Chapter 1

Introduction

Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in March 1985 and within six months he launched restructuring programmes called ‘perestroika’ and ‘glasnost’ to reform the stagnating Soviet economy and to democratize the political institutions and their relationship with the people. The hesitant and ill-conceived reform measures could not bring about the changes intended within the Soviet socialist paradigm and ultimately ended in 1991 in the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the subsequent formation of 15 autonomous nations which came to be known as Commonwealth of Independent Nations (CIS), with the exclusion of the Baltics, with which Russian Federation came into existence.

The 74 years long presence of the Soviet Union had a strong significance for women’s movements and feminist politics world over. The experience of socialist ideas to emancipate women and to alter gender relations constitutes very important experiences in understanding potential complications, shortcomings and gains of socialist and feminist politics. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 has been one of the most significant events bringing to a close the last chapter of 20th century in world history. It has had enormous implications for international balance of forces and individual nations. The proliferation of studies conducted, researches being done and academic work produced on the former bloc of socialist countries in Eastern Europe is massive but yet incomplete.

One of the central concerns of Soviet state had been to ensure and expand the utilization of women’s productive labour. But this concern was prioritized over its relationship and impact on women’s reproductive functions and rights. In the present context, acute demographic concern and ascendant market forces have led to a shift in Russian state’s response towards women’s reproductive role at the cost of their rights and participation in production process. For feminist politics and theory, the issue of
the relationship between spheres of ‘production’ and ‘reproduction’ has been of fundamental concern and has been crucial to the ways feminist theory has analysed women’s oppression. Sexuality and its relationship with motherhood, tasks of social reproduction and production process has been the site of feminist debates just as much as it has had a bearing on formulating state policies. The paradox of production/reproduction i.e. productive labour and social reproduction is therefore central to both the state and women. Our attempt in this research will be to explore various dimensions of this paradox in the context of state policies and their impact on gender order and changes that have and are taking place in the course of the transition in the post-soviet Russian society.

An important debate in feminist scholarship concerns the relationship of women with the modern state. Is the state an instrument of women’s oppression or it can be used to break down patriarchal authority? Scholars have argued that the state is a ‘contested terrain’ on which battles both for and against patriarchy are fought. The paradoxical role of state with regard to women and family results from a structural contradiction between the state’s interest in production, on the one hand, and reproduction on the other. More specifically, the modern state is committed both to the wage labour system (production) and to the patriarchal-based reproduction while attempting to mediate between these two conflicting spheres (Ursel 1992). The result of this dual allegiance is conflicting policies, legislations and state action. Soviet socialist state’s attempts to resolve this structural contradiction within the ideological paradigm of Soviet socialism and international hostile capitalist encirclement entailed a certain organization of production processes and tasks of social reproduction which resulted in a partial resolution of the ‘gender question’. Pragmatic internal and international concerns often influenced the predominant emphasis of state policies regarding gender relations and women’s emancipation. However, ideological commitment and the political will of Soviet socialist state enabled many policies which had as its aim encouraging women to participate in production process in large numbers, which sometimes entailed large economic costs. The inability of Soviet socialist ideological endeavours to rigorously take up the cultural and ideological premises of patriarchy and its fundamental links with social reproduction and production left many core issues untouched, one of the basic and fundamental of which was sexual division of labour, which remained unresolved and which
undermined most of the intended outcomes even in the sphere of production of state policies.

The Soviet collapse generated a transition to capitalist forms of government and relations in the former Soviet societies. This transition radically transformed the economy, political structure and altered the social formations of these states. Russia as leading country led this transformation. The vast number of powers vested with the President in the new Russian Constitution at the cost of other institutions stilted the nascent democracy and political structure but enabled a quick and painful transition to the market which was the basic aim of those ushering in this transformation (Chenoy 2001: 64). Our research will look into the nature of this transition and investigate the changing relationship of Russian women with the state in the context of a determining role of free market.

**Collapse of Soviet Union**

Before moving on to the eventful context of the transition from Soviet Union to the Russian Federation we will take a brief look at the internal dynamics which laid the ground for the eventual collapse in 1991. One of the most persistent problems which eventually became decisively important to the nature of socialist development in Soviet Union was the increasing monopolization of power by the Communist Party. The party which was the party of the proletariat came to be identified more and more with the state. As it moved away from the proletariat and the people it gave rise to a powerful and centralized ‘single-party state.’ The internal and external circumstances of a devastating civil war, a very backward predominantly rural economy, World War and hostile capitalist encirclement had made a highly centralized political structure and policies of rapid industrialisation conceptualized as NEP by Lenin immediately after the revolution a compulsion for the nascent revolutionary state of Soviet Union. Measures characterised by Lenin as a ‘temporary retreat’ took on a permanent role and continued to entrench themselves giving rise to a ‘managerial technocracy’ (Singh 2006: 368). A highly privileged power bloc evolved at the top of society, constituted by party apparatchiks or nomenklatura. This layer at the top increasingly became rigid, oppressive and a constraining force in Soviet society and was perceived
by the people and in its own self perception as the ruling political elite, not owners of the means of production but in near absolute political control over all decisions pertaining to Soviet people.

Dobb (1995) has elaborated on the need of such a centralized political structure in tandem with the need to fulfill mammoth tasks that the centralized command economy had taken upon itself in highly adverse circumstances. This explains the spectacular economic and social gains made by the heroic efforts of the Soviet people in the face of imposing adversities which won the admiration of struggling people all over the world and which made the capitalist political-economic order even more anxious to challenge the alternative model being offered by Soviet Union. It attributed legitimacy to the path chosen by the Soviet leadership of economic and social development as the correct path towards building an alternative and a superior socialist system to capitalism. However, this remained only one side of the picture the other side of which was showing all signs of degeneration and being left far behind the 'economic' progress. Degeneration of the party, sheer poverty of theory in terms of lack of a meaningful and rigorous understanding in a truly Marxist and socialist sense of how to steer the course forward taking the people along, led to the emergence of political, social and economic distortions.

Renowned political scientist Randhir Singh (2006: 237-238) has remarked that, "...the external political factor compounded of military threat and hostile capitalist encirclement was dominant in the initial stages of the socialist experiment and remained dominant throughout its history. The political, economic and at times military forces of the developed capitalist world were mobilized to harass, destabilize and defeat this experiment. The real historical socialism thus was not the gradual putting into effect of a socialist idea, however much this idea, and the theory accompanying it, may have been flawed in the post-Lenin period. Real socialism, 'actually existing socialism' as it came to be called, grew through an historic dialectic with the force of world capitalism within the frame work of a global inter-state system. Theory apart, it was the product of the world system- a capitalism dominated system- as much as of internal political forces. As such it had internalized the marks of this historical dialectic. The post-Lenin Bolshevik theory simply failed to cope with this awesome historical dialectic."
More than anything else the ceaseless threat of attack from hostile international encirclement successfully drew Soviet Union into a prolonged and a disastrous arms race with the U.S. Also to the detriment of its own future, the understanding of socialism in Soviet Union was premised on the idea that juridical abolition of all private property and state ownership of all property was equal to fulfilling the fundamental and adequate condition of achieving socialism. Altering the relations of production, taking up ideological and cultural contradictions were shelved for some remote future as the Soviet policy set about its imposed and chosen task of rapid industrialisation. This introduced a fatal economistic and related productivist bias in all Soviet policies or as Singh (2006: 239) put it “…with its implicit beliefs that the public ownership of the means of production can be equated with, or is bound to be followed by the socialist transformation of the relations of production, or that a massive development of the productive forces is an essential precondition for the achievement of socialist relations of production- made it the dominant theory underlying the socialist construction in the Soviet Union”. At the time this policy orientation seemed to Soviet leadership like the required and a much needed solution to the difficult challenges to its survival posed by objective conditions.

The option of a strong and centralized state as the best probable means to achieve the economic and military targets had the strong likelihood of the emergence of an all powerful state and bureaucracy. This is what happened followed by political control and prioritising these needs over and above all others. This indeed produced spectacular results as remarked by Davies who noted that the transformation undergone by Soviet Union in terms of speed and scale did not have either any precedent or successor anywhere in the world. Webbs (Webbs and Webbs 1993) summed up this achievement calling it ‘A New Civilization.’ Nonetheless, these achievements came with a heavy price in the long run for the Soviet Union. The fast and forced pace of industrialisation also had to let go of Lenin’s repeated insistence on the crucial importance of forging a worker-peasant alliance to sustain the fragile future of Soviet Union and to build socialism. The imperatives of rapid industrialisation shaped agrarian policies, importantly those of collectivizing agriculture, largely to enhance and sustain adequate grain supply to industrial towns.
In the hurried and forced march to industrialisation it became that much more difficult to make potentially difficult choices to fight the long term and contentious centuries old cultural and ideological contradictions. Rather they were announced as resolved. The need to rigorously forge new paths in the direction of long term emancipation of many social groups, including women, who were building socialism as also the way to their own emancipation, were pushed to the background and even declared as achieved. One of the most serious distortions that emerged was an all powerful party-state bureaucracy and denial of democracy to the people of Soviet Union. Such prioritising of rapid economic development, over and above all, subordinating all politics and ideology had serious consequences not just for the people but also the very future of such socialism. The concentration of authority at the top everywhere, in government, party and economic enterprises led to the stifling of all debates and democratic impulses. It also led to the stratification of Soviet society and simultaneous depoliticization of the masses. Such economic policies made it possible for the privileged bureaucracy and nomenklatura, those in position of economic and political power, to constitute themselves as the new ruling class over the mass of working people.

This also made the option of withdrawing from the disastrous cold war, a conscious strategy of capitalist offensive, an impossible one. Achieving the status of a superpower, second only to its greatest rival; the United States of America cost Soviet Union very dear. It extended a very legitimate concern of Soviet Union to defend itself against imperialist aggression to blowing it up into a military contest with the global capitalist powers. It had the consequence of enslaving the Soviet military-industrial complex to external imperatives. It did endow the mantle of superpower on the Soviet Union, proudly worn by the people and used by the leadership to legitimate and rationalize its policies, but it was a defeat in the end. It was a defeat not just in the cold war but also in the inability of the Soviet leadership to foresee its significant contribution towards the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The capitalist offensive was successful beyond even its own conception of its strategy as it ended up dictating the terms throughout on which the ‘competition’ between Soviet socialism and western capitalism was conducted. Singh (2006: 445-446) aptly comments that, “While Soviet Union could never compete with the ‘success’ of capitalist ‘freedom’ of consumerism and popular culture, it could have offered a renewed and genuinely substantive
socialist freedom and democracy to its people. Instead, increasingly failing at the former, it was even worse in its record of democracy which had degenerated into a kind of 'polit-bureaucracy' dictatorship... Unwilling to match the political freedoms of the west, let alone go beyond it, “socialist” regimes pegged their legitimacy to their ability to economically outperform advanced capitalism, where “performance” was to be judged in terms no different from the latter’s extravagant consumerism. It was this comparative or ‘competitive’ failure which provided an all important basis for the collapse of 1991.”

The ruling elite, a thin strata at the top, from which came Gorbachev, Yeltsin, Chubais and the others, was the champion of capitalist democracy and ushered in the new painful chapter in the history of Russia. It was the impetus from above from a class which had long been preparing for the actual ownership of assets over which it had had only political control. The beneficiaries therefore, not surprisingly, were from the apparatchiks or the party nomenklatura and the black market which had till now been illegal and had operated clandestinely.

Kryshtanovskaya and White (1996: 716) pointed out processes such as ‘komsomol economy’ that began to develop around late 1980s. The komsomol and youth centers played an important role in developing early Russian capitalism including conversion of paper assets into liquid cash. It was constituted by “…Coordinating Council of Centres of Scientific and Technical Creativity of Youth (TsNTTM), established in 1987 and staffed by Komsomol officials, with a network of centres attached to every district party committee in Moscow; these were, in effect, the first commercial structures of any kind in the former USSR, and it was through these centres that many in the first wave of new Russian entrepreneurs became established: like Konstantin Borovoi, a computer scientist who moved into Komsomol business and thereafter established the country’s leading raw materials exchange and his own political party; or Igor’ Safaryan, who progressed from a Komsomol centre to a cooperative and then his own firm of brokers...or Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who graduated from a deputy Komsomol secretaryship at the Mendeleev chemistry institute to the chairmanship of Menatep Bank.”

The 'Komsomol economy' originated from a resolution adopted by the CPSU Central Committee on 25 July 1986 in which the Komsomol was permitted to
establish a network of scientific and technical centers for the benefit of its members. Kryshtanovskaya and White (1996: 716) elaborated that, “The new centers were supposed to operate on commercial principles, basing themselves on agreements with enterprises and providing services that were not otherwise available... more than 60 centers were already operating in towns throughout the country. The scope of the new centers was extended considerably during 1988, allowing them to engage in the manufacture of consumer goods and to establish economic relations with foreign firms and organizations. They could set their own prices for the goods they imported from abroad, and were relieved of all customs duties. The Law on Cooperatives, adopted in May 1988, was modified as a result of pressure from the Komsomol to cover ‘other public organizations’ and this allowed the new youth centers to broaden the basis of their activity. Complaints soon began to reach government that youth organisations had been buying and reselling video recorders, computers and other forms of technology at inflated prices, and with ‘crude violations’.” Gorbachev initiated many reforms under party and state patronage that later became founding stones for transfer of state property into private hands.

With the coming of Yeltsin into power this elite began the process of consolidating itself openly. There was a concentration, not only of political power, but also of economic resources. Kryshtanovskaya and White (1996: 723) explained how, “…The period of economic reform from 1987 to 1992 was associated with a process of decentralisation and collapse of the formerly powerful 'vertical' links in the state system of economic management. Formerly, for instance, the banking system had been represented by Gosbank, Promstroibank, Zhilsotsbank and their local affiliates, and the whole system had been closely regulated by the Ministry of Finance. In the perestroika period this monolithic system collapsed and a whole series of commercial banks developed in its place, often by simply renaming themselves. A similar process took place in other sectors of the economy. In 1992 a process of recentralisation began to assert itself, but based on horizontal rather than vertical links. Commercial banks were no longer united by their capital, but by a range of interrelated activities of other kinds.” Power was shifted into property from key infrastructural sectors like finance, retail trade, international economic relations and most profitable sectors of industry such as energy and mining. The consolidating elite now moved its previously clandestine dealings with the ‘black market’ into the open along with the mafia which
became a significant part of this 'second economy' and acquired an all pervasive and independent character.

However, in spite of the emergence of the relatively nascent and weak elite what still remains crucial, at least to the future of capitalist development in Russia today, is if this class is capable of building 'successful' capitalism as the western bourgeoisie did over a number of centuries in the west. This is still a matter of doubt as the new stratum that is emerging under the continuing influence of market reforms in the words of Kosygina is, "...horribly distorted, completely incomparable with social classes as understood in classical western theory...we do not have a rational, thrifty, productive bourgeoisie in the 19th century western sense...The Russian new rich are a marriage of convenience between the most vigorous sections of the old nomenklatura and former black market structures. Their idea of doing business is to get rich quickly through easy speculation. There is virtually no productive investment occurring in this country" (Singh 2006: 527-528). This constituted the background of internal dynamics to which a steady momentum was provided by global capitalist powers.

Political and Economic Context of the Russian Transition

Soviet planned economy was inextricably entwined with the political structure. Indeed as Dobb (1995) pointed out that the massive central organization of economy could only be enabled by a party structure which played a key role in coordinating and implementing the central decisions along with enhancing and linking local initiatives with the top. Subsequent bureaucratization of state machinery, Communist Party functionaries and institutions replaced the dynamism of the role of the party of demanding accountability from the state and ensuring the link between the centre and the periphery. However, the Communist Party of Soviet Union had maintained its vanguard role over all key political and economic decisions and institutions right up to the point when Gorbachev sought to separate the Party from the state.
While the economic reforms initiated during perestroika were half hearted and often lost in the planning room itself, political reforms initiated by Gorbachev were much more substantial and proved to be of decisive significance in bringing about the events to a head just a few years after they were launched. The Nineteenth Party Conference formulated a grand strategy of political reforms to modernize the entire political system of Soviet Union. The process of separating the party from the state began with the overall principal of creating a ‘socialist legal state’, separation of powers and a revived legislature (Sakwa 1996). “December 1988 legislation was adopted by the USSR Supreme Soviet for the creation of a three-chamber Congress of People’s Deputies (CPD), two chambers of which (the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities) were to be chosen in multi-candidate elections, while the third (what can be called the Soviet of Representatives) was to be made up of delegates from social organizations, including 100 guaranteed seats for the Communist Party. The CPD was to meet twice a year while current parliamentary business was to be conducted by a smaller Supreme Soviet drawn from the CPD (Sakwa 1996: 5).” The many reformist legislations passed by the CPD and its Supreme Soviet were a steady movement away from the ‘socialist’ content towards a capitalist ‘legal state’. The increasingly bold political reforms served to underline the need to do away with the economic system which had socialist means of production and property laws as its foundation. Indeed Boris Yeltsin inadvertently accurately summarized the entire exercise leading up to the actual collapse in a speech on 28 October 1991 saying that, “We have defended political freedom; now we have to give economic freedom” (Aslund 2007:90). This ‘economic freedom’ which was elaborated as the economic basis of statehood had to be sought through land reform, privatization and the market.

The reformed political structures of perestroika were duplicated in all 15 republics. The first elections to the Russian CPD were held on March 4th, 1990 and at its first convocation Yeltsin was elected chairman with a narrow margin of 4 votes. The single political structure of Soviet Union had already given way to reformed political structures in each republic and also laid the foundations for a nationalist assertion dictating the political and economic decisions that were being taken. Russia led the path by being one of the first to moot the idea of the possibility of her leaving the Union against a backdrop of growing fears of anti-Russian sentiments. The Declaration of State Sovereignty adopted by the Russian CPD on 12 June, 1990 stated
that Russia was ‘a sovereign state, created by historically united nations’; ‘the RFSFR retains for itself the right of free departure from the USSR’ and most significantly stressed the priority of the Russian constitution and laws over Soviet legislation (Sakwa 1996: 8-9). Political developments in the years leading to the final collapse of Soviet Union indicated an emphasis on expediting the transfer of power away from the centre to the republics rather than transforming the economic-political institutions of Soviet Union.

In a significant observation assessing the reform attempts of perestroika, (Sakwa 1996: 10) points that, “Gorbachev’s inability to convert the CPSU into a genuine instrument of reform was one of the main reasons for the failure of perestroika...” The inability of perestroikan reforms to delve consistently into the problems of economic stagnation, genuine democratisation and to address the serious challenges mounted within CPSU on the path of economic reforms paved the way for establishing market democracy championed by none other than Gorbachev himself who was broadly in its favor by 1990. Questions of democracy, accountability and party bureaucracy were also sought to be resolved in a framework of market democracy with futile results as events leading to 1991 demonstrated. The hastily brought about political reforms succeeded merely in the dissolution of Soviet Union and the CPSU which seemed to be one of its first aims and without which the economic basis for the future capitalist order could not be altered.

One of the first decrees passed by Yeltsin on being elected as the first President of Russia even before the dissolution of USSR was to ban CPSU on 20 July 1991 in government offices and enterprises. Following this, he suspended the CPSU just a day after the counter-coup was carried out and on 6th November 1991, Yeltsin banned the Communist Party in Russia signaling the beginning of the dissolution of Soviet Union in December 1991. Although Yeltsin retained his membership to the Communist Party till very late, it was largely to reach a position of power and influence from which he could discredit the CPSU. Playing the role of the opposition Yeltsin did not form or promote any independent political party. He remained a lone opposition mass leader leading and articulating mass discontentment with the Communist Party and state bureaucratization. As Chenoy (2001: 34) pointed out, “…the delegitimisation of the CPSU meant the delegitimisation of the system itself.
The removal of the CPSU would leave no alternate political formation intact. This made the collapse of the system possible." The process started by Russia was a signal to other republics which rapidly followed suit. The 1991 Union Treaty was a last attempt by Gorbachev to save the political entity that was Soviet Union and his own position. It sought to strengthen the Union and stop the flow of power to the republics and was put to vote in a referendum carried out on March 17, 1991. 76.4 per cent of the total electorate voted in favor of the Treaty, showing that the majority of Soviet citizens supported the continuation of the Soviet Union. However, the demand for greater democracy and autonomy was also supported by the electorate as 69.6 per cent of the electorate voted for direct election of the Russian president (Chenoy 2001: 40). Conflating the two enabled Yeltsin to sharpen the process of succession of Russian Republic from the Soviet Union leading to the final dissolution of the Union.

The political dissolution of Soviet Union paved the way clear for sweeping economic reforms and changes in property laws and relations of production. As the central agenda of the transition unfolded, it became clearer that perestroika had more served to remove the political hurdles standing in the way of establishing a market democracy than to introspect and rectify the grievous problems facing seven decades old Soviet socialism. The popular demands and expectations of democracy, latent and those generated by the processes of perestroika, were utilized by Yeltsin to consolidate his own power in the new political structures that were taking shape. It became a popular platform for delegitimizing CPSU and socialism. What was presented by the Russian leadership led by Yeltsin and euphorically celebrated as a triumph of western liberal capitalism by the media worldwide was an ambiguous blurring of popular demands of democracy with the desire for establishing free market capitalist order. For these two issues were not as synonymous as the populist leadership sought to present to the people within Russia and to the west.

In a revealing analysis Lane (1996) conducted studies into the role of elites in the process of political change and factors significantly influencing and contributing to the events which led to the transition to a free market capitalist order. He considered both, endogenous and exogenous factors. Amongst the endogenous factors, the interest of bourgeoisie and political elites were prominent ones in advocating the democratic shell of representative democracy. Outside factors were
interests of west, international institutions such as the IMF/WB (International Monetary Fund/World Bank) and so on. His analysis of interests that were instrumental in furthering the independence and sovereignty of the Russian Republic indicated that “…the presidential apparatus was the most significant followed by the parliament. The next important set of influences was the west, either indirectly- policy being set to produce outcomes likely to receive approval from the west or directly as a consequence of pressure from organizations (such as the World Bank) or leading politicians (Lane 1996: 537-538).” During Gorbachev’s regime the responses interestingly indicated that a strong driver of policy was the west and its patronage to Russian emerging elites clustered around the presidential apparatus.

Lane’s (1996: 539) analysis of political factors driving Yeltsin’s major policy initiatives of moving to the market and privatization of state assets pointed that President Yeltsin and his advisers were the major interests and that the west, directly and indirectly, were again prominent. Most significantly, “demands from ‘society’ were relatively unimportant…” Similar results obtained on the issue of banning Communist Party in which Yeltsin and his advisers and ministers appointed by him was the major interest group but this was done not just in their self-interest but also to demonstrate their political legitimacy to foreign western interests. On all three counts i.e. dissolution of USSR, privatizing state assets and banning Communist Party the major interests were the Presidential apparatus and western interests. Taking stock of the western assessments in media of the unfolding transition Anderson (2007) has commented that, “…The US ambassador to Moscow in the late 1980s, Jack Matlock, has explained why: ‘Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev, in effect, co-operated on a scenario, a plan of reforming the economy, which was defined initially by the United States. The plan was devised by the United States, but with the idea that it should not be contrary to the national interests of a peaceful Soviet Union.’ Gorbachev ‘adopted the US agenda, which had been defined in Washington, without attribution, of course, as his own plan’. Adult supervision – the term once employed by another US envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad of Kabul and Baghdad, to describe his country’s relations with the world at large – was even closer under Yeltsin.”

While the Parliament was deeply split over and largely endorsed President Yeltsin on issues of greater autonomy and independence from the Union, its
opposition sharpened as the moves to formulate a constitution greatly consolidating President’s powers at the cost of other institutions, including the Parliament, became clear. Contrary to the west, in Russia the Parliament had ‘regional interests’ associated with state socialism and were opposed to private property and the market. Lane (1996: 545) observes that, “…western political leaders strongly supported the executive of Yeltsin because he assured a transition to capitalism, and only a handful of English parliamentarians opposed the storming of the Russian Parliament by Yeltsin’s armed forces.”

Most significantly, he contradicts the claim of many analysts that the demand for market economy was a popular one originating from the society. He underscores in his findings that the public support of democratic political processes was recognized by the political elite which then blurred this support with public support for economic market reforms for which there was less backing. He points to the remarkable fact of absence of the major internal social actor, labour, in the processes making the transition. Contradicting analysts like Przeworski, Moore, O’Donnell & Schmitter who deny the role of external factors like those of the west or IMF and W.B. he cites the experiences of Latin American countries and others which reveal American attempts to achieve military hegemony and waging ‘psychological’ attack against socialist countries. As commented upon by another scholar, Zavadskaya (1999) that between 1991 and 1998, the Russian Parliament enacted about 800 new laws which were related to many spheres of public life. It led some scholars to observe that “Russia, and for that matter all newly independent states, experiment far too much with new laws which are unfortunately quite often influenced by international organizations” (Knieper, 1999: 261).

Chenoy (2001: 51) points in her analysis towards the processes that went into the making of Russian Constitution. Although the new regime’s first task was to declare Russia as the successor state of the Soviet Union, its priority was to integrate the new Russian state with western capitalist system, to break from Soviet ideology and to establish market economy. She remarks on the extent of support from external forces like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank which assisted Yeltsin in bringing in capitalist economy into Russia and consolidating tremendous powers to Yeltsin in the process. The first draft of the constitution emphasized the
break from Soviet traditions and ideology and the rejection of socialism. This draft was rejected and critiqued by the Supreme Soviet. The second draft was presented in October 1991. This was prepared with assistance from representatives like William T. D. Zurilla of the United States Democracy Development Institute which had been set up to assist the democratization of legal structures in former communist countries. D’Zurilla worked as an advisor to Yeltsin and the Constitutional Commission. The second draft was a roadmap to a quick transition to market economy and to enable this it vested the President with tremendous powers. Power would be located horizontally between the executive and the legislature and the division of powers was vertical determining the relation between the centre, the republics and regions within the Russian Federation (Chenoy 2001: 54).

Western backing, politically and financially and in policy orientation, contributed to the ability of Yeltsin’s faction to bypass the opposition and any debate over such a constitution in the Parliament or even in the CPD which endorsed Yeltsin largely but still wanted a more detailed debate on the reforms. Many more draft constitutions were formulated by various factions and rejected by the Parliament amongst emerging fears of its dissolution. Finally in an attempt to hasten and impose his own draft and methods of economic reforms suggested by him, Yeltsin forced the April 1993 referendum. However, despite the 53 percent electorate support to Yeltsin, the mandate said nothing about the constitution and was in fact a vote on support for President Yeltsin, his economic policies (which had never been spelt out) and whether early presidential and parliamentary elections should be held. This mandate, which was neither on the constitution and nor on market economy was treated as sufficient basis for imposing Yeltsin’s constitution and economic reforms on Russia. As Chenoy (2001: 55) points that Yeltsin “…clearly believed as did his backers, that any dilution of Presidential authority might impede the success of the Russian transition to the market. The arbitrary and authoritarian manner in which Russian Constitution was adopted and heavy powers vested with the President were indeed crucial to the next stage of the transition during which almost overnight ‘Shock Therapy Programme’ of economic reforms was imposed on a relatively unsuspecting population.”

These conclusions are significant because they contextualize the transition as brought about by a faction of political elite of Russia, dependent on outside external
support to further internal policy and which was constantly striving for legitimacy and approval from the leading countries of the west. It indicates the depth of political crisis preceding the dissolution in which the previous powerful political players like the Communist Party, excepting the stratum at the top, were successfully ousted from political power in the new regime. It also belies the popular representation of the transition to a capitalist economic order as brought about by popular demands from society. This has also had consequences for political stability which took over a decade to come and which came in the wake of Petro dollars through which Putin could somewhat enhance the living standards of millions of suddenly pauperized Russian people. The growing anger of the people against the political forces which had ushered in the transition and even more so their western backers led to the necessity of putting some distance between the west and Russian political and economic interests. Putin perceptibly shifted Russia’s foreign policy on to a more independent plane, sometimes confronting western hegemony. However, the fundamental orientation and aim of the transition to establish a free-market based economy and its attendant requirements of reforms in labour, land and property laws have consistently been consolidated despite the oppositional stance and socialist rhetoric of political leadership in the next decade.

The first step taken by Yeltsin as President of the Russian Federation was to initiate privatization which began on October 1st 1992 under the ‘shock therapy’ programme initiated by Yeltsin and his then appointed Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar. This meant freeing of prices, removal of subsidies and the sale of state owned enterprises. At the time state owned private enterprises started to be privatized through voucher sale they numbered about 100, 000. “The majority of these state enterprises and collective farms were in functioning order when it was decided to dismantle them. There was no real crisis in their structure, function, organization or output, when it was declared that the entire system was to be transformed” (Chenoy 2001: 190). The ‘Shock Therapy Model’ of economic reforms was prepared by WB/IMF as the roadmap to a quick and effective transition of Soviet economy to a free market economy. These reform processes were initiated by IMF even before the dissolution of Soviet Union when leaders of Group of Seven (G7) got together in 1990 and discussed methods of effective reforms for Soviet Union and entire former
socialist bloc of Eastern Europe. Their recommendations were proposed in a study entitled ‘A Study of the Soviet Economy’ in December 1990.

Chenoy has quoted Lance Taylor who elaborated the policy adopted in the entire region, including Soviet Union. The key points of the policy orientation which were scrupulously followed to usher in capitalist neo-liberal free market economy in the place of Soviet socialist collective command economy were as follows:

1. A total shift to capitalist structures and rooting out completely any institutions or structures evolved during the Soviet period.

2. A break up of the old Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, CMEA or Comecon region and the old trade and industrial linkages that the states of the Socialist block had established with each other over the decades.

3. Each state from the former Comecon block was to be linked directly to the west, and not to each other in the region. The precondition of this linkage was its development of capitalism. These states were thus to be gradually absorbed into the western economy and an ultimately unified Europe.

4. The western states would be leaders, and thus guide and control the development of the former Soviet and East European block through the multilateral agencies, providing incentives for cooperative governments and constraints for uncooperative ones.

5. Development was envisaged through trade-led growth, directed towards, western countries. And thus a sudden and complete switch to free trade was considered essential.

6. Financial deregulation; currency convertibility; open trade and freeing prices were to be key policies in the transition.

7. Private ownership was to be the dominant pattern of ownership. Denationalisation of industry, privatization of state assets, corporate ownership patterns were to be immediately institutionalized.
8. De-collectivization of agriculture and break up of the collective farms was a key agenda. Private farming and capitalism in agriculture was advocated.

9. Membership of key international institutions was advocated with complete immediacy...

10. Openness to foreign investment. The free trade regime and foreign direct investment (FDI) were to be the main engines of change.

11. No alternate or ‘third way’ would be acceptable. This meant that retaining any of the old institutions or a ‘mixed system’ was ruled out (Chenoy 2001: 192).

Yeltsin’s economy was controlled tightly by a tiny group of profiteers. Anderson (2007) elaborates on the circumstances and the crucial role of a small minority of these profiteers in bringing about Putin’s arrival on the Russian political landscape. He explains that these profiteers, “...who had seized the country’s major assets in a racket – so-called loans for shares – devised by one of its beneficiaries, Vladimir Potanin, and imposed by Chubais, operating as the neo-liberal Rasputin at Yeltsin’s court. It is doubtful whether the upshot had any equivalent in the entire history of capitalism. The leading seven oligarchs to emerge from these years – Berezovsky, Gusinsky, Potanin, Abramovich, Fridman, Khodorkovsky, Aven – ended up controlling a vast slice of national wealth, most of the media and much of the Duma. Putin was picked by the Family to ensure these arrangements did not come under scrutiny afterwards.” It was no surprise therefore that despite a mixed political rhetoric President Putin in his two terms solidly stayed on the course set by his predecessor.

President Putin’s arrival as the chosen successor of Yeltsin was marked by the exceptional good fortune of soaring oil prices in the international markets. Anderson (2007) pointed out that this has meant a desperately needed windfall gain for Russia which has amounted to, “…Since 1999, GDP has grown by 6-7 per cent a year. The budget is now in surplus, with a stabilisation fund of some $80 billion set aside for any downturn in oil prices, and the rouble is convertible. Capitalisation of the stock market stands at 80 per cent of GDP. Foreign debt has been paid down. Reserves top $250 billion. In short, the country has been the largest single beneficiary of the world
commodities boom of the early 21st-century.” Putin’s spectacular popularity can be seen in the context of both, the stability and improvement in the living standards of a pauperized and traumatized population and perhaps even more importantly as a comparison with the dismal performance of the Yeltsin regime which is now largely considered as one dark and humiliating phase of the life of the Russian nation.

As Anderson (2007) puts it, “... the country is no longer ‘under external management’...The days when the IMF dictated budgets, and the Foreign Ministry acted as little more than an American consulate, are over. Gone are the campaign managers for re-election of the president, jetting in from California. Freed from foreign debt and diplomatic supervision, Russia is an independent state once again.” Putin, with command over the Russian language after many leaders, has earned his popularity by carefully mixing socialist, anti-western, nationalist strains in his public political posturing. He broke the power of the main oligarchs like Gusinsky, Berezovskvky and Khodorkovsky to check their political interference and ambition and took control of some major sectors which were also quick profit yeilding like energy back under state control bringing to a stop booty capitalism of 1990s. This image, however, glosses over enormously fundamental continuities of his regime with that of Yeltsin’s. In Anderson’s (2007) words, “The Russian state has been strengthened as an economic agent, but not with any socialising intent, simply as a quarry of political power...Land has finally been privatised, a threshold Yeltsin’s regime was unable to cross. Moscow boasts more billionaires than New York, yet a flat income tax of 13 per cent has been introduced, at Yegor Gaidar’s urging. A highly regressive ‘unified social tax’ falls on those who can least afford it. Welfare benefits have been monetized and slashed. Key economic ministries remain in the hands of committed marketers. Neo-liberalism is safe enough in Russia today. The president has made this clear to all who are interested. On a visit to Germany in October, brushing aside questions about the death of Politkovskaya, he told his hosts: ‘We do not understand the nervousness of the press about Russia investing abroad. Where does this hysteria come from? It’s not the Red Army that wants to come to Germany. It’s just the same capitalists as you.”

Most importantly, he draws attention to one of the most striking facts that has often been overlooked by most analysts that the size of bureaucracy has, since the
demise of Soviet Union, actually been doubled to about 1.3 million towards the end of Yeltsin’s regime. Putin has strengthened and doubled the instruments of coercion and intimidation should the need arise. Unlike any other time in Soviet history, the proportion of officers drawn from security and army background occupying very high political offices is much higher. The budget of FSB, the successor of KGB, has now been trebled. These very officials with their security background also head major economic corporations in a potent mix of ‘siroviki’ (crooks who grabbed control of the country’s raw materials) with ‘siloviki’ (officials recruited from military or secret police) under Putin. In an instance of this phenomenon in the year 2005, six years of Putin in power, Anderson (2007) points how, “...Under his system, a more organic symbiosis between the two has been achieved, this time under the dominance of politics. Today, two deputy prime ministers are chairmen, respectively, of Gazprom and Russian Railways; four deputy chiefs of staff in the Kremlin occupy the same positions in the second largest oil company, a nuclear fuel giant, an energy transport enterprise and Aeroflot. The minister of industry is chairman of the oil pipeline monopoly; the finance minister not only of the diamond monopoly, but of the second largest state bank in the country; the telecoms minister of the biggest mobile phone operator.”

It was clear that the paradigm of economic and social relations that were relentlessly pursued during the transition was a neo-liberal free market liberal capitalist framework. It prioritized, above all, the interests and profit motive of capital and made industrial and agrarian i.e. real economy subservient to finance economy. The legacy of social relations not based on monetary interests and social responsibilities that were burdensome were unceremoniously thrown out of the new definition of growth, progress and development. This overthrow had enormous implications for not just social tasks of reproduction and domestic realm but it had crucial implications also on the relationship of women, old citizens, minorities and so on with the monetary free market economy. As it appeared in Financial Times, ‘In building a society ‘infinitely better for its citizens and foreign partners than the USSR’, Putin has achieved the essential: he has ‘cemented the transition from Communism to capitalism in a way that neither of his predecessors was able to achieve’ (Anderson 2007).
The shift to market economy and capitalist order has had a fundamental impact on gender order in Russia. The processes of production and social reproduction have been reorganized to cater to the emerging interests of big capital and privatized economy. The pace with which the transition was carried out and the resultant almost overnight pauperization of millions of Russians altered the relations of production and social reproduction at one stroke in this transition. The roles of men and women, their location vis-à-vis ownership of means of production and the social allocation of responsibilities have been altered with enormous implications for women and men and the emergent gender order.

**Gender Order in Transition**

Our research will focus on post-collapse Russian socio-economic system. It will locate the changing state policies and the renegotiation of social relations in a neo-liberal capitalist framework. Many of the questions that we will look into are the ones that large parts of the world, particularly countries like ours in the third world, are grappling with in the wake of the onward march of neo-liberal policies under globalisation. In the Russian context, these are further complicated by the historic and complex legacy of 70 years old socialist practices. Has the transition meant a process of re-patriarchalization, a reorganizing of the patriarchal state to meet with new economic and demographic challenges, in post-Soviet societies? Albanese (2003) suggests that the rise in ‘masculine assertion’ can be traced also to a tendency of a backlash against “communism, sexual permissiveness and women’s emancipation which have destroyed the country’s moral foundations.” The fundamental changes that have occurred in Russia have thrown open a number of questions. How has the market altered the conditions that influence the options and opportunities that are presented to women in the changed circumstances? How has the Russian state responded to the fundamental restructuring of its socio-political context? How have gender relations been altered or regressed? What impact has it had on women’s productive and reproductive labour and rights? Will it lead to a further empowerment or will it mean a systematic dismantling and erosion of women’s rights and securities? These are some of the questions that we will look into in our research.
In the second chapter we will briefly look at the feminist debates and the theoretical differences between major feminist analyses of the oppression of women. We will also survey briefly the different ways in which feminist theories have elaborated on the relationship between women, gender order and the state. This is not to suggest that state policies are unilaterally the only or the most dramatic factor in giving shape to gender relations and the consequent question of women’s oppression. However, state practices are gendered and determine and are in turn shaped by gender relations. It is in the context of a non-determinate relationship between the state, market and gender relations that we will look at the emergence of a gender order in post-collapse Russian society.

At the centre of this overview we will look at the way in which various feminist theories have explained the relationship between the realm of production and reproduction in so far as this impinges upon an adequate explanation of why women are oppressed in different social systems including socialism. We will outline our theoretical perspective with which we will approach research questions that we have taken up in this work. We will briefly discuss Soviet socialist attempt at resolving the gender question and critique it from our theoretical feminist perspective. Our focus, however, will be on post-collapse neo-liberal capitalist framework which sought to and has successfully made a fundamental break from the Soviet past in reorganizing production and reproduction relations. The area pertaining to our research begins from 1991, the year in which Russian Federation came into existence and in which officially Soviet Union ceased to exist as a political-economic entity.

In chapter 3 we will explore the changes brought about by economic reforms in Russian society. We will also discuss the neo-liberal ideological basis for restructuring the market and economy and its subsequent impact on women. The percentage of Soviet women participating in formal paid employment in Soviet Union had been one of the highest in the world. Higher education, professional skills and state support to women’s presence in the labour market resulted in the formation of one of the most qualified large scale female labour force in the world. Since the transition, this situation has undergone a profound change. Privatization of production and liberalization of the labour market along with implementation of the structural adjustment programmes caused serious distortions in women's employment in Russia
Malysheva 2007). Russian Government’s own response has taken note of, “Lack of representation in political life, discrimination in employment, deterioration in women's health and growth of violence directed against them (women) arouse the strongest concern of society in the context of the radical reforms currently taking place in the Russian Federation” (Russian Federation 1994). Restructuring of the labour market has introduced many new features to women’s participation in the production process (Spencer 1997). Feminization of poverty is a new phenomenon that post-Soviet Russia is contending with (Kligman 1994).

The introduction of private property, which almost always works to the disadvantage of women, legislative changes in Labour Code, deskilling and casualization of labour have accompanied sex segregation in the labour market to seriously undermine the economic rights of Russian women (Zavadskaya 2001). As banking, insurance, and finance sectors become more centrally important in the context of a new market economy, women are being displaced by men, especially in positions of responsibility. The gender pay gap in this sector can be as high as 50-60 percent (ILO Moscow, 2004: 17). Pension reforms have rendered women totally vulnerable. Shrinking earning power of women compared to that of men will mean that according to the new pension system a woman's average pension, based on her retirement savings, will be smaller than that of a man (Baskova 2000: 62). As unemployment is rising so is the idea that it is right for women and not men to be the target for removal. As the Minister of Labour said in 1993, 'why should we employ women when men are employed? It is better if men work and women take care of the children and do housework’ (Harden 1998: 15). It is to these dimensions of change in the sphere of production and women’s participation in it that we will focus our attention on in this chapter.

Chapter 4 will look at the ways in which the domestic realm, tasks of social reproduction and women’s roles in it have undergone a change in the course of the transition. Feminist analysis of the link between the changes occurring in the realm of production with the changes in the realm of social reproduction will also be discussed. Prioritizing the needs of capital and profits has not only affected labour market and the economy in the narrow sense. In fact, we will look at how processes of reallocation of the tasks and responsibilities of social reproduction have made it
possible for the former changes to occur. By emphasizing the necessity of ‘sending’ women back into the family and reinstating their primary role as those of a mother and a wife neo-liberal market order has pushed the costs and burden of what was earlier a collective and social task on to individual families and even more so on to the backs of individual women in it. The feminist theoretical approach outlined in the second chapter will critically examine the complex linkages between production and social reproduction, not as separate realms with production determining reproduction but as both spheres mutually enabling and elaborating the consolidation of capitalist neo-liberal social order. Changes in one not only impact the other but enable and give particular shape to the policies and political posturing relevant to each.

For instance, the changing trajectory of abortion rights and women’s reproductive rights forms an interface between rising nationalist assertions and demographic worries of the Russian state. It can be contextualized in the new alignment of the Russian state and the political-economic forces in Russian society. The articulation of women’s reproductive rights in terms of a nationalist cause and the translation of freedom in terms of their ‘choice’ not to work and morality have serious implications both for women and the state. On this issue the unity of the conservative, nationalist ideological environment with the consolidation of Church, anti-abortion lobbies, traditionalist forces and neo-liberal advocates forms a powerful voice to which Russian women are attempting to respond. Returning to ancient Russian glory not only offers an alternative to the troubled age old question of ‘wither Russia?’ in these fluid times, it also fits in well with the image of a woman back into the domestic fold performing her traditional womanly duties (INSTRAWser.B/54). This ideological onslaught has been state backed to meet with the worrying fall in population ratios in Russia and simultaneously rising unemployment whereby the women are being encouraged to become good mothers and wives and provide a stable environment for the consolidation of the Russian family (Albanese, 2003).

This has been pointed out in many studies which note that, “Simultaneously, in post-Soviet Russia, there was the beginning of a largely-male, vocal, anti-abortion movement...partly supported by the Russian state.... According to Vanden-Heuvel (1993), the Ministry of Social Protection (similar to a Department of Health and Human Services), Yeltsin’s Office of Family Affairs and the Moscow city
government distributed Christian Right books and paraphernalia to secondary schools. Vanden-Heuvel (1993) noted that state officials claimed that the Christian Right material that was distributed was expert, unbiased information about reproductive health and sexuality. She also reported that the Minister of Social Protection at the time, Ella Pamfilova, consulted Focus on the Family, a conservative Christian group, to develop a curriculum for social workers, and sought its advice on family and social policy to promote changes in attitudes towards fertility and abortion. Religion was used to serve broader national goals” (Albanese 2003).

In fact this conservative environment has the consolidation of the Russian family as its crucial and integral agenda. The market friendly drives co-exist with a greater regimentation of women’s roles back into their families. “The political and economic changes that took place at the time were said to have been accompanied by a ‘celebration of masculinity’ and the denigration of the strong capable woman worker glorified in the first decades of Soviet history. It was not uncommon to find marriages in which the main breadwinner was the woman, with the household being run by both spouses” (Pushkareva 1997: 5). In fact, some views suggest that the “over emancipation” of women in Soviet Russia was blamed for a myriad of contemporary social problems in new Russia. As a result, there were some state-supported efforts to assist women to, as Gorbachev put it, “‘return to their purely womanly mission’ in the domestic sphere” (Posadskaya 1994: 167).

Analysing ‘The Programme for Improving the Position of Women and Protection of The Family, Motherhood and Childhood,’ a state programme intended for the 1990s, Posadskaya and other Russian feminists (Posadskaya 1994: 54; Rimashevskaya 1992) say that it is not clear why this programme is called a programme for the improvement of position of women when women are only an appendage to the family and are not as independent individuals. When this programme was being discussed in USSR Cabinet of Ministers, Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov stressed that, “this programme will help to fortify the nation’s physical and moral health and enhance the stabilizing role of the family as society’s primary unit and the family’s importance in people’s spiritual development” (Posadskaya 1994: 53). The ways in which state is responding to the emerging political elites and their interests forms a powerful nexus influencing the state policies.
that are being formulated. We will look, in some details, at the phenomenon of state withdrawal from responsibilities of social reproduction and the ouster of these concerns from the economic processes which are seeking to become unfettered from any state regulation and in equal measure from any non-profit oriented social responsibilities.

The notion of work was central to the construction of Soviet gender contract and Soviet woman’s identity. In chapter 5 we will discuss changing gender roles and identity of the Russian woman. Displacing work as a central category of the Russian woman’s identity, post-collapse political and cultural discourse is seeking to refashion her identity around sexuality. Celebration of the woman’s body and posing it as a sufficient and perhaps the only authentic grid of her identity has found an eager response from the market which has been readily poised to manipulate it for its profit. Anti-Soviet and anti-socialist rhetoric has also found a place from which to denounce the older, tired, masculine and overworked Soviet woman and replace her with a younger, desiring and sexually independent Russian woman. This has been made easier by the Soviet legacy of stringently separating sexuality from gender identity whereby sexuality was hardly discussed and a woman was more than anything else a ‘working mother’.

An eminent sexologist from Russia, Kon (International Encyclopedia of Sexuality) said, “Soviet Russian general attitudes to gender roles and sex differences can be defined as a sexless sexism. On the one side, gender/sex differences have been theoretically disregarded and politically underestimated. The notions of sex and gender are conspicuously absent from encyclopedias, social-science and psychology dictionaries, and textbooks. On the other side, both public opinion and social practices have been extremely sexist, all empirical sex differences being taken as given by nature.” Soviet women were projected as ‘de-sexualised soviet citizens’ as degendered workers and not as women in the realm of production signaling their equality with men. At the same time they were ‘re-sexualised’ by the state as mothers and reproducers of the nation as women. Talk of sex, sexual behaviour and preferences was not a topic of much discussion and was discouraged by the state.

In the current post-Soviet context the possibilities offered by numerous beauty contests and cosmetics industry coupled with a surrounding glorification of the body
in mass media and political discourse are also being seen as an articulation of the ‘natural’ identity of women. In this chapter, we will look at the ways in which market forces are colluding with the state and appropriating the feminist voice of women’s emancipation in terms of her sexuality. We will also briefly explore the contentious debate in feminist theory on what should be the basis of a woman’s identity. We will discuss the rising phenomenon of pornography and prostitution in Russia and engage with the implications this has for constructing an identity grounded in the woman’s body.

The construction of Russian woman’s femininity and man’s masculinity has a complex history, whereby the traditionally understood stereotypes of males and females were broken and gender roles mixed up. For instance, the wide spread participation of Soviet women in combat and defence industry as highly qualified specialists breaks the pattern by women occupying traditional male preserves. Cronberg (1997: 276-77) notes, “...In the social world of the former Soviet Union’s defence enterprises the masculine and the feminine have interacted in a peculiar and complex way. Working for defence is a common value shared by both men and women...It is about how welfare practices, job satisfaction and pride were built into arms production in the former Soviet Union...The emerging market economy offers them a number of new identities- that of housewife, secretary, accountant or entrepreneur. This offer comes either at the price of economic independence or, as in the case of entrepreneurship, at great risk. All Russian women stand to lose economic independence and the welfare assets provided by their former employers. The difference between the women in the defence industry and the others is that the former were the best educated, the best paid and they had access to the best social welfare.”

The post collapse free market social order has undercut the economic basis of women’s rights and grounded sexuality firmly into women’s biology by reinforcing the ‘natural order’ i.e. back in the family and home and conversely celebrating the ‘body’ by commoditization of the articulation of her sexuality. Sexuality, therefore, becomes the problematic site and a terrain of conflict. Contesting strategies of market manipulation and women’s autonomous articulation of their sexuality is generating tensions in today’s Russia.
The transition to the new capitalist forms of governance and political economy, with its commercialising and profit-oriented market values has been quick to manipulate women's sexuality. The new patriarchal order which is a confluence of interests of capital/church/nation building politics has made women marginal, underpaid, unemployed and heavily sexualized in the production sphere and more dependent, subordinate and burdened in the family/household with their prime function being to reproduce and nurture. At the same time, prostitution, trafficking, pornography, and beauty industry are heavily invested into for huge profits. High levels of unemployment, increasing poverty, and social dislocation, coupled with western imports of pornography, have led to high levels of domestic violence, prostitution and trafficking in women. The changing contours of the construction of masculinity and femininity also point to the competing pulls in the construction of Russian women's sexuality.

The rising number of prostitutes of East-European origin in western countries and the U.S. and a proliferation of such agencies all over East Europe indicate a darker side of the freedom of mobility of women and labour. The trend shows that, "..... Eastern European women had broad access to education and the labour market in the period of socialism. Therefore, their propensity to migrate, which is very high, is rather associated with their experience of a loss of previously held benefits and rights acquired under socialism, than with the recently changing roles enabling them to gain more independence" (Muller-Morokvasic, 2002: 10). In one of many detailed studies, Muller notes that, "... the number of prostitutes in Germany varies from 200,000 to 400,000 and a quarter are said to migrate from Eastern Europe. In the Czech Republic 70% of the prostitutes come from the poorer ex-communist countries. German sex tourists now have to cross the border instead of going as far as Thailand. Along the border between Germany and Czech Republic there is a several miles long strip of brothels where hundreds of ever younger and younger girls from Bulgaria, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova cater for the need of clients. According to the estimations of the joint EU police force this is a business equivalent to several billion dollars every year" (Muller-Morokvasic, 2002: 26).

The changing identity of Russian women has also been rather quickly utilized by the nationalist rhetoric that became a powerful voice in the post-collapse Russian
political discourse. The renewed identity of Russian women has also fed into the overtly anti-immigration bias of Europe and has been used to target migrating Russian women’s labour force. This is the dimension of the transition that we will explore in our last chapter 6. The panic of West European countries and their fear of invasion by poorer East Europeans in fact did not materialize. It was perceived that millions of Russians would leave their country the minute they got their passports. Nothing of the sort happened. Rather the pattern indicated a rise in educated and trained women’s legal and forced migration in response to both sex trade and labour demands of the west, primarily Germany and to an extent Austria and others. However, the popular imaging of a single young Russian woman as a prostitute has made her vulnerable to harassment by the authorities and the destination culture.

The studies of Jewish women’s migration to Israel are a case in point. Not only are women subject to forced deskilling of their professional expertise but they also suffer from sexual harassment and negative stereotyping in Israeli media and society (Remmenick 1999; Lemish, 2000). Such gendered migration patterns also help to explain the international reconfiguration of balance of nations and the nexus of powerful patriarchal business interests that are fast consolidating the advantages accrued to them by a free market economy and opened up borders of post-Soviet countries.

Most of the independent nations formed after the collapse of Soviet Union have been passing through a crisis of national identity. This is more acute for Russia who has been grappling with the debates on what the true destiny of Russia should be from pre-revolution times. While all political formations have claimed to represent the nation’s interests, gender representation as a symbolic resource has also been very useful to demarcate between the future visions offered by each political strand. Many recent studies of Russian nationalism and state formation make no mention of gender, let alone treat it as a vital component of national identity (Ryabov 2007). We will attempt to look at the social conditions under which Russian national identity has been articulated as masculine or feminine? What impact do gendered representations of nationhood exert on the lives of real men and women? How are constructions of womanhood and manhood used in nationalist movements to inspire a sense of “us” (nationals) vs. “them” (non-nationals)? As pointed out in another study, “...Yeltsin
had come to power on a wave of anti-communist feeling combined with elements of Russian nationalism. The sentiment for nationalism, which had begun to make its appearance since 1989, became more overt (Chenoy 2001: 34). How does the nationalist discourse construct and is in turn shaped by gender relations? Nationalism has traditionally used women’s sexuality and Gapova (1998: 477) points in her analysis of Belarusian nationalism, “...how the cultural construct of ‘women’ can be used by those participating in the discourse over the nation’s political future and in its search for a destiny.” Women have been utilized as a symbolic resource drawn upon in power struggles taking place in political arenas which actually exclude the majority of women and their interests.

These will be the dimensions of the Russian transition that we will explore in our research. Changing contours of patriarchal order requires an enormous shift in the response from women. A lot of initiatives by Russian women towards understanding the conditions of their oppression and organizing as an independent and autonomous force are welcome steps in this direction. Russian women’s response to such profound changes is a relatively less explored area of our research. Part of the reason is because the transition is still to an extent an ongoing process and women are yet in the process of shaping their articulation and strategies. The subject of our enquiry which we have undertaken places a limit on our exploration of this crucial dimension of the transition. We have not been able to go into the complexities and challenges faced by attempts of Russian women to organize and respond to the transition in their lives.

Studies that have and are still being conducted to study the impact of the Russian transition on women are fast growing in numbers but are still relatively recent. As observed by Molyneux (1995: 645), “...much research and theorizing still needs to be done to grasp the complexity of the changes underway, let alone their gender significance.” Russian woman, her subjectivity and agency have come under the academic lens and theories, analysis and predictions regarding the future of feminism in Russia has become a frequent subject of research, especially in the academia of western countries. In this interaction between the ‘East’ and the ‘West’ the tendency to apply western analytical tools, for instance contextualizing it in the tradition of liberal western theory can be seen. It introduces an element of distortion since the Russian women’s experience is historically very different from that of the
west. Also, problematising gender in particular cultural ways can overlook the triumphant discourse of globalised capitalism which has already proclaimed the 'end of ideology'. Such approaches tend to locate emancipatory potential solely in the demise of socialism and advent of globalised capitalism. Simpson notes, "...it offers neither a threat to the entrenched patriarchalism of the East, or to the Euro patriarchy of the western cultural world" (Simpson 2002).

It is important to take note of the initiatives taken by Russian women. The success of 'Women of Russia' in 1993 elections can be seen as women's reaction to the severe impact of the reforms taking place in their lives (Einhorn, 1999: 109). As articulated by a woman activist, Besolova, them, "...We want to cross the border of isolation. We want to act and be together but we still have not understood our-selves and sometimes move in very different directions" and "...For women here, it is very important to have their own voice, to speak independently. To speak not from a position of class, or one half of the population which has been rescued by somebody else, but to set up their own agenda....This accent on independence is very crucial for understanding Russian feminism..." (Posadskaya 1992).

The initiative taken by a group of a few women, especially some like Anastasia Posadskay, Natal'ia Rimashevskaya, Olga Voronina Alexandrovna, Olga Besolova, Elena Gapova, Natal'ia Zaxarova has been significant in this context. Their attempt to form a women resource center in 1993 as an independent non-profit research center 'NeZhDi' (Don't Wait), followed by the formation of 'Lotus' (League for Emancipation from Sexual Stereotypes) in 1998 has come a long way. It culminated in the Moscow Center for Gender Studies (MCGS) which has produced numerous papers and reports as a result of their ongoing research and as a result of international and regional collaboration with groups and academics.

The relevance of this research can be located both in the context of feminist theory and practices, and to understand patriarchal organization of modern state. The location of the researcher assumes importance in such researches. Our location as a post-colonial, 'third world' woman researcher will influence the choice of analytical tools and empirical evidence that is needed for this research. This location has the potential to keep us aware of epistemic problems encountered by western scholars which can make 'invisible how western knowledge is encased in historical and