VII

Concluding Remarks
Concluding this research attempt would be meaningless as it still remains a tentative analysis, partially done, leaving many possibilities of interpretation behind. This has been an attempt to study the concepts family and gender at one level to assess the gender apathy of family structure. At one other level it was an effort to critique the gender blindness of the family concept depicted by Manu-Smrti which is resembled in the existing modern Indian society. The following observations derived during the study are of diversified nature.

Various frameworks of methods that may alternatively embrace in the process of understanding and analyzing a text and concepts concerned might lead the research unending. Especially in an interdisciplinary conceptual research project, the methodological ambiguities and complexities are on cards, as any type of research or method has inherent flaws as has always been argued by the tremendously critical theorists, postmodernists. Such an argument would suggest any interdisciplinary conceptual research to make a survey through various methodological frameworks the study holds.

The studies on family have not recognized the gender aspect in the beginning though the concept and institutional organization of family worldwide proved to be gender insensitive. The augmentation of Marxist, structuralist and psychoanalyst means of criticism and the feminist intervention refined the study of the family from a functionalist perspective. Various sociologists, historians, economists, social
philosophers and social anthropologists have written on family, but the introduction of gender into its analysis was initiated by the feminist theorists. In India also the studies on family were gender-blind and the existing family drew many religious/scriptural ideas to keep the concept patriarchal.

The deep entrenchment of scriptural ideas in modern Indian family could be asserted by the reflections on the verses of Manu-Smrti. The verses in the text clearly show its male-centered character that subordinates woman and this revelation raises the need for refuting the existence of such an allegedly misogynistic text. Manu-Smrti being the most well known among the Smritis has caused immense pressure in the social stratification in India and it is much visible from the discussions on it in the modern time. A range of references confirm that the text has been significant in India, as a law-book for the function of a good-life. The doctrine of dharma among the four purusharathas is the major concern in the text, but it could be argued as mainly revolving around the householder’s life. The garhasthya stage among the four asramas is interlinked with all other asramas and so the family construction could be seen as a main agenda of the text that has to be checked out because of its gender lethargy.

Traditionally the dharma concept seems to be meant only for male human beings, as it comes in the list of the four purusharthas. It evidently refers to a Stree dharma and the only way for a woman to attain moksha is by strictly abiding the duties of a wife to look after her husband. In Manu-Smrti the duties of female humans are given as
daughter, wife and mother. The man as a householder and as an individual virtuous person, is given the right to rule the women to fulfill these duties at home, according to the verses in *Manu-Smrti*. Women are conceptualized as ‘non-social beings’ in every sense and she is never conceived as an individual person holding her ‘own’ virtues. Also they are seen as vulnerable to transgressions by nature and thus the text ascertains women should be controlled by their men by engaging them all the day and night at homes. By assigning the duties limiting their life in the architectural space of family alone, the woman’s subject position is subordinated to man according to the textual reference. And regulations are made by the prescriptions that are ordering her life in the day to day activities. The construction of woman’s sexuality and identity is evidently referred by the verses in the text. The ideas pertaining to virginity, chastity and motherhood dominate the sexuality of woman and it is disseminated through the cultural and religious languages which are defined in the process of socialization. One of the main duties of men as per the text is to protect their women (daughter, wife and mother) from being corrupted or transgressed. The governing position given for the men according to the text is evident in almost all the verses that describe the marriage, divorce, widowhood, remarriage, transgression etc. These ideas could be viewed in the reflections on modern family structure as well, elucidating the scriptural injunctions in the present society in India. Any person pursuing the meanings conferred by the verses in *Manu-Smrti* can locate the peculiar way of gendering, especially around the household structure and the process of institutionalization of family. The structure and nature of the family and the household in the present society is exemplified in the description
of the duties of husband and wife as ‘the householder and his woman’ in Manu-Smrti. The role of the text in the construction or preservation of patriarchal family structure is evident in the recent discussions on it by various feminist thinkers in India and outside. The power structure in the family and the power relations between man and woman are produced and preserved by the repeated use of the religious and legal languages.

Literature is commonly seen as offering its own unique insights into a period.\(^\text{567}\) The social function of language could be seen as per the way in which we use language to view our relationship to other people.\(^\text{568}\) Manu-Smrti is a popular text in modern Indian society and diverse debates have recommended the need to make changes in it, according to the demands of changing time. Especially being an androcentric linguistic invasion on the law and order, no one can neglect the fact that the text Manu-Smrti has an indirect influence on the Indian social reality even after about two thousand years of its birth. Every single utterance would turn to be affecting the listener’s mind in construction of concepts, and the language of the text proves to have absorbed in the religious and cultural ideas in India. Written references also show that the text has an authority over the people’s minds in India without any barriers of time and space. Uma chaktavarti has deciphered the need to understand gender relations in early Indian history beyond the Altekarian paradigm. The negative effect on the real understanding of women in history by the existing limited


\(^{568}\) Hudson, R.A. Sociolinguistics, Cambridge University Press, UK, 1980, p.230
works has been an anxiety for her.\textsuperscript{569} This leads to the need for the analysis about the influence of the text in the present time as well, testing the gender kindliness of family in the modern India finding its link with ancient scriptural ideas. Many commentators and translators of \textit{Manu-Smrti} claim that the ideas in the text were universal in nature and this turns true especially in the case of gendered/gendering family.

A deep scrutiny into the text in terms of its statements about the household and the people related inside would no way leave any loophole to understand the contents in a positive way. The descriptions and statements are turning to be prescriptions though there are limitations in the translations of the verses to understand the correct meaning and nature of them. But the conceptualizations of masculinities and femininities in the hundreds of verses explaining the duties and roles of women and men in the household, are clearly exhibiting the patriarchal norms. For example, by stressing on the authority of the father, ‘to give his daughter’ in marriage, the woman is conceptualized as a property that could be ‘delivered or gifted’ (see Sharma, ed., 1998:104 and Buhler, trans., 1886:80). It is known as ‘\textit{kanyadanam}’ and the word itself asserts the objectification of woman (\textit{Kanya} means ‘virgin girl’, and \textit{danam} means ‘giving free of cost’) according to the tradition dominating in Indian region. From such interpretations it becomes needless to say that the text has never seen the entity called woman as a social being. It is typical feature of this ancient law-book pertaining in the modern time that it was never gender susceptible. Although the

\textsuperscript{569} Chakravarti, Uma. “Beyond the Altekarian Paradigm: Towards a New Understanding of Gender Relations in Early Indian History”, \textit{Social Scientist}, Vol. 16, No. 8 (Aug., 1988), pp. 44-52
The recent century has witnessed some laws to enhance women’s status in the family and society, the conceptualizations on the roles and identities of women in relation to the family life give the impression to resemble the verses of Manu-Smṛti.

This study was carried out with an intention to see this resemblance reflexively with the lived experiences of the readers, and at later levels it becomes an interpretive textual analysis that includes rhetorical analysis, discourse analysis, ideological analysis, and deconstructive approaches, although the main version is of feminist approach. This type of an analytical search is an attempt for getting beneath the surface meanings that are denotative and examine more implicit social meanings that are connotative. This textual analysis often inspect culture or religion as a linguistic process in which the particular text or cultural or religious artifact consciously or unconsciously link themselves to larger stories at play in the society. This would incorporate with the analysis of dominant discourses as well. A key concern in the process is to see how texts create subject positions or identities and construct concepts.

Androcentricism of religion and culture has been of great discussion among feminist theorists. Accordingly, the lies about the nature and function of woman that are intrinsic to patriarchal religion have informed the cultural, legal, educational, political, economic, and medical/psychiatric systems of our society and are accepted as ‘natural truths’ by even the most modern citizens.  

perspective, it is possible to make overt those inherent norms and rules that construct the language of culture, politics, law, religion, caste and class concepts of family in modern India. Since discourse consists of sets of hierarchical units which make up discursive structures, the analysis made on the problems around the conceptualization of woman and family in the modern era illustrates the scriptural injunctions. In the Indian context the canon of religion could never be neglected and especially the domination of Hinduism has to be questioned in terms of its patriarchal features. The fabrication of textual reference of the *brahmanical* patriarchy has disposed to the process of social stratification in India through the aspects of caste, class and gender. The religious, cultural and legal discourses on the power structures of family and the power relations between men and women have been produced and preserved by the textual references. *Manu-Smriti* has to be viewed as a problem-text to be probed because of its main agenda and the power politics determining the role, identity and sexuality of women by the institution of family, which is constructed through many different discursive structures.

As part of the feminist movements and gender theorizations in modern India, the hierarchical social organization influenced by and indebted to the ideas of the ancient text has been questioned. The modern terminological definitions and demarcations of family and household might not be directly camouflaged by *Manu-Smriti*’s concepts revealed in its description about householder, housewife and their duties. As they discover many common factors, there are many limitations the arguments may hold and the analysis made in this study look forward to leave at least some
thoughts about the scriptural injunctions that seem to have affected the construction of gendered/gendering family. The reflections of such a family in the present society that seem to be similar to Manu-Smrti’s model of family, construct the concept of good-woman. The discourse on family and social formations, in the region termed as India could be traced from the verses of the text. Even the recent writings accuse the brahmanical concepts generated from dharmasastras which promote religious-ethical ideal of purity.\textsuperscript{571} One answer for the query on the process and reason for the hierarchical man-woman relation and the power structure of family could be accomplished as the revival of religious, cultural and legal discourses emerged or strengthened through the texts such as Manu-Smrti in the modern Indian social system. The conceptual link between the ancient and modern situations of women in the societies could be analyzed more with reference to the recent writings on feminism.\textsuperscript{572} This study would wind up with a self-effacing call to analyze the family, further more in terms of gender, seeing the linkage between the scriptural concepts and the modernization project in Indian region.
