CHAPTER-VI

Conclusion

“How can man be happy at all, since he cannot ward off the misery of the world.”

Ludwig Wittgenstein.
CONCLUSION

Conception of gender justice is based on the assumption that all women and all men are free and equal individuals. It assumes that all human beings have a dignity that deserves respect from laws and social institutions. The idea of human dignity is taken to imply an idea of equal worth. Female and male, rich and poor, talented or untalented, all are equally deserving of respect, just in virtue of being human. By free human being it is meant that all those who possess moral power or capacity to have a conception of the good and all those who are capable of taking responsibility for their ends are human beings and worthy of equal treatment. Gender justice is based on the idea that men and women have similar capacities to live a flourishing human life. Gender justice is a claim for and faith in humanism. It is the premise of the critique of unjust social relations which gives rise to the categorical demand for abolishing all those relations in which man is humiliated, enslaved, forsaken and contemptible being. Any type of relations based on the suppression of one person by another person is clearly unjust. Gender justice is a rejection of hierarchical and gender-structured families. It is the practical and theoretical negation of inhuman social relations destroying fundamental genuine features of human beings. It is a rejection of the practice and expectation of roles based on the divisions of labour by sex. Justice means granting each individual what he deserves and what he needs in virtue of his humanity. People are to be treated equally not because of their actual equality in some respect. But just because they are people. People may differ in their capacities but each person can contribute in the society according to his capacity, but each has the right to get according to his needs. And each person must get actual (not formal) equal opportunity to develop his capacity. By this it is not implied that there is a natural equality of people or that all people have identical needs, Granting all persons an equal right to satisfy and develop various needs and secure optimal conditions for their realisation is a conception of justice. Infact, a conception of justice is evolved within the critique of any specific historical social relations, which a thinker calls unjust according to his
vision of a good society. Therefore, an abstract analysis of the concept of justice in general is not fruitful, as justice is not a ready abstract formula of learning the world of values. It is rather an ideal of relations among people (in families, work place and social institutions) created in practical activity, especially in the struggle of humanity for abolishing inhuman conditions of existence.

There are those who believe in the perfect justice or rather in the society that requires no justice because it knows no significant social conflict or inequality, as a coming society in the world. It is characteristic of that line of thought that it envisages the total withering away of the law and the state; they have a vision of the ultimate society, which is much more that a vision in which all production, distribution and exchange are under state or some form of social control. It is a vision of society in which the category of particularity has been overcome, in which all men display a truly general will that stands in total rational and co-operative union with the will of other men, in which the very possibility of endemic or systematic conflict has been remained. It is a vision in which justice as a specific concern allegedly has no function and is, therefore, given no place.

But this vision ignores one important point that every society needs some sort of structure to be maintained and every reflective society needs some sort of concept concerning that structure. And since every society consists of individual persons, there is bound to be a tension between social cohesion and the feeling of independence and separate identity between public opinion and conscience dictates, experienced by every individual human being. Any given social arrangement, any elevation of specific principles of harmony and balance of men giving their rewards and proper place will suit some and not others and can be considered fair or unfair, just or unjust in a broader sense. Only in the light of given historical expectations that have changed and will no doubt continue to change with remarkable rapidity, elevating some concerns at the expenses of others, remedying one felt inquiry to produce new unexpected one. Thus, the idea of justice has been a perennial one. The problems and issues of justice will always engage reflection and analysis. Concrete
contexts will change, the old answers may become abselete, but the issues will never lose that relevance. Each age and each social group will continue to give its own content to the concept of justice. The principles of justice must be determined for any possible plurality: for they demand only the rejection of principles that cannot be shared by all members of plurality. Judgements about this justice of actual situation are regulated by these principles. They may not be entailed by them. The most significant features of actual situation that must be taken into account about justice are the security and the vulnerability that allow actually others to dissent from and to seek change in arrangements which structure their lives.

Every person should have the exclusive right of deciding all questions related to his domain of work or else he will feel weary and sapped and his life will be a life of alienation from the self. He should also have the right to decide whether or not he should continue to work in that sphere. If this right is taken away from him, he will feel trapped. Because one of the pre-conditions for ‘equality’ is decision-making. First of all, subjects should have a growing competence in all areas. All areas should equally be areas of decisions. Secondly individuals should have the opportunity to participate equally in the decision-making. Within such a framework, the idea of equal opportunity is no substitute for equality but is a real mechanism in equalisation. To decide one must have the ability and competence to decide. There can never be equal competence for all men in every single question, but all men are competent in some socially relevant question. Moreover, an individual’s competence can always grow. But for this to take place, individuals must be given equal opportunity.

The idea of justice as developed here is based on the belief that all human beings are fundamentally equal in worth. It holds that human beings have common resources and common problems, common abilities and traits wherever they live. Their special dilemmas grow out of special circumstances. It must be admitted that social, political and natural circumstances do shape extremely different
The problems people face wherever they live include scarce resources, competition for resources and the shortness of life. These have been called the circumstances of justice. These are circumstances that make it necessary for us to develop an account of what is due to people and to their dignity. We must admit that any good solution to this problem must be responsive to the concrete circumstances for which it is designed. At the same time we must also admit that the ultimate standard of what is right for an individual or a group cannot be derived solely from the internal traditions of groups. Because we must remember that traditions are not monoliths. Any living culture contains plurality and arguments, it contains relatively powerful voices, relatively silent voices that cannot at all speak at the public space. When women are at issue, we should especially be vigilant that we are not deferring to the most powerful voices in local traditions. As in the words of Martha C Nussbaum “In most parts of the world that voice is especially likely to be a male voice and that voice may not be all that attentive to the needs and interests of women.” Human dignity is frequently violated on grounds of sex. Many women all over the world find themselves treated unequally with respect to employment, bodily safety and integrity, basic nutrition and health care, education and political voice. Women's lives are unequally at risk in many parts of today's world. Statistics continue to show that women suffer unequally from hunger and malnutrition and from unequal access to basic health and care. Although it is very difficult to pin down the origins of practices of unequal feeding and care, cultural systems that portray female life as unequal in worth to male life must bear some of the responsibilities for this egregious situation. Religious discourse has also played a substantial role here. Almost all-religious customs have denigrated the value of female life in ways that have undermined woman's claim to basic goods of subsistence. Religious discourse has also played a major and undisguised role in confining women to the home in many parts of the world, and in denying them
opportunities to earn wages outside. At times, religion directly urges female death. Our practice of sati is certainly religious in origin. Though religion is not directly involved in dowry deaths, but it has been an important part of a cultural system that supports these traditions making women highly vulnerable. Apart from dowry crimes, women suffer many abuses that violate their bodily integrity. These include rape, domestic violence, other sexual abuse, genital mutilation and forced stereotype roles. Religious norms and laws play a direct role in persisting woman's inequality. Religious systems and customs of family law severely limit women's degree of choice in the matters of marriage. They also restrict woman's rights to control the lives of their children during the marriage and of the child custody, if the marriage ends. They also pose obstacles in their access to divorce and the type of evidence required getting divorce. Not only this, women's educational opportunities and achievements are drastically and dramatically limited despite legal formal equality.

The whole point in enumerating and highlighting all these too common facts is simply this: it is that human beings should not be violated on any grounds. The protection of the basic human rights should have a very strong degree of priority, even when this interferes with some elements of traditional religious discourse and practice. These basic rights should appear to be necessary for all people if they are to carry out their plans of life, whatever they are. Because any good society should commit itself to protecting these rights for all individuals regardless of whether it contains groups that do not like individuals to have these rights. The fundamental bearer of rights is the individual human being. A violation of a person is no better when it comes from some group to which the person belongs than when it comes from the state. To quote Martha C. Nussbaum once again, "The hunger of A is made not less but more morally offensive when we learn that A is a loving girl child in a family in which there is overall, enough food to go round." The rights should not be regarded as isolated items, which can be given or withheld independently of one another because they interact and support one another in so many ways, we should think in terms of a total system of opportunities and refuse
to compromise in any one right not only because of its intrinsic worth but also because of the way it affects the other rights. For example, education is closely correlated with meaningful opportunities for employment and both of these with nutrition and health. The right to protect one's bodily integrity is closely connected to equality in family law and rights to mobility and assembly. The need is to secure to individuals not only one or two liberties but a total system of liberties and opportunities. This should not be in name only but in their fully equal worth. People should be able to avail oneself of them. Therefore, there should be complete legal change to do justice to women's human rights. Almost all religions threaten these basic human rights, especially where religions act politically. Where women are concerned, the same has been true of all religions over the years.

The Hindu tradition offers many different and contradictory pictures of women's identity and agency. For example, its traditions contain views of female whorishness that derives from the laws of Manu, but it also contains the agency of Draupadi, Sita, Damyanti. Even in Manu Smriti, we read self-contradictory passages. Manu declares, where women are honoured, there the gods are pleased, where they are not honoured, all works become fruitless.” 3.56.

Manu writes about the mutual responsibility of both husband and wife of ensuring happiness to each other on which depends the happiness of the whole family.

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\text{सतुष्टो भार्यया भर्तर भयाय तत्वे च ।}
\text{योगमेत्रे कुले नित्यं कल्याणं तत्र वै धृतवर्णं ॥}
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\text{(Manu Smriti Ch. III,60)}

Even God, in Indian tradition is regarded as half man half woman "aradhanarishwara". The female principle compliments and completes the male. The polytheistic Hindu pantheon consists of divine couples such as Shiv and Parvati, Ram and Sita, Purasa and Prakriti. Together the male and its female represent the
specific power for which they are revered. In very early times education of woman was encouraged. The goddess of learning is known to be Saraswati. The Mahanirvana Tantra says, “A girl also should be brought up and educated with great efforts and care.” “All forms of knowledge are aspects of Thee and all women throughout the world are thy forms.” Infact, in the Vedic age, women enjoyed equal opportunities for education and work. They were also eligible for initiations and Brahamcharya. They could gain Brahanan knowledge.

The institution of marriage was exalted in the Indian tradition. Women were free to choose their husbands. There is said to be popular festival ‘samanas’ where men and woman meet and mixed freely. We find a reference to Durga who is Kumari (virgin) tells those who aspire to marry her. "He who conquers me in battle, he who humbles my pride, he who is my equal in this world, he shall be my husband." Of course, the end of marriage in Vedic period has never been sexual pleasure alone. Rather the end of marriage is spiritual companionship: man or woman each is a self who requires the other as its compliment. Male and female constitute a fundamental unity. A woman was not only her husband's life long companion in weal and woe but the ‘Swamini’ of his household, and a real active partner in all her activities, including religious sacrifice. The union of the wife and husband, both in body and in mind is emphasised. The entry of a body into the husband's home was regarded as an auspicious event bringing blessing to the entire household, including the domestic birds and animals. The husband and wife will build a happy home faithful to each other in order to live a life in peace and prosperity and then, be cared in old age with children and grand-children. The woman was entitled to all the ‘Sanskaras’ or religious prayers and sacrifices jointly. Even the wife alone could offer them in the absence of her husband. S.RadhaKrishnan writes in the Introduction to the Great Women of India, “To crown all, women were regarded as rishis or seers, i.e. composers of hymns and some of the hymns in the Rik Samhita are actually attributed to women.”
Lopamudra, Apala, Vishwara, Sikata, Nivavari and Ghosha are a few names of some of the famous women. We are told in the Atharva Samhita that by the Vedic studentship a girl wins a young husband and this indicates the value of high education for girls to get well placed in life. We find a good concept of ‘Sadyodwahas‘, those who study till their marriage and a concept of ‘Brahmavadinis’—those who pursue their studies throughout life. Gargi, Vachaknavi, Vadava, Pratitheyi, Sulabha, Maitreyi are the names of scholarly women. These evidences show that the highest education including the Vedic studies was open equally to men and women and many women distinguished themselves not only as Vedic scholars but also as the great philosophers, debaters and teachers. In fact, there was a distinctive place for women in the practice of the Hindu religion. Women particularly those who were virgins or virtuous wives, are believed to have special powers. Their prayers, penances or supplication to God is believed to earn grace more readily than the prayers of men. A married couple could only perform several of the most important religious sacrifices, ceremonies and rituals. Single men, single wife, widows or widowers could not perform them. But despite all this, what should not be neglected is the fact that although, there was no question of ill treating a daughter, yet it was true that there was distinct preference for sons. In Atharva-Veda we find hymns that leave no doubt that sons were preferred to daughters. And after the Rig-Vedic age there was a constant and steady process of decline in status and position of women in later Samhitas, Brahmanas, Upanishadas, Dharam Sutras and Smritis. The different aspects of women’s life were radically changed after the Rig-Vedic age. First of all education of woman was neglected. The dignified position of the wife, her co-ordinate authority with her husband and her position as the mistress of the household, her free movements, her attendance in public assemblies and social gatherings—all eloped gradually. An early marriage for girls became the rule. The main emphasis was to preserve the physical purity and chastity. Marriage at very early age (at four, eight, ten) was strongly recommended. Thus, pre-puberty marriage became the normal rule. This led to a vicious circle. Girls married at early age could scarcely receive any education. So they were
gradually deprived of higher education, especially Vedic learning. A lack of knowledge of Vedas made them unfit to make the sacrifices and the various sacraments. The Upanayana or initiation into Vedic studies stopped. Women lost the status of a dweja or twice born or come to be regarded as shudras. Even in the Bhagvad Gita, we read,"even those who are born sinners, as well as women, vaishyas and shudras may obtain salvation by devotion to the lord." 9.23.3. This idea of inherent inferiority of women is also emphasised by the commentator of Narads when he says that women must ever remain dependent on others, because, as they are not entitled to study the Shastras (scriptures), they don't know what is proper or what is improper. Thus, overall there was the degradation of the status of the women in the later age. This degradation was neither sudden nor unexpected. Rather it developed its course during a long period. A gradual aversion to women as a clan as early as the Atharava Samhita where charms were prescribed for changing the female foetus into a male one. Son was considered as a hope of a family, and a daughter as a source of trouble for the family. Gradually women were turned into a patient and suffering class of humanity. They were deprived of ordinary humanity. They were subjected to unmerited sorrows and sufferings. They were denied of all intellectual enlightenment and all other virtues and accomplishments except self-surrender, obedience, meek devotion to her family.

It must be admitted that Indian society gradually became on the whole unfair and unsympathetic to women during the last two thousand years. Society's attitude towards woman came to be one of patronising condescension. Indian tradition has for the major part encouraged the subservience of women applauded their self-effacement and thus promoted their subjection. All this can help us in understanding the nature of the social and cultural processes in Indian society, which determines the working of patriarchies in the daily lives of Indian women. It is a patriarchal culture and what we get is a masculinist definition of ideals and images of women. These ideals and visions are not women's creations. They are not born out of their own experiences. Everyday behaviour and roles she is expected to play
are dictated only by a mythical view of femaleness. Yet in order to put everything in perspective, it is important to recognize the distinctiveness of Indian context. A careful consideration of the implications of the differences of the cultural contexts is necessary in order to gain deeper understanding of the problems concerning gender discrimination. Otherwise, the discourse on women's question can remain alien to Indian audience, especially to Indian women. First of all, we must remember, though we may not appreciate, that Indian society has always been hierarchical. There have been several hierarchies within the family of age, sex, ordinal position, affinal and consanguinal kinship relationships. There have also been several hierarchies between the community, particularly caste, lineage, learning, wealth, occupation and relationship with the ruling power. These hierarchies have been maintained and integrated by means of complex combinations of customs and religious beliefs. Although there has been harshness and oppressiveness of all these hierarchies, there has been a sense of mutuality of a series of behavioural codes that bind superiors to fulfil their obligation to their inferiors. The concept of equality as a correlate of the concept of individual freedom has been alien to Indian society. The concept of equality in this sense did never become an operational principle of Indian life. And when India achieved independence, the constitution granted woman political status fully equal to that of men. Thus Indian women did not have to bear the kind of injustices that women in the west had to suffer because of the continuing gap between the political ideals and the realities. Nor did they have to suffer the indignities European and American women have had to experience in the course of their battle to bridge the gap because Indian women did not have to fight such a battle. At the same time it is not being denied that situation of women in India has not been (or is not) quite miserable and a great deal need to be done on their behalf. But it is simply emphasising the important fact that cultural context needs to be differentiated and recognised. Infact, Indian experience has been quite opposite of western experience. Educated male members of Indian society have rather reflected upon their own value systems and have examined the inequalities, injustices and oppressions of their own culture. This introspection resulted in a strong movement.
for social reform. Significantly, the removal of practices and customs that led to suffering for women figured in the social reform movement led by Indian ‘men’. The list of the names of the men who championed the cause of women is long. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chander Vidyasagar, Keshav Chandra Sen, Phule, Agarkar, Ranade to mention only a very few. They made impressive efforts to abolish the practice of Sati, the custom of child marriage, the custom of disfiguring widows, the ban on the remarriage of upper caste Hindu widows and a host of other evil practices that affected women. They also engaged themselves actively in promoting women's education, obtaining for their legal rights to property, by requesting the law to take cognisance of their status by providing them with some basic rights in matters such as adoption. These reformers who initiated action in support of equality and freedom for women were all men (males). This is the reason that man-hatred is not the acceptable idiom of liberation of women even in the eyes of Indian liberated women. They do not accept the premise that men are their principle oppressors. Oppressive relationships are experienced by Indian women not as oppression by the male. Most women, in India, experience family violence as the cruelty of the mother-in-laws or the husband’s sister or co-sisters. The principal and the direct oppressor is the husband's mother or his unmarried or widowed sisters not the husband. In many incidents of bride burning, or suicide attempted by women unable to bear ill treatment within the family, the person who has driven the woman to death is almost invariably one of her female relatives. Even in cases in which the husband has been held guilty of a crime against his wife, the victims have generally named his mother or sisters as abettors. On the other hand, many in Indian history have often stood out benefactors facilitating the advance of woman. Biographies and auto- biographies of nineteenth as well as twentieth century women clearly indicate that those who stepped out of the beaten track to pursue education, to take up social work or politics to enter occupations or professions that were considered to be the exclusive presume of men have almost invariably been encouraged, supported and actively helped by husband, a father or a brother, the most frequently by a husband. Therefore, Indian women hold very high the names of these male social reformers.
from Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Gandhi. Gandhi directly declared that equality for the 
woman has to be one for the central objectives of the political program. Gandhi 
realised that a poor country like India or for that matter any nation, must build a 
moral power against any unjust force. He called for the people to arm themselves 
morally and declared that the acceptance for the equality for women, eradication of 
untouchability, liberation from crippling superstition and fears and the cultivation of 
humanism were crucial to their armament. In order to explain the concept of Ahinsa 
he always likened the moral power in a non-violent struggle to the pure and gentle 
but firm and tenacious strength that he emphasised women continuously displayed 
in life. Finally at the organisational level also he emphasised that nothing less than 
the total involvement of the entire population (man and woman both) in the non-
violent struggle for freedom would be adequate. In this context, he pointed out that 
it was imperative to involve women in the man's movement.

Gandhi's understanding of woman is markedly different, infact, 
almost a break from that of these reformers. Gandhi works at an altogether different 
plane. This is a plane from where woman can only be seen as born for love and 
respect, this conception is steeped in the understanding of absolute will, absolute 
love, absolute humanity. There is no place for inequality and oppression. Gandhi 
adopts differences between male and female but the differences are to be 
appreciated and respected, not in any way hailing them as the grounds for 
oppression. Infact, for Gandhi, the end of oppression is only the beginning here and 
this is what makes Gandhi's perceptions of the status and standing of woman so 
exclusive.

"When women whom we call abala becomes sabala, all those who are 
helpless become powerful." This message of Gandhi to the All India Women's 
Conference in 1936 reflects the crucial importance Gandhi gave to the issue of 
women's freedom and strength in the struggle to build a humane and exploitation 
free society. Gandhi saw women not as object of reform and humanitarianism but as 
self-conscious subjects who could, if they chose, become arbiters of their own 
destiny. In this way, Gandhi represents a crucial break from the attitude of the many
of the leaders of the reform movements of the late nineteenth century, who tended to see women as passive recipients of more humane treatment through the initiative of enlightened male effort.

The most crucial difference is that he does not see women as object of reform, as helpless creatures, deserving charitable concern. Instead, he sees them as active, self-conscious agents of social change. His concern is not limited to bringing about change in selected areas of social life such as education and marriage as a way of regenerating Indian society, as was that of the 19th century social reformers. He is primarily concerned with bringing about radical social construction. The political movement for national liberation was a means, a weapon to achieve that end. And he saw women playing a major role in the task of social reconstruction. He thought that in the process of reconstructing society, they would also free themselves from the specific forms of bondage that affected them as women.

Gandhi, never considered the women to be weak. "Woman is, in fact, not weak - there is no reason why she should be dependent on man, there is no eternal rule that leadership in society should always remain in the hands of men. Woman can shape and develop herself, and thus only can she help in achieving human progress. In an Annual gathering of the Bombay Bhagini Samaj held in February 20, 1918, Gandhi delivered in his presidential address, "It is necessary to understand what we mean when we talk of the regeneration of women. It presupposes degeneration and if that is so, we should further consider what led to it and now............. Legislation has been mostly the handiwork of man, and man has not always been fair and discriminate in performing that self-appointed task. The largest part of our effort in promoting the regeneration of women should be directed towards removing these blemishes which are represented in our shastras as the necessary and ingrained characterisation of women. Who will attempt this and how? In my humble opinion, in order to make the attempt, we will have to produce women pure, firm and self-controlled as Sita, Damyanti and Draupadi. Their words will have the same authorities as the shastras. ----------- Woman is the companion

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of man gifted with equal mutual capacities. She has the right to participate in the minutest detail of the activities of man, and she has the same right of freedom and liberty as he. She is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in him. This should be the natural condition of things and not a result only of learning to read and write. By sheer force of a vicious custom, even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying superiority over women, which they do not deserve and ought not to have. Many of our movements stop half-way because of the conditions of our women. There is no justification for men to deprive women of or deny to them equal rights on the ground of their illiteracy. But education is essential for enabling women to assert these natural rights, to exercise them wisely, and to work for their expansion; the true knowledge of self is unattainable by the millions who lack such education. It is no exaggeration to say that a human being without education is not far removed from an animal. Education, therefore, is necessary for women as it is for men. Man and woman are equal in status, but are not identical. They are a peerless pair being complementary to one another, each helps the other, so that without the one, the existence of the other can not be conceived; and, therefore, it follows as a necessary corollary from these facts that anything that will impair the status of either of them will involve the equal ruin of both. Woman is the embodiment of self sacrifice. But at present, her self-sacrifice is restricted to her family. Why should she not make for the nation ever-greater sacrifices than those she has been making for her family. The ancient laws were made by men. Though these men were sages and seers, they show a lack of real knowledge of women. I feel if Mirabai can not get salvation, no man would ever get it."

If women were to be free they had to be fearless. Gandhi rightly realised that it was more psychological fear and helplessness, culturally imposed upon women by society, than physical weakness which kept women crippled. The real strength of a woman was her consciousness of her 'purity and 'chastity'. This dazzling purity could disarm even the most beastly of men. Woman's virtue was to be her defence.

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It is significant that Gandhi repeatedly dismissed the more situationally relevant Rani of Jhansi symbol in favour of a combination of Sita-Mira symbol whereby answers were sought not primarily in a woman's individual strength and the way to cultivate it but in the realm of women's spiritual and moral courage. His choice of a certain kind of feminine courage in preference to other kinds of strength and heroism reflects his vision which was one of women acting primarily as the best examples of a certain moral force in society. This vision stressed the superiority of woman's suffering and self-sacrifice rather than aggressive assertions and forceful intervention to protect their interests and to gain political power.

Rules of social conduct had to be framed by mutual co-operation and consultation, not forcibly imposed on women from outside. But men had reduced women somewhat to the position of the slave of old who did not know that he could or ever had to be free' Since legislation has been mostly the handiwork of men------ men has not always been fair and discriminate in performing that self-appointed task."5

Therefore, if "women were to get justice, scriptures needed to be revised and all religious texts biased against the rights and dignity of woman should be expurgated."6

The fact that women had been for so long 'caged and confined in their houses and little courtyards: had a ruinous effect on their personality, narrowing their vision and stunting their interests to petty things Gandhi felt that women created an unbearable din, and it was difficult to interest them in problems larger than their immediate lives, because they know nothing of them having been never allowed to breathe the fresh air of freedom. This kind of denial of freedom to women leading to their infantalization had to be put an end to not withstanding the religious scriptures that legitimate such denia: since they are repugnant to the moral sense.7
In fact, according to Gandhi Hinduism's essential postulate was the absolute freedom of every individual, man or woman, to do whether he or she liked for the sake of self-realisation for which alone every human being was born. But then, this absolute freedom was supposed to function within well-defined boundaries.

The main contribution of Gandhi to the cause of women lay in his absolute and unequivocal insistence on their personal dignity and autonomy in the family and in society. Personal and social experience had convinced him that hitherto 'man has regarded women as his tool. She has learned to be this tool and in the end easy and pleasurable to be such, because when one drags another in his fall, the descent is easy.

Though men owed it to themselves to help in the cause of women, ultimately woman will have to determine with authority what she needs.

Gandhi insists on the inviolability of the personal dignity and autonomy of women. She had the right to say 'no' to everything and to everybody. He wanted woman to learn the primary right of resistance. 'She thinks now that she not got it.

The woman has the right to her own body which she doesn't surrender for a life time with marriage. However, this view is intimately linked with his view of a noble woman as a sexless being and legitimate sex as only that which is meant for the purpose of procreation. He equated the purity and nobility of womanhood with absolute sexlessness. But despite his obsession with sexual chastity, in response to an attempt to justify prepuberty marriages on the basis that the sexual derive of women could lead them to indulgence and sexual malpractice before marriage, Gandhi indignantly reported: "And why is there all this morbid anxiety about female purity? Have women any say in the matter of male purity? Why should men arrogate to themselves the right to regulate female purity?"
Gandhi’s message to Indian women was to rise above wifehood and become ‘Sisters’. He felt a wife could never become a sister in the full sense of the word. A sister is such to all the world, while a wife hands herself over to one man. It was possible to become the world’s sisters only by making brahmacharya, a natural condition and being fired by the spirit of service. ”

For Gandhi, women were not to combine their concerns only to what are normally seen as women’s issues but to have a say in the re-building of the whole society. For that, he insisted that ‘the few educated women we have in India will have to descend from their western heights and come down to Indian plains ... This question of liberation of women, liberation of India, removal of untouchability amelioration of the economic condition of the masses and the like resolve themselves into penetration into the villages, reconstruction or rather reformation of the village life.

In any case, he did not see marriage and motherhood as the only mission in life for every young woman who chose to remain unmarried, for the nobler purpose of serving society was a much more preferable ideal for self-realisation. On the other hand, however, he did not altogether reject the institution of marriage. Because he realised that sexuality could not be eliminated, he saw marriage as the only existing, though, in adequate restraint on sexuality. Restraint, to be meaningful, should be self-defined.

He urged women to step out of their homes and join the movement. The whole purpose of going into the historical circumstances is to show clearly that the Indian women find themselves in an altogether different culture with different ethos and convictions where angry tirade against men is missing despite the fact that the situation of Indian woman is in many ways worse than that of the situation of American and European women. Although the deprivation, exploitations and oppressions suffered by women are almost common in the two societies, there are basic differences in the value systems and historical circumstances in which they are
pitched. These differences seem to account significantly for the difference between the attitude of the Indian women to the issue of the status of the women and that of western women. This can explain why despite the woman’s cause gaining substantial strength in the country, a large section of them recoils from the feminist rhetoric even today. One of the possible reasons is that Indian women respond as they do to the faint cries for the reason that it does not take the adequate note of the historical circumstances and values that render the woman's issue different in India from the issue of the west. That’s why this cry that the men are their oppressors (father, husband or brother) or women have been neglected by the govt. does not quite appeal to Indian women. In fact there would have been no women's movement in India if Indian men in the nineteenth century had not been concerned in modernising women's roles. The decisions made by these men meant that women, whether they wanted or not, would become part of the new society. The gist of all this is that it is important to take careful role of the differences in the ethical and cultural context of gender issues in western and Indian societies. India is as yet new to the ideology of personal freedom. Both Indian men and Indian women have hitherto functioned under rigid hierarchies; learned to curb their freedom; condition themselves to suppress their needs, silence their senses, and sublimate their selves in philosophy of self-denial, self-effacement and service. The Indian situation is unique in yet another way. India has a rich tradition, which accommodates women ‘rebels’ in its fold. This tradition is known to be Bhakti tradition. This shows that there has been much cultural variation within India. Thus rich tradition of Bhakti is particularly significant for woman both for variations and commonalities in its religious and social implications. Women cross and collapse the boundaries operating in social world. They overcome the obstacles imposed by a rigid hierarchical social order and arrange a breathing space for themselves. This is known to be a dissent movement. This movement provided the space to women to expand both their own selfhood and conventional gender and social relations. The space thus created provided the woman required asserting herself into the cult of Bhakti. Denied a voice in normal social and political relations, in Bhakti poetry they
left behind their only record. It is significant to note that India's tradition has saved it as a valuable heritage for both men and women.

Thus we see that Indian tradition has the capacity to absorb much cultural variation to make much accommodation. It has provided space to women to have her own identity in her own terms, choose her own ideals and social relations. It is unusual to remember and recognize that it is not unusual for rigid and conservative society to canonise a few women into sainthood and permit them to be idealised. Their saintliness pushes them outside the normal lifestyles of women, and they cannot as a threat to male interests in everyday life. These women saints are, no doubt glorified and revered but not seen as examples to be emulated by women. Their piety, religiosity and miraculous powers are emphasised, not their unconventionality even though all of them had broken several taboos and liberated themselves as individuals, just as Mira did.

The women's cause in India could gain enormously if it takes cognisance of these peculiarities of Indian traditions. It is important to recognize that it is useful to build upon what has been achieved in the past. Indian feminism is particularly fortunate in that the reforms that nineteenth and early twentieth century reforms were able to achieve on behalf of women, constitutes a firm base. Indian tradition contains several elements that can develop towards establishing equality for women and towards a new assertion of full dignity of their personhood. For instance, why can we not highlight the spiritedness, the intelligence and the resourcefulness of figures like Sita and Savitri. We don't have to break away from the age old models of virtuous womanhood, but we have to bend them to speak for the new value system. Otherwise, we shall unintentionally snap vital links of communication with Indian audience in general and women in particular. The feminist message in India will also miss its mark if it names men as oppressors the cause of gender injustice in India or in the world needs to be looked into elsewhere. It is not enough to put exclusive blame on men for unhappy situation of women. The history of men's involvement in the movement for the liberation of women, their
educational and advancement of their status, the position that men in the Indian culture have traditionally held as caring brothers and affectionate fathers, and the weight that the Indian value system accords to the capacity to compromise could and should be carefully employed to co-opt men in the movement for the advancement for the status of women in India. We need to go into the coverage of much larger issues of human rights, which is what in essence it is. We need to look into the root cause of patriarchy, gender injustice and unequal society by analysing the structures of family, workplace and other social, economic structures. The discourse on gender justice must start from the smallest and the most basic unit of society, that is, family.

Until there is justice within the family, women will not be able to gain equality in politics, at work or in any other sphere. The typical current practices of family life, structured to a large extent by gender, are not just. Both the expectations and the experiences of the division of labour by sex make women vulnerable. A cycle of power relations and decisions pervades both family and both workplaces, each reinforcing the inequalities between the sexes that already exists within the other. Not only women, but children of both sexes too are often made vulnerable by gender-structured marriage. Any theory of social justice must pay attention to the multiple inequalities between the sexes that exist in our society, or to the social construct of gender that give rise to them. Attention must be the paid to the internal inequalities of the family. Women suffer both because of their class as well as because of their gender. Those who discuss the family without paying attention to inequalities between the sexes are blind to the fact that gender families radically limit the equality of opportunity of women and the girls of all classes – as well as the poor and working class children of both sexes. It is not appropriate to adhere to idealised vision of the family; that family is the social institution for which justice is not an appropriate virtue; that family is governed by virtues nobler than justice and therefore, not needing to be subjected to the tests of justice to which we subject other fundamental social institutions. But in the real world justice is a virtue of fundamental importance for families as for other basic social institutions. Family is
an important sphere of distribution of many social goods from the material to the intangible. And in the real world the family has the history of distributing these goods in far from just ways family is also a sphere of life that is absolutely crucial to moral development. If justice cannot at least begin to be learned from our day-to-day experience within the family, it seems futile to expect that it can be developed anywhere else. Without just families how can we expect to have a just society. In particular if relation between a child’s parents do not confirm to basic standards of justice, how can we expect that child to grow up with a sense of justice. Family must be just if we are to have a just society since it is within the family that we must come to have that sense of ourselves and our relations with others that is at the root of our moral development. In a just society the structures and practices of families must afford women the same opportunity as men to develop their capacities, to participate in political powers, to influence social choices and to be economically as well as physically secure and independent.

Moreover, the sharing of roles by men and women, rather than the division of roles between them would have a further positive impact because the experience of being a physical and psychological nurturer – whether of a child or of another adult- would increase that capacity to identify with others. The injustice that results from the division of labour between the sexes affect virtually all women in the society, though not in all the same ways. Almost every person in our society starts life in a family of some sort or other. Family is potentially a place where we can learn to be good. It is especially important for the development of the sense of justice that grows from sharing the experiences of others and becoming aware of the points of view of others who are different in same respect from ourselves but clearly with whom we have some interests in common. The capacity to comprehend fully the viewpoints of others is very important to a sense of justice (a society that minimised gender is yet to be an- experience of all of us) a society that is committed to equal respect for all of its members, and to justice in social distribution of benefits and responsibility can neither neglect family nor accept family structures and
practices that violate these norms as do current gender-based structures and practices. A child of either sex can not learn anything about fairness in the average households with two full time working parents, where the mother does twice as much family work as the father. A child certainly can not learn about the value of nurturing and domestic work in a home with a traditional division of labour in which the father abuses his wife. A child simply can not learn about responsibilities for others in a gender structured family. How in hierarchical families, in which sex roles are rigidly assigned, are we to learn to put ourselves into other's place and find out what we would do in his position?

The substantial inequalities that continue to exist between the sexes in our society have the serious effects on the lives of almost all women. Underlying all these inequalities in the unequal distribution of the unpaid labour of the family. The tradition of the patriarchal past has been of major significance in the perpetuation of the gendered social structures and practices that have resulted in continuing and serious injustices to women. Family institutions throughout history have not been just, but been rather a relic of caste or feudal hierarchical societies in which roles, responsibilities and resources are distributed not in accordance with the principles of justice, but in accordance with innate differences that are imbued with the enormous social significance. Unless the household is connected by the continuum of just association to the larger communities within which people are supported to develop fellow feelings for each other, how will they grow up with the capacity for enlarged sympathies such as are clearly required for the practice of justice. Thus family justice must be of central importance for gender justice.

Now the million-dollar question is what do we need to do? From where do we need to start? Rawls must be given the credit to suggest that it is the 'original' position from where deliberations on the principle of justice have to start. We must start by questioning and considering all traditions, customs and institutions from all points of new. We must ensure that the principles of justice will be acceptable to everyone regardless of what positions 'he' ends up in. Only then, we
can avoid the problem of domination that is inherent in theories of justice based on tradition or shared understandings. It will be useful to quote a description of a cartoon, Okin saw and wrote about it in her book 'Justice Gender And The Family'. “Three elderly, robed male justices are depicted, looking down with astonishment at their very pregnant bellies. One says to the other, without further elaboration: "Perhaps, we had better reconsider that decision." This illustration graphically demonstrates the importance in thinking about justice, of a concept like Rawls' original position, which makes us adopt the position of others—even positions that we ourselves could never be in. It also suggests that more than formal legal equality of the sexes is required if justice is to be done. In a well-ordered society, no one needs be servilely dependent on others and made to choose between monotonous and routine occupations which are deadening to human thought and responsibility. These conditions are far more likely to be met in a society that does not assign family responsibilities in a way that makes woman into a marginal section of the paid work force and renders likely their economic dependence upon men. Therefore, principles of justice would seem to require a radical rethinking not only of the division of the labour within families but also of all the non-family institutions that assumes it. It requires the need to avoid at almost any cost the social conditions that undermine self-respect. We need to surely be concerned to establish thoroughgoing social and economic equality between the sexes that would protect either sex from the need to servilely provide for the pleasures of the others. We need to emphasise the importance of girls' and boys' growing up with an equal sense of respect for themselves and equal expectations of self-definition and development. In general, all those social institutions that asymmetrically force the members of one sex to serve as sex objects for the other must be rejected or replaced. A current gender structure is incompatible with the attainment of social justice. Disappearance of gender is a pre-requisite for the complete development of non-sexist fully human theory of justice. We live in a society that has over the years regarded the innate characteristics of sex as one of the clearest legitimizers of different rights and restrictions, both formal and informal. While the legal sections that uphold male
dominance have begun to be eroded in the present century, the heavy weight of traditions combined with the effects of socialisation still work powerfully to reinforce sex roles that are commonly regarded as of unequal prestige and worth. Gender is a prime and socially all pervasive case of dominance and therefore a serious threat to equality. The unequal distribution of rights, benefits, responsibilities and powers within the family is closely related to the inequality in the many other spheres of social and political life. There is a cyclical process at work, reinforcing the dominance of men or women from work to what is conventionally referred to as the political arena, and hence back home again.

The 'personal is political' and the public/ domestic dichotomy is a misleading construction which obscures the cyclical pattern of inequalities between men and women. Firstly the domestic sphere is itself created by political decisions. Secondly, power that has always been understood paradigmatically political, is of central importance in family life. Thirdly, the family is undeniably political because it is a place where we become our gendered selves. The division of labour with gender-structure family raises both practical and psychological barriers against women in all the other sphere of life. Challenging the dichotomy of public domestic does not necessarily mean denying the usefulness of a concept of privacy or the value of privacy itself in human life. Nor does it mean denying that there are any reasonable distinctions to be made between the public and domestic sphere. Anita Allen's recent book 'Uneasy Access' is a feminist argument based on women's unfulfilled need for privacy. Both the concept of privacy and the existence of a personal sphere of life in which the state's authority is very limited are essential. However, such a sphere can be secured only if its members are equal. Infact, what happens in domestic and personal life is not immune from the dynamics of power, within the family that of husband over wife or of parent over child, has often not been regarded as such, either because it has been regarded as natural or because it is assumed that, in the family, altruism and harmony of interests make power an insignificant factor. But the notion that power with crassest form, physical violence,
is not a factor in family life is a myth that has been exposed during last decades. Once we admit the idea that significant differences between women and men are created by the existing division of labour within the family, it becomes increasingly obvious just how political an institution the family is. Therefore, the family needs to be a just institution. Contemporary theories of justice neglect women and ignore gender. Now the question is, how can we address the injustice? This is a complex question. It is particularly so because we place great value on our freedom to live different kinds of lives. There is no current consensus on many aspects of gender and we have good reasons to suspect that many of our beliefs about sexual differences and appropriate sex roles are heavily influenced by the very fact that we grow up in a gender-structured society. All of us have been affected, in our very psychological structures, by the fact of gender in our personal pasts, just as our society has been deeply affected by its strong influence in our collective past. Because of the lack of shared meanings about gender, it constitutes a particularly hard case for those who care deeply about both personal freedom and social justice. The way we divide the labour and responsibilities in our personal lives seems to be one of those things that people should be free to work out for themselves. But because of its vast repercussions, it belongs clearly within the scope of thing that must be governed by principles of justice. It is to say that it belongs both to the sphere of ‘the good’ and to that of ‘the right’.

Any just and fair solution to the urgent problem of women’s vulnerability must encourage and facilitate the equal sharing by men and women of paid and unpaid work, of productive and reproductive labour. We must work towards a future in which all will be likely to choose this mode of life. A just future would be one without gender. In its social structures and practices, one’s sex would have no more relevance than one’s eye colour. No assumption would be made about male and female roles, child-bearing should be so conceptually separated from child-rearing and other family responsibilities that it would be a cause for surprise if men and women were not equally responsible for domestic life. It would be a future
in which men and women participate in more or less equal numbers in every sphere of life, from infant care to different kinds of paid work to high-level politics. If we are to be all true to our democratic ideals, moving away from gender is essential. Obviously, the attainment of such a social world requires major changes in a multitude of institutions and social settings outside the home, as well as within it, such changes will not happen overnight. Moreover, any present solution to the vulnerability of women that is just and respects individual freedom must take into account that most people currently live in ways that are greatly affected by gender practices. Sociological studies confirm there are no currently shared meanings about the extent to which differences between the sexes are innate or environmental, about which family forms and division of labour are most beneficial for partners, parents and children. Public policies must respect people's views and choices. But they must do so only in so far as it can be ensured that these choices do not result, as they now do, in the vulnerability of women. Special protections must be built into our laws and public policies to ensure that, for those who choose it, the division of labour between the sexes does not result in injustice. In the face of these difficulties, balancing freedom and the effects of past choices against the needs of justice- fully satisfactory answers are very hard to get. But still certain suggestions are being tried at. First, public policies and laws should generally assume no social differentiation of the sexes. Shared parental responsibility for the childcare should be both assumed and facilitated. While high quality-day care, subsidised so as to be equally available to all children, certainly constitutes an important part of the response that society should make in order to provide justice for women and children, it is only one part. The pluralism of beliefs and modes of life should be fundamental to any society. So, perhaps, the genderless society as just outlined may not be agreed upon by all as desirable. Thus when we think about constructing relations between the sexes that could be agreed upon in the original position, and are therefore just from all points of view, we must also design institutions and practices acceptable to those with more traditional beliefs about the characteristics of men and women, and the appropriate division of labour between them. It is essential, if men and women are to
be allowed to so divide their labour, as they must be if we are to respect the pluralisms of beliefs and values, that society protects the vulnerable. Without such protection, the marriage contract seriously adds the initial inequalities of those who entered into it, and too many women and children live perilously close to economic disaster and serious social dislocation. Too many also live with violence. It should be noted that the rights and obligations that the law would need to promote and mandate in order to protect the vulnerable need not be designed in accordance with sex, but in terms of different functions or roles performed. Attempts are still being made to retain the age-old practice of defining women in terms of the functions they serve. Such attempts however can be refuted by means of rational analysis of the separate functions which women and the family presently serve and by acknowledgement that practically all of these functions can be fulfilled by men and women, rather than being divided along sex lines. A tendency to regard men as complete persons with potentials and rights, but to define women by the functions they serve in relation to men, is clearly unjustifiable. By fully consistent with a hierarchical conception of a good society in which only the few males at the top were regarded as fully human, it is jarringly out of place in a society which claims to be founded on the principles of human equality. In such a society, woman must be treated in every respect - politically, socially, economically - as the equals of men. They must be set free from assumptions about the kinds of work they are suited for, and enabled to attain equal status with men in the workforce and in all other parts of the economic and the political realm. Susan Moller Okin is very right when she closes her book by the lines "Women cannot become equal citizens, workers or human beings-- let alone philosopher queen - until the functionalist perception of their sex is dead."

It is time for us to start looking at the women's questions from the bottom up. If today we want to further expand the horizons of our freedom and independence, we must look towards the toiling women of this country to provide the initiative for an alternative. It is their labour, which produces social wealth. And it is this labour, which gives them the dignity, and strength from which we have to
learn. The struggle to put an end to all forms of exploitation based on class, caste, religion, race - can be successful only when women join this struggle for a new society in which one of the most fundamental inequalities, that based on sex, has no place. Let us re-examine the whole question, all the questions. Let us take nothing for granted. Let us not only redefine ourselves, our role, our image - but also the kind of society we want to live in.

Just as fundamentally men and women are one, their problem must be one in essence. The soul in both is the same. The two live the same life, have the same feelings. Each is a compliment of the other. The one can not live without the other's active help. But somehow or other man has dominated woman from ages part, and so woman has developed an inferiority complex. She has believed in the truth of man's perception that she is inferior to him. But justice demands that she be treated as his equal.

Gender injustice can be addressed only by moving towards a humanist justice. To ensure a permanent and true emancipation of women, one must recognize the dignity of human life. Woman is a prime representative of the species Homo Sapiens. Like any other human being, she must choose her own way of life, her own rewards, and her own usefulness. The primary identity of a woman is not in being a mother. She is a human being, complete in herself. While she could contribute to the lives of others around her, her life is her own, to live with dignity and honour, to pursue goals and ambitions that are her own. Surely she enjoys being a mother but motherhood should be only an option for her, not a compulsion. Similarly marriage cannot be the only way of life for her. Like motherhood, marriage should be an option. She may enjoy her married life, being a wife to someone and a mother of her dear kids but so doing ought not to compromise her own identity. It is not necessary for a woman to be a Mother Teresa for people to recognize her as an individual. All women should first be so recognised, and not as the daughters or wives of men. Not all women desire or require the trappings of a marriage. Not being married should not make them in anyway less than her counterparts. Women with a mission in life
should be appreciated and given the chance to enrich the lives around us and not labelled and branded and discouraged every step of the way for choosing to toe an unconventional path.

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