

UNITED NATIONS INTELLECTUAL HISTORY PROJECT
The Graduate School and University Center, City University of New York
365 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10016

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW OF

DEVAKI JAIN

BY

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New York, 12 March 2002

THOMAS G. WEISS: This is the beginning of tape number one on 12 March 2002, Tom Weiss interviewing Devaki Jain here in New York—not in Bangalore—and also accompanied by Diana Cassells, who did research on this topic. Devaki, I wondered whether we might start at the beginning, so to speak. Could you tell me a little bit about your family background, your own upbringing, your own schooling, and how you believe these elements contributed to making you the person who you are, and in particular, to your own intellectual interests, and your own approaches to international problem-solving?

DEVAKI JAIN: School was during the colonial era, when I was in what you call junior school and high school. India was still a British colony. I think that was the most significant aspect of my early days, in that my sister and I were sent to convent schools. And there's a story behind that which really explains some of the course of my life, I think. My father was a civil servant in a princely state in India, Mysore, which was different from a British province. My father, M.A. Sreenivasan, has written a fascinating book on his life and the times which is well worth reading, called *Of The Raj, Maharajas and Me*, published by Ravi Dayal, New Delhi, 1991. The princely states were more autonomous during the colonial times. They had their own army and their own administrative service. They were not as colonized, in the sense that there were no white officials running the administration as they were doing in some of the other states of India, called presidencies. Therefore, my father was a young civil servant under the maharaja, who was supposed to be one of the most emancipated, good rajas in those days. He has gone down in history as being like Ashoka, who followed another paradigm in governance.

The tale I want to tell is that my mother and father were married when my mother was eleven, so she had not studied beyond the second primary or elementary class. So when she was confronted with the British ladies who came with what was called the “resident,” who was the

British representative in a princely state, she felt terribly humiliated because she could not speak the language and she looked very “native.” So in some sense, I think it drove her to send all her daughters to English schools so that they wouldn’t suffer the humiliation that she did because she couldn’t speak English. And I know she fought a great deal with my father, who was very firm about nationalistic, indigenous aspects of our education, saying, “Don’t send them to Christian schools. It’s bad for them.” But she said, “No, the Christian schools are the only ones who teach in English.”

So I remember the three of us daughters were sent to English-speaking schools, whereas the four brothers of mine, who were all older than the three girls, all went to schools where they were taught not in English but in Kannada, which was the local language. So forever my brothers have always had the handicap that they were not so smart in English as the girls were. I think this was my mother’s way of overcoming the humiliation of what was considered the British presence.

So, I’ve already told you about schooling and family in my own way. Then, as we came into high school, which we saw with clarity what has now been written up in history—that is, the British combined the Christian church with the colonization of India as an economic colony, because everywhere it was the East India Company and the church. This came out so clearly in school. The nuns would celebrate the British Empire and ask us to sing songs celebrating the English language. I remember the first time I protested when I was about twelve or thirteen. There were only two of us Hindus in a majority class of Christians, and they asked us to sing songs celebrating the British Empire and the English language and the flag. We both said we wouldn’t sing, and therefore we were both turned out of class, and things like that.

So it was nationalism and the liberation from colonialism that were the biggest influences in that early era. Then my father left the princely state in the south and moved to Gwalior, which was one of the large northern states, also a princely state, as the prime minister of that state. What was brilliant was that he became the prime minister of the state just a year before India got independence. So he has gone down in history as being the leader of the princes in asking them to federate into the Indian union. Historically, it is said, the princes thought they might like to get British support and be independent and not federate into what has become the Indian Federal Union. But my father led the princes through his negotiating skills.

Where that links with my life is that [Jawaharlal] Nehru used to come to our house when my father was the prime minister of Gwalior because my father played a key role in what was called the Chamber of Princes. So we used to see Nehru having dinner with my father or hear about Mountbatten's dinner with my father. Mountbatten, at that time, was governor-general of India. My father's book about that whole era, which I earlier referred to, has evidence that an act of Mountbatten had betrayed India and betrayed [Mohandas] Gandhi, and led to the partition of the subcontinent, which has been one of the plagues over the subcontinent. So politics of that kind was very much part of the home. We could never be liberated from it because my father would be on the phone to Nehru and other leaders at midnight. Gandhi's assassination—he had sort of feared it because the assassin actually came from Gwalior, from the Hindu Mahasabha, which was the extreme Hindu fundamentalist movement at that time—was another traumatic event. My father had been with Gandhi the previous evening and was totally shocked and bereft when he heard the news.

So it was all very much a hot house, in the sense that it was always heated up with the big issues of integrating India and liberating India and a strong critique of the role of the British at

the time. So that was up to 1947/1948. Therefore, I would say that along with that came Gandhi later as a major influence on my life. My family was very conservative about women. So my father would think of educating his sons beyond school, but his daughters were to get married pre-puberty. So my oldest sister got married pre-puberty, and I was next on the platform.

Resisting that pressure, that tradition became a huge challenge for me. I guess my sister being a victim, I could just find a little space. So going to college was a revolutionary event and I did a B.A. in mathematics in 1953. At that time, i.e., 1954, I met—curiously enough, through a Quaker seminar, because that was the only thing my parents would allow me to go to as a girl—some young Gandhians, a British and an Indian boy, both aged nineteen years. I was about seventeen and they transformed me. They showed me the value of simplicity, of working with the poor, as Gandhi used to do. There were no gender feelings, they said, in the ashrams (the Gandhian collectives) at all. Boys and girls were all, in one sense, sexless—performing roles with total equality. And I think that interest in Gandhi's method of transforming an unequal society into a just society and economy stayed with me for most of the rest of my life.

So I would say the environment of the freedom movement, the Gandhian mode and ethic of self-reliance—both self and the nation—not only made me the person that I evolved into, but colored some of the choices I have made such as getting involved with poverty removal, social injustice. But I must confess that I cannot recall, nor do I think it was part of that time, to find ways of resolving international problems. It has been then, and it remains now, this preoccupation with my country as the platform for my work.

TGW: You mentioned all of those factors which are within India. I wondered whether there was a significant impact from the cataclysmic world events that were going on, including the economic ones when you were born in the beginning of the 1930s. I presume there was a

trace of the Great Depression, and also of the World War, which of course then led to the founding of the United Nations. Did any of this come on the radar screens of girls in your college at that time?

DJ: It seems strange now looking back. But the outside world did not seem to have any presence in the radar screen. In fact, the only aspect of the international or the world outside at that time was World War II, and the fact that we were evacuated from what is now Chennai (Madras). My father was controller for civil supplies for the war effort and located in Chennai. The Japanese entered the Bay of Bengal and brought a ship to the coast of Chennai. All the families—and we were living right on the seacoast—were shifted to a safer place inland. I remember it more as a painful event because I had to leave school where I had friends in what is called the fourth prep. All of us were shifted to a tiny house in Mysore, crowded with fourteen members of the family.

So World War II only came as a dislocation. And the other big thing was hating the Germans and the Japanese—as cruel images of fascism and the evil of the Japanese as torturers. And it linked also with one economic aspect. I was too young to know it, but it certainly made an impact on me and I remember talking about it in school. While the Japanese toys were the toys that were in the market for us—and Japan was a dumper of cheap goods at that time—which is different from what it is today—there was also Japan as the evil and Germans as the evil. So we as children only saw the World War in that sense, but not a word about the UN or the Depression or anything affecting that whole period. Even up to college I was not at all a person who had any inkling or interest in international affairs. In fact, I didn't even know Oxford and Cambridge Universities existed. I was insular in the world I lived in.

TGW: What specifically do you recall from those earthshaking events in 1947 and 1948? And I wondered in particular whether the parallel struggles of other, what are now called developing countries, colonies figured on your radar screen. Or was it only the Indian subcontinent? Did what was going on in Africa or elsewhere in Asia come up?

DJ: Remember in 1947 I was fourteen years old. Therefore, it was not a great age for knowing anything outside home and school. What you perceived were probably more what was rolling around. There were no TVs or internets inside your household. Friends were all people who were reading anything from Sherlock Holmes to Axel Munthe, Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince* and *Green Mansions*. All those were influential books on my later life. They were really another form of reading. Most of my life I wanted to be an academic. I was an "intellectual pursuit" person, as opposed to my brothers who were technologists, or my poor sister who was shepherded into marriage. So I can't say that it would be at the age where I would have had that either. But certainly, in that circle in which I was located, international events and decolonization and the other liberation struggles other than India didn't affect us at all. And I would say this was true perhaps for a huge amount of us middle-class high school students.

TGW: How did you confront your parents or your father about the decision to resist marriage and go off to the university? And how in particular did you end up at Bangalore [Mysore University] doing economics and math?

DJ: It was all subversion and subterfuge. And I am sure there are other men and women who have told you narratives of how you tactically liberate yourself from these kinds of oppressions. Firstly, one of my achievements was that whatever exam I did, I stood first. So you couldn't help the fact that this child or girl had a brain and an aptitude for schooling. Then, my father being so busy and up in front, you could manage many things without his knowing. And it

was the usual difference, I am sure other women have told you, between father and mother, that my mother was in some sense an accomplice to all of our desires, whether it was the boys or the girls. Anything mischievous she would allow. My father was a disciplinarian who would say, “no” to going to a movie and “no” to my brothers for anything they wanted to do which was outside the strict frame.

My father was so busy simultaneously trying to get me married. I was constantly weeping and saying, “I don’t like this guy and that guy. I don’t want to get married.” So through this weeping, silent protest, I could register in a Roman Catholic college for women. I was prevented from going to the university, which was coeducational, because I really wanted to become a brain surgeon. I didn’t want to be an economist. And the brain surgeon course required doing medical, and medical meant coed, and I was not allowed. So finally I crept into this very Roman Catholic women’s college, and that’s where I did my first degree.

After that, I was stopped at home, not allowed to do postgraduate study, as they were looking for bridegrooms for me. One of the bridegrooms happened to be a man who was studying in Paris. My father at that time was on the Air India board and was always traveling on Air India to London and New York. So he invited me and said, “I’ll take you to Paris if you’ll agree to meet this man.” So we went to Paris and I met him. Of course, he proposed to me and all that, but then I cheated my father. When we went to London, I said, “Can I stay for a week in a boarding house and join you later?” He said, “Sure, here’s your ticket.” And I didn’t go back. I just stayed there. I worked in London for half a year as a dishwasher and a maid to pay for boarding and lodging and then got admission to Oxford to an unknown college called Ruskin College. The college was run by the trade unions and the Worker Educational Council of the United Kingdom, but recognized by Oxford. It offers a diploma in economics and politics, and

is meant for working class students. It's an upward mobility arrangement—postmen, miners at the age of thirty or forty who have got good certificates and evening classes are admitted to this college and in two years they can get a diploma in economics. That was the only place I could find when I was doing this dishwashing and all that in London. It was a series of coincidences, accidents that took me there. The woman in whose boarding house I lived said, "Let me drive you to Oxford. Have you ever seen it?" I said, "No."

I got terribly excited about Oxford. I talked my way into the college even though I was only twenty and I had never been in a trade union. I was so charged with the desire for education that the principal admitted me, gave me a room, and the college completely supported my boarding, lodging, and fees. The principal was a die-hard socialist, and I was this apolitical creature. I lived for a year with working-class men in the hostel. There were only three girls and about 120 men in one building, and it was a great experience. All my holidays were spent in miners' homes, in cockney homes. I was drinking every Saturday with them in what they called "pub crawling." I was smoking a pipe. I was eating everything that was available to eat because there was no money to be choosy and vegetarian. So there was no problem with beef or bacon, you name it.

Tom Mboya, who later became the first prime minister of Kenya, was my regular Saturday evening dancing partner, and through the conversations with him I got my first lessons in racism, in the struggles for liberation from colonization in countries other than India, knowledge about Africa too. That link and feeling of closeness to the African continent remained through out my life. I initiated an African students' friendship society when I was working in New Delhi, on return from Ruskin College. My engagement with worker issues also took birth at Ruskin. So apart from Gandhi, it was that working-class experience that drew me into strong

class-based analysis, into preoccupation with inequality, the importance of upward mobility and education, and discrimination.

And seeing Oxford from the eyes of the coal miners and the postmen from Ireland, all those better off very young Oxford boys and girls who got Rhodes scholarships and lived in the colleges looked really like dandies. They looked like idiots walking around with their umbrellas when we were the robust working class.

So that way I completely broke away. It was hard, I think, for my mother, because remember there was no email, no international telephone system. Letters would take three weeks. I don't know what she did. I feel sorry for her, but I certainly was a free woman. I had no problem at all. I broke away from the authority of my family and returned to India after I came from Ruskin. I worked in India for two years. I affirmed the fact that I would not marry—I wanted to work. I worked for 300 rupees a month for the Indian Cooperative Union. That was when I walked with Gandhi's successor, Vinoba Bhave, through the villages of India. Part of that famous movement where they asked you voluntarily to give land—I was part of that. I was walking every day from village to village at three in the morning. It was a great experience. It was a transformative experience. Because of that, and then joining the Indian Cooperative Union where they were trying to build cooperatives with the refugees from Pakistan—and I was supposed to be the economist who assesses that, this because of my Oxford diploma—I was chosen by Henry Kissinger as a potential leader from India to participate in what used to be in those days a very big thing called the Harvard International Seminar that Henry Kissinger ran for six months in the summer.

I met all these amazing chosen people from the whole world—MPs (members of parliament) and writers. That was an extraordinary moment. I was seduced by Harvard. I

thought, “Now I want to become a Harvard professor.” But I came back to India and continued to work and teach, and so on, till I joined the Gunnar Myrdal team for the book, *The Asian Drama*. Thus in 1958, I went back with Gunnar Myrdal to Oxford for a year. I became Myrdal’s only junior research assistant for his book, *The Asian Drama*. I was attached to Balliol College, and Paul Streeten was his great friend, and Thomas Ballogh and Nicholas Kaldor and all that. Then I left Myrdal and worked for a second degree, from 1959 to 1962, at St. Anne’s. So I have had three visits to Oxford, each for a different purpose. But in terms of one of the questions that you asked, the first one was perhaps the most transforming for me.

TGW: I am curious. When you end up—I am just going to go ahead a little bit—when you end up going to Oxford, was there any choice or did you have to go to a women’s college at Oxford at the time—that is, Saint Anne’s?

DJ: I think in those days the colleges were all segregated. There were either women’s colleges or men’s colleges, so you had no option.

TGW: Was that a good idea or a bad idea? There are people today who argue that for certain girls, certain kinds of segregated schools are better, and for certain women they’re better as well. If we could go back for a moment to how you look back on that experience, whether you would have wished it otherwise, or what you think were some of the pluses and minuses at St. Anne’s.

DJ: I know that this is a point on which there can be a lot of contention. That is, it is not an agreed issue between women. But I think it was much nicer to have it as a women’s college. Some of the highlights were that we had only women professors. And mind you, I was not a feminist. I didn’t know what feminism was all about. I was just a fighting female trying to get educated. I couldn’t care less about anything on women’s rights. I didn’t know it. It was not

articulated. But there was joy in meeting women academics and other women as students. It was such a nice nest, and it didn't prevent us from having access to the male world. All my specialist tutors, like Paul Streeten and David Worswick, were all men, and Francis Seton.

I was pampered by Iris Murdoch and got some of the best tutors in Oxford because she and I fell in love with each other—not as a lesbian, which she was at the time, but we just liked each other's ideology. She was an existentialist, and I was a Gandhian-Rousseauian, and we had great times of dialogue. So she pampered me and she got the best tutors in Oxford for me. They were all located in the male colleges. We had access to everything, including boyfriends and all that.

Now as a feminist, it endorses what some of us are saying, that our own collectivities within the gender of women have strengthened us before we go into a partnership and dialogue with men—that whole business that there is a feminist identity, a woman identity, which is a first step to negotiating with the other power structure. So it sort of endorses that for me.

TGW: Have you seen the movie *Iris*?

DJ: Yes, I have.

TGW: Did you like it?

DJ: It was so disturbing and irritating for me, I must tell you. I admired Judi Dench's performance, but John Bayley has really betrayed Iris. Many of us students, after we heard about what he had written, refused to read the books. Another student of hers, whom you may know, Ann Lonsdale, who is the president of New College in Cambridge, and who was my tutorial partner for the tutorials with Iris, was also appalled. Iris and I had kept up our friendship up to 1994. I have entertained John and Iris in India. I have visited them in Oxford. And John was somebody who was always around. But I never imagined that John, who I think is a nobody,

would have exploited his nursing of Iris into making himself famous. I mean, that's how we see it. I don't think the film was about Iris, it was about John, and it was a false John, in my view.

TGW: You have mentioned a couple of people, Paul Streeten amongst others, who were at Oxford at the time. Which books were of particular importance to you during this period in Oxford? What were the hottest topics in the pub or the coffee shop or the local watering hole at that time amongst students?

DJ: It was the era when linguistic philosophy arrived, so John Hare, Wittgenstein—these were the new books and ideas. In economics I cannot think of anything as gripping, any lectures or books that were path-breaking at that time. I think the biggest influence for us was the position of language. Those of us who were good at mathematics and logic were sort of the stars. I found myself fascinated with moral and political philosophy. Isaiah Berlin, I think, was a great influence. He was running seminars in those days. I was a part of those. In the coffee shop, as you call it, for those I went around with it was the struggle for achievement. We, i.e., the students, were not into the outside events, and you can understand that. Even today, Cambridge and Oxford are very inward-looking. You can read there and not know that the world is breaking apart in Afghanistan.

So we were like that and I found that wonderful. I wasn't even curious to belong to anything. Though because of the peace movement, led by Bertrand Russell—I was in the CND, you know, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. I used to go to Trafalgar Square and march. So that was a big thing in my life outside Oxford. But inside Oxford, it was philosophy. And in terms of the political economy issues, Karl Popper and Isaiah Berlin, though they were different. And I was deeply plunging into achievement as a scholar, not achievement in the public life of

Oxford. Remember, I was being supported all the time by people who thought I was going to be a useful citizen.

TGW: What about development ideas? Did these come into the PPE (philosophy, politics, economics) at all, or was this really too early in the game?

DJ: It wasn't as much as it is now. People like Paul Streeten taught public finance. They didn't teach development. Peter Ady taught economics, but never talked about less-developed countries beyond Arthur Lewis. The only set of seminars I attended which had something to do with developing economies, or developing countries, were David Butler's, who used to lead seminars on elections and democracy. It was part of the politics course. He used to bring people from India to speak about Indian elections. It was fascinating, amazing. And I must confess to you that, in those days, our learning was still very much the basics of classical economics. It was only when I came back to India and started to teach that I got embedded in Indian economic issues. That's when, if you come to your phase three or phase two, I would say—the education helped me to plunge into development economics and then I completely moved away from the other areas

TGW: I am curious. You mentioned that you were, after you got started on this path, thinking of going down the academic one. But you didn't go on to do a Ph.D. immediately. Did you abandon this temporarily for financial reasons? What was the logic?

DJ: I did want to follow the academic path. On graduation from Oxford 1962, I was offered a minor fellowship at Worcester as a kind of a teaching student in order to work for a post grad degree. However, since I had been completely away from India for four years from 1958-62, and missed all my brothers' marriages and everything, I decided to go home for a bit but planned to come back. I drove over land back to India, with five other Oxford undergrads in

a Land Rover. I got a teaching job almost immediately in Delhi University, and I got gripped by that. I then registered for a Ph.D. at the University of Delhi. I was going to rebuild an appropriate national accounts for India. That was my area of interest—statistics and accounts. So there was a desire to do a Ph.D. and to maybe do it in India. The Ph.D. didn't materialize, partly because of some personal issues about which we'll only talk if there is time.

TGW: Oh no, by all means please continue the story.

DJ: No, because that may not actually bring you to the global events and the UN. But just like I had this problem of getting educated in a family or in a society which was not at all keen on women remaining unmarried after thirteen—the man whom I wanted to marry, whom I met in 1956 at work, was someone that my family didn't approve of. Much as I could have just married him and said “that's it,” I had some kind of a terror that my mother would have a heart attack and down the line die of shame because I wanted to marry a man who was two castes lower than mine. So maybe foolishly, maybe wisely, I kept on letting it be.

But the fact that I was wanting to marry somebody and didn't marry him for eight years, from 1958-1966 the subterfuge, the negotiating attempts, while also teaching for thirty hours a week, became such a preoccupation that I couldn't do my Ph.D. at all. It was constant tension of meeting my parents, talking to them, being told that “You're going to kill us. We'd rather you committed suicide.” You know, you talk of honor killings now—those were the days when they would have rather had me die than shame them by marrying this person. So it became such a feverish thing that I used to go to my Ph.D. supervisor, and he would say, “What did you do last week?” I would say, “My head was bombed with this fear of which way to go.”

Finally, of course, I did what I wanted to. I married him and my parents survived. But you can never predict, you see. You get scared that you lose something and gain something. My

fear was what if my mother died as I married him. How could I be happy? All my life I would be thinking of having killed her. So it became an impediment. I lost a lot of time in my life, which could have gone into acquiring academic qualifications. After marriage there were children and so the Ph.D. never got done. But anyway, those years that I taught at Delhi University were very satisfying.

TGW: Actually, when did you eventually get married?

DJ: 1966.

TGW: How would you describe juggling the things that parents and spouses juggle and their professional lives? What were the biggest tensions, and what were the biggest rewards from the juggling over the years?

DJ: I loved teaching. If you ask me, “What is your natural profession?,” it’s a teacher. And I was such a successful, popular teacher. My students were always doing well—the nine first classes in the whole university, in the third year that I taught, were all my students. Teaching was like an obsession, and my teaching was also related to what I used to write about in the university newspapers.

Everything else became secondary. I think, according to my sisters, I was insensitive. They say I never really bothered too much about what my parents were doing. Perhaps that was the trade-off, that I was quite comfortable leading my own life. Remember, also, spaces. I was teaching in Delhi, and my parents had by that time retired to Bangalore. So there was no question of a daily encounter with the family. I was living on my own and finding it very satisfying. So I think there was not, therefore, much juggling as far as my parents were concerned. But after marriage it was altogether another scene. It was extremely tense giving, and the juggling became so impossible that I resigned from my permanent tenured position as a

lecturer in the University College for Women and settled down to full-time mothering of my two sons, born 1967 and 1969. Post resignation, too, I was unhappy—unhappy that I had to leave the work-place, unhappy that my husband went to work while I stayed home. The rewards were reaped later in life, when my sons turned out as wholesome young people admired by many for their composure and self-confidence.

But the resignation led me to doing a book at home, the official Indian volume for the Mexico conference for the UN World Conference for the International Women's Year, which in turn brought me to the women's question, which then has become the central interest in my life. So in that sense there were rewards.

TGW: I was going to ask, in spite of the cocoon of Oxford, and now going back to, I presume, a different kind of shelter within Delhi, when global events began to penetrate your consciousness. For many of us, this comes through reading in university, but you have said that wasn't the case. When did you become aware of the massive coming together of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) that began in Bandung (Asian-African Conference) and gathered force as decolonized countries became independent, along with the start of the G-77 (Group of 77) in UNCTAD (UN Conference in Trade and Development) in 1962? These movements have preoccupied you for much of your professional life—when did they enter the equation?

DJ: It only came up between 1973 and 1976, and it came up in a strange way. I was asked to do a book on Indian women by the Indian government, partly because I was writing all the time in journals and partly because I was home as I explained earlier. An article I wrote on the image of women in the past, one of unqualified subjugation, and how I would like to re-arrange the imagery with women who deviated, attracted the attention of an editor in the government's publication division. That book made me visible in India. It was launched by the

president of India in a well-publicized ceremony. People who were looking for people to invite to the world conference in Mexico sought me out.

In terms of an analysis, when I was thinking back for your interview, it struck me that the work always has been tethered in the country. Even post-1975, what has all the time brought me into visibility in the UN Statistical Office (UNSO), or in the ILO (International Labour Organisation), or UNESCO (UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), it was always, “She has done some path-breaking work in India, and therefore she comes to an expert group.” It was never belonging to an international community. All these years it has been embedded in the country, and then that has created the interest.

But your question was, “When did the global impinge on you?” The participation in the global came through the women’s movement, which was much later in my life, and this book that I wrote. And then of course, one must applaud the kind of work that some of these women who were in New York did. They were always hunting for people like us who had a location in our country as somebody who was doing something significant. They constantly drew us into it. It never impinged really, and no global event really did much. But being somewhat of an admirer of Gandhi and Nehru as a student, and a young adult, as a teacher in university, you always saw the world through something they did. So Bandung and the Non-Aligned Movement were fantastic because Nehru was one of them. So I think from that moment on, I became a NAM person. And you must have read the report I wrote on the first women’s conference for NAM, and I was a delegate from India. My joining the South Commission—all that South affirmativeness is part of my “globalism.” The other person that sort of commanded our attention all the time that it was “nation, nation-building, justice within your country, preventing

discrimination within your country based on caste” was Gandhi, who was constantly a person who made you look inward.

So it was nationalism and nation, and the globe only in that sense. So I was myself surprised that I never bothered or heard about the UN Charter or the United Nations. I had no glowing thing about it.

TGW: Is there something about the size of a country? If you are China or India or the United States or Russia, in fact it is much easier to ignore these global events because you have a rather large playing table.

DJ: Absolutely. Yes, I think you’re very right. And the kind of ideologies—remember China closed herself. And India, in some sense, was closed—one of the major events, when you talk of international events, was the Suez Canal Crisis in 1956. It was joy that the British were not allowed to do what they had done before because of the NAM. We could throw the British back when they tried to take over the Suez Canal. That was a striking moment. And again, it just matched one’s own nationalism, which is now such a bad word because nationalism and fascism have become associated. But for us, nationalism meant liberating the country and rebuilding the nation.

And I think, if I look back at the last thirty years of my life, I would say that is where I have been engaged—in the nation-building project. It preoccupies me, and it preoccupies a whole lot of us of that generation who came out. And I think all the time we are trying to say, “What are the lessons from India which can be shared with others? So it has become India to the others, rather than the other way. Although later in my life, when I was with the South Commission, I became a totally different person in terms of that.

TGW: You mentioned that you began doing your book in 1973, but that you had been fighting your own battles before then. When did the notion of a collective women's battle, if you will, enter your own analytic framework as something that you thought you might want to pursue independently of all your other intellectual interests?

DJ: That's a very good question. Let me just go a little chronologically in order to show when that arrived. I was teaching, and then I gave up teaching in 1969/1970, because of my incapacity to handle home and the teaching job. Then I returned to what can be called professional work in 1973/1974 by editing this book as a project, a paid project like the UNIHP project. That book and the International Women's Year suddenly brought me into a new space of women. And when I arrived in that, there was an organization in India just like yours called the Indian Council for Social Science Research. I made applications to them to do my famous time-use study, which Joann Vanek said was a trailblazer. It was the first time-use study. I'll talk to you about that later.

One of the quests I was having was to know more. So the Indian Council for Social Science Research told me, "You know, there's a very interesting event taking place in Ahmedabad in Gujarat. They say there is a woman who has organized self-employed poor women into a trade union. Would you please go and do a case study for us, and we'll pay you to do it." So that's it. I went to Ahmedabad, and I saw this amazing thing which has now become a world icon, called SEWA, the Self-Employed Women's Association. It's a big thing now.

What I saw there were street vendors, vegetable vendors, like you see in Africa and other parts—who are the poorest of the poor, women who are pulling cartloads on their back and had welts on their belly. They had been made into a trade union. And what were they doing there as a trade union? They were going to collectively negotiate for better prices for either the rags they

were picking or the soiled paper that they were collecting. Or the vegetable vendors wanted to sit on the pavement and they were being attacked by the police, so they formed a collective. So, the strength of women—and that women can do that within poverty, within caste, but always occupationally based. That is, like the trade union, it had to have the one-point program that you negotiated for cheaper paper to recycle into bags, or you negotiate for a better price for the rags that you buy off the textile mills in order to make them into quilts. They did quilts with rags.

So I saw that and started writing analytically about them. I was perhaps one of the first to write how when women organize, it actually changes gender relations in the home. So I made this point about how women's public space occupation also affects women's private domain, because the men, who are beating and drinking—the usual phenomena—were so impressed that these women had negotiated an increase in income.

Then suddenly another brilliant thing happened. Remember, this was 1975, over twenty-five years ago. They gave them identity cards, without anything but your picture, that you are a member of SEWA. And these women, who were stinking, dirty, badly-clothed, unable to talk any language except their own dialect, could enter a bus with that card. That card somehow empowered them in a society in which they were considered to be the lowest of the low. Gradually, the organization began to open a bank. As you probably know, they are the people who, in a way, initiated what is now called Women's World Banking.

So the precise answer to your question is that it was SEWA which taught me that. Then I had a link with America. I met Gloria Steinem, a feminist leader in the United States when she was eighteen and I was eighteen, in Delhi. She was a student and I was just beginning to work. Many years later—I lost touch with her—I met her again in 1974. She exposed me to this idea of feminist consciousness, that when you put a group of women together who have a common

problem, whether it is wife-beating, or lack of a crèche, or there are no stores near you, they then strategize. They find that they all have the same problem so they can deal with it as a collective. So the two matched. The one was West and the other was East, that women can get self-strength through sharing their common problems. And now you find it happening all over the world, whether it is for physical amenities or violence against women. They fight as women on certain issues that impinge on them, especially poor women.

TGW: So as a result of this book, you then became associated with the Institute of Social Studies for your long period as director there? What did you try to do with the institute when you arrived? What kind of place did you find, and what kind of place did you leave?

DJ: That's the telling point. Because of this book, as you correctly said, I found myself getting into the women's question. The first study I undertook was to challenge the data on women's work participation. Mind you, it was done without my knowing at all that there was something called time-use study that was being done in the West and in the East. It was entirely self-generated. So the institute was already there but it was dying. I used it then for all the studies on women in poverty. The main thrust was women workers, on the argument that all poor women are workers. So we did a lot of work only related to women in poverty.

And I was thinking, if you asked me what were the major influences we had in terms of ideas, I would say gendering statistics, gendering and contextualizing the analysis of women in poverty, seeing how women in poverty had a mind and a set of choices which were different from men in poverty. So we went from statistics to the choices, and then we went into gender politics and hierarchies. That led me, as you know, later to critique the whole development theory paradigm. We were engaged in a lot of studies on the impact of women funded by the Swedish development agency and UNDP (UN Development Programme). Women in the

informal labor market became another major issue, and I think the institute published the first ever three-volume bibliography funded by the Canadians and published by SAGE—a bibliography of everything, every written word on women and work in India.

So we became the focal point in India for women in poverty and women workers. We became strong partners with ILO. ILO couldn't have a meeting in Geneva or Bangkok without inviting us. We were there, everywhere.

TGW: I'm curious, as somebody who frequently has his hands with a tin cup looking for resources. What was the relationship between the availability of resources or donor interests, and the research and the ideas that you eventually pursued? How much of this was their agenda, and how much of it was your agenda?

DJ: One thing that maybe I didn't spell out was that India had a very lively period between 1975 and 1985 on her own, on women. It's difficult to explain why. I think maybe the Indian liberation struggle had thrown quite a lot of radical women leaders—and many of us are the successors of those leaders. India has always had some kind of an interest in caste and gender as two major stratifications. So I want to argue that the Indian government was itself one of our biggest funders. For example, in that era from 1975 to 1985, I was a member of every ministry's council. You had in the Ministry of Labor women advisors. DJ was there.

Agriculture—there were about four of us who had arrived and we were there.

The institute actually had major support from ministries. Donors were the secondary one, and the donor was choosing us because we had partnership in government. You know how donors are. They like people who are able to influence policy. So when I talked of SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency) or CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency), I should have clarified that they were marginal to the institute's finance. But Ford,

Canadian CIDA, or Swedish SIDA were always looking for work that they could get out of us. I mention them only because it was Ford and Swedish SIDA which finally brought me to the international scene by funding me to go to UN conferences, which in turn led to DAWN (Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era) and all of that.

TGW: To what extent did—I'm not quite sure what the term I would use would be—the UN provide a “gimmick” for you to pursue your own agenda? That is, presumably there was a call for papers, or the Indian government needed to prepare for the 1975 Mexico conference, or the 1985 conference (Third UN World Conference on Women) in Nairobi. So to what extent did these external goings-on provide you a vehicle to disseminate your ideas?

DJ: They did, and that is where the turning point comes. While I was doing this time-use study without knowing there was a whole world outside of internationalism and UN conferences and all that, somebody just picked me up and said, “You should go to Mexico and be a panelist on Ester Boserup's panel on women and work.” That somebody was an American woman who had visited India. That's what I find so amazing—the unplanned nature of all of these events. But that was a turning point. Since we are looking for something which related to our project, I think that's where the really substantial part of what I'd like to share with you comes in.

So the going to Mexico had exactly what you must have heard from people that you interviewed—it was a turning point in the lives of many of us. Firstly, the knowledge itself with the panel with Ester affirmed what I was saying, that all the measuring is wrong, and that the measuring of women and their work had to be redone. Then for the next fifteen years I was into that, so that's important. But the more important one is what has been said by others. That is that it gave us a huge understanding that there was a world of women with whom you could identify yourself—eight thousand women in the NGO (nongovernmental organization) forum. I

still have the photograph. I couldn't believe it, and everyone feeling so similar. So it was the beginning of what has been one of the values of the world conferences on women. It was really of networking.

It was the beginning of consolidating of something called a women's movement worldwide. And it was slightly different. I'm told later by the earlier NGOs of women that were operating with the UN between 1946 and 1974 the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), the international association of this or the other—what we called the conservative brand of NGOs who were registered with the UN and came to the Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) up to 1975. That was one kind of women's organization. But after Mexico, it changed. There were the newer international networks and international connections.

But curiously Tom, looking back, only the day before yesterday talking to Nafis Sadik, we both felt that the International Planned Parenthood Federation, the International League of Women Voters—you know that the international agencies that were there earlier were, in fact, very significant. We, the new ones after 1975, initially denounced them. I don't mean openly, but we just felt that they were the old, feudal people and we were the new, world-changers. But looking back, they actually were in a base in which empowerment lies, which is family planning, the liberation from imposed fertility. So they were doing that. Women voting, getting women to vote, and helping them to understand how to vote—these are crucial for women's empowerment.

But when we came on the scene and found them, we thought they were really weak. So Mexico, therefore, was a defining moment for me. It was the group that met in Mexico that has still maintained its friendship—Hameed Hossain, Nafis Sadik, Raunaq Jahan. We're still in touch with each other. But coming back from Mexico, one felt—and you are right, I was on the committee that India reported to prepare the report from Mexico. So I came back and I got

involved in that. So no UN agency could do anything without inviting me or the ISST because we became the post-Mexico informed focal point. That led us then, constantly, to look at the UN's agenda and to try to adapt for it. The very thing for which the UN is honored in fact happened. That is, the UN provided us with the international platform to universalize issues which we earlier thought were only country-specific.

So when I did the time-use study, then I knew about somebody doing it in Nepal, I knew about somebody doing it in Brazil. Then I would be invited to Brazil for a conference called Women in the Labor Force in Latin America. I would go to that and then I would tell ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific), "Let's do something on women and the labor force in Asia." Then ILO said to me, "Would you please do that for us?" So you got into that kind of loop—interregional exchange of ideas, interregional research, and regional.

Joann was saying how that first paper I wrote for the ESCAP conference on the household survey, which was the first ever conference the UN had on household survey methodology—I took a paper called "Importance of Age and Sex." The household survey questionnaire was modified because of that paper. And that then came back to New York, and the UN Statistical Office called a meeting. So we internationalized an experience from a country, took it to a regional UN, and then took it to an international UN. So exactly what the UN would like to see happen was happening.

TGW: I would like to ask you a general question about conferences. You've been involved in all of these, what some people would unkindly call "jamborees," and others "quite important devices." As you look back over them, are they all important? Are the earlier ones more important? Does continuity add something that we haven't seen in other issue areas? How

do you look at the vehicle of the women's conferences, because there actually have been more of these than on any other topic?

DJ: You know, right now, even yesterday when I went to the Committee on the Status of Women, this is one of the most contentious issues. I can only give you my opinion. Right now, the women's movement in the world is divided. Hilka Pietilä and others want another conference called Beijing Plus Ten. And people like Noeleen [Heyzer] and myself, we don't want another conference of the kind that we had with Beijing Plus Five. So it's good that you asked that, but I just wanted to make my current position clear.

But going back, I think the first three or four were really important in that they educated us on both ourselves and the UN, and led to a lot of caucus-building that took place between 1975 and 1985. All these caucuses were subject-specific—lawyers getting together, development economists getting together, violence against women activists come together. So in a way, that was a very positive outcome. The second positive outcome—again, Hilka and Richard [Jolly] I think have written about, I think even you have—was that the caucuses formed in the women-only conferences then became caucuses for the conferences on other issues, non-women ones. The famous example is what we did in Vienna (World Conference on Human Rights), and what we did in the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD, Cairo). So there was definitely what I call the “women's club” that got formed, like the boy's club of the world, and they became a strong negotiating force.

Over the years, however, like all the intergovernmental institutions in the world, there has been not only a fatigue, but the process is not yielding any more rewards. That is, the reward period of caucusing and learning how to negotiate, updating yourself on the mainstream discourse, has reached a point where it is ceasing to be new. Therefore, it's come back to a

certain amount of staticness. If you ask me what do you mean by that—because intergovernmental processes require lobbying at the national level, and getting whatever change you want to be done by the pope, or the American conservative women who don't want abortion, you're coming there as an NGO when the stage is set. You are not able to make the transformation. The most important example is Beijing Plus Five, which happened in New York in 2000, when all the decisions taken by ICPD and Beijing 1995 were reneged by the conservatives—the Arabs, the Roman Catholics, and the American conservatives.

So one feels that this is no more the right way. What some of us are doing—and I'll be doing a meeting of that in July—is to rethink how to do it, how to reassemble the UN and the international women's movement in a way that it isn't the same thing. The challenge would be to find a way where feminist analysis, women's intellectual input into global discourse, whether it is on globalization or on internationalization, the women's contribution to mainstream debate becomes the agenda. This would be the new mode, rather than have delegates come from all the world to quarrel over a document prepared by the Secretariat where you are constantly engaged only in putting brackets and commas and things like that.

Yesterday, Carolyn Hannan also spoke about how the CSW has to change itself and not be what it is. So I think there is the beginning of a desire to change how we do it, rather than to abandon the international conference on its own. So when you talk of the women's conferences, yes—1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, and even up to 1995—they were valuable for the reason I mentioned. Now the international women's movement is set. The caucuses are all there—you could see them yesterday—but they are treading.

And there is one dangerous thing that is happening, which would be valuable if we are doing “a way forward.” The dangerous thing is, because the international women's movement

has become so communicative with email and all these opportunities we get to meet, we have ceased to take note of the official machinery. It's a kind of what you call a "backlash" or a retrograde step. For example, in the last three days in New York, even in meetings of African women that I had on Saturday—they are all saying the CSW should be wound up. They are saying it for the same reason as we are all saying that politics should be wound up, because political personnel are so corrupt and silly. It's a kind of a technocratic bureaucrat's view that all these systems of representative councils are not delivering. So these six African women tell me, "The CSW is a dead loss." So I said, "What's your alternative?" "The NGOs." So I said, "Listen, how do we get the state to transform itself, get the UN to universalize issues?" But that did not change their view.

I think the NGOs have become so alive that they cease to do what the women were doing pre-1975. In the history that I am researching, pre-1975, the NGOs were taking a lot of time lobbying with their delegations. Delegates were able to transform the CSW and the General Assembly. Now that route is not the one that we are bothered about because we are so strong outside it. So I think part of the demeaning or downsizing of the UN system is as much the rise of this outside constituency, and therefore the loss of the track necessary to negotiate. I was meaning to tell you that because in the work that I did since Uppsala, looking at 1947 to 1975—you remember, I started by saying these two periods are very dramatic and different, and now reversing my judgement that post-1975 achievement in terms of actual UN outcomes is less than pre-1975.

Pre-1975, the stage was set—CSW, all the kinds of platforms for the tentacles with which the UN can deal with issues were set. It's unbelievable that after 1975 very little has taken place, except this muscular international women's movement and, of course, what Noeleen recently did

with the Security Council resolution and so on. But at some point, when we are evaluating, you find that actual achievement, even among ICPD, which was supposed to be successful for getting reproductive rights on the agenda—reproductive rights are on the agenda and there is a resolution, but reproductive rights have not invaded national population policies. You know, the outcomes have not been as significant, and that has been an issue which I have been so teased with that when I interviewed Nafis Sadik and some of them, I was curious to find out, and they also felt that.

The only insight we have so far is that NGOs no longer feel it necessary to plead and argue with the delegation coming to a UN meeting to feel included or powerful. They feel it is worthless. Now the donors are funding NGOs to come to the alternative forums. They feel the power of their coalitions, even though they are in some ways in a ghetto, they seem to celebrate and are not too bothered it seems. There is a certain disdain for the members of the delegations. It is believed that they are not clued in, are not feminists. I am just exaggerating a bit to show you that the imagery and the use of conduits has changed.

TGW: I want to pursue this a little because you said that, post-1975, no big changes occurred except for the muscular international women's movement. It seems to me that, in political terms, that may be the most important result. One of the propositions we're playing with is that an idea becomes important when it allows heretofore disunited dispersed groups who didn't know about one another to come together in new ways. Of course, on the women's issue, it cuts two ways—the Vatican and the Arab countries didn't know they had things in common either. But is this one of the most important impacts of an idea, that it permits new coalitions to come together?

DJ: Yes indeed, Tom. I'm just saying that it formed new coalitions, that the international women's movement is muscular, that they have generated a lot of ideas, since you and I are talking about ideas. And I have even tried to list the five or six ideas which I think have caught on. For example, I think one of the ideas that has caught on is gendering of various streams or themes. Perhaps the most successful gendering was of statistics, that everywhere you have to differentiate the data on gender.

I think an important idea contribution that has been made by the muscularity, the articulateness, and the visibility is that you have to analyze poverty in a gendered way—the gendered analysis of poverty, that women are located in a different poverty than men. It is not just the feminization of poverty, which is an outcome, which is how there are many more women amongst the poor than men. But I think the analysis of poverty and the breaking it down to not just gendered analysis, but feminist analysis, which builds up on the fact that the poor woman's experience of poverty leads you to different types of public action and policy than the poor man's experience of poverty. Poor women's choices of development are different. You know that famous one of women wanting fuel and fodder trees and men wanting orchards? It's called the Chipko (hug the trees) movement in India, and the whole world knows about it.

But whether it is Africa or Asia or Latin America or even the United States, there is much literature currently about women's choices or priorities. The third idea which I think has taken root tremendously is that development and economics is about politics. So in Beijing the biggest pledge was that women have to come into power because it is only through power that you renegotiate the discrimination which you face. So CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), which was mainly to look at legal ways, has moved because of this into what I have called, in one word, politicizing development, and

therefore feminists saying there is a feminist analysis of development. And it shows that development and economic policies are driven by politics. And politics is a whole male construct of power has to be challenged by women's politics.

I think a fourth idea which has taken root is feminism as an intellectual discipline. I mean, feminism was only been seen as women affirming themselves. But now, there is feminist analysis of sociology, theology, economics, politics. And a feminist analysis, as Tatiana [Carayannis] must have told you when she attended the statistics discourse, is saying that when you analyze it from a feminist point of view, you actually challenge the very facts and theoretical propositions of that particular theory—economic theory, statistical classificatory systems, measuring tools, measurement hierarchies. So you are opening up a new world of how to analyze. We also argue that this form of analysis is useful not only for women, but for all forms of discriminated people—so it could be race, caste, other minorities. It's a form of looking at a new picture of discrimination and how it is embedded. I think therefore that feminism is an intellectual discipline.

The last one I would say is the understanding that there is diversity, and therefore the South-South connection, the women of the developing countries as having to have their own space in a dialogue internationally. That has also sort of gotten legitimized. These ideas have certainly come into the fore when you talked of ideas.

But where I have a pessimistic or have a negative comment is that they have not changed international public policy discourse. There my view is that it hasn't, that we have done all this work but it hasn't made that quantum leap into public policy discourse. A brilliant example of that is the way you put together your fourteen volumes for this UN Intellectual History Project. We were finding that most of the authors are men, and as I talked to some of the men—like I

talked to the security person in Oxford, or Michael Ward the other day—they are still not completely aware of that other pool of analysis, not just gendering in a flat way. Therefore, obviously all our work has somehow not penetrated other places. It has not been taken up the same serious way that let us say Marxist analysis was used as a critique of theory in an earlier era.

We have not also changed the condition of women worldwide. Poor women are on the increase as a percentage of the poor. Therefore, when you look and ask has it landed you somewhere—no. And in many ways, in spite of forty years of various forms of liberation struggles, including in Afghanistan, in spite of women being at the forefront of liberation struggles and all this articulate support you get from the international women's movement, we have not been able to influence the UN system to do it differently in Afghanistan. For example, Mary Robinson, myself, Amartya Sen,—we all combined and wrote a letter to the UN Secretary-General (SG) that when he sends envoys to Afghanistan, he should put many more women, partly because it would mark women as politically significant people, as intellectuals, more visible to the Afghan regime, which is a very patriarchal, feudal regime.

But guess what? Nafis told me that the last two people the SG has put again are men. It's almost like you people thought that there aren't women who could write that book on trade and liberalization, or women who could have written the volume on human security, or women who could have led the volume on statistics. It's a similar kind of feeling that there aren't that kind of women available or that it doesn't make a difference. It could be the other way. So that's where one feels that, if you take your last question—have they become embedded in institutions and taken on a life of their own? Yes. Have they altered prospects for forming new coalitions of political or institutional forces? I don't know. Have they provided a guide to policy

and action? Unfortunately not. Have they changed international public policy discourse? In a ghetto, they have.

This came out very well in the Council for Foreign Relations when Ann Tickner presented a brilliant paper, and so did two other women, on what they called “Feminist Perspectives on the Foreign Policy of the United States and the EU (European Union).” Some of the most bright minds were there—Peter Katzenstein and others. One of them whose name I have, because I am supposed to send him my paper, said after the whole thing was over, “I still don’t know what’s the difference between a feminist framework and a human rights framework. Why did you bother at all about calling it feminist theory?” He still couldn’t see that, you know. So we haven’t really been able to penetrate the intellectual domain currently occupied by a majority of men, in spite of brilliant analysis which shifts the elements of the theory at the base of the theory. So when you come to ideas, yes we have generated a lot of important ideas. And at some point, I’d like to tell you some of the ideas I think that have gone into development theory from women’s discourse.

TGW: Are you playing somewhat of a devil’s advocate here in terms of discourse, or are we engaging in a discussion about how empty or full the particular glass is? As someone who has looked at textbooks and articles and conferences and agendas over the years, I would have to say that they look, from the point of view of your concerns with gender, very different now than they did ten years ago and certainly thirty years ago. So I’m trying to figure whether this is a debate about how fast or how slowly we’re proceeding. Wouldn’t you say that discourse is really quite different? It would be impossible to use some of the language one used twenty-five or thirty years ago. It would be impossible to conduct a search in a professional university or corporation, at least in this country, the way one used to. Politicians have to frame their

arguments differently, and they take into consideration, I'd say, lots of people and their constituencies. So I'm just trying to say that obviously not everything has changed, but wouldn't you say that at least discourse has altered?

DJ: Tom, I don't want to say no. You are absolutely right that there is a whole lot that has happened. I was not completely dismissing the achievements. But considering that particular point about the muscularity, the robustness of the voice—and there is no doubt the voice has influenced all of us—and you say textbooks, selecting a candidate, the gender balance of everything. But when you look at outcomes and achievement, you take any level—for example, I was stunned that when I was writing my chapter on women's work, in my search I found a report in the *New York Times* of a study done here by someone who has found that the wage differentials between men and women in New York itself is extraordinary in some spaces. I can tell you the citation for the quotation, but I am just giving you a little trivial example.

Then you look at the UN, and you find the balance—there is improvement. The improvement is definitely a plus point. Then I deliberately, to provoke you, mentioned the UNIHP project and the gender of the authors, which I was hinting to you has caused a certain amount of outrage. How come in 2000 Richard Jolly, Louis Emmerij, and Tom Weiss couldn't identify people who had come to the same intellectual caliber on a theme, but also had their foot in gendered analysis. So there are a lot of spaces like that where you find this absence of women, and I deliberately gave you the example of the SG not putting more women in the front of political negotiations in Afghanistan, knowing full well that unless you made women visible as powerful people, you will still see women as a humanitarian need people and not necessarily leadership people.

There is a brilliant quotation from Amartya Sen where he says, that if you see women always as patients, need-based, you will always see gendering as a need-based idea, gendering as a social justice activity, but not gendering and feminist analysis as an intellectually legitimate analysis. There is where I thought we probably haven't been able to do it. And I think we have to do that and therefore become an important political force, apart from being a social force, which we are now. This is a very contentious thing I'm saying, and you can tear me apart and ask me how to explain it. Even I don't know. The discrimination against women, even in the overall development outreach, is still there and getting worse. Therefore, one wants to know what our achievements are.

This came out very well in Beijing Plus Five. We all got up there to speak, and we all said, "We should be ashamed. We have been to five conferences, and the condition of women is worsening, according to even UN reports." So what is it this big conference—as you call it, a jamboree. Are we jamboreeing? Have we really reconstructed the programs and the methodology in order to not have that happen? So we felt ashamed. That's why, even yesterday, Joanne Sandler of UNIFEM (UN Development Fund for Women) and Yasin Fall, who has just joined—they all said, "no, no, no," when somebody said, "have one more conference." There was also a perplexing guilt amongst us, that we don't want to be jet-setting to Rio and to Finland—women of the world unite business. It's perplexing, and that's why I wanted to say, "Yes, ideas we have given."

TGW: You mentioned just a few moments ago that ideas have crept into development thinking. How would you actually characterize, in broad brush-strokes, movements in development thinking over the last half century? And which of these big or little ideas from the

women's conferences and this international movement have managed to permeate in some way development thinking and made it different?

DJ: This will be something we have to verify. At the moment, intuitively, and because of some of my reading—I want to corroborate this by having a collective seminar with some people—I think the focus, curiously, on the poorest of the poor, in my opinion, somewhat came from us. I think right from Mexico, if you see—I've done a chapter on conferences—the women's movement somehow, and there it was a middle-class movement, the one that went to these conferences, has had that ethic of identifying itself with the downtrodden, the least privileged. It could be called "class," if you think of poor as a class issue.

It's been very vivid to see how the adoption is always for the other person—for the poorest women of Senegal, Marie Angelique Savane; the poorest women of India, Devaki Jain. You see the voices in Mexico—Ester Boserup talking about the poor African farmer woman. So I think we torch-lighted the poor as a focus. Today the whole world is talking of poverty eradication as the top flag.

The second—and again, I'm having this corroborated, but so it far seems to have been corroborated—is the importance of organizing and the group. And when you see the World Bank's work now on the micro-credit group, all the movements are first from a group. You see Bangladesh—the Grameen Bank and SEWA. So I think we were the ones, and in my own memory I'm sure women older than me would be able to do better than me on this.

Though I told you earlier that it was SEWA, an Indian initiative that had been the inspiration for bringing in the idea that organization around economic activity was an effective practice for women to pull themselves out of poverty, I was wrong. On further triggering of my memory, I recall it was a woman from Cameroon who came to a UNESCO consultation in Paris

in 1974, a pre-Mexico exercise of the UNESCO. She narrated the experience of a corn-grinding mill in a village in the Cameroon, a project funded by some donor, and how the mill had become the rallying point for about twenty women who then as a collective entered other domains of male power, be it domestic or outside. This was also SEWA's lesson to all of us.

The third contribution is the term "participation." We feel it was part of our language. Because we are all the time questing for equality, for removing discrimination, we are always saying, "We have to participate in decision-making." Some of the women working currently in the World Bank have affirmed this proposition, that the recognition currently given to participation as an important element in development design came from the experience and articulations of women—be they at the grassroots, or in the higher and higher circles of management, governance, academy, et cetera.

Advocacy for local government, that is, for proximate governance, is another idea which I think has been especially promoted by the women's movement. Proximity is a value to the poor and excluded. Women value proximity, whether it is to a drinking water source, a fuel source, a crèche, a health centre, a court of justice, or an office of administration. Poor women have to walk to access these facilities, which is exhausting and consumes valuable time. Moreover, when there is an attack, a rape, a burning, a witch-hunt, or other violence against a woman, seeking redress from councils, which are located far away, may not be feasible. But if these councils and the people in them are near, the chances of redress and effective action are greater.

Finally, I think this whole idea that development theory is flawed—growth measures are flawed, that the measuring of growth should be not just GDP (gross domestic product), but other alternative measures of economic change—has been an area that women or women studies has

uncovered and provided ideas. I think this critique of development theory is now the mode, and we have a whole bunch of books—[Joseph] Stiglitz and [Ignacy] Sachs to mention only a few. But I think the alternative development proposals also came from women and their cogitation and experience.

I suggest it is studies and reflection as undertaken by women scholars and activists that gave birth to this quest for alternatives, this critique of the existent—and thus even to the human development approach. For example, in 1983 I prepared a lecture on the invitation of the OECD's (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development) DAC (Development Assistance Committee) WID (women in development) group, which I called "Development as if Women Mattered: Can Women Build a New Paradigm." For this paper I read 143 assessment impact studies, ranging from those prepared by UNIDO (UN Industrial Development Organization) to donor agencies' evaluations. My review led to the finding that wherever it had happened, be it in Ethiopia or Korea, whoever had funded it, be it a UN agency or a bilateral donor, the impact of these projects had almost always been negative on poor women.

I think and would suggest that it was this generalization that began the process of thinking and critiquing that led to DAWN. DAWN's critique of the UN's framework, as sent to the various governments, was that equality with men, i.e., monitoring women's progress or the progress of the commitment to women by the UN, through measures such as percentage of males to percentage of females in education, labor force participation, et cetera, was not enough nor analytically useful in showing the way forward. The DAWN analysis argues that the location of women, especially poor women in geopolitical space, within a macroeconomic crisis for example, has to be understood and analyzed for the status of women—however broad and undefined that term may be, it was at that time used widely—to be changed for the better.

Women in the continents of the South are contributing to development in embedded ways, as for example Ester Boserup too had pointed out, but they were often losing that space. So a “ladder approach,” that men are on a ladder—we also want to be there, too, was not an adequate framework. This challenge that we posed to the UN at that point was much appreciated and considered new at that time.

We asked what are the issues that women have brought to macroeconomics, not what macroeconomics can bring to women. DAWN offered an alternative way of looking at women and development, and wanted the UN to remove itself from the pure parity measures approach. In fact, DAWN suggested that understanding women’s location, especially poor women’s location, could provide an analytical tool to look at macroeconomics—an argument and a viewpoint that also came in clearly when we had the consultation at the UNIHP office with some of the pioneers in data revision the other day.

So those are some of the contributions, I think, which came from us. I think I told you yesterday that I am hoping that some of the women economists who opened the box of economic theory—including measures and values, and who believe in this view that understanding women’s location and experience and gendered analysis of poverty, such as Nancy Birdsall, Hazel Henderson, Lourdes Benería, Lynn Bennet, and some from the DC’s (developing countries)—could call a brainstorming session on what has the World Bank and mainstream organizations learned from the gendered analysis, apart from harvesting and moving forward with our own alternative economics reasoning.

TGW: I’m also interested in internal dynamics. At least in my own somewhat superficial knowledge, lots of conferences suggest that the usual framing of issues is *grosso modo* North-South discussions, and frequently with NGOs coming in with a pro-Southern, shall

we say, outlook. It seems that in a couple of areas—and I am thinking actually of human rights and of women’s issues—that this breakdown is not nearly so neat, if it is anywhere. And in particular, one of the most interesting dynamics is within the women’s movement itself. And here, at least one of the fissures, or differences anyway, seems to be between educated professional, middle-class, or whatever you want to call it, women, wherever they are, who have one set of concerns and needs, and poorer and less-educated women on the other. Is that true?

DJ: Reframe your question again.

TGW: I am wondering whether this distinction is not quite unusual within UN debates. That is, that it is not so much rich versus poor countries, but—let’s say within the private, or NGO part of the women’s movement—there is actually a distinction between rich and poor women, or better educated and less-educated, with different sets of needs, different sets of priorities, different sets of concerns. Has this contributed to the ideas that you have laid out or the framing of issues that you have delineated?

DJ: If I understand you correctly, you are suggesting that in the area of women, the North-South division that was the pattern at the UN was not as important as the heterogeneity amongst women themselves—that class and education divides were more important than North-South? I think not. I think, and that was an experience in which I participated, the experience of the women from the South, working with the UN, further endorsed the need for North-South interaction. Initiatives like DAWN were an illustration that it mattered, and mattered more than the divisions within the “women” identity.

On the whole, in inverted commas, my life’s work, or what I have learned, has been to argue that there is a case for the South—and not only for what is called global South, i.e., the poor in both rich and poor countries, but poor within poor countries and regions—and how there

is a certain amount of solidarity across class and caste based on location in a geopolitical area. So there is a language now which talks of the South in the North, and there is a certain amount of this new way of speaking, that does what Amartya and I do, that is class analysis, where class supercedes all other identities or divides. This way we push back some of the other ways of dividing according to religion. There is a case for locational solidarity. Many of us think the stronger case, and the more useful case for negotiating with the UN, is to have the geopolitics type of boundary.

There are, of course, contradictions here. Many of us, including those of us who are working on human rights, are finding that our real negotiating outcomes is within our own political boundaries—that is, our national or our regional boundaries—because that determines to some extent the space with which you can be effective. Secondly, we also identify ourselves very often with what I call the macro impact on our countries of international configurations and initiatives. For example, talking of myself, I think India takes a lot of very important stands at the WTO (World Trade Organization), when earlier she was in NAM, or G-77, arguing that the North-South relationship is one of economic injustice: “your trade incentives are asymmetrical, you’re really dishonest when you are talking of liberalization. You are actually holding your cards to your chest and indulging in oligopolistic type of negotiations.”

So there is a whole lot of language of what we call the political economy of the globe within many of our countries. This came out very clearly when I was a member of the South Commission—that most of the southern countries used to feel that if we had an economic South, where we would have internal trade between ourselves in order to strengthen our own economic global presence, we would be less vulnerable to cards being dealt by the U.S. or the EU.

But we also network across these divides and speak for universalization, as for example on the human rights issue. However, we often find developing countries get tethered by the conservatism of the North and the way alliances are forged by the North within the UN. For example, at the international population and development conference in Cairo in 1994, and at the children's summit in New York in 2002, the U.S. conservatives combined with the Vatican and the Arab countries to deny women's rights over their bodies, to put it bluntly. The DCs wanted the issue at ICPD to be the importance of development, of poverty eradication, of investment in social amenities and social security as a means of stabilizing populations and improving their quality. But this agenda was distracted by the rights struggle between the radical feminists of the North and the reactionaries also from the regions mentioned. At the children's summit too, the resolutions were to move women back to their family roles and for abstinence. So allying with the North for the women's movement, which may look like a progressive alliance, can actually pull back progress. The women's movement of the North is not able to bring the state. Their delegations to UN meetings tend to be liberal, or rights-based, or progressive, whichever word suits you.

I recall that when I founded DAWN, people like Fatima Mernissi, Marie Angelique Savane, all of us were working at the grassroots on both data collection and research and had a sense that we were declassing ourselves, and were really speaking and voicing the concerns of the poor women of our country. For example, the analysis I did of development transfers, showing that projects had worsened the condition of women in Africa, or in Asia, was the condition of poor women. It was the condition of women farmers in Africa that Esther talked about. It was the condition of women in small-scale industry and poverty households that I talked about.

So our adoption of the concerns and the physical hardship, e.g., lack of lack of water, or the fact that forests were being cut by loggers, and therefore women had to walk longer distances to pick up fuel, et cetera, was an identification across class. However, even with that across-class bonding, we used to feel that we must locate ourselves in our own geopolitics. In fact, DAWN's analysis is region divided, not men and women divided. And I think it is even more important now, in 2002, that we do that kind of matching of South-South. Such viewpoints are now appearing even more strongly than they did in 1985, when we go to any international conference, even the last one in Afghanistan. Even as action plans are being formulated, regional groups begin to ask for identification by region. Women of South Asia say, "This is our main agenda. We are differentiating ourselves from the women of the United States."

Another point that we made at DAWN, which was a troubling thorn, was to limit our membership or informal belonging to women actually living in the South. We argued that you may be a Bangladeshi woman, working like Naila Kabeer on development and with fieldwork in Bangladesh, out of IDS (Institute of Development Studies) Sussex, but you are not allowed to be a member of DAWN. We felt that location was as important an experience as learning from the field and academy for that particular political veneer, which comes out of participation in citizenship under a given constitution. When you are struggling, politically located in your own political fabric, the incentives, the vibes, your priorities, your capacity to do is very different than when you are living in a country with a social security base, where your gas and water supply works, and every morning you read the *Times* of London.

When I was in the South Commission, I used to challenge Sonny Ramphal, the former secretary-general of the Commonwealth: "Sonny, you are a Third World man, but when you open the newspaper you read the *New York Times* or the *London Times*, and you know what

some senator in Washington said and worry about it. It is far away from my concerns in India. I don't even know this man exists because I read the Indian newspapers."

So the answer to your question is yes, I still think there is a case for women to identify themselves with the political economy of their region or their country. For example, women from the least developed countries, which is getting a special handshake by the world—the fifteen countries—really need to work on how to access that special UN status. And if they don't do that, then they will not get the benefits of that special status, and they won't be able to negotiate their location. I think Afghan women have to negotiate similarly with their region and political location, not divided across "economic" divisions. Yet the bonding as women across North and South has also been a valuable space for the women of the South. Thus we think the location of women across class is also a political force within our own countries and regions.

TGW: I am going to continue for a minute. How would you characterize what cuts across northern countries and unites them, and what cuts across southern ones? Just to take the least developed countries, I would have thought that women in Singapore have as much in common with women in Switzerland as women in Nepal. Economic development, income, literacy levels, contribution of manufacturing—none of this cuts across?

DJ: I would like to consider your question in two rather disparate frames. I think it would be useful to use terms or concepts like identity and solidarity here, to bring the internationalism into this question. The economic development of, say, Singapore, of course determines the per capita income, literacy levels and role of manufacturing, would have a different meaning and effect for women in Singapore than it would for women in Switzerland. Women in Singapore have much higher labor force participation rates than women in Switzerland. They are also much more vivid in the political firmament than their Swiss

counterparts. In fact Switzerland would be backward compared to Singapore in terms of women's status. Women in Nepal would probably be closer in typology to the women in Singapore, as again they are deeply embedded in production, albeit agriculture, and also highly political, with an active women's movement and the hub of South Asian Civil Society. So it is difficult to support that type of cut across North-South.

On the other hand, if you are asking what cuts across North, within North and South within South, I think there are several such issues. I cannot speak for North, but what I have gathered is issues of single mothers, freedom of sexual choice, violence against women, and of course sexual harassment. Most times we feel that women in the UK and in the USA are less equal to men than in the South—they seem to be stereotyped into sex objects and there is a struggle to claim dignity. Scandinavia is different, but there they are now initiating a process of inclusion of men. But all said and done, even women in Scandinavia are on record to say that they feel subordination and oppression, low valuating, et cetera, as all women feel.

So what binds South women more into the political space, the struggle for livelihoods, for rights to land and other natural resources, the fight against exploitation of female labor in sunrise industries, in MNC (multinational corporation) and FTZ (free trade zone) production, apart from, of course, domestic violence? While human rights looks like it can cut across, its capacity and its focus would differ widely between North and South, according to the political framework and the cultural sphere.

At another level or view, Amartya Sen has one of the best responses to your question where he shows how economic development does not necessarily change the strong attacks on the female in what is called "sex-selective abortion." He has examined this phenomenon in Korea, China, and South Asia and finds that son preference, as it is called, is prevalent in all

these countries irrespective of the fact that South Korea is so much better of than, say, South Asia, and women are such an important part of that economic miracle. Another indicator is violence against women. Whether you are a Singaporean or living in Mali, the gender-based violence is equal. Another brilliant example is Japanese women. Japanese women are some of the most oppressed in the world. They have the highest rate of illegal abortions. And yet, when you look at Japan, a G-7 (Group of 7) country, with that kind of per capita household income, this degree of patriarchal oppression seems unnatural. So when we take other indicators and not the level of living, or the education, the issue of discrimination against the female of the species seems to occur in spite of what are called the normal indicators of progress.

One of the most interesting analytical contributions that feminist analysis makes is to show how the normal normative scales don't necessarily deliver the normal outcomes that those normative scales should deliver. In fact, you have made me think on that by this question you asked me. You see, there are "alternative" indicators which challenge the traditional indicators, and that's been one of the areas where we are teasing ourselves on this disjunction, as I would call it.

And that's where the UN has also been very enabling—that women tend to universalize their condition across these boundaries at one point. So for example, you talked to Radhika Coomaraswamy or to Devaki Jain, and we'll say that we don't believe in cultural relativism on human rights. We want the one human right to go across Yemen to America, because once we embed it in our own societies, then we do not have to accept the traditional hold of our societies, which can be feudal and patriarchal. So in that context you get the UN as being the leveler. Then you have other parts of the UN where we do not want to lose our identity, region-bound or color-bound or race-bound.

TGW: While we're in Asia, I take it from your last comment there that you're not so fond of Lee Kwan Yew and Asian values.

DJ: Absolutely.

TGW: How did the women's movement make the argument in Vienna in 1993 in relationship to the universality of rights versus the particularization of rights?

DJ: I cannot speak to you about Vienna—I didn't attend the 1993 conference there. And I must tell you it's very interesting politically why I didn't go, though it may not be part of the value of the history. I was actually asked by the government of India to lead the Indian women's delegation. I had never been asked before to be the official head, because I am always on the fighting fringe. But the Indian government was somewhat under siege because of allegations that they were violating human rights in Kashmir. The conflict with Pakistan has always made India self-conscious at all UN forums, as Pakistan raises the Kashmir issue as a violation of human rights and Amnesty International has a large list of such complaints against India. In parenthesis, the situation today in 2002 is somewhat different, as Pakistan is seen more as a terrorist and human rights violator. Note the evidence of people like Asma Jehangir of the Independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

The Indian government thought that since I was an accepted, and in inverted commas, "woman leader"—accepted by the well-known feminists of the West—I could negotiate a more worthy view of India as a democratic country where the women's question had been taken up with extraordinary support by the government. At that time Canada and India were some of the models on how the state could respond to Mexico and Nairobi. But I refused, as the complexity of on the one hand joining hands with women worldwide for universalization of human rights, and on the other hand resisting the invasive aspects of the human rights laws into national

sovereignty could be a difficult dance. I thought this example would also illustrate the role we have to play and the dilemmas between national and UN allegiances.

Indian civil society organizations, however, are very strong on the rights front. Often NGO women who come from India hold black flag demonstrations outside the Indian mission in New York if they think the government is putting its violations under the carpet in its reporting. In Durban at the WCAR (World Conference Against Racism), Indian NGOs constantly challenged the Indian government delegation and their views. Asian women are insisting that on human rights we do not want to succumb to Asian values. And happily for me, India and Sri Lanka somehow are not into this Asian values—it is Malaysia and now Indonesia that lead such archaic ideas. There I would like to make a link again. Ideologically, I think India and Sri Lanka stand out as countries with a culture of democracy more embedded than Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. I have just written an article for the *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* arguing that democracy and that kind of embedded democratic experience and culture is the most crucial lever for landing social justice of any kind, whether it is removal of poverty or removal of discrimination against women.

These other countries are archaic compared to us. They may be economically advanced, but they are not politically advanced. I think that is the most significant difference in our countries. That's why the Indian women's language and voice is very different. We have problems when the Indonesian women and Malaysian women, and even women from Uganda come to our meetings, as we may have to dissociate from them. Most Ugandan women are convinced that the one-party system is good for them, and we don't agree. They may be having a good time now, but it is not the right mode in terms of accommodation of diversity. So it is not

as if we are united in one voice as Third World women, but all the time we try to enable each other to try to see the bigger picture and then the smaller picture.

TGW: Maybe this will be the last question because we are almost at the end of the tape. How would you see a country, or how could you be sanguine about Afghanistan where, to use your term, a democracy and the democratic culture is not highly embedded? How would you try to make progress on the gender front? By way of example, can the international community try to put women out in front? How would you make inroads in a culture that, not just for the last four or five years seems aberrant on this score—particularly aberrant, but even in the period before, somewhat aberrant? How would you attack the problem there?

DJ: I am very glad you mentioned Afghanistan. Maybe some of your perceptions are not quite correct. Before the Taliban—I now have data which I did not have earlier—50 or some such percent of the teachers in Afghanistan were women. Forty percent of all doctors were women. The women were a very large portion of professional workers. They had one of the most advanced constitutions in the world, which I have a copy of. So there is a profile of Afghanistan pre-Taliban which actually makes one sit up, that it was not exactly this Yemen-like country that is postulated in the media, despite the fact that their health figures—maternal mortality, infant mortality—like Nepal, or like some parts of North Africa, are dismal. I am not, therefore, arguing that it is not one of the most patriarchal, feudal social systems with enormous disdain for the female. That was also there. But the first thing I want to say to you is that is not as bad as the Taliban made it become.

So re-invoking the old doesn't seem to be as horrendous a task if you postulate the other image. Noeleen Hezeyer invited me as a friend to the major consultation she had with Afghan women in Brussels a couple of months ago, and the Afghan women pushed us back. They told

us, “Stop postulating us as what you see in the media, and saying you are going to rebuild us, and help us to design our constitution. Tony Blair’s wife and George Bush’s wife want us to take off our veils, and it’s only when we put on lipstick that suddenly we are considered to be free. It’s all very trivial,” they said. “We were there, so let us carve out our own thing. So leave us alone, but just strengthen us to be our own advisors. We do not want you to fly advisors from Pakistan or India.”

So to answer your question specifically, I think there is a long way to go, but I think if the UN Secretary-General and some of the others—and Noeleen by the way celebrated March 8th in Afghanistan just to make a point. She had [Lakhdar] Brahimi there, and [Hamid] Karzai and everybody—is to say give leadership in the ministries, in the finance ministry, in the conditions that you are setting up, put women to arbitrate for themselves, that will open the door for a more democratic institutional frame. But I am not answering the question by saying it can happen tomorrow. But I think it can only happen if you put women on top. Again to use Amartya—not to see women as patients needing humanitarian assistance, but women as leaders and women as thinkers.

I believe just the other day many women from the UN, such as Ameera Haq and others, have come back from Afghanistan. They were telling me it is quite incredible what this one woman minister has been able to do. But the tragedy, Tom—not the tragedy, but the same thing, is that the UN from New York is not supporting what people like Noeleen and I, and Mary Robinson, and Amartya are saying. That is, “Put more of your UNDP personnel who are the female of the species there. Even your technicians, technocrats, put women. Let the women be visible so that the very patriarchal male leadership negotiates what they want, like money, with

the women from, say, Washington, rather than a man.” It is the imagery business. If they did more of that, I think Afghans could turn around.

Noeleen and I had a dream when Afghanistan fell. When they talked of reconstruction, we emailed each other very fast and said, “This is an opportunity, Noeleen, for us to do what we have been wanting to do for the last twenty years—put women in leadership.” You know, in an empty space, you think you can fill it with women. But it didn’t happen. That’s why I say that we have not succeeded when I made that negative comment.

TGW: This is the end of tape number one.

TGW: This is the continuation of the interview on 12 March here in New York at The Graduate Center, Devaki Jain being interviewed by Tom Weiss. I just wanted to pursue one thing we discussed over lunch. If you were going to identify four or five giants in this field, people whose ideas you think really changed the way you or other people frame issues, who would those people be?

DJ: Are you specifically asking on the advocacy with women, or are you just talking generally?

TGW: No, I am thinking on the issue of women and gender, and the way we think about those issues now versus the ways you didn’t think about them at Oxford. In those intervening forty years or so, who have been the people whose thinking was the most original and whose work you respect the most?

DJ: You know it’s strange that one would say the greatest influence on one’s thinking—even though this may sound very snobbish—is from poor women themselves. It’s curious that one or two of us in India now, when we try to think where did our learning come from—and as I said, it sounds snobbish because it sounds very rhetorical to say, “I learned from

the people.” It sounds like one of the those unpalatable politicians, but the curious thing is that many of us in the last twenty years who have been deeply embedded in this work call ourselves illiterate, by which we mean that we have not really had time to read books. So we become somewhat marginal to academia, because we are involved in forums, meetings, fieldwork, conferences, conventions, people’s marches.

And much of the understanding of gender and poverty, which has been my field, has come from the voices of these meetings. So we often say we learned from other women, from women’s collective struggles and practices and achievements, more than we have learned from a book. But that doesn’t mean we marginalize the book, because the book ultimately has put together this very thing we are talking about. So I would find it very difficult to mention any turning point, even Ester Boserup, with whom I worked for one year, when she was Gunnar Myrdal’s senior assistant, and I was his junior assistant. I read her book after I had identified the fact that women’s roles in agriculture and women’s ownership of land was the base which had not been taken note of by the development funders, which was Ester’s major point about agriculture in Africa. All this we had done without Ester.

Another influence, to move me from what I was at Oxford and now is lived experience. Experiencing discrimination within family and outside has in fact been the most powerful change agent for most of today’s known feminists, as they write their biographies. So self and other women I would say are the most important influences.

One person whom I always touched base with when I was writing was an elderly Indian woman called Kamladevi Chattopadyaya, who was a colleague of Jawaharlal Nehru, and who was in the freedom struggle with him and was jailed many times. She was a socialist. She was somebody who helped me to understand when I was trying to say that I didn’t know how to

define the status of women. I felt that women need not be like men, that women must not get into the race with men, that women had something that they should celebrate and invite men to join them. These were some of the words I used in the introduction to my first book, and she was the person I used to ask, “Does this sound odd? Am I being unrevolutionary?” And she would say, “No, this sounds fine. This is how I think.” She had admired Gandhi, had even joined him in his salt march, but had had to point out to Gandhi his own gender blindness, or his inability to see that women could be more than great mothers and wives. It is said that it was she who got Gandhi to include women in the famous salt march, which raised the voice of India’s masses, to what is called the Quit India Movement, and the boycott of foreign goods, a way of squeezing Britain out non-violently.

In terms of trying to give an ethical polish to my work, I found Gandhi very useful all the time. His understanding of the gender stereotyping of roles, and how that related to the hierarchies which then women got involved on—he was the only one who found ways of enabling people to mute the differences, to get homogenized, so that there wouldn’t be these hierarchies. So I have always found that an inspiration.

I found listening to and participating in some of the early American feminist meetings and conversations not inspiring as such, but definitely enabling to see of the commonness of what I began to call “feminist consciousness.” But I would say that if I had inspiration, it was more from events rather than from individuals.

TGW: Let me ask the question another way. If you were going to provide some advice to a largely illiterate interviewer like me, and you said I needed to read five things, which five books would you tell me to read that would summarize the nature of the *problematique* for women and gender as you see it?

DJ: Some basic, more essays than books, written by Amartya Sen bring out the complexity of gender-based inequality very well. I can give you a list of some of his recent work, definitional as well as empirical. I just got an anthology, which is in my room, which is an Oxford Reader—that is part of a set of such readers that Oxford University Press has brought out. This one is a reader for feminism put together by two British women, starting with Virginia Woolf. I found it very useful. But its limitation, and the editors make this point, is that it's limited to the North—the U.S. and Europe. From the other geographical hemisphere, I think some of the books that have been written on women and work—not only Noeleen Heyzer and Gita Sen's edited book on women and work, but some other works too, of which I will have to search for appropriate titles.

There are two writers who are not directly related to economic development, or development, but whose understanding of gender relations can be very emancipatory to somebody who does not know. They are Fatima Mernissi, a Moroccan social-anthropologist. She has done a book called *Women in an Islamic Paradise*. There is her other essay in a book that I co-edited with Diana Eck of Harvard (who is the other author), called *Speaking of Faith*, and the book has twenty essays on religion by women who are critiquing that religion from the inside. I summarized it as deconstructing theology and reconstructing it from a feminist point of view. While mentioning this broad range, I am trying to make the point that the person who doesn't know needs to see what we deconstructed and why we did it, rather than merely seeing us as a voice which shows that men are different from women. That's trivial. What I want to show is what does the differences do to analysis.

TGW: In your participation in major regional or international gatherings at which these issues have been discussed, what kinds of outsiders with ideas? That is, what kinds of

researchers or academics can be useful, can make a difference? Is there any way to generalize about who is effective with ideas and who is inept?

DJ: By and large, there have been many scholars who have been influential. The typology of the person who is influential is somebody who has her feet in activism and in academia. There are many women—take Hazel Henderson, or you take the early Swedish women whose names I have forgotten, who were brilliant anthropologists who used to come to our conferences and shout, effectively shout. Then there are quiet scholars like Anne-Marie Goetz, Gillian Hart, and many academics from IDS Sussex or from the Harvard Institute of International Development, who are used as consultants by the World Bank or by the British ODM (Overseas Development Ministry) and SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency).

So to come back, there are scholars who have done good work on dissecting gender, and the ones who are effective are those who do consultancy with the donor agencies or with governments and, therefore, bring the academic into the government or donor agency's project. Then that gets into the UN in building the document for negotiation. To give you an example which is most telling, before the Cairo conference, the UNFPA (UN Population Fund) had the wisdom to call many conferences of scholars. They called one in Botswana and they called one in Bangalore. And Tom, it was stunning to see the kind of knowledge that those seminars brought. They were all seminars of social anthropologists and demographers who happened to know or be women. Similar processes have been followed by some of the other conferences to bring scholars to discuss an issue which is going to come up in a UN conference.

TGW: I wondered if we could just switch gears a little from conferences to the vehicle of commissions—eminent persons commissions—which has been another device that we have

certainly noticed since the first 1969 report by Lester Pearson, *Partners in Development*. You participated in one of these, so maybe we could use this as a way to get at the dynamics of such commissions, and your judgement about their importance in trying to push out ideas. How did you get involved with the South Commission, and who were the important players on that, and what do you think its legacy is?

DJ: How did I get involved? I think by accident, as there were many more visible economists who were more ‘eligible.’ I had, as you know, initiated a process of getting women from the Third World together to think how they could form some kind of platform what is known as the DAWN framework and network. Before DAWN was born, Third World women would go to most conferences and denounce the North. That was very negative. We used to disassociate ourselves from northern feminists, but we didn’t know what we wanted. So this was an attempt to put a positive framework. While furthering the process, I had to convene many conferences on issues relevant to the South such as traditional wisdom and survival strategies of the poor, et cetera—themes which had been identified as “Third World” issues.

For an international conference on survival strategies of the poor and traditional wisdom, to which I had invited Gita Sen and other partners, I also invited Dr. Julius Nyerere, as I had heard that he was interested in the issue of traditional wisdom. When I met him to invite him, he told me, “I am putting together the South Commission.” I said, “Very important. Who are the members?” And he gave me a list—Augustin Papić, Gamani Corea, retired officials from finance ministries.

Apparently, according to Dr. Julius Nyere, who recalled that meeting, I laughed and said, “Oh my God! You’ve got a committee of old men,” and just ridiculed the fact that he had put all these very old men together in a commission for the South. Then I said, “But we have done it

much before you. You are starting in 1987. I founded DAWN in 1985, so we women of the South have already thought of the importance of the South.” The interview stopped at that time, but at night I got a call from his assistant who said, “Mwalimu wants you to join the commission.” That was it. Apparently he felt that I had challenged him. He also chose Solita Colos Monsod, a brilliant development economist from the Philippines. She told me a similar kind of story that she was one of the people he met not to invite in the commission, but to know what to do. She had mocked at his idea and said, “You are looking for Filipinos. We are nothing but Americans,” or something challenging or careless. But he immediately put her on the commission.

His choice did not go down well with the Indian government. “She is not a mainstream economist. She is an academic, and she is not in policy.” They argued and offered others from the Planning Commission and Finance Ministry. According to Mwalimu, as we called Dr. Julius Nyerere, he threatened them saying, “Either I take her from India, or nobody from India. I’ll take somebody from Pakistan.” So Rajiv Gandhi, who was India’s prime minister at that time, agreed to the choice. This is a story that Nyerere used to repeat again and again. So that’s how I got into the South Commission.

Now the South Commission as a forum was absolutely an education. Its validity became visible almost immediately—the validity meaning that every member felt this was a call, this had to be done. There was a need to put the economic South together. But you know, Tom, what was so moving was that anybody we met—for example I don’t know if you remember Eddie Lee, who used to head the employment division in ILO Geneva, or any other international UN civil servant originally from the developing countries, brown, yellow, black, living and working in an international agency—they used to say, “Sorely needed.” They felt the perpetuation of

unequal standards, the politics of North-power, the underdog, the sense of being the second-class citizens. It used to be so amazing that as they would close the door and say, “You really have to do something about this white Eurocentric world. You must awaken the South. They all depend on our brain, but they are actually colonizing us.” You know, this neocolonialism thing was very strong in the 1970s and 1980s.

Then when we went to the countries, we would meet with the heads of state. We were always state guests. The host country always used to have a conference of intellectuals and activists during our visit. That was a process used by all the commissions, like the Brundtland or Brandt. You would meet government, and then you would meet civil society. Inevitably, there would be this affirmation, saying, “Do it. It’s needed. We have to do something to contain the economic unipolarity. There is no way we can get out of this trap unless there is a solidarity.” It was very much like the working class trade union ethos.

By the time we had finished, in two years we had traveled to forty countries, and each of us felt committed to developing an economic South. If you have ever read the book, there were very interesting institutional arrangements that are now coming back into fashion. We had a South bank. We had a debtors’ forum, where the debtors could meet and sort it out. We had national development to precede internationalism, that each country had to be strong to withstand globalization. We had extraordinarily well cut-out chapters. So the experience of the commission was positive. It showed there was a legitimacy in having an economic South. Its process was very open. We were all allowed to speak.

The flip side was that there were three or four people who were still not retired from heads of state or other positions, like Carlos Andres Perez, who was president of Venezuela and a member of the commission. Shridath Ramphal was still secretary-general of the

Commonwealth and a member of the commission. Michael Manley was still prime minister of Jamaica and a member of the commission. The rest of us were not in that kind of public formal position. Unfortunately, one of, in my view, Julius Nyerere's weaknesses, which was also Jawaharlal Nehru's weakness later I found, was that he respected formal structures of power. He did not really have great respect for the informal structures of power, like people's movements. He was still in the paradigm of that era where you respected a head of state, much more than, let us say, a revolutionary in his country. Here as the chair of this commission, he gave them more space to carve out the book and the action plan. There was no space for civil society, no strategic plan for getting ideas adopted. It was all left to governments, to set up committees and implement the plans. There was no academic or ideological underpinning as ideology was considered 'dangerous' by these men.

Curiously, we three women—Marie Angelique Savane, Solita, and I—were always telling him, "Mwalimu, you are too stuck on formal power." If you want, you can associate with the feminists who are always looking at the informal sources of power. However, even after a good debate, he would turn to Sonny Ramphal or to Perez, and ask them to continue the process. They in turn would tether it in the most conventional language and ideas. So very often, Michael Manley and I—and there was another young man who used to be the head of the first SADC (Southern Africa Development Community), whose name was Simba Makoni, and Marie, Solita, and I would feel marginalized. The process would always be open but the outcome would be very orthodox—but nevertheless, in spite of all that, the report itself was quite a valuable report.

So if you are asking me what do you think about the role of commissions, I think a commission can be a valuable traveling forum to give expression to a wide range of voices on an issue. A commission can wrap up its deliberations and provide useful tools. But the South

Commission lost completely because of the political moment in which it was born. It was released in 1990 in Venezuela on the very day, tragically, that Iraq invaded Kuwait. The whole world's press had been called by Carlos Perez, but nobody turned up because everybody was gripped by the invasion. So when the book was launched with what was called a multimedia big-bang, not a squeak came out in any northern paper. Of course, Nyerere said, "Not a squeak came out in a northern paper because we are fighting for the South. If it had been a white-led commission, with Brundtland or Brandt, the *New York Times* would have taken notice of it." But it never got taken notice of.

The second reason it was a failure in its influence was because the countries of the South were already in such disarray. The structural adjustment programs had already started, and most countries were seeking every form of revival from the international donors. They were very scared to form a club which looked like a union against the other. So many of the countries would say to Nyerere, "Yes, we believe in the economic South," but then they would not like to show that they were building a kind of an alternative power structure. The evidence for this is that, along with the South Commission's report, we also set up the G-14 (Group of 14). It was supposed to be a counter-economic intergovernmental club to the G-7 (Group of 7). Nyerere provided space for that club in the same office of the South Commission, which the Swiss had funded. And the G-14 could never meet as fourteen. It met as three or two or one, because the heads of state did not want to come to it. I remember India convened one and three people came out of the fourteen. The Group of 77, the Group of 14, the South Commission have collapsed in response to a unipolar economic force. And also the Bretton Woods institutions' power could not be contained by any kind of alternative configuration.

I was also one of the people whom Nyerere favored to represent the South Commission at the Brandt Plus Ten event in Berlin. I was also sent to represent, along with Marie Anglique Savane, the Commission for a North-South Civil Society Conference at Benin. I now wonder whether any of those commissions really were able to walk and transform the world. The Brandt Commission was definitely a defining moment for North-South. But Brundtland, though we all have learned the language, was not followed up. In India, for example, we feel that the Brundtland and the Agenda 21 have simply not been adopted by most of the countries. And the U.S. itself refuses to adopt so many of its principles. When the biggest, most powerful country does not accept the convention, what do you do with the weaker countries?

One point, if I'm not overdoing it, is—you haven't asked me, but I'm sure you want to know—what did we do on gender and feminism in the South Commission. We couldn't do much. It was so difficult. Ultimately, the Arabs said there is no Arabic translation for the word "gender." Then we rang up Fatima Mernissi and found that we could get a word. Finally, we do have a subsection called the Gender Dimension, which I drafted, which makes the same case you heard me make, that it's a dimension for analysis. We also have—the women advocated for a chapter on culture, so we have a cultural view of the South, which is worth looking at. It's universal, and yet it is South. We also have a section on people's movements.

These were the three inputs of the small women's caucus that we formed within the South Commission. There were twenty-eight members—three were women. And we three very quickly made ourselves into a caucus.

TGW: What are the advantages, in terms of rethinking or reframing an issue of coming up with a slightly new agenda, of a select group of independent people versus an intergovernmental framework in which people are representing countries? It seems to me that if

you have twenty-eight people, it's a little like Noah's Ark. The idea is that somehow this will be different from strict geographical representation. Is this really freer, or more imaginative, or can you push out the envelope more quickly within this context than within an intergovernmental one?

DJ: Tom, in a way—you have been on commissions, too, so this must sound too basic for you. But the idea of putting together twenty-eight economists from different countries in the developing world was to put together a homogeneous forum. They were all economists with economic track experiences. Therefore, there was a technicality or a technical capability amongst the members. Secondly, it was supposed to set up an economic agenda for the South. Now if you compare it with an intergovernmental, let us say, committee for drafting an economic charter for the G-77—after all, G-77 was there—then you have a disparate group of individuals with a common purpose. But the individuals would be very disparate. There would be a representative who was a politician and somebody who was a bureaucrat. The G-77, when it comes to the General Assembly, has a political agenda but is not backed up by an economic service station.

So Nyerere's idea had been that we should have an OECD DAC. And it was Robert Mugabe's idea—curiously, the same naughty Mugabe who was then president of NAM—to set up the South Commission in the hope that it would generate a DAC for the South, because there was a feeling that the G-77 assembled and came together when the General Assembly was called and then fell apart the moment the General Assembly was over. Whereas the Europeans always had a service station in Paris giving them the data, showing them the trade-offs between trading like this, pricing like this, unionizing, non-unionizing. So our dream was that we then get

transformed into what is called an Economic Intelligence Unit, which would feed the G-77 with the data and the analysis and the politics, which would then make them argue in world councils.

So that was the purpose. Therefore, you can see what we mean by the difference between an intergovernmental forum for an issue and what could be economic expertise churning, which would then lead to something which would be a perennial source of economic advice. So I think “thinking” with some kind of homogeneity formed the group.

TGW: Why did the South Centre—well, it’s still around, but it’s in very feeble shape. Why, in your view, did this seemingly obvious idea, an OECD for the South, not get very far?

DJ: Well, I have my personal view, and I must say that Solita and Marie, the other two completely agree with me. Again, I don’t know whether it’s because we are women, or because of what. But Nyerere had many faults. As I told you, his weakened fault line, or his Achilles heel, was his being overpowered by the importance of formal power. So when he transformed it into a South Centre, even after the end of the commission, he put again Perez, Ramphal, and people like that on a small committee—people who were not at all part of the resurgence of their countries. Some said they had all become deadwood. Then he never let the South Centre become the focal point for the energy that the South was generating. We had told him so often, “Make it the focal point for civil society. Let it be an exchange center. Consolidate.”

But he was very smitten by bureaucracy—and the biggest fault was that he chose one of the weakest persons in the secretariat, Branislav Gosovic, who had neither intellectual nor political power to be a focal point. He put together again an advisory committee of important people not active popular people. Many of us had suggested some much more visible, interesting people who had leadership, who, if they went to Washington, would command the attention of the World Bank because they had their own status in society. That is where Joan

Wicken was another Achilles heel. She was, of course, enslaved by him. But she also had very dogmatic ideas, and he often relied on her. For example, she was completely infatuated with Sonny Ramphal and would always insist that what Sonny Ramphal said was to be recorded and chaptered, even though we all screamed. And she had her own views on how it should be run.

You may say, "But why did he listen to her?" That's another question. So we were very disillusioned by Nyerere's incapacities, as we were very impressed by his greater capacities. So he killed it in its very birth. Now it is sliding down, and Graça Machel has been asked to save it. I think many countries like South Africa have decided to withdraw support. And I would be quite happy to let it die now.

TGW: You mentioned, on a couple of occasions, DAWN, Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era. Why don't we just spend a few minutes on this? This began before the second women's conference, but what really pushed you to try to get this thing off the ground in the first place? Was there any event, or was this just a long, simmering notion?

DJ: It was two things. The experience of being part of the process of the UN conferences and the research on the impact of development on women in India and other developing countries. The bilateral donors would always try to invite some women from the Third World, not only to the main conference, but also to the consultancies that took place prior to the conferences. After Mexico, in 1980, there was what is called a mid-decade conference in Copenhagen (World Conference of the UN Decade for Women). I was there for this conference, which was held in Copenhagen; the Scandinavian agencies had a lot of consultations. Some black and brown women would be there, but by and large the consultations would be held by a Swedish university or Swedish professional women or an American at Wellesley, or things like that.

We brown/black from the South found that every time we went—and this was Zen Tadesse, myself, and others—we would be in some kind of a position where we were critiquing what was being said by our northern sisters and then huddling together and saying, “Oh these women, they are neocolonists.” We were very troubled by racist and intellectual domination type of disturbances. So this I had experienced for three or four years between 1975 and 1980, when the Copenhagen conference was held. Then when we went to the UN conference in Copenhagen, the divide came out very sharply, whether it was Zen, myself, or Marie, we would always be on one side, so to speak, each supporting the other.

It became very humiliating, because then the people would say, “These Third World women—these Third World women, they’ll come and disrupt this conference. These Third World Women, they are so political.” It was that kind of “these Third World women” like you talk of “these disturbing punks.” So that was also rather demeaning. So, I had been experiencing this, and yet I was one of those few women who had a lot of friends in the North—Gloria, Judith Bruce, and many, many others—and a lot of friends amongst women in the South. So that was point one which came out of the frequent meetings.

The second major one was that, as a person who was working on projects and evaluation of projects in India for the government, the Swedish development agency identified me to do a scanning for them of their development funding in India for women. And when I did that, the woman at that time, Karin Himmelstrand, said to me, “I would like you to deliver a lecture to the OECD DAC WID group in 1983 in Paris prior to the Nariobi conference to set us thinking on our role at Nairobi 1985.” She said, “Every time the WID meets, we have one speaker.” So I was honored by being asked to give this lecture.

For that lecture, I asked Karin to send me all evaluation reports done worldwide, which were available at the OECD, including the World Bank. And as I have mentioned earlier in the interview, she sent me this 100 or 120 documents. I read them and did this lecture called “Development As If Women Mattered: Can Women Build a New Paradigm?” Basically, it was saying that development as it was being engineered did not seem to be working out. When I gave that lecture, curiously the donor agency women appreciated the analysis and felt that it had given them ideas on how to handle gender. It was to be published by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation. This was a defining lecture. But after that, I circulated it to a few friends like Carmen Borosso—who is now at MacArthur but used to be at the Carlos Chagal Institute in Brazil—and Claire Slatter and a few other friends who felt that it echoed their own understanding of development experience especially in relation to poor women. They felt that I had reflected their thoughts.

And the last point I want to make, to show the birth, was it so happened I was at Harvard in 1984 teaching a course on the life and thought of Gandhi. I had no interest in doing anything for Nairobi. I had no interest in giving birth to a new network. Nothing at all was on my mind. But people at the Ford Foundation heard that I was at Harvard, and there have always been friends of mine in the women's division. They came and said, “Hey, do you have any ideas for Nairobi?” So I said, “Look, I’ve been dreaming up this idea to critique and challenge the UN’s framework for Nairobi, which asks, ‘How are you equal to men?’ I think this is the wrong question.” So this woman at Ford, Kate McKee said, “Devaki, tell me what you want to do and I’ll do it.” I said, “Would you like to call a brainstorming?” She said, “Sure.” I said, “I have no energy. I have no money.” She said, “Just give me the names, and I’ll do it all for you.”

It was an amazing partnership. She took the names. She made a letterhead in my name right here from Ford New York. She sent letters to ten women whom I had met in my life travels and whose names I chose. They were all women known to me for different reasons—somebody from the Pacific, somebody from Senegal. So I only invited women whom I knew very well, and we sent them all my paper. They all said, “This resonates with what we want.” So Ford said, “What would you like to do?” I said, “I’d like to call a meeting in my house in Bangalore, and close the door and let them talk.” They all came for three days, and Ford funded it fully—their tickets, their stay.

We started by taking the UN’s program or framework for the Nairobi conference, and then we shattered it. Curiously enough, the shattering came not from what people may think—myself or Gita or any of them—it came from Fatima Mernissi. We were still very much a product of western intellectual training and we believed in putting up something on the board—what now has become more technical and fashionable at the UN. I was writing. So suddenly, Fatima said to me, “Tear it all up. Just rubbish it.” So we thought, “Oh my God, she’s a destructive creature.” But she said, “You’re thinking in a groove. Break out.” Then she had this idea, “What is Africa’s biggest problem?” Then she said, “Food. What is Latin America’s biggest problem? Debt.” Then she offered what she called the regional crisis framework and where the women link to that crisis. Where there is a crisis of debt in Latin America, that is where I must link poor women, and not to men and women equality measure.

So that is how it happened. So when you say, “Did you just sleep all night and think about it?” No, it was these three steps—the analysis, which is my research bit; the conference, which made me realize there was something wrong in the way we were going about it; and the friendships made in the conference track is the most important. Just knowing some women

whom I could say, “Look, I must do this. Will you come?” And they all said, “Yes, we’ll come because you are doing it.” Partly it was the solidarity that we had built up. And I invited as many of the women I knew who had, in fact, some relationship with networks in their own region. So Marie Angelique I invited as the president AAWORD (African Association of Women in Development). Somebody was a coordinator at IUPERJ in Latin America.

They were really networked, so it was not just individual scholars. And Fatima, because she and I had been together at Harvard on the religion book—so I had criteria, one from every continent.

TGW: Let me open a parenthesis on religion. Can religion—basically, one of the most traditional forms of human organization—and a push for gender equality coexist? Is this a non-starter, or is there more room for maneuver here than I make out?

DJ: Religion, its use in worship, has provided a support system, I suggest, to women, to face their sense of insecurity, injury, subordination. It is said that there are more women worshippers, whatever the religion, than men. Even though many churches, mosques, temples, exclude women from forms of entry and participation, they turn to religion, God, and worship wherever they can. Since it does cater to a need, and since often identity, especially minority identity is forged through a religious identity, and since women have been major participants, I think it is important to take religion on board as a structure, a tradition, an ethic that is deeply embedded. As you suggest, religion has most often been patriarchal and therefore cannot be seen as an instrument or a source for equalizing power between men and women. But I want to argue that for this very reason, religion needs to be included and can in fact turn out to be the source of changing not only power hierarchies, gender relations, but building peace within conflicting arenas and peoples.

I think the most interesting push and re-accommodation of gender has been done by feminist scholars, from Turkey, Morocco, and Egypt in relation to Islam. Similarly, there has been strong deconstruction and reconstruction of Christology by feminists from the Christian tradition. Hinduism, not being structured but more a way of life than a formal religion—though currently Indians are trying to box it in orthodoxy—does not have to be recast from a gender perspective. There are goddesses and men are so used to going and genuflecting in front of these goddesses from the very beginning, not as mother of God, but as Goddess herself. But there are practices here, which are harsh and highly cruel to women. In Sri Lanka women are not allowed to go to sacred Buddhist pilgrim centers, and in some parts of India, women are not yet allowed if they have a period. The pollution issue is still there.

But then again, when you ask if any books can be influential, I would refer to a book that I co-edited with Professor Diana Eck, of comparative religion at Harvard University, called *Speaking of Faith*. This was a cross-cultural dialogue across faiths between women only. Most of the writers, who were all participants in a seminar held at Harvard University in 1983, were monks or nuns or serious practitioners of a religion. Thus they had “faith.” But at the end of three days, they could both feel the identity across religions due to the common experience of discrimination, as well as see the construct of religion by women to be around the universal spirit, the common spiritual consciousness, the identification of divine as one, though worshipped with many names and in many ways. Thus a feminist perspective was identified, which actually led to the unity, the unifying grace—a potential which today could provide the healing touch. Further, women taking to the priesthood would also change gender power relations, since priesthood is associated with power. Therefore I would argue that this is a vital area for those concerned with gender relations as well as international relations.

The book, the first of its kind, then led to so many other publications of feminist views on religious practice. So I don't think it's difficult. And that's one of the things I've written in the introduction to that book. The core of a religion supports individual spirit—you know, the core. And once you have an individualized ethic, women can find a place.

But if you don't mind, I'd like to go back one minute for something which I think I don't want to miss out. It's about networks. The International Network Against Trafficking in Women, the International Network Against Prostitution, like the Third World Association of Women Against Prostitution, and many others that were born between 1975 and 1980 have played a very important role in the process of linking women to the UN, generating ideas and enabling their entry into the UN. Even today, they are the most lively in organizing around a conference—more than individuals. And most of the networks are interregional, but they build on region. DAWN was the first interregional network of the South. It networked the regional networks. Therefore, when we were asked why we were there, we were the umbrella for all the networks.

When Bella Abzug, who founded WEDO (Women's Environment and Development Organization)—she has written that she decided to do this because of DAWN. She thought she would build a network of regional networks. It became a kind of Bella for the North and Devaki for the South, which is why the UN gave us both awards in Beijing—one woman from the North and one from the South. But even today, there is a bit of a tension. So the Ford Foundation has given one million dollars to WEDO and one million dollars to DAWN as a kind of even-handedness between a North-based network and a South-based network. But the networks have become crucial for the efficiency of the UN conferences.

TGW: Are the networks—and DAWN more particularly—also useful for the production of ideas? What is the mixture of advocacy versus research or policy formulation?

DJ: Very good point. DAWN particularly was influential with ideas and analysis, as you know from the first book. DAWN was also effective with the intellectual work. But now I would say it is more influential with intellectual work at the local level than raising any great values. I think this is partly deliberate. Change is easier to accomplish—the more local, the more you can accomplish change. So gradually, all of us are affected with trying to do the big thing and not getting anywhere. So we'd rather do the little thing and get somewhere. So you'll find that DAWN spends more time this way.

But DAWN is also, of course, visible now even in the big world meetings. But coming to the idea bit, I would say the idea bit is muted compared to the transfer of knowledge. People like WEDO and ISIS—they are not very much into ideas as much as the exchange of best practice, which itself could be an idea. Then networking in order to make one big point, like the International Criminal Court (ICC), like critiquing the multinational corporations. For financing for development, all the women's caucuses have come together in support of the public goods idea and the Tobin Tax. Now they build consensus before they come to Monterrey because of the internet and the networks.

TGW: Have there been ideas that have come out of DAWN, or is that not its comparative advantage?

DJ: Indeed yes, and in fact that I would say is DAWN's comparative advantage. I have already spelt out in great detail how DAWN upturned the view of integrating women into development, also how to move from knowing women in poverty to a macroeconomic analysis which enables policy, also on identifying the vehicles for that transformation as coming from

peoples' movements, in this case the women's movement, which would be the vehicle for implementing whatever is mandated by the UN. There's a last chapter called "Vision," which a small subgroup of us drafted, which is about the linking between the two, the analysis and the implementation. They say that the book which DAWN brought out after the ICPD was very important because it opened up the whole importance of women's autonomy and reproductive rights.

DAWN has also brought in language, like the political economy of globalization, the link between political and economic structures—there was one theory we had that it is only political restructuring that will enable social transformation. PRST (political restructuring for social transformation) is to show that unless women can participate in formal politics you can't actually transform society's discrimination. So I think DAWN has made conceptual contributions.

TGW: Does DAWN still serve a purpose? I have a notion that institutions, like individuals, should perhaps leave at the top of their game as opposed to waiting to get worn out. And I'm wondering whether you think that certain kinds of networks, or certain sorts of institutions, be they governmental or intergovernmental or nongovernmental, get fatigued, and there ought to be a sunset clause in these.

DJ: Well, it's interesting that you say that, because I'm still trying to figure that out. There is value in what you suggest. On the other hand, very often it takes time for a network or an institution to learn and find a niche. Today that is more difficult, as there is fragmentation and there are also many more networks. There are also emerging new leaders with new interests. DAWN is still moving, in that it provides a platform for the women who analyze and advocate. Since there are many more networks and interests, DAWN now works with coalitions and partners, and to that extent may not be as unique or vivid as earlier.

Should leaders within organizations wither away or reinvigorate? Yesterday, when I went to CSW for a LINK caucus, just to see, I was surprised to find that neither WEDO nor DAWN were there, but a whole lot of others had emerged. I thought, “Good.” And there was a very young, white American girl who was actually conducting the kind of business that Bella Abzug used to be conducting five years ago. I thought, “Good, the old order changed. We’ve replaced it with a newer one.” That kind of thing went through my mind. So I suppose it’s not fatigue as much as bubbling. That is, you find there is a space and lots of mushrooms come up. Some of them may grow beyond the others, and some may not. Some may get co-opted, some may die.

There is constantly a flux in this. And there is a lot of fragmentation too. One thing—I don’t know if you noticed in the other books that you are doing, but the world is much more fragmented. I have a chapter in my book called the “Politics of Identity.” I think social groups are getting fragmented. Anti-racist groups are getting fragmented, feminist groups are fragmented. It’s partly the celebration of diversity. And the new terminology is “intersections.” Therefore, you enable diversity and then you say there is intersection—class and caste, gender and class. It has its negative. I think it is destroying the capacity for unity and solidarity. I find this in almost all the forums that I go to. I don’t know whether you find it, too.

So why I’m saying it is, you can say there is fatigue, but you can also say there’s breakaway, that almost every large group has breakout groups now. Every other year that I come here, I find that two women have broken apart and set up their own organizations. That is happening a lot, and that has been lamented upon by my generation. This is in answer to your question.

TGW: I think that in professional associations and universities you have the same phenomenon. How would you characterize the changes in your thinking over time? How do

you think differently now than three decades ago, or four decades ago? What has forced your own reevaluation, and how would you characterize the major changes in your own approaches?

DJ: One is that some of it hasn't changed, it's gotten more embedded. Many have changed. For example, the belief that identity based on gender can become an important social political force has been a view from as far back as 1975. Change would be that many of us, including me, are thinking that the word gender has been a problem. It has diverted attention from women's struggle for rights. It's an analytical tool, but it is now becoming a way of referring to women. So you do gender budgets—the question is have you gendered that, have you gendered this—which means that you are looking at the difference between men and women in data or in impact. But it has sort of become synonymous with women, which is a mistake because women is an identity based on gender, but it is not gender. So we are now hearing, here in New York as well as the South, that we should be careful because by not using the word women, the unity-building of the women's movement is getting distracted.

So there I may have changed, because I was one of the early ones to do gender differentiation. Now I may say, "OK, we've done that. It's only an analytical tool. We have to go back to the word 'women,'" which I had not. Secondly, we had put a lot of emphasis on the importance of the economy and the economic place of women. Now we are realizing that the social relations between men and women, gender relations across class and caste is an issue we should have addressed much more. Whether you take this violence against women issue, and other such, you find that gender relations have to be changed.

Another is my current conviction that the basic problem lies in the valuation of woman, the female of the species, that women are always valued as an insignificant part of the human race, just like the blacks were considered to be mindless by the apartheid whites. So that sort of

thing is now teasing me, that maybe we should have really looked at that very core of the mindset of people on the female of the species. So that will be a major change in my view.

Whereas earlier I was doing much more on projects, and impacts of projects, and insuring that some of it came to women, that women would fight for a piece of the cake, one would now say, “My God, it’s deeper than that. You have to have a very strong political resistance across class and caste to be able to push the male mind to see women as valuable humans.” That would be another change.

Another change in my view is vis-a-vis the NGO. I now think that the NGO should not be made into such a significant actor. There is an overplay of the NGO right now, and this is going to be bad for democracy. It is going to be bad for the poor. And I am using childlike language like “bad.” Government has to be made to transform itself, and the NGO must not try to replace the government, which it is doing now, and is being encouraged to do by the World Bank, and the UN, and others, by saying, “You see, the state is corrupt, the state is indifferent. But the NGO will save the poor and the needy and bring social justice.”

This has given so much impetus and encouragement to NGO multiplication, and this is a very serious erosion of the responsibility of the state and accountable institutions. And of course you can never have an NGO to be everywhere. Whereas, for example, in India we have 350,000 legally elected local self-government bodies scattered across India. No NGO can be 350,000. But the fact that the NGO has become so pugnacious, and so visible, has led to the Bank and others in India bypassing these 350,000 institutions and wanting to put together NGOs to do the social justice bit. And the NGOs are not recognizing that they are actually hurting the very framework that they want to support—that is, democratically set up institutions. You’ll be amused to hear that in the last three or four days that I’ve been here, and at the UNDP’s advisory

panel, there were other voices which also said the NGOs were trying to replace the state, and cannot do so, and should not. So those would be the major changes, in my thinking.

TGW: I wondered whether this switch in your own thinking is paralleled in UNIFEM's switch away from the more traditional "women in development" toward a more holistic notion of women within a more coherent development process emphasizing equality, peace, and the whole works.

DJ: Absolutely. I don't know what has influenced UNIFEM except that the cycle of all of us may be changing together. But certainly, we call it moving from WID to WAD to GAD—Women Advise to Development. From women being a component, we are now of that view that women should lead development rather than women asking to be integrated into development. So it's called WID, to WAD, to GAD, and now whatever. So you got it right. A little bit of a peep of that happened in Beijing, but it's been going on. And the person whose papers I found very useful on this, which Richard Jolly sent me—but she's an old friend, I had not realized that she had written this—is Ann-Marie Goetz. She has done a brilliant analysis of the conversations in Beijing and what messages they were giving—South, North, WID, WAD, and so on.

One thing, Tom, which we haven't talked about, which I think is perhaps one of the experiences I had which I thought would be valuable for the UN analysis, is the specialized agencies—the ILO, UNESCO, FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), WHO (World Health Organization), UNDP, UNICEF (UN Children's Fund), UNFPA. Many of us have had very strong interventions as well as accommodation and integration of our ideas into those agencies. I don't know if you're interested.

TGW: Absolutely. Please.

DJ: Is there something I'm moving away from that you want to try?

TGW: No, no, let's move.

DJ: I had deliberately listed in the bio-notes my links with the specialized agencies of the UN, not so much to acclaim myself but to show what was happening. From 1974 to 2000, in my own life—but I am only an example of others—all of us have been very much more influential in those agencies than maybe the UN General Assembly or the CSW. For example, if you take IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), we were the ones who enabled IFAD to design its credit program for women on the basis of collective women's groups. In 1976 some of us enabled IFAD to see women as necessarily to be individualized for credit, rather than seen as part of a household. We shifted from the household to the individual within the household. And IFAD became a major giver of credit. Chandini Joshi, now the representative of UNIFEM for South Asia, implemented what I would call a learning by doing project in Nepal for/with IFAD. Similarly, FAO, in its first major conference, called the World Food Conference, in 1974 commissioned us to write about food security.

And I remember developing a concept paper where I argued that, “food security of a household is dependent on the individual food security of the members within the household.” I brought evidence of discrimination in food distribution within the household, especially based on gender to argue the case. Sequential feeding as it was then called, with the woman, the girl-child being given less, et cetera. Thus, for real food security, the “household” has to be dismantled. To perceive food security at the household-level would hide discrimination against women, because women are being given less food within households. The FAO actually commissioned a paper and used it for the conference called “Individual Food Security and Proximate Food Production.” The proximate food production point, namely that proximate food production ensured better nutrition for women and the aged, was taken up by IFPRI (International Food Policy Research

Institute) afterwards. They also made the case that women's nutrition is directly related to the proximity of food production, and therefore food security for women could depend on proximate food production. When food is bought in the market, then access for the female is diminished but if the food is in your backyard. You can access it.

And this was again justified by the studies of the kitchen garden in the Soviet Union. People were not allowed to own land, but the woman could have a kitchen garden at her house. It was found that the nutrition of girls and family was strengthened, where there were kitchen gardens.

I think the number of us who have knocked on the ILO's doors effectively is the most useful. The latest is the ILO International Convention on Home-Based Workers—the result of the worldwide advocacy of women's networks. There is now HomeNet, a new website for home-based workers. And there is the International Convention on Home-based Workers, which recognizes the woman working at home as a legitimate worker, entitling her to labor laws. It is a revolutionary step. It took fifteen years of advocacy to get that done, but ILO did it. And even now Juan Somavia is very sensitive to women in the informal economy, and he has made that a big agenda. So that was encouraging.

Then UNDP, from the beginning, has funded many projects of technical cooperation between developing countries. I was responsible for one of the first, which went across to the ESCAP region.

The study was seen as a how-to gender a project, and the site taken up was handlooms—textiles which are woven with hand operated, as different from machine-operated looms—in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, famous for its carpet-making and other crafts. Interestingly, Jammu and Kashmir State have a major trade union, initiated by no less a person than Mahatma

Gandhi, called Dastakar Anjuman, the union of hand craft persons. So the study was located in that organization. The project report “Impact of Women’s Employment: A case Study on the Modernization of the Traditional Handloom Weaving Industry in the Kashmir Valley, 1977,” was so well appreciated by the UNDP’s TCDC that it was made into a slide presentation and presented in many training workshops via the ESCAP nodal point for social development and gender, for many years.

UNFPA has been closely in touch with the NGOs and had an annual brainstorming with an advisory panel. We were able to give UNFPA the language of women’s empowerment, remove them from a family-planning focus to a social policy focus. And Nafis Sadik will admit that to you when she sees you.

So I think, if you were thinking of which conduit was most effective, both in my personal life as well as in the advancement of women, I would say it was the specialized agencies. INSTRAW (International Research and Training Institute for the Development of Women) and UNIFEM had an enormous number of expert group meetings all the time with us, the academics, and the NGOs. While the concentration of history and defining moments is often built around the CSW, the CEDAW conferences, the larger influence which may have fed into the main system came from the specialized agencies.

TGW: Are you making an argument for the relative importance of mainstreaming these issues throughout agencies as opposed to concentrating them in UNIFEM, or INSTRAW, or “women’s places”? Is this where you think the real payoff from your ideas is located?

DJ: I wasn’t making that point. I was not trying to say that therefore UNIFEM is less or UNFPA is more. Actually, UNIFEM, as an agency, is a torch-bearer for the women’s movement, and that has been valuable. People like Noeleen have further given it a burnished

light, which was not there before. So that's where another issue that you have raised in one of your other books, about leadership, should be discussed—namely that it is the structure and its mandate, and the individual who leads, that makes all the difference. So you had a Richard Jolly who makes a difference, and you can have a non-Richard Jolly and kill an organization. Noeleen Heyzer has something in her personality where she makes herself vivid, and that vividness has affected the Secretary-General, and the Belgians, and the Swedes. They all admire her because they see a life and a person who knows what she wants. So leadership has been important. So UNIFEM has that.

INSTRAW is dying, as you know, and should be allowed to die, because INSTRAW was supposed to be an intellectual powerhouse for the UN. But apart from the fact that no intellectual was placed there to lead, bureaucracies cannot be the source of intellection, in my view, and UN and its “hands and feet” cannot try to concentrate research in its own body. It needs to feed on the food developed in the academy or other centers of learning, such as the social, political and economic movements. The UN appointed persons like Dunja Ferencic who were basically bureaucrats—they were not intellectuals—something like Nyerere did with the South Centre.

So I wouldn't look at INSTRAW and UNIFEM and make that kind of comparison, but what I was trying to say was that the UN General Assembly, the UN secretariat, and the UN's Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) are more difficult for us to reach and we did not really making the effort to reach them. But these places outside, i.e the specialized agencies, the regional commissions, which are also part of the UN system, have been great blotting papers for influencing with ideas, and generating ideas.

TGW: In your view, is there a lot more room for intellectual leadership within these secretariats? Would you care to characterize how you would look upon the average official with whom you come in contact in agencies? If you could inject people of your choice, what kinds of people would you put in them?

DJ: I'm glad you asked that. I have had, of course, exposures with UN secretariats without necessarily being on the three-member review committee, which the Secretary-General appointed to review the reform process, with special reference to UNDP. That committee gave me the chance to sit inside UNDP for three weeks here at the UN plaza, which I have never done in my life.

The quality of the personnel in the field and often at the headquarters is often poor. You hardly have three or four interesting people. There is also a certain kind of a perpetuation of a certain type of bureaucratic persona, which I have noticed in the Indian civil service, also. You might meet them at a party and find them very interesting, or they may have written a book on the side. But whether the system dulls them, or they have got dulled by the procedures, you have an enormous amount of process which is very incestuous and internal, and completely ignorant of the political vibes that are happening outside.

I'll give you an example. Whether it was Romania, Yemen, or the people I met who were presenting something from Nepal—Nepal wrote a fantastic presentation on how they have done UNDAF (UN Development Assistance Framework). The four or five men who came from Nepal were French, or Australian—they were all part of the UN system—and they hadn't even looked at the LDC program fund for Nepal. Nepal belongs to those fifteen countries. And I had been in touch with Mr. Choudhry, who was the chair of that. I had been to two UNCTAD consultations for those LDCs. And there was this whole design of how these fifteen countries

need to be “pulled up.” And there was economic advice to them. Stiglitz was there, I was there, and Carlos Fortin. But these UN civil servants in Nepal had never thought of locating the rehabilitation of Nepal under the UNDP’s program with the mainstream “least developed country” status agenda. They didn’t even know about it. When I told them, they took notes.

Similarly, when I went to Romania, I asked the head of the UN there, “What about the Romas? I’m curious.” He said, “Don’t talk about Romas. It’s a politically difficult issue. Please don’t go and visit them. Please don’t call them. I’ll get in trouble with the government.” Yet, when I finally met the Romas through the Indian ambassador, the European Union had taken the Roma issue as one of the biggest issues. And it came up in the UN conference. So the EU and UN were not putting the Romas under the carpet, but the UNDP man was so naive, and so timid, that he thought if he allowed a member of the review committee to meet Romas that the Romanian government would throw him out.

Thabo Mbeki, the president of the Republic of South Africa, has summed it up. Apparently, he told this new UNDP administrator, Mark Malloch Brown, when he went to South Africa—this is a quotation from Mark himself—“Go away. You and your blue flags, and your people running around in huge Mercedes with blue flags, and your big houses, and ultimately we get one dollar for all that bombast. They want to be invited as ambassadors, they want pride of place in the functions. It’s all very ceremonial, and the money is little. But they pay themselves very well, and they know how to handle that.” This can be said by South Africa, which takes only one or two percent from the UN. India is also rather skeptical.

So this is a way of illustratively telling you that the secretariat has become a burden for the UN’s vision, and secondly that the secretariat is self-perpetuating. The secretariat individuals have become rather dull. And the secretariat, and its role vis-à-vis the General Assembly and the

main UN, is typified by a certain amount of snobbery that technocrats have over elected people. Technocrats always feel that the elected person is ignorant and can't cope without the civil servant. You remember that, "yes, minister," parody of the minister. A UN civil servant will say "Oh my God, this General Assembly and this G-77, Mrs. Jain, you really don't know what a mess they are," as if these people can resolve the issue. So that snobbery is there, which also is bad. So I have rather strong views on the quality of civil servants.

The impact of institutional rivalries was hurting the field offices. When we went to the field, as Prof. Adedeji must have told you, the agencies like UNFPA had to keep their identity. Therefore, if the Yemenis wanted all of them to work in one district, they would say, "No, we have to keep our identities." They are not willing, because of the ego in New York as well as the fact that it is identities that can earn them donor assistance.

In making these somewhat sweeping statements about the quality of the UN personnel, in the field, I would also make some qualifications drawn from my country-based experience . Many of the women who staff UNICEF, UNIFEM and sometimes UNSP also in India, have been outstanding. They have been drawn from universities or technical research centers, with expertise in their field, and have thrown up knowledge on the "what" and the "how." They have then maintained their contacts with the social and intellectual organizations that they knew earlier and then led the UN to them. However, of late one of the trends is for officials from the Indian government to occupy vacancies in the UN system. These men and women often know the agencies, go to meetings in Rome or Geneva or New York and then hearing of vacancies occupy them, taking lien or retirement from their own service. This further perpetuates the closed circuit mentality, proving a barrier to knowledge from the ground and from research.

So to come back to your question, how do you look upon the average official—and then if you could put people of your choice, who would they be? I think I have answered the first, and as for the second, I think it is so important now to select, on a contract basis, if necessary, individuals and agencies embedded in nations, in the countries and let them govern within the UN. This long service, which was a feature of the past, has of course its good points, but who gets those positions and should it be for twenty-five years, et cetera, is a question in my mind I would say. Today, there are many persons who hold elected office, i.e. who have some touch with masses, others who have good field experience either through research or action, and I would say UN needs to recruit from there. Maybe they should even change the recruitment rules to sort of nudge out the typical government official who occupies these posts.

TGW: I had meant, a little earlier, to ask one thing about your views regarding human security. Do you think this is a step forward in the way we frame issues? You were talking about the chapter that you had done on women in peace and security, which is not quite the same thing. But human security is a concept, as I understand it, that begins to embrace more and more ways of guaranteeing peace and tranquility outside the military arena. I am just wondering how useful such a broad conceptual notion is.

DJ: It is so strange. In my reading I find that women claim that it is they who gave this idea, because it's so crucial for women. If you take military security now it is very clear to everybody—but it has always been clear to the women's movement—that the people who are affected most by war are women. The soldiers die, but the women are raped and often homeless or abandoned, or going to prostitution. So now that the women have established that they are some of the prime actors in the war theater, human security—their own security, both in terms of war as well as poverty, hunger, deprivation, et cetera—is considered to be the central concern of

women. And since women are associated with security for the child, more than men, it is considered even more vital that security as designed and defined by women should be human security, because they are the ones who provide security to the family, and they are the ones who are hurt most by insecurity—both military as well economic deprivation by natural resources depletion or any of the other ways in which security is undermined.

So ethically and politically, women are very into it. Again, the criticism I have heard, which I had already expressed, when the International Commission on Human Security was set up—led by Ms. [Sadako] Ogata and Amartya Sen—Peter Geithner, who was one of its architects, as adviser to Rockefeller Foundation, showed it to me I was appalled. I said, “Peter, how could you do this? How could you have one woman, and yet human security is something on which women have spoken more than men, and know about it.” So immediately, he said, “Give me a name.” And I gave him the name of Frene Ginvala. They wanted somebody from South Africa, and they took Frene Ginvala. Then I said, “You must expand it, or have working groups dominated by women.” So now they have put a woman in the secretariat, called Vivian Taylor, also from South Africa.

But I give you this as an anecdote to show you how, in spite of the fact that this has been the language—even in 1970, if you see the literature—of women, that security should be brought in to include human security, that security should include peace and development, which is the Nairobi call. When people set up these commissions, they do not see the importance of having women’s voices in equal measure, if not more prominent than men. It is amazing to me, this unwillingness to accommodate what seems crucial. So anyway, that is my political point. But my factual point is that this is the very heart and soul of the matter.

And yesterday, Carolyn Hannan, the new Director of DAWN, was saying that one of the major concerns she has is how to link social and economic. The two have become almost conflicting. Of course, I didn't participate. But I told her, "You just have to think of the poor woman. She and her body embodies economic and social security, because for the poor, you can't distinguish between livelihood, and health, and water. Social development—you take the poorest of the poor women and you ask her, "Which do you want, water or bread?" What is she going to say? "Which do you want, a social amenity like a health center, or an opportunity to earn wages?" She would say, "I don't know. I want both." Whereas in the middle class you may say, "I prefer this to the other."

TGW: Are there any weaknesses in this concept?

DJ: I haven't thought about it enough. I think it has not been fleshed out sufficiently. I think people are frightened that the UN will take it as its major role, and forget all about economic development, growth, justice in economic transfers, new financial architecture. Therefore, my government, the government of India, is certainly not comfortable about it. Again, if women are allowed to articulate it better, more than men, they may be able to make those linkages. We women are great people at making linkages, as you must have noticed during this interview. And because we make the linkages, we are also told we are not very smart because you should be like a scientist, only looking at one microbe. Then you are smart, but if you say, "I am looking at the microbe and the paper on which the microbe is sitting," then you are supposed to be fluffy.

TGW: I was interested by your discussion of NGOs earlier, or civil society. I do think that part of the euphoria was related to their production of ideas—legitimate ideas—but we went one step beyond that. It was almost part of the marketization—anything the state can do, an

NGO can do better, or something like this. We have moved a little away from that. Nonetheless, do you see any ways that the intergovernmental system, the UN system, could more effectively integrate private views or pluralize debate by involving NGOs? How would we do this?

DJ: This is what we want to think out when I told you I am to convene a reflection called Ten Wise Women, of experienced, UN linked-women leaders and thinkers to consider what should be the changed in the way women call conferences but also about partnerships, pluralizing debates. In other words, how can an inter-governmental system be inclusive of other actors? Certainly, the NGOs are a space for such integration and conferences have offered that space. But the UN's use of expert group advisory panels have also been valuable in this direction. But I think real leverage will come about only when countries are democratic and the intervention, the inclusion begins "at home" and is brought to the UN via that route also. A democratic exposure at a UN Conference or working group—going back to a theocratic or authoritarian "home" does not make such NGO roles effective. It can only exude a "mist"

Let me be simple-minded and say it is happening now vis- a vis one such space—the UN conferences. You have an intergovernmental conference. You have government delegations. You have national machineries citing reports. And you have a document which is negotiated. Then you have NGOs coming for an alternative conference. But in the middle, you have a third thing, which is the most important. You have NGOs submitting their ideas to governments as they prepare their papers for the conference. But depending on the government, whether it's democratic or very rigid, it influences or doesn't influence. I would say the majority it doesn't influence, but a minority it does. So that's the process now.

How can we make it, as you say, listen and also negotiate with the government? We are thinking—and that's the idea we're going to discuss, and that's only one answer but there may

be others. It could a group of Ten Wise Women, or people, say to imitate the former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's Ten Wise Men, or a think tank like the one Gamani Corea led for the NAM conference, a panel of economists, in Durban in 1998 or an eminent persons group—the UN could put together an eminent persons group to develop a document which represents the voice of what you call the movement, the private sector. A document which is not going according to sections, but a document which says, “These are the crises in the world. This is how women would like to see it addressed. These are the changes we want in law, in an organization, in state, and this and that.” And then say, “Could this document please be negotiated by an intergovernmental structure?” It could be something like a white paper which is presented to governments and parliaments—that the UN itself commissions a white paper, but not a summation of governmental reports, which is what it now does with committee work, platforms, and all that, with the NGOs lobbying. But could that be an alternative? I don't know.

It would be completely revolutionary, but it is at the moment the only way I see it. The other is to have national machineries in countries that the UN has spawned. The UN, as you know, has spawned it. The “bureaus” have not really been appreciated by the women-led NGOs. The feminist movement does not appreciate the national machinery concept, because there is a thick bureaucracy handling the women in development issue. Instead, the movement would have liked gender commissions—like South Africa and India have, what India calls the National Commission on Women, which are parastatals. That is, they are statutory bodies legally set up by the government, but autonomous of the government. We think that kind of location of the national machinery, not in a department of the bureaucracy, but independent would be more an intersection of the official with the non-official. Now for example if the National Commission

on Women in India can do a *Progress of Women* report, like UNIFEM did, and that's negotiated in India's parliament, and then that is brought to a UN meeting, that will be great.

So we still see the UN as being important and relevant, but we think that the conduit—and maybe this is not only for women, maybe that's how it should be for environment and human rights too—should be different. I think all UN conferences are having problems whether it is the Cairo Plus Five or Rio Plus Ten.

TGW: You're not the only person who is not fond of "plus five" conferences. Many of the interviewees have voiced disgruntlement.

DJ: It shows that somewhere the process has begun to not yield results. So we have to change that.

TGW: You've spend a lot of time writing a lot of documents, essays and books. When do you think these make the most difference to governments? You've seen your own government function as an advisor in planning commissions and delegations. When is there the most openness to outsiders, and their ideas, or their publications, or their lobbying efforts? When does a specific publication make a difference in terms of changing policy?

DJ: I don't know, Tom. Your first sentence itself, I'm not sure. Governments don't seem to bother at all about books. I think governments are always only influenced when you write memos. Most of my life I've spent going to committees, coming back, and writing up two pages, and then sending it as a letter to the minister saying, "I think this is what we said," so that his staff doesn't misrepresent us. But the normal weight for a book—I think books have influenced individual ministers, I agree, but it has to be a very visible, influential person who writes the book. The book and the person are important. If Amartya Sen comes in, releases a book in Delhi, then it's a big event because he's a Nobel Prize winner. But before he became a

Nobel winner, his books were not so visible nor his ideas “walking.” We may have learned about his ideas, but the government didn’t worry about it. Even now, they don’t actually take his advice, but they feel bound to listen.

So I don’t know about the point you are making about documentation and books. But on the other side, books do influence public opinion—that is, the opinion of academics who in turn may give it to activists. Many activists have told me, “You know, Devaki, we read that thing. We found it very helpful.” Bangladeshi women say that they read something I wrote about India, or Indian women may say they learn from Pakistani women. So books have been very valuable. We circulate them a great deal. In fact, a book of my lectures is being published in Pakistan. So they have their own journey of lighting up the arena. Then that influences maybe influence the government. But I thought you specifically asked about government and books, and that’s where I don’t see much.

TGW: So when you founded the publishing house, Kali, it was not to influence governments. It was to influence everyone else?

DJ: Yes. It had two aspects. One was it was going to publish us, because most of the books we got on feminism and women’s literature were from America, or from Germany, or from England. So it was the first time you had a publishing house which said, “I’ll publish you here and now.” Secondly, we were going to do much more narrative on literature and history. I don’t know if you’ve seen—Kali has anthologies translated of women writing in our own languages. It’s the first time women writing in indigenous languages has come out in English for the world to read. In fact, Gloria Steinem finds that one of the most valuable volumes. That was the translated literature from India of women poetesses, women writers. She keeps these three volumes and she gives them as gifts, because it is such a way of saying, “Here is a voice.” So

one of the purposes was affirmation. It's been successful beyond words as a corporation. We are now registered as a company, not as a society.

TGW: So you're not losing money?

DJ: No. And we have partnership with Zed in London and with the Feminist Press here.

TGW: That's in this building of The Graduate Center.

DJ: Yes. I have to go meet them on Friday. And now African women have taken it up. There's a publishing house set up in Africa. And now people like Sara Longway are setting up what they call WomenNet, because now even on the internet you can become a publisher.

TGW: If you had a research budget in the UN, where would you put it? What are the, in your view, most significant intellectual challenges over the next ten or fifteen years? Where would be the biggest payoff, in your view?

DJ: You see, Tom, this may look superficial to you because I haven't really thought that question out. But what is worrying us—not only me, and not only women, but even men like Ambassador Sharma, and the Mexican ambassador, and the South African one—people are humming around the UN here, apart from those of us who are called upon by the UN in India to come and give a lecture or open a book or something. It is the downgrading of the UN vis-a-vis the Bretton Woods institutions. It's a very sad relocation of positioning in the international domain. It's justified because the World Bank has more money, and you don't have it, because the governments are not giving as much. But actually, as this very simple-minded minister told me in Yemen, "Madam, the World Bank is giving loans, but the UN is giving grants." There is a very big difference between loan funding and grant funding.

The point is that we are letting that international agency, the UN slide down the scale of importance in the international agenda. If I was to do research, to answer your question, I would

like to do something which enables the UN to mirror itself in its pristine origins, try to do a little tracking of its journey, and stop demeaning itself. I think it is very much associated with the individual. I think, for example, Kofi Annan has weakened himself a lot. Not that I know what his predecessor did—nor do I know him. But Kofi Annan has, in many ways, surrendered to the idea that the World Bank and the private sectors can be partners to the UN. By putting a partnership with an agency which is so different in its genesis, its funding, and its purpose, he is actually putting the UN into a mating which will hurt the UN's own values. The World Bank is after all a financial institution who has to be driven by recovery of a World Bank loan, whose very criteria is something which is economically efficient and rewarding. Yet it is the economic domain that poor countries are more interested in than the humanitarian domain. Many, many argue that conflicts are increasing in the world because of increasing disparities, which in turn is related to economic deprivation. And you know all that.

So if there was some way in which research could show the decline, show how serious this is as an attack on international governance, and lobby to pull it back it would be in my view the most important task. Yesterday, I was with an official of the UN, a woman who is now the head of the secretariat set up by the Security Council to implement the anti-terrorism resolution that was passed in the Security Council after Afghanistan. She is the principal UN official and an Indian. She services that committee. She was telling me if the UN wasn't there, we would have to invent it. So we all think that the UN should be there, but not swept off its original "purity" and swept off into the shadows of agencies whose driving force by definition are different, i.e. banks and private sector. So if one could do that, it would be great.

Your second question, what are the most significant intellectual challenges that I foresee in the next ten to fifteen years. To reinvoke political ideologies, whether they are what can be

called philosophies or principles. To move back from pragmatism, and techno forces to thought-led forces. The physicists and neuroscientists are battling with the mind-body issue, bringing in consciousness as a convergence of the physio and the neuro. I attended some of these seminars, convened by the Templeton Foundation, at the alternative millennium summit meeting in 2000, where interestingly I met Richard and Louis [Emmerij], and they invited me to write the UNIHP book .

We social scientists have to find our way through the divide between the techno and the so-called human, find ideologies of, let us say, justice, equality, et cetera, around which we can unite, supersede our current worship of diversity, and overpower the pressures of religious and civilizational divides. The old class-across-all-divides, race over all other divides were useful tools for engineering transformation. We need that, even for the women's movement, which right now is extremely fragmented, where many expressions are welcomed and applauded as the essence of women's culture, i.e. accommodation of and identification of difference. But it has also made us less politically forceful and effective. So how to return to moral and political philosophy, which both understands and accepts some of the forward movements in science technology and affirmation of identity, is the challenge

Your third question, where would be the biggest pay off? To concentrate on a building of nations, and two, within that specifically to empower politically the excluded. There needs to be more attention to politics and institutions of administration, in which some of the tracks can be reversed and the major issue of disparities, inequalities can be tackled .

TGW: Do you wish that I had asked you something I didn't ask?

DJ: No. I think there is one question here which is quite an interesting one—identify a particular UN idea that has had an impact on international politics and why. I thought it was a very interesting question.

TGW: Is there a good answer?

DJ: I don't know. I'm just thinking of particular UN ideas that have had an impact on international politics and why. If we can answer that question some of the kind of pool from which I would like to draw my book, or you would like to draw your book, should be identified. Of course, the only area I know in international politics is North-South. Many others may be interested in East-West. It did have an impact, I think, on international politics—the South and development. Remember that Development Decade, NIEO (New International Economic Order), which you mentioned in your *Ahead of the Curve* book? But I think that spirit was lost. So if one says which idea—it was a great idea, but I think over time it was dried out.

I would have liked to say, “Yes, gender and the feminist movement have an impact on international politics because we consider the issue of gender a political issue.” But again, I wouldn't be able to say that its impact, as you say here in another way—has it got embedded or taken on a life of its own?

TGW: Not yet.

DJ: I think development itself, as a concept, was a great idea that came into the UN. Others are well-known—universalization, equality, the ones you people have lined up at the top of your book. Is there anything I would have liked you to asked me which you didn't? No, I think we have been over everything.

TGW: Maybe we ate too much at lunch. You've been very kind to have put up with us this morning and this afternoon. On behalf of the future users of these tapes, let me thank you very much.

DJ: Thank you.

TGW: One more thing. Could you give me a brief response to your most significant contribution as an academic yourself to the United Nations?

DJ: I think the most significant was the influence that I may have had on the statistical system if you are looking at a hop from a local—that is, a study done in a village in India—all the way to the UN Statistical Office in New York, which then filters back worldwide into household surveys, into INSTRAW, into UNIFEM, and, of course, into ILO. It was both to point out the flaw in the counting of women workers, but also in the presentation of national accounts. It was the first time we tried to look at the neglect, and how to overcome it. It is now acknowledged that the influence I had on the national statistical system, and the household survey methodology worldwide, then moved into the UN Statistical Office, expert groups, and so forth.

INSTRAW also had many meetings on what we call “measuring the invisible,” or “giving visibility to the invisible in statistics.” That was also a phrase I had used. And there I was hoping Michael Ward could take up this point. He was asking how it has any relevance to international standardization. We showed that the international classification of what is called activity codes, there is a code called domestic activity. When you present a women with a question which says, “Which code do you belong to?,” she will say “domestic activity,” because that is where she sees her largest preoccupation, if she's not a wage-earner. So by that, she gets

trapped in that activity code called domestic activity. Thereby, she preempts herself from being asked questions like, “What is your productive gainful activity?”

So we pointed that out, and we said if the UN Statistical Office could drop the code called domestic activity completely it would improve counting women workers. Of course it was never accepted, which is why I say sometimes we have not been able to change the core system of universalization of standards in spite of our efforts. Similarly, in nutrition, the FAO had a ratio that women needed less food because they use less energy. Therefore, the calorie equivalent for women was lowered. Again, we challenged Sukhatme, who was the advisor to FAO. But I am sorry to tell you that the calorie equivalent still hasn't been changed. There was a North-South calorie equivalent also in terms of the kind of body weight of the women of the South. We were arguing that women work very hard whether they are in Africa, in England, or wherever. Their food requirements are the same.

The second major contribution I think I made to the UN's discourse, or whatever, is this whole business of not looking at women in development as a race with men, but looking at women in development as women embedded in a political economy and shifting the debate in many ways. So it was shifting from the equality race to the micro-macro link. That is, you have to see it in the macro. I think these were the two contributions which have actually been accepted by UNDP and others.

So these are some of the areas in which we shook the system. And I think that is where my major contribution—but I want to reemphasize that it was every time work at the national level, ground level, partnership with government, which carried it forward. It was not sitting in international organizations and doing research or generalizing from there. And that's why I came back to that earlier point where the only way we can influence the UN is to work from the

national scene. Then you partner with the government. You do advocacy with the government, move it through the government conduit. Then the possibilities of success or effective outcomes are greater than, say, I do this brilliant piece of work, I go to a panel in the NGO forum, people say, "Wow, you've done some extraordinary work." Then you get tremendous satisfaction, but it doesn't transform anything.

TGW: Is it not possible, however, that you could be working in a country that is unreceptive to your ideas, but that the information would be important elsewhere? Then you could short-circuit your government by going to an NGO, who then takes it to a sympathetic government?

DJ: Yes, that has happened. And you know how it's happened? I'll give you the case of Yemen. In India, as you know, we have a thirty-three percent reservation for women in local government elected councils. We have one million local politicians in India, now. I was in Yemen, and they had declared elections to local bodies. I told the women there that we in India have this reservation, which means that you would have to select women to participate in the elections. So they managed to do advocacy, and now I am told they have passed a ruling that next time they have elections they will have a quota for women. Pakistan has recently held elections with thirty percent reservations for women. And this happened through the back door. That is, through the international network we took India's experience to the UN or to intergovernmental meetings. So you are absolutely right. However, while there are important gains, a large part of the internationally mandated achievements lie wasted as they did not go through the conduit.

TGW: Thank you.

DJ: Thank you.

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