were divided about the way to a settlement of Northern Ireland's national conflict. The history of the feminist movement in the 1970s and 80s repeated efforts to unite around issues of common concern to catholic and protestant, unionsit and nationalist women, coming to grief over disagreements about national identity and allegiance.[5] As it become clear that a new round of inter-party talks, with some chance of greater success, was about to be launched, groups of women who had been active in a variety of organizations decided to take positive action. Two related aims motivated their initiatives, firstly, to ensure that women were not pushed to the sidelines and secondly, by involving people with experience of working in may different contexts and first-hand knowledge of exclusion and its effects, to increase the chances of success of the new peace process. A series of conferences was convened, in which women from every sector in Northern Ireland attempted to find ways in which women could articulate their aspirations, needs and ideas without having to sacrifice their concerns as members of one or other community in order to speak as women. The conferences also tried to find ways in which these ideas could be pressed upon policy-makers and to devise institutions which would allow for women (and other groups) to press their concerns in the future. At this point, the "window of opportunity" for women's involvement was opened. Early in 1996, the British Conservative government, under pressure from the Ulster Unionist party, announced that participation in the multi-party peace talks would be decided through elections to a Northern Ireland Forum. This decision was very unwelcome to the majority of nationalists; however, one of the women's networks (the NI Women's European Platform) produced a paper on "genderproofing" the elections, and the talks. This was received positively by the relevant officials and an electoral system was devised which seemed likely to ensure representation of some of the smaller political parties at the talks. While the government's primary purpose was to ensure that the parties linked to loyalist paramilitaries would be there, the system offered hope to groups concerned with "other" interests – labour, environment and women. At a hastily convened meeting of community activists, trades unionists and individuals, on April 17th 1996, it was decided to form a women's party to contest the elections; the NI Women's Coalition was born. Agreeing to put a party name on a ballot-paper, of course, is a long way from creating a party of building support. Could the NIWC avoid the pitfalls that has trapped earlier attempts to create a unified women's movement and attract support from all sectors of women? There was certainly a great deal of scepticism and even hostility from many women as well as men. The question of the political relevance of such a party to the "big" political questions was soon raised, as was that of competing for votes with other indentities. However, the experiences of women working together at community level proved significant enough to overcome the doubts of sufficient numbers of people, a strong list

of candidates emerged and an electoral platform which could fuse ideas about women's representation with ideas about political dialogue was drawn up. After a campaign which managed to combine humour and drama with serious political commentary – the key slogan was "say goodbye to the dinosaurs!" – the NIWC became one of 10 parties elected to the forum and permitted to send two delegates to the multiparty talks.[6] Unfortunately, as the NIWC arrived, one of the key nationalist parties was excluded: because of the ending of the IRA cease-fire in February 1996, Sinn Fein was not permitted to join the peace-talks*. For a year after the elections, little progress was made on political dialogue within the talks. However, the NIWC was able to play a part in creating structures and frameworks for proceeding to an agreement, and to build its own support and policy-making structures. When the IRA cease-fire was resumed, and Sinn Fein re-entered the talks, the NIWC delegates and their back up team, had already found a distinctive voice in which to deliver some clear messages.

Promoting dialogue, promoting inclusion

The NIWC was one of only three parties elected to the Talks and the Forum which could claim to have "cross community" membership and support. The Alliance Party, formed in the 1970s, aimed to find common ground among catholics and protestants and to find structures which would ensure the protection of minority rights within whatever kind of state might exist in Northern Ireland. The other was the Labour Coalition, a party which was also formed shortly before the elections in an attempt to ensure that class issues and social inequalities would not be neglected in the Talks. Like the women's movement, the labour movement in Northern Ireland has suffered division and disarray as its potential members found it difficult to give priority to their interests

as workers over their identities as unionists or nationalists. The NIWC had something in common with both these parties, but differed from them, not only in its attentiveness to gender inequalities, but also in the insights it brought and the approach it took to the problem of creating solidarity across difference. These insights came from the experiences of women (and men) in community based groups building alliances and working for common purposes despite deep and sincerely- held political, national or religious differences. They also came from some of the reflections of feminist writers from South Africa, Sri Lanka, Russia and the Middle East, as well as Europe and the USA on the "ethonocentrism" and even racism, which had been built into second-wave feminism. So, the NIWC had learned that common purposes must come out of respect for and acceptance of differences, rather than from expecting people to be prepared to transcend of disavow community identities. From its inception, the NIWC has tried to adopt an approach of principled dialogue and accommodation, both within the party and in its relationships with other parties and political actors.

Within the party, this has involved a series of meetings and discussions where all points of view are genuinely listened to with respect and where agreement on policies and principles is arrived at through attempts to understand opposing positions. Certain core values and principles were arrived at, forming a framework within which discussion could take place. Agreements were reached step-by-step, with difficult issues given longer time in order to keep the process going. There was a commitment to respect for human rights and civil liberties, to aiming for social equality and to justice. Running through all these values and practices was a common theme of regard for a process which allowed all voices to be heard and for all to be facilitated to speak.

Translated into the hard realities of Northern Irish politics, this meant that the NIWC consistently – and often solely – called for the inclusion of all parties in the Talks process, without preconditions. This meant calling for the admittance of Sinn Fein before an IRA cease-fires were breached. It also meant continually calling for an end to paramilitary violence and demanding that the parties linked to paramilitary groups demonstrate their willingness to achieve and end to violence. To many unionists, the NIWC appeared to be supporting a republican agenda, to be part of the "pan-nationalist-alliance" which they feared was winning a lot of ground. To republicans, the NIWC often seemed to be calling for "surrender" and to be working for a restoration of devolved government which would be compatible within unionist aims. Again, on the issue of reform of the police force, or the release of paramilitary prisoners, the NIWC had to find workable policies that would encourage accommodation and keep the process going.

As the multi-party talks continued, through continual crises and deadlocks, the NIWC negotiations faced many occasions on which their policies were misunderstood or misrepresented. Any group of party which came into the public arena throughout the history of Northern Ireland, but especially over the years since 1968/9, has had to face the challenge; where do you stand on the question of Northern Ireland's statehood? Are you for the union with Britain or for a united Ireland. Thanks to its own unique methods of reaching accommodation and also thanks to the framework of this new peace process, the NIWC was able to offer a new kind of answer to this question. In effect, their argument was this is in many ways an out-of-date question in the late twentieth century when sovereignty and statehood are being transformed and renegotiated. It might now be possible to create new types of institutions and relationships which would re-

flect and honour both nationalist and unionist identities and traditions, but also allow other aspirations and allegiances to emerge. The format of the talks, in many ways, proved very compatible with the NIWC methodology. One of the key principles was that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed", which meant that no party could hope to secure agreement on issues of importance to itself without contributing to compromise on other issues. Parties in the talks had to remind themselves continually of the importance of the process as a whole and to weigh their "bottom-line" issues against the possibility of undoing the achievements that had already been reached, however insufficient or tenuous they may have appeared at any time.

The women's coalition worked to keep this momentum going by offering to talk and listen to all the parties in the process, as well as to some who had left or were excluded, and to act as a conduit between parties which were not yet ready to meet face –to-face. Being prepared to negotiate with or on behalf of any party willing to enter dialogue, and being open-minded about possible outcomes, meant that they could on occasions assist in the building of trust and facilitate exchanges of positions between parties. Not all parties were willing to accept the NIWC as mediators, but some on occasions found their interventions helpful.

Did the NIWC make a difference?

In many conflicts, perhaps especially in ethnic or national conflicts, there are participants who believe they have more to gain by continuing the war than by looking for peace. In the long term or in a global sense we are all better off with peace and stability, but in the short term some groups or communities can advance their interest through violence and conflict. There will also be some parties or lead-

ers whose continued existence, status and power derives from the conflict and who will work very hard to prevent a settlement. This has been true over the years of parties to the Northern Ireland conflict. War and violence in most cultures and societies are thought of as inherently "masculine" activities; for the most part, we think of women as more likely to prefer peace. While recent studies, and social changes, have led us to question such generalizations, there is still a tendency to assume that women-with their closer connections to nurturing and protecting children and families — will be peacemakers rather that warmongers. But, when we look at policy-making institutions we find very few women entrusted with the task of settling the so-called "big" questions.

Close study of any conflict situations shows that the roles women are required to play are usually more complex and often contradictory while the actual women in any real situation may themselves have mixed feelings about what they want and how they can achieve their objectives, Often, women will prefer to identify as part of "the struggle" rather than as part of the neutral camp.[7] In Northern Ireland, women have been expected, depending on their circumstances, to be peacemakers, to be above the conflict, to be loyal supporters of one of other side, occasionally to be combatants or more usually, to be the mainstay of private and family life in the midst of turmoil. Women have been more often seen as the victims of the conflict, which they are often assumed to have no responsibility for perpetuating. One of the justifications for promoting women's entry into politics in this, as in many other situations, has been that women will be both more realistic and more conciliatory. In general, however for many of the men in powerful positions, if women are thought of as not part of the war, it is assumed that they can not be part of making the peace.

Women themselves are of course the occupiers of many different positions and perspectives; neutral peacemakers, intransigent loyalists or republicans, impatient with all sides, defenders of communities. As we have seen, the majority of women have found it impossible or chosen not to put their interests as women above their interests as loyalists, republicans or any other identity. However, as the new peace process was getting under way, many women were beginning to look at these identities from a "women's perspective" and to begin to claim a right to define them. The NIWC was able to appeal to women who wanted to see progress towards a settlement, who believed that women had perspectives which were likely to be different from those of the majority of men and who also wanted to defend and show solidarity with their religious or national community or social group.

When the NIWC entered the 1996 election campaign, many were doubtful or disparaging about what it could offer as a "single-issue" party to the wider peace process. Nationalist and unionist parties are, of course, also devoted to a single-issue platform, built because their issue is concerned with sovereignty and statehood it has more salience and status.

What the NIWC managed, however, was to fuse together the issues of the injustice of women's exclusion from political structures with a broader package of ideas about dialogue and conciliation, justice and equity. These ideas were inspired by and based upon the practices and principles forged by many women over years of working in families, in campaigns and in their communities. And, to some extent, being a new voice untained by "baggage" from the past, the NIWC could, by their efforts and perseverance, win the trust of people from many different backgrounds. While the NIWC could not claim to have the support of, or represent, all women it is distinguished by having members and sup-

porters from all parts of the Northern Ireland population – including men. Its support has increased, as the recent elections to the new assembly demonstrated. Despite a somewhat unfavourable electoral system and with virtually no money, the NIWC won two seats and secured a very respectable vote in other constituencies.

It would be foolish and arrogant to make exaggerated or inflated claims for the contribution of the NIWC to the securing of the Agreement or the success of the referendum campaign. It is possible, however, to argue that the NIWC has made a difference to the peace process over the months since it formation. Firstly, by the style of leadership which it adopted, it has shown that women can be resolute and consistent in pursuit of goals without having to appear tough or domineering. This it should be noted, required a lot of long meetings, research, professionalism. Secondly, by being open to dialogue and persuasion the NIWC has been able to build alliances and make common cause with people from many different persuasions. Thirdly, by building upon, identifying with and bringing into the talks the experiences of many years of cross-community work by NIWC members and others, the negotiators were able to show how much agreement might be possible, given a certain amount of goodwill. Finally, by its commitment to a particular type of process – fair, inclusive, based on mutual respect, empathy and dialogue across differences – the NIWC continually reminded the public of what we stood to gain by supporting this latest peace initiative.

There are, of course, many other people and groups whose contribution made the process possible in the first place, and ensured its continuation through very difficult times. For perhaps the first time, however, the NIWC brought the voices of women to the negotiating table and allowed women to be the makers of history in Ireland.

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Notes

*   The electoral system was a variation of a regional party list system, with 90 candidates elected from constituencies and a further 10 elected through a second tier, whereby the ten parties with the highest votes were awarded two seats each, The NIWC came ninth.

POLITICAL RESTRUCTURING AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Vivienne Taylor

Introduction

Implicit in the theme on political restructuring and social transformation are a number of assumptions. These include:

*   Firstly that political restructuring and social transformation are linked.

*   Secondly, that there is no longer any need to debate the need for political restructuring,

*   Thirdly, that notions of political restructuring centre women in a fundamental way into these processes and include feminist thinking.

*   Finally that the nature of political changes underway could lead to social transformation which will shift the balance of power and forces in favour of women and those who have been excluded from political and economic power.

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It is evident from some of the mainstream debates on the nature of political changes and processes of governance at the global and national levels that the dominant discourse does not include feminists perspectives and concerns, and, that social trans-formation is not an objective of political change. Indeed whether what is happening on the political agenda is restructuring is highly questionable.

Given the changes in the geopolitical landscape post 1989 and the type of realignments and the emergence of new power blocs, there is an urgent need for a critical analysis of the changing context from the perspective of feminists in the South. Such analyses would contribute significantly to the debate and lobby for alternative political strategies to promote gender justice and social transformation.

The discussions leading upto and after the World Summit on Social Development (WSSD) prompted the need for a critical analysis of what is understood by governance within a changing global context and the increasing inter dependence of national economies. A central issue is the capacity of states to develop and manage policies and programmes to promote human development through institutions and structures, that are so bureaucratic and rigid that they no longer serve the needs and interests of the majority and are particularly anti women.

There is a critical need for political restructuring at national, regional and global levels to deal with fundamental concerns related to gender inequalities and the use of different forms of power. Another concern is how to link the process of political restructuring not only to a deeper understanding of the nature of the state and its instruments, but also to the need for the transformation of relations and processes within and between governments, business and community sectors(NGO).

Our societies are said to operate in a post modern context in which the dynamic nature of the changes taking place demand that we seek alternatives beyond conventional orthodox models of development.

The form of governance that would best serve the interests of those who have been excluded both economically and politically, particularly women, is a central concern. Therefore the conceptual framework for analysing political restructuring must recognise that economic and political processes are inter related, that economic power and political power are mutually reinforcing. While the sites of struggle and actors may differ, the compacts, negotiations and confrontations that take place at various moments contribute to women's multiple experiences of gender oppression at the household/community, regional, national and international levels.

Development And Democracy

Across the development decades links have been made between the need for social and economic development of people who have been excluded from mainstream society, as a basis for their active, democratic participation in political processes at all levels of society. Indeed, economic development has also been seen by some theorists (Huntington, S. Political Order in Changing Societies, Yale University, New Haven, 1968) to have the potential to increase social mobilisation and the demand for political participation. The tendency to fast track political liberalism on the back of economic liberalism persists today.

But the type of transitions that many countries are experiencing raise issues of concern that go beyond whether political restructuring should precede economic reform and development to, whether national

states are able to create a political environment which provides the space for participation and the institutionalisation of decisions made by those people who were previously excluded. This raises questions about the nature of the state as the main lever for restructuring economic and political systems and processes.

Therefore even within the mainstream or male stream debates on the nature of the states from both the right and the left (World Bank report of 1997, Report on Global Governance by the Commission of Global Governance, the South Commissions Report, and many other publications) the contradictory logic of how government's make decisions with regard to women and their fundamental human rights as citizens is not challenged and makes a mockery of the concept of nationhood and citizenship.

In the conceptual framework on this theme the objectives of the state in relation to women are questioned against the political and electoral process which also pose new challenges for women's participation. We need to challenge why the benefits derived from citizenship are minimal for the majority of women and what the nature of the state's administrative capacity is, the manner in which formal and informal coalitions emerge and capture power, the impact of globalization on the state and women's position.

The need for institutional reform of the state is emerging from both a neo-liberal and a left critique for different reasons. Both sides of the critique focuses on the state's role in the market. The market and the NGO sectors are seen as alternatives to lead economic development. While both critiques focus on the unresponsiveness of bureaucracy to people's views and needs and the growing inequalities within and between countries, the reasons attributed for this differ. The neo-liberal proponents see the market as the best allocater of

goods and services and the left perceive the state to be alienated from people, corrupt, promoting a new elite with vested interests in maintaining the status quo.

Whatever the critique, the state is seen as the arbiter of democracy and therefore its role in public policy and action cannot be abolished. Neither can it be left to the NGO sector (as if this is an independent sector) nor can it be left to what is glibly seen as a unified homogeneous civil society sector. However, even more significant, the 1990's is characterized by the concern with growth through the market, the erosions of state's capacity while at the same time development directions are discussed in terms of governance. The debate has shifted from issues of distribution to efficiency and management.

The State and Globalization

The state, the way it operates in contemporary society and whose interests are served, are outcomes of history. States have been influenced by colonialism, post colonial and neo colonial forces in many instances. In many countries, local capitalist forces have been consolidated through the penetration and expansion of international capitalism, often mediated through local elite's in what are seen as "culturally acceptable ways".

Global restructuring of economic, political social and cultural processes has changed the geo political landscape. It now reflects a re-alignment of forces, shifts and consolidation of power. This phase of globalization, unlike previous ones is different and poses new challenges because of the rapidity and scale at which changes occur.

Key features that impact on states during this phase of globalisation are the manner in which information technolo-

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gies have restructured production, distribution and communication processes. This has made possible the exchange of goods, services, and labour across the globe at an unsurpassed pace. Borders have become permeable, the traditional division of North and South is being questioned. The flow of information and finance capital are unstoppable and being moved faster at greater costs to individual countries.

An important feature is that the state machinery does not have the capacity to manage the changes or influence the directions of change to benefit the poorest. The state is under threat. The weakening of nation states affects women's position, especially in respect of access to resources and the increasing burden placed on them because of cutbacks in the social sector.

It has given rise or is accompanied by the formation of quasi-government structures through multinational financial institutions such as the world Bank and the International Monetary fund and the organisation of the World Trade Organization .

There are contradictory and differential impacts of globalization for the gender division of labour. More women migrate in search of work, become commodities in the field of sex tourism and experience unrestrained violence.

Another contradictory impact is the easy links/connections between the local and the global through information flows which create and expand the space for "rights based" work. But, while strengthening civil society, it also gives room and provides an environment for the rise of narrow forms of fundamentalism. The gains won during the World Summit on Social Development and at Beijing are being lost by the right wing backlash and fundamentalism emerging as narrow nationalism in opposition to globalisation. It has cre-

ated conditions for "national" citizenship within patriarchal forms of government on the one hand, and, a universal, internationalist citizenship opportunity on the other.

Opening up global political space has the potential for the feminist movement to mobilise around issues such as human rights, democracy, internal democracy, accountability, and diversity, but it also has the potential to co-opt and contain feminist action aimed at social transformation.

A major critique of the current debates on the state and governance from a feminist perspective is that the discourse lacks a historical analysis and therefore does not reflect patterns of powerless ness and the manner in which traditional cultures and the colonial cultures combine through state and economic institutions to exploit women. Even when a historical context is used by theorists on the left (such as Issa Shivji and Mahmood Mamdani) the state is examined from the perspective of class and race and the position of women is ignored.

This of course raises further issues in our analyses of the state, that of how patterns of patriarchy are embedded in its institutions and derive from traditional cultural forms, but are not exclusive to these. The result is an explicit or implicit compact of male power that permeates every sphere of women's lives and has given rise to what some feminist call the masculinity of state. The construction of a masculine society and state has a significant impact on the type of space for women's engagement. There are stark contradictions emerging. It has, on the one hand, resulted in the push for liberal democracy and protection of individual rights within the whole notion of citizenship and nationhood and, on the other hand countries continue to deny rights to women within the public and private sphere.

Given these trends there is a new consensus emerging that in order to promote the active participation of women and civil society in political processes, the degree to which governments and organs of the state are prepared to intervene/respond , as opposed to abdicate their public responsibility is the degree to which new political spaces and an enabling political environment will be established, which can facilitate new relationships of a diverse and pluralistic nature.

The transition to democracy in south Africa is a case in point here. Since those who were previously excluded from political and economic processes constitute the black majority the push for a new type of democracy is emerging. The policy approach is one which seeks to democratize both the economic and political processes. Further countries in the South experience the state as unresponsive but invasive, inefficient and usually restrictive.

Ineffective but restrictive states often have a top down or authoritarian approach. They are characterized by an absence of local participation, poorly coordinated, rife with corruption, bureaucratic leakage and insensitive to poor people's needs. They are not accountable to people or their own structures and usually foster dependency rather than development. In these contexts, principles of accountability, equity, participation and transparency have no relevance.

The Market and States

Free market policies have reorganised the state (Lang and Hines, 1993) according to some development proponents. With the privatisation of state assets and industries there appears to be less direct involvement of states in the production and distribution of goods and services. But alongside this has been the rise in new state regulations, sub-

sidies and institutions which are designed with the intention of promoting an enabling environment for newly privatised industries (Lang & Hines, 1993). What this has actually resulted in within countries of the south is a new class structure and changes in internal social relations. A complex arrangement of interests is evolving with new elites and traditional power blocs acting in what they purport to be the public interest.

Analysts (Pierson, 1996) on the left argue that the state has played and continues to play a role in promotions and implementing free market policies. Indeed the free market is said to need the protection of the state to maintain its interests and ensure its power. Given that poor women operate largely outside of the mainstream markets and that markets respond to needs backed by cash, the emerging state-market relationships perpetuate the exclusion of poor women from mainstream economic and social activity.

Key to the debates on the nature and role of state institutions in relation to dominant market forces is the objectives of state restructuring and/ or reorganization. Current trends indicate that states are being reorganized to serve the interests of market forces which do not coincide with the interests of the dispossessed. The reality of emerging trends across countries reveals that the reorganizing of the state bears little relation to the process of social transformation. That the power of the state is being eroded in relation to public interest is more and more evident.

Generally in the North and the South structural adjustment measures have been introduced in different ways. However we note the emergence of contradictory trends. While in the North (OECD countries) state spending relative to the economy has continued to grow, averaging 50% of

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GDP. In the South, government spending has been cut back to just over 25% of GDP on average[1]. Government spending has also been redirected.

The state continues to play a significant role in framing taxation policy, in monetary policy, directing subsidies to sectors of industry, outsourcing government contracts, awarding franchises for privatised industries, etc. In sectors such as the health, social and education sectors the emphasis is on the establishment of new state mechanism to ensure marked efficiency and discipline. At the same time there is a market increase in initiatives within the State and outside to train and retrain and re-orientate civil servants towards business plans and efficiency models.

The re-directing of the State towards market efficiency on the one hand, has in some cases led to the enforcement or reinforcing or repressive legislation and policing to contain and stamp out resistance to the economic violence inherent in the market. The implication of the redirection of states' towards market efficiency models and cutbacks on the social sector has placed an increasing burden on women. It has also resulted in the expansion of state policing and security measures to enforce compliance and deal with the other social outcomes of social and economic marginalisation.

In India security forces have been increased to "deal" with internal dissent and to facilitate domestic capital or foreign exchange-bearing entrepreneurs.[2] Special units of Indian police are being trained by Western security experts to "protect the life and property of foreign investors"[3].

Similar trends emerge in Africa with a finely nuanced relationship developing between some African governments and private security firms or groups of mercenaries. South African based Executive Outcomes (a privatised military/security force) is being used both by governments and others (like multinational firms). This has led to new relationships based on economic and political interests which promote unaccountable practices.

The state may be said to be complicit in the privatisation of security, forming compacts with those who have no public interest and are available to any side. What does this mean for women at a micro and macro level? Counter insurgency is used to enforce control and compliance, and as a results democratic processes are subverted. Compacts are negotiated without due regard to political processes, accountability and transparency. The state can abrogate its responsibility for the security of its people and for negative outcomes through the use of privatised security firms.

Instead of political restructuring and social transformation the role of the state and its power has been redirected through certain key processes. These are de and re-regulation, the reallocation of subsidied and the pooling of national sovereignty to form new trading blocks.[4]

Countries and governments efforts to attract foreign investment include relaxation of foreign exchange controls, dismantling other controls such as environmental protection and the promotion of export processing zones as a low wage regulated haven(Namibia is a good example of this).

The Feminist Movement and the State

Global space provides opportunities to express new ideas, reshape/recast democratic practices of women's movements and to push the advocacy agenda. It has resulted in the possibility of forming new strategic alliances at a global level to push gender equality to the core of political restructuring and to consolidate a global system of guarantees of peoples rights against which to hold national states accountable.

Current trends indicate that feminist movements are using existing institutions to push for greater representation and mainstreaming of gender. It has given rise to "femocrats": There are also tensions of not being able to use new spaces strategically because of the internal dynamics/dissension within the feminist movements.

While the nature of states is changing, so too are the dynamics within the feminist movement. What are these dynamics? Some say that they are characterised by "feminist tourism" and "feminist activism"[5] .

Naripokko (NGO in Bangladesh) used the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action as a lever to engage with state and negotiated programmes.[6]

In Brazil the feminist movement engaged with the executive and legislature but not with the judiciary. The women's movement created machinery to engage with the legislature and advocated for policy changes in the executive but due to political and financial pressure this broke down in 1989. But the push continued until another feminist organization was established which links the legislature to the progressive movement (since 1992).

Relationship between the State and Feminist Movement

How can feminist movements which aspire to democratic forms of governance work with authoritarian systems of government ?

What are the conditions under which the feminist/women's movement can retain its autonomy from the state and still use the political spaces for new gains ?

Feminists/women individually and as a collective need to determine how to engage with the state in order to change/transform its policies, programmes and structures, and not to become co-opted into these.

How to ensure accountability, transparency and representivity within the women's movement while at the same time push for these within the state governments is also a key challenge to the women' movement.

Understanding how power and influence are used within the feminist movement is as critical as understanding how these elements promote political restructuring and transformation. Women's movements have had an uneasy relationship with power and it uses. Issues that challenge the women's movement in dealing with its internal relations and pushing the state to restructure include:

- Identifying/naming and dealing with/accepting power in all it forms.

- Practices being used to attain and share power.

- Need to contexualise the use of power

- The exercise of power in women's/feminist movements is shaped by specific. Cultural, patriarchal, political, economic, environmental and racial factors

- Inter-generational issues and the inclusion of young leadership on the one hand and willingness to give up space and positions on the other by experienced activists.

Spaces for the women's movement to fight for citizenship to transform itself from passive to the active, to not only receiving rights but fighting for them as a determining force within civil society are opening up. However these spaces are

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in themselves contested terrains and require strategic alliances.

In order to engage with the state from a new position of strength the women's movement needs to form strategic alliances with other progressive networks.

Some of the Challenges and Contradictions

- Forms of Democracy have been built on the pillars of economic, political culture, institutions and political behaviour although the role and significance given to each of these vary.

- Countries in the South (Africa and L.A.) have experienced democratic changes at a rapidity not seen in other parts of the world. The whole area of democratic governance is still contested and the nature of pluralism has to be understood in relation to historical and contemporary forms of exclusionary politics. Social activity no longer about whether pluralist democracy is desirable but how quickly it can be attained and in what form

- Economic development may sometimes be a spur (South Korea) to democracy but economic stagnation or collapse, can undermine the basis of authoritarian /illegitimate governments and pave the way for democracy.

- However, in some cases it has paved the way or strengthened the hands of antidemocratic elite's , who then use material resources to reward friends and punish foes giving rise to what we call in south Africa the "Patriotic Bourgeosie".

- olitical institutions have changed over time and have been shaped by a multiplicity of forces including historical, external and internal factors. Weak and ineffective

institutions make the relationships between the governed and government problematic, but over powerful institutions, in societies where there are few or no autonomous centres of power (civil society) can leave those in control of the state machinery unchecked.

- Development tends to be tied through Aid to a commitment to western style democracy / pluralism and in the post cold war, post modern period this has led to a greater acceptance of political and economic liberalisation (the objectives of competition between parties in place of single-party hegemony and competition in the market in place of state planning.

- The impacts have varied but there are complementary and contradictory pressures. There is internal and external pressure to have open competition for power and civil liberties and then there is econ-liberalisation(one dollar one vote in place of one person one vote) where decision-making is removed from the majority. This disjuncture creates continuous sites of struggle. The issue here is how to ensure that market led strategies and state led development processes are able to secure the interests and meet the needs of the majority.

- Econ-liberalisation poses limits to the state's power but the counterweight to this is not only in the hands of the masses but in changing the rules that determine transnational decisions and agreements.

- There is a crisis of distribution in terms of economic and political power and the position of women in this process is a fundamental concern.

- The battle ground for the debate is what political system would best serve the needs of capitalism. Liberal

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democracy and capitalism are completely compatible. This poses interesting challenges for the region and women's emancipation.

- Questioning the nation state is important and the questions raised are critical. Can the formation of the nation state be challenged if it does not take into account representation of those who have been excluded, the majority, the environment and the need for patterns of sustainable livelihoods.

- The process of inventing and restructuring the nation state in itself is not dangerous but what is dangerous is the manner in which forms of cultural politics and the issue of narrow identities promotes racism and other divides in opposition to globalisation.

Political Empowerment of women and Political Restructuring

There is no end state in which women suddenly realise that they are politically empowered to act in certain ways. Political empowerment is a process through which women are able to secure the right to participate in the exercise of political power through formal institutions such as local government structures, parliamentary processes and organisations to promote a movement for social transformation. Political empowerment helps to increase power and control of women over their own lives, the right to address structural inequalities and systemic issues, and influence wider decision making as a collective force in society.

There are various ways through which women are engaging in political restructuring and social transformation.

Empowerment through direct action

Women's organisations, public policy processes and projects move through certain stages in the empowerment process as they interact with forces of domination. These stages may be reflected in a progression from sensitisation to consciousness and then critical analyses and action leading to social transformation. There are many practical examples of this. Some include situations in South Africa, Latin America and in India.

Empowerment through building Grassroots Democracy

The other approach that is gaining ground is one based on developing reciprocal relations between the power of the state and the power of civil society through a process of building grassroots democracy as opposed to a formal democracy which protects the interests of those with economic power. How the state articulates with civil society and movements for change, which include women's movements can reflect new modes of democratisation. In this way organisations work to overcome the contradictions that are inherent in relationships of oppression by working in dialogue with women/poor women, to analyse their own oppressive conditions.

Empowerment through building a human rights culture

In some countries the constitutional and legal framework has changed and provides institutional mechanisms through which women are able to secure their rights. However, accessing rights, understanding what they imply and

ensuring that they are administered in a way that is a sensitive to race, class gender, age and other issues is critical. The flip side is that the legal framework legitimates certain rights it also makes others invisible.

Linked to the above is the concern that when women understand their rights and are able to assert these they are exposed to negative reactions from the powers that be. Reactions include the increase in institutional violence, they become subjected to forms of fundamentalism that pervade all areas of their lives and limit their freedom to voice their views, to associate, to engage in activity that will advance issues of gender justice.

Limits to Political Restructuring

At different moments in the transition process there are points of historical conjuncture and disjuncture. These points provide strategic challenges in the restructuring and empowerment process which can build women's capabilities and secure their rights to full social citizenship. The major challenges confronting development advocates within the gender field at the moment is how to ensure that the complex, differentiated and varied relationships women and organisations have with the state and civil society promote a recasting of the political sphere (public and private) and, a realignment in terms of movements and organisations, a restructuring and transformation of structures and systems that are oppressive, perpetuate national domination, discrimination and economic exploitation.

Notes

1   World Bank. The State in a Changing World. World development Report, 1997, World Bank, Washington DC 1997, Fig.1 p2

2   Kothari, S "Whose Independence? The social Impact of Economic Reform in India", (Journal of International affairs, Summer 1997)

3   Indian Express, 25 August 1995.

4   The Corner House Briefing

5   Dakova. V. Eastern Europe

6   Huq. S 1997

THE POLITICS OF PRACTICE AND THE PRACTICE OF POLITICS

Selvy Thiruchandran

Why are we here today? It is not to indulge in an intellectual exercise or a theoretical game play, neither for a discussion in feminism. We are here to talk and discuss what I would call the politics of practice and the practice of politics. We women do not still know the practice of politics and it's implications for us women. We still do not know also the practice of competitive politics. M· presentation today will try to answer the question wh women and why politics and how ? It is the feminists whc coined the phrase "Personal in Politics'. To politicize the personal of women, women need to enter politics in substantial numbers and with substantial issues, as democracy is sustained through meaningful participation and through a meaningful display of numbers.

Why don't women participate in politics is a question answered well in the recent research publications on women and politics. In short it is a sociological inquiry into the internalization of a culture that is imposed on women for centuries.

This paper was read at the Conference on Political Restructuring and Social Transformation, Feminist Perspectives from South Asia, organized by Development Alternations with Women for a New Era (DAWN) in Bangalore in August 1998.

One of the main reasons for the lack of participation of women in politics is based on a culture which has assigned to woman the charge of the domestic sphere and with it the domestic chores and related concerns. This denies woman the space and time in the "public" world. Placed in the backdrop of this tradition and culture women are reluctant to step into politics. Lack of time, and encouragement from relatives and society in general and for cultural, societal expectations, women keep away from politics (Thiruchandran, 1977 ;29).

Despite laws which give freedom to the woman to enter politics, she is prevented from doing so because support systems of the society in which she lives have not been provided for women in many countries. The Scandinavian countries are an exception.

> Due to the absence of a supportive system consisting of child-care facilities and flexible working hours, it has been extremely difficult for a mother with small children to be a politician. Mothers are often not able to control the allocation of time, while the hours of a politician are often unpredictable. (UN Study 1992:.37)

In a society which measures the woman's worth through "virtues" and "chastity" which she is expected to possess, politics can pose a threat to the woman, in that she can be subjected to character assassination. The woman is conditioned to prefer staying away from politics than be subjected to character assassination, which forfeits her right to legitimate, "acceptable" full membership in society.

Another reason for the lack of women's participation in politics is that politics in many countries and particularly in Sri Lanka has indeed become a dangerous game - so much so that with entry into politics there arises a constant, gripping fear for one's lives. Memories of violence amounting to murder and attempts at murder remain while the reality of po-

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litical violence is fresh and bleeding in the Sri Lankan context today.

Socially and economically many women have come out of the imposition of what their culture has placed on them, but to the practice of politics there are still stumbling blocks both psychologically and practically. Those blocks also have to be broken and broken with results. I am sorry my language usage of this presentation sounds like that of a politician, persuasive, and attempts at rhetoric towards a process of convincing you and others. Yes we have to be first convinced to convince others.

But mine is not an empty prattling with rhetoric without reason. I have many reasons and let me elaborate on them.

My first argument from which springs the other is that women are socially and economically visible but politically invisible with drastic consequences and that has to be corrected. Statistics overwhelmingly provides us with examples of non - participation and therefore selections and elections of women into politics. There is a historical subordination of women and extra efforts have to be devoted to equalize opportunities, to struggle against injustice and deeply rooted discriminatory practices and exclusion of women from politics. What are our unresolved problems now in quality and quantity? We did politicize our issues but we have not politicized our issues through politics. Our politicizing is social politicizing mostly. The agenda for change in social conditions will not change automatically the whole spectrum of gender issues and gender relations. How many men have been conscientised to become "Feminists" by the historical feminist movements? Discrimination against women is endemic throughout the system, from the way in which rights and laws are conceptualised, formulated, applied

and regulated. We have been researching documenting, petitioning, drafting, lobbying, for twenty years, from Mexico to Copenhagen , to Nairobi to Beijing and beyond. But we have been doing very little of legislating , far less in proportion to our tremendous problems and the success has been far less across space and time. How many more years do we have to wait on the goodwill of the few expecting them to be conscientised towards women's issue and gender relations? Dependent we have to be on men - because they are in a majority in politics. If we women do not make political interventions in the legislative, executive, judicial bodies we have to wait indefinitely.

Laws relating to day care centres, to abortion, to rape to divorce and maintenance, sexual harassment and domestic violence and women's health have seen a process of trivialisation in the hands of men law makers who are in a majority. I do not have to elaborate the hazardous historical path we women have travelled to get some of our grievances redressed. The plight of labouring women in the Tea Plantations in Sri Lanka is a case in point of a historic impotence. It is not simply a case of capitalist exploitation - but it has embedded gender implications. Even if capitalist women on the opposite camp may obstruct the laws relating to improving the conditions of the women workers, I am sure women across party politics in the opposition will vote for issues such as for day care centres, laws relating to divorce and maintenance, and laws relating to rape, sexual harassment and domestic violence. Domestic violence and sexual harassment are hardly acknowledged by men as crimes. They are within a realm of silence and concealment and often invisible. The victims are often blamed. There is a commonality among women of all classes, ethnicity and other social groups -on a converging point of common experiences. Women in the trade unions are not involved politically and invisible in the party struc-

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tures. Despite the fact that Sri Lanka produced the first prime- minister and the first executive president , Sri Lanka over the years has displayed a lack of women's participation in politics. Women in present day politics are very few and their involvement in politics low. This is revealed by the table given below.

Legislative body	Total	No. of women	%
Parliament	225	11	4.8
Municipal Council	209	6	2.8
Urban Council	297	7	2.3
Pradeshiya Sabha	2,882	34	1.1

(Elections Department)

In the year 1994 the total number of parliamentarians were 225 out of which women were a mere eleven in number (CENWOR, 1995). The Cat's Eye column of the Island, 30/3/97 states that in the 1931 - 36 State Council there were 5% women and that the figure remains the same at all subsequent elections up to 1994.

Countries have adopted special policies to ensure fuller and greater participation of women in the country. Two broad mechanisms used to increase levels of female participation in politics are the system of **reserved seats** and **quota or target setting**. Quotas or targets are often established by political parties themselves. Under this policy a certain percentage of all candidates for a position or selection have to come from a certain group (have women), either as a minimum or as a range within which that group should fall.

The second mechanism of reservation is that reserved seats are allocated for a particular group which is normally under- represented. Only candidates belonging to this group

can contest these seats (UN Study, 1992). Where women have been under - represented countries such as **Pakistan** (20 of the 237 seats), the **United Republic of Tanzania** (15 of the 244 seats in the National Assembly) **Bangladesh** (30 of the 330 seats) and **Egypt** (31 of the 360 seats) have adopted the system of reserved seats to ensure leadership of women.

There are many among us who have reservations about the quota system. But there also arguments for the quota system. Affirmative action and positive discrimination have been put in to political practice as political experiments with beneficial results. As an interim measure one can certainly try out this system. Women have to be made to get into the water of politics to learn to swim. They are an under-represented and politically a handicapped group-with a historic subordination, and that is why it is essential to consider introducing the quota system as an interim measure as a remedial action. We, in Sri Lanka have accepted the youth quota proposed by the youth commission. The other reason which weighs heavily for the quota system is the positive experience of other countries.

The quota system is felt to be very effective in introducing and encouraging women into politics. A UN study finds that the quota setting in Scandinavian countries has been very successful. While India's move in putting forward the consideration of a bill reserving one third of seats in legislative bodies for women is a source of encouragement, the shelving of a decision on the issue owing to protests by a few parliamentarians comes as a disappointment. The quota system for women was initiated by the United Nations, in 1995, the UN Economic and Social Council endorsed a target of 30% for women at all levels of decision making. In the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa has argued for a 30% quota on nominations to the legislature. Sweden's

target is a minimum of 40% of all posts to the "less represented gender." In U.K. the labour party has set up a Working Committee on Parliamentary Selection which would have as its sole aim the development to promote representation of women. The quota system thus through its mode of ensuring seats for women in the legislature seeks to redress a situation where women's participation in politics remains low and stagnant through time.

Margareta Cordero called this of the problem "Participatory Poverty." An example of electorate and political party education was the formulation of a programme called "The Programme of Minimo Feminist - PMF/90 -minimum feminist programme—by the Researchers for Feminist Action in the Dominican Republic in 1990. Among its most notable achievements was the inclusion of its proposals on the platforms of most of the political parties.

Vasanth and Kalpana Kannabiran in their article titled "From Social Action to Political Action: Women and the 81st Amendment (Economic and Political Weekly, February 1st, 1997) reveal this about India, where even the miniscule number of women in politics have been able to stride forward and "wrest a voice for themselves." The article also identifies the strength of the underprivileged masses of women who influence these women politicians and spur these women politicians to speak out. Masses of underprivileged women have a far more important political presence that overruns and refuses to be contained by the vote bank politics of mainstream parties..... These women, the underprivileged have actually been able to force accountability on women in politics irrespective of and a in shorter time span than their male counterparts.

There are arguments against the quota system:

1) *It has been argued that women who are culturally and socially conditioned to be Secondary citizens, if introduced into politics would emerge as mere "puppets on strings" manipulated by the men in the game of politics.*

2) *It has also been argued that reservations for women becomes an artificially created participation, not based on their "innate belief in their equal rights but grounded in paternalism" which once again reinforces the women's image in the political arena as a "handicapped group" entitled to concessions.*

3) *Another reason put forward against reservations is that its implementation increases the number of relatives into the legislature, where mothers, sisters, wives and daughters figure in high proportions. But experience has taught that these are merely a few of the initial handicaps and that with the second generation of politics it disappears.*

My second argument begins by dismissing some assumptions and re-instating another. There is an assumption nay an argument that women in politics may make a difference. Women by nature are care-givers, intuitive, less competitive — the so called feminine attributes associated with "women's nature " have been used as an argument to say that feminism will cleanse politics which is dirty and corrupt. I do not for a moment subscribe to this "theory." In fact the so called stereotypical femininity which is used to justify exclusion and marginalisation is now recalled as being positive. The critique of an authoritarian and hierarchical system of organization identified with a patriarchal order has now become the favourable re-evaluation of the so called feminine qualities. In short feminize politics by entering into politics is the call for feminist women. There is a danger I feel

strongly that such stereotypical reestablishment may defeat our purpose for an argument to re-emerge that feminist are less rational, less instrumental ,less assertive, therefore not fit for politics for which one has to be rational assertive and instrumental. Besides we have a history where Indira Gandhi, Imelda Marcos, Margaret Thatcher, and Jayalalitha have proved as authoritarian leaders who seldom tolerated oppositional views and could equally be corrupt.

But one factor that could be said of women and the argument that I want to reinstate is about the question of violence. Both quantitatively, that is in numbers and qualitatively that is in its levels kinds and manners-feminists are less violent. In Sri Lanka today violence-both political and social is the major problem. In fact, the most obnoxious one, the most intimidating phenomenon for our socio-political ethos. Will the women's entry in numbers change this scenario?

My answer is yes it will change the situation substantially. Mine is not a biologically determined argument, which says there is something in the nature of women to be less violent. It is rather due to the fact women are socialized into a phenomenon of a victim hood and therefore have been receivers of violence both verbally and physically and not perpetrators of violence Both quantitatively and qualitatively the picture is different.

The Praxis of the Achievement – and the Modus Operandi:

We have established women as a category- and there is no problem of definition here. Women cannot said to be belonging to a class category but as a gender category it has its commonalties. Women share nationally and internationally a common pattern of discrimination, exploitation, oppression and marginalisation. These words are no jargons but concepts with special political meanings. When this category forms more than fifty percent of the electorate with genuine grievances there is a need to have political representation of this category proportionately in the legislative bodies. Democracy and good governance demand that women be equally represented at the decision making levels both on the argument of rationality and human rights. This is an argument for engendered democracy. Our project today in this historical juncture is to work towards this and enthrone democracy. We have statistics which have proved beyond doubt our under-representation. We have to work at various levels and this is where this conference should lead us.

We have to work at the electorate level towards voter education, at the party level we have to lobby the party leaders and with women's wing who are presently actively attending rallies's and demonstrations we have to make interventions to raise their consciousness towards agency.

Since women's entry into politics would be definitely enriched and enhanced through their participation at the party level and local council levels - the reservation system should be initiated in a significant measure at party levels. It is only then that there will be wider participation of women from a wider spectrum of society which would cut across divisive factors such as class and caste. This would also provide the necessary experience and expertise for women who would gain higher positions in the political ladder at higher and greater decision making levels.

Even while the world societies move towards greater participation of women in politics, one is compelled to wonder why just 30% - 40% percent seats are reserved for the women. Considering the fact that women and men constitute equal proportions in society, "why not 50%" is a legitimate

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question. While women may not initially display political acumen, owing to the disadvantaged positions they have held in society through the ages, experience will gradually teach them to participate at equal or better levels in politics.

The experience of the Scandinavian countries shows that women accent issues such as child care, schooling and the organisation of leisure, according to a study done in a suburban area near Stockholm where women's participation increased dramatically in the 80's. Women it is said used simpler, more concrete language, which made political debates more accessible to the general public. It also brought about acknowledgement by the male representatives of their family obligations. (UN Study, 1992:108)

Given the fact that the participation of women in politics needs to be full and equal, it is the obligation of political parties and rural governing bodies, which could be considered a rich source of recruitment and training, to give training and opportunities for women within the party which would provide them with training and resources for an active political career. In view of the international situation where affirmative action towards women's political participation is guaranteed constitutionally as a first step towards this the political parties are urged to nominate 50% of women as their candidates for parliamentary election.

The promotion of this task/cause falls upon the broader network of women's groups in South Asia.

A Practical Dilemma-

I still have a pertinent question, perhaps we can jointly answer that .We take it that a political party has in its manifesto to a very progressive agenda for gender issues but with very reactionary politics of ethnic chauvinism. How does one vote? Being a socialist and an internationalist and a feminist ideologically one can not subscribe to its overall policy shown on the manifesto. Even post- modernism which opts for little or marginal wisdom as against grand narratives can not help one in this —Yes politicians have to change and that is the peril of democracy. Being slow and delayed in the operationalisation of good governance is the peril of democracy one has to put up with. Does forming a feminist party help? Ireland's women's coalition has of late played a very effective role in the peace agenda. There is also an all women's political party formed in Uttra Pradesh in India.

With this I stop speculatively !.

Strategies that Need to be Broadbased and Implemented.

1) To raise consciousness at all levels to make women realize the importance of female political leadership, to make interventions at policy planning levels. There is so much anomie and apathy among women who are able and efficient at the social level.

2) To convince women's wings in political parties and the leadership of the political parties to enlist women candidates to seek elections both at local government and National levels with gender sensitive manifestos.

3) To do the same at Trade Union Levels.

4) To take steps to mobilise women and introduce gen der sensitivity at the level of civil society in the electorate by creating a component of "raising the political consciousness on gender issues" into our gender sensitizing programmes.

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WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION CONSTRAINTS AND FUTURE STRATEGIES

Durga Ghimire

Women's participation in every level of decision making is an essential prerequisite for the establishment of equality, development and peace. Women constitute 50% of the total population of the world, yet their participation in the various levels of decision making is negligible. The political realm is monopolised by men all over the world. In many countries women have played a very important role in the independence movements for democracy, but their participation in the various spheres of public life has continued to remain minimal in comparison to their male counterparts.

The political participation of women in the South Asian region is not very encouraging. In many countries of South Asia special provisions have been made to increase women's political participation, yet the percentage of women in the higher levels of the political power structure has not risen. There are various factors that have discouraged women from taking an active part in politics.

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The main reasons are due to the amount of violence, corruption and manipulations that are present. Many women who have excellent leadership qualities are unwilling to participate in politics because of these factors. It is therefore essential to make politics clean so that the flow of women into the political arena is increased.

Political History and Women's Political Participation in Nepal

For a century of isolation between 1850-1950, a feudal family - the Ranas, who called themselves Kings, ruled Nepal. The Ranas ruled in Nepal for 104 years, during which time the people were deprived of fundamental rights. In 1950, a movement jointly involving the people of Nepal and the King overthrew the autocratic rule of the Ranas. During this historical mass movement the women of Nepal played significant roles. They not only participated in demonstrations but also raised the awareness of the people through radio programmes and establishing women's organisations to motivate women. Many female leaders worked underground and some of them were arrested for distributing pamphlets. Even at the time of autocratic rule female leaders worked hard establishing schools, demanding voting rights for women and mobilising women through organisations with an objective of fighting against the Rana rule. After the political change of 1951, when democracy was established, women's organisations were influenced by party politics. Women were represented in the National Level election of 1958. One woman was elected into parliament and several were nominated into the National Assembly. But in 1960 his Majesty the King banned the parliamentary system of government and the party-less autocratic Panchayat System was established. Women activists protested hard against this Royal proclamation which was undemocratic. A few women activists were jailed for more than two years due to their views and actions.

For more than thirty years there was no party system but women worked underground mobilising other women. Though there were women's organisations established by the government under the Panchayat system, they were not able to mobilise large numbers of women. Constitutional provisions to involve women at the grassroots level were made but the number of women in parliament was very limited during this period.

In 1989 there was mass movement for the restoration of democracy. Many female leaders were jailed. The participation of Nepalese women for the restoration of democracy is a milestone in the history of popular mass movement. Women from various political parties, social workers, NGO activists and students leaders all contributed greatly to the success of this movement. After the restoration of democracy a new constitution of Nepal was promulgated which provided women with equal political rights. The provision formulated states that women can vote, compete in local and national elections, involve themselves in political parties and support and adapt any political ideology. The constitution also states that all political parties must have at least 5% female candidates for the house of representative. Three seats must also be reserved for women in the upper house of parliament.

The new ordinance act of 1997 made another provision to increase the participation of women at a local level. This act states that one seat must be reserved for women in each ward of the Village Development Committee. Due to this compulsory provision about 40,000 female candidates were elected in the local level election of 1997. This provision forced all political parties to support a female candidate and encouraged women to become involved. Women's political

participation at a grassroots level has clearly increased but it is too early to say whether female politicians will be able to raise women's issues strongly and if any positive changes to the lives of women will result.

The number of women involved with politics on a National level is negligible. The following tables show the number of male and female candidates who contested and were elected in the election of 1991: -

Candidates Contested

	National	%	District	%	Village	%
Male	1264	94	2112	99.7	101,546	99.1
Female	81	6.6	7	0.3	956	0.9
Total	1345	-	2119	- 1	02502	-

Candidates Elected

	National	%	District	%	Village	%
Male	197	96.1	1067	99.4	44,421	99.5
Female	8	3.9	7	0.6	241	0.5
Total	205	-	1074	-	44,662	-

These tables clearly indicate that female politicians in the National Legislative only made up 3.9% of the total number. In the National Assembly, the upper house of Parliament, three out of sixty members were female. Therefore 4.9% of the total number of members of Parliament were female in 1991. When this figure is compared with the percentage of females in Parliament in 1986 (5.7%) it is clear to see that a decreasing trend in female participation is present. This trend is further confirmed by the mid-term poll of 1994 when the number of women elected was only seven.

Participation in village and town development committees is also very low. according to the election commission report of 1992 the number of candidates in the Village Development Committee (VDC) were 102,502 out of which the number of women candidates were 956 which is 0.9%. The number elected were 241 which is 0.55% out of 44,662 members.

Even the constitutional provision for integrating women into the various levels of the political power structure has failed to increase women's participation. The decreasing trend has not only been seen in Nepal but in many countries of the world. Women's movements have been able to generate awareness and encourage women to fight for their rights but still few women are taking up active roles in the political scene.

Many countries of South Asia except Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives have produced female Prime Ministers and Presidents, yet even these successful examples have failed to encourage women to participate in politics. Women have the legal rights and the ability to be excellent politicians, what is stopping them?

Women's participation in the government administration

The participation of women in the various levels of government administration is very discouraging. No women currently hold high level decision making positions in the constitutional bodies. There have been instances of women occupying middle level decision making positions but their numbers are negligible. No women have been nominated as members of the National Planning Commission and there was only one woman working in the diplomatic service as an ambassador and she retired in 1992 after 30 years of service.

The scene is no different in district administrative and judiciary sectors. Only two female Chief District Officers (CDO) have ever been appointed out of 75 CDO's in the country. There has never been a female Supreme Court judge and few female lawyers are currently working in Nepal.

In 1983 the total number of women engaged in the civil services was 4.2%. In 1992 only 5% of the total civil servants were women. This clearly indicates that within ten years the total increase in the number of female civil servants was less than one percent. The majority of these women occupy low-level positions.

After the restoration of democracy, a high level administrative reform commission was set up to advise the government on administrative reforms but nothing has been mentioned in the report about the ways and means of enhancing and promoting the participation of women. It has made two important recommendations for women: 60 days maternity leave, provision of funeral leave, and the appointment of husbands and wives into the same positions as far as possible.

The latest figures of government service do not indicate much improvement to women's employment status. The percentage of female officials has never exceeded 5%, even after the restoration of democracy. The technical professions, however, have seen a considerable increase in the number of female employees. The percentage of women in the health profession is 50%, although only 2% of these are at an official level. Likewise, the number of women in the teaching profession has risen.

Realising the importance of women's participation in the process of development the government of Nepal has pronounced various policies in the eighth five-year plan (1992-1997). The following policies were proposed to enhance women's participation:

1) The discriminatory laws related to women should be reviewed.

2) The participation of women in agricultural training should be increased.

3) Special provisions should be made to increase the participation of girls in primary and secondary education.

4) Technologies should be designed to reduce drudgery.

5) An appropriate organisational structure will be created to increase the political participation of women.

6) Provision should be made for credit facilities for women.

7) Women's participation in the various levels of decision making will be facilitated.

8) Women's participation in forest and social conservation should be encouraged.

9) Expansion of family planning, maternal and child-care services should be carried out.

10) Programmes for credit for women will be expanded in various parts of the country.

All these provisions have, so far, not increased the participation of women in politics.

Constraints

Patriarchal Values and Norms

The main reason for low political participation of women in politics is the patriarchal structure of society. According to our tradition and culture the participation of women in politics is generally not accepted role. The patriarchal values have subjugated and distempered women.

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The majority of people in South Asia, both male and female generally expect that the women's role is in the home. Women are considered stupid and ignorant when it comes to matters of any real importance. When they are constantly being told that they are not intelligent enough to participate in politics it is no wonder that they do not believe in themselves. Women are encouraged to believe that politics is much too complicated for them to understand and so it is best left to men. They believe that women should stay at home cooking and cleaning and having children. Women who do have a slight inclination to achieve a career might be encouraged to be a nurse, midwife or school teacher as these are jobs considered suitable for women.

Lack of Education and Awareness

We have already seen that the literacy rate of women is considerably lower than that of men. Boys are encouraged to attend school whereas girls are of more use in the home. This denial of a basic education means that the majority of women do not realise that they are not receiving their full rights. It is difficult to teach them when they cannot read and difficult for them to stand up for themselves when they cannot write.

Family Responsibilities

The majority of women are not interested in politics because they are suffering from multiple burdens which bar them from political participation. The overwhelming family responsibilities women face ranging from household chores to income generating activities, deprive them of the opportunity to work actively in politics. In many countries of South Asia, burden and responsibilities of the family fall on women rather than on their male counterparts.

Discriminatory Law

The main challenge to integrate women in the various levels of political participation is the discriminatory laws related to women. Both men and women must be equal before the law. In some countries of our region, there are discriminatory laws existing with regards to property rights, divorce, nationality, and marriage. Without changing the discriminatory laws it will be impossible to increase women's participation in the various levels of power structure.

Economic Dependency

Funds are required in order to embark upon a political career. The majority of women are financially dependent upon their husbands or fathers. Women without money do not have the freedom to make their own decisions and act as they wish. There is a saying that one who holds the purse, holds the power. A women who wants to become involved in politics but has no funds must have the financial support of her family. This can be difficult to obtain because of cultural beliefs.

In many countries in South Asia, the majority of women are deprived of economic rights including the right to inherit property, which discourages them from taking part in political activities. Although women play a major role in the national economy, their contribution has never been realised and counted for. The rural women's contribution of 18 hours a day in maintaining their family and economy can not be ignored. Women should be provided with equal economic rights along with equal human rights.

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Lack of Institutional Support

Though there are many institutions established for the overall development of women there is a lack of institutional mechanism that can encourage and support women to take part in elections. There are many women's organisations related to different political parties but they have not been able to provide moral and financial support to women who are interested in politics.

Criminalization

Criminal activities in politics have increased rapidly in recent years. Mafia, money, manipulation and muscle power have played dominant roles in South Asian politics. Because of this scenario it is very difficult to motivate and encourage women to come forward and take part in this "dirty game". Women feel that it is not their territory- that men are better players than they are. This view is simply not true. In addition, increasing the numbers of women in politics has the potential to create a more honest and fair political sphere.

Lack of Family Support

Family support can either prevent or promote women from participating in politics. Women who come from families with a strong political history will often be encouraged to continue the work of past relatives. Women generally need to receive permission from their husbands or fathers in order to embark on a political career. Without this permission and support it would be very difficult for a women to become a successful politician. This is not only because of the financial help that is so often required, but also for moral encouragement.

Women are expected to be a responsible daughter, affectionate mother and disciplined wife in the home. This connotation has discouraged women from taking part in politics. Women who are married and trying to raise children while keeping a home will find it almost impossible to work full time as well. This problem is enhanced in a country like Nepal because of the large family sizes that put additional burdens on women. To participate in politics women often find that they must either be less committed to their families and homes or put marriage and married life on hold until they have finished their political careers.

Lack of mobility

The role which all women, including female politicians, face in their home further reduces their mobility. Women who want to get in to the political field find it difficult to give time to their constituency when they have limited mobility. This can become a great hindrance to women who want to enter the political arena.

Future Strategies

In order to encourage more women to participate in politics the following activities have been formulated:

Change in Traditional Beliefs and the Values System

The belief that women are weak, must be changed. These types of beliefs are deeply rooted in our society. The main task is to change the traditional beliefs of people through positive promotion of the values of women. Awareness raising programmes on women's equality must reach the entire country.

Women Leadership Training

Leadership training programmes for women would promote their confidence and teach them that they are capable of occupying political positions. The public relations and management skills of women could also be developed in these programmes. Training would encourage them to take part in politics as well as raising the political consciousness of women.

Support from the Political Parties

The role of the political parties is very important for increasing women's political participation. It has been observed that the political parties are not encouraging women. All the political parties should reserve at least 30-40% of their positions for women in all parts of the party hierarchy, especially at the decision making level. Women's issues and concerns should be clearly incorporated in the manifesto of the political parties.

There is also a need to convince political parties not to use women as their vote bank but to involve them in every level of the power structure. Political parties must recognise women as a political constituency.

Equal Educational Opportunities

In order to enhance women's political participation, there is a great need for equal socialisation for both boys and girls from early childhood through formal and informal education. Awareness raising programs and government incentives would encourage parents to send their daughters to school. Without education, women and girls will remain voiceless in a cycle of poverty, ignorance and despair.

Combat Discriminatory Laws

All of the discriminatory laws related to women should be reviewed and changed to support women's empowerment. Women's political participation must be seen as an overall strategy to the empowerment of women, through repealing discriminatory laws.

Increase in Family Support System

There is a great need to increase the sharing of roles and responsibilities within the family. A media campaign that emphasises gender equality and non-stereotyped gender roles will increase women's participation in the public sphere.

Change in the Negative role of the Media

In many countries of South Asia the media has played a negative role by enforcing harmful stereotypes of women. There is a great need to change the attitude of the media through various gender sensitising training programmes. The message that women's rights are human rights should reach all segments of society.

Economic Empowerment

Women must be given the opportunity to become economically independent so that they are able to make their own decisions without needing the permission of their husbands or fathers. There is a great need to change all the discriminatory laws related to women.

Awareness Raising Programmes

There is a definite need to raise awareness throughout the country to the ability and potential of female politicians.

As well as encouraging women to come forward as political candidates, people must be encouraged to vote for female politicians. The programmes must try to change the concept that politics is a "dirty game" that is not suitable for women. Seminars, orientation training, workshops and mass media campaigns should be conducted to raise the political consciousness of women.

Political Reform

There is a great need for political reform. Clean elections need to be brought about along with an election system that is favourable for women's political empowerment.

Increase the number of seats reserved for women

The existing constitutional provision related to women's politics is very limited. More seats should be reserved for women at all levels of the political power structure, not only at the higher level.

Support from Women's Pressure groups

Pressure groups and support groups should be formed throughout the country to work as lobbying groups in conjunction with political parties. Their aims should be to increase the political participation of women at various levels of the power structure and to support women eager to take part in politics.

Women should organise and establish networks at different levels to influence the decision making process. There is a great need to increase solidarity among women's groups for the cause of women

Institutional Mechanism to Support Women

There is a great need for a strong institutional mechanism to develop self-confidence and self-esteem among women and also to increase participation of women in politics. The objective of this type of institution is to provide financial and moral support to women who are interested to come forward in politics.

Conclusion

It will be impossible to create any change to policies without increasing the representation of women in the various levels of the political power structure. Women need to learn about politics, its impacts and its positive consequences. They must understand the importance of their vote. Everyone must realise that women are essential parts of a political system that is free from corruption and exploitation. The voices of women strengthen democracy and will lead to a peaceful, developed and equal society. Political parties should encourage more women to enter into politics. They should not be used only as votes but to help bring about change to the present political structure.

It has been observed that there is a great need for electoral reform. This reform is designed to place measures on expenditure, control violence, ensure voter registration and fair canvassing of votes.

There is a great need to reserve seats for women to help curb the vast difference between the number of males and females holding political power. In India, according to the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, one third of the seats in all local bodies are reserved for women. Likewise, in Bangladesh, 10% of the seats in the National Parliament are reserved for women. This reservation of seats has really in-

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creased political participation of women, especially the reservation at a local level in India. Nepal has increased the participation of women at the grassroots level. There is a great need to provide leadership training to women. This will not only encourage women to make decisions but it will also develop their self-confidence.

The policy pronouncements and the lip service to increase women's participation have not really changed the various levels of the power structure. There is an enormous need for an institutional mechanism, which will promote women's participation in the process of development.

STATEMENT 1

An Appeal to the Government And the LTTE

For more than a decade the Sri Lankan people have paid an enormous price for not being able to solve their ethnic conflict. The ethnic problem has taken various forms, the devolution package being its latest political manifesta-tion while war for peace is its military strategy. A considerable number of people have been killed, over thousands have been injured and maimed for life having lost their limbs and eyes. Many more are bereaved, left widowed and orphaned and unemployed. People have become refugees in their own country having been forced to abandon their habitat. In political parlance they are the dislocated. People have been terrorized by the violence and have left the country. The economy is paralyzed. Money needed for our welfare, education, health services, infra-structural development are being wasted on the war, turning our citizens into war victims. The morale and ethos of our existence of our culture and civilization have come to be devalued. Insecurity and continued violence have traumatized children, women and men.

Ours is turning into a sick nation, where violence and counter violence have become our only language in dealing with what originally developed as a language issue.

As people, citizens and women of this country, as interested in peace and reconciliation, we believe that we have to take into account the reality of our political situation.

1. There is no military solution to our conflict. The Sri Lankan conflict needs to be addressed politically.

2. Compromise is essential.

3. Wrongs have been committed on all sides and this needs to be acknowledged.

4. We also need to acknowledge the corrosive lack of trust we have in each other at all levels.

5. Unresolved issues of justice continue to aggravate our divisions.

6. Peace requires structures for future government within Sri Lanka with links to the rest of the island; the majority of people from both traditions must give their consent to these structures If they are to take responsibility for them.

7. Healing requires that we take our share of responsibility for those things which damage our relationships.

8. The inclusion of all as the goal of genuine peace will best be served by inclusive negotiation.

9. A genuine peace process involves all of us.

10. Risk cannot be avoided in moving forward.

11. There will be different stages on the journey towards a lasting peace; dealing with these stages will require patience and a long-term commitment to the process.

12. Agreeing structures as part of a political settlement is only the beginning of a much longer process of healing.

We

❑ need to act, with wisdom and courage to bring sanity into our partly disintegrating polity - our existence has to be made meaningful. Our collective convenience should now lead us into political advancement towards restoring security and peace.

❑ appeal to both the government and the LTTE to start negotiations. In all military and liberation struggles there is a need to review and revise strategies. There is a social aspect which made immediate attention in the present political military strategies. It is time to take stock of the popular will. The will of the civil society which should become the cornerstone of any political strategies.

❑ do realize that as our history's unpleasant legacy there is mutual suspicion in the minds of the protoganists of the war. We do know that with suspicion there is no going forward. Therefore we appeal to you again that a third party — a third party acceptable to you both. A third party which both of you consider as honourable and trustworthy, a third party which is experienced in the knowledge of dealing with mutually antagonistic and suspicious groups can be selected.

❑ appeal to you that there is an urgency. There is an immediate need and there is a popular. We need to work for the people's voice that you should take into consideration. Peace with dignity through a process of negotiation on a dual parity of status of the parties in conflict through a third party.

Through this statement we are also appealing to all those concerned citizens, members of the civil society, voluntary organizations, N.G.O.'s , religious bodies and all those who want an end to the war, to mobilize logistics to stage a collective front with a collective conscience.

STATEMENT 11

Women's Coalition for Peace calls for collective problem-solving

At a time when regions in the world from Ireland to the Middle East are seeking peace, Sri Lanka continues to descend deeper into a war that is no longer justifiable be any stretch of the imagination. The Sri Lankan people are well aware that no political party or militant group can solve the conflict alone. It is therefore time that the leaders of the country work towards a peaceful solution of the conflict which is exacting an enormous cost in both human and economic terms and is brutalising our society.

Excluding the loss of lives on both sides incurred in the latest fighting at Kilinochchi and Mankulam, the official estimate is that the war in Sri Lanka has killed over 60,000.

The women's Coalition for Peace, comprising women of all communities who are against the carnage and senseless destruction, call upon:

1. The people's Alliance Government and the Opposition to build an atmosphere of cooperation towards collective problem solving, and to restore civility to national politics.

2. The Government and the Opposition to arrive at a consensus on Constitutional reforms aimed at satisfying the democratic and peaceful aspirations of all Sri Lankans.

3. The Government and the LTTE to take steps towards

4. The Government and the Opposition to work together to seek third party facilitation to promote negotiations between the parties and all other political groups and interests concerned with the conflict.

5. The LTTE to take into consideration the immense loss of life, livelihood, displacement and insecurity of the Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim communities in the country and the aspirations for peace expressed by all people living in the conflict areas, and to begin a process towards the re-commencement of the peace talks.

Signed:

Darini Rajasingham-Senanayake, Malathi de Alwis, Radhika Coomaraswamy, Kumudini Samuel, Sepali Kottegoda, Kumari Jayawardena, Nimalka Fernando, Sunila Abeysekera, Yasmin Tambiah, Kishali Pinto Jayawardene, Shafinaz Hassandeen, Annathai Abeysekera, Pearl Stevens, Deepika Udagama, Selvy Thiruchandran, Bernadeen Silva, Ameena Hussein, Lisa M. Kois, Rani Savarimuttu.

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STATEMENT 111

For a Nuclear Weapon-Free 21st Century Statement issued at World Conference against A & H Bombs August, 1998.

☐ With the 21ˢᵗ century just around the corner, the world has entered an extremely critical phase in opening a new era set free of the menace of nuclear arms. The current new situation created by successive nuclear tests by India and Pakistan has elicited deep concern among the peoples of the world. Now, strengthened actions are called for to accomplish a world without nuclear weapons.

☐ The nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan, whatever reasons these two governments may find, clearly run counter to solving conflicts by peaceful means, and aggravate the nuclear arms race and increase a danger of nuclear war. At the same time, contradiction and bankruptcy of the policy of the nuclear weapons states to condemn the nuclear arms development of other states while trying to maintain their privilege of development and possession of nuclear weapons, have now become clearer than ever. Unless we change the situation to abolish nuclear weapons immediately, we cannot fundamentally remove the present danger we face today. Voices of the people calling for that effort are now rapidly growing and expanding throughout the world.

☐ During the recent years, based on the proposals made by the Non-aligned nations, resolutions demanding the time-bound abolition of nuclear weapons have been adopted many times by the United National General Assembly. In the wake of the recent nuclear tests, foreign ministers of 8 non-nuclear states issued a joint declaration addressed to the governments of the nuclear weapons states as well as those with capability to develop nuclear weapons, urging them to make "a clear commitment to the speedy, final and total elimination of their nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons capability". The resolution of the European Parliament also has called for a commitment to be made by the nuclear weapons states for immediate abolition of nuclear weapons.

☐ Recent opinion polls in the U.K., Canada and Germany showed that an overwhelming majority of the public demand the abolition. In India and Pakistan, criticism is growing against nuclear weapons as a cause of increased regional tension and pressure on people's living. In the U.S.A., the most powerful nuclear weapons state, people of many different fields, such as religionists, researchers involved in nuclear development and journalists, following the former generals and military officials, are raising their voices against the nuclear policy of their own government. Against the backdrop of the shift in public opinion, a draft resolution was submitted to the U.S. Congress, which stated, "the only security from threat of nuclear weapons is their elimination", and called for the start of negotiations for this purpose.

☐ In achieving this historic task, the responsibility of the nuclear weapon states is heavy, especially that of the

U.S., whose deterrence policy has been the biggest obstacle. The U.S. has repeated subcritical nuclear tests and promoted the development and deployment of new nuclear weapons. Last autumn, it also decided on the new nuclear policy, which included the possible use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states on the pretext of preventing the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. And it has taken dangerous military actions against Iraq, with the use of nuclear proliferation is totally unacceptable. We believe that such dangerous policy of nuclear monopoly is the decisive factor of the inherent contradiction of the NPT regime that has worked to perpetuate the inequality and unfairness between the nuclear weapons states and non-nuclear states, and is providing an incentive for acquisition of nuclear arms.

☐ We urge the governments of nuclear weapons states to decide without delay to eliminate nuclear weapons and to start international consultation to eliminate them within a fixed time-frame. We will demand that the nuclear weapons states immediately stop all kind of nuclear tests and nuclear weapons development, and declare non-use of nuclear arms against non-nuclear states.

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