CHAPTER-1

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The Constitution of India guarantees equal status to men and women and prohibits any discrimination on grounds of sex, class, creed etc. Despite all the legal provisions and stronger laws, women are still treated as inferior and subordinate to men. They have been struggling for a long time in getting equal status in the society. It is to be noted that women are not only deprived and oppressed in this patriarchal world, but also ignored in public as well as private sphere. There exists not even a single country where women’s voices are heard without any bias. They have always been denied even with their basic needs. They can neither live their own life nor make decisions at their own will. The society has stereotyped the image of women as emotional and weak. The societal and cultural norms have barred women from working outside their homes. They have to live their lives in the shadow of homes as per the wish of their fathers or husbands. They always have to live under the hegemony of their male counterparts. The problem does not end with the discrimination and the bias towards women, their achievements and contributions are also kept hidden. Women are not allowed to show their talent anywhere. This is because the society is full of patriarchal set-up. Whenever they tried to let the world know about the agony they went through or started to demand their rights, male domination stopped them from doing so. Even their basic needs and demands are not fulfilled. With the cultural burdens and societal barriers imposed on them, women are still trying to improve their status.

The Constitution of India not only prohibits any discrimination on the grounds of sex but also favours to make special provisions in interest of women by the State. But in this world of male domination, women have to compromise with their rights. They even cannot raise their voice in front of the male counterparts. Ultimately, women have to bear the burden of society. They have to do what men want; they cannot do whatever they want. However, with the advent of gender neutral new information and communication technology accompanied with the increase in the level of education among women in the last few decades, have tremendously increased the skill acquisitions and enhanced the efficiencies and capabilities of
women. As a result, women have expanded their roles and making significant contributions to development in all aspects of social, economic, political and cultural life. Yet, in spite of their significant contributions, the contemporary Indian society does not consider them equal partners in the process of nation building and continues to be regarded and treated them as a second fiddle and unequal partners in the process. The structural imbalance towards the female gender is an issue of grave concern for all of us. Gender inequality is a serious concern and a great challenge for a developing country like India which wants to emerge as one of the super powers in the new world order. Keeping in view the gravity of the issue at stake, the United Nations has given much emphasis on gender equality in its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Individuals, organisations, and institutions must come forward and contribute their due share in ameliorating the menace of gender inequality towards establishing a better, just and equitable society, where everyone will get equal opportunity and freedom. In this respect the role of mass media as a powerful institution in the contemporary society cannot be underestimated.

In the 21st century, India is rapidly emerging as a global power, for half of its population, the women across the country, struggle to live life with dignity continues. Women are facing problems in every sphere of life whether employment, access to health care or property rights. The attention required is still not being paid to the issues that concern this section of population. Women empowerment in India is still a distant dream. There exists a wide gap between the goals enunciated in the constitution, legislation, policies, plans, programmes and related mechanisms on the one hand and the situational reality of the status of women in India, on the other hand. India is one of the fastest developing countries but women in India continue to be discriminated. The declining sex ratio in India amply portrays the discrimination shown towards women at the stage of birth. Women may be have stardom in any stream, but are getting harassed every day by their surroundings. They are victims of crime directed specifically at them- from rape, kidnapping and abduction, dowry-related crimes, to sexual harassment, etc. Most of the married women in India are victims of domestic violence. The increasing violence against women shown in television and films and their vulgar portrayal as objects of sexuality is also an important contributing factor to the escalating violence against women in India. The crimes against women in India are growing at a rampant speed. Women, irrespective
of their class, caste and educational status, are not safe. The lack of any serious effort to rectify the weaknesses in dealing with the crimes against women further compound the situation and result is that the conviction rate remains abysmally low. (Aggarwal, 2002).

Media, also considered as a fourth pillar of democracy has always played pivotal role in creating awareness among the masses. It has helped masses in identifying good or bad and choosing the right one over wrong. It shapes the public image and reflects public opinion in the society. Media is believed to be a reliable source of information and a tool which can raise the issues of unsung heroes of the society. It not only imparts information to the masses but also brings changes in the existing stereotypes. Media is also expected to report the issues which remain unseen and unnoticed without any prejudice. Reporting issues in the media does not mean the solution of any problem. It can only elevate the issues and create awareness about the happenings in the society. The policy makers still have to come with effective solutions for ensuring equality in the society. Sometimes policy makers or planners do not pay much attention to the issues which are not covered or raised by the media, even if the issue is extremely critical. It is the need of the hour to think about each and every issue of both sexes for bringing changes in the society.

Media is an essential part of the change because it has credibility and capability of reporting issues without any fear. Media, especially newspapers have enlarged their campaign in each field like social, cultural, political, educational and economic sectors. It should also look into the matter of women’s issues with serious concern. This is the need of hour to come forward and work shoulder to shoulder for achieving this goal of gender equality. Media needs to play proactive role in this regard. In the contemporary society media has the power to make change in the society. Besides, informing, educating and entertaining the masses, it shapes public opinion. Without media’s interference gender equality is not possible. Mainstream English as well as vernacular press has to work more proactively. Most of the times mainstream dailies do not give adequate coverage even to the most important issues either because of paucity of space or because of not reaching to the incident. So, it is the duty of local vernacular press to actively give importance to those issues which are left by mainstream English press without any bias or prejudice. The newspapers can raise the issues before the policy makers. These can create pressure on the policy
makers to take decision on the right cause. This is only possible when newspapers will report news in gender neutral way. We only come to know about the issue or happening only by reading the newspapers. If the issue would not be taken up by the media, deprived section of society will not get empowered. And the empowerment of any country is only possible by the contributions of male and female both. For this purpose, female work also needs to be appreciated and brought to the mainstream. In a democratic country, media acts as a cornerstone which imparts information on public issues and through which mass audiences convey their problems to the policy makers. Media not only help audiences in raising national issues but also in deciding good or bad outcomes. It is expected that the issues appeared in the media will have fair chances of getting on the agenda of both the public and policy makers whereas the issues missing in media remain unnoticed and unseen.

Media is the mirror of society and media reports are reflection of happenings in the society. Media has immense power to influence the masses and communication revolution has further increased its importance. Unfortunately, nowadays media seems to be wavering from its actual role and giving biased information which makes development of the society more difficult. Critics lament that portraying women as equals in the society is a subject that has been given low priority by the Indian media. According to them, the Indian media needs to be sensitized to gender issues so that it will cover women’s issues in a gender sensitive way. (Anderson et al, 1979)

Now media seems to be failed to raise women’s issues because of male domination in news organizations. Almost all news organizations are dominated by male workers. Women are also not seen in key positions or decision making positions. Only male workers decide what is to be covered and what is not to be. Which issues have to be covered on which place and which issue will get how much attention, all of these decisions are taken by male workers. The media can be a powerful force for change and gender justice. It can play an important role in advancing gender sensitive development agenda by supporting and promoting issues relevant to women’s empowerment. In a democratic setup, media is considered as a watchdog, gatekeeper and agenda-setter. It can ensure gender equity by raising public consciousness on women’s issues, enabling the women to hold their governments to account, curbing gender violence, and creating a civic forum for debate. It can also amplify the voice of marginalised women. However, it needs to be noted that due to time and
organizational constraints, news media organizations can cover a limited number of events and issues, because journalists must choose, process and filter the news, the news media must focus attention on a few key priorities—those that are deemed newsworthy. Over time, the issues to which news media gives priority will become the priority issues for the public. Media, specially the news media should give special attention towards women’s issues. Similar to subjects like sports, entertainment, politics, business science and technology, newspapers should also allocate special pages on gender issues and give prime importance in their agenda. If newspapers allocate special pages for covering women’s issues, there would be greater chances of having detailed information and analysis of the stories in depth.

Print media has a big role to play in originating opinions on vital issues in democracy system. The right of citizens in any democracy to free information on matters relating to the governance of the country becomes almost mandatory. While electronic media carries more immediate weight in focusing attention on various issues, it is print media in its vast, almost global outreach, which has a more persistent and lasting effect. Comparatively free from certain constraints and factors that inevitably delimit the commercially driven electronic media, the print media with its much longer tradition has more tangible impact by highlighting certain issues sustaining momentum on discussions and debates generated by social and legislative changes. It helps change perceptions by the nature of portrayal of these issues in print.

Going through historical accounts of the press in India, one is surprised by the conspicuous omission in these records of the role women have played in designing and reshaping it since the time of their entrance into the profession. Of course, as compared to their male counterparts in print media, women started late in the profession. And while we do have records of significant contribution of women during the 19th and early 20th centuries to books i.e. categorized as the ‘permanent press’, Indian women in newspaper journalism have only four decades of history which certainly needs decoding to establish their side of the story of the Indian socio-political scene. This decoding of their participation in the journalistic enterprise gives necessary details about the genesis and nature of women’s liberation movement in India from how it obtains from the West.

Actually, like in anything else for women, the liberation for Indian women started with the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi as a great political leader. His was a
leadership with vast social ramifications, particularly for the women of India. Of course, the links in the chain of progressive ideology regarding women’s status in India can be traced back to 1830s to Lord William Bentinck’s rule in India and Raja Rammohan Roy’s *Brahmo Samaj* movement, his condemnation of the Sati, propagation of widow remarriage and education for women etc, but it was Gandhi who, for the first time, invited women straight into politics. It is the Gandhian ideology, a workable mix of the East and the West, of thought backed by action and action endorsed by thought that made women’s issues alive for them in India. And it will not be an exaggeration to say that Gandhi was the first feminist in India. He is on record to have acknowledged, that but for women’s active participation towards improving their social lot no real development and no kind of freedom in India was possible. (Mishra, 1993)

1.1: Historical Background of Newspapers in India

The first newspaper was started by James Augustus Hicky on January 29, 1780. It was the *Bengal Gazette* or *Calcutta General Advertiser* and it was a weekly dealing exclusively with the arrivals, departures and other social, economic and cultural activities of the small British community in Calcutta (now Kolkata), the headquarters of the East India Company. (Priolkar 1958). Hicky's Gazette voiced the grievances of a section of the British residents of Calcutta who were dissatisfied with the East India Company’s personnel policies and practices. Hicky, himself an ex-employee of the East India Company (EIC), described his paper as a "political and commercial weekly open to all parties, but influenced by none". However, Hicky soon ran into hot water for exposing corruption both at the highest levels of Company administration and within the superior ranks of the British settlers living in Calcutta. His newspaper lasted only two years. Hicky was fined and thrown in jail for slandering the reputation of Warren Hastings and his wife, and for scandal-mongering. His paper was confiscated. That is how the first newspaper of India ended—not with a bang but perhaps with the editor's feeble cry for justice!

As the number of settlers in India grew, the number of English newspapers also grew to serve the information needs of the community of Anglo-Indians (meaning Englishmen or Europeans born or settled in India) and Indo-Anglians (Indians who lived like Englishmen or Europeans). In any case, the newspapers that
served this small population did not have high circulations—perhaps only 350 or 400 copies weekly. (Machwe, 1980)

We cannot ignore the historical truth that the early English newspapers did not spring from any indigenous need. They emerged from the social and political grievances and needs of the small number of settlers in Calcutta, first and then in the other metropolises.

Some of the early newspapers were officially sponsored ones which gave importance to commercial activities also. But most of them aimed mainly at the lightened needs of a small, alien mercantile community and therefore social and sometimes scandalous events found a place in them. All these newspapers lasted only for short periods.

The tone of these papers was set by Calcutta journalism which, according to Sir William Hunter, editor of the *Imperial Gazetteer* of the 1780s, was scurrilous and servile (Primrose, 1939). The pattern of news content was the same in all the Anglo-Indian newspapers. Newsletters from London, Paris, Stockholm, Vienna and other metropolitan cities of the world determined their contents. Social news included tour programmes of prominent Britishers, announcement of births, deaths, engagements, weddings and other personal news pertaining to the European community. Some of these features have been inherited by Indian language newspapers as well as English newspapers published by Indians.

About the time of William Carey's work in Serampore, the British Crown had taken away the right of monopoly trade in India by the East India Company. As a result, several British agency houses and other commercial undertakings sprang up and began to circulate newspapers in support of competing business and trade. One of the most well-known editors of those days was James Silk Buckingham whose *Calcutta Journal* started in 1818. Buckingham opened a new era in Anglo-Indian journalism. He replaced scandal journalism with commercial journalism. His aim was to promote commerce, trade and the business interests of his sponsors, namely, Palmer & Company. Of course, his newspaper also gave importance to news of general interest, and not just of trading and commercial interest. (Primrose, 1939).
1.2: The First Indo-Anglian Newspaper

One of the significant developments about this time was the emergence of an English newspaper under an Indian management and editor. In 1816, Gangadhar Bhattacharya, a teacher who had been greatly influenced by Raja Rammohan Roy, launched a second *Bengal Gazette*, which was also a weekly. Historians tell us that this wholly Indian venture lasted for almost four years. (Moitra, 1960).

Bhattacharya marked a trend which became powerful in the latter half of the 19th century, namely, nationalism and patriotism. Perhaps he anticipated it. In a spirit of patriotism, through the columns of his paper, Bhattacharya attempted to educate his readers of the best in European religious thought and without sacrificing the essential tenets of his own religion and philosophy. Later on, this moderate nationalist editor was a model for others who preceded Mahatma Gandhi and advocated the synthesis of the best in the East and the West. However, there was no indication of the need for any change in the economic and political structures, in any of these early newspapers. (Natarajan, 1967).

Bhattacharya is significant not only because he started the first English newspaper under an Indian management, but because he chose to express nationalism through a foreign language. His attempt signified the most interesting trend in Indian nationalism in the 19th century—British liberal thinking manifesting itself in the Indian environment and idiom.

1.3: The First Indian Language Newspaper

The Serampore trio, William Carey, William Ward and Joshua Marshman, made an important contribution to the emergence of newspapers in the Indian languages, besides beginning a long series of highly significant translation efforts including the production of the tools of writing such as dictionaries, grammars and vocabulary lists in different languages.

In June 1818, the trio started the first Indian language newspaper, namely, *Digdarshan* (Bengali for world vision). This pioneering periodical has to be put in the proper historical perspective. (Bhatnagar, 1946).

Indian newspaper publishing, as demonstrated by *Digdarshan*, was an attempt to meet local needs although in a limited manner. It was begun not only in Bengal but also in other parts of India mainly through the efforts of European scholars, some of
whom were also Christian religious communicators. These pioneers in newspaper publishing in local languages had to contend with the monopolization of printing by some East India Company officials. From time to time, certain regulations were imposed by the Company officials on the Indian language newspapers. Finally, there was the lack of economic and commercial clout on the part of the local people. We have already referred to the prejudices against printing among a few intellectuals, on the basis of narrow 'religious' (superstitious) considerations. (Murthy 1966).

*Digdarshan* paved the way for other Indian language newspapers and another Bengali paper, *Samachar Darpan* (News Mirror) started in October 1818. Although the first paper did not last long, *Darpan* lasted 34 years and covered daily news as well as items of special interest to local Indian Christians. The Serampore Trio also brought out an English journal, *The Friend of India*, which was in essence an English version of *Darpan*. (Bhatnagar, 1946).

The newspaper efforts of the Serampore Trio and Gangadhar Bhattacharya aroused the journalistic interest of Bengali intellectuals. Some of them began their own Bengali and Persian (the language used in courts and royal circles) journals to reach the educated and scholarly minority of Calcutta.

### 1.4: Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833)

The first attempt at an Indian language newspaper by an Indian was made by the prominent communicator, Rammohan Roy. He brought out the *Sambad Kaumudi* in 1821. It was a journal carrying articles on the philosophical debates conducted in those days in Calcutta among intellectuals. (Natarajan, 1967).

Roy also launched an English magazine, *Brahmanical Magazine* to counter the theological criticisms raised by the missionaries against the Vedanta philosophy through the columns of *Samachar Darpan* and other publications. Roy's efforts were not confined to Bengali and English.

He also started a Persian weekly, *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* (Mirror of News). He tried his hand at *Bangadoota* a Hindi weekly, the first edition of which came out on May 10, 1829. It was a Hindi rendering of the English *Bengal Herald* with which illustrious thinkers such as Dwaraknath Tagore and others were connected.

Roy's papers were all slanted towards the intelligentsia and like the missionary papers, they too had small circulations. *Samachar Darpan*, for instance, had a
circulation of 398 copies even after twenty years of its existence. Raja Rammohan Roy was a remarkable communicator. An eloquent orator and a clear thinker, he is considered to be the Father of the Indian Renaissance. He was a liberal who advocated English education but he did not accept the arguments raised by foreign intellectuals. He valued Western secular knowledge and respected Christian teachings; but he strongly criticized the superstitions and evils associated with popular forms of all religions. And he worked against inhuman practices such as Sati and human sacrifice.

1.5: The Evolution of other Indian Newspapers

By the middle of the 19th century, there were printing presses and publishing houses in almost all the important centres of economic and political activity. Secular as well as religious groups brought out primers, readers, grammars, dictionaries and books of general interest. Leaders engaged in social and political activities in the major cities and towns of India made use of the printing press, however small their efforts were, to propagate their ideas. The tools for the growth of journalistic activities had also been developed: standard prose, grammatical rules and norms, dictionaries, vocabulary lists, printing ink, paper manufacturing, type foundries, etc.

There also arose a group of artisans, skilled printers and persons well-versed in history, economics and other social sciences. The first universities of the country were established in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in the same year, 1857. English education spread to different corners of the country. A small band of university graduates became aware of the political reorganization and socio-economic changes in Western countries, although their nationwide impact was felt only by the end of the nineteenth century. All these factors led to the evolution of newspapers in various linguistic regions. We shall have a cursory look at the developments in the press of different languages in the 19th as well as the 20th centuries. (Natarajan, 1967)

1.6: Hindi Newspapers in India

In 1820, the first bilingual paper, Gospel Magazine which came out in Bengali and English, carried a notice that extracts of the magazine were available in the Nagari script (used in Hindi). The only copy of Extracts from the Gospel Magazine
printed in Khariboli (a dialect), is available in the British Museum. This is the earliest example of Hindi journalism, if not the first Hindi journal, according to Vedalankar of Bhagalpur University. (Vedalankar, 1967).

However, it is generally acknowledged that the first Hindi newspaper was *Oodunt Martand*, a weekly that was first published on May 30, 1826. It was published by a Kanpur businessman, Pandit Jugal Kishore Shukla, who was residing in Calcutta. Why Hindi journalism originated in Calcutta is an interesting question. Calcutta was in fact the birthplace of newspapers not only in English and Bengali, but also in Hindi, Urdu and Persian, just as it was the birthplace of printing in many languages, including foreign languages such as Baluchi, Burmese, Chinese and Pushtu.

The reason for this pre-eminent position of Calcutta in the growth of journalism, printing and publishing is that Calcutta was the centre of political, economic and administrative activities of the British EIC first, and then of the British government. It was the capital of British India until 1911 when the capital was shifted to New Delhi.

The new forces of modernization and cultural renaissance made their first appearance in Calcutta. It was, therefore, natural that leaders of the Hindi-speaking community there decided to bring out a newspaper in their own language for the economic and political advantage of their members.

*Oodunt Martand*, according to Vedalankar, thrived for some time on the controversy between the Bengali magazine *Sarnachar Chandrika* and the upcountry traders. However, it ceased publication on December 4, 1827 after about a year and a half of its commencement. It seems the paper suffered from the lack of advertisement support, particularly from government.

Among the Hindi newspapers of the mid-19th century were *Samachar Sudhavarshan* (Calcutta, 1854), which was the first Hindi daily, and *Samyadant Martand* (1854). Among all the newspapers of India, it is the Hindi newspapers which have the largest circulations. Until the 1990s, the English newspapers had the highest circulations. The progress made by the Hindi newspapers is remarkable indeed. In 1947, there were just a handful of Hindi newspapers and they did not have much of circulation. Today, high circulation newspapers are available in all the ten Hindi speaking states: Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh,
Rajasthan, Uttaranchal and Uttar Pradesh. Hindi papers are also circulating in substantial numbers in Maharashtra and Punjab. (Vedalankar, 1967)

More than 45 per cent of India’s population claim Hindi to be their mother-tongue, which means some 450 million people (45 crores). However, for such a huge population, the circulation of nearly 1 crore or 10 million copies of all dailies (including English dailies) is quite inadequate. There are at least 150 million literates in the Hindi-speaking areas. Perhaps the biggest revolution in the mass circulation of newspapers has to occur in the ten Hindi-speaking states of India. One hopes that it will occur with the gradual expansion of literacy and economic well being of the people in those areas. (Mass Media in India, 1988-89, 1999)

1.7: Urdu Newspapers in India

The first Urdu newspaper, Urdu Akhbar, came out in Calcutta in 1910; it was edited by Maulana Akram Ali. Bananis Akhbar (1845), Simla Akhbar and Malwa Akhbar were also among the early Urdu papers. The Urdu papers, like their Hindi counterparts, played a significant role in the formation of public opinion against the East India Company during the Great Rebellion of 1857. That the British rulers imposed stringent measures against the Indian language press is a clear indication of their fear of the growing political influence of those papers, especially in the Northern provinces. According to the Registrar of Newspapers, as per the annual statements received for 2013-14, 929 Urdu dailies claimed 2,72,88,254 copies per publishing day respectively. (Bhatnagar, 1946).

The main Urdu newspapers come out from Delhi, Hyderabad, Jalandhar and Lucknow. The major Urdu newspapers are Roznama Rashtriya Sahara RRS (Lucknow), Quami Awaz, Pratap and Milap (all from Delhi), Rahnma-e-Deccan and Siasat (both from Hyderabad), Hind Samachar and Quami Awaz from Lucknow, Quami Morcha (Varanasi), Paigham (Kanpur and Lucknow), Mashirikhi Awaz (Gorakhpur) and Siasat Jadeed (Kanpur).

1.8: Feminism and Women’s Issues

Feminism can and does vary across historical periods, geographical locations, class/caste/creed/race, and even schools of feminist thought. This diversity is, in many ways, its strength. As feminists have said time and again, feminism and women's
movements are not, as they are often portrayed, about "the battle of the sexes". Anyone who recognizes the existence and injustice of patriarchy and sexism (discrimination on the basis of sex) and who takes some action against such unfair systems and practices is a feminist. Many men fit this description of a feminist, whether or not they consciously adopt the label some women do not. (Bhasin et al. 1986)

Action against sexism and patriarchy can take any form - private or public, quiet or loud, dramatic or otherwise. It can take place at the individual or at the collective level. The primary focus of present-day feminism is the indisputable need to ensure the recognition of women as full human beings with all the rights and responsibilities that accrue to all inhabitants of the earth and all citizens of the world. This involves struggles on many fronts and at many levels for the achievement of women's equality, dignity and freedom to control their lives and bodies both within and outside the home. Feminists believe that the fight for women's equality will result in a just and equitable society for women and men, as well as their children. (Joseph, 2012)

Feminist concerns are not just a few, narrowly-defined "women's" issues, like violence against women, reproductive rights and equal wages - vitally important as these are. Everything in the world concerns women because everything affects them. Feminists seek the removal of all forms of inequality, domination and oppression through the creation of a just social and economic order, both nationally and internationally.

There is and has to be a women's point of view on all issues. As half the human race women must and do take a position on everything that affects the earth and its inhabitants—whether it is terrorism, war (or war-mongering), ethnic/caste or communal conflict, political/economic or developmental trends and policies (including recession and inflation), human rights and civil liberties, environmental issues (including the climate change crisis) or a host of other concerns. Feminists seek to integrate the feminist perspective in all spheres of personal and national life. Despite their relatively limited human and other resources women's organizations — in India and elsewhere — have taken a stand on and are involved with most current events and issues. (Joseph, 2012).
Feminists now stand not only for gender equality, but for the transformation of all social relations of power that oppress, exploit, or marginalize any set of people, women and men, on the basis of their gender, age, sexual orientation, ability, race, religion, nationality, location, class, caste, or ethnicity. Women do not seek simplistic parity with men that would give them the damaging privileges and power that men have enjoyed, and end in losing many of the so-called ‘feminine’ strengths and capacities that women have been socialized to embody. But they seek a transformation that would create gender equality within an entirely new social order - one in which both men and women can individually and collectively live as human beings in societies built on social and economic equality, enjoy the full range of rights, live in harmony with the natural world, and are liberated from violence, conflict and militarization. (Batliwala, 2008)

Gender ideology has been used to co-opt women into not only participating in their own subordination, but often even becoming ardent defenders of male power and privilege. It seeks to justify through various theories the inferior status and subordination of women, and to make it seem natural and logical — which, of course, it is not. In the case of gender, ideological indoctrination takes place through what is known as gender-based socialization (also known as gendering), which begins at birth, and conditions boys and girls to believe in and abide by gender-based hierarchies and roles.

While both males and females are expected to conform to these, conformity is enforced more strictly among girls and women, and punishment for non-conformity is also generally more severe for them. Their best and often only chance to win status and respect is by doing their prescribed duty as women: those who play their ideologically assigned roles dutifully are supposedly rewarded in material, social and/or psychological terms. Of course, things do not always work out that way.

The effectiveness of the ideological control system lies in the fact that, in time, it is enforced as much by the oppressed as the oppressor. All too often those who are discriminated against are co-opted into becoming key instruments through which discrimination is reproduced and deviation is policed. For social survival, women learn to actively collaborate in their own subordination, and to win rewards by actively upholding male power and privilege. As a result, men themselves do not always have to assert that control.
Whatever the family leaves undone, other social institutions, beliefs and practices complete: the educational system, cultural practices, religious dogmas and even the media. The ideology is also further perpetuated by its entrenchment in the whole network of economic, legal and political structures that govern public life (i.e., the market, the state and its bureaucracy, the law and its enforcement machinery, the military, etc.)

So it becomes extremely difficult for women to live autonomously or independently of men: they stand to gain status, respectability, physical security and, in the case of middle and upper class women, even economic security by being someone's daughter, wife, or mother. This is what leads to situations in which women appear to oppress other women — or, as many people love to point out, why women often seem to be their own worst enemies, typified in the infamous "mother-in-law syndrome". (Joseph, 2012).

When women's power is restricted to the narrow domestic sphere, to control over the little world of the household and family, when their entire social position is derived from their authority within the home, they are forced to become rivals for pieces of a very small pie. When women's only access to control family resources, decision-making, or even the world outside is through their influence over their men, they are obviously going to be pitted against each other, competing for greater influence.

The narrow social boundaries, together with economic and social dependence, make such women perpetually insecure and perpetual rivals. Such conflicts and battles are much more rare, if not entirely absent, in households where both mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law have access to a larger world for self-realization and do not need to depend solely on their husbands or sons to feel respected and affirmed.

Gender inequality is so deeply internalized and rooted in social, cultural and economic life that it is usually invisible until one is forced to look it in the face. Thanks to this invisibility and more or less blind acceptance, the high social and moral price paid for the injustice done to women often goes unnoticed. In recent years public and official complaisance has increased because of the obvious strides made by urban middle and upper class women in most walks of life. Yet the situation of this high profile but relatively small section of the female population represents only half the story.
In India we do not have women pioneers like Abigail Adams, Susan B. Anthony, or Elizabeth Cady Stanton as in U.S., Mary Wollstonecraft in U.K. and Simone de Beauvoir in France. In modern India, however, the revival of the linkages with our past helped us come closer to and join the vanguard of women’s movement in the West, and this has been possible with the global outreach of print media that also affected the journalistic scene in India. (Joseph 2012).

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