

**Development Paradigms, Feminist Perspectives and Commons
A Theoretical Intersection**

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Abstract

The need for a Perspective on Commons drawing from several disciplines has become indispensable considering the significant multi dimensional role and wide ranging impact it has on community living, collective action and livelihoods. While studies go deeper in each discipline and stream of thought, various approaches to understand social problems and work for social change are beginning to realize the necessity and strength of convergence and a fundamental need to perceive them together in order to enrich intervention.

In the past five decades of active Planning, Development paradigms have influenced national policies aimed at bringing about social change and improvements in conditions of living. Most of the policies and programmes align with certain Theory, based on what they identify and focus on as a problem and what they want to achieve.

Feminist theories examine specifically the social constructs around women, their position in the society and the impact of Development processes on women. Various approaches to understanding Society and the position of women within the feminist theory reflect, on the one hand, divergent perceptions, and on the other, different social and historical locations in which feminists exist.

Commons are essentially part of a dynamic eco-system, and the contemporary social, economic and political processes involving surrounding communities. Their existence and character is affected by changes that come upon in any of the above. Various assumptions underlying the nature of Commons and assessment of the Environment at large, stemming from Development paradigms, Feminist theories (and many other Theories) culminate into programmes intending to bring about certain changes in the state of Commons and its users.

This paper would attempt to bring together to the discourse, the fundamental understanding under Development, Gender and Commons and locate the concerns regarding women's participation in common property resource management. Tracing history, matching with contemporary development and feminist thinking in order to find how these have designed and affected lives of women as beneficiaries, stakeholders and participants of CPRM programmes and examine few relevant Institutional arrangements.

The aim to interface theoretical frameworks originates from a need to relate one issue to another in the attempt to generate comprehensive understanding. Frameworks are not static and evolve over time, although their underlying assumptions usually endure, and these enable us to distinguish one framework from another, even when some elements are common to more than one framework.

This paper would engage in understanding the insufficiency of any single approach and the need for inter-disciplinary understanding, approach and a holistic perspective to working on Commons. The paper would delve into the criticality of recognising how we formulate our understanding, the specific historical, cultural, and economic context; the analysis and the mechanisms that emerge from such understanding.

Key words: Development, Gender, Commons, Participation

Theme: Survival of the Commons: Mounting Challenges & New Realities

Sub-theme: Contemporary analytical tools and theoretical questions

Alice said we should begin at the beginning. However, as Foucault implies, what constitutes the beginning depends upon one's point of view.²

Introduction

*This we know
All things are connected....(Chief Seattle's letter)*

As ecological stresses rise, we are compelled to see the interconnectedness of impacts of varied actions. We are living in a time when propelled by the process of Globalisation and aided by advanced means of communication, changes in one part of the world are having significant impact in even remote corners.

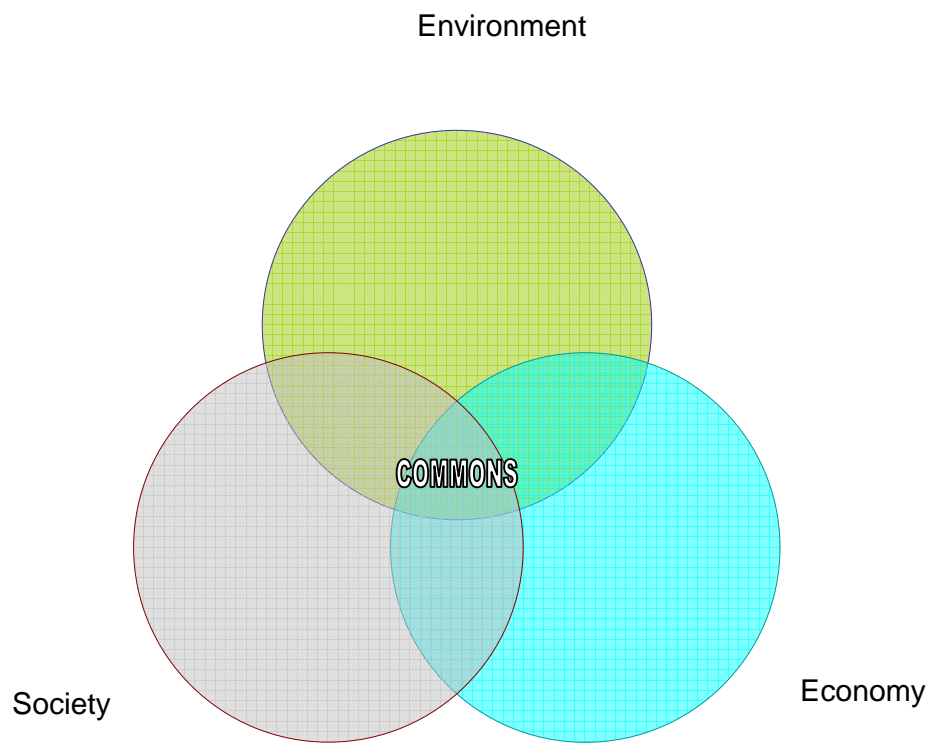
There is a need to rethink the conventional response to multi-faceted issues. The normal response has in it a tendency to break problems into component parts with the hope of reintegrating them at a later date. Our knowledge of the earth's ecology has become more sophisticated in recent times. We have come to recognise that problems once thought to be local and isolated are in fact situated within a wider web of interconnection.

There is a growing realization that neither development nor the environment (human beings as a significant part of environment as users, custodians and decision makers) can be studied in isolation from one another. Development interventions have environmental implications, and environmental interventions have repercussions on peoples' lives, livelihoods and future.

In a non-theoretical simple depiction, the various approaches of Development fall within the matrix given below, emphasizing elements according to focus. Each approach to development also puts across a perception of Nature, either to be preserved or to be exploited or to be controlled, valued from use perspective.

| | ECONOMY | SOCIETY | ENVIRONMENT |
|-------------|--|--|--|
| ECONOMY | Centrality of economic growth, production and consumption, Market orientation | Primacy is on economic advancement and society is seen as a production unit | Primacy on economy where environment is seen to be exploited for economic growth |
| SOCIETY | Primacy is on collective living on exchange and small scale market within the control of the society | Androcentric and seen from a strong social and communal living, strong governance rules in place | Primacy on society to live in the environment, use its resource for subsistence living |
| ENVIRONMENT | Environment contains natural resources which are important to further economic growth | The society is within the environment and is a part of it and sustains itself within the environment | Primacy on environment and conservation of resources |

² From web search



For this paper, we would centre our discussion around Commons, which is a source of livelihood for the poor, women and the marginalised communities (economy), it also by the very character of being designated as Commons, is a social and political space of the poor (society) which has a reasonable scope to aid conservation practices (environment). The recognition here is also that what we are talking about is a small but significant interface of the three sided critical elements and has the scope to influence the rest, within each circle and beyond.

The attempt in this paper is to build a perspective which examines their interconnectedness, builds on each other and suggests certain ways of looking at women's involvement in community based natural resource management projects (CBNRM).

Since this paper would use theories, frameworks and their intersection, we would begin with a basic understanding.

The need for Theory

Theory is defined most commonly as scientific theory, which emphasizes a logically unified framework, generalization, and explanation. Ornstein and Hunkins (1993, p. 184) indicated that a theory is a "device for interpreting, criticising and unifying established laws, modifying them to fit data unanticipated in their formation, and guiding the enterprise of discovering new and more powerful generalisation." Common-sense understandings of theory often use the concept to describe the rules that guide action, opinion, ideals, or a particular philosophy.

Stanley and Wise (1983) suggested that the majority of persons, particularly women, have been brought up to think of theory as something mysterious and forbidding, produced by clever people, most of whom are men.

Theorizing as a process is used to test assumptions about a number of phenomena in order to generate principles and theories to explain these phenomena.

The framework

A framework is a point of view, which emerges from various experiences, knowledge, beliefs and traditions. A framework is a system of ideas or conceptual structures that help us “see” the world, understand it, explain it, and guide our thinking, research, and action. It provides a systematic way of examining social issues and as researchers and practitioners, and foresees ways of change.

A framework consists of basic assumptions. For example, society is assumed by some people to be harmonious and based on shared values. Others assume that society is rooted in conflict over power and access to and control over resources.

Each framework represents an alternative way of looking at the social world suggesting a particular line of questioning. It is possible to hold different sets of assumptions about the same aspects of social reality. Different assumptions lead people to view issues and problems differently. For example, each development framework relies on its own assumptions about the nature of development and examines how and why it does or does not occur; each raises its own questions and provides its own concepts for examining the process of development; and each suggests its own strategies for change.

Frameworks have key issues around which discussions evolve. For example, the concept of efficiency in the modernization framework, class in a Marxist framework, sexuality in a radical-feminist framework, and reproduction in a socialist-feminist framework.

Frameworks compete with each other, and some become dominant over time. Different frameworks also suggest different solutions to problems. For example, inefficiencies in society can be taken care of through reforming or adjusting the status quo in a gradual and rational manner. Or inequalities can be abolished through transforming society to redistribute power and resources fairly.

Theoretical intersection

The current discussion emphasises the necessity for intersection and multi-disciplinary approach as although development interventions are mostly conceptualised from sectoral points of view but are interconnected and impact each other. The basic understanding that peoples lives and in fact all life forms are interconnected, and so instead of trying to bring various theories together at the level of programmes implementation, the attempt is to link them at the roots, at the conception of the framework and approach.

Though the scope to bring together all disciplines or streams of thought is vast, in this paper the attempt is to bring together the development, feminist and commons perspectives, as an example and also because of the immensity of a work of such magnitude. The aim of the paper is to ultimately look at involvement of women in natural resource management projects. It is assumed that bringing out such a theoretical intersection will help students, practitioners and researchers in the field of natural resource management to understand various perspectives and accommodate them within a single framework.

This paper comprises of five sections. The first section draws a history of emergence of development paradigms, locating within it evolution of concern for poverty, social justice, women and environment. The second section would deal with feminist perspectives and how these reflections on the status and position of women relate with the natural world and environment. The third section would situate Commons and its significance as a development, environment and gender convergence point. The fourth deals with Participation as a concept and its experiences with CBNRM projects. The concluding sections would put forth certain arguments in order to strengthen involvement of women in natural resource management.

There is a long history of attention to gender and development and more recent focus on gender and the environment, there have been few attempts to bring the three issues – gender, development and the environment – into a single critical frame for theory, policy and practice. Yet gender, which we will define as the relations of power between and among men and women, is often a critical factor in shaping the ideas, imaginations, experiences, practices and pursuits of people engaged in development and environment initiatives, whether policymakers, practitioners, scholars, activists, or participants.

In this paper, Commons form a significant part of environment. We would be looking at common property resources as critical livelihood support, social and political spaces for the poor and holding significant ecological value for now and for future.

SECTION I

Understanding Development

In ordinary usage, *development* implies movement from one level to another, usually with some increase in size, number, or quality of some sort. In the Penguin *English Dictionary*, the verb *develop* means “to unfold, bring out latent powers of; expand; strengthen; spread; grow; evolve; become more mature; show by degrees; explain more fully; elaborate; exploit the potentialities (of a site) by building, mining, etc.” (Penguin 1977).

These meanings of *development* apply to human societies. The usage of the word in this context was popularized in the post-World War II period to describe the process through which countries and societies outside North America and Europe (many of them former colonial territories) were to be transformed into modern, developed nations from what their colonizers saw as backward, primitive, underdeveloped societies

The most critical element to development is the notion of Change, from what it is now to what we want it to be, for each of us as an individual, a community or a specific group within a community or the Planners. This notion of change derives from experiences which constitute our perspective.

It is also important to understand how these changes are affecting people's lives. Rather than seeing these changes in terms of an evolutionary process, in terms of how societies move (or are kept from moving) from an underdeveloped to a developed state, what people do to construct their political, social, and economic lives and how they adapt to or resist changes in the conditions confronting them. We must consider not simply the larger structures and institutions but also the local culture and knowledge that adapt or react to changes.

The concept of underdeveloped-developing countries emerged as part of the work of early development economists in the 1950s.

Underdeveloped » Developing » Developed

Development (or modernity) was equated with industrialization. Industrialization and its companion, urbanization (the emergence of towns and cities), were considered the only ways for backward societies to become modern, or developed. Progress and advancement were also seen in this light.

After the end of colonialism in certain parts of the world including India in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s Development took the meaning of

- That state or government should play the central determining role in introducing development policies and strategies that could lead to improved standards of living and conditions of life; and
- That international investment, loans, and aid can redirect economies away from their traditional bases — usually in agriculture — toward industry and manufacture.

The dominant thinking in the late 1980s and early 1990s has been that the state has a leading, but only facilitating, role in the economy. Development is seen as the responsibility and prerogative of private companies and in addition, the market is seen as the main arbiter of decision-making. North–South became a popular term around 1980, after the publication of the report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues, popularly known as the Brandt Commission. This approach is based on the renewed influence of liberal economic thinking, neoliberal economics, which has affected international economic policy and development thinking.

Sustainable development was initially proposed by IUCN (1980) as a compromise between development and conservation, two goals that were previously regarded as incompatible.

The term *sustainable development* came into popular use after the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, popularly known as the

Brundtland Report and the Brundtland Commission, respectively. The report was largely a response to the growing international environmental and ecological lobby. It defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987, p. 43).

According to Donald Brooks (1990), the paradigm, or worldview, emerging around this concept recognized the need to ensure and facilitate the following:

- Integration of conservation and development;
- Maintenance of ecological integrity;
- Satisfaction of basic human needs
- Achievement of equity and social justice; and
- Provision of social self-determination and cultural diversity.

Some economists, for example, speak of “sustainable growth.” Critics argue, however, that economic growth (that is, continuous increase in the quantity of economic production) cannot be sustained indefinitely, given the renewable and nonrenewable resources of the planet. Nevertheless, a more equitable distribution of existing resources could lead to improvements in the quality of life.

Feminist activists have been central to the movement against environmental degradation and for sustainability right from the movement’s inception. They have also often gone beyond the narrower definitions of the issues to include the struggle for peace and the struggle against the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Whereas most of the discussions on sustainable development have taken place within the context of mainstream development economics, feminist activists have for the most part seen sustainable development as part of a larger alternative model of development or societal transformation.

In short, sustainable development for many feminists from the South and North implies a new kind of political, economic, social, and cultural system and a new value orientation.

Development Decade in the 1960s, which emphasized economic growth and the “trickle-down” approach as key to reducing poverty. Women’s concerns were first integrated into the development agenda in the 1970s. Disappointment over the trickle-down approach paved the way for the adoption of the basic-needs strategy, which focused on increasing the participation in and benefits of the development process for the poor, as well as recognizing women’s needs and contributions to society.

Decentralisation and its significance in Development

The moves towards decentralization and devolution in the last decade is noteworthy as it gives considerable powers to local governance institutions.

Decentralisation can be at three levels, political, administrative and fiscal. The form refers to the transfer of authority for making decisions to local units of centralised agencies (deconcentration), lower levels of government (devolution), or semi-autonomous authorities (delegation) (ODI 2002). While deconcentration and

delegation imply a reorganisation of central government, devolution means relinquishing political power. Political decentralisation where powers and responsibilities are devolved to elected local governments is synonymous with democratic decentralisation (Robinson 2003).

Rondinelli considers a fourth type of decentralisation, namely economic or market decentralisation. This can take the form of privatisation and deregulation, and shifts the responsibility of functions to the private sector that had been until then primarily assigned to the government.

Democratic decentralisation as a form of governance that expands participation of subordinated groups and is responsive to their interests is critical for women as a subordinated group not only because of the proximity of local government to the lives of ordinary women but because the lack of democracy in gender relations excludes them from participation in governance and the consideration of their interests in the business of governmental decision-making.

However, governance is about the exercise of power and thus a political project determining which citizens will be included in the process of decision-making, whose interests will be met through allocative decisions and how and by whom those in authority will be held accountable for unfair, unjust and exclusionary practices. A significant factor of democratic governance is that institutions of participation can function as democratic organs only under an overall democratic framework, and that local is determined and influenced by its interaction with State and others who are not local.

Development interventions aimed at commercialisation of natural resources involve a major shift in the manner in which rights to resources are perceived and exercised. It transforms commons into commodities, and deprives the politically weak communities of access. The purpose of economic growth and processes to generate wealth with the intention of trickle down effect, changes the nature of land use, the character of institutions, mostly to impact the marginalized, poor and women negatively.

Third world ecological movements are challenging the concepts of politics and economics as defined within the narrow confines of the Market. The definition of democracy is wider and deeper than market democracy. The ecological concept of democracy recognises the right to life of non-human nature and all segments of human society. The wider concept of economy is based on the maintenance of life and livelihood, not merely on the accumulation of profit.

A brief history of emergence of women's issues in larger development discourse

Women's issues were seen mainly within the context of human rights in the 1950s to 1960s. 50% of the world's food for direct consumption is produced by women and women do two-thirds of the world's work. Yet global development projects from the 1940s onwards viewed women as little more than mothers feeding babies. As a result, the socio-economic status of women actually declined.

1970s recognized the key role of women, particularly in relation to efforts to relieve or solve problems in the fields of population and food. In the United Nations' earlier decades, women had been seen as objects: the organization made recommendations and enacted conventions for their protection and rights. In the 1970s, the formula was to "integrate women into development."

Women were characteristically seen as resources, and their contributions were sought to enhance the development process and make it more efficient. For this purpose, the United Nations sought to improve the status, nutrition, health, and education of women. It was often claimed that a failure to fully integrate women into development efforts would be a "waste of human resources." Women's dignity and rights were not yet seen as a cause in themselves. The perennial nature of women's contribution to the well being of their country's population was still unrecognized.

By 1970, when the United Nations General Assembly reviewed the results of the First Development Decade of the 1960s. It was found that the industrialization strategies of the 1960s had been ineffective and had, in fact, worsened the lives of the poor and the women in Third World countries. The Second Development Decade was therefore designed to address this and "bring about sustainable" improvement in the well being of individuals and bestow benefits on all.

Ester Boserup's (agricultural economist with research in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America in the 70s) describes in *Women's Role in Economic Development*, the disruptive effects of colonialism and modernization on the sexual division of labour through the introduction of the international market economy. Among other things, this process drew men away from production based on family labour and gave them near-exclusive access to economic and other resources. Boserup concluded that the economic survival and development of the Third World would depend heavily on efforts to reverse this trend and to more fully integrate women into the development process.

In the 1980s, the United Nations' Third Development Decade gave rise to a "trend towards seeing women as equals, as agents and beneficiaries in all sectors and at all levels of the development process. ... and the year 1985 became a turning point in the history of women's issues in the UN system" (Pietila and Vickers 1990, p. viii).

In several international meetings following Rio, gender aspects of and women's role in development have been recognized: the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), the World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) and the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Istanbul, 1996) and the World Food Summit (Rome, 1996). For example the Ministerial Declaration of the International Conference on Freshwater (December 2001): "*Water resources management should be based on a participatory approach. Both men and women should be involved and have an equal voice in managing the sustainable use of water resources and sharing of benefits. The role of women in water related areas needs to be strengthened and their participation broadened.*"

Emergence of various approaches to women in development policies

Welfare approach: In the 1950s, resources were directed primarily to market oriented productive activities and the residual welfare assistance was directed to vulnerable groups of which women formed an important segment. Programmes on nutrition, home economics and child welfare sought to reinforce women's role as mothers and wives. They were seen as primarily responsible for the well being of the family with little recognition to their role in productive and development activities.

Before that time, in 1947, just 2 years after the formation of the United Nations, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established to monitor United Nations activities on behalf of women. To a large extent, however, its efforts were limited within the legalistic context of human rights. By the 1950s and 1960s, women of these newly independent countries began taking their delegations to the United Nations (though in small numbers) and were able to challenge the legalistic agenda of CSW by raising development-oriented issues.

1950s and 60s saw the beginning of the **women-and-development concept**. During this time, 50 countries were freed from colonialism, and the women who had participated in independence movements acted on their convictions that they must join with men in building these new nations. The central point of the original women-and-development approach was that both women and men must be lifted from poverty and both women and men must contribute to and benefit from development efforts.

"Women and Development" is an inclusive term used to signify a concept and a movement whose long-range goal is the well-being of society, the community of men, women and children.

Women in Development approach gained prominence in the 70s. It recognized women as producers and contributors to the economy and sought to integrate women in development by improving their access to resources and benefits. As mainstream development agenda in the 70s focused on poverty and basic needs, it was possible to demonstrate that women were predominantly represented in the ranks of the poorest of the poor and were largely responsible for meeting the basic needs of their family. The critical significance of women's economic contributions in any effort to maximize returns to development investments was increasingly emphasized.

International Women's Year was declared by the United Nations in 1975, and the celebration of this at the First International Women's Conference in Mexico City marked the globalization of the movement, bringing together women representatives from nearly all countries of the world under the theme Equality, Development and Peace and extended its work during the United Nations Decade for Women (1976–85).

The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Women (later called the United Nations Development Fund for Women) and the International Training and Research Centre for Women were soon established within the United Nations system. IWTC and the Women's World Bank, a loan-guaranteeing organization, came into existence as

NGOs. At the national level, “national machineries” — commissions on women, women’s desks, and women’s bureaus — were soon established in most countries. New women’s organizations and networks sprang up at the community and national levels.

Gender and Development approach: The focus on gender rather than on women was originally developed to differentiate the perception of women’s problems in terms of their biological differences with men and the perception rooted in terms of social relationships between men and women. After about 30 years of ‘Women in Development’ approach, “... the sluggish rate of change in women’s material condition led to the conclusion that lesser power in social relations which is institutionalized in gender relations (as well as in class and race relations) was inhibiting their capacity to profit from improved access to social and economic resources.”

This approach rests on the axis of social justice rather than formal equality. It is argued that it is the socially constituted power relations between men and women and the different roles they play is the core of the problem and since it is socially constituted, these can also be changed.

This approach is gaining ground as it has moved away from looking at women as beneficiaries of welfare programmes. Instead it seeks to include them in the development agenda and questions the very developmental paradigm that has had an adverse impact on women.

It calls for adopting a transformatory strategy in policy interventions. It emphasizes that women have to be empowered to counter the institutional barriers in households, communities, markets and the State that come in the way of making use of opportunities.

The ‘Gender, Environment and Development’ look at the social relations between men and women (of different class, caste and ethnicity) and the manner in which these relations affect their relationship with the environment. Further, both approaches point towards the need to transform some of the fundamental definitions and institutions of development as well as the notions of relationship between people and nature.

SECTION II

Understanding Feminism

Feminist theoretical frameworks and development frameworks have influenced thinking and policy. A historical context is important to understanding development and feminist thinking and how have they progressed, impacting each other in the process.

Feminism derives its origin from multiple theoretical formulations and is based on historically, and culturally concrete realities and levels of consciousness, perception and action. From the 17th century till date the definition has evolved to represent different articulation, conceptualization and the changing times. A broad definition of

feminism is “An awareness of women’s oppression and exploitation in society, at work and within the family, and conscious action by men and women to change this situation.”

This paper attempts to analyse from a feminist point of view, while recognizing that factors other than gender shape perceptions and understandings. Class, race, and culture are also powerful determinants and therefore create differences that need to be taken into account.

Feminist theorising seeks to uncover

- The pervasiveness of gendered thinking that uncritically assumes a necessary bond between being a woman and occupying certain social roles;
- The ways women negotiate the world; and
- The wisdom inherent in such negotiation.

The social roles and the ways women negotiate the world also differ among women in diverse contexts (cultural, social, political, racial or ethnic, religious, etc.) and with diverse personal characteristics (age, education, caste etc.). Most development approaches make the mistake of clubbing seeming similarities into Groups ignoring vast difference amongst women, influenced by many factors like class, caste, socialization process and its manifestation in their lives.

Some feminist perspectives

Liberal feminism is rooted in the tradition of 16th- and 17th-century liberal philosophy, which focused on the ideals of equality and liberty. The liberal conception of equality was based on the belief that all men had the potential to be rational and that any inequality had to be justified in rational terms. The liberal conception of liberty meant that people were governed only with their consent and only within certain limits, generally defined in terms of the public and private spheres (the former the government can regulate; the latter it cannot).

Classical Marxism argues that throughout history people have found many different means of feeding, sheltering, clothing, and reproducing themselves, that is, of producing their material life. In producing their material life, people work together and enter into social relations with one another. The means and social relations of production constitute the modes of production. The subordination of women came into existence with the mode of production that introduced private property.

Radical feminism emerged in the 1960s in the US in response to the sexism experienced by women working within the civil-rights and antiwar movements. Traditional Marxism stated that class was the prime factor in the oppression of working people and that gender equality would follow upon the abolition of class society. Radical feminists argued that making gender equality secondary to class equality diminished the importance of, and deferred action on, women’s concerns. Radical feminists insist that women’s subordination does not depend on other forms of domination, such as class. They argue that patriarchy, or the domination of women by men, is primary and existed in virtually every known society, even those without classes. Women’s subordination, as it is deeply embedded in individual psyches and social practices, is more difficult to change than class.

Socialist feminism emerged in the second half of the 1970s. Socialist feminists argued that class and women’s subordination were of equal importance and had to be challenged simultaneously. Socialist feminists redefined the radical-feminist conception of patriarchy so that it meant a set of hierarchical relations with a material base in men’s control over women’s sexuality, procreation, and labour power. They added an historical dimension to the concept of patriarchy, arguing that it takes different forms in different historical periods and in different racial, cultural, political, economic, and religious contexts.

The **Eco-feminist perspective** (also referred to as the Women, Environment and Development perspective) holds that there is a natural link between women and environment as both are involved in creation of life. The mainstream post-colonial development characterized by capitalism and patriarchy exploited both nature and women’s labour. As a result of this linkage and dual exploitation, women have a greater interest in ending domination over nature and their own lives. Ecofeminists see the patriarchal dominance of women by men as the prototype of all domination and exploitation in various hierarchical, militaristic, capitalist, and industrialist forms. They point out

that the exploitation of Nature, in particular, has gone hand in hand with that of women, and the ancient association of women with and nature links women's history and the history of the environment, and is the source of natural kinship between feminism and ecology. Accordingly, ecofeminists see female experiential knowledge as a major source for an ecological vision of reality.

Arguments tracing a universally caring attitude of women toward nature fail to convince in the face of varying behaviour across classes, regions and contexts. Urban women who use little firewood or fodder, and women from rich peasant households who can obtain much of what they need from family land, have a very different dependence on and hence relationship with communal forests than do poor rural women.

Feminist environmentalism argues that women's and men's relationship with environment needs to be understood in the context of specific forms of their interaction with it, i.e., the material reality. Factors such as gender and class division of labour, caste divisions, distribution of power and property influence the impact of environmental change on people and consequently their responses to it. Since knowledge about nature is experiential, these factors also shape knowledge based on this experience. For instance, women acquire special knowledge about resource regeneration, food grain cultivation in agriculture and plant species for meeting subsistence needs. Feminist environmentalism calls for a transformational approach. It requires a complex set of interrelated changes in the composition of what is produced, the technologies that produce it, the processes by which decisions on products and technologies are arrived at, the knowledge systems on which choices are based and the class and gender distribution of products and tasks.

The Gender, Environment and Development perspective draws from feminist environmentalism and looks at the inter-linkages between organizational relationships, social structures and planning processes and methods. In doing so, it outlines a strategy for more sustainable, participatory, just and gender-sensitive natural resource management. It recognizes that men and women interact with natural resources differently and that gender is a key factor in divisions of labour, rights and responsibilities affecting the management of natural resources. Consequently, it calls for a need to challenge and transform not only notions about the relationship between people and nature but also the actual methods of appropriation between people and nature by a few.

Thus, there are diverse feminist theoretical approaches. Although they converge on the core issue of women's subordination, they differ in their assumptions about the causes or sources of that subordination. These differences reflect the richness of women's lives and the need to integrate the experiences and knowledge of women across the globe, and a move towards a more inclusive, sensitive theorizing about both women's subordination and their power. **Global feminism** celebrates difference without abandoning the search for common political and intellectual agendas. "Difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialect (Audre Lorde 1984)."

One of the major problems with feminism in many women's perception is that it has become a checklist of attitudes and runs the risk of being seen as allied to a whole assortment of convictions they do not necessarily endorse and there is an ideological overloading. Many women identify feminism with specific issues that may or may not include them, rather than with a theory of self worth that applies to every woman's life without exception. Feminism should mean, on an overarching level, nothing more complicated than women's willingness to act politically to get what they determine that they need.

SECTION III

Understanding Environmentalism and situating Commons within the larger scenario

Broadly, environmentalism has two kinds, that of the poor and of the prosperous. Simply stated, the ideological difference between the two stems from how they see

the need for a stable environment. The contrast between the environmental justice movements and wilderness lovers is well captured by Ruth Rosen “At best the large mainstream environmental groups focus on the health of the Planet; the wilderness, forests and oceans that cannot protect themselves. In contrast, the movement for environmental justice, led by the poor, is not concerned with overabundance, but with the environmental hazards, social and economic inequalities that ravage their communities and environment as a source for basic survival and livelihoods.”(modified)

Some varieties of environmentalism

| | Materialist | Non-materialists |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| In affluent countries | Reaction against the increased impact of the effluents of affluence, e.g. the environmental justice movement in the US, the anti-nuclear movement | Cultural shift to post material 'quality of life' values and increased appreciation of natural amenities because of declining marginal utility of abundant, easily obtained material commodities |
| In poor countries | The environmentalism of the poor, i.e. the defense of livelihood and communal access to natural resources, threatened by the expansion of the market Reaction against environmental degradation caused by unequal exchange, poverty, population growth | Biocentric eastern religions Essentialist eco-feminism (poor women intrinsically closer to nature) |
| | Materialist | Non-materialists |

Understanding Commons

To quote Ivan Illich in “silence as commons”

“I shall distinguish the *environment as commons* from the *environment as resource*. On our ability to make this particular distinction depends not only the construction of a sound theoretical ecology, but also - and more importantly - effective ecological jurisprudence the distinction between the *commons* within which people's subsistence activities are embedded, and *resources* that serve for the economic production of those commodities on which modern survival depends.

An oak tree might be in the commons. Its shade, in summer, is reserved for the shepherd and his flock; its acorns are reserved for the pigs of the neighbouring peasants; its dry branches serve as fuel for the widows of the village; some of its fresh twigs in springtime are cut as ornaments for the church - and at sunset it might be the place for the village assembly. When people spoke about commons, *iriai*, they designated an aspect of the environment that was limited, that was necessary for the community's survival, that was necessary for different groups in different ways, but which, in a strictly economic sense, was *not perceived as scarce*.

People called commons those parts of the environment for which customary law exacted specific forms of community respect. People called commons that part of the environment which lay beyond their own thresholds and outside of their own

possessions, to which, however, they had recognized claims of usage, not to produce commodities but to provide for the subsistence of their households. The customary law which humanized the environment by establishing the commons was usually unwritten. It was unwritten law not only because people did not care to write it down, but because what it protected was a reality much too complex to fit into paragraphs. The law of the commons regulates the right of way, the right to fish and to hunt, to graze, and to collect wood or medicinal plants in the forest.”

Situating common property resources in the larger processes

Common property resource is defined from an economic point of view as ‘a property on which well defined collective claims by and exclusive group are established, the use of the resource is subtractive, having the characteristic of a public good such as indivisibility shall be termed as common property.’ This definition has two distinct features, One the nature of the resource is that of a public good. This is the physical and intrinsic character of the resource. Second, it should have an association with a community or a user group in a specific way, with collective claims (hence governance). Without the second, these resources can be managed as state or public goods. As an example of conversion of CPRs into state property, when the British took away the community rights of village tanks in India by creating the PWDs to look after them.

A large portion of humanity depends on Commons for its livelihood. Neither open to all nor privately owned, commons regimes involve more than systems of property rights. They provide a political space where communities are able to define themselves and where the power of any one group or individual can be held on check. The unlimited diversity of the commons also makes the concept elusive. While all commons regimes involve joint use, what they define access to is varied.

A property right is a claim to a benefit stream that is recognized by people conventionally, legally or otherwise. It is an institutional system in which the ownership and management of various resources are identified and specified (modified from Singh, 1994b:p. 133). CPRs implies right of local people to define their own grid, their own forms of community respects for watercourses, meadows or paths; to resolve conflicts their own way; to translate what enters their comprehension into the personal terms of their own dialect...to treat their homes not simply as a location housing transferable goods and chunks of population but as irreplaceable and even to be defended at all costs. CPRs are backed by legal and social legitimacy.

The creation of empires and states, business conglomerates and civic dictatorships – whether in pre-colonial times or in the modern era- has only been possible through dismantling the commons and harnessing the fragments, deprived of their old significance, to build up new economic and social patterns that are responsive to the interests of a dominant minority. Seen from this perspective, the process that now go under rubric of nation building, economic growth and progress are first and foremost processes of expropriation, exclusion and denial in a word - of enclosure. Only in this way has it been possible to convert peasants into labourers for a global economy, replace traditional with modern agriculture, and free up the commons for industrialization. We also realize the growing threats to community living and

collective action because of rapid urbanization, communication flows, resource dependency from urban centres which renders the institutions on common properties highly vulnerable.

Two bodies of thought: One which aims to resolve Hardin's Tragedy of the Commons, is primarily concerned with the problem of encouraging collective action to conserve resources that are both depletable and unregulated. The other, influenced by notions of moral economy and entitlement, deals with the problem of creating and sustaining resource access to poor and vulnerable in the society. The first emphasizing on efficiency and conservation, and the latter on inequality, poverty and exclusions.

Three overarching concepts

Equity, participation and sustainable development necessitate specific discussion for this paper for a cross cutting understanding. These words, separately and in combination, can be used to mean very different perspectives. As critics (Chambers 1997; Lele 1991; Moore 1992) have pointed out, the diversity of meanings attributed to these key terms is confusing and ambiguous. Everyone, whatever their political persuasion, can agree that equity, participation, and sustainability are desirable. People may think that policies and programs couched in these terms reflect a broad consensus on the goals and processes of development, but this practice masks major differences and reduces the scope of critical debate to the issue of selecting the most efficient delivery mechanisms.

Within a modernization framework, *equity* refers to equal legal rights to participate in an ever-expanding global capitalist system (sustained growth). Equity does not, in this framework, imply equal effective opportunity to participate. The modernization framework does not recognize the systemic class, race, or gender barriers that negate the idea of an open society in which every individual makes progress according to his or her merits. Participation, here, does not imply making any choices about goals or lifestyles. No ecological or temporal limits and no recognition of the uneven costs and benefits of the global economy accompany the idea of sustained growth.

Within the institutional framework of development agencies, these same terms have a different set of meanings and carry different assumptions. The meaning of *Equity* ranges from equal rights and opportunities to mean obligation to participate in development programs and projects (government, nongovernmental, national, international). Sustainability in this context is often associated with the ideas of efficiency and low cost. If the programs have been well designed and participation is high, they are supposed to continue indefinitely, with minimal resources from government.

The radical framework, with empowerment as its central objective, defines *Equity* as equal effective power (overcoming race, class, and gender barriers) to participate in defining the goals and agenda of development processes that meet every human's need for a secure and decent livelihood, both for present and for future generations (sustainable development) and recognizing the significance of life support systems on the earth. Sensitivity to difference (race, class, gender, region, history, etc.) is an

essential component of attempts to develop new visions and plan for change: one group's liberation or "development" may otherwise cause another group to be neglected or, worse still, further oppressed.

SECTION IV

Understanding Participation in the context of Development, Women and CPRs

The broad aim of participatory development is to increase the involvement of socially and economically marginalized people in decision making over their own lives" (Gujjit and Shah 1998). The advocates of such participatory models basically belong to two categories: one which views participation as a means to achieve institutional efficiency, and the other, which sees participation as furthering the goals of empowerment, equity and democratic governance.

Participation as voice/ equity/ empowerment has two theoretical foundations. One, deepening of democratic process through the inclusion and recognition of hitherto marginalized groups of society. This is backed by a global trend to decentralize and interventions that further such moves.

The second approach supported by Amartya Sen's work on entitlements and capabilities, the normative aspect of empowerment is in enlarging a person's capabilities to function and the range of options to decide the kind of life one wants to lead. The basic objective of development is the expansion of these capabilities for their intrinsic value (the justification for better life does not have to be in being a better producer). Development policies should not view people as a means of production but as an end in themselves. The goal of public policy is to enlarge a person's functioning and capacity to function or expand the range of things that a person can do and be in her/ his life.

One of the major complexities of participation lies in the community not being a cohesive whole. Both social capital and social capabilities theories have come to recognize that discrimination, inequalities, hierarchies are characteristic of community living.

According to a survey carried out by Food and Agriculture Organisation, more than 50 developing countries have adopted participatory forest protection programmes (Agarwal and Gibson). Broad arguments for community involvement in NRM are two; one sharing responsibility in management would ensure sustainability by encouraging 'prudent practices'. Two, in cases where the government owned the resources but did not have the managerial capacity nor the commitment, community involvement would regulate use and conservation. Participation based on efficiency is an instrumental means to the end, which can be institutional efficiency or state-defined public interest. It would not be too wrong to assume that the primary focus of these projects have never been empowerment.

There are basically two prerequisites for effective 'good government' – one active participation of the civic community in public affairs, and two a civic culture in which participants are bound together by horizontal relations of reciprocity and cooperation, not vertical relations of authenticity, and whose norms and values instill in the

members habits of cooperation, solidarity and public-spiritedness. This reflects in the policy-makers reliance on social capital to design development programmes that mobilize social institutions and networks for varied policy/ programme goals.

Contemporary ideas of democratic governance and human development are also reflected in the issue of local resource management. A move from utility based arguments for better management is accompanied by at least a rhetoric of how involvement, inclusion and participation can lead to empowerment and equity.

The idea being that by enabling the disadvantaged sections of society to analyse their own realities and influence development priorities they would gain the ability to (self confidence and skills) to act in their own interests. Through empowering participation, the disadvantaged can get an opportunity to influence policies by getting their particular need on board (Gujjit and shah 1998). Similarly, unlike the gendered nature of women's work and their association with the forests to provide justification for inclusionary forest projects, where participation is seen to empower women to 'change and challenge' the gender roles and power relationships.

| Form and level of participation | Characteristic of participation |
|--|---|
| Nominal participation | Membership in the group |
| Passive participation | Being informed of decisions <i>ex post facto</i> or attending meeting and listening in on decision making without speaking up |
| Consultative participation | Being asked for opinion, without guarantee of that influencing decisions |
| Activity specific participation | Being asked to or volunteering to take up certain specific tasks |
| Active participation | Taking initiative, speaking and expressing opinions whether solicited or not, |
| Interactive (empowering) participation | Having voice and influence in the decisions |

The concern for women as key actors or privileged participants stems from both, a need for efficiency and as reasons of social justice and equity. The objectives oscillate between equal participation in order to sustain forest resource, to regenerating and sustaining forest resources in order to alleviate poverty related sufferings of the dependent/ user community who are also marginalised.

Quoting Bina Agarwal, empowerment refers to 'a process which enhances the ability of disadvantaged individuals or groups to challenge and change (in their favour) existing power relationships that place them in subordinate economic, social and political positions'.

Critical voices about participatory initiatives have focused largely on mis-matches between overambitious aims and poor practice. One such breach is that between claimed social inclusiveness and the reality of gender biases (Guijt and Kaul Shah, 1998). Despite the aims of participatory development to involve people in development that affects them directly, surprisingly little attention is paid to understanding who wants to 'participate', what makes their participation possible, and what's in it for them.

Many a times, one notices confusions over whether certain processes are visualised to lead to an empowered position of women or are they conceptualised to meet certain practical needs. For example, raising a nursery which in many forestry programmes are 'reserved for women' stem from many different views (given below), which shape the approach, interaction with women and thereby determining the outcome of such initiatives.

- Women take better care of plants because of their nurturing quality
- As an entry point activity, to gain access to the community and women
- As a livelihood supplement for women
- As establishing a relationship with the forest, activity specific participation
- As an empowering process, knowledge of certain technical skills and understanding the role of a nursery in determining the character of the village forest, demystifying working with others, a space to include women's understanding of species, their suitability to local conditions and needs
- Negatively, it has also been criticised as raising the burden on women, to fetch water in times of scarcity

There are likely to be more explanations. But what we are attempting to understand here is the varied understanding behind an activity, with an aim to involve women as representative of a marginalised community. It would not be wrong to assume that a project which sees nursery raising as an activity for women because they are caring, would possibly be looking at women as the nurtures and care givers of the family and community, and not as farmers, economic contributors of the family. This approach validates stereotypical roles assigned to women by the society.

Often, participatory processes have left women on the sidelines, along with the gender issues that shape their lives. Combining gender awareness and participatory approaches can be used to unlock men and women's voices for gender redistributive change and gender-sensitive programme and policy development.

The fields of participatory development and gender studies have remained far apart despite their shared goals of social inclusion and societal transformation (Chambers, 1997; Kabeer, 1994), The initial emphasis of participatory development work on poverty alleviation rather than gender concerns was compounded by resistance to what some viewed as a western and imposed feminist agenda. Thus women's practical concerns, such as child and maternal health, became an escape route for those keen to avoid the time-consuming and difficult process of negotiating structural changes in the power relationships between women and men (Kaul Shah, 1998).

SECTION V

Conclusions

In this section, I would attempt to derive certain conclusions from the discussion so far and factors that can contribute to address Gender issues in Development approaches to Environment through an interconnected understanding.

What is the correct vision of Commons? Whether this resource, also as a social and political space exists to meet basic survival needs of a community and the related bargaining and negotiation, so that the situation does not worsen for them, or are

they in reality spaces to cultivate social change? There is also an element of this communally held land being increasingly threatened by large-scale privatisation and industrialisation, which makes it a matter of social justice. Clarity on the objective of the programme of various agencies would go a long way in determining its work and achieving its purpose. For example, a programme to assist in regeneration of Commons through community based collective action, would benefit a great deal in confirming its ideology, whether it's following a welfare approach or a socialist approach, and aligning its focus and activities accordingly.

The phrase "Common Property" can also be misleading as the connotation behind this phrase is usually that the property is equally common to all in the community. This in fact is not true. Different communities may use the same area of property for different reasons. For example animal herders may use an area for grazing, while others may use it for forest produce or seasonal cropping. Many families may benefit and depend on such resources, not all members of families may collect and process such resources, and different members of families may collect and process different resources from the same location. It is well known that women make use of a greater variety of forest resources, and different resources, than men.

While such situations are complex and difficult to understand, ignorance of them leads often leads to unwitting denial of traditional usage to some by development projects, and leads to conflicts within families and between communities.

Access to NTFP also determines the relative position in society, which many times maintain status quo. Typically, old women are given access to NTFPs which fetch the lowest prices. The good thing here is the provision for old, vulnerable, poor and needy; the concern is the societal construct about who gets what.

The nation-states that emerged from colonialism in South Asia were unable to undo the legacy of state-society relations produced through years of the colonial enterprise that had made ascribed relations (caste, religious community and ethnicity) the basis of identity and relationship with the state. Since gender relations and women's entitlements were key in defining the identity of these bounded communities, the implication for women's status is that, on the one hand, women's rights cannot be discussed, claimed, fought for separately from that of the 'bounded' community. On the other hand, the role of family, caste, kinship and religious community have become key factors of public life, structuring access to state and market opportunities. Women are brought into the public domain as mothers, sisters, and daughters and their entitlements subject to community and ethnic norms and arbitrated by family, kinship and custom.

Women are concerned with the provisioning and care of the household, not because of a particular liking for it, but because of a constructed social role. Women have a small share or no share in private property, and depend more on common property resources. Women have specific knowledge of agriculture and medicine, basically originating from long association and somewhere to fall back on available backyard medicine as women are not so easily taken or can afford modern health care.

The absence of a gender perspective results in significant opportunities to promote effective collective action being missed, due to a failure to recognise the potential for such action specifically among women. Women often have a long history, relatively distinct from men's, of cooperative functioning within traditional social networks characterized by reciprocity and mutual dependency, especially in the rural communities of developing countries. Their dependence on such forms of social capital is often greater than men's, given women's typically lesser access to economic resources

Gender mainstreaming is not only about more women participating in the Sustainable development arena, but also about getting women's concerns and ideas on the agenda. It has also to do with the way of thinking, of organizing, of looking at things. Of not only putting equal access to land and water resources on the agenda, but also acting according these lines and making law reform and land reform happen in favor of women It is about securing women's health and security, of ensuring women's rights, about demilitarization, promotion of sustainable agriculture and energy, and about equal information sharing and respecting for women's needs, priorities, knowledge and wisdom.

The empowerment approach to gender issues connected participation and development in a transformative sense, in so far as change was to be driven by self mobilisation of women's collectivity leading to a wider process of social transformation and a potential challenge to existing power structures. It also meant allowing conflicting interpretations of the social reality to surface within the communities - namely from women and men from different social groups/classes. The idea was that sensitive facilitation would lead to a realignment of social practices

The consensus approach in development which relies in getting everybody to agree is a misconception and a superficial approach. What would be real is to agree to differences of many kinds and thereby agreeing to change and set the course right.

What is also clear is that participation is not an open and spontaneous process whereby all participate equally leading to a 'free consensus' on the issues under discussion. Rather it is 'a complex political process in which inequalities in resources and power between participants and potential participants strongly influence the aims of participation and the forms which this takes' (Mayoux, 1995: 245).

Experience shows that participatory processes and 'attempts to involve poor people' do not automatically include women. Attention to gender differences and inequalities is required if participatory development initiatives are to involve women as well as men. Specific issues include:

Communities are not harmonious groups with a common set of interests and priorities. There are often strong divisions along the lines of age, religion, class, and gender. These power differentials make it difficult for some people to voice opinions that contradict general views. Some women may find it difficult to speak out in front of their husbands or fathers. They may also believe that discussions relating to family matters (even issues relating to workloads) are not for public forums.

Men and women have different responsibilities and work loads, with women often having less time to devote to new activities. Attending specific meetings may raise problems for women if they are set for times of the day when women tend to be occupied. Women's responsibilities for childcare may also make it difficult for women to participate.

Given gender biases in education, women and men often have varying literacy levels. Men may also have more experience putting their arguments forward to outsiders and more confidence dealing with new people. Awareness and knowledge play an important role in the process. Policy/ rules and norms and placing them in the larger perspective and its consequences strengthen understanding and builds confidence.

Women and men may make different calculations about the costs and benefits of their involvement in participatory processes. Given the already high demands on most women's time, they not see the extra effort required to participate as worthwhile, especially if the benefits are questionable.

Organisations need to develop the skills to do this type of work. Facilitating gender-sensitive participatory processes requires experience, skills and the ability to deal with conflict, if it arises.

As advocated so correctly by Paulo Freire, "Consciousness of being an oppressed class must be preceded by or accompanied with achieving consciousness of being oppressed individuals. However severely a social group may be oppressed, it is not without its own analysis of the causes and nature of the oppression and its own strategies of resistance. Changes promoted by outsiders without a full understanding of these strategies and conditions can undermine the well being of the people they are intended to help. Caution, consultation, creativity, and a willingness to learn and adapt, rather than impose, are key characteristics of effective development partnerships. "

The poor have little problem aspiring to be non-poor. However, gender relations are far more complex and articulations for transformed gender relations are rarely overtly stated. Stimulating empowerment in ways that women and/or men might not support, not only threatens to expose vulnerable people to conflict but will also determine the extent to which they wish to engage in a process that may draw attention to deeply rooted conflicts. Participation is only inclusive of gendered views if those who drive the process want it to be, or if those involved demand it to be. Gender-sensitive and participatory techniques can help translate their intentions into practice. Participatory processes can take a long time and may require support over years. Participants (women and men) require support as they explore new issues. It is extremely irresponsible for an outside organisation to encourage people to raise issues of gender inequalities and then not support the consequences.

'Empowerment'-oriented work requires methods that can make social transformation a principal goal, yet which do not expose or generate conflicts that increase the vulnerability of marginalised groups. This is difficult as even methods that appear gender-neutral can provoke household-level and community-level conflicts, or, conversely, provide descriptions rather than revealing underlying power imbalances

rooted in social relations. For example, participatory maps, life histories, and questionnaire surveys can reveal the impact on women of changes in gender-differentiated needs but cannot necessarily explain underlying gender relations. Not everything can be surveyed or visualised, such as psychological well-being and domestic violence. Participatory methods can only address the causes of suffering when embedded in long processes of social change.

Gender activists and feminist researchers are familiar with the dilemma involved in treading the difficult path between the technical (getting institutions right) and the political (mobilisation of voice, representation and demands for accountability).

There are state machineries to address gender issues. Their understanding and approach to development plays a significant role in the promotion of gender sensitive projects and activities. Projects of equality, as for example gender equality, simply cannot be forwarded solely by getting institutions right or merely through the agency of state bureaucracies (Standing 2004; Mukhopadhyay 2004). And yet women more than any other subordinate social group require state intervention and institutional provisions to be able to participate in the public sphere.

Many pin their hopes on collective action and the mass organization of women to counter gender oppression. But the recent work of Marxists and feminists recognizes resistance in its more subtle forms. Those oppressed because of their class, race, or gender — often multiple jeopardies — may be unable to take the risk of overt and collective action (Scott 1985). This does not necessarily mean they are passive or ignorant of the forces that oppress them. They do not suffer from false consciousness, and many have no need for “consciousness-raising.” It is simply that outsiders concerned about liberation, looking for more dramatic rebellions, have often failed to notice covert and indirect strategies of resistance. Although these strategies are perhaps low key, they are nevertheless effective in registering dissent and whittling away at conditions of oppression to the extent that circumstances allow. Feminists have documented many strategies of women’s resistance, some of which have existed for centuries and others of which have been generated more recently to meet new conditions (Risseeuw 1988; Abu-Lughod 1990). As an outsider, we must be alive to notice and work on the reasons for discontent and lack of participation by women.

The dearth of women in formal groups contrasts with their often significant presence in agitational collective action catalysed by the same groups. For instance, rural Indian women have been highly visible in protest demonstrations held by forest protection movements such as Chipko in the UP hills, or by anti-large-dam movements such as the Narmada Bachao Andolan in central India and in different parts of the world. This is in line with women’s substantial presence in agitations within peasant movements, such as the Telangana and Tebhaga movements in India in the 1940s (Agarwal, 1994B) and also the struggle for freedom from colonial rule. Jawaharlal Nehru, founding Prime Minister of India wrote in his book *The Discovery of India* when women came out in large numbers and took control of the civil disobedience movement in 1930, “....It was not only that display of daring and courage, but what was even more surprising was the organisational power they showed”. Observers also comment on the spontaneous nature of women’s

agitational protests in mass movements; yet women rarely find entry into the regular decision-making forums of the organisations spearheading these movements

In local resource management, agitational collective action can complement but not substitute for institutions that monitor resource flows and the regeneration of stocks.

Women's participation would thus be necessary in both. At a minimum, such participation implies group membership and is linked with rules of entry. But effective participation also requires attending meetings, speaking out, and having one's opinions carry weight in the decisions made. In other words, there can be *degrees of participation* in collective action.

Recent years have seen a cautious convergence of gender and participation. Some suggestions

- Smoothly used but rarely explained, the term 'empowerment' is seldom accompanied by analysis of the causes of gender-related suffering or of the processes through which it is commonly but erroneously assumed to occur (Crawley, 1998).
- Comparing official definitions of 'participation' with organisational mandates and available resources can reveal conceptual inconsistencies.
- The term 'community' ignores the differences, with its simple but incorrect image of an undifferentiated and co-operative social group.
- The use of simplistic and stereotypical concepts of 'gender' have alienated rather than encouraged men and have done a disservice to the complexity of gender relations (Cornwall, 2000; Kandiyoti, 1998).
- Use of gender analysis as a cross cutting aspect

The organisations that seek equitable participatory development, as concepts and methods only work if supported by organisations and institutions in which they are nested. Yet many organizations, including the international powerful donor agencies shirk long-term commitment. The crucial need for time to bring about equitable social change is often diametrically opposed to the speedy disbursement of funds or quick need for data that characterises many development initiatives - hence the need for institutional change at other levels.

Capacity building programmes are one small step, but only if gender and participation are presented as integral components and if participants' personal experiences and views on gender are explored. Training-induced change can only be effective if organisational willingness and ability exists on other fronts (Goetz, 1997).

A Gender Analysis Framework is a step-by-step tool to raise questions, analyze information, and develop strategies to increase women's and men's participation in and benefits from projects and programmes. (source: GDRG Gender and Development Programme)

1. The development context or patters in an area, answering the questions *What is getting better? What is getting worse?*

2. Women's and men's activities and roles in the forestry sectors, answering the questions *Who does what?*

3. Women's and men's access to and control over resources, answering the questions. *Who has what? Who needs what?* and

4. The forestry programme actions needed, answering the questions *What should be done to close the gaps between what women, and men need? What does development deliver?*

Affirmative action in some countries has made it possible for women's inclusion in significant numbers in local government. South Asia where four countries have quotas for women's entry is a good case in kind. How measures can make for effective and sustainable participation is being worked on.

Goetz (2004) gives examples of the institutional innovations that have made it possible in different country contexts for women to participate and for planning and monitoring functions to be more accountable to women's interests. These include rules to secure institutionalised spaces for women's participation in planning and monitoring and most importantly auditing and review of expenditures; ring fencing a percentage of the budget for women-only deliberations, gender-sensitive local revenue and spending analysis. These are some of the measures that should amplify women's voice in local deliberations, and support spending on women's needs.

To address the impact of environmental degradation on women, there are no universal solutions. Indeed, attention needs to be given to the character of each local ecosystem. As ecosystems include people and their institutional structures, resource conservation and development has to be accompanied by enhancing the capacities of institutional structures to respond to these challenges. The effectiveness of institutional responses to different natural resource needs depends on the way men and women in a particular ecosystem interact with natural resources and their respective roles in managing them.

The suggestion here is nothing new, but perhaps difficult to visualise and practice, to move from a sectoral perspective to a multi-faceted one, where one is able to perceive people's lives so intertwined in a social, cultural and economic setting. The challenges are in scant convergence among discourse.

The paper has attempted to showcase the development programmes would be able to perform better when seen from an interconnectedness point of view. Commons are, by design, spaces of the poor, even though they are not so common in practice. Women are doubly marginalised within a poor community because of their positions of subordination in the society. The need to involve women, poor and marginalized is to secure the future of the Commons and survival from a constant threat to change their character from staying Common.

In this paper we have seen how the approaches to development, from colonialism to neo-liberalism, thinking in feminism, i.e. from legal rights to household relations, types of participation and understanding of institution and fostering an institution

function closely, determining its trajectory. The attempt is to unfold the labyrinth and understand their paths as leading to or turning away from one another.

The shift of paradigms requires not only an expansion of our perceptions and ways of thinking, but also of our values. There is an interesting interconnection between the changes of thinking and of values. Both of them may be seen as shifts from self assertion to integration. Neither of them is intrinsically bad, what is required is a dynamic balance. Power in the sense of domination over others is excessive self assertion. For men and the few women in the hierarchical order, see their position as part of their identity and thus shift to different set values generates fear. However the power more appropriate for the new paradigm is – power as influence of others. The shift thus indicates a shift in social organization from hierarchies to networks (*Fritjof Capra in The Web of Life*).

"When we try to pick up anything by itself
we find it is attached to everything in the universe."

-- John Muir

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