Chapter I

GENDER AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: AN OVERVIEW

“Women...have the mentality of minors in many fields, and particularly in politics, they will accept paternalism on the part of men. The man- husband, financer, lover, or myth- is the mediator between them and the political world”.1

Since time immemorial the term ‘power’ has been primarily associated with masculinity, where ‘man’ becomes the generic term for both man and woman, thereby assimilating the fundamental divergences and differentiation between masculinity and femininity. Over the years the dichotomy between masculinity and femininity has been more and more highlighted; it stands for mutually exclusive and hierarchically organised gender groupings, where the attributes of power, strength, rationality, superiority and independence have been related to man, while women have been characterised as inferior, weak, dependent and emotionally charged.2 According to scholars, men and women differ from each other anatomically, hormonally and genetically and these factors have facilitated in the evolution of sharply different perceptions of their respective functions, roles and identities.3

The analytical differentiation between the two gender categories leads us to an oft debated question: why has there been a marked absence

of women in politics, policy making functions and power positions? The obvious answer is based upon the Freudian assumptions of the ‘weaker sex’ theory that regards man as the vanguard of physical strength, rational judgement, and power, which are necessary for serving the vast public world, and man thereby, possesses an inherent right to protect and dominate the female, who is relatively weaker—both physically and mentally. These traits disqualify women from assuming high public offices, as they are suitable only for serving in the domestic private sphere. Conventional opinions also suggest that man being rational, intelligent and possessor of objective knowledge always takes the centre stage in politics since the woman lacks the desired intellectual capacities or the analytical and judgmental ability that are considered to be prerequisites in politics.

The traditional distinction between male and female has been theoretically propounded again and again since classical political theories originated from the Greek tradition. Although Plato was the foremost to consider women as potential members of the guardian class, the highest segment of the three-tier inegalitarian social hierarchy, having the ability to rule and administer the state together with men, Aristotle, on the other hand, treated women, along with children, old people, commoners and slaves as non-citizens, since they lacked the desired qualities to participate in the administration of the ‘Polis’ unlike men.

Since then, mainstream political thinkers have characterised politics as a typical male enterprise, which automatically precludes women from participating in deliberations on state activities and in political discourses, because of the latter’s ‘inherent soft’ behavioural

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4 Jill Steans, Gender and International Relations: An Introduction (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1998), p. 4
5 Kelly and Boutillier, n. 3, p. 13.
7 Ibid.
traits and absence of rational thinking and knowledge that have led them to remain submissive and subordinate to and be dominated by men.

This apparent asymmetries in the gender understanding can also be discerned in the general discourses of International Relations (IR). As an intellectual discipline IR gathers its salience largely from the Anglo-centric and North Atlantic perspectives that focus on the state and its by-products-- sovereignty, security, foreign policy, power, militarism, war and Realpolitik. Its most dominant discourse, the realist school of thought emphasises on the competitive and conflictual nature of states in the anarchical milieu that endangers security and stability, and legitimises balance of power as the only protective shield to guard the national interest of the state. At the same time, it portrays the state as the only rational actor that is operated and guided by the egoistic, competitive and objective nature of men who always seek to aggrandise power at the expense of the national interest. While advancing their policies in this process, statesmen would ensure and guarantee political supremacy and national survival. This explanation and understanding of world politics according to gender theorists is intrinsically male-centric, male-dominated and masculine and hence, uni-dimensional and one-sided.

Some feminist readings note that there is a visible distinction between a male and a female policy makers, where women are more prone to engage in cooperation, confidence building measures and restoration of peace, men advance the realist dogma of balance of power, making friends being gender-neutral, that is, once a leader reaches the

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10 Ibid., p. 5.
pinnacle of power, his or her gender becomes irrelevant in determining and making policy programmes be taken into account, then it would be discerned that most of the female political leaders worldwide, who have assumed the highest office of power, have behaved like their male counterparts, and are less feminine. Practical knowledge also shows that gender rarely affects the political judgments of leaders and the concept of women being peace-loving, does not fit the image of women leaders along this line of thinking.

However, gender certainly is a significant factor when it comes to male political leaders, because it is important for the leaders to appear ‘manly’ and masculine even if it means leading their countries into devastating and even unfair wars. On the other hand, in a patriarchal world, women leaders are not expected to make their policies women-friendly, or take decisions towards peace rather than war because ‘feminist virtues’, which are extolled at home, may be seen as ‘cowardly’ in the public sphere.

In the post Second World War period, very few women have been elected to the chief executive positions of their respective countries. In western democracies, which claim to be the champions of gender equality that necessitated equal and unbiased treatment for men and women, it was expected to have more opportunities for women to assume the highest political post. However, it was in Sri Lanka, a typical third world nation that the first woman Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, was elected.12

Since then, the scenario has remained more or less, unchanged. Only twenty women were serving in top positions of their respective countries as heads of state and heads of government, either elected or

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appointed, between 2005 and 2012.\textsuperscript{13} Out of them only five hailed from the
developed western world- Australia Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Switzerland, and the rest fifteen from the Third World and East European
countries- Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Costa Rica, India, Jamaica, Kosovo, Liberia, Lithuania, Malawi, Mauritius, Serbia, Slovakia, and Thailand and Trinidad and Tobago.

Out of the few women elected heads of government, three outstanding women Prime Ministers from the 1960s and the 1970s and 1980s, Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher and Golda Meir have been selected for the present dissertation. The main reason for this choice is that all three faced extraordinary domestic and international challenges and sometimes took ruthless decisions for the promotion of their personal programmes and sustenance of power, and that they are comparable. At the same time, they were regarded as ‘Iron Ladies’ of their respective countries, because of their authoritative functioning styles which displayed little intention of power-sharing. They chose their own Ministers, who were loyal to them and relegated dissenters to the background, pursued policies that they had decided on, regardless of the wishes of their parties, Ministers, advisers and sometimes, even the general public. They belonged to a generation of statesmen who were largely venerated, adored and hated at the same time. Their modes of functioning, decision-making styles, relationship with their colleagues and party establishments, and foreign policy behaviours, were all significantly different from their predecessors and successors, and therefore, they received criticism and acclamation at the same time, worldwide.

It also needs to be noted that, Indira Gandhi became the second female head of government in the world after Mrs. Bandaranaike; Golda

Meir was the third in the order, and Margaret Thatcher, the fifth, following Isabel Peron of Argentina. Mrs. Thatcher was also the first woman Premier from the developed world.

In order to understand the characteristics and overall styles of functioning of these three leaders, the present chapter looks into various feminist standpoints with a view to find out whether the premises satisfy any of the standpoints advanced by these theories. All three Prime Ministers broke the stereotypes imposed on women that they are less violent, more peaceful than men and are swayed by emotion at the cost of rationality. These leaders also demonstrated their inordinate strength and power, which sometimes appeared to be more aggressive in their behaviours than any male counterparts.

It is also imperative to clarify that this dissertation has deliberately kept other female leaders of the world outside its purview. The intension, however, is not to belittle their contributions to world politics, but to keep the study focused on state power and the locational imperative of the countries concerned- India, the regional power of South Asia; Britain, one of the leading developed nations; and Israel, a *sui generis* not only in the Middle East, but also in the world.

Another important matter that also needs to be clarified is that this study has not been carried out from the standpoint of feminist analyses. This dissertation is not an extension of the feminist readings. Rather, it has used feminist discourses for the purpose of understanding the leadership qualities and functioning styles of the three female heads of government.

Also, the principal focus of the present study is to understand the patterns of leadership when the three leaders of this study were Prime Ministers. It will also be seen from the following chapters that each of these politicians accomplished significant political assignments as members of their respective parties before becoming Premiers. However,
since the focus is restricted, more attention will be given to the leadership styles of these international figures as Prime Ministers than as party members.

**HYPOTHETICAL PREMISES**

Based on these above mentioned focal points, the present study has been premised upon few interrelated hypotheses. To begin with, it is widely believed that the patriarchy has largely restricted women from playing a dominant role in politics and governance. Unless blessed with inordinate power, authority and personal stature, along with a favourable environment, both in the domestic and the international settings, very few women get the chance to lead their nations.

From this assumption follows the second premise that gender and biological differences between male and female leaders are not effectiveness of his or her gender becomes irrelevant and is largely obscured by the exigencies of both the domestic and international situations. Gender rarely affects political and personal judgments of leaders in their response to national and international challenges.

As a logical corollary, another area of investigation in this study is to see whether women leaders are viewed as leaders *per se*. Moreover, it examines the gender of these women leaders play any significant role in determining their modes of functioning, foreign policy behaviour and decision-making techniques.

A concomitant assumption is that childhood influences help in shaping identities, images and personalities of leaders and their understanding of and reaction to political exigencies. Their childhood influences have a lasting impression on their behavioural attributes as well.

Keeping these premises in mind this study seeks to understand the various facets of feminist readings that explain women’s role and
responsibilities and their concomitant position in both the public and the private realms. Through a study of these approaches, the present dissertation wishes to understand the leadership and functioning styles of the three female heads of state.

The present chapter is divided into two sections: Section I deals with the feminist interpretation of international relations and the subsequent understanding on the role and responsibilities of women in the public domain.

Section II highlights some common traits of these heads of government that can be identified from their biographical records and political careers in the light of their childhood influences, modes of assuming power, relationship with party colleagues and opposition members, and the role of ideology and personalities. These matters are taken up for extensive analysis in subsequent chapters.

SECTION I

It must be stated at the outset of this section that while some important feminist discourses have been outlines here, this has been done for the purpose of setting a background for the understanding of women leaders and their functioning styles. In fact, the functioning styles of these women leaders chosen for this study can hardly be said to fit into any mould put forward by different schools of feminist theory. It is because of this that a discussion of feminist readings is necessary here.

1. FEMINIST DISCUSSIONS
Feminist scholars have questioned time and again as to why there has been an acute marginalisation of women from the purview of IR and politics and why the issue of gender becomes peripheral in the analysis of
the state and international relations. Their basic assumption is premised upon a partial and inaccurate understanding of IR by IR theorists that has led to the felicitation of man as being the epitome of rationality, valour and reason while women have been globally portrayed as submissive, inferior, and passive. Feminist theorists regard IR as a ‘malestream’ discourse that has perpetuated a “distorted and partial world view that reflects the disproportionate power of control and influence that men hold”. It was due to the theoretical analysis and explanations of the apparent absence of women in IR, which gave rise to a new dimension of IR theory that attacked the overarching dominance of the realist discourse over all others. The outcome was a triangular contest among realism, pluralism and reflectivism during the 1970s that questioned the ontological foundation of the discipline in the form of Inter-paradigm debate.

The theoretical and sociological perspectives, which were related to subjective, cultural and cognitive norms and values as modes of analysis gathered momentum as an alternative to the rationalist outlook, and is collectively termed as Reflectivist approach, pioneered by Professor Robert Keohane. Within this paradigm, the feminist approach

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14 Kelly and Boutilier, n. 3, p. 13.
15 Young, n. 11, p. 76.
16 Pluralism, unlike realism, highlights the importance of non-state actors, associations, groups, and international organisations for the promotion of peace, stability and cooperation, and stands for peaceful coexistence of states and mutual partnership for the genesis of a supra national or world government. For more details, see David Mitrany, *The Functional Theory of Politics*, (Londra, Martin Robertson, 1975); Ernest B. Hass, *Beyond the Nation State*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1964).
constituted one of the most vociferous criticisms against the almost megalomaniacal predominance of realism in IR.\textsuperscript{19} Although the discourse lacks a unified position, because of a multiplicity of theoretical dimensions, yet, it has constructed the concept of ‘gender’ as a category of analysis in explaining international events. It has challenged the assumed ‘genderless’ nature of international theory.\textsuperscript{20} According to political analyst, Chris Beasley, this has been orchestrated through the triple coordination of exclusion, marginalisation and trivialisation of women and their accounts of socio-political life and has thereby, shattered the earlier presumption that IR is gender-neutral.\textsuperscript{21} According to political scientist, Professor Fred Halliday, with the emergence of gender issues, IR has had to face dual challenges, namely, to ascertain how gender explains the discipline and to analyse the gender-specific consequences of the subject.\textsuperscript{22} However, the feminist discipline lacks consensus as to what constitutes feminism, and is, therefore, internally fragmented. The consequence is a proliferation of explanations from myriad perspectives.

\textbf{A. Liberal Feminism}

As the foremost feminist approach, liberal feminism is recognised as a first generation understanding of the study of gender in political science.\textsuperscript{23} It seeks to explain to women’s age-old subservience and oppression, and in the course of analysis, it denounces the practice of acute division of labour between man and woman and their corresponding roles in the public and private spheres, the organic

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Weaver, n. 17, p. 180,
  \item \textsuperscript{20} J. Ann Tickner, “Hans Morgenthau’s Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation”, in Der Derian, n. 18, p. 53.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Fred Halliday, “Hidden from International Relations: Women and the International Arena”, in Grant and Newland (eds.), n. 8, pp. 159-160.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Steans, n. 4, p. 18.
\end{itemize}
hierarchy with man dominating woman, which, in turn, necessitates unequal distribution of rights and duties and imposes artificial barriers to women’s participation in the public domain. Its basic premise rests on the scholastic foundations advanced by Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill.

Following the tenets of French Revolution (1789), Wollstonecraft in her path-breaking study on women’s sufferings, *The Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), challenged the centuries-old societal arrangements that had prevented women from enjoying their fundamental rights. Referring to the Lockean theory of natural rights, she demanded equality of rights in both civil and political spheres, irrespective of gender distinction, equal access to education and opportunities for women, and above all, she pressed for women’s right to suffrage and to hold political positions and offices as she believed in the natural and equal possession of rationality and reason for mankind.\(^{24}\) She considered education to be the stepping-stone to the fulfillment of rational and mental wellbeing and self-determination for women. Wollstonecraft opined that “If she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue…unless freedom strengthens her reason till she comprehends her real good.”\(^{25}\)

Writing nearly a hundred years after *The Vindication*, John Stuart Mill devoted much time to theoretical explanations regarding the emancipation of women. In his seminal study, *The Subjection of Women* (1869), Mill contended that the exclusion of women from public affairs was an antithesis to the traditions of the Enlightenment and the Age of Reason that postulated general equality for the human society, women


\(^{25}\) Wollstonecraft, p. 10, quoted in ibid., p. 124.
having equal capacity for thinking along rational lines and sharing the same mental faculty of reason.\textsuperscript{26} As a champion of individual freedom, he believed that “As long as woman is imprisoned in the private sphere, she neither knows nor cares which is the right side in politics...Giving women use of their potential in occupation of their choice would double the mental faculties at humanity’s service as well as stimulating men’s own intellect by the additional competition”.\textsuperscript{27} Only then, he envisioned, women would be truly ‘liberated’ from the parochial patriarchal bonding.

Much later, in the twentieth century, the liberal feminist approach overturned the traditional portrait of women sketched under the philosophical tenets of classical thinkers, to whom, politics was indisputably, a male enterprise. The liberal feminist scholars argued in favour of women’s active involvement in public matters, their wielding of various channels of power, especially in the fields of leadership, defence and statecraft, which were previously meant for the sole enjoyment of men.\textsuperscript{28}

Liberal feminists, such as J. Ann Tickner refuted the traditional portrayal of women as more peaceful, less violent, passive and harmonious than men, as such attributes are “damaging to women, particularly to their credibility as actors in matters of international politics and national security” and stressed more on women’s participation in politics, and insisted that they should assume governmental positions in order to get rid of gender inequality, inquire into new agendas of world


\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.

politicals, such as human rights, root causes of war, civilian protection during war, etc.\textsuperscript{29}

Like other theoretical approaches, the liberal understanding of feminism is not free from criticism. To begin with, it is often criticised as being too universalistic in its judgments.\textsuperscript{30} It tends to flatten essential distinctions between men and women, and instead, universalises them in order to develop a basic equalisation of gender. It also assimilates or negates the significant impact of factors like race, class, colour, ethnicity and other socio-cultural constructs, which are actually indispensible elements in shaping human identity.\textsuperscript{31}

To communitarians, such as Michael Sandal and Hanna Arendt, an individual is an ‘encumbered self’, whose identity is very well ‘entrenched’ and ‘situated’ in his or her own community, which in turn, articulates community specific rights and duties.\textsuperscript{32}

Similarly, problems also arise regarding the definition of ‘difference’ between the liberals and their critics. To the former, being universalists, they try to do away with stereotypes and define ‘difference’ in terms of “a deviation from the standard that is essentially male”.\textsuperscript{33} Radical feminists, who are staunch opponents of the liberal approach, on the other hand, are essentialists in the sense that they bifurcate the world between the rich western white women and the impoverished blacks and coloured of the Third World, and to them, this ‘coloured’ view

\textsuperscript{33} Andrea Baumeister, “The New Feminism”, in Ibid., p. 55.
subsequently shapes the experience, interest and identity of women.\textsuperscript{34} They also highlight that in its attempt to develop a common platform, liberal feminism “eliminates all traces of femaleness”.\textsuperscript{35}

Another critical aspect of liberal feminism is that it overemphasises on the role of women in the public realm, neglecting the private domain.\textsuperscript{36} In most cases, domestic harassment and oppression of women are either ‘silenced’, or go into oblivion without any public notice. In their zeal to liberate and empower women through rational education, suffrage and wielding of power in the public sphere, critics note that the liberal scholars have failed to take the domestic theatre into account.\textsuperscript{37}

This one-dimensional version leads one to question the extent of a woman’s independence. If she is unable to free herself in her very own, small private life, how would she ensure her freedom in the larger public space. Carol Pateman, one of the radical critics of the liberal approach, argues that “liberalism has built into itself a contradiction between the ideals of individual freedom and equality in the public sphere and the assumption that women are naturally subject to men in the family”.\textsuperscript{38} The liberal doctrine has failed to answer this critical public-private debate.

It may be argued here that although Gandhi, Thatcher and Meir were successful in their public life, Gandhi and Meir suffered in their respective private domains. Unlike Margaret Thatcher, who had a supportive husband, the married lives of both Indira Gandhi and Golda Meir were unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{39} Feroze Gandhi resented his wife’s public

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\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p. 55.  
\textsuperscript{35} Coole, n. 25, p. 153.  
\textsuperscript{36} Birte Siim, “Towards a Feminist Rethinking of the Welfare State”, in Jones and Jónasdóttir (eds.), n. 2, p. 162.  
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p. 162.  
\textsuperscript{38} Pateman, n. 30, p. 192  
\textsuperscript{39} Blema S. Steinberg, Women in Power: The Personalities and Leadership Styles of Indira Gandhi, Golda Meir and Margaret Thatcher (Montreal, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008), p. 5.
involvements and became extremely competitive with her. Likewise, Morris Meyerson disliked his wife, Golda Meir’s public participation, which meant she had little time for him or her family. Both the ladies lived separately from their husbands. It therefore seems that mere right to suffrage, contesting election, assuming political positions and all other external arrangements are not sufficient to guarantee the genuine inner freedom of an individual, where the individuals happen to be a woman.

It may be pointed out that male leaders normally have supportive wives, and indeed, this appears more visible in countries like the United States, which upholds the concept of ‘supportive’ wife under the essential idea of “family values.”

Despite these criticisms, it can be said that liberal theory was the first to champion women as having equal rights, duties and work assignments in relation to their male counterparts. It elevated women to a high esteemed position by prescribing their access to education, right to enfranchisement and the assumption of high ranking political positions and offices, which were unthinkable earlier. Subsequent theories arise out of the shortcomings of the liberal feminist doctrine. Here lies the value of this theory for which it is aptly regarded as the first generation theory of feminism.

B. Radical Feminism
The shortfalls of the liberal approach gave rise to the radical feminist theory or the theory of difference, which has been termed as the second wave of feminism. It was deeply influenced and popularised by the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, as well as the students’ movements of the US, North Atlantic region and Australia during 1960s and 1970s. It begins where its predecessor liberal feminist doctrine ends. It accepts the indispensability of women’s access to education, employment and political positions, but rejects the universalist outlook of
liberal theory and prioritise and advance difference, essentialism and the exclusiveness of feminine traits.\textsuperscript{40}

Both liberal and radical approaches to feminist theory presuppose the power of patriarchy as the central hub of women’s subordination.\textsuperscript{41} The difference between the two, however, comes in the manner of utilisation and sustenance of power. For the liberals, the acquisition of rights to education, employment, etc., would automatically lead to an end of women’s oppression by dint of their public involvement. To the radicals, on the other hand, such realisation of public goals by virtue of liberal democratic avenues would not terminate the overbearing patriarchal dominance over women in private life, for gender difference is “so universal, so ubiquitous and so complete that it becomes quite natural and therefore, invisible”,\textsuperscript{42} unless a radical change in personal and domestic life is achieved.\textsuperscript{43}

According to this approach, dominance of man over woman starts from childhood within the family itself and later extends to her education, religion, marriage, which in turn, help in socialising and internalising a girl’s upbringing under a patriarchal shadow and eventually determines her public life as well, which eventually leads to self-hatred, self-rejection and the acceptance of inferiority.\textsuperscript{44}

Thus, leaving the coat of liberal assimilationist project behind, the radical doctrine embraces a feminine exclusivist and separatist discourse.\textsuperscript{45} It highlights the gender exclusivity between man and woman and sets out an autonomous identity for woman \textit{per se}, that is, it speaks of the nurturing of sisterhood, for their “strategic similarities, irrespective of

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{40} Steans, n. 4, p. 20.
\bibitem{41} Ibid., p. 20.
\bibitem{43} Siim, in Jones and Jónasdóttir, n. 2, p. 164
\bibitem{44} Bryson, n. 42, p. 185.
\bibitem{45} Steans, n. 4, p. 20.
\end{thebibliography}
their class, race, ethnicity, nationality, colour and so on”. In so doing radical feminism seeks to explain international relations from the anti-realist camp, and promote peace, negotiation, trust and confidence building mechanisms as well as friendship and cooperation against the realist principles of war, anarchy, hostility, distrust, rivalry and competition between and among states.

While emphasising their views from radical feminist standpoints, Christine di Stefano and Carol Pateman try to reevaluate the Hobbesian metaphor of the ‘state of nature’ in analysing international relations. To them, Hobbes had delegitimised women in his theory. In the state of nature, according to them, women were conquered and converted into family-cum-servants, because of their passive nature and, thereby, they remained silent spectators of the entire international discourse once the formal state was established through people’s contract with the Leviathan after abandoning the state of nature.

Similarly, J. Ann Tickner gives a feminist perspective of political realism by re-orienting Hans J. Morgenthau’s six set of principles. Without disparaging Morgenthau, she argues that the realist paradigm overlooks the basic conceptual dichotomies between objectivity and subjectivity, reason against emotion, mind against body, culture and nature, self and the other, the public against the private, and is therefore, one-dimensional. Tickner stresses the importance of women in the promotion of peace, the restoration of confidence, rather than in sowing distrust as advanced by realism.

46 Chris Beasley, n. 21, p. 54.
47 Tickner, in Der Derian (ed.), n. 20, pp. 55.
50 Ibid., p. 67.
The radical approach, too, is not above criticism from various corners. It can be argued that the theory seeks to create an exclusive feminist alternative to patriarchy, which poses a sharp contrast to the present day concept of gender equality. Its overemphasis on the emotional and sensitive faculties of womanhood has sidelined reason and rationality. Also, its prioritisation of women-centric attitudes, associations, groups, politics and its deliberate choice of remaining separate and different from males has led its critics to pejoratively refer to it as another form of lesbianism.51

By the same token, critics have also pointed out that there is no behavioural distinction or separate way of functioning for males and female players of international politics. Once they assume political power, according to the critics, women act like their male colleagues and appear to be no longer “peaceful, or any less committed to states’ sovereignty and territorial integrity…and tend to be more warlike to compensate for being females in traditionally male roles”.52

Simultaneously, the radical approach strives to establish an exclusive women’s world by dissociated from male partners. In reality, however, that aspiration is nothing more than a utopian idea. There cannot be an exclusive world of men or women as both are complementary and incomplete without each other. In this context it is interesting to mention the views of Judith Evans, who sets out a concept that she calls ‘androgyny’ that literally signifies an alliance of all good qualities of both genders.53

Nevertheless, the radical approach to feminism postulates a theoretical framework that focuses exclusively on women. For the first time, ‘woman’ is brought to the centre-stage to nurture sisterhood, in

51 Beasley, n. 21, p. 54.
52 Goldstein, n. 28, p. 133.
order to solve international problems through peace, negotiations, friendship, cooperation and trust, which would eventually eliminate war, violence, hostility and mistrust between and among states in the international arena.

C. Marxian Feminism

A third school of feminist theory is Marxian feminism. As an influential school of thought, Marxist feminism owes its origin to the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The central principle of this approach is its focus on the material and economic bases in political and social structures associated with capitalism, in opposition to the inherent biological thesis of the radical feminist view, or the liberal feminist doctrine of unequal social positions, which resulted in unequal distribution of rights and privileges.

The approach seeks to offer a ‘scientific’ enquiry on the oppression of women and considers that their subjugation is social and alterable, that is, it is rooted in a dialectic and material process of history. Considering women as a separate ‘class’, the Marxist interpretation, thereby rejects liberal and radical readings on women’s subjugation and keeps its faith on a concerted and united action of women against their oppressors and

54 Karl Marx in his German Ideology and Das Capital spoke for the natural and spontaneous division of labour within the family, where man treated his wife as slave. It was only in Holy Family that he wrote along with Engels, considered the need for women’s emancipation, and that the progress of society was contingent upon the position of women in the society. Otherwise, he did not focus on the role and position of women per se. Friedrich Engels, in his study, The Origin of Family, Private property and the State provided a materialistic account of the origin of patriarchy and its consequent subordination of women. For more details, see Subrata Mukherjee and Sushila Ramaswamy, A History of Socialist Thought: From the Precursor to the Present (New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2000), pp. 136, 157-159.

55 Coole, n. 24, p. 192.
material forces, rather than resorting to rational education and joining the services through their enjoyment of rights.\textsuperscript{56}

In his seminal study, \textit{The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State} (1884), Engels noted that pre-industrial society was better for women as they received due respect from their male associates.\textsuperscript{57} In the industrial setup, on the other hand, women were commodified and treated as the private property of their male owners and relegated to second class citizenship. The Pre-industrial society, although patriarchal, still considered women as equal partners to men. The success of industrialisation and capitalism, on the other hand, dissociated the ‘home’ and the ‘work place’ marked the difference between the ‘private’ and ‘public’ spheres of functioning.

The final outcome is the ‘valourisation’ of production over reproduction, leading to an unjust treatment and disproportionate possession of material benefits that in turn paves the way for male superiority over female.\textsuperscript{58} The concentration of wealth in the hands of dominant males over inferior females gives rise to socio-economic and political exploitation of women and the consequent denial of their rights and liberty.\textsuperscript{59} Engels also noted that “The very cause that had formally made the woman supreme in the house, namely, her being confined to domestic work, now assured supremacy in the house to the man: the woman’s work lost its significance compared with man’s work in obtaining a livelihood; the latter was everything, the former an

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 192.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, n. 54, pp. 157-158.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Steans, n. 4, p. 18.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Rinita Majumdar, \textit{A Short Introduction to Feminist Theory} (Calcutta, Anustup, 2001), p. 17.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
insignificant contribution”. Both Marx and Engels, however, considered women as “powerless victims of patriarchy”.

Following Marx and Engels, later Marxist feminist scholars, however, emphasised the suppression of women in the private sphere as well, a big departure from the first generation of Marxism. Renowned Marxist feminist scholars, such as, Heidi Hartmann and Zilla Eisenstein argue that patriarchy reproduces the power of man over woman and create relationship on the basis of various modes of production. This patriarchy, in turn, not only plays an important role in the continuation of women’s repression by gaining control over the mind and body of women, but also precludes women’s access to socio-economic and political avenues of power. Hence later Marxist scholars incorporated both the external and domestic theatres of women’s repression, unlike Marx and Engels.

Juliet Mitchell, another Marxist interpreter of feminism argues that unlike traditional Marxism which depicted an evolutionary and historical understanding of women’s condition, the root cause of their sufferings is quite a complex one. In her influential study, Women’s Estate, she considers production, reproduction, sexuality and socialisation of children as the four situations of women’s misery. To her, each of these situations has an individual way of oppressing women. She points out that women’s entry into the workforce would entail material gain as they would earn their living, in exchange of their renunciation of their

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61 Siim, in Jones and Jónasdóttir (eds.), n. 2, p. 171.
socialising role as mother and wife, which would not be satisfied in their families. This becomes a juxtaposition of women’s equality in the public world and their subjugation within their own families at the same time.65

Similar lines of thinking can also be discerned in the theoretical frameworks of Christine Delphy, another well-known Marxist feminist researcher. In her noteworthy study, *The Main Enemy*, she highlights the fact that there are two modes of production: the capitalist and the domestic, and each is distinct from the other. She suggests that women work with lower wage in public, while in their private sphere, they are basically unpaid worker.66

However, too much emphasis on the class structure and the corresponding economic superiority of man over woman as identified in the Marxist feminist discourse makes it partial, as there are other agents of subordination of women, such as race, colour, ethnic affiliation that have been overlooked here.67 Moreover, the Marxist analysis discerns wealth and power as inter-related- whoever possesses wealth, incurs power. But in the Third World, where millions survive below the poverty line, there is more violence against women than in the developed, industrially advanced world. Moreover, its tendency of treating women as a separate ‘class’ has also been rejected by the critics.68 The term class is an economic connotation that has nothing to do with women per se. Women may belong to the bourgeoisie or to the proletariat class, but, holistically they are a distinct human category.

Simone de Beauvoir has rejected the deterministic attitude of Marxism. She argues in her path-breaking study, *The Second Sex* that a change in the economic condition would never help women in acquiring

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66 Steans, n. 4, p. 19.
67 Coole, n. 24, p. 250.
68 Ibid., p. 193.
social positions and prestige—“until it [social evolution] has brought about moral, social, cultural and other consequences that it promises and requires, the new women cannot appear.”

In spite of its shortcomings, the Marxist explanation adds a new dimension to the feminist discourse. It highlights the concept of class, wealth and private property in analysing the oppression of women across the globe, something that had not been taken into consideration earlier.

**D. Psychoanalytic Feminism**

Psychoanalytic feminism is an interesting approach, which incorporates psychology, and its associated features that help in building gender based identities and distinctiveness, which, in turn, explains male dominance over females. The approach takes its intellectual ingredients from the psychoanalytical discussions and writings of Sigmund Freud.

According to this approach, a human infant relates only to its mother, who has the primary responsibility of nurturing and parenting her child. With maturity, the child comes to differentiate between its mother, or the female figure portrayed as the caretaker and nurturer, and its father, or the male figure, who is the symbol of authority and power. This early distinction shapes the feminine and masculine identities. Correspondingly, this identification determines the psychology and behavior of the respective gender group. The girl child remains subservient and passive, similar to her mother, while boys develop authoritative attributes akin to their fathers. On the larger canvas, such behavioural and attitudinal divergences between males and females are reflected in the public domain as well.

Inspired by Freudian analysis, a group of feminist scholars, commonly regarded as Freudian feminists, presented their own

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70 Steans, n. 4, pp. 21-22.
understanding of women’s subjugation. Nancy Chodorow in her scholastic work, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, emphasises the biological differences between males and females.⁷¹ These differences, in turn, determine the behaviour and psychological setup of each gender. She accepts the development of gender identities in respect to single parenting, motherhood and a dominant fatherhood that have eventual repercussions in establishing the ‘externality’ or the public space ruled by men, and the ‘internality’ or the private sphere, guided by women’s passivity. According to Chodorow, this differentiation, however, in her vision, does not arise from easily observable psychological boundaries, but are constituted by psychological and emotional responses.⁷²

Dorothy Dinnerstein, another notable psychoanalytic feminist scholar, likewise, feels that the impact of separate identities of the mother and the father over the child that has an overbearing influence in shaping the child’s psychology. In her remarkable study, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*, she argues that “Seeing in her daughter a reflection of herself, the mother treats her differently from her son, who is at once treated as the other. Due to this differential reception, which is reinforced by cultural pressures in relation to gender, the boy child quickly breaks the psychological union… and soon establishes his masculine identity as one who is not mother and not female, modeling himself as the father.”⁷³

These scholars, however, refute the Freudian analysis of women as being submissive under the dominant patriarchy.⁷⁴ Instead, they speak of

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⁷⁴ Steans, n. 4, p. 22.
the “feminisation of the male”, and the establishment of male-female relationship on equitable terms.

Simon de Beauvoir was one of the staunch critics of the psychoanalytical discussion of feminism. While rejecting the psycho-social determinants advanced by psychoanalytic feminism in his masterpiece, *The Second Sex*, she contends that the subjugation of women started from pre-historic civilisations when man began inventing tools, the woman has had been excluded from using these as she is considered as the ‘Other’. “She is”, Beauvoir explains, “defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute- she is the Other”. In Beauvoir’s vision, women will be free when they abandon all of their traditional roles and identities and adopt male practices to become equal with men.

Psychoanalytic feminism, however, was a novel approach to the understanding of women’s sufferings. For the first time it considered cognitive setups and gender identities that are responsible for shaping distinctive male-female behavioural patterns. Till today, women are regarded as distinct from males. Kenneth Harris related an interview about his dealings with Margaret Thatcher after her forming the first Cabinet: “If any male Prime Minister had said things to me in Cabinet in the terms and tones that she often adopted, I would have gone to him privately afterwards, given him a bashing, and told him that if he did that again, I would resign. But you cannot treat a woman like that.”

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75 Beasley, n. 21, p. 67.
76 Chodorow, n. 74, p. 47.
77 Beauvoir, n. 70, p. xxii.
78 Ibid., p. 690.
This highlights male-female dichotomy in everyday behavior. To cite another instance, which is relevant to the present thesis, is a case narrated by Golda Meir about the condition of women in her country when she was the Cabinet Minister “Once in the Cabinet we had to deal with the fact that there had been an outbreak of assaults on women at night. One Minister (a member of an extreme religious party) suggested a curfew, where women should stay at home after dark. I said: “but it’s the men attacking women. If there is a curfew, let the men stay at home, not the women”.”

E. Feminism on Race, Colour and Ethnicity:
The expansion of feminist analyses in IR has facilitated the development of feminist discourses based on race, ethnic affiliation and colour. This approach received a fillip from the emergence of Third World nations across Afro-Asia and Latin America, particularly following the Second World War. The primary contention of this feminist reading is that, whatever has been discussed till date was based on the narratives and lenses of feminists from the developed world, inhabited by ‘white’ women, which were assumed to automatically encompass women from all socio-economic categories and strata. “White feminists”, explain Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh, “have simply assumed that whatever they say will apply to all women...White feminists deny the importance of ethnic difference and racism. By ignoring these...their work claims to be of relevance to all women but in fact grounded in the specific experience of white women: it is ethnocentric.”

According to this point of view, although earlier approaches to the study of feminism, such as the liberal school, prescribed the emancipation of women through universal suffrage, rational education and the vesting of equal status with men, it was the mouthpiece of white, western

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80 Paxton and Hughes, Ibid., p. 4.
81 Barrett and McIntosh, n. 31, p. 24.
women. In its zeal to remain universal, the liberal approach remained straitjacketed so as to eliminate women from all societies, who had different experiences from their western counterparts. Therefore, it remained oblivious to the various cross-cutting cleavages that exist within each society. As a consequence, the locational determinants and the geopolitical aspects of the Third World and post-colonial societies, where the persecution of women is conditioned by race, colour, ethnic ties, religious, caste and other cultural identities, have been completely leveled out so as to prioritise universality.

In this context an instance regarding the (mal)treatment of Mrs. Indira Gandhi by Western powers may be cited as a reference to substantiate the arguments of the Third World and ethno-national feminists. According to a recent declassified document released the US State Department regarding the Indo-Pak War of 1971. In their exclusive private meeting on the impending India-Pakistan War centering Bangladesh in 1971, the American President Nixon and his National Security Adviser Kissinger pejoratively called Mrs. Gandhi as an ‘old witch’.

Question can be raised here is, if Mrs. Gandhi hailed from a developed first world nation, could she have been labeled as a witch? Did the US make similar depreciatory remarks regarding Golda Meir or Margaret Thatcher? It may be argued that these two leaders were not ‘witches’, for, both Israel and Great Britain were America’s staunch allies, militarily, politically, ideologically and diplomatically, unlike India. On the other hand, Mrs. Gandhi’s belonging to a Third World with a distinct historical-political-social background, and having the authority to defy American hegemony, automatically detracted the US to stand by her side

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82 Ibid., p. 25.
during that major crisis. It is doubtful whether a male counterpart of Mrs. Gandhi would have attracted similar epithets from the western world if he had dared to defy the United States and help dismember a US ally. Here, gender was linked with race, ethnicity and Third World heroes.

Another notable analogy in this case was the Falklands crisis. Both Argentina and Britain were America’s trusted allies. But when the war broke out between the two nations, Mrs. Thatcher got active support, political, military and diplomatic, from the US, which stunned Argentina, because it was the US which had promulgated the Monroe Doctrine. Mrs. Thatcher was perhaps seen as a white leader fighting a Third World state.

Such incidents bear testimony that politics is extremely colour prejudiced. It is due to these inequalities, Black feminism and feminism based on race, colour, ethnicity and cultural identities raised their voice against injustices. This approach introduced the concept of the ‘situatedness’ of Third World women in the mainstream discourses. It does not discredit gender identity, but embraces the circumstantial and situational consequences of womanhood. It explains that “White feminists are not acquainted with traditions outside of their own culture and histories, the ideological and the theoretical legacies that they write from, inevitably deny as valid any modes of struggle and organisations which have their origins in non-European philosophical traditions”.

Hence the analytical viewpoints of this school of feminism holds the belief that feminists from the industrialised world have tended to hegemonise women’s experiences that are derived from the whites. As a consequence, they assume that “Our experience as black women has led us to develop a new radical theoretical perspective with as much academic credibility as any other theoretical school. The theoretical framework of black feminism combines the reality of our personal experiences within the context of a definite economic and political

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overview.”

It is to be remembered in this connection that the term ‘Black’ feminism is a blanket connotation for women belonging to the Third World, apart from the Blacks of the USA and Britain.

In this backdrop, the leadership and functioning styles along with the political career of Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher and Golda Meir would be analysed in the following chapters. However, before that, some comparing features of these three heads of government would be discussed in the next section.

SECTION II

COMPARATIVE CHARACTERISTICS

While understanding the leadership styles and functioning patterns of the three female leaders, certain common features have been found. These will be delineated here, prior to detailed discussions of each individual leader.

1. Heads of Government

To begin with, all three heads of state, Mrs. Gandhi, Mrs. Thatcher and Mrs. Meir, were democratically elected through the Parliamentary system had popular support behind them, and became leaders by virtue of their own rights. Mrs. Gandhi and Mrs. Meir, however, served as acting heads with the sudden demise of Lal Bahadur Shastri and Levi Eshkol respectively, before becoming Prime Ministers through fresh general elections. Mrs. Thatcher, on the other hand, was elected as the leader of the Conservative Party while it was running the shadow cabinet against the Labourite Callaghan government.

Unlike the customary precedence by which most Premiers of the world were in charge of key and import departments such as Foreign, Finance, Home, or Commerce Ministries, in their respective governments, these three international figures held less important portfolios before being elected to the highest position of the state. In fact, except for Mrs. Meir, who was the ambassador to the Soviet Union, and Housing and Labour Minister with a Cabinet post, thereafter, Mrs. Gandhi was initially in charge of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, while Mrs. Thatcher headed the Department of Education and other minor departments with lesser significance.

2. Grasp of International Politics

An interesting feature of the three politicians was their familiarity with international politics. Except for Mrs. Thatcher, who had little exposure in foreign policy matters, both Mrs. Gandhi and Mrs. Meir had experiences in international politics long before they got involved into politics. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was accompanied by his daughter Indira Gandhi in all his foreign trips, when she was serving as her father’s hostess.86

Similarly, Golda Meir undertook foreign trips for raising funds and securing international support since her early career as a Zionist member.87

Margaret Thatcher, on the other hand, had little international exposure compared to the other two leaders. She went for foreign trips

only after her becoming the Shadow Cabinet leader of the opposition in 1974.88

3. Role of the family in shaping political ideas
Another interesting feature among them is their introduction to the world of politics since their childhood by their family members. Indira Gandhi and Margaret Thatcher received their basic education in politics from their fathers, while Golda Meir looked up to her elder sister, Sheyna, who influenced her on the views of Marxism and Socialism. Nehru’s letters to his daughter from prison, Sheyna and her friends’ association with radical socialist groups in Russia and in America, later, and Thatcher’s daily discussion of Conservative policies with her father, Alfred Roberts, had facilitated them in shaping their ideologies and views on politics.

4. Childhood Influence
The respective childhood influences of the three world leaders were also equally significant in not only shaping their psychological makeup, but also got reflected in their later policy outlooks. Indira Gandhi belonged to India’s one of the most respectable families of the contemporary period-the Nehrus of Allahabad. From her childhood she was groomed into the spirit of nationalism, imbibed from her parents and grandfather, which later found reflection in her nationalist-welfare policies after her inauguration as the Prime Minister.89 Moreover, her growing up as a lonely child because of frequent arrest of her parents by the British colonial police made her innately self-reliant and self-dependent, which could be seen later in her decision-making patterns, where she was driven by her own impulses.90

90 Marry C. Carras, *Indira Gandhi: In the Crucible of Leadership* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1979), p. 36
In contrast, the childhoods of both Margaret Thatcher and Golda Meir were punctuated by acute poverty and hardship. Unlike Indira, both were hailed from relatively impoverished lower-middle class families where indulging in one square meal was considered to be a luxurious one.91 From her life-experience, however, Margaret Thatcher had, perhaps, learned the fruits of economic generosity, which could be noticeable from her dissolution of welfare economics and waiving of state protectionism to pave the path for market oriented privatisation programme.92 Simultaneously, her love from discipline and conformity to orderliness that was inculcated from her parents and school had contributed profoundly in shaping her policy decisions. “My views on economics”, she noted in her autobiography, “flowed from personal experience of the world in which I grew up. My ‘Bloomsbury’ was Grantham- Methodism, the grocer’s shop, Rotary and all serious, sober virtues cultivated and esteemed in that environment…for me, experience of life in the Roberts household was the decisive influence.”93

By the same token, Golda Meir’s life experiences from the pogrom affected Russia and struggle for existence in Milwaukee, later, had enabled to be one of the champions of the Jewish cause.94 It was solely for the cause of Palestine and love for her fellow Jewish people that forced her to leave her secured life in America for an uncharted and unknown journey of Jewish Aliya or immigration into Palestine.

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94 Meir, n. 92, p. 2.
5. Standpoint of the Party

It needs to be re-emphasised since it has been mentioned earlier that the three lady Premiers, studied in this thesis, were not the initial choice of their respective parties when it came to election/seletion of party or the national leader. The sudden death of Lal Bahadur Shastri in 1966 created not only a political vacuum, but also instigated an open war of succession among the Congress party bosses. Mrs. Gandhi was chosen for two reasons- to have a temporary arrangement till the commencement of fresh election in the later part of the year, and secondly, because she was considered to be shy and timid, for which she was nicknamed for being a silent and nonargumentative listener in Shastri’s government, and therefore, she would not pose any threat for the senior party bosses.\(^{95}\)

The case of Margaret Thatcher was quite different from that of the others. The defeat of the Heath government in the 1974 general election precipitated an urgent search for a new Tory leader. However, nobody was even ready to back Thatcher in that impending election because of her relative inexperience in dealing with the government and administration as precedence revealed that all previous national leaders had served earlier either as the Chancellor of Exchequer, or Foreign or the Home Ministry.\(^{96}\) Nevertheless, according to Francis Pym, her Foreign Secretary, she became the leader of the Party because of three reasons. “…she offered an approach that was new and in tune with the party’s interest at that time, because she articulated that approach with clarity and conviction, and because the circumstances of the election gave her a head-start over both the incumbent and the main front-runners.”\(^{97}\) In the first ballot she had secured her position as the party chief by defeating her


competitors. The Shadow Cabinet was thus inaugurated under her suzerainty.

On the other hand, Golda Meir emerged as the leader of her nation on account of her predecessor, Levi Eshkol’s sudden demise in 1969, quite similar to Mrs. Gandhi’s case. But unlike her, Golda Meir was looked upon by her party colleagues as the right person to lead the country given her seniority not only within the party but also in respect to her age.

6. Relationship with party peers
Thatcher, Meir and Gandhi had maintained distinct relationships with their respective party members. Once they had consolidated their position as Prime Ministers, they displayed superior-subordinate approach with respect to their party colleagues. Their personalities were so strong that they became *primus inter pares* with unchallenged authority where all their party colleagues were dwarfed to a large extent. In fact, their names became synonymous with their respective party organisations. Moreover, they were manipulative enough in shuffling and reshuffling Cabinet members so as to preserve their supremacy and fulfill their desired objectives.

7. Relationship with the Cabinet
A notable comparable trait among these three lady Premiers was their capacity to ignore their respective Cabinets. Instead, they were known for maintaining an Inner Circle or Kitchen Cabinet under their patronage. They preferred a close coterie of ‘yes men’, comprising of politicians, bureaucrats and people from non-political backgrounds. Once they reached the pinnacle of power, they have demonstrated their all-out unwillingness to prioritise the Cabinet, the central and collective decision-making institution and, instead, relied upon their close-confidante, which would uphold their personal interests.
9. Role of Ideology

Ideology played an important role in shaping the ethno-politico-economic structure of Israel, India and Britain under the leadership of Golda Meir, Indira Gandhi and Margaret Thatcher. Both Mrs. Meir and Mrs. Thatcher had a strong ideological conviction that made them stand apart from the rest. Being a hardcore Zionist, Mrs. Meir’s basic and prime objective was to make rooms for her Jewish kinfolk across Israel, without making any kind of concessions to the resident Arabs. She was one of those few hardliners, who repeatedly refused to withdraw from the occupied territories of June 1967 War against the neighbouring Arab countries.98

Similarly, the ideological commitments of Margaret Thatcher also deserve special attention, since she was unanimously regarded as the transformer of Britain from a welfare to monetarist economy. She broke the post War consensus and introduced new economic rightist approaches that sought to denationalise state owned and sick industries, limit the power of state in the economic sphere, which would be replaced by private agencies, together with a strong state for the continuation of her monetarist policy, maintaining law and order, upholding Parliamentary sovereignty and rule of law.

For Indira Gandhi, on the other hand, ideology was used as a manipulative devise in strengthening her power base in the Congress party as well as in the country. Unlike her other two peers, who were innately dogmatic and firm believers of their respective ideological postures, Mrs. Gandhi rested her brand of ideology for fulfilling her political purposes and serve her desired goals, which explains her initiation of policies, ranging from the devaluation of the Indian currency, to nationalisation of banks and abolition of the Privy Purse, together with a series of Constitutional Amendments that apparently altered the

democratic-republican nature of the Indian State in the name of Emergency.

10. Response to international threat and aggression
Last but not the least, all three heads of government fought international wars, upheld and restored sovereignty of their respective countries. Although at the initial stage, both Mrs. Thatcher and Mrs. Meir miscalculated and misjudged the hostile intentions of their respective aggressors during the Falklands War of 1982 and the Yom Kippur War of 1973, both the leaders responded to these international crises with firmness. Mrs. Gandhi, on the other hand, initiated unilateral moves to counter Pakistan’s aggression on her eastern flank that resulted in the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971.

With these ideas in the backdrop, chapter II, III and IV will analyse the domestic and political careers of the three women Prime Ministers, their electoral victories and defeats, along with their leadership skills, functioning mechanisms and image behaviours. Chapter V seeks to analyse some domestic threats faced by the three leaders during their Prime Ministership. Chapter VI looks into the major international threats and external armed aggressions their countries faced during their leadership. The present study has used history selectively and took into consideration those domestic policies and international efforts which are necessary to make a comparative study of Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher and Golda Meir.