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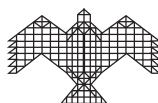
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“The problems of knowledge are central to feminist theorizing, which has sought to destabilize androcentric, mainstream thinking in the humanities and in the social and natural sciences.¹”

The feminist agenda raises questions on what constitutes knowledge and how the disciplinary divisions are created. This questioning creates a “politics of disturbance”². It unsettles the given and starts to “plough up inherited turfs without planting the same old seeds in the field.”³

*T*he story of women's reasoning is a story of unpeeling the layers in which inequality is embedded, and addressing the many faces of difference, the strategies to be employed and structures that are needed for removing it, - from local to global. It outlines the legal, political, social, cultural, economic, and ethical elements that come into play in the quest for equality. It points to the

enemies of the idea as indeed Mill pointed to where the threats to liberty come from.⁴

Making the invisible visible, peeling the layers of the onion seemed to be the process, and it is in this process that the “other” domains gained. In other words revealing of the excluded or the invisible was a method, a process that also revealed other invisible facts or phenomena, and enabled new dimensions and new lights

¹ Helen E Longino, “Feminist Standpoint Theory and the Problems of Knowledge”, *Signs*. Autumn 1993, Volume 19 No. 1, pp 201-212

² William Connolly, “Democracy and Territory” in M Ringrose and A.J. Lerner (eds) *reimagining the nation* (Open University Press 1993) 61

³ Christine Sylvester, (1998), “Homeless in International Relations? “Women’s” Place in Canonical Texts and in Feminist Reimaginings,” in Anne Phillips, ed., *Feminism and Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press,:44-66

⁴ Mill J. S., 1859, “On Liberty”

to be thrown on old or dark spots. This broader enlightenment is where the knowledge flew into the modernization theories, challenging them, deconstructing and reconstructing them apart from obstructing them.⁵

Another key aspect and purpose of women's struggle is against theorems of power, embedded hierarchies legitimized often through invoking culture, in archaic language.

Women's engagement with development provided ideas for strategy and policy, as well as pulled development out of conventional paths. In landing just development, there has been a value added. Much of the contribution of the partnership has been on the "how", whether it is the strategies of using power or revealing effective transformation at the grassroots level, or measuring value: the exposition has been on method. A whole range of issues that make up what is called measurement, qualitative, quantitative, has been enriched. Categories such as "private" and "public" space, "formal" and informal "participation", traditional division of the

labour force, the location of "inequality" have been influenced if not challenged.

I hope in this paper to link two independent streams of work, - one stream, some of the gleanings from what is called women studies, but is basically further investigations in the social sciences and the second stream is the findings during research for a book, "Women, Development and the UN, A 60 year quest for equality and Justice"⁶, - which was part of a project recording the history of ideas that went into the UN over 60 years.⁷

Women through the articulation of their lived experience challenge the basis of given knowledge, phenomena, and their interpretation in theory. They have expanded concepts, deconstructed and reconstructed the principles of various disciplines and offered new ways of doing things effectively. But their contribution to thought and thereby the methodology or practice, is ignored, whether it is in the immediate context by academics and policy makers here and now, or by the UN and the agencies, as I discovered when I was writing the book.

⁵ Hazel Henderson, "Paradigms in Progress – Life Beyond Economics", (Indianapolis: Knowledge Systems, Inc., 1991); Marilyn Waring, "**If Women Counted: A New Feminist Economics**", (San Francisco: Harper & Row) (First published in New Zealand as **Counting for Nothing: What Men Value and What Women are Worth**. Wellington: Allen & Unwin.), 1988.

⁶ Jain, "Women, Development and the UN, 60 year quest for equality and Justice", United Nations Intellectual History Project Series, 2005, Indiana University press.

⁷ **United Nations Intellectual History Project**, <http://www.unihp.org/>

One of the many values of women's reconstruction of knowledge, is that what women are doing for themselves also enables others who have been subject to similar exclusions or demeaning values due to poverty, race or religion. Thus, we argue that this intellection and the challenges it provides to many of the theories, illuminates the road to justice, to truth.⁸

While the body of literature is immense in this field (women studies books and learned papers) what I would like to do is illustrate from a few of the disciplines, how interpretation of experience changes theoretical propositions, the language or nomenclature, and thus the prescription too.

From Psychology

In 1986 at a Seminar at the Leiden University on the Gender of Power⁹ almost all the scholars from the Netherlands, drawn from the fields of Psychology, Sociology and Politics, challenged - not only almost every theory whether it was Freud¹⁰ or Foucault¹¹ or

anyone else's propositions, both fact and analysis - but reinterpreted them from feminist understanding of the female experience. An evocative illustration comes from nervous diseases, such as anorexia and hysteria. Anorexia was seen by the paper writers as covert and overt expressions of resistance by women, not as some form of depression to be treated with pills.¹² It was fasting rather than starving. Fasting as a voluntary choice, which is a threatening message, as different from starving, imposed by others, a victimization from the outside?

Men, including these famous analysts, tend to see women as hysterical and unreasonable. Robespierre, the leader of the French Revolution, and therefore one would imagine a champion of rights, argued that women, were like children, - he called it "the babble of women", - and therefore declared that they were not eligible for voting rights (Rothschild, 2000)¹³.

Other times women have been deemed not only as mentally fragile, but as easily insane, mad, or as witches.

⁸ Jain, D, "Are Women a Separate Issue?", *Populi*, vol. 15.1, 1982

⁹ i Jain, Devak "Power Through the Looking Glass of Feminism". Paper Presented in Symposium on Gender Of Power University of Leiden, Netherlands 1986.

¹⁰ Freud S and Breuer J, "Studies on Hysteria" 1895.

¹¹ Foucault M, "The History of Sexuality" (1976-1984)

¹² Bordo S., *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (1993)

¹³ Rothschild, Emma, "An Infinity of Girls: The Political Rights of Children in Historical Perspective,"Centre" for History and Economics, 2000

Fatima Mernissi¹⁴ of Morocco and Elizabeth Amoah¹⁵, from Ghana have argued that women who were strong within their communities, and showed signs of leadership which threatened men's power were notified as hysterical, as witches, dangerous and put aside. Joan of Arc comes to mind as a well known historical example of such a view. Several strong women leaders of rural India are even now often beaten or burnt and called witches.

All my childhood I would be told of women suffering from hysteria, various forms of dementia and therefore marginalized-put away.

We also find that in India, when a family wishes to access property that is a woman's, - let us say a recent widow, or a mother - they have her declared as out of her senses, not in control of her mind. So she is put away in a home, or sent to Brindavan to seek moksha. Her property then can be annexed without much litigation.

This is possible because of that perception of women as mentally fragile,

emotional, easily breaking down; a perception strengthened by the theories of behaviour put forward over time by the male analysts.

In my paper (Jain, 1986)¹⁶ I added another idea, - silence, to be seen not as passivity but as a protest, as method, and not ignorance, not dumbness. I drew this from watching my mother in relation to my father's wrath and dominance. As I recall it, my mother's silences, did not arise merely from her diffidence, but was also the result of her conscious, very wide awake choice of method. There was a kind of stillness about her, she was silent and appeared to know both the obvious and the hidden but seemed to prefer watching the resolution of human situations, with eyes, and therefore mind, wide open - without intervening. While my father intervened all the time.

I am encouraged by Rustom Bharucha¹⁷ who says, "Here it is necessary to question the cultural valences and resonances of silence, which more often than not are equated in monolithic terms with repression, cowardice and

¹⁴ Mernissi, Fatima, "Femininity as Subversion: Reflection on the Muslim Concept of Nushiz, in Speaking of Faith: Crosscultural Perspective in Women, Religion and Social Change", Devaki Jain and Diana Eck(Eds), Kali for Women, New Delhi,1986.

¹⁵ Amoah, Elizabeth, "Women, Witches and Social Change in Ghana", (ibid)

¹⁶ Jain, Devak, "Power Through the Looking Glass of Feminism". Paper Presented in Symposium on Gend of Power University of Leiden, Netherlands 1986.

¹⁷ Bharucha Rustom, "Between Truth and Reconciliation: Experiments in Theatre and Public Culture", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Sep.29 2001 Vol. XXXVI No.39 pg 3771

fear...Silence is unacceptable in dealing with any tragedy or atrocity, even if the absence of justice is tolerated. You have to speak out; it could also be argued that the "breaking of silence" should not be made into a dictum. Silence can be a political or cultural choice. Silence can be, in certain individuals, the only means of "reconciling with reality"

Economics

The women's work thread was perhaps the most interesting and influential in this interplay, and will be used here to illustrate the intersections in economics.

The feminist engagement with the issue of women and work resulted in uncovering not just women's contribution to the economy but also in raising questions on some of the basic tenets of neoclassical economics. For example Diane Elson stresses the need for "pluralism in thinking about economics"¹⁸ and Nilufer Cagatay has shown how seemingly 'genderless' concepts like expenditure patterns, growth levels etc. are influenced by the manner in

which gender operations operate in any given society.¹⁹

Household was the ultimate unit of classification not only for data collection but also for programmatic responses, especially related to poverty. Such as, the counting of poverty numbers, providing of employment, the provisioning of services such as credit, or food and so on. Studies opened this box and found that women and children not only had different bread earning activities, but also differences in access to services be it health or education or time or leisure. Further the households amongst the poor may not be homogenous bonded individuals collectively optimizing their household operations. They are often fragmented, separated, and within them many are headed by women, who fend for themselves and the family's survival²⁰ Within poverty households, especially assetless labourer's households women had higher labor force participation rates than men as they were willing to accept harsh, badly paid work for the sake of family survival.²¹

¹⁸ Diane Elson, "For an Emancipatory Socio-Economics", Paper presented at the UNRISD Seminar *The Need to Rethink Development Economics* Sep 2001 Cape Town South Africa

¹⁹ Nilufer Cagatay, "Roundtable on Gendering Macro-Economic Policies: Concepts and Institutions", *NGO Forum* in Huarou 1995

²⁰ Devaki Jain, "Through the looking glass of poverty", paper presented in New Hall, Cambridge, 19 October 2001

²¹ Devaki Jain, "Valuing Work: Time as a Measure". *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXI, No. 43, October 26 1996, and Institute of Social Studies Trust, "Impact on Women Workers - Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme," a study sponsored by ILO, Geneva, December 1979 (Mimeo)

This differentiating along gender lines within households in poverty, basically individualizing its members, changed the collection of statistics, the employment offers, the understanding of employment trends, the efforts to unionize labor, the nature of credit offers including the need for collateral. The nature of women's work often within the household, often as self-employed traders drew attention to what is now known as the informal sector,²² and to the importance of this sector in the economy. Concepts like household level food security were changed to individual food security within the household as sequential feeding in several cultures, meant that children especially female children and adults had smaller shares of household food and health services etc in some places²³. This attention to intra-household inequality in all aspects - power, earnings, service utilization, work and time load, leisure, morbidity and mortality rates - led to many transformations in the approach to "development as freedom," to borrow from Prof. Amartya Sen.²⁴

For example the importance of individual rights, and its impact on the

perception of the family as an arena which is not "fair" in its dealings with its members, matched the universality of human rights approach. Women's situation revealed the importance of such universalization. The importance of social inputs, social security as a public good to even out the inequality embedded in the power structure. The fact that economic achievement measured in conventional terms, hides the achievements in social protection and that the two often do not go together led to the attention to social development, going on to human development and its deviation from standard economic growth paths.

While many attempts have been made to valuate the non-monetized, and the invisible transaction, they are still against the 'standard' of money.

In a study done in six villages of India, (Jain, 1996)²⁵ using time and activity to record the activity patterns of men, women and children in a sample stratified by class - (using land ownership as a proxy for class) it was found that women from the asset - less households were engaged in longer hours than men in gainful economic activity. That the work

²² Marilyn Carr and Marty Chen, "Globalization and the Informal Economy: How Global Trade and Investment Impact on the Working Poor", International Labour Organisation 2002

²³ FAO World Food Conference, 1980

²⁴ Development as Freedom, Amartya Sen, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999.

²⁵ Jain Devaki, "Valuing Work- Time as a Measure", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Bombay, October 26th 1996.

participation rate for women in West Bengal was heavily under enumerated (as their work of cooking meals for the farm workers was not considered as labour, they were therefore not paid.) The data that emerged challenged the existing official data.

Time as a measure of value, would reverse the values of men and women's work - women would always come on "top" as they spend more hours working than men as the United Nations Development Report, 1995 shows through a review of time use studies worldwide.²⁶ Thus, the hierarchy in the assessment of male and female economic contribution would change dramatically and therefore the perception that she is less valuable as an economic agent, than the man, if the valuating tool was not money but time.

Further, apart from the increase in numbers of poor women as well as an increase in the proportion of women among amongst all poor, they suffer from discrimination within discrimination; they are at the end of every stick, be it armed conflict, or access to nutrition. Amartya Sen captures the phenomenon well when he says, "The afflicted world in

which we live is characterised by deeply unequal sharing of the burden of adversities between women and men. Gender inequality exists in most parts of the world, from Japan to Morocco, from Uzbekistan to the United States of America. However, inequality between women and men can take very many different forms. Indeed, gender inequality is not one homogeneous phenomenon, but a collection of disparate and interlinked problems. And within each community, nationality and class, the burden of hardship often falls disproportionately on women."²⁷

The power of nomenclature to distort

Nomenclature can change the interpretation, valuation, and hence power relations and gender relations, central to all issues of inequality as well as important elements like inclusion in legal protection. If we rename "home" as "work place" then those who work at home - and in India there are 350 million workers engaged in the informal economy, or 93 per cent of our total workforce, of this huge number, (it is estimated that about sixty per cent are women and girls; in fact, 94

²⁶ Human Development Report United Nations Development Programme, Oxford University Press

²⁷ Sen, Amartya '*Many Faces of Gender Inequality*.' An inaugural lecture at the New Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University 24 April 2001

per cent of the female workforce is in the informal sector) - will be recognized as workers and some of the invisibility, under valuation, exclusion from the legal protection of labour laws of women's work will be overpowered.

Another example of skewed nomenclature which in turn affects the input of program and policy and the outcome, is the characterization of forest produce, as major and minor forest produce. It is now well established that the value and volume of minor forest products not only in India but the rest of the third world are greater than the volume and the value of what is called major forest produce, yet the words minor and major are used inappropriately.

To illustrate, in a study done on forest based industry for the FAO, in Rome, it was found that a particular berry, used as a souring agent, *uppige* in Kannada , was being collected by women from a tribal community in one of North Karnataka's Districts, one of the major sources of that product. However, there was no recognition of the workers, as collection of forest produce is considered "free collection of- goods and services, so of no value", as forest dwellers have rights over forest produce. Therefore the product

is not monetized and so, the collectors and the produce do not merit any recognition in the economic calculation or the laws. This meant that contractors could buy the produce at any price they wished, and no one could be protected, - that women were not counted as workers and their employment or their unemployment was not an issue for it does not merit attention and the contribution of these women to the domestic product did not enter the system (Jain 1990).²⁸

Sociology

The notion of family and kinship organization is an important part of Indian sociological studies. However, when this notion or observation is applied to the poor, it is found that there is the acute separatedness of individuals, a competition for survival within a home a family a community; a Darwinian drive, making nonsense of the idea of community, even caste, of unity of family. Family as we know it does not exist amongst the poor. What I found from the same time use study that I conducted as well as other studies of poverty households, that these were fragmented non - families in which women battled for life.²⁹ There is enormous dispersal

²⁸ Jain, Devaki, "Development theory and practice- insights emerging from women's experiences", EPW, July 7th 1990.

²⁹ Amartya Sen, "Food battles: conflicts in the access to food", Coromandel Fertilisers Ltd., 1982

which looks like indifference but it is distance imposed by necessity. Women get adjusted to the pain of loss of child and husband as part of the survival drive. This made me ask - What were all these tracings of kinship organizations in India and their rules and regulations that were such an important aspect of Indian sociological studies?

Also, even when the family is seen, not only amongst the poor, but from women's experience, the wholesomeness, the supportiveness and the bonding perceptions and readings of the Indian family, break down.

R. K. Narayan perceived women's place and loneliness in a family in his novel called the DARK ROOM,³⁰ a moving story of a woman in a family who is assigned to live in a dark room. A.K. Ramanujan³¹ wrote about **mother's** tongue (as different from mother tongue). Mother's tongue was the dialect, talk in the kitchen in stories and parables which spoke to the child's moral sensibility, and gave him / her their true education, while father sat in the drawing room, spoke the formal language in pompous platitudes. Some other illustrations, which might

amuse. If female seclusion is named female socialization, as women do in fact enjoy their own company, then the odium cast on our cultures also could be reduced.

These examples are given just to illustrate how much changes on the basis of how we build our knowledge, analysis and therefore prescription, by changing the lens, or the corner of the prism through which one looks at reality. It also shows the importance of valuation of an item, be it behavioural or otherwise, and how it is placed in a hierarchy of value. Also the importance of naming, the nomenclature used which also suggests a hierarchy. For example, is it fasting or starving? Is it weakness to be silent, proof of ignorance and incompetence or is it a proof of strength, the conscious decision to listen and think? (Jain, 2001).³²

War and Peace

As far back as in 1915, a group of women had met at the Hague, Netherlands to protest against World War 1, and to suggest ways to end it and to prevent war in the future; wanting an acknowledgement of women's role in peace and reconstruction – but they were

³⁰ Narayan R. K., "Dark Room" (1938), UK, Macmillan Publishers

³¹ Ramanujan, "The Literatures of India" Edited with Edwin Gerow. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, (1974)

³² Jain, Devaki, "Through the Looking Glass of Poverty", Poverty, Paper Presented in New Hall, Cambridge, Oct 19th 2001)

not taken notice of. Today, war has returned in a certain form, as World War 3, after September 11th, 2000, and the events that have unfolded since has meant that attention has again been re - directed to these concerns – of “war, peace, security” and UN to play a role. Once again women’s voices across nations have been for peace settlement of conflicts: for protection of civilians and the earth; and as before their voice has been ignored. UN leadership is again with men in political negotiations and women for humanitarian – the age - old stereotyped division of roles.

Women have also contributed to the conceptualization of peace. For example, for years the UN and many other international bodies (as well as national governments) defined peace to mean the absence of war with an almost exclusive military and static focus.

At the Nairobi UN World Women’s conference (1985) women choose to broaden the definition to say “peace includes not only the absence of war, violence and hostilities at the national and international levels but also employment of economic and social

justice, equality and the entire range of human rights and fundamental freedoms within society.”³³ For women it is their daily experience of providing for a day to day human security. Today even in the mainstream the concept has been broadened, but though it was women, who made that change; they are not in the forefront.

Trafficking of women and children received formal recognition in the 1949 convention.³⁴ And yet the problem has not only persisted but has thrived and assumed newer forms and today is a \$7 billion business, and INTERPOL has been called in to grapple with it like some of the major economic crimes.

Even in the area of economic equality, in 1919 the International Federation of Working Women had suggested, among other things eight - hour working days, equal pay for equal work and minimum wages for housework. These were politely “accepted but put away as too radical.”³⁵ A Congressional study conducted in 2000 in the USA, found that the difference in managerial salaries for men and women in American industry, grew between 1995 to 2000.³⁶

³³ Forward Looking Strategies Document from the Third World Women’s Conference Nairobi 1980 (paragraph13).

³⁴ Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (came into force July 1951).

³⁵ (Hilkka Pietala 2001).

³⁶ Elizabeth Becker, “Study Finds a Growing Gap Between Managerial Salaries for men and Women”, Jan 2002

In international agencies, commissions including the UN women are still left knocking at the door of the clubs, which continue to be dominated by the “old-boys.”

Valuation of woman - shifting the interest from the body to the mind is what is required.

There is a pervasive hierarchy in this mind - body characterization. The mind of course is seen superior to the body I think therefore I am “Cogito ergo sum”, argued the philosopher, Descartes.³⁷ For years activists were seen as good at doing things and then there were the intellectually skilled who wrote or analysed, derived, theorized. There was also the hierarchy among NGOs, including women’s groups, north and south. We were great organizers, actions oriented - and our comrades, our sisters in the North would write up for us or help us with format, and training modules, concepts, frameworks and network us. Technical assistance North to South. We were the bodies and they the minds. This analogy can be extended to suggest that women are the bodies, and men the minds.³⁸

The approach to women, by men reminds of the basis and attitudes

embedded in the Apartheid Phenomena that existed in South Africa, whose shades still hunt. Talking to the citizens, especially white Christians, while in South Africa for a year 1997, I found that they thought the black was not really a full human being. He / she, they felt had no feelings, had no moral veneer, was a brute and could be handled as we do the inanimate things, as they did not feel. Hence, we have stories of white soldiers eating roast meat on an open fire, while the leg of a young black boy was being burnt on the same fire, as punishment.

Surely, this must be similar to how men must feel about women if they can assault women and girls carelessly, cousins and uncles raping girls in the family, fellow students throwing acid; and in armed conflicts torturing women sexually? They must imagine that we cannot feel. We are mere holes.

This turning away from giving recognition to women, their understanding of phenomena, their challenging of the basis of knowledge, and their claim to be recognized seems to hinge on how women are valued and hierarchies of value are embedded everywhere in the knowledge base. It seems that unless that valuation of

³⁷ Descartes R., “*Principles of Philosophy*” (1644), Part 1, article 7:

³⁸ Jain, Devaki, “*Minds Not Bodies Expanding the notion of Gender in Development*”, Paper Presented at Bradford Morse Memorial Lecture, UNDP, Beijing, Sep. 1995.

woman is budged, knocked down the unequal and demeaning attitude to woman cannot change. To break the hard rock of gender inequality it is necessary to shift the attention to gender - difference, from the body to the mind, to the difference in the ideas and principles.

Gandhis method of melting hierarchs

Not surprisingly, it was Gandhiji who saw how hierarchies are embedded in roles.

Since, he was a great believer in harmonising and equalising he persuaded men to cook, sew, clean dishes, knit - do what are called ‘women’s jobs.’ He tried to shift mental perceptions of the difference between men and women by transposing traditional roles. In the ashrams or collectives that Gandhi built in those days, roles were constantly transposed to dismantle hierarchies. Everyone, man, woman and child had to do manual work as well as ‘meditational’ work so that the intellectual or the educated would not look down on the manual worker. Brahmins had to lift nightsoil so that nightsoil would not hold stigma and untouchability. Persons belonging to diverse religions in India had to recite the prayers of all the religions - as a Hindu would read the Quran, or the Christian would the Hindu

prayer, effacing distance through muting the kind of difference that connotes hierarchy.

Gandhiji was reacting to what he felt was the terrible fact of female subordination in a caste - ridden, hierarchical and diverse society. He perceived women as equal, but ‘morally’ superior to men.

However, we are not living in those ashrams and the low valuation continues to haunt - when you hear of the atrocities against the females, the latest being the expansion and intensification of sex selective abortion (Census 2001 and Census 2011). I call this phenomenon the “female blood - stained hands of India.” The spread of eliminating the female has increased as revealed by the 2011 Census through the infantile sex ratio, and further is happening in all the social and economic categories of the population. This is inspite of the strong advocacy of the women’s movement and the Supreme Court order.

There are other exploitations such as the various ways in which women are treated in the political domain, with the men manipulating the reserved seats.

Hence, the valuation of woman is the key. This perception has to change before the law and the policy can have an impact. For it to change both the woman as well as the “other,” have to shift their emphasis

from emphasising gender as a bodily difference to seeing it as an intellectual difference. Women and policies towards them are body - oriented - and this is perpetuated by women too when they express their needs. Men also see women as a body. However, it is the intellect of women that needs to be highlighted for that change along of course with activism and solidarity as we saw in South Africa for overthrowing the white supremacy mind set.

Here is a wonderful quote on need based approach from that great economist, Amartya Sen, "We need a vision of mankind not as patients whose interests have to be looked after, but as agents who can do effective things - both individually and jointly. We also have to go beyond the role of human beings as 'consumers' or as 'people with needs', and consider, more broadly, their general role as agents of change who can - given the opportunity - think, assess, evaluate, resolve, reshape the world."³⁹

From threads to weave

I have taken this journey not only to reveal the value of women as thinkers, but also to show how the given hierarchies of mind over body, now totally challenged

and dismissed by the latest in Physics and mind research, blind us not only to justice but to truth, to knowledge created from lived experience. How the valuation of the other, is the basis of respect, and of equality. That this not only applies to women, but Dalit, and other social distances, though women are at the bottom of all those discriminations. That there is still a job to be done by academics and others engaged in the knowledge making and disseminating industry - the flavour of the day.

Almost all the diverse themes, events, debates over the 50-55 years can be captured in just the one issue, or notion or concept or aspiration - equality. Women's quest provides a rich exposition of the kaleidoscopic complex, multi dimensional "thought", termed equality. The quest also seems to suggest that while unraveling and enriching this thought; it is difficult to actually achieve the outcome - a willow the wisp that escaped the attempts to capture. The many faces of inequality, the intertwined aspect, its "universality" as well as its "particularity" were exposed. Legal attempts, struggle attempts, deep plumbing into philosophy and politics, economics and sociology, culture, action took place, enriching the

³⁹ At the keynote address at the International Meeting '*Transition to Sustainability in the 21st Century*' organised by the Inter Academy Panel on International Issues (IAP). Tokyo 2000.

topic, even if not necessarily achieving the objective.

But the exposition itself is worth the journey, as it also provided the torch light for other inequalities and attempts to redress them. There is value added both in the re - conceptualisation as well as the fact that there is a tangible awareness worldwide, even in the most remote so called illiterate spaces, that there is an issue of injustice which needs to be redressed. Affirmative action has been accepted, as is inclusion, as crucial for justice.

In conclusion:

A major fault that runs through histories of knowledge as a whole, is the failure to take note of, to understand and respect and to absorb, women's ideational and intellectual skills and outputs in the area of theoretical and analytical knowledge. While some of the values emerging from the understanding of poverty, inequality, discrimination, conflict resolution, deepening participation, method, that this interaction or intersection generated, has been applied or followed on belatedly, recognition of the intellectual and leadership powers of women has remained

in **the ghettos**. The **minds of men** have not changed.

The turning away from giving recognition to women, to their understanding of phenomena, to their challenging of the basis of knowledge, and their claim to be recognized, hinges on how women are valued, and hierarchies of value are embedded everywhere in the knowledge base. Unless that valuation of woman is budged, knocked down, the unequal and demeaning attitude to woman may not change.

In my reflections on the journey of the last 30 years, what has been clear is that we did not come out with a treatise., a theoretically stand alone development model which responds to the changes in the external world and our quest. We did some of it 20 years ago, at Nairobi, as for example the framework developed and presented by DAWN, the third world network⁴⁰ But what is needed now and it can be done if women put their minds together is for women's brilliant struggles, to be treated as a BODY of knowledge, chiseled into **theory**, into an intellectual challenge to what "is" i.e. the currently dominant social science theories / ideas The importance of an **intellectual theoretical construct** out of the ground

⁴⁰ The Bangalore Report – “A Process for Nairobi at Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era”, Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi, 1984

experience, which can claim **space** in the world of theoretical discourse, cannot be minimized. A new Das Kapital (Marx) or Wealth of Nations (Adam Smith), is the only bomb that can explode the patriarchal mind set and exclusion of the real agency of women in public policy.

Amina Mama's words, part of a speech at the Uganda World Congress on Women, 2002. gives us a view “....Even our most radical political scientists have failed when it comes to addressing the intellectual and political challenge posed by the problematic nature of gendered identity. Postcolonial feminist theory has a great deal to teach our leading lights in contemporary political analysis. The complicated phenomena currently being grouped under the rubric of 'identity politics', for example, have not been adequately theorised, and ignores all the feminist theory on the gendered nature of identity. Yet it has been clear since the

days of Freud that all identities are gendered, whether one is talking about identity at the level of individuality, sociality or politics. Feminist theory also has much to contribute to our understanding of statecraft and politics. At the very least it alerts us to the partial and limited manifestations of individuality, sociality and politics in patriarchal societies. It leads us to ask interesting questions, such as whether there is a link between male domination of social and political life and the prevalence of war and militarism?...

...we women are in no position to deprive ourselves of the intellectual tools that can assist us in pursuit of gender justice. The arena of the intellect has been used to suppress us. We cannot afford to ignore the importance of intellectual work, especially in the 21st century when knowledge and information define power more than ever before”.⁴¹

⁴¹ Excerpt from interview of Elaine Salo with Amina Mama, (African Feminisms I, no.50 (2001), 58-63 (http://www.wworld.org/programs/regions/africa/amina_mama.htm)

