Chapter 2

Gender, State and Market: Organizing Patriarchy

Feminisms and Analyses of Women’s Oppression: An Overview

Broadly speaking, feminisms i.e. feminist theories and feminist politics are constituted by a number of perspectives that attempt to describe women’s oppression, analyse the causes and impacts and work out the strategies of women’s emancipation. As a consequence of combining all three, each perspective that calls itself feminist has articulated its positions in terms of political slogans, demands and movements with the purpose of mobilising women around these demands so as to further the agenda of their emancipation. In the process of their historical development feminist theories have drawn from, expanded and often moved beyond the limits of the major political theories of their time. Not surprisingly while they share the fundamental premises of these political theories, in the course of women’s movement they have realized and attempted to move beyond their restricting frames also. The major approaches, very broadly, that distinguish one from the other can be understood as liberal, Marxist-socialist, radical, and post-modern feminisms.

The conceptualization of the modern state and its role in organizing patriarchal forces has differed for different strands of feminist theories. Largely differing feminist approaches can also be understood from the different ways in which major political theories have conceptualized and characterised the modern state and its relationship with gender order. We will give a brief overview of each major approach and outline the feminist framework in which we will analyse the Russian transition and shifts in the gender order there. We have not elaborated on post-modern feminist positions here as we will take it up in greater details in chapter five during the course of discussing identity politics. While Russian historical experience of Soviet variety of socialism and the distinct subjectivity of women constituted by their experience
fundamentally differs from that of the West, it will be useful to understand major feminist approaches to appreciate the conjunctures and departures from Russian feminist attempts to analyse their position. It will enable us to better evaluate the influence of the recent encounter between western theories and their responses from Russian women as they take and yet differ from their western sisters. It will also be useful in articulating our theoretical framework with which we have approached our research work.

Liberal Feminist Analyses of Women’s Oppression

Liberal formulation of the state as the guardian of individual liberty and property is always accompanied by a tension within liberal political theory pertaining to the demarcation of legitimate areas of state control from those that are to be totally free from any interference. These limits are marked by the conceptual distinction between the public sphere, which is open to state regulation, and the private sphere, which is free from any state regulation. The public/private distinction has been one of the most resilient distinctions, which have continued to influence the frame around which state activities have been legitimately organized. The public realm has been defined as that of politics, economics and so on and is traditionally associated with male sphere of activities. The private realm is that of family, procreation, emotions and so on and is associated with women’s sphere of activities.

Jagger (1988) has done pioneering work in the explorations of the philosophical roots and the conceptualization of human nature by political theories. For liberals the highest value is human rationality and the fundamental premise on which they base their demand of equality of opportunity and individual right is the liberty to exercise the full development of individual’s capacity of reasoning. This had the consequence of prioritizing the activities associated with the ‘public’ realm in comparison with those activities that were associated with the ‘private’ sphere. This was because activities of public sphere afford an individual better possibility to do more fulfilling kind of work compared to activities performed at home since these degrading activities are done merely to service bodily needs. This prioritisation of human mind over human body has shaped many liberal notions of work such as
skilled/unskilled, intellectual/manual, creation/procreation. The first kind of work in this binary defines human capacity for reason and the second kind are generally not worthy of being built into the conceptualizations of the liberal individual, justice or equality. As a result liberal individual is independent, atomistic and fully capable of taking decisions which can maximize his happiness. This individual is unencumbered from burdensome preoccupation of the bodily constraints, any outside intervention and he is in perpetual pursuit of unfolding his concept of good life. Liberal conception of a just society would therefore be the one which will allow individuals to exercise their autonomy and fulfill themselves.

What was fairly radical for his time, defending women’s right to equality in a classic liberal paradigm, J. S. Mill (1970: 190) argued that, “...the abolition of sex discrimination is not only required by justice but will also maximize each individual’s contribution to society as a whole.” Jaggar aptly pointed that, “...this claim is a version of Adam Smith’s classic belief that when each individual is free to pursue his own self-interest, the “invisible hand” of Providence, working through a market economy, will coordinate these selfish strivings to the net benefit of all. Justice is in our economic as well as moral interest (Jaggar 1988: 178).”

Liberal feminist demand of equality for women in public life is premised upon liberal conception of the individual. Wollstonecraft (1975) argued for equal opportunity to education for women giving the logic that by better utilizing society’s human resources, women will be able to contribute more. Such were liberal feminist demands addressed to the state in the 18th century. In the 19th century they expanded the terrain of rights for women to giving them civil rights and economic opportunities. These were rights that fall within the realm of ‘public’ sphere so the state could legitimately be asked to formulate policies giving greater equality to women.

Feminist critiques of liberal feminist politics and theory have problematised the liberal concept of individual ‘rights’ which nonetheless has also informed much of the relationship between liberal women’s movement with the state. Tong says that, “…The “right,” liberals assert must be given priority over the “good.” In other words, our whole system of individual rights is justified because these rights constitute a framework within which we can all choose our own separate goods, provided that we do not deprive others of theirs. Such a priority defends religious freedom, for
example, neither on the grounds that it will increase the general welfare nor on the grounds that a godly life is inherently worthier than a godless one, but simply on the grounds that people have a right to practice their own brand of spirituality. The same holds for all those rights we generally identify as fundamental… [But] if it is true, as most liberals claim, that resources are limited and that each individual, even when restrained by altruism, has an interest in securing as many available resources as possible, then it will be a challenge to create political, economic and social institutions that maximize the individual’s freedom without jeopardizing the community’s welfare.” Jaggar points towards this persisting contradiction in liberal theory, which is sought by them to be resolved by the state.

There have been a number of opinions within the liberal camp on the extent to which the state should be allowed to intervene. The classical liberal idea of the state is that its role is to protect the civil liberties such as property rights, voting right, freedom of speech, religion and so on of individuals. The distinction between the ‘public’ and ‘private’ realm in liberal theory enabled the state to leave economy and the market crucially free from any state intervention and remain a realm in which the individuals have equal opportunities to accumulate the maximum for heir gain. However, later welfare liberalism shifted their emphasis from civil liberties to economic justice guaranteed by the state. This development in liberal theory recognizes that “…individuals come to the market with differences based on initial advantage, inherent talent, and sheer luck. At times, these differences are so great that some individuals cannot take their fair share of what the market has to offer unless some adjustments are made to offset their liabilities…call for such positive government intervention in the economy as legal services, school loans, food stamps, low-cost housing, Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security and Aid to Families with Dependent children…” (Tong 1992: 12). The attempts of welfare state to prevent a further perpetuation of inequalities has also been analysed as a part of the liberal state’s strategy to ameliorate the differential impact of free market policies on different social groups.

Focus on distributive justice and basing the notion of equality in terms of ‘individual rights’ has enabled liberals to leave untouched the much more contentious issues of the fundamental protection of ‘private property’ and the existing inequality
described as status quo. The abstraction of ‘rights’ without disturbing their socio-economic context has allowed the continuation and perpetuation of the structures of domination and led to the domain of rights being constrained within the limits of ‘formal’ equality.

The limits of liberal political theory have challenged the liberal feminist framework of equality for women. The abstract ‘individual’ of liberal theory precluded, in the full sense, a woman as she was much more immediately and obviously constrained by her biology. Her wants, needs and constraints were structured in different ways from an adult, unencumbered male individual. This recognition shaped twentieth century liberal feminists’ position on expanding the scope of state intervention more and more into the hitherto ‘untouchable’ private sphere—the predominant arena of women’s activities and also their oppression. This is what led 20th century liberal feminists to demand for greater state intervention by way of more affirmative policies, maternity benefits and child care allowances and so on. While liberal feminists continue to place their politics in the frame of ‘equality’, they have constantly expanded the progressive element of the liberal theory and attempted to make a shift towards the notion of more substantive equality.

Recognizing the significance of liberal feminist contribution in the expansion of women’s rights to the liberal values of equality, autonomy, self fulfillment and justice, socialist feminists however, pointed out that these rights could only be achieved through limited legal reforms and welfare measures. Liberal feminists do not question capitalist political economy which is a structural feature of women’s oppression. Instead they rely on the state to ensure equal opportunities and autonomy for women. “The state is the only permanent, legitimate and non-exclusive form of human association” (Jaggar 1988). It is founded on the consent of all its members and is entrusted with the task of protecting basic rights of all and women’s rights in particular. They do not see the state as a site of contest and as representing dominating hegemonic interests which are almost always to the disadvantage of women.

Eisenstein has argued with the liberal feminist approach to the state. She points that eventually, liberal feminists will be forced to recognize that the state is not a neutral arbiter between conflicting individuals but is rather, “the condensation of a balance of forces,” a balance in which one of the strongest force is that of male
dominance. She further points that while liberal feminists continue to struggle for state-instituted reforms, they will find that "...the motive of the state, via liberal feminism, is to keep women in their place as secondary wage earners and as mothers" (Eisenstein 1981: 226, 248).

The much-improved legal status of women in most of the industrialized countries of the West has been as a result of the first wave of women’s movement informed with liberal politics and values. Many affirmative action programmes have been adopted by welfare liberal feminist efforts. However, the advantages accrued to some women as a result of such far reaching legal reforms are more visible than the continued and mostly reinforcing trends of sex based wage differentials, job segregation, increasing violence against women and burden of double shift of both domestic and outside jobs.

One of the fundamental shifts brought about in the relationship between the state and feminist politics has been due to the centrality accorded to production/reproduction dilemma by radical feminists on the one hand and Marxist and socialist feminists on the other. The significant impact of placing this debate in the center was questioning the validity of the long-standing liberal conceptual distinction between the public and the private. What was the relationship between the sphere of production and the sphere of reproduction? Was sexuality and procreation the driving mortar of production also? These were some of the questions that radical and Marxist feminists took up in their analysis of oppression of women and their relationship with the state.

Marxist Feminist Analyses of Women’s Oppression

Marxist feminism shares basic conceptual formulations of Marxist political theory. Marxist political theory came in mid nineteenth century and elaborated a devastating critique of capitalism and its political philosophy i.e. liberalism. It established causal links between women’s oppression and class divided society and had radical implications for the analysis of women’s oppression and their liberation. To begin with, it demystified many enduring liberal myths regarding the ‘naturalness’
of women’s subordination. It proposed that the public/private distinction was central to women’s oppression in a capitalist society. This split characterizes sexual division of labour under capitalism into two spheres: the public sphere of the ‘market’, controlled by men and the private sphere of the ‘family’ in which with rare exceptions women are solely responsible for housework and childcare. Zaretsky (1976: 19-70) emphasized that the sharp split between the ‘economy’ and the ‘family’ came about with the rise of contemporary capitalism whereby women’s subordination was transformed and intensified by their exclusion from commodity production. Unlike the pre-capitalist societies where home was the site of production and women had an integral role in the processes of production and economy, capitalism took production out of the home into the factory. Thereby, home became a place for reproduction and replenishment of the worker who could then go out for wage work each day at the factory. This led to a dependence of women on men and women being excluded from productive labour. Marxist theory pointed out that the work that women did was not degrading in itself; it was the separation of that work from the process of production that devalued domestic and procreative labour.

Marxist theory questioned the classical liberal public/private split and proposed that in fact this split was the axis of women’s subordination in capitalism. Most significantly, Marxist conception of human nature asserts that humans are first and foremost biological being, later they acquire the capacity of praxis. This formulation effectively destabilized liberal public/private split. Human biology shapes their capacities, needs and interests although they are not biologically determined. This enabled Marxists to take into account different interests and needs of human beings which had far reaching significance for feminist theory (Jagger 1988: 60).

Dalla Costa and James (1973) elaborated on the causal link between capitalism and women’s oppression. They said that women’s unpaid domestic labour enables male workers to work for longer hours thereby enhancing capitalist accumulation and profits for their employers. Marxist feminists pointed that it was the assumption that women are ‘by nature’ more domestic, which allowed a more convenient rationalization of paying women less in the market. This keeps women as a reserve pool of labour to depress the wages of the working class as a whole and to
maximize profits for capitalists. The significance of Engel’ analysis of women’s oppression was that it denaturalised the causes of women’s subordination and asserted that women were confined in the family or the ‘private domain’ to enhance profit for capitalism. Analysis of women’s oppression by a historical materialist method revealed that social organizations are products of particular historical situations and must be reconceptualised as the situation changes.

As we mentioned before the liberal ‘public/private’ split enabled the demarcation of the arenas of legitimate state power. However, this was an irrelevant exercise as human nature develops during the course of continuous social creation which means that there is no aspect of an individual’s life that is of concern only to that individual. Unlike the liberal conception of the state as a neutral arbiter, Marxism characterizes the state “…as the means by which the dominant class strengthens and legitimates its dominance over the subordinate classes, both by passing laws that favor its own interest and by punishing any attempts by members of the subordinate classes to challenge the status quo” (Jaggar 1988: 61). Unlike the liberal separation, politics and economics are inseparable and Marxists centered their analysis on what they called ‘political economy.’

The characterisation of the state as an instrument of patriarchal consolidation reproducing and perpetuating gender inequalities came with Marxist-Socialist and radical feminist critiques of the state. Marxist and Socialist feminist analysis grounded the state as an instrument serving and mediating the interest of both capitalism and patriarchy. By maintaining and reinforcing oppression of women the capitalist state was playing the role of sustaining capitalism. Welfare state, therefore, is a part of the measures taken by capitalism through which women’s unpaid labour in reproducing and nurturing the labour force in the family was ensured (McIntosh 1978; Wilson 1977).

This analysis of women’s oppression proposes a possible means of women’s liberation. Marxism proposes that bringing more and more women into wage work, in the realm of production will lead to their liberation. Socialist-feminist critics of Marxist-feminist response on women’s oppression have pointed out that it fails to explain ‘why it is that women do women’s work’ i.e. it fails to explain the gender division of labour. Gender division of labour persists in the labour market also where
there isn’t a sharp distinction between the kind of work that men and women are supposed to do.

Another problem identified by critics is that the gender blind category of analysis that is central to Marxism is class, which fails to adequately take into account the material basis of women’s oppression. Although in Marx’s writings it is mentioned that both production and reproduction are inalienable parts of human nature, the sphere of production is accorded primacy and the sphere of reproduction is left rather untheorised save for saying that it falls outside the capitalist relations of production. What those relations might be and how are they predating capitalism are some of the questions left unanswered in Marxism. There followed many debates regarding the characterization of women’s labour in the sphere of reproduction whether it was a unit of consumption, or unproductive labour i.e. labour that does not have exchange value and has only use value.

Marxist feminist attempts have been to redress some of these questions left unanswered in Marxist analysis of women’s oppression and have analysed the link between the institution of family and capitalism, the devaluation of women’s domestic work and job segregation based on sex. In what came to be known as ‘domestic labour debate,’ Marxist feminists have attempted to explain sexual division of labour in the family and in job market.

Benston (1969: 16) argued that women were primarily producers and secondarily consumers and advocated the socialization of domestic work. Dalla Costa and James (1974: 34) went further and asserted that women’s work was productive labour not merely because it was useful but also in the strict market sense whereby their labour plays a role in “creating surplus value.” They demanded that rather than paying only individual male wage workers, housewives should be paid by the state since capital enhances its profit from exploiting women’s labour. However, others pointed that waged housework will reinforce women’s subordination because it will confine women even more in the domestic realm and will legitimize the idea of ‘natural’ domestic roles of women. Holstrom (1981: 208) also critiqued the concept of waged housework and instead said that women constituted a separate class. She said that despite being a part of all classes women were oppressed as women but their experience of oppression were not homogenous. Oakley (1974: 186) pointed that
housework is the most shared experience of women and this work was also productive labour. Mitchell and Rowbotham (1972) analysed the relation between family and capitalist production. Marxist feminists have advocated comparable worth to be a better approach to assess feminization of poverty and to assess value of work. According to this approach there is a potential to analyse sex based wage differentials in the market. They proposed that it was possible to attract men into what were supposedly called ‘feminine occupations’ by raising the wages high enough.

Amongst a number of criticisms of traditional Marxist feminist analysis of women from radical and socialist feminist perspectives, the most influential one is that Marxist theory is unable to explain the oppression of women as women. Sexual division of labour has persisted in the family and in formal paid work despite a large scale entry of women in formal labour force. Marxists have been unable to analyse the specific patriarchal factors responsible for the oppression of women across pre-capitalist, capitalist and socialist countries. The radical feminist critique of Marxist feminism points that for Marxism gender inequality is a derivative from capitalist relations and that it does not explain how not only capitalists but men dominate women and that men derive material benefits directly from exploiting women’s sexual and unpaid domestic labour.

Marxist assertion that the mode of production determines the lives of women within their households and by locating their position in the social system had concrete implications. It meant that women would not achieve liberation just by entering the labour force. As long as the family remained the primary institution through which women participated in this society, each and every woman would continue to be subordinated (Zaretski 1974: 87). Locating family as a locus of conflict rather than the liberal picture of family as a unit of harmony and tranquility had significant implications for advances in feminist theory. However, Marxist analysis implicitly proposes the withering away of the family rather than concretely analyzing its relationship and its role in shaping capitalist structures of oppression of women.
Radical Feminist Analyses of Women’s Oppression

Radical feminists rejected the primacy accorded to production in Marxist analysis. They brought ‘private/family/reproduction’ in the center of their analysis. They proposed that gender inequality was a result of an autonomous system of patriarchy. Women’s oppression cannot be explained as a derivative of any other social system. In addition, they asserted that patriarchy was the primary form of social inequality. Diverse forms of women’s oppression are interlinked enough with each other so as to form an independent system called patriarchy whereby women are oppressed as a distinct group. Firestone gave a powerful analysis developing a theory of patriarchy. In her renowned work ‘The Dialectic of Sex’ she established that the moving force of history was relations of reproduction and not production. It was men and women’s differing reproductive roles that led to “...the first division of labour at the origins of class...” (Firestone 1970: 1-12). She proposed that since the source of women’s oppression was her biology only a biological revolution could liberate them. The elimination of patriarchal reproduction and capitalist production will usher in an androgynous future. Achieving right to education, entry in paid work force and legal and political equality for women is meaningless till the time biological reproduction remains a rule rather than an exception.

Radical feminists characterised the state as inherently patriarchal and even though different interests compete for domination, the state will always reflect and uphold dominant male interests (MacKinnon, 1982). The focus on sexuality and motherhood as the primary locus of women’s domination and control by men led many radical feminists to bring the spotlight directly on the hitherto invisible realm of the family and reproduction. Feminist analysis of politics as power relations led Millet (1977: 25) to say that ‘personal is political’ and that there is no separation between different realms of society. All aspects of society including the family, economy, force, religion, sexuality and psychology contribute in the maintenance of patriarchy which is all pervasive. This radical slogan went further to uproot the mythical public/private divide and brought ‘private’ matters into the center of public discussions.
Another significant advance made by radical feminists was to highlight the centrality of violence in the consolidation and maintenance of patriarchy. Brownmiller (1975) outlined the crucial role played by direct and the threat of violence in keeping women under patriarchal control. In this patriarchal strategy, rape was important in keeping women under male domination. A woman’s sexuality is for the pleasure of men and is controlled and objectified by him to such an extent that in her self-perception also her body does not belong to her. She neither has any autonomy over her body nor on the decisions regarding bearing children. The institution of heterosexuality is central in maintaining patriarchy and radical feminists highlighted the ideology of romantic love which keeps the woman’s sexuality enslaved to the man who is her lover and also her oppressor.

MacKinnon (1982), while keeping sexuality as the central source of women’s oppression added that it was the basis of sexual differentiation. She analysed sexual harassment at work, pornography, rape and prostitution and considered that sexuality constructs gender, rather than gender constructing sexuality. Sexuality was also constructed through social processes and is not a biological given. Therefore, the institution of heterosexuality, long established by the patriarchal myth as a ‘natural’ and the only legitimate sexual activity did not hold true. Men were the expropriators of women’s sexuality. This led MacKinnon to reject all forms of objectification of women, including objective forms of knowledge.

The rejection of state as an embodiment of male power and domination had the consequence of their oppositional politics being defined in terms of political demands such as raising consciousness, creating women’s culture and practicing lesbianism. However, critics pointed out that radical feminism’s near total emphasis on sexuality overlooked crucial issues like class, sexual division of labour and so on. This did not allow working and many other women to identify their experiences of oppression with those located by radical feminists. The complete focus on sexuality and reproductive capacity of women as a cause of their oppression or the source of her special feminine strength left questions of crucial linkages between these forms of oppression with those in the realm of production unanswered.

Jaggar subjected radical feminist formulations to the most rigorous critique from a socialist-feminist perspective. She pointed to the strengths of radical feminism,
for instance, their focus on the hitherto neglected woman’s body. While appreciating radical feminist materialist approach in doing a systematic analysis of human reproductive biology and for bringing sexuality, childbearing and childrearing practices into the domain of politics, Jagger critiqued the potential biological determinism implicit in their formulations. There was an ahistorical, universalist and essentialist element in their approach because of which women’s biology was posited as the source of their oppression and the potential source of their liberation. This approach is unable to take into account historically specific changes in the forms of oppression and in human biology. By grounding their analysis in the relatively universal models of women and men’s psychology, radical feminists can end up fixing all men as victimizers and all women as victims. Return to some apriori ‘non-patriarchal’ true woman’s nature suggests an implicit sharing of liberal premise of autonomous true human that existed outside and before society. She asserted that human biology and psychology are as changing and moving as the environment with which it interacts. Biology, therefore, is only one of the constituents of woman’s identity.

Socialist feminist critique put forward by Jagger emphasized on recognizing the fact of male domination. Simultaneously she problematised radical feminist conception of women and men as distinct and opposing classes (Daly 1973). While this formulation emphasizes that women’s subordination is not natural and that men derive benefit from it there is an oversimplification of the experience of both women and men. “It obscures the fact that men are also staggering unequal with each other in the amount of control that they are able to exert over their own lives and the lives of women” (Jaggar 1988: 118). She contends that a more useful approach to the analysis of patriarchy would be an account of specific instances of female oppression in specific time and place i.e. a historical materialist approach is necessary while keeping the broader scope of encompassing patriarchy in the background. As she explains, “…if we attempt to abstract “patriarchy” from the specific social practices through which men dominate women, we lose the history and only ahistorical biologism seems to remain. Thus an ahistorical conception of patriarchy or male dominance…reinforces each other and together encourages biological determinism. The appearance of universality is in fact part of the ideology by which contemporary male dominance sustains itself” (Jagger 1988: 116).
Jaggar has done one of the most systematic elaborations of the conceptual formulation of socialist feminist analysis of women’s oppression. In her classic work ‘Feminist Politics and Human Nature,’ she attempts to synthesize the best insights of radical feminism, Marxist tradition and arguably some from psychoanalytic feminism to outline the socialist feminist theory and politics. Its method is unmistakably Marxist method of historical materialism and subjects both aspects of human nature i.e. physical and psychological to rigorous analysis to develop ‘a fully historical materialist account of the social construction of sex and gender’ (Jagger 1988: 124-26).

**Socialist-Feminist Analyses of Women’s Oppression**

Jagger explains that, “Socialist feminism sees, therefore, that the sexual division of labour is not just a division *between* procreation and “production”; it is also a division *within* procreation and *within* “production.” Consequently, socialist feminism does not view contemporary masculinity and femininity as constructed entirely through the social organization of procreation; these constructs are elaborated and reinforced in nonprocreative labour as well...Changes in the mode of “production” as well as in the mode of procreation have affected prevailing conceptions of femininity” (Jaggar: 130). The elimination of sexual division of labour is central to socialist feminist political concerns.

Many attempts have been made as part of the continuing endeavour of feminist theory to understand and define the complex linkages between the realms of social reproduction and production. Both radical and socialist feminisms attempted to explain all pervasiveness and persistence of male domination by conceptualising a new material base of society by locating it in sexuality and procreation. However, for radical feminists procreation is a cross-cultural phenomenon in that women in all societies are childbearers, childrearers and sexual servants to men. Heterosexuality and marriage, which organize sexuality and procreation, are the central institutions of male dominance. The modes of “production” are simply manifestations of a more basic and universal “mode of reproduction.” (Jaggar 1988: 139) Socialist feminists point that without giving the reference of procreation, women’s subordination cannot
be explained, but they emphasize that it cannot be explained entirely by this reference. The need is to examine the sexual division of labour between and within the processes of procreation and production.

Socialist feminist analysis attempts to integrate the activities of procreation and production. One approach has been called dual-system theories and the other is unified-systems theory. Tong (1992: 175) explains the two approaches saying that, "Dual-system theorists maintain that patriarchy and capitalism are distinct forms of social relation and distinct sets of interest, which, when they intersect, oppress women in particularly egregious ways. For women's oppression to be fully understood both patriarchy and capitalism must be analysed first as separate phenomena and then as phenomena that dialectically relate to each other...although all dual-systems theorists describe capitalism as a material structure or historically rooted mode of production, only some describe patriarchy as a material structure or historically rooted mode of reproduction/sexuality. Others describe patriarchy as a nonmaterial structure—that is, a largely ideological and/or psychoanalytic structure that transcends the contingencies of space and time."

Mitchell is one of the leading voices of psychoanalytical approach. She proposed that capitalism is located at the economic level and patriarchy at ideological. She says, "In analyzing contemporary western society we are (as elsewhere) dealing with two autonomous areas: the economic mode of capitalism and the ideological mode of patriarchy...The patriarchal law speaks to and through each person in his unconscious; the reproduction of the ideology of human society is thus assured in the acquisition of the law by each individual" (Mitchell 1975: 412-413). Mitchell makes this attempt by drawing upon Freudian psychoanalysis leaving out the patriarchal bias of his theory. But this approach failed to explain the material benefits to men from unpaid domestic labour of women and the reasons for the restrictions placed on women's access to paid work.

Delphy (1977) argued that the basis of gender relations is two modes of production: a capitalist one and a domestic one. Husbands expropriate women's unpaid domestic labour and the tasks of social reproduction performed by women are not paid equitably. Therefore she should be considered exploited. This forms the main
basis of a woman’s oppression and also accounts for the exploitation she suffers outside the family.

Hartmann (1981: 7-11) also gives a persuasive analysis in dual-systems approach as she attempts to inter-relate patriarchy and capitalism. She emphasizes the aspect of men’s control over women’s labour and attempts this in a different approach from Mitchell. She elaborates a materialist account of patriarchy and capitalism and says, “We can usefully define patriarchy as a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men and enable them to dominate women.”

The unified-systems approach attempts to avoid the problems confronted by dual-systems approach and suggests that it would be more fruitful to take up the analysis of division of labour i.e. giving detailed account of who is doing what, rather than an abstract class analysis. Gender division of labour is the unifying concept of this approach. This way we can better explain why women are the lowest paid, in least skilled jobs and men in better paid and more stimulating and skilled jobs. Explaining the link between capitalism and patriarchy, Young (1981: 58) says, “...marginalization of women and thereby our functioning as secondary labour force is essential and fundamental characteristic of capitalism.”

Other attempts have been made by socialist feminists to analyse types of productive activities not ordinarily understood as economic but seeking to understand them in economic terms. Rubin (1975: 157-210) analyses women’s oppression as a particular form of “sex-gender system,” which is “...the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied.” Chodorow (1978) contends that the prevailing system of procreation has a significant determining influence on the organization of non-domestic production. She focuses on mothering rather than sexuality to locate women’s contemporary oppression. Ferguson and Folbre (1979) have also attempted to conceptualize the relations between “economics”, procreation and male dominance.

As Jaggar takes an overview of various socialist feminist attempts she points that, “These efforts are all characterised by a view of sexual and procreative activities
as labour, as political and economic, and as existing in dialectical interrelation with what is ordinarily called “production.” Socialist feminists emphasize that procreation and “production” is mutually determining and one is not a more “ultimate” determinant than the other; both are part of the economic foundation of society.” This is the original and a greatly advanced formulation of socialist feminism, which expands and reconceptualises the Marxist definition of the domain of mode of “production” to include procreation in an instance of fundamental reworking of central Marxist formulations. “…the organization of procreation (or reproduction or sex-affective production) constitutes part of the economic foundation of society…acceptance of this claim presupposes a willingness to conceptualize procreative and sexual practices as forms of human labour, historically changing rather than biologically determined (Jaggar 1988: 142).”

This approach takes the radical feminist critique of the liberal public/private split even further by building upon it their critique of Marxist tradition. As we have already noted before, Marxist conception of the link between public and private realm is fundamentally different from the liberal conceptualisation. They examine political economy whereby economy and politics are not separate but intimately linked. They locate women’s oppression significantly in this liberal distinction. However, what they have not been able to do is describe the social relations that define this work in contemporary society. Paradoxically, both liberals and Marxists assign sexual and family relations to the realm of the private. Marxists do not keep the reproductive realm outside politics but in their analysis this realm is always less central in comparison with production. Women have always worked in both but the capitalist split enables them to discount their work in the ‘public’ realm and devalue their work in the ‘private’ realm. By accepting even a modified form of this split in their analysis, Marxists implicitly share a feature of liberal capitalist ideology.

Most of the socialist feminists (Jagger, Petchesky, Kelly: 146) have pointed that accepting that there are two distinct spheres is misleading. As Jaggar says, “Socialist feminism conceives contemporary male dominance as part of the economic foundation of society, understanding, “economic” to include childbearing and childrearing and sexual activity...abolition of male dominance requires a transformation of the economic foundation of society as a whole. It is necessary to
transform not just education, nor simply work, nor sexuality, nor parenting. We must transform everything (Jaggar 1988: 147).”

Feminist Politics and the State

Feminist political engagement with the state has a long and varied history. There is an important debate in feminist scholarship concerning the relationship of women with the modern state. As we noted, different characterization of the state by feminist theories has led to differing articulation of feminist political demands. Is the state an instrument of women’s oppression or can it 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. Dahlerup (1987: 121) has argued that state support to women by the way of protective legislation and affirmative policies enable women to break away from their dependence on individual men thereby undermining patriarchy. In the post-colonial context Kandiyoti (1991) points how nationalists see the state as a modernizing force and ultimately beneficial to women. For liberal feminists, who marked the first wave of women’s movement in the West, state is a neutral arbiter between different groups in society and women could legitimately address to it their demands of equality with men.

Feminist scholars have also argued against developing any theory of the state. They argue that analyzing the state is of not much use as the state is too unitary, aggregative and unspecific. Women are simply the objects of its policies. ‘The state’ is too abstract a category (Allen 1990: 22). On the other hand Rai and Lievesley (1996: 1) have argued that the state is “...an uneven and fractured terrain with dangers as well as resources for women’s movement.” In the context of Russian women’s engagement with the post-Soviet state, Sperling makes a similar argument that even though the state reinforces women’s subordination, there are always possibilities and spaces in which contest for changing gender power relations exist.

Women’s movement’s long history reveals that there exists a broad consensus over the fact that the state is a gendered political structure and that the policies that it formulates from contradictory and competing pulls within are also gendered. Charlton
et al (1989) outlined three areas of state policies. One area is of policies aimed particularly at women. This included protective legislation and areas pertaining to organization of reproduction such as policies and laws regarding abortion, childbirth, maternity leaves and so on. Second are the policies dealing with relations between men and women. It includes family laws, an area where power relations between men and women are institutionalized, most importantly property rights, organizing sexuality, marriage laws and so on. The third set of state policies are the supposedly gender neutral general policies which have been subdivided into two groups. One subgroup of state policies is that which is linked to the traditionally ‘masculine’ public sphere of war, foreign policy, international trade, resource extraction, land reform and so on. Although all these policies situate women differentially in terms of citizenship rights of participation in decision making, livelihood and resource allocation they are deemed outside the purview of constituting gender power relations. The second subgroup is those state policies that often fall under the general rubric of social sector and welfare policies. They include concerns of the private sphere such as housing, health, education, and so on.

For the purpose of our analysis we will look at state policies and the shifts that have taken place in those policies that pertain to organizing the processes of “production” in the Russian society. The socialist-feminist understanding of “production” will include both, production as it has been defined in the Marxist sense and the social organization of procreation. We will also look at the impact of these policies on the prevailing gender order in Russia not in a determinate sense but as part of an active engagement between competing pulls on the state that are shaping these policies, women as an interest group and other non-state social actors.

While it is important to look at the changes that have taken place in Russia since 1991 in continuation with the Soviet socialist social order that preceded it, it is crucial to keep note of the fact that the Soviet socialist state was the outcome of a socialist revolution and based itself within the ideological frame of socialism as understood by the Soviet leadership. Unlike the liberal state, which characterizes a capitalist political economy, Soviet socialist state was a self-proclaimed workers state and public ownership of all property in the form of state ownership and regulation was the organizing principle of society. Central command economy, in keeping with
the basic socialist tenets, included within its domain concerns of differential needs and capabilities of social groups like women, old people and children.

The claim to have emancipated women was one of the most celebrated claims of Soviet socialism. In the next section we will briefly look at the socialist feminist critique of this claim to underline the crucial fact of not just the limitations of the seven decades of Soviet socialist attempts to resolve the question of women's emancipation, but also to comprehend just how fundamental a restructuring of Russian state and society followed the collapse of Soviet Union.

**Soviet Socialist State and Socialist Feminist Project**

October revolution in 1917 created Soviet Russia, which since 1923 came to be known as U.S.S.R. It became "...the first case in history of a working class form of State (under the slogan of "the dictatorship of the proletariat") carrying out the expropriation of the former propertied class and establishing a socialist form of economy (Dobb 1995:1)."

A formerly backward country transformed into a highly industrialized country at an unprecedented fast pace without the aid of any considerable import of capital from abroad and was carried out under the guidance and control of a national economic plan. This was unlike the classic industrial revolutions of the West which were characterised by conditions of laissez-faire and atomistic capitalist enterprise. It profoundly influenced debates and direction of economic development in third world countries like India, which became independent from colonial rule a few decades later.

Amongst the many analyses that have followed during and after the existence of Soviet Union the question of scarcity of consumer goods and lack of consumer choice has been highlighted as a crucial failure of the centrally planned socialist economy of Soviet Union. This aspect has impacted on the feminist analyses of Soviet socialist production process that is relevant for our purpose in this research in two significant ways. One, it has been the factor responsible for considerably increasing
the burden of managing households with the burden falling disproportionately on women. Second, it has been the underlying thread of comparison between the model of democratic capitalist economy of freedom of consumer ‘choice’ and centrally planned socialist shortage economy of availability of basic needs for the overall population at the cost of consumer choice and freedom. Another, perhaps more important than all others, is its impact on the overall policy orientation during the 70 year Soviet regime. Though not directly related, but it had a significant bearing on the Soviet resolution of the conflicting aims of the realms of production/reproduction. The appreciation of the dialectic between international constrains and national priorities with which the Soviet leadership could perhaps not cope does not discount the ultimate detrimental impact of Soviet state’s over emphasis on production at the cost of all else. In this perhaps lay the greatest failure of the 'Soviet socialist resolution of the women’s question.' We will take a brief look at the context that the Soviet state found itself in and which shaped this aspect of soviet economy.

The particular context in which Soviet state found itself immediately following the revolution and the ideological and economic premise of a socialist economy resulted in rather specific constraints and novel possibilities presented to Soviet planners.

The pace of Russia’s industrial development was seriously hampered by the relative backwardness of her transport system, fuel and power base. This also meant that products of heavy industry were diverted first and foremost towards improving the infrastructural base like the railways, waterways, roads, opening up of new mines and building new electric power stations for further industrial development. Suspicion, if not outright hostility, characterised much of the response of the Western world at the time of Soviet revolution which meant that there was little possibility of importing capital from abroad in the shape of loans. Unlike Britain's industrial revolution U.S.S.R had to generate the means for industrial construction almost exclusively from internal resources. Secondly, the ideological, philosophical and programmatic foundation of Soviet socialist state also dictated the priorities and shape of the economy into collective forms. While this enabled centralized planning, it also meant that “...an agricultural surplus could not be obtained by permitting or encouraging the growth of large scale individual farming, as was done in other
countries, since this would have opened the door to a revival of Capitalism in the
countryside: a Capitalism deeply entrenched in the village and dominating the supply
of primary products to industry and the towns...it proved necessary for Soviet
economy simultaneously to carry through a policy of high-speed industrialization and
a socio-economic revolution in the basis of peasant agriculture” (Dobb 1995: 13).
Last but not the least was the factor of the prospects of war and need to build defence
capabilities. This factor not only forced the pace of industrial development but it also
led to diverting much needed products of industrial development to those of
armaments and war.

Questions of productivity of each industry into which investment was made
were decided “...without the device of a price for capital as an explicit category of
cost and used the priority-list method. In Soviet economy there is a retail market in
which consumer goods are priced, and there is a wage-structure related both to the
nature of different types of work and to the relative scarcities of different sorts of
labour-power, which form the basis for the calculation of prime costs” (Dobb, 1995:
13).

Dobb has analysed the specific features of Soviet socialist planning which also
entailed a higher degree of specialization. A particular industrial plant specialized in
one type or variety of products unless significant elements of joint supply and joint
cost in the production process could be created. This then could make the production
of several types of products in one plant especially advantageous. However, this
degree of specialization also meant that increasing the output of a commodity by less
than twice its existing output was not often feasible. Secondly, the important question
of variety in production of products that the people at the given time can afford can
never be satisfactorily be decided by any verdict of the market. The alternatives
available are conditioned by the means available and as the means grow so do the
alternative commodities in the market. As the primary wants are satisfied and more
alternatives in a variety are available the choice between them becomes more
controversial and less calculable. Dobb points to an often-overlooked paradox. He
says, “…the demand for most luxuries will be restricted within the bounds of a
comparatively limited supply by the fact that their price is beyond the reach of all but
a small minority of the population...above a certain price the article...will have
scarcely any purchasers at all, because few or none can afford it; while immediately below this price the demand for it may become almost infinitely elastic because everyone will now wish to acquire it, until the supply has become adequate for all, when the demand may once more become quite inelastic. In such circumstances, a planning authority would need to be very careful not to put a new article into production until resources were adequate to produce it on a large enough scale to supply the majority of consumers...the more that the income-distribution of a community approaches equality, the larger is likely to be the number of things that are either not available at all or are in short supply. Yet the existence of these conditions is not necessarily any indication that economic resources are being inefficiently used. Rather it is an indication to the contrary (Dobb 1995: 20-21).

In the common perception the central command economic planning was synonymous with an economic ‘totalitarianism’ whereby decisions from the top or the center were imposed on an unwilling periphery. There are many debates surrounding questions of the relationship between the center and the periphery in economic decision-making, initiatives and discretion. The method of economic planning followed in Soviet Union was unlike capitalist atomistic economic decisions propelled by the profit maximizing motivation of private entrepreneurs. It was instead dictated by the social policies managed by neither personnel who had rights of ownership over the means of production nor the activities they were managing answerable to profit motivation of private owners. However, in any planned economy apart from the main contours of the economic process which are centrally planned, the filling out of details such as costing and pricing and the output of particular commodities and variety of commodities, new construction projects and reconstruction of existing plants has to be locally decided (Dobb 1995). In all except in key lines of production which rendered supplies, orders and administration highly centralized, decentralization of decisions applied to a very large range over aspects like choice of production within the limits set by investment plan, detailed employment of personnel and so on.

Economic planning in Soviet Union was not merely “...a priori creation of economic or social doctrine”, it was forged during the tumultuous course of actual experience and was subject to continuous change and adaptation. Economic decisions and policy was a part of the revolutionary transformation of a formerly feudal old
social order into a new social order was not divorced from concerns of the impact of economic decisions on class relations, revival of old classes and maturing of the new ones.

The legal form given in 1936 was a consolidation of such complex processes of transformation that had substantially altered the structure of Russian society. The Constitution of 1936 entitled “The Structure of Society” explicitly defined forms of property and enterprise existing at that time in Soviet Union. Article 4 “the economic foundation of U.S.S.R.” elaborated “the socialist economic system and the socialist ownership of the tools and means of production…” Article 5 defined socialist property as having two forms: “either the form of State property (the wealth of the whole people) or the form of co-operative or collective property (the property of separate collective farms or of co-operative association)”. The following two Articles expand this definition saying, “the land, its deposits, waters, forests, mills, factories, mines, railways, water and air transport; banks, means of communication, large State-organized farm enterprises (State farms, machine, tractor stations etc.) and also the basic housing facilities in cities and industrial locality are State property i.e. wealth of the whole people; secondly, “public enterprises in collective farms and co-operative organizations, with their livestock and equipment, products raised or manufactured by the collective farms and co-operative organizations, together with their public structures, constitute the public, socialist property of the collective farms and co-operative organizations.” Added in Article 7 is that “every collective farm household shall have for personal use a plot of land and, as personal property, the subsidiary husbandry on the plot, the house, productive livestock, poultry and small farm tools…” and in Article 8 that “the land occupied by collective farms is secured to them without payment and without time limit, i.e. in perpetuity”.

Explicit recognition was awarded to two categories of individual or personal property. Article 9 declared that “alongside the socialist system of economy, which is the dominant form of economy in the U.S.S.R., the law allows small-scale private enterprise of individual peasants and handicraftsmen based on their personal labour, provided that there is no exploitation of the labour of others”. Article 10 said that “the right of personal property of citizens in their income from work and in their savings, in their dwelling house and auxiliary husbandry, in house-hold articles for personal
use and comfort, as well as the right of inheritance of personal property of citizens is protected by law” (Dobb 1995: 282).

The Third Five Year Plan was tragically overshadowed by the menace of war and the subsequent unannounced and unprovoked assault by Hitler pushed back and diverted the precious and hard earned fruits of Soviet women and men. The allocation for defence was much larger in 1938 than it had ever been until then. 1940 saw doubling of the allocation made in 1938 which was equal to the allocation made from the budget for capital investment in the economic system as a whole. Soviet people and the economy paid an incalculable price for the war imposed on a nascent nation which was finally coming into its own more than twenty years after intervention wars had been terminated. Dobb commented that, “Had it not been for the claimant needs of rearmament, it seems likely that this Third Plan would have seen considerable shift in priority to the consumer goods industries, so that the greatly enlarged capacity of heavy industry could be utilized to achieve an equivalent expansion in the capital equipment of the lighter industries and by the end of quinquennium in the flow of consumer goods on to the market; yielding thereby a substantial rise in the standard of life both of the urban and the rural population. But once again the chance of any rapid expansion of these industries had to be sacrificed to the needs of heavy industry and to investment in armaments and in armament factories” (Dobb 1995: 292-93). When Lenin prepared the roadmap of a socialist economy in which mixed economy of the NEP was regarded as a preparatory stage he meant creating a system in which collective forms of production predominated, based on collective and not individual ownership of the means of production. In this system neither would the classes disappear nor some measure of economic inequalities. However, exploitation and gross inequalities attendant specifically to class divisions would end.

The complexities and resultant complications, which besieged Soviet economic planning, meant a continual adjustment and adaptation of policies in the light of actual experience. The relationship between the state and trade unions, wage differentials, worker responsibilities, incentives and a variety of very detailed engagements with the multiple dimensions of individual’s relationship with the collective had to be worked out during the course of this revolutionary transformation. The massive investment in education and vocational training of the masses from
working and peasant classes fundamentally altered the scope of possibilities open to the Soviet women and men. The altered relationship of work with monetary income exclusively as an incentive had a tremendous impact on people's perception of the centrality of work as something meaningful to their sense of self-worth and independence. Just as the reorganized Soviet state struggled to formulate and draw the contours of its sphere of influence in shaping the future of USSR, so did the women and men of Soviet Union. They engaged with contentious issues constantly pushing the boundaries set by the radical attempts of the state.

The historical contingencies which shaped the unprecedented possibilities and limits of the Soviet economy and the concomitant transformation of the social fabric of Soviet Union notwithstanding the pertinent question for the purposes of our analysis is that why and how did the shortcomings translate into such social policies and social organization which rendered an unsatisfactory resolution of a transformed gender order? While the shortage economy impeded all, why did it have a disproportionately negative impact on women and was translated as, popularly known within and outside Soviet Union, women's double or triple burden? While the question of wage differentials between different types of work and skills was a problem that throughout the course of Soviet planning sought to resolve, why did gender based wage differential (although it was one of the least in the world) remain a constant and persist in virtually all sectors of employment? The rural-urban divide and the relationship between industry and agriculture always remained as an uneasy though friendly alliance but why did the gender relations persist in their traditional patriarchal mode in domestic division of labour? It is to these questions we will turn in the next section of our analysis, which will take a brief look into the socialist attempts and its limitations in resolving the gender question.

**Socialist Organizing of the Gender Order**

The emergence of Soviet gender order was marked with the breaking and remixing of traditional gender stereotypes. Charged debates on what the form of a socialist family should be and what should be the roles of women and men in it took place in years immediately following the revolution and carried on into the twenties.
The linkages between women and space found a reflection in heated debates regarding the architecture of the new society that was being made by the people. Debates followed on how to enable the new architecture to reflect new structures of the socialist family and the evolving socialized tasks of reproduction and domestic work in the shape of communal kitchens, laundries, kindergarten schools, crèches and so on.

Almost all scholarship, those that are sympathetic and those that are not towards the socialist endeavors, on the status of women in Soviet Union acknowledge the tremendous achievements of women in all indicators of social development. The number of women with degrees in higher education, technical skills, their entry in all spheres of formal production including those of military and other such previously male preserves indicate a profound and fundamental reorganization of women’s position in Soviet Union when compared with pre-revolutionary Russia. Sakwa (1996: 266) points that, “The participation rate of women in paid employment was one of the highest in the world at around 90 per cent...women made up 60 per cent of Soviet specialists with higher and secondary special education, constituting 58 per cent of all engineers, 67 per cent of all doctors, and up to 91 per cent of librarians...half a million women in the USSR were directors of enterprises, institutions and organizations.” Many other experts (Rimashevskaia 1992; Posadskaya 1992; Korel 1996; Buckley 1992; Bridger et al. 1996; Gal and Kligman 2000; Molyneux 1990) have documented the achievements of Soviet women while highlighting the paradoxes in all spheres of social life. Patnaik (2002: 314), while reiterating the abovementioned statistics also observes that, “By the 1970s more women lived in urban areas than in countryside...only about 15-20 per cent of employed women worked in agriculture, where about 7 per cent of those directly working in agricultural production were skilled specialists – agronomists, livestock experts and veterinarians etc.” Studies (Busse 2003; Bystezinski 1989; Cronberg 1997) have also analysed the attitudinal shifts in perceptions of the self of Soviet women and men and the significance of the practice of working in imparting intellectual stimulation and challenges to women who considered work as an intrinsic and a central component of their identity.
Some studies also elaborate on the engagement of the Soviet state and women with contentious issues that emerged as a result of the altered position of women in Soviet society (Krylova 2004, Cronberg 1997). Intense debates on participation of highly skilled and trained women in actual combat is only one instance amongst many of such radical pushing of the boundaries set by a reorganized economic and political basis of the Soviet socialist social order. Such studies have resisted the analytical mould which tends to simplify the Soviet past by treating it as a homogenous, monolithic, unidirectional state action and control upon a passive, non-participant and victimized population. These studies have not explored the linkages between the statistics of achievements and the potential it held for forming the basis of women’s agency and empowerment.

The paradox of Soviet socialist organizing of gender order has also been noted in numerous studies, including those that have been cited from above. The dilemma of reconciling conflicting demands of the roles that the women were expected to perform is most obvious in the shifting emphasis of state policies. State policies sought to strike a balance between enabling women both as workers in the realm of paid employment in production and women as mothers in unpaid labour in the realm of reproduction. While the statistics amply make women’s successful entry into paid employment visible, it glosses over the invisible domestic labour that women performed at home. Social policies and infrastructure developed by the state performed a supporting role to enable women to cope with this dual burden which however, remained as women’s responsibility all through Soviet regime. Maternity benefits, leaves, crèches, communal kitchens, laundries and small shops at workplaces and other dimensions of socialization of the tasks of domestic labour were a part of the state attempt to encourage and maintain women in their, equally if not more important, role as mothers. The gender basis of the division of domestic labour remained largely unquestioned in the Soviet socialist family. This was also one of the reasons why shortages of consumer goods and lack of labour saving domestic devices hit women disproportionately as compared with men. It increased the sheer number of hours that women worked as unpaid labour and the stress it generated after and apart from paid employment.
Analysts have also extensively documented the sex based labour processes in the realm of production, which rendered women’s participation in the economy as only partially successful. Gender based wage differentials, sex segregation of jobs with women occupying the lesser paid and skilled job sectors, ‘glass ceiling effect’ which restricted a larger entry of women in top and decision making jobs marked the Soviet labour market. State subsidies and the enterprises shouldered the burden of maintaining the more expensive labour force of women. Compensations, benefits, infrastructural support, which were almost exclusively availed by women, and a divided loyalty between prioritising family responsibilities and formal employment made women a ‘lesser productive force’ than men. Soviet state’s attempt to ameliorate women’s difficulties in overcoming the conflicting and demanding load of twin goals seems to have reinforced their status of not being equal to men in production and kept their presence in the economy at best as ambivalent.

Acute demographic concerns and a falling birth rate despite making abortions illegal and non-availability of contraceptives led the state to further consolidate and even expand protectionist policies for women. It excluded a number of sectors which were deemed to be harmful to women’s health in which women could work, extended benefits and leaves, made part-time and lighter work load for women more available. It was partly in response to a number of pressures such as growing articulation of stressful lives of double or triple burden on women, international stereotyping of Soviet women as ‘masculine’ and most importantly demographic concerns which shifted the ideological balance in favor of motherhood and femininity in the 70s.

Natural biological roles and destiny of women and men were reiterated and women’s valor and contribution to Soviet society primarily as procreators of the nation was lauded. This did not mean that women were pushed back into the private realm of the family but it did mean that the paradigm of evaluating women’s roles and contribution in society found a more conducive articulation in their biological procreative functions.

A brief overview of Soviet understanding of the agenda of women’s emancipation raises a few obvious questions. Why is it, as Jagger succinctly put it, that woman always had to do women’s work in the Soviet socialist society? The fundamental patriarchal premise that natural sexual differences ordain different roles
of the sexes in society was not disturbed rigorously enough and perhaps gender differences were ingrained as 'natural' and therefore a constant. All the policies and analysis of the gender question was premised on creating favorable circumstances to enable women to transcend the isolation of the private domain and enter the formal domain of production. Soviet analysis of locating the 'natural biological' role of women as procreators as the only 'natural' difference between women and men translated into not just giving birth to a child. It also meant that she was responsible for all the tasks related with procreation like nurturing, rearing, caring and so on. Even though the Soviet state attempted to socialise various tasks of reproduction by providing the infrastructure as acknowledged by numerous studies, it did not question as to why women were fundamentally responsible for managing and performing all these tasks. Was it because of their 'innate maternal nature' that they were better suited for the job? The connection between procreation and the roles flowing from this spilled into all other domestic tasks also for which women held themselves responsible which then further lend itself into a sex based differential in the formal sphere of paid employment. Even those women who excelled in their profession articulated their battle with the guilt of not being able to give more to their families than they were already giving.

Consequently, even legislations that led the world in correcting historic wrongs done to women and were boldly formulated and sought to be implemented, the impact was not quite as had been intended. Caught in a contradictory bind of demographic, economic and war contingencies, state policies and the debates carried out were limited within the traditional gender roles and hierarchies. Radical potential of even those policies that could disturb the 'patriarchal natural gender order' was proscribed by the periodic corrections made by the state and social norms and attitudes.

The breaking of traditional gender stereotypes and ambivalent, often contradictory, attitudes revealed by the women themselves as well as numerous debates carried out in the public sphere do not point to a simplistic picture of a 'totalitarian' society as many analyses have been uncritically presenting as the basic assumption of their premise. It points to a society fraught with engaging in multiple and complex issues. Masculinity and femininity were far from settled definitions in a
society that had started out with legalizing homosexuality and many other radical attempts to redefine the notion of family and marriage in its complex linkages with the other questions of their society in the making. The political and ideological will of a socialist state made it possible to take the substantive demands of equality for women radically forward and laid the ground for a feminist debate with the possibilities and limits of such attempts. But tumultuous events in 1991 led to the disintegration of the very basis of the political economy of Soviet Union and completely overturned the grounds of the debate.

**Neo-Liberal Challenge to Feminist Politics**

Amongst the many dimensions of Soviet society that were fundamentally restructured by the ‘transition’ of Soviet socialism into Russian capitalism, gender order and its relationship with the state and free market is a crucial one. As the Russian variety of capitalist system emerged with the collapse of socialist system, market forces and big capital found their way into the new political economy of Russia in a big way. It marked the decisive shift in international balance of forces heralding the rightward shift in both politics and economy in the world. Neo-liberal basis of political theory and political economy gained a greater legitimacy with the collapse of Soviet socialism.

The renewed legitimacy of neo-liberalism not only was strengthened by opposing socialism but also created the grounds for the reappearance of minimal state theories as opposed to welfare regimes in liberal democracies. As we have observed the philosophical basis of liberal political thought was organized around the crucial distinction between public/private realms of society and arenas of delimiting or legitimizing state authority. This dichotomy has been preserved as it is crucially linked also with the preservation of private property and free hand of the market in a liberal democracy. Simultaneously, the liberal state has a renewed responsibility to ensure the safety and security of its citizens and borders of its country. This allows the state to formulate repressive and draconian laws to suppress people’s movements for equality and justice. So a liberal free market economy is premised upon the evolution of the state into a politically hard and ‘masculine’ state. These are the fundamental
basis of individual rationality, initiative and freedom, values that are celebrated and presented as the highest achievements of human civilization.

Soviet socialist gender order was implicitly organized around a public/private distinction. However, it is crucial to note that this distinction was preserved not on the basis of private property or free market. The socialist system handled gender difference and hierarchical power relations between women and men that they had inherited first by its ideologically committed attempt to erase all inequalities including gender based discrimination in the public sphere of production. Work for both women and men were compulsory with both genders being defined primarily as workers on their way towards becoming the new socialist soviet citizen. “The private was simultaneously targeted for fundamental change that went beyond the elimination of “private property”...postwar Western trends resanctified the nuclear family as a symbol of the “free world,” while the East moved in the opposite direction. New regulations eased divorce, set up at least rudimentary childcare facilities, socialized laundry, cooking, and other household tasks, and even pressured men to participate in household labour. But these latter changes were difficult to construct and maintain, resisted by the populace, and difficult to enforce. Some of them fell by the wayside and others were inadequately developed...Thus, despite early efforts, the division of labour in the household was never fundamentally transformed by state socialism. Socialization of housework was not fully realized; housework remained publicly invisible and devalued” (Gal and Kligman 2000: 48). The relationship of women was largely independent from men and women were not exclusively restricted to the private realm. However, dependence on the state and the relationship between the women and the state remained an uneasy one. The responsibilities of Soviet state, as entailed by the Soviet gender contract enabled the shifting of most of domestic infrastructural burdens on the public services provided at minimal costs by the state. The work enterprises also structured themselves around the needs of dependent children and domestic tasks of working women. The transition radically altered the role and basis of the upcoming Russian state.
Neo-liberal Paradigm of the State

Neo-liberal emphasis on the role of state being a minimal one was a reiteration of the earlier classic liberal position of locating the state over and separate from society with its functions being limited to a neutral arbiter between free contractual relationships and transactions of the market. This shift from welfare regimes to a free market minimal statist social order was marked by, as Sawer has analysed, a highly gendered sub-text. She says, “The welfare state is portrayed by its neo-liberal critics as undermining the masculine values of independence, self-reliance and competitiveness. Whereas women’s suffrage was opposed on the grounds of its effect on women’s femininity, today the welfare state, which in part flowed from women’s citizenship, is opposed on the grounds of its effects on masculinity. The ‘maternal state’ is a barrier to competitiveness both at home and abroad: the ‘competition state’ must replace the welfare state” (Sawer, 1996: 119). Nozick (1974), influential liberal conservative, re-emphasized the ‘self-reliant citizen’ and weaning him away from an overprotective maternal state. The state’s proper function was to protect private property rights of its citizens and to ensure the law and order of the land. Goodin (1985) said that the neo-liberal ‘self’ presumes a self-reliance which conceals the dependence of men on women’s caring and nurturing work and women’s dependence on men as breadwinners to sustain them. It invisibilises the relation of interdependence and dependence in the family. It also devalues the non-market work performed by women and attributes value only to the market work performed by men. It is never expected that women as mothers and wives would be self-reliant or independent therefore, they can never really lay a claim to full citizenship rights as defined by the neo-liberal minimal state. This inequality is portrayed as a contract between two free individuals entering voluntarily in the contract called marriage.

The neo-liberal hostility towards single mothers particularly is revealed in the Hayek’s (1979: 119-120) suggestion that all those ‘dependent’ on welfare state provisions should be excluded from voting rights. He excluded not just single mothers but all government employees, pensioners and so on from voting rights. Sawer (1996: 131) critiques Gilder (1980), another American minimal state advocate, saying “Gilder's highly sexualized account of the state was influential in the White House at the time of President Reagan. On this account the state, by usurping the provider role,
robs the male of his potency within the family and also removes the restraints on the antisocial expression of male sexuality outside the family. Male potency and power within the family seemingly relies on the economic dependency of women; where there is an alternative source of economic support men are disempowered. The images of ‘brides of the state’ and of the state cuckolding husbands clearly run counter to the dominant metaphoric constructions of the welfare state we have discussed, such as the nurturing mother or the mollycoddling nanny. They draw attention to the sex of the main beneficiaries of the welfare state and suggest that this kind of state becomes the illegitimate rival of male citizens.”

The contemporary neo-liberal discourse calls for minimal state intervention, self-reliance of individuals and strengthening the family. Women’s arena of activities is emphasized within the bounds of the family. The harmful effects of women’s employment on the family and in restricting employment opportunities of men are often cited. All minimalists oppose welfare state provisions, redistributive justice and non-market services provided by the ‘nanny’ state. The popular view is that an honest tax payer’s money is not for the purposes of supporting other people’s families. McNeil (Stokes 1997: 42) said of Thatcherism that, “The disdain for the ‘nanny state’ conveyed the view that people should be ‘real men’ and take care of themselves. It constructed a set of dichotomies: welfare state, socialism, femininity, dependence and indulgence versus the market, laissez-faire values, masculinity, independence and austerity.” Johnson (1993: 86) asserted that public sphere should have a ‘hard masculine identity,’ sharply demarcated from the feminized arena of nurturing and caring of the family.

Women’s movement has always kept as part of their political demands increasing the role of state in socializing the tasks of reproduction such as providing kindergartens, playgrounds, maternity and child benefits and health services. It is precisely this role of the state that has aggressively been opposed by minimalists leading to withdrawal of state from social sectors in a significant way in the First World. The model of neo-liberal family being encouraged is a return to the ‘natural’ patriarchal gender hierarchies.

Benaria (2003:15) has been working with the contemporary neo-liberal development paradigms and has developed an influential feminist critique of the ways
in which neo-liberal emphasis on deregulating finance capital transactions, labour market and all other arenas of regulations and imposition of such policies on developing countries in the form of SAP (Structural Adjustment Programmes) has had an effect on large number of populations with its detrimental effects most profoundly affecting women of these countries. She points to the exclusion of gender from all mainstream economic development paradigms and debates and its separation into a separate realm. She argues that this is part of a wider trend in economics generally, and development specifically that removes economic issues from their social and political context. As she builds upon work done by many feminists and feminist economists her focus in any alternative analysis is to incorporate the full range of factors that explain oppression, inequalities, and discriminatory practices tied to gender socialization and women's position in society. The same can be said for other hierarchical or class-based constructions/divisions such as those associated with race, ethnicity, colonial and postcolonial tensions and North-South divisions.

Feminists have challenged the neo-liberal assumptions of economic science. These are assumptions of rational individuals and natural reproduction, according to which women’s work is infinitely elastic, and the belief that all the factors are equally mobile. Kuzmanovic’s (2005) analysis is based on understanding unequal power relations between men and women and the need to transform the current power relations towards gender equality. Feminist economists challenge methodological individualism of a rational and gender neutral economic agent, which is premised on traditional gender roles, racial, class and national hierarchies and thus a privileged male agent.

Neo-liberal shift in international polity and economy has not only attacked the basis of welfare regimes, labour markets but has had profound impact on tasks of social reproduction. As the ideological basis of women’s rightful place in the family is being reinforced, the simultaneous withdrawal of state and broader society from the responsibilities of social reproduction are also shifting more and more on individual families and individual women in the family.

Feminists such as Brenner, Katz amongst others have analysed the losses suffered in the realm of social reproduction as a result of globalised capitalist production. Katz (2001: 709) says that, “...Insisting on the necessity of social
reproduction provides a critical arena, as yet under theorized, within which many of the problems associated with the globalisation of capitalist production can be confronted…Variable capital produced in one site and tapped in another is no less a capital transfer than the extraction of raw materials, debt servicing, and the like. Yet this transfer seems to be of no moment to most theorists of globalisation. Social reproduction is the missing figure in current globalisation debates. This is a serious omission. Globalisation cannot be understood without addressing the restructuring of social reproduction.” She attempts to put at the center of her analysis the problems that occur when production is separated from processes of reproduction. As the market forays more and more into the ‘private realm’ by marketing many household services which can be bought by some, it does not alter the gender division of labour in the household or social relations of production and reproduction and is premised on the availability of cheaper migrant labour from the global South. Recent policies of globalisation have created a wider difference between rich and poor not just within a country but also between countries of the globe. Its impact on women has been most detrimental as they struggle more and more to fill the gap between the state and the market to ensure their household’s reproduction and well-being.

**Feminist Resistance to Neo-liberal Politics of Globalisation- Subject Trouble**

Cindi Katz marks the absence of explicit articulation of issues of social reproduction in instances of global movements like WSF (World Social Forum) that are resisting the policies of capitalist globalisation. She emphasizes on the need to do so as, “…Redistributing responsibility for social reproduction back to capitalists and the state, transnationally and at all scales, would begin to recalibrate the costs and benefits of globalisation in ways that would pinpoint its widely distributed costs and promulgate increased social justice and equality across classes, nations, localities and gender. Making such a move would help revitalize a truly internationalist politics” (Katz 2001: 718).

The difficulties in framing a feminist analysis in the context of both, a renewed attack on the gains made by women’s movement by the neo-liberal shift in
international polity and economy on the one hand and the post-modernist encounter with feminist theory can hardly be overrated. There has been a persisting tension visible in the decade of 90s on whether gender should be considered a central category of social-political analysis or it needs to be deconstructed. Butler and Scott called this moment a ‘productive crisis’ in feminist theory. This crisis was a result of radical contestation and destabilisation of fundamental concepts of ‘gender’, ‘experience’, ‘agency’, ‘woman’ and ‘subject.’ However, this has resulted in a much bigger crisis of being unable to think, “…about gender identity representation and so on epistemologically/linguistically. It means that there is crisis of being unable to think ‘about what we can do in the ethical/political sense’” (Zerilli 1998).

Feminist theories have been increasingly subject to sharp critiques from women situated at multiple locations of class, race, ethnicity etc. for constructing a gender identity, which assumes to represent the interests of all women. This is not to say that early feminism went unchallenged as it was amply demonstrated by the spirited criticism by black and working women who pointed out that the experiences claiming gender universality excluded their experience of oppression. Feminist theory has been grappling with the tension between a gender identity that both mobilizes a libratory politics on behalf of women and that can result in gender prescriptions which excludes many women. In the late 80s and early 90s these terrains lend itself to post-modernist formulations with its articulation and celebration of differences. Charging all theories of essentialising, post-modernism has proceeded to strip all identities of any fixity or essence. This tension seems especially acute in feminist debates about gender identity essentialism/deconstructionism. Concentrating on the shared sex of women may run the risk of embracing an essentialism that ignores the differences among women, whereas emphasizing the constructed natures of sex and gender categories seems to threaten the very project of a feminist politics.

Benhabib (1995) articulates her unease with many formulations that feminism borrowed from French post-modernist thinkers in 1980s. She says, “As a consequence of postmodernist warnings against grand narratives, we have become skeptical about any tale of this or that historical moment, this or that historical sequence, or logic of development. In fact, we no longer know who “we” are. Postmodernist theorists tell us that this “we,” even if only invoked as a rhetorical gesture of public speech and
writing, is politically suspect, in that it tries to create a seeming community of opinion and views where there is usually none. Relishing in diversity, basking in fragmentation, enjoying the play of differences and celebrating the opacity, fracturing, and heteronomy of it all- this is a dominant mood in much of contemporary feminist theory and practice.”

Jonasdottir and Jones (1998: 11-12) expressed their doubt about the postmodernist foregrounding of ‘difference’ as a fundamental category of feminist analysis and said that, “…to assert as an imperative that feminist theorists make ‘difference a target of [feminism’s] critique of power’...collapses distinctions between levels of social analysis. In other words, it confuses the theoretical utility of ‘gender difference’ as a social category in political analyses of inequality (such as in research on differences between women’s and men’s economic opportunities) with assigning gender an ontological or ‘naturalised’ status (such as in claims made that women are inherently more peaceful than men).” They have attempted to focus their analysis on how different social organizations of activities constitute gender as a social system of difference, and under particular conditions, sometimes as a structural system of inequality.

Diverse feminists as Harding, Wylie and Bordo have proposed that ‘androcentrism’ assigns an essence to women whereas; it denies real essence to women. Their marginalisation constitutes the real bases of their shared experiences. This is not a result of marginalization by ‘nature’; rather it is concrete patriarchal androcentric social-economic conditions that lead to it. This is pointed to us by feminist theory that the essence assigned by androcentrism is not the real essence, it is nominal. As Rubin (1975) put it, we will have a better chance of understanding the oppression of women in its “endless variety and monotonous similarity.” Harding (1986) says that it is important to mobilize women politically based on their shared experiences of sexism without glossing over the differences of race, class etc. which leads to different forms of oppression and privileges.

Benhabib (1995) pointed out the need to better analyse and understand the shift from standpoint feminist paradigms to that of post-modernism. She remarked that, “Throughout the nineteen-eighties the theoretical message of the French “masters of suspicion” was at the center of a political critique by lesbian women,
women of color, Third World women of the hegemony of white, western European or North American, heterosexual women in the movement. This political critique was accompanied by a philosophical shift from Marxist and psychoanalytic paradigms to Foucauldian types of discourse analysis and Derridean practices of textual deconstruction. In terms of social research models, there was a shift from analyzing women's position in the sexual division of labour and the world of work in general to the analyses of identity-constitution and construction, problems of collective self- and other-representation, issues of cultural contestation and hegemony.” She pointed out the resultant impossibility of developing ‘a common vision of radical transformation’ and stresses on the need to develop our capacity for autonomous agency.

The relevance of socialist-feminism is underscored by Holmstorm, particularly in the context of intensifying structures of oppression as the impact of the policies of globalisation deepens all over the globe. Holmstorm (2003) says, “I believe the time is right for a positive reappraisal of the socialist feminist perspective. The brutal economic realities of globalisation make it impossible to ignore class, and feminists are now asking on a global level the kinds of big questions they asked on a societal level in the 1970s...Most important is the fact that the increasingly female and minority composition of the workforce makes it more apparent that sharp splits between class oppression and sex or race oppression, or between workplace and community issues are untenable practically and theoretically...Even within identity politics there is some indirect attention to class...It is essential to retain the insights of the 1960s. Socialist theory and practice that failed to give serious attention to issues of gender, race/ethnicity, and sexuality would have little credibility today. And so, in addition to criticism, it is important to offer positive examples of analyses that integrate class with those other aspects of identity. It is also important to pursue theoretical discussion within the broad socialist feminist perspective regarding the relationship between class and other aspects of identity and the meaning of “material” and “economic.” The recent internal critiques of postmodernism by feminists who have tried to take it in a more realist and materialist direction have broadened this discussion. With economic questions once again central to many feminists’ agendas...this is an opportune time to reconsider how Marxism can help us comprehend the global reality of women’s oppression and how Marxism itself needs to be revised or supplemented.”
The Russian transition from Soviet socialism to free-market neo-liberal capitalism has been a fundamental restructuring of social and economic relations. Our analysis will look at the impact of this transition on gender relations from a socialist-feminist perspective. This will include processes of production and reproduction and identity construction of Russian women and men. Many policies and pressures to which the reorganized Russian state is responding are generated from the recent socialist past and demands of its population used to socialist benefits. While the line is more blurred in social policies and political rhetoric, the orientation of the reorganizing Russian state is unambiguously in the direction of dismantling the political-economic basis of socialism. Reinstituting private property and privatization of previously all major state assets, land and deregulating the labour and financial market has been the unwavering cornerstone of this transition.

While the Soviet socialist attempts, their engagement with Russian feminists on issues pertaining to gender relations need to be studied in greater details and subject to feminist scrutiny and criticism it will not be the area of our study. We will focus on the ideological, political and economic shift to neo-liberal values and policies and its resultant impact on Russian gender relations. The shifts in state policies and reorganization of tasks of production and reproduction have taken the agenda of women's emancipation back from engagement with a socialist resolution to a neo-liberal reassignment of gender roles and identities. It is the implications of this shift, located in the neo-liberal paradigm guiding whatever variety of capitalism that is emerging in today's Russia that will be the focus of our analysis in the following chapters of the present work.