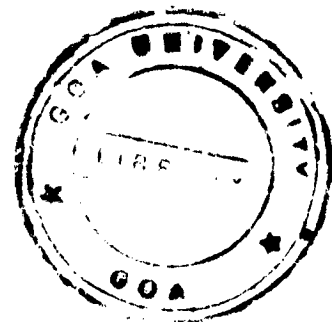


A PHILOSOPHICAL PROBE INTO THE FEMININE
LIFE - WORLD

A THESIS SUBMITTED
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DECLARATION

The contents of this thesis are the product of my research done under the guidance of Professor R.A. Sinari. I hereby declare that this thesis, or any part thereof, had not been published by me anywhere in any other form. The work has not been previously submitted by me for a Degree or Diploma of any university.

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CERTIFICATE

As required under the University Ordinance (No.19.8(ii)), I certify that the thesis entitled "A Philosophical Probe into the Feminine Life-World" submitted by L.V. Padmaja for the Award of the degree of Ph.D. in Philosophy is the result of her own research done by her under my guidance and that it has not in any form been previously submitted by the candidate for any Degree or Diploma of any university.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

In all ages and cultures, gender has been one of the most debatable subjects. Social scientists, philosophers, jurists, and litterateurs have in some context or other made it the main focus of their reflection. Whether one defends the superiority of the male and pushes the female to a status of subordination or one glorifies the female and regards her on a par with the male, one has not been able to ignore the crass historical fact that it is the male that has propelled the whole process of human civilization, started it and fuelled it, so to say. The power of the male has been there behind the origin of primitive technology, of science, of ancient Greek, ancient Indian, and ancient Chinese thought. It is man who designed ancient polity and government, arts, religions, and mystic cults. Even if the woman provided, in very many situations, the zeal for man's creativity and imagination, human civilizations and cultures carry print of the male as their progenitor. One of the greatest mysteries of our history is that between two sexes it is the male that has wielded authority over almost all institutions and it is the female that has remained at the receiver's end. The happenings in the history of the animal kingdom has not been different.

The question which I wish to probe into is the raison d'être of the inequality between the two sexes. The

inequality I want to explore is not biological. Although biological inequality between man and woman is of great significance whenever we reflect on the question of gender what is striking to a student of philosophy is that it is man who has exploited this inequality by, so to say, relegating her to a stage of subordination, by preying on her whenever opportunity arises, by curbing her will-to-equal-man, by being her unrestrained commander, by feigning blindness towards her suffering. In societies, Western and Eastern, which claimed to have well-knit organization, the male atrocity towards the woman has not been uncommon. History shows that kings, emperors, rulers, statesmen, politicians, parliamentarians, and law-makers have many a time been male chauvinists; they have not seldom shown utter intemperance while dealing with women; they have been the incorrigible embodiments of the male superiority.

The feminine life-world is a highly intricate reality. There are certain factors basic to the woman's life-world, however diverse may be the cultures and social groups she may belong to. In all cultures and social groups, for instance, the male, phenomenologically as if, has carried an unmitigated sense of egotism, an awareness of being the master and the giver, almost an assumption that it is to him that the woman is finally accountable. In the socio-political structure of the human race, the law-making and law-executing authority of man has always been taken for

granted. Man has been looked upon as the owner, the captain, the superior self, the legitimate "user", and even the buyer and seller of the woman.

In Part One of my thesis, I have portrayed the image of woman in some of the most important Western philosophers' writings. Philosophical thinkers who are known for their socio-political theories and whose influence on world's ideologies is unquestionable have seldom displayed neutrality of outlook towards the dignity of woman and woman's rights. Besides treating the views of individual thinkers such as Kant, Rousseau, and Nietzsche, I have tried to encompass rationalists', romanticists', socialists', and utilitarians' approach to womanhood. What seems to be intriguing about these philosophers and philosophical movements is that they invariably reflect extraordinary consciousness of the superiority of the male and the inferiority of the female. For Kant, for instance, woman's love and emotion-laden attitude towards things in the world have no role to play in the strict, rationally governed moral world that he would recommend.

Perhaps the central question underneath the thinking of most of the Western philosophers is whether the feminine power and role in the society is of a category other than rationalist-political. While the role the male plays in the constitution and advancement of society is rationalist,

organizational, and political, the woman does something "romantic", that is, she, by her very nature, is the source of affection, warmth, compassion, friendship, and tolerance. The two-pronged human reality - reason-governed and emotion-governed, ruled-by-the-mind and ruled-by-the-heart, reflecting the rigour of intellect and the elegance of feeling - forms the undercurrent of my treatment of the ideas of the Western thinkers.

As a matter of fact, the mutually opposed movements of rationalism and romanticism constitute the projection of the very opposition human reality is made of. Rationality and emotionality are two distinctive aspects of the same reality - they are two diagonally opposed expressions of the same human nature. While rationality figures as the dominant countenance of the male and emotionality as the dominant countenance of the female, there is feminine element in the male and the rigour of reason in the female though in a subdued way. The well-known concept of Ardhanarineshwara in ancient Hindu mythology, meaningfully suggests that a human individual is a potential amalgam of the male and the female, of masculinity and femininity, of Shiva and Shakti, of the dance of creation and the love of upbringing and protection. The terms "male" and "female" are thus metaphorical in the sense that they are designations to indicate either of the two elements predominating in the

particular individual.

By deriding woman the male has tried to overpower the female in him. This is a highly ambiguous process, and yet human history shows that the fury with which man has tried to suppress, subordinate, and victimise woman is basically the projection of a primordial split within the male psyche—the masculine in his psyche both loves and hates the feminine within it. It is a peculiarly dialectical activity but has had consequences damaging to the ego of the feminine world. One of the reasons why I have dwelt on the rationalist-romanticist dichotomy in the eighteenth century Western thought is that this dichotomy represents the split within the Western mind. In Hegel and Nietzsche, for instance, the basic assumption has been that the intellectual level of the woman cannot reach that of man, that the woman is a slave to feelings and emotions, that she is incapable of any political will. The refusal to accept woman as his equal, the uninterrupted drive to overpower her sexually, socially and politically, to ridicule her ability to govern the affairs of the state are clearly expressions of the male psyche intolerant to the female propensities within itself.

In Part Two, I have focused my attention on the image of woman in ancient and traditional India. The ability of the Indian male to inflict suffering on woman, to derecognize in practice (if not in theory) their rights, to

regard her as an object of pleasure rather than as an independent decision-maker, is exhibited throughout the history of social institutions in India. At the same time, Indians' love and devotion to their mothers have no equal in the world. The male ego of Indians is so self-aggrandizing that it has expressed itself in unique sense of ownership an Indian husband has in relation to his wife. He desires to assert his ownership right concerning her even after death by forcing her on the burning pyre!

That the genuine place for a woman is the kitchen and the life-long mission of hers is to give birth to and rear children is an adage too often repeated in the Indian society. It is only in the present century that this adage is being challenged by the feminist activists. However, despite this challenge, the Indian woman, unlike the Western woman, is so fixedly entrapped inside the web of authorities generated by men that for the dawning of woman's liberation in India the awareness/realization of the equity between the two sexes has to take place in the Indian male rather than in the Indian female. The very strategy of the Indian male in all religious and regional communities is to ridicule and to weaken the movement of Woman's liberation.

My description of the Indian woman's condition in the Indian Shastras and mythologies has the single purpose of pointing out that despite the inherent humanistic tendencies

in the history of Indian thought the prevalence of the male ego in the practical world in India shows the extent to which Indians have gone to persecute the woman.

Hindus have idolised woman to the degree to which she has never been idolised anywhere else in the world. The celebration of the second sex in the worship of goddesses such as Parvati, Durga, Kali, Uma, Laxmi, Saraswati, Rukhmini, Padmavati, Santoshi Ma, and others is an evidence of Indian's idealization of the female element in their psyche. the wife is persecuted, the mother is admired and respected; the woman in the street is molested, but Parvathi's personality is worshipped; the woman boss is abused, but the grand old lady who controlled the affairs of the house is revered. And in the same joint or non-nuclear family, the pain of separation from the mother is taken by the male as more intense than the pain of separation from the wife.

My objective in Part Two has been to portray the status of the Indian woman in India's history and culture. One can observe the magnitude of the male oppression against woman in India in the press and police reports flashed out almost every day. The curious happening is that even the widespread phenomena of dowry-deaths, bride-burning, bride-drowning, female suicide, etc., are many a time engineered by the woman (the mother of the man whose psyche has not succeeded

in freeing itself from the Oedipus complex grip, so to say) who is looked upon as the progenitor, Ma, the creator, Mata, Ba, Aai, Avai, Amma.

In the Indian situation, the sway of the mother on her son's conduct and value system and the reciprocal dedication of the latter to the former are well-known. One of the questions one has to look into is whether, to man, the two women - his wife and his mother - represent the same womanhood or whether, because of the pre-given affection he has for his mother, the wife is assigned the role of an alien. What is the image man bears about the woman? To what extent is the woman's life-world affected by the pre-given identity between the young man and his mother? Does the man appropriate his mother while disappropriating his wife because the projection of the resentment of the female element in his psyche takes place as soon as the process of alienation in him from his mother takes place? In other words, does the male want his wife to be identical with and a substitute for his mother? Although this identity is felt by man in the most unpalpable way possible, whenever it is felt by him his attitude toward his wife undergoes a radical change. Really speaking, in India, it is the male's devotion and attachment to his mother that induces him to make excessive demands on his wife, to ask her to be as benign as his mother, to want her to be like his mother.

The main thrust of Part One and Part Two of the thesis is to concentrate on the male attitude towards the female in the works of some of the Western and Indian thinkers. These parts set a background for our understanding the feminine life-world as it was prevalent prior to the modernization of the woman in the world. With the development of science and technology and their application for industrialization man's conception about the world and the social environment changed drastically. This change is not an accident generated by the sporadic events. There is a close connection between industrialization and urbanization, between science education spread through schools and colleges and the awakening of the consciousness of rights, between economic growth and intensification of the right of freedom, between liberal education and rebelliousness. Feminism of the twentieth century is the direct consequence of the varied forces - scientific - technological - industrial , social, economic, and political - that revolutionized the world in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In Part Three, I am concerned with understanding the mind of the awakened woman. The awakened woman has clearly transcended her biological limitations. The modern woman's quest for an independent status in society is not merely a social phenomenon. Its roots lie deep in her image about

herself - she no more looks at herself as the man would want her to look at herself, but, on the other hand, she would insist on man to perceive her in her own image. Behind the whole liberation movement triggered off by women in the West, there is the presupposition that universal justice lies in man's considering woman as his equal in all spheres of life. This is why, for accepting woman as his equal man has to first regard the feminine element within the psyche as a "natural" part of his being, a facet of the metaphysical structure of human reality.

In Part Three, I have drawn very much on the feminist ideas of the existentialist philosopher Simone De Beauvoir. One of the greatest contributions of the existentialist philosophy has been ethico-political - it is to argue that a human individual is primodially free to shape his/her own destiny, to make out of himself/herself whatever he/she wants, with the only proviso (and this proviso forms the inner imperative of the human self) that the ultimate accountability of the individual is for himself and for none outside himself. The existentialist image of woman is at the heart of the woman's liberation movement.

An understanding of the history of the woman's life-world is essential if we want to appreciate the image the modern woman has about herself. The modern woman is confronted by what can be called the lived experience of the

entire feminine world, regardless of the cultural, ethnic, religious, and ideological variegatedness of the communities she might be born in. There is what Edmund Husserl has called the "lived time," the lived history absorbed by the woman. She cannot easily be oblivious to the fact that it is the male who has consistently attempted to empower her, to curb her will to be independent, to injure her self-esteem by regarding her as a means for his pleasure and exploitation. Because of man's influence on the global lexicon, he has introduced into the language the derogatory terms to describe her: the bitch, the whore, the concubine, the lecher, the hireling, the lewd. The feminine life-world has as one of its constituents the pouch of abuses centering on her sex.

As Simone de Beauvoir points out the biological and anatomical aspects of the woman have always caught the male interest to such an extent that he has often failed to meet her inside, her innerself, her spirit, her virtuosity. In fact this inner being of the woman is the counterpart of the very self man is proud of possessing as his self-identity. The basic existentialist thesis that it is the inwardness of the individual that forms his human essence, is applicable to the entire human community. The thesis is ontological and hence has no reference to any class, based on gender or otherwise.

A woman's experience of being-a-woman in the world which is governed largely by the male authority, has something unique about it. It is different from the consciousness the male carried about his being a male. Since the world is politically masculine, the male is more secure in it than the woman. The fundamental existentialist reality of the woman is that love, compassion, empathy, helpfulness, candour originate from her. It is these elements that form the bedrock of the welfare society.

PART ONE

THE WESTERN WOMAN

P A R T - I

The Western Woman

I. The Wall Between Two Sexes: the Rationalist and the Romantic Realities

In the eighteenth century, liberal advocates of sexual equality who were preoccupied with the struggle for the vote and with the assertion of rights on behalf of middle-class women, underestimated the material forces - in the market as well as in the family - which militated against real independence and total participation for the majority of women. However, the ideals of rational fellowship and of romantic love covered the elements which associated women's liberation with fundamental changes in human relationships and in the political society.

The debate on women's emancipation had a basic postulation of universal link between moral autonomy, political right, and democratic citizenship with regard to the groups excluded from full participation in the community. A closer study shows that the attempt to provide women the same freedom available to all autonomous agents faced problems of a particular kind. The position and roles of men and women within the private sphere of the family appeared, even to the radical thinkers, as the embodiment of natural, immutable differences. In this context, we may question whether, already on the most abstract philosophical level, concepts such as liberty, right, justice, or

citizenship do not contain an inherent bias against the full inclusion of women and whether their exclusion cannot simply be disposed of as an oversight or as an inconsistency which can be explained in terms of specific historical, that is contingent, factors. It becomes obvious that, the abstract individualism manifested in the understanding of freedom and self determination, the sharp focus on changes in the legal and political superstructure and, most significantly, the failure to break with traditional division between the public and the private spheres prevented a full recognition of the informal mechanisms at the root of women's oppression and of the collective character of their inferior position.

There is a contrast between a political and an aesthetic conception of women's liberation. While the former tries to end women's oppression by political means, the latter is committed to a strategy of revolutionizing the very basic of personal experiences and intimate relationships, by retreating from politics. The two strategies highlight a more fundamental difference concerning the way in which we should perceive women's specific identity in relation to the universal concepts of human nature, reason, morality, rights and citizenship.

In Rationalism, emphasis is laid on those universal and uniform features in individual human beings which are owned by the faculty of reason. By contrast, Romanticism stands

for an aesthetic ideal of the many-faceted human personality in whom all faculties - reason and feeling, spirituality and sensuality - are fully and harmoniously developed. The Romantic views differ from the Rationalist views mainly on the ground that they consider the political sphere as altogether unimportant to the experiences and endeavours through which individuals (men as well as women) can realise their truly human potential. Not rational fellowship among citizens, as Ursula Vogel says, but romantic love freed from the limits of conventional sexual roles points towards the utopia of a regenerated world. Both perspectives converge on a common purpose - to refute the ideas of Rousseau, 'the pharisee of our times' (Von Hippel; 1977:40; see also Schlegel; 1983:129; Wollstonecraft; 1975:127) who has done more than any other modern philosopher to lend to blatant prejudice against women the false dignity of profound truth. Both disagree with validity of assumptions according to which the capacities of women and their role in civil society should be defined by the physical nature.

Vogel asserts that parts of evidence concerning primitive society, psychological observations, similarities with the condition of slavery and the Kantian postulate of autonomy serve as building blocks in a philosophical and moral critique of women's condition in modern society. She argues that, reason is identified with a single standard of systematic analytical thinking because only with such an

orientation and training of mind, can we avoid becoming dependent on the opinions of others and submitting blindly to their authority and she asserts that identity or reason must be seen as a necessary condition of equality right. Due to the misconceived notion of natural sexual virtue unaided by knowledge, women have in the past been denied access to the opportunities to cultivate their understanding. And from the want of understanding have sprung all the causes that have degraded women. Because they thus derive the capacity for virtue as well as the entitlement to right from autonomous reason and because autonomy is staked upon certain methods of acquiring knowledge, nationalists such as Wollstonecraft must insist on a single intellectual character in women and men, holds Vogel.

Vogel further writes that, given the assumptions about the essential identity of male and female nature, rationalist strategies for emancipation aim to create the right conditions for women to prove their capacities as rational agents. These strategies give priority to the task of securing to women their rightful place in the public domain of civil society - as equals and fellow citizens of men. The pre-occupation with formal equality of rights suffers from the typical liberal illusion that women's present degradation is due chiefly to defect in their legal position which might be corrected by constitutional

amendments.

The early advocates of women's rights realised that genuine equality for women cannot be achieved merely through the extension of legal entitlements because their capabilities have been cramped and their character wrapped through a long history of subjugation - to the point where they themselves have come to connive at in their inferior position. This is why so much emphasis is placed by them upon change through education. Women will have to learn that their first duty is not towards men - in their roles as mothers, wives and daughters - but towards themselves as rational creatures. But there are other reasons for doubting whether political enfranchisement and equal educational opportunities will suffice to ensure women's emancipation. Feminists might opine that the rationalist strategies ignore the root cause of women's oppression in the sexual division of labour within the family. The aspects of the new women that receive utmost attention in the vindication are those of a mother who actively and conscientiously discharges her domestic duties.

The rationalist strategy for emancipation envisages a process whereby women must move towards a goal that men have already reached, and they must adopt values and attitudes and emulate standards of existence that have been irrevocably shaped by the history of patriarchal domination.

The early feminist movements both in England and America formed close links with the campaigns directed at the abolition of slavery in frequent analogies between the subjugation of women and the condition of the slaves. The article, 'On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship', was written in 1790 by Condorcet, himself a member of the French National Assembly, with the aim of moving his fellow revolutionaries to adopt a more enlightened attitude towards women. The argument formed part of his radical conception of a rational political order based upon complete equality between the sexes with regard to both political rights and educational opportunities. According to Condorcet, there can be no stronger proof of the power of prejudice over people's minds than the fact that even among the most enlightened and benevolent reformers the principle of equality invoked in favour of 300 or 400 men is forgotten in the case of some 12 million women.

In studying the logic inherent in the principle of natural right, Condorcet exposes the self-righteous and hypocritical attitude of men who attribute to women natural disabilities which are the result of wrong education and of previous legal discrimination continually reproduced.

The omission of women from the vote, like that of the poor or of ethnic minorities, raised many questions about

the natural conditions of democratic citizenship. On the one hand, the advocates of democracy subscribed to the view that all individuals should be entitled to political rights. On the other hand, however, most of them demanded certain conditions (mostly property) as proof of civic competence for the actual admission to rights of political participation. With regards to women, this inconsistency was particularly striking, since their exclusion could not in all cases be justified on economic grounds and thus had to be defended in terms of natural disabilities, such as inferior reason, enslavement to the passions and so on. Condorcet's main concern is to ensure for women the dignity and self-respect which is satisfied by the public recognition of their equal rights. Like Mary Wollstonecraft, he sees the most beneficial effects of this equality in the improvements of human relations within the family: "And so it is unnecessary to believe that because women could become members of national assemblies they would immediately abandon their children, their homes and their needles. They would only be better fitted to educate their children and to rear men.. (Vogel, 1986:23). Von Heppel denies that the common division of labour within the family is in any way sanctioned by nature or compatible with reason, and mentions that as women took control over domestic animals she soon became one herself. Surrounded by petty objects and by beasts who patiently submitted to bridle and yoke, women

gradually sank, in body and mind, to a lower station.

Romanticism contradicts the terms of universal, uniform and immutable standards and thus challenges the presuppositions of rationalist thinking. It believes in the appreciation of what is particular, characteristic and unique excellence in the provinces of beauty, morality, and truth. With regard to emancipation of women, the romantic opposition to rationalism is on the following lines as summarised by Vogel. First, abstract ideal of the human person as a right-holder obliterates the particular gender-related individuality of women. It can claim universal validity only at the expense of suppressing the diversity in mental and emotional character traits. Secondly, the primacy of reason, by virtue of which women are included in the right of mankind, establishes a normative dualism, dividing the individual into separate warring factions, placing mind against body, rationality against sensuality. Thirdly, the ideal of 'rational fellowship' - thus constituted by uniformity of human nature and primacy of reason - must appear as a one-dimensional, impoverished form of relationship when compared to the liberating possibilities of mutual fulfilment that women and men can find in romantic love. Fourthly, what is at issue in the critique of women's oppression is not, in the first instance, a violation of moral principle, but an offence against the aesthetic ideal of femininity in which reason and feeling, desire for

knowledge and the free expression of sensuality are brought into harmony. Fifthly, given these assumptions, neither the causes of women's subordination nor the conditions of their liberation will be sought in the domain politics.

There is an urge for individuality, diversity and organic wholeness in romantic thinking. In the fusion of apparently contradictory elements that is universalist autonomy and gender-determined character, the romantic ideal of self-reliant femininity stands apart both from the traditionalist claim of women's natural incapacity for freedom and from the rationalist postulate of sexless humanity. Schlegel notes, "Both, the impatient will to dominate in man and the self-denying submissiveness in woman are exaggerated and ugly. Only self-reliant womanhood and gentle manhood deserve to be called good and beautiful" (Schlegel; 1983:61). For Schlegel, the woman's capacity to harmonise experience and knowledge from an inner centre of intuitive understanding and reflective feeling is the distinct feature of female reason.

Love plays an important role in both romantic and rationalist conceptions of women's emancipation. While in the former it is celebrated as an agent of liberation, due to its unique power to free individuals from the fetters of repressive conventions, it is considered in the latter as a major threat to women's independence by concealing the

reality of her degradation. Since freedom is understood as a process of self-creation in which all individual faculties and endeavours are activated and since the polarity of female and male nature can act as a stimulus for such development, love constitutes the proper sphere of emancipation. Romantic love allows for the uninhibited, ecstatic expression of all passions, from the most exuberant sensuality to the most spiritual spirituality. It does not ignore or discard the different sexual identities of women and men but it continually shifts their boundaries. This is perhaps the most important idea that romantic thinking has contributed to the debate on women's emancipation. What is possible on the basis of female and male nature cannot be concluded from the conventional divisions of sexual roles. Love is something with which women and men have the freedom to play and experiment.

While in the rationalist vision the emancipation of women depends upon a transformation in the political relationships among individuals, the romantic ideal of self-reliant femininity refers to a process of liberation that takes place outside the public sphere. Through love, friendship and intellectual companionship woman will become the equal of man, but the political conditions of her subordination remain unchanged. The romantic entrusted love and friendship with the power of creating alternative forms

of sociability, based upon free association, spontaneity, mutual affections unconstrained by social etiquette and formal legal arrangements. In this context Schlegel writes, " ... instead of an artificial society, there should only be marriage between the two estates of women and men, and a universal brotherhood of all individuals" (Vogel; 1986:42).

The term 'Romantic' is commonly associated with notions of sentimental love, with feeling and yearning for harmony and nostalgia for the past. But, the characteristic mood of Romantic thinking is enthusiasm for building a new world of beauty and love, coupled with a radical spirit of criticism. German Romanticism was essentially a collective enterprise. It reflected the determination of a small circle of friends to create in their personal life and work new forms of sociability that would transcend the conventional divide between male and female roles. The most important feature of the Romantic group, is the participation of women in its literary and philosophical projects. The Romantics challenged the dominant ideology of their time and rebelled in the face of sacred traditions. However, they did not join radical reformers in the quest for women's equal rights. Though they were contemporaries and even enthusiastic supporters of the ideals of the French Revolution, they were remarkably unconcerned about women's inferior legal and political status.

The term BILDUNG entails the commitment to a lifelong, open minded process of self-education in which all our human faculties are activated and extended. Fixation of human beings in natural roles and rigid sexual polarizations, denies scope to those of our faculties which the Romantics valued above all others: imagination and creativity. Therefore, the Romantic writers rebelled against the equation of femininity, nature and domesticity, because it was incompatible with the ideal of BILDUNG, with the full development in each individual of her particular potential.

The equality of right and citizenship were not the issue. The political realm was left out of the Romantic argument about women. So are the constraints of economic necessity; neither household chores nor the need to earn a living seem to exist in the aesthetic domain of BILDUNG. However its ideals are equally accessible to men and women. The Romantic experiment is a precarious one. It has to disassociate the idea of a woman person from fixed conceptions of gender - without, however, losing the distinct attributes of femininity in the abstract notion of a sexless humanity.

Wilhelm Von Humboldt wanted to overcome the Kantian antagonism between rational and sensual faculties by calling upon the sense of beauty as a mediator. As a vital source of our creative energies, sensuality was rehabilitated. Since

the study of the individual as an aesthetic being put premium upon the feeling of beauty that binds all human capacities together in a single whole, and since this disposition towards harmony was considered an attribute of female rather than male character, women could rise considerably high in the philosopher's esteem.

Two implications inherent in Humboldt's ideal of BILDUNG, as individual self-realisation, are important. First, the emphasis on liberty. Marriage must be understood as voluntary union between two human beings sustained entirely by their mutual affection. Since enforced permanence would have a disastrous effect upon each person's development, divorce must be possible 'at any time and without excuse' (a conclusion which was too radical even for J.S.Mill). Second, Humboldt's ideal of the fully and harmoniously developed character does not abstract from the sexual differences between individuals. On the contrary, the dissimilarity and polarity between male and female nature import vital energies to the process of self-development (Vogel;1987:111).

Humboldt believes that women are closer to the ideal of perfect humanity because their natural disposition tends towards harmony and wholeness. Whereas man given to restless striving in the external world, invests and dissipates his energy in a multitude of fragmented pursuits, woman

experiences and understands everything in relation to an inner centre; her mind is infinitely receptive, open to everything that is good and beautiful, yet she remains at one with herself.

However, the emphasis on harmony and receptivity in the idea of genuine femininity leads Humboldt to disapprove of active self-assertion and of all manifestations of outstanding talent such as wit and brilliance of mind. Whereas in a man such accomplishments are admired as features of excellence, in a woman they are considered as unfeminine because they disturb the equilibrium of a harmonious character.

Friedrich Schlegel searches in the great art of works of classical Greece for a model conception of femininity. But his account is more critical and brings to light the defects in both modern and ancient attitudes. In 'free' Athens, the majority of women were excluded from the very activities - public education, gymnastics, citizenship - which enabled the Greeks to reach the ideal of perfect humanity. He writes, "The female sex lacked all those opportunities for self-development, kept out of the realm of sociability it was confined to the narrowest circle of domestic life. Repression and general contempt brought about its degeneration." But there were also exceptions. Why are we moderns, Schlegel asks, so loath to see in those examples

from the past a higher, more developed form of women-hood? Because we have exaggerated the natural differences between the sexes into a rigid scheme of mutually exclusive qualities. We find it difficult even to imagine that there was a time when in Sparta' women possessed masculine strength and independence while young men displayed female modesty, shame and gentleness' (Vogel;1987:113). To accept that the Nature has locked up the potential for human development behind the prison walls of a sexual role makes nonsense of the idea of freedom. The selfless, unbounded devotion of a wife praised by many writers as the 'most admirable among female virtues is, in fact, a shameful renunciation of independence, a symptom of a woman's 'absolute lack of character' (since she passively receives the maxims of her actions from another person, i.e. her husband). Schlegel recognised that the ideal of pure femininity, with its emphasis on innocence and helplessness, serves as an instrument of male dominance - a convenient belief to rationalise the desire that women should exist for men. Self-interest is reinforced by confusion: people fail to distinguish the essential attributes of an idea from its contingent associations.

Although narrow conceptions of sexual role could be challenged, the polarity of male and female character could not be denied or minimised without depriving the Romantic idea of love of its specific meaning. The only sense, in

which we may refer to femininity as an essential attribute of a woman's character is that, for her living and loving mean the same. Her love is total and self-contained. It can transform a man's life by imparting to it a sense of direction towards an inner centre. She, on the other side, gains from his love an extension of herself, self-consciousness, knowledge, contact with the outside world. Therefore like man, woman must strive for the ideal of BILDUNG. Schlegel regrets that, even under optimal circumstances, marriage, motherhood and family tend to entangle them in the limited circle of mere needs and petty responsibilities. For a woman, therefore, BILDUNG will always tend towards inner independence rather than towards self-assertion, in the world outside.

While the romantic theory postulates the transcendence of women's inferior position in the realm of love, sociability and BILDUNG, it takes for granted the material and legal conditions which allow and perpetuate this inferiority. Vogel asks, if romantic love is capable of transcending the constraints of inequality and subjugation imposed by the conventional form of marriage, why should its transformative power not reach further into the legal and political sphere? In this world a woman's particular capacities are not inferior. From the Romantic viewpoint it might even be said that her feminine qualities and talents

constitute a genuinely political sphere insofar as she translates love into the art of sociability. Political emancipation, allows women only the freedom to become like men; Romantic sociability, on the other hand, envisages a situation where they can express and develop their specifically feminine qualities which will liberate men, too, from the fetters of conventional roles. The romantic approach of emancipation has some resemblance with premises on which some groups in women's movement today have entered politics. They also want to transform the routines of the existing political system and the meaning of politics, by bringing the personal experience of the 'private' sphere to bear upon political activity. Where the romantics of today most differ from their predecessors is their willingness to make some concessions to the need for political participation. they are prepared, although with numerous reservations, to use the established political institutions for the realisation of a more-than-political goal.

Citizenship, in the Rousseauian sense, could never rank prominently amongst Romantic values, and this applies to men as well women. But the Romantics failed to see - that women will not be able to realise their potentials in personal relationships as long as they are not recognised as equal persons in the public sphere.

2. The Feminine Feeling and the Concept of Justice

Recent feminist thinkers have challenged the western political thought in two ways. Some focus on how the gendered structure of the societies in which theorists have lived has shaped their central ideas and arguments and consider how these ideas and arguments are affected by the adoption of feminist perspective. Some works highlight the absence of the assumed subordination of women in a political theory, and then question how the theory would have to change in order to include women on an equal basis with men.

Susan Moller Okin questions about the effects that assumptions about the gendered structure of society have had on thinking about social justice. She examines how the assumptions about the division of labour between the sexes, with women taking care of their realm of human nurturance, have a fundamental effect upon their accounts of moral subjects and the development of moral thinking and finds that this is exemplified in their tendencies to separate reason from feeling and to require that moral subjects be abstracted, from the contextuality and contingencies of actual human life (Moller Okin;1989:230).

John Rawls and Kant are open to two criticisms as Okin pointed out that they involve assumptions about human nature and that they are of little relevance to actual people thinking about justice. They give contrasting accounts of

how one learns to be a moral person. Rawls expresses his major ideas in the language of rational choice. His theory of justice reflects both Kant's stress on autonomy and rationality as the defining characteristics of moral subject and his rigid separation of reason from feeling and refusal to allow feeling any place in the formulation of moral principles. Kant is abundantly clear that feelings are to have no place in the foundations of morality, as feelings always belong to the order of nature. Being contingent and subject to change, belonging to the order of nature rather than to the order of autonomy or reason, however, this type of feeling can play no part in the formulation of the moral law, according to Okin.

Kant's brief account of moral education, as presented in the Doctrine of Virtue, reflects the relation (or, rather, comparative, lack of it) between feelings and moral thinking. The moral catechism Kant presents in the form of a dialogue between teacher and pupil is, as he says, "developed from ordinary human reason" (Moller Okin;1989;229). Subsequent to formulating principles on the basis of reason, the pupil becomes conditioned, by imitation, in the virtues, inclination and action. Kant's reduction of love to two types, moral feeling of benevolence that follows from recognition of duty, and the affective love that he calls mere inclination, ignores the

parent/child relations. This kind of love is fundamental to human life and relationship, since it is the first kind of love experience (if circumstances are fortunate) regardless of our sex, and it has, of course, constituted throughout history a much larger part of women's than of men's experience.

Kant divined a moral world that excluded women. He defines the moral subjects of whom he speaks as not only human beings but also rational beings as such and clarifies that women are not sufficiently rational and autonomous to be moral subjects. He says of women that their philosophy is not to reason, but to sense their virtue, unlike men's which is to be inspired by the desire to please. In case of a married woman Kant points out that she is necessarily subject to her husband and a legal minor, thus taking back any thought of moral autonomy. Lawrence Blum says about Kant, "It is natural for him to ignore or underplay the female qualities as they are found in his society on sympathy, compassion, and emotional responsiveness. He fails to give these qualities adequate expression within his moral philosophy" (Moller Okin;1989;234). Thus for Kant, women who are inspired by feeling and by the desire to please, provide both the essential nurturance required for human development, and a realm of existence without which the moral order he prescribes for the world outside the family seems intolerable in its demands.

Rawls's account of moral development is very different from Kant's and indicates clearly that rationality is not a sufficient basis on which to found or sustain his theory of justice. There is no indication in most of A Theory of Justice, that the modern liberal society to which the principles of justice are to be applied is deeply and pervasively gender-structured. This neglect of gender has major implications for the practical feasibility of Rawls's principles of justice. The love of parents for their children as reciprocated by the child, is important in his account of the development of sense of selfworth. By loving the child and being "worthy object of his admiration, ... they (parents) arouse in him a sense of his own value and the desire to become the sort of person that he is", says Rawls. Thus, the supposedly just families play a fundamental role in moral development. Further, participation in different roles in the various associations of society leads to the development of a person's capacity for fellow-feeling and to ties of friendship and mutual trust. Rawls's further contention is that, just as in the first stage certain natural attitudes develop toward the parents, so here ties of friendship and confidence grow up among associates. According to him, sense of justice is continuous with a love of mankind. At the root of the development of the sense of justice, are an activity and a sphere of life. Unless the households in which children are first nurtured and see

their first examples of human interaction, are based on equality and reciprocity rather than on dependence and domination, whatever love they receive from their parents cannot make up for the injustice they see before their eyes in the relationship between these same parents. Furthermore, unless the household is connected by a continuum of associations to the larger communities within which people are supposed to develop fellow-feelings for each other, they cannot grow up with the capacity for enlarged sympathies such as are clearly required for the practice of justice.

Feelings such as empathy and benevolence are at the very foundation of Rawls's principles of justice. Rawls considers his theory of justice as a branch of Rational Choice Theory. In Rational Choice Theory, the pre-requisite for choice for the individual is to have both a great amount of relevant knowledge about the environment and a well organised and stable system of preference. It is on the basis of these, but especially the knowledge of his or her "independent utility function" that individuals are presumed able to choose, from the alternatives open, the option that will permit each to reach the highest attainable point on his or her preference scale. In conditions where this knowledge about individual preferences is presumed not available, reasoning based on abstract probabilities comes into play.

Many of the respondents who Gilligan identifies as speaking in the 'different voice' use it to express as fully universalisable a morality of social concern, as respondents who express themselves in the language of justice and rights. The inference frequently drawn from her work, that women's morality tends to be more particularistic and contextual, appears to be unfounded. Here, Rawls's theory of justice is itself centrally dependent upon the capacity of moral persons to be concerned about and to demonstrate care for others. The question arises about the wisdom of distinguishing between an ethic of care and an ethic of justice.

The feminist interpretation of Rawls's is that feelings such as caring and concern for others are essential to the formulation of principles of justice. It does not suggest that such principles can be replaced by contextual caring and thinking. In a recent work on theory of justice, Young argues that the ideal of impartiality and universality in moral reasoning is misguided and that it operates against the feminist and other emancipatory politics, because it attempts to eliminate otherness and differences, and creates a false dichotomy between reason and feeling. It is found that Rawls's theory is rational, monological and abstracted from particularity as Kant's.

Rawls's theory of justice can most coherently be

interpreted as a moral structure founded on the equal concern of individuals for each other as for themselves. Empathy with and care for others, as well as awareness of their differences, are crucial components of theory. The original position is designed so as to eliminate from the formulation of the principles of justice, biases that might result from particular attachments to others, as well as from particular facts about the self. Surely impartiality in this sense is a basic need to make of a theory of justice.

In order to develop a sense of justice, human beings must be nurtured and socialised in an environment that is best suited to develop these capacities in them. By envisaging the importance of such feelings for the development of a sense of justice, Rawls breaks away from the rationalist Kantian mode of thinking.

3. Biological Distinctiveness of the Woman

Human birth has always been spoken as a natural, biological event, rather than as a distinctively human one, while human death has been presented as distinctively human. Mary Obrion writes, "Birth was not, and will not become, a worthy subject for male philosophy, ... Feminist philosophy will be a philosophy of birth and regeneration" (Held;1989:362).

The humanness ascribed to death and denied to birth has

had vast implications for conceptions of political life and society. In the male realm of the world, men risk death for the sake of human progress. In the female realm of the household, it is thought that the species is merely reproduced. To overcome patriarchy, it will not be enough for women to be permitted to enter the "public" arena where men are willing to cause death for their beliefs. Birth and the "Private" world of mothering will have to be reconceptualised and accorded the evaluations they deserve.

Virginia Held tried to show the ways in which human being giving birth should be seen as engaged in as distinctively human an event, as a human being dying. And to the extent that we continue to acknowledge a realm such as that of the "natural" human birth should not be thought to belong to it any more than does human death.

The ability to choose has been emphasised with respect to death and denied with respect to birth. Human beings can die for noble causes and die heroically. They can die out of loyalty, out of duty, out of commitment. They can die for a better future, for themselves, for their children, for human kind. they can die to give birth to nations, or democracy, to put an end to tyranny or war. They can die for God, for civilization, for justice and for freedom. In contrast, birth is spoken of as a natural, biological process. Human mothering is seen as a kind of extension of the "natural",

biological event of childbirth. For most women actual childbirth has involved no choice whatsoever, and a very little consciousness. With little chance to avoid pregnancy and few chances for abortion, all this time women have experienced childbirth as something almost entirely outside their control. However, in recent years women have increasingly been able to gain control over their capacity to give birth. Through contraception and legal abortion, most women now have a large measure of choice over whether or not to give birth.

That a humanbeing can choose what to die for, and what to live for, characterises our concepts of being human, and our concepts of dying a human death and living a human life. What we should realize is that women can choose what to give birth for, or what to refuse to give birth for and that this characterises human birth. There can be for women giving birth a great consciousness of one's connection with all of nature. If anything, giving birth is more human, because we can choose to avoid it, whereas death, eventually, is inevitable.

It is asserted by some feminists that men as a gender suffer from a preoccupation with death. To the extent that forms of art and culture have been largely created men, the prevalence of death as imaginative subject would be expected. It can be seen how underdeveloped are the subjects

of giving birth and mothering as subjects of imaginative cultural representation.

The imaginative consideration of childbirth and the imaginative aspects of the activities of mothering, are, however, as limitless as they are for representation of death. Rituals surrounding human death are many. Ritual recreations of birth, or initiation rites are common in many cultures. But rituals celebrating women's actual birth-giving are rare. The culture has thus limited the imaginative representation or celebration of birth. In the absence of feminist awareness, however, the focus may be almost entirely on the father's role, rather than on the fact of giving birth by women.

Feminists, have envisaged the point that men as well as women can be caretakers of children and have shown how the concept of 'natural' in the claim that women should be the ones to bring up children has been badly twisted to serve the ideological purposes of men, and they have successfully challenged such misuse of the term 'natural'. Some feminists have argued that women's reproductive biology is so fundamental a feature of the oppression of women that technological means should be developed to enable women to avoid having to give birth. Some feminists called for birth to become something artificial, and for infants to be produced in a laboratory, so that women would no longer be

defined by their biological functions or be tied to its consequences. Mostly, however, feminists have rejected artificial birthing as a solution to the 'problem' of biology, preferring instead more natural birth processes and the social supports for child bearing and child rearing that are now so inadequate.

According to Virginia Held, instead of incorporating 'man' into the domain of "nature and women", we should incorporate women into the domain of the fully human, and advocate respect by humanity even for non-human nature. We should interpret giving birth as a central event in human experience. Simone De Beauvoir concluded that woman is more enslaved to the species than the male, and her animality is more manifest. She sees reproduction as mere repetition. "On the biological level", she writes, "a species is maintained only by creating itself anew; but this creation results only in repeating the same life in more individuals" (Held;1989:376). To De Beauvoir, man in contrast with woman, must more frequently transcend, through action, the repeating of life, and "by this transcendence he creates values that deprive pure repetition of all value". She thinks that for women to liberate themselves from this confinement to mere repetition, women must be free to engage in the kind of action open to men, action which transcends biological reproduction.

De Beauvoir is emphatic in arguing against the conclusion that women are inferior merely because they are more confined to the repetitive biological realm than are men. But she does not dispute, the conception of childbirth as essentially biological. Similarly, Ortner argues against the view that because, they are 'closer to nature', women should be deemed inferior, but she agrees that in fact women are more involved with 'natural functions'. Ortner concludes, that woman is not 'in reality' any closer to (or farther from) nature than man - both have consciousness, both are moral. A long line of thinkers have associated the 'public' sphere with the distinctively human, the 'private' with the natural. In Ortner's formulation "the family (and hence women) represents lower level, socially fragmenting, particularistic sort of concerns, as opposed to inter-familial relations representing higher-level integrative, universalistic sorts of concerns" (Held; 1989:377).

Though the two domains are different, it is clearly an unsatisfactory distortion of their reality, to think of the public sphere as distinctively human and the sphere of mothering persons and children as involved in mere reproduction. Among the concepts most clearly in need of reconceptualization are those of 'public' and 'private' with their varying but characteristic associations with male and female. With the Lockean renunciation of political

patriarchy, the family was relegated to a peripheral status outside and irrelevant to the political organization of "free and equal men". Since then, liberal concessions towards equality for women have usually expected women to enter political sphere structured by concepts designed for a male polis.

In saying that women, in giving birth and rearing children, can engage in 'transcendence' and in the distinctively human and cultural activities of moving beyond mere repetition, we should be on guard against misuses of such arguments. Some may say that since childbirth or childcare are such admirable activities, women should have no complaints about being confined to them. However, from the recognition that birth should be at the heart of our conceptions of life, and from celebrating the wondrousness of empowering a child to live a good human life, it does not imply that women should be confined to child rearing or encouraged to accept the leadership of men in any domain. There may be very good reasons why childcare should be fully shared by men, and reasons for men to be able in non-sexist society to participate in decisions concerning the moulding as new persons. The point is that a proper reconceptualization of childbirth and childcare would recognise their distinctively human features.

The Marxist view of childbirth and childrearing has

been similar to the other views we have examined. The traditional Marxist conception sees childbirth as an entirely biological process. But the implicit implication is that women, who are primarily procreative labourers, are biologically determined to a greater extent than men are. Moreover, traditional Marxists have extended the biological view of childbirth to the raising of the children. In this context, Marx and Engels believe that the division of labour within the family is natural because it is biologically determined, based on a purely physiological foundation. While childbirth and housework belong to the realm of reproduction, work in the factory or on the farm belong to the sphere of production. Some Marxists like Alisen Jagger and William Mc Birde have noted the serious ambiguities in the categories of production and reproduction and concluded that the distinction distorts the reality of women's work and serves largely to obscure the way women's labour is exploited by men. They propose that procreation and nurturing are production in the broadest Marxist sense of being necessary to human life and they are increasingly productive in the Capitalist sense of falling within the market. In their view, procreative and nurturing activities are just as fully form human labours as are the activities involved in agriculture or manufacturing.

It is increasingly becoming evident that in trying to overcome the long history of patriarchy, we should jettison

traditional ways of thinking and acting. Among the views that need to be changed are those that see human childbirth as primarily natural or biological. Also in need of transformation are views that political life must always be organised around male conceptions of power. Those who give birth and nurture need to affirm their own point of view. Only when the conscious experience of mothers, potential mothers, and mothering persons are taken fully into account can we possibly develop understanding that may someday merit description 'human'. When human birth and mothering are appreciated as the fully human achievements, we can expect that human death will be less often pointless, debased and unnecessarily early.

Apprehensions are frequently expressed that the new technology surrounding the late twentieth-century childbirth will be used to uphold patriarchy rather than to liberate women. Such techniques as invitrio fertilization and embryo transfer can deprive women of grounds they have had from which to demand consideration. The reaffirmed belief of many feminists in the traditional conceptualization of human childbirth as 'reproduction' confirms that to overthrow the conceptions of patriarchy is a monumental task.

4. Rousseau's Derision of Women

The theory of citizenship was expounded by Kant in his books Theory and Practice, and Metaphysic of Morals. In

Metaphysic of Morals, he identifies three characteristics or attributes which are considered inseparable from the nature of citizen. In Theory and Practice these are referred to as three principles by which a State can be established. They are 1. The freedom of every member of society as a human being. 2. The equality of each with all the others as a subject. 3. The independence of each member of a commonwealth as a citizen. As per Kant not all will have a hand in framing the law, even though all will be equal as subjects under the law.

Kant distinguishes between active and passive citizenship. The passive citizens are mere auxiliaries of the commonwealth, for they have to receive orders or protection from other individuals, so that they do not have civil independence. What is crucial for active citizenship is being one's own master or being independent of the will of others. Some examples given by Kant for passive citizens are apprentices to merchants or tradesmen, servants who are not employed by the State, minors and women. In general all those who are obliged to depend for their living on the offices of other people (excluding the State), have no civil personality and their existence is purely inherent.

In this formulation of the independence criterion it might be thought purely contingent that women count as passive citizens only. The status of women as passive

citizens appears to be merely contingent. It just so happens that women in that time in that country lacked civil independence.

However, Kant argues "Whatever might be the kind of laws to which the citizens agree, these laws must not be incompatible with the natural laws of freedom and with the equality that accords with this freedom namely, that everyone be able to work up from this passive status to an active status" (Mendus;1987:27). It implies that even the Indian smith, the apprentice and the domestic servant might be allowed the opportunity to advance to achieve citizenship with it. What Kant insists on that everyone be able to work up from a passive status to an active status. One can hope that 'everyone' includes women. However in Theory and Practice he offers various reasons for denying women the status of active citizens.

Kant says in Theory and Practice that the only qualification required by a citizen (apart, of course, from being an adult male) is that he must be his own master (sui-juris) and must have some property (which can include any skill, trade, fine art, or science) to support himself. It is clear that the women are ruled out from active citizenship from the start and it is not merely contingent that women lack active citizenship. Women become, not persons occupying particular social position but occupants

of the position "woman". They fit only for passive citizenship and unlike servants, they cannot hope to occupy a different position in future. Thus they are eternally denied that possibility of advancement, which is opened even to the lowliest of men.

The following conclusions can be drawn :

1. Women are relegated to the status of passive citizens and in the Metaphysic of Morals this appears to be justified by applying the independent criterion.
2. In Theory and Practice women appear to be incapable of independence.
3. This sure and purposeful exclusion of women makes them worse off than the male passive citizen, since it denies them any opportunity of advancing to active citizenship.

Thus they are denied equality, which belongs to all men whether active or passive citizens.

In the ground work of Metaphysic of Morals, Kant emphasises, the moral principles he proposes must be applicable not simply to men, nor even to human beings, but to rational beings. As such this generates the exception that in political philosophy, women will be accorded equal

status with men. However, in his political philosophy he insists that women may be passive citizens only - never active citizens. He appears to indulge in an irrational endorsement of the prejudices of his day and abject acceptance of the dogma of others - notably Rousseau. It appears that Kant confuses the dictates of reason with the merely contingent and socially determined.

While most great political thinkers have taken for granted subjugation of women, Rousseau's patriarchy is particularly blatant because it contrasts so violently with his views on the proper condition of men. Rousseau did not simply ignore women. He deliberately excluded them from his vision of public life.

Rousseau offers not one concept of citizenship but two different ones, which Margaret Canovan proposes to label 'juristic' and 'Spartan'.

In the concept of juristic citizenship, individuals concerned are abstract specimens of humanity, free and equal and under no obligation to render obedience without consent. They are morally autonomous. Their freedom consists in obeying laws which each lays down for himself. The climax of his juristic theory is the noble vision of autonomous, responsible citizens discovering the general will in themselves and setting it above their own private wills to

achieve public harmony and justice. In this conception citizenship is natural, general and abstract. He distinguishes between the individual qua citizen, bearing a public personality, and the same individual as a private person. When the citizen attends the public assembly, he leaves his private life behind him, and moves into a public realm concerned only with general issues. Similarly, the citizen's general will is distinct from his private will, and is not concerned with his particular interests. Although the citizens are different and unequal as private persons, the public realm confers upon them an artificial equality as citizens which supercedes their private characteristics (Canovan; 1987:80).

The picture of citizenship changes as soon as Rousseau moves on in The Social Contract from defining the general will to spelling out circumstances in which it might exist. The abstract, rational, juristic image fades into the background, and the stern model of Spartan takes its place. The first casualty of this change is the juristic citizen's rational autonomy. The free individual laying down his own laws for himself is replaced by a mass-produced product of intensive socialization. The role of citizen ceases to be a juristic abstraction and becomes an all-absorbing way of life. A 'civil religion' is proposed to foster Patriotism and to counter privatism and factionalism. One of the notable features of Rousseau's 'Spartan' citizenship is its

total unmediated quality. One can be either a citizen or a 'natural man' but not both. The 'Spartan' citizen loses his own identity so completely in the republic that he is not torn by inner conflict. For patriotic virtue comes naturally to him. The integrated 'Spartan' citizen forms a sharp contrast to the 'juristic' citizen who is aware of both his general will and his private will and has to use his reason and self-control to keep the two in their appropriate places. The other main feature of the 'Spartan' citizenship is that although all-embracing in its intensity it is severely limited in its scope. The apparent reason for Rousseau for moving on from the juristic general will to the quasi totalitarianism of 'Sparta' is that men will not behave as rational, juristic citizens and find their freedom in willing the general will unless they have first been subjected to patriotic socialization. The intensity of Sparta is a necessary though apparently unlikely precondition of juristic citizenship (Canovan;1987:84).

In The Social Contract Rousseau did not mention female citizenship even to refute it. He omitted women from citizenship and consigned them exclusively to private life. He made it clear that women's place was in the home, not in the public sphere. Rousseau stuck to the beliefs about women that put female citizenship out of question. He believed that they were fitted by nature "to please and to be

subjected" to man, to take subordinate role within a patriarchal family. Emile's predestined bride, Sophie was a natural woman for him. His first assumption was that men and women are naturally different and complementary to one another in mind and character as well as in body. Each sex has a specific role marked out for it by nature so that a perfect man and a perfect woman should no more be alike in mind than in face. Woman's sexual role is to be weak and passive in the face of the man's strength, and this basic sexual difference corresponds to a subordinate role in life, together with abilities and attitudes appropriate to it. For example, women are naturally modest because it is their job to guard their virginity and their husband's honour. They are naturally interested in dress and self-adornment because it is their role to please men. Naturally cunning because they must rely on wiles rather than strength to get their own way. Naturally docile to obey their husbands. Woman is made to give away to man and to put up even with injustice from him. Young boys cannot be reduced to the same condition as their inner feelings rise in revolt against justice. Nature has not fitted them to put up with it. As for their mental powers, women are less intellectual than men, and their reason is not strong. They have ready tongues and good heads for practical details, but are less capable of grasping general principles. Woman has more wit, and man more genius; woman observes and man reasons. Thus, the women

are conveniently fitted by nature to be wives and mothers.

Rousseau argued that a good woman should stay within the family circle, avoiding social distractions, let alone political ones. When Ancient Greek women married, they disappeared from public life; within the four walls of their home they devoted themselves to the care of their household and family. Further Rousseau said that this is the mode of life that nature and reason prescribe for the sex. Unlike the Greeks, however, Rousseau did place a high value on the domestic life to which he wanted to relegate women.

Rousseau's most fundamental argument for the subordination of women is that men are naturally a stronger sex. If the juristic side of the concept of citizenship is at odds with his view of women because of its stress on autonomy, the Spartan side is no easier to reconcile with his account of the feminine role. For, the Spartan mother makes the point that citizenship is artificial and is at war with natural feelings.

The reason for Rousseau's formulation is to be found in convention: upto a point he may have resembled other men of his own and previous times in simply overlooking women's claims to participate in politics. It was hard for any 18th Century man to take seriously the idea that men and women might be political equals. Moreover, Rousseau had many examples of emancipated women. For example, Mme de Warens,

Mme Dupin and Mme d'Houdetot. Further, he had admiration for Plato, who had proposed to include women among his philosopher-kings. It is, therefore, obvious that he must have had stronger reasons than mere convention in keeping women strictly out of public life.

In the modern-day West, Rousseau's concepts do not appear to be totally pertinent. Public life for Rousseau is all-embracing, private life is virtually non-existent. If one is a citizen, one is so every minute of the day, perpetually mobilised for political and military duties. For a woman to be a citizen in this sense poses physical difficulties analogous to those faced by women trying to combine motherhood with career as an athlete or a ballet dancer. With the advent of reliable birth control and test tube babies the prospect of releasing women from biological constraints and allowing them to be full time citizens has opened up. According to Susan Mendus feminism is an offshoot of liberalism and it places a value on individual freedom what is at total variance from Rousseau's Spartan citizenship.

In juristic citizenship public and private spheres are distinguished. Citizen (male) can participate in both. He is a dual personality able to move in two worlds and make an abstract distinction between them. He can distinguish between his general will and his particular will. He

understands the difference between acting as qua member of the Sovereign and qua-subject of the State. This duality of roles applied only to one sex. Men are expected to cope with the distinction between public and private spheres, whereas women were confined exclusively to the latter. If private and public life are distinct, and the citizen participates in the latter by abstracting his role in the former, there should not be any difficulty about including women. Men and women can be equal as citizens in public regardless of their differences in private. Most modern non-feminist Commentators, by ignoring Rousseau's Spartan side and his view of women, have universalised his juristic concept of citizenship. However, it is argued that women's admission to public citizenship, on the same terms as men cannot be other than sham because of women's private position as wives and mothers. In spite of universal suffrage, women are not really equal citizens even in the non-participatory democracies. The consequence of women's enfranchisement, and the other reforms that have led to women's present position of political and legal equality with men, is that the contradiction between civil equality and social equality, especially familial subordination is now starkly expressed.

The objection that women's citizenship must be nullified by their domestic role is clearly a serious one. It is cited that women had been enfranchised along with men

during the French Revolution. Given the unshamedly patriarchal structure of the eighteenth-century French family, and the continual pregnancies to which wives were subjected, women could hardly have combined subordination in private with equality in public. In many of the countries where women have been given the vote as part of the standard modern package of 'national liberation', the same situation exists today. Even in societies like contemporary Britain and the U.S.A., where contraception is almost universal and families less patriarchal than ever before, women still cannot be considered equal citizens as they are still held responsible for child rearing.

While women are identified with the 'private' work, their public status is always undermined. Margaret Canovan pointed out that we need to make a distinction within social life and to recognise that the necessity for equal employment and equal citizenship are not the same. Women in general are caught between the demands of career and domestic life, and spend a great deal of their time and energy feeling guilty both at home and work. This explains why so few young women become MPs or Congress persons. Women with small children may find it hard to participate in politics, and women who are struggling to keep home and job going simultaneously may feel that to expect public spirit of them as well is too much. But older housewives, or part time workers, may have more time and energy to spend on

politics.

When the role of citizen is formally open to all, some women do find the resources to make use of it and most men do not. The fact that Britain's first women prime minister is a mother of twins is enough to check hasty generalizations about the contemporary subordination of women holds Susan Mendes. At present, effective citizenship is considerably easier for women in some social classes than for men in others. While equal sharing of the burdens of domesticity would no doubt release some women into public life, there is no reason to suppose that it would produce genuinely equal citizenship for all.

Some feminists link up economic dependence as an inadequate basis for political equality as many working women belong to an under class. But one can note that not all women are economically dependent, and, conversely, not all men are economically powerful. Compare a married women teacher with an unemployed man. Economically dependent women are simply one of several under classes who suffer social and economical barriers to full citizenship.

It was considered by Rousseau that love and justice are antagonistic virtues: the demands of love and family bonds are particularistic and so in direct conflict with justice. He insists on keeping women in the home and apart from men

as much as possible because they are a corrupting influence on men. Their disorder leaves them always to pull men away from civic virtue and mock at justice. In fact, most men are no better qualified to be Rousseauian citizens than most women are.

Feminists find themselves in a dilemma between two opposite impulses : The desire, on the one hand, to affirm an abstract concept of citizenship and to seek admission to public life on the same terms as men, ignoring as irrelevant their private identity as women; and , on the other hand, the urge to challenge the public-private distinction itself not only as a patriarchalist ploy but as a destruction of authenticity.

An observation of Rousseau's legacy from the point of view of a modern women leaves us with all-or-nothing choice. We have the public life of the citizen, which must be lived with Spartan intensity if it is to be lived at all. Also, we have the private life of personal intimacy and child centered domesticity. We cannot have citizenship without Sparta, and Spartan citizenship is irreconcilable with family life for women. The choice is either to retreat into domestic life or to sacrifice the family to an exclusively public life. It appears that Rousseau and perhaps the whole tradition of male-dominated political thought has nothing to say to us. We must start again from scratch.

5. Women in Bondage : the Socialite View

Feminism has evolved over generations although, this has not always been in an even or unilinear fashion. But the development has been within particular parameters of patriarchy as well as in response to other parallel explanations of power in society such as liberalism, socialism and Marxism. All of this is part of the project of building of feminist political theory.

Socialism and feminism have influenced each other's development in both a proactive and reactive manner, and many of the roots of their conceptual development are twined together. And attempts have been made to cement the two analyses - one of class society, the other of patriarchy. The Women Question constructed by socialism and socialists in the 19th Century includes all aspects of relations between the sexes in the public sphere, including work and politics, and also in the private sphere, including the family, marriage and sexuality. It also entails the ways in which the notions of the public and the private themselves are conceptualised. The Woman Question specifically dealt with the question of women's oppression.

Karen Hunt examined how women's politicization was conceptualised and how it affected women's perception of socialism, in the context of the Women Question. She had examined, how the Social Democratic Federation, which was

Britain's first Marxist party considered Women Question. Emphasis was laid on pre-First World War period, as it witnessed a major confrontation between socialism and feminism and hence saw the framework being set for the socialists' understanding of the Women Question. Anything beyond the strictly economic was a matter for the individual conscience and as such could not be used to impugn anyone's socialist credentials. The socialist understanding of Women Question rested on Engels's The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State first published in 1884, and most specifically on August Bebel's Women under Socialism, first published in 1879. Both Engels and Bebel said that the Woman Question could only be resolved under a socialist society and that, therefore, it was in women's interests to join the proletariat in the fight to overthrow capitalism. Bebel argued: the Women Question is only one of the aspects of the Social Question, which can find its final solution only in the abolition of the existing social contradictions and of the evils which flow from them. Bebel's book Women under Socialism, paradoxically had the effect of marginalising women within contemporary socialist concerns while also drawing women more firmly into the socialist arena (Hunt;1986:52).

Women's freedom had to wait until after the revolution. Their interests were therefore secondary to the class struggle and their duty was to support that struggle. The

duty of socialist women was not to divert energy from the class struggle by autonomous action as women did in what was termed 'bourgeois' feminist movement. It could be argued that in order to distinguish socialism from its potential rival, feminism, it was important to socialists to challenge the view that sex and class oppression were distinct, or even unrelated, oppression which demanded separate solutions. Thus, the relationship between sex and class oppression is crucial to socialism's understanding of the Woman Question. The key to this relationship for both Engels and Bebel was the analogy they drew between sex and class. Engel's view was that: The first class opposition that appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male. The antagonism between classes finds its oppression in Engels's statements about capitalist society where he says that within the family he is the bourgeois, and the wife represents the proletariat.

As regards women's oppression, Zillah Eisenstein points out, "Exploitation speaks to the economic reality of capitalist class relations for men and women, whereas oppression refers to women and minorities defined within patriarchal, racist, and capitalist relations. Exploitation is what happens to men and women workers in the labour

force; women's oppression occurs from her exploitation as a wage-labourer but also occur the relations that define her existence in the patriarchal hierarchy as mother, domestic labourer, and consumer Oppression is inclusive of exploitation but reflects a more complex reality". Bebel writes that woman was the first human being to come into bondage. She was a slave before the male slave existed. All social dependence and oppressed upon the oppressor. In this condition woman finds herself from an early day to our own (Hunt;1986, 53). The Woman Question has found a socialist answer by disappearing into the class or Social Question.

By providing a theory in which it was possible to understand the Woman Question, Engels and Bebel set the framework for socialist organizations of the Second International and beyond to develop a relationship with women as potential and actual socialists. For the SDF, the socialist understanding of the Woman Question in tandem with narrow economic definition of socialism provided a theoretical basis, and hence endorsement, for an open policy on women's issues and the Woman Question

It was argued forcibly against any sex/class analogy, proposing not only that women were not oppressed but that they were, in fact, the privileged sex, practically, and legally. This it seems could then explain, and even justify, for example, wife-beating as the revenge of the oppressed

man. If one looks at the matter fairly, one surely cannot be surprised at occasional violence committed on women - wife assaults, wife murders, etc. Legalised tyranny and inequality has always led to sporadic outbursts of brutality on the side of the victims.

There was a particular combination of theoretical stands which ensured that the Woman Question was not integrated into socialism itself. This combination was the limited economic definition of socialism, which marginalised women and the theoretical construction of the Woman Question itself which, while endorsing the existence of the question as such, tried to submerge it within the larger class question. But the irony is that the most important implication of the socialist construction of the Woman Question, coupled with the SDF's understanding of socialism itself, was that it made a virtue out of the political vacuum it created around women. It is important for the implications for socialist theory and practice to recognise that this was not purely the result of individual prejudice and misogyny but was rooted in the ambiguities of the theory itself.

Further, women were seen as a reactionary force in society. There was a general fear that women constituted a threat to socialism. This was based more on their 'undue' influence over their husbands or over their children than on

their own negative influence on socialist politics. The latter was less of an issue because of women's lack of direct political power, particularly the vote, and hence the emphasis was on their indirect but insidious political influence.

Focus was made on the ability of woman to function as a brake on male socialist activism. The aim of socialites was to neutralise the brake. It was this perception of women which framed the SDF's attitude to women's potential politicization. In this connection, although women's support in general was needed, the focus was in fact much more domestic. SDF men's greatest concern was with their own womenfolk - mostly wives but also sisters and daughters - whose tacit support had to be won for the cause. Although there was no question for the SDF that they wanted women to become socialists, their conceptualization of women as a problem gave their approach to women's politicization a particular emphasis.

The gap between socialist men's theory and practice was felt profoundly by socialist women in the SDF. The same point was made by women in the German and American socialist movements. For the SDF, it was asked what the point was of socialists saying that they wanted women members. When those women who can join socialists by breaking the custom are thought and spoken of contemptuously not only will they not

join, but the few who have done so, if it were not for their strong belief in the righteousness of the cause and the educative influence of time, would be inclined to abandon socialism in disgust with the glaring inconsistencies between its preaching and its practice.

The process of politicization assumed by the SDF understood a very public definition of politics and used methods which depended upon access to public meetings, to demonstrations, and to campaigns. The methods adopted by the party might, reach some women who could stop and listen, join campaigns, become propagandists or organisers. Yet, this seems to have been an incidental benefit in a process mainly conceived of as reaching potential male socialists. In spite of the SDF's proclamations that they needed women if socialism were to ever succeed, the socialists conception of the Woman Question led them to see general politicization only in terms of the class rather than as a problem permeated by class and gender difference. Women's politicization was dealt with in a number of ways by the SDF. Men were not to be 'induced' but to be persuaded rationally, yet in the case of women it was discussed in all seriousness how socialism could be 'sweetened' for their consumption. By playing up to women's supposed trivial, parochial, individualistic natures it was suggested that women's support could be won. The point was to captivate and attract the women with the beauties and possibilities of

socialism. Another approach was to deceive women as to the nature of socialism by attracting them to its social side with the boring politics removed. Yet another view is projected by Bax and others. They looked to economic change as a means to influence only women's surface behaviour. Her essential feminine characteristics were beyond influence. Their socialism therefore involved the maintenance of a firm sexual division of labour. Their fear was that if feminism were to be accepted, women could accrue direct political power, in addition to all the advantages which they believed chivalrous and benevolent men had given women. Bax argued that it was men, not women, who were oppressed.

SDF's view was that, it was women's attitudes which had to be influenced and altered to bring them into the party and socialism. Education was central to the process of politicization and it was accepted that women were disadvantaged both in a general sense and in terms of any openness to socialist ideas. Women therefore needed education before they reached the stage at which men automatically entered, that is party membership. It was considered that corrective education was needed to transform the problem wife into the SDF supporter and socialist. This solution only confirmed the idea that it was women who were the problem, rather than socialism and its method of politicization.

The feminist Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy agreed: It is unquestionably the fact that a very large number of the most earnest and thoughtful women workers of the day, whilst sympathising deeply with every effort towards a just and true socialism, are driven back from co-operation and union with any existing English Socialistic group, by the all but universal failure of male Socialists to recognise practically to woman the other half of humanity, with rights absolutely equal to those of the male half. Theoretically the several socialistic groups admit this equality, practically they ignore and deny it. Many socialist assumptions about women are still tied to the original formulation of the Woman Question, with all its ambiguities. Socialists need to consider this aspect of their practice in a more realistic manner, for however detailed the discussion of socialist theory is, it all remains academic without a mass crossing of that "river of fire". Women, more than ever, need persuading that the journey is worthwhile (Hunt;1986:63).

6. Hegel's Discriminating Eye

Hegel likens the difference between men and women to that between animals and plants. Human beings become more free and more aware of freedom due to their being able to draw more and more of what lies outside them under their influence, drawing away from natural determinism towards

greater self-determination. Hegel supposes that it is men, as embodiments of animality, who are able to do this, through their ability to go out into the world, to change themselves and to recognise what seems to be external as subject of influence. Women, as immobile plant life, remain bound by the constraints of nature, unable to control even their own extremities. Confining women in the family, therefore, is merely a way of recognising the difference between the capacities and structures of women and of men, providing women with the sense of self-delimitation which men acquire by trying to realise their aims in the world. By confining women in the family, Hegel reserves change and development, self-improvement and immortality of fame, for men. He excludes women from social life, from politics, from history and from freedom.

Hegel seeks to show that just as women and men are two parts of a single unity, which is brought into being through marriage, so ethical life and legality are two parts of a single unity, which is brought into being in particular states. He proposes this reunification in the state of family and civil society, of ethical life and legality, of feeling and will. Despite this reconciliation at the abstract level, he does not hesitate in excluding women from the public and political spheres. Women for Hegel, are the slaves of feeling and emotions, quite incapable to form

plans and to take action. Thus the will is bound up with being a man, and to permit women to represent the will in the political domain is to disrupt his carefully constructed separation of spheres and capacities.

Hegel also excludes women from the discussion of legality and morality at the same time as he excludes women from the domains of the social and historical. For him, ethics and the law occur only in specific social and historical contexts. To be excluded from history and from society is thus to be excluded from morality and legality. He thus excludes women from playing any part in the realisation of reason in history. Only men can enjoy legal status and engage in moral reasoning. Thus the very possibility of exercising rights and the capacity to discuss what rights might be depend in the *Phenomenology* on previously assigned gender position (Hodge;1987:154).

He identifies the interest of the women with the interest of the family. Long before the radical feminists declared men to be the enemy of the women, Hegel had declared women to be the enemy of the community. He explicitly excludes women from political life, in his book The Philosophy of Right. Hegel's distinction between the ethical life of the family, the public spheres of economic production and legal regulation, and the political sphere, the State, gives us a reason to question the contemporary

radical feminist assertion that the exercise of male power occurs in an identical fashion in family and society.

Hegel's work is just one example out of many in the Western, European tradition of political theory, which has not concerned itself with the interests of women. In this tradition, the interests of European men have been treated as the interests of the whole of humanity. He tries to enlist the realization of reason and freedom in the history of the world.

The exclusion of women from political life, from history and from society generates a series of tensions in Hegel's political analysis. According to Hodge, there are four main points of tensions in Hegel's account of the relation between men and women in The Philosophy of Right: in his conception of marriage and legal status, in his conception of education and of educability, in his conception of work and in his conception of property ownership and access to legal process.

Hegel along with most theorists assumes that natural biological difference generates social difference. He writes in The Philosophy of Right, that a man actualises himself only in becoming something definite, i.e. something specifically particularised. This means, he restricts himself exclusively to one of the particular spheres of need. Hegel supposes that women never confront choices nor

make decisions. Thus for him there is no split for women between individual inclination and rational choice. He supposes women to be incapable of self-development and that women benefit from education but not from the higher more creative forms. According to Hegel, women are capable of education, but they are not made for the activities which demand a universal faculty, such as the more advanced sciences, philosophy and certain forms of artistic production. Women may possess happy ideas, taste and elegance, but they cannot achieve the ideal.

Both wife and husband are subsumed in a relation more important than themselves both happily surrendering their personalities. But their relations to the resulting legal entity are significantly different. It is the man who becomes the representative of the family in the law. The legal status of marriage, indeed takes on a peculiarly oppressive character, granted that one of the parties, the woman, is not herself permitted to enter the legal domain in her own right. The difference in the physical characteristics of the two sexes are believed by Hegel to have a rational basis which consequently acquires an intellectual and ethical significance. This significance is determined by the difference into which the ethical substantiality, as the concept, internally sunders itself, in order that its vitality may become a concrete unity

consequent on this difference. It means marriage is grounded, according to Hegel, in the complementarity of the two elements joined together; it is grounded in the difference between the two kinds of personality, not in mutuality and similarity.

The social and political positions earmarked for women and for men are outlined by Hegel. Men engage in struggle in external world, in order to overcome the division within themselves. They fight a war with each other in order to defend the fragile unity of their states. The unity of the state becomes a symbol for the self-divided man's possibility of self-unity. Thus the willingness to fight and die for the king and the country becomes explicable as the will to retain at the level of the state that unity which has not yet been achieved at the level of the individual. As far as men are concerned, the family is a source for 'a tranquil intuition' of self-unity. This suggests that while men may imagine the family to be a tranquil refuge from the struggles and warfare of the world, for women the family is precisely the domain in which they encounter that struggle and labour.

Hegel supposes that women are barred from taking part in legal process and cannot seek legal redress in their own rights; women cannot form corporations to represent a collective interest against the other interests competing in

civil society or against the sphere of the state: in short a collective interest against men. Women are thus prevented from contesting the arrangements, through which women are disadvantaged.

Working, fighting and philosophizing are three of the human activities through which, for Hegel, the process of moving to self-determination away from natural instinct is accomplished. Work is reserved for men. Theoretical education through which the individual acquires the grasp of language required for full participation in legal and political process, is denied to women. They are thus even denied the means of articulating discontent with the social order, in which they are subjected and oppressed.

Women's contribution to the family's well-being is taken to be a constant and therefore, for some unstated reason, to be wholly insignificant. The supposedly collective possession of the family is collective just so long as the husband, the legal representative, chooses it to be so. Since the wife is, as woman, excluded from the state and from civil society, she cannot resort to law to protect her interest in the property, nor can she campaign to change the system whereby she has no such resort.

By making women the representative of nature and men the representative of mind, or spirit, Hegel seeks, through his account of marriage and the relations between women and

men, to bind together the domains of nature and of spirit. The field of spirit is one of cumulative development, in which the elements are mutually dependent and interconnected, one to the other. The less complex relations making up the domain of nature become identifiable and understandable through the use of the richer resources made available in the domain of spirit.

Hegel suggests that, because men are citizens, with an ability to identify with the universal interests of the state, they also have the capacity and the right to form desires and to expect their fulfilment. These two are, as far as Hegel is concerned, interdependent. It is then plainly in the interests of men to prevent women from becoming citizens, for women would thereby also acquire this right and capacity, in direct competition with men.

Hegel supposes that it is through work, theorising and fighting that the difficult transition from natural determinism to self-determination takes place. He seeks to profit from the more advanced forms of education, which he seeks to reserve for men. This confirms his belief that women are not capable of moving from the domain of nature and of determination to that of self-determination in society.

The exclusion of women from public and political life

is arbitrary and unjust. It becomes natural to ask why for so long theorists, whose justice and wisdom is not generally in doubt, should have erred so consistently on this issue. Probably the radical feminist answer to this question is acceptable. It is not in men's interest to permit women to participate in public life, and it is not in their interest to discuss their own will to exclude women. Therefore, male theorists exercise themselves to produce false justifications. Thus, to counter Hegel's declaring women to be the enemy of the political community, radical feminists declare political theory and its theorists to be the enemy of women.

7. Woman as the Moral Conscience of the Family

Adam Smith's analysis of his own commercial society - its gains and losses, its moral strengths, and weaknesses offers an opportunity to examine in depth some of eighteenth century political thinking about the position of women. Throughout much of early modern Europe, definitions of the public sphere had looked to an older concept of citizenship that ultimately based on the pursuit of virtue within the classical republic. Citizenship, gradually came to be seen as resting not on virtue, but on the rights of the individual, both natural and contractual. The public world was no longer that in which the individual might find moral fulfilment. Inseparably linked with such a changing view of

the public sphere, was the relocation of the pursuits of virtue within the private sphere, which had its base in the family and the moral inspiration of women. Adam Smith's writing on natural jurisprudence, on moral philosophy and on political economy was constructed throughout by an appreciation of this critical transition, in which both public and private spheres were defined anew, dividing the commercial world of the market economy, from the domestic morality of the family.

Jan Rendall points out that two major traditions of thoughts shaped his ideas. One such transition is the 'classical republicanism' or 'civic humanism'. The model for this was the small republic or city state in which the male citizen might find personal fulfilment, and attain a virtuous life, through full participation in public affairs of all kinds: for that citizen, private interests are to be subordinated to a public role of unceasing civic and military involvement sustained by patriotism. Luxury, commerce, credit, all appeared to threaten the moral imperatives of the republic, the subordination of private to public good. The second tradition is that of natural jurisprudence. The seventeenth and eighteenth century writers grounded a theory of natural rights in natural law which was distinguished from divine law, and from the positive laws of individual states. Natural law was divinely

ordained, yet knowable not through revelation, but through 'right reason', as 'necessary for sociability between men' (Rendall; 1987:46).

Rendall observes that Pufendorf provided the basics of teaching of moral philosophy and jurisprudence. Natural law prescribed certain institutes for the good of human society. One simple association is marriage. The purpose of marriage was procreation. Pufendorf listed the four irreducible articles of the marriage pact. Firstly, the contract, to be initiated by the man in harmony with the nature of both sexes, had to contain the woman's promise of fidelity, in order to ensure legitimate offspring. Secondly, the woman must require the same promise of the man. Thirdly, there had to be a commitment to continuous cohabitation, and a mutual promise of such life together as a nature of that alliance requires. Fourthly, it was in agreement with the natural condition of both sexes that the husband should be the head of the household, and in matters relating the marriage and the household the wife is subject to the husband's direction. Protection was exchanged for obedience. According to Pufendorf, to fulfil the articles of the marriage pact, certain qualifications were required: The rationality and consent of both parties, the fulfilment of all the terms and conditions of the marriage, the absence of a previous marriage. Modesty and a sense of shame were, necessary to guard the chastity and good order of society, especially

among the more civilized peoples. That was the utilitarian reason for the preservation of such a barrier in the law of the nature, at least between kin in close affinity.

The objection to marriage did not arise primarily from the necessity of reproduction, of the desirability of a well-ordered society. Rather, the marriage pact, in its pure form adapted to the rational and social nature of humanity would bring the right kind of upbringing for children, and with it a better informed and educated population. And for that purpose the mutual promise of fidelity between spouses was essential. According to Rendall this view of Carmichael does not appear to give the same primacy to a woman's obligation to fidelity, to secure legitimacy. Rather, his suggestion is that whether the contract originates from the woman or the man - a departure from Pufendorf - both seek to care for and to rear their own children. It means he is a little more sympathetic than Pufendorf to the notion of a degree of equality in marriage. Further, there was nothing in the law of nature to prescribe the subordination of a wife to her husband beyond the need to vest authority in the family in the more prudent spouse: though it was true that custom normally gave that authority to the husband.

Later Hutcheson made several important alterations in his examination of the four articles of the marriage contract. The first article was the necessity of fidelity on

the part of woman. The only remedy was a sense of the enormity of such a crime in a man, and the inculcation of habits of modesty in both sexes. In the second article he denounced any suggestion that the obligation to fidelity and monogamy was not a reciprocal one: The natural passions of the woman as much require a friendly society, and unity of interest in the joint-education of the common off-spring as those of the man. On the third article relating to 'Continuous cohabitation' he stressed the mutual friendship of the partners, and, since true friendship was possible only for life, that the contract had to be perpetual one, or marriage would become 'a mere servile bargain from procreation and joint labour'. He also denied Pufendorf's fourth article, relating to the husband's right to head the household. And he rebutted John Locke's view that men's superior endowments, in body and mind, normally gave them that authority, arguing that such superiority was by no means universal, nor were those qualities in which women were usually superior taken into account (Rendall;1987:53). He appears to have advocated for a wide degree of equality in the relationship which was based on a division into two areas, one fitted for the management of each sex, in which the other should never interfere, except by advising. He denounced many civil laws, especially those depriving women of property, advising that important affairs should be entrusted to both partners equally. The parental power, for

example, belonged equally to both parents, though it was sometimes voluntarily surrendered by mother. The sharpness of the division between the worlds of men and women however, was never in doubt. Citizenship was still entirely male, but was defined by Hutcheson, both in the classical terms of participation in civic and military affairs, and with reference to the restrained pursuit of wealth. A healthy economy required a growing population, and the task of bearing and educating children, for the republic was the sphere of women. In the work of Adam Smith, the republic was to be displaced by the market, as the arena of public life. He based his understanding of moral rules not on the perceptions of 'right reason' but on his own view of human psychology, though he rejected the notion of an inherent moral sense. He wished to ground the principles of morality in the passions and instincts of humanity. Rendall comments that, yet his approach, as a practical moralist, was to deal with the ways in which individuals both acquire and internalise moral sentiments. Those moral rules, known through sympathy and judgment, would, come to be recognised as the general principles of morality. Considerations of utility, though they might be relevant in reinforcing moral judgement, did not determine it.

Smith's concern is more with the every day virtues of those who dwell in a changing and commercial society. For

him the man embodying the highest degree of virtue is the one who has all the soft, amiable and gentle virtues and joins all the great, the awful, and the respectable. There is Smith's continuing reference of the necessity of balance. The sensibility of civilized nations may endanger masculine firmness of character. A lack of passion may reveal weakness, as the want of proper indignation is a most essential defect in the manly character. For men, Smith saw the contrast between the two principles as bringing a proper balance of humanity and generosity.

It looks as if, one side of that balance only was relevant for women. Women excelled in humanity, and the finest example of the principle of sympathy which Smith can offer is that of the mother's feeling for her sick child. There was little suggestion that women might acquire the virtues of public life, lacking courage and the necessary capacity for self-command. The women might possess the ability to control their desires, to a lesser degree. On suffering the death of a relative, for example, even a wise man may, for sometime, indulge himself in some degree of moderate sorrow. A weak woman who is affectionate is often, upon such occasions, almost totally lost. But, time, the healer, in a longer or shorter period, is bound to compose the weakest woman to the same degree of tranquility as the strongest man.

As regards chastity, Smith compared breaches by women to breaches of fidelity and the breaking of contracts by men. It was the one specifically female obligation, and it was to be judged by the unyielding standards, as breach of chastity dishonours irretrievably. No circumstances and no solicitation can excuse it, and no sorrow and no repentance can atone for it.

Love and the marital relationship, brought with them other important social virtues, of sensibility, kindness, friendship. One might watch with pleasure a family ruled by love and esteem, with little difference between the members.

For Smith domestic education is the institution of nature; public education, the contrivance of man. Rules of morality were first learnt through sympathising with those nearest and dearest to us. That education was dependent, not on the physical upbringing of the child, but on the moral responsibility exercised by the parents.

Smith's concept of virtue had balanced those qualities which he rooted in marital society, barbarian or republican, against the humanity or natural affections, which played so much larger a part, in his more civilised world. The male citizen, ideally, would aspire to an appropriate balance. It is a balance which clearly had different implications for women. Their role in a civilised world was that of transmitting the human virtues and the natural affection

through. domestic education, though they could hope to achieve only occasionally those virtues which were primarily of a masculine character. They might, however, in private life exercise those qualities of self-restraint and self-command which Smith so much admired.

Marriage, for Smith, as a formal, legal institution, could not be described in terms of the rights and duties of the law of nature, or of the abstract end of marriage. Its obligations were rooted in that sense of injury felt by men at the infidelity of a wife. Sympathy with that sense of injury became the basis of social and legal rules and acting impersonally, though in the masculine interest, it was to restrain and moderate individual practice. Custom and historical process were to shape the form of marriage, the pattern of legal codes, the prevalent moral sentiments (Rendall;1987:68). He linked the material wealth of the wife to her strength in the marital relationship. The qualities of humanity and prudence appeared more relevant, to private life and economic relationships respectively. It remains relevant to consider how far propriety dictated, for women of different classes a role as economic agents in the eighteenth century economy. Regarding poor women, Smith assumed that their labour was necessary to the bringing up of a family. Women's participation in the economy was limited then and, with a proper distribution of wealth,

would be limited even further by the proper care of their families.

The best known reference to women in Wealth of Nations is that contrasting the education received by girls with that of boys. There are no public institutions for the education of women, and there is accordingly nothing useless or absurd in the common course of their education. They are taught only what their parent or guardians judge it necessary or useful for them to learn. Every part of their education has some useful purpose, either to improve the natural attractions of their person, or to form their mind to reserve, to modesty, to chastity and to economy, to render them both to become the mistress of a family, and to behave properly when they have become such. In every part of her life a woman feels some convenience or advantage from every bit of education imparted. For a man, in any part of his life, conveniency or advantage from any part of education seldom occurs. The classical education which so dominated the masculine curriculum in grammar schools and universities, offered a man no training for the public world. Though for Smith the public world was surely not the city-state or commonwealth, in his opinion propriety dictated for the woman of the middling and perhaps the upper classes the life of the mistress of a family. Obviously the household had an important consuming function, but, more important, it had a moral and social task. The family and

the part of women in the family, had taken on a new significance. Here the pursuit of virtue was first to be relocated in the conjugal family, as an instinctual haven of the natural affections and habitual sympathy which is to be contrasted with the market economy and the social world, inspired by emulation, expediency, and the restrained pursuit of self-interest. The family was to be the source of emotional and moral strength of the natural feelings. Smith visualised a civilized society in which the influence of women and those virtues was increasing at the cost of a progressively clear-cut division of sphere between the economic world in which the male citizen acted, and the household, which though consuming goods, might lie largely outside production and commerce.

There were important elements in Smith's treatment of the role of women, which were fundamental themes in what has come to be thought of as the 'Victorian' concept of womanhood. They are, his implication that women were the moral educators of the family, the limited social and economic role of women of the middling classes, and his view of the monogamous European family as representing the highest form of family life. The emergence of political economy as the most dynamic element of his philosophical study indicates that the shifting boundaries of public and private life were in the future to be as dominated by the

requirements of the market as those of the state.

8. Nietzsche's Chauvinism

The term 'Power' was the centre of Nietzsche's philosophy. This is evident in his cultural critique of state and society in Imperial Germany, and in his view of women's cultural and political role within it. As regards women, Nietzsche's views align with those of the narrow-minded bourgeois who was his primary philosophical and cultural target. He was considered a male chauvinist. His views on women's social and political role can be explained in terms of the fundamental principle "The will to power". Nietzsche's antifeminism is consistent with his opposition to democracy, socialism, Christianity, intellectualism, pessimism, and his anti-morality, all tendencies that deny the basically healthy will to power which all living things have, each of them in one way or another its antagonist. In every one of these, Nietzsche argues, women have played a major role in the transmission of values hostile to the will to power. Each of the positions he opposed - democracy, socialism, pessimism, intellectualism, feminism - appear in his works as weaknesses, movements or attitudes which erode the will to power by taming its natural force; in short, by civilizing natural man (Kennedy;1987:183).

Nietzsche argues, as the weaker sex women have always had the most to gain from 'civilization' and Christianity,

and women's role as helpmate of priests, teacher of the Christian virtues, tamer of the natural wildness in man encourages the degeneration of the will to power. All the virtues - pity, love, caution - are in a particular way 'feminine' and life-denying. It is said women's childbearing faculty is the central explanation for her irrationality, lack of foresight and inability to appreciate any of the art. She is a kind of middle-stage between child and the man. But woman's true vocation is not and cannot be separated from Nietzsche's assessment of women's place on the scale of a 'will to power' that runs downwards from masters to slaves. Nietzsche asserted that Women want to serve and find their happiness in this. A creature whose basic nature is subservient cannot lead, dominate and create, cannot be an Übermensch.

Nietzsche's opposition to women's emancipation was partly, an extension of his political and cultural critique. For him feminism was part of a modern sickness, a symptom which only woman's return to her 'natural function' would cure. Since natural woman wants to serve man and will be happy in her servitude, the movement to liberate women from this primary role as mothers appears to him as sick and unnatural. The thought of emancipation of women is because of the instinctive hatred of the abortive woman, who is incapable of giving birth, against the woman who has turned out well. The fight against the 'man' is always a mere

pretext, a tactic. He finds, the emancipated are anarchists in the world of the 'eternally feminine', the underprivileged whose most fundamental instinct is revenge. As opined by Ellen Kennedy, for Nietzsche, although women's emancipation appears here as a plot by sick and unhealthy women against healthy and happy ones, this view is in fact characteristic of his presentation of women as a whole. Women scheme like slaves to weaken their master's power, using, all their wiles, but especially their sexuality. In her relation to men there is one of abysmal antagonism and eternally hostile tension. At a certain point in 'the war between the sexes', man subdues woman in an age-old way: he makes her pregnant.

In Nietzsche's view, woman has always conspired with the types of decadence, the priests, against the 'powerful', the men. Woman brings the children to the cult of piety, pity, love. The mother represents altruism.

Further, Nietzsche's adamant rejection of the claims for women's emancipation appears within his view of democracy, as an example of his general opposition to the claim of 'equal rights', not only by feminists but also by various social groups and classes through out the nineteenth century. His ideal state excludes all the social and political practices which serve to support empirical states and through which power relations within them are expressed.

In the ideal state, citizenship does not mean the legal definition of individual right and their enjoyment, but power. Nietzsche's elite race of Übermensch is an 'open' product of education and excellence. It is however, defined in explicitly biological terms. Nietzsche's view of women's roles and appropriate place is more complicated and offers two perspectives. One is a vigorous opposition to the emancipation of women on the grounds of a principle of natural equality, the same principle which defines the elitist vision of an ideal state. The other is based on Nietzsche's theory of civil society, which sees women as men's property without rights of their own and not entitled to them, and on a practical objection to women's participation in the state.

Nietzsche is strongly opposed to the education of women. He says that 'one could in a few centuries make whatever one wants to out of women in the three or four civilized European Countries, even men, though of course, not in their gender'. But even if women were educated, the result would be terrible : ' This would be the time (while women were being educated) in which rage would constitute men's real feelings, rage that every art and science were flooded by an outrageous dilettantism, forgotten and neglected, philosophy talked to death in stupid chatter, politics even more fantastic and partisan than ever,

society in complete dissolution, while the guardians of the old customs (Sitte) would have become laughable to themselves and would yearn for success in every area other than morals' (Kennedy;1987,193).

Nietzsche is not ambiguous about women's role in the State. Women are excluded from participation in both his conception of the state, the ideal as well as really-existing ones. They are excluded from the former because our nature denies and tames the source of morality, the 'will to power' and excluded from the really-existing state because women's participation here would only deepen the cultural crisis. In a philosophical world from which all facts have disappeared, woman remains as one, an object seen and known, a thing in a world out there.

Nietzsche's philosophy provides a remarkable continuity with his predecessors on the subject of women. His predecessors in the history of Western political thought almost unanimously opposed the participation of women in politics and the activities of the state. For Nietzsche women cannot be citizen of either the really-existing or the ideal state. The grounds for women's exclusion in both cases are the same. Other philosophers considered women as ineligible for citizenship because for them women are not rational beings. For Nietzsche, the reasons are rather different, and it is as if, having finally managed to gain

acceptance in the set of potential citizens (human beings), the rules are suddenly changed against women. Instead of intellect, what now counts is will. Although Übermensch is one who has 'overcome himself', Nietzsche's texts depict him as one overcoming a succession of 'weaker' types, but above all women. First mothers, then lovers, finally 'woman' as a cultural gestalt, thus man should overcome them. Nietzsche highlights his contempt for the emancipation of women.

9. Utilitarianism and the Feminine Rights

Utilitarianism considers that women as well as men have interests which should be taken into account. The principle of utility assumed that there is a fundamental equality in the structure of human psychology. 'Pain' and 'Pleasure' are fundamental units constituting the happiness of individuals and societies whose interests must be calculated on the criterion of the greatest number. The 'epistemological appeal' of utilitarianism can be explained, first of all, by the possibility it offered of gathering all the phenomena of the moral world under a single principle - the principles of utility. Utility became thus the great, unifying 'scientific' principle under which all human behaviour could be studied, remarks Lea Campas Boralevi (Boralevi;1987:160).

Newtonian physics had proved that the existence of

rational and universal laws governing nature could be discovered by observation and experiment, and that religious and metaphysical speculation played no part in the description of empirical reality. Most philosophers of the Enlightenment believed that the study of man could become a new kind of natural science, based on empirical experiment and observation. The principle of utility thus paved the way for creating a new science of man and of society, starting from sensations of pain and pleasure, and from matters of fact which were empirically verifiable, such as benefit and mischief, rather than grounding ethical and anthropological assertions on hypostasized, abstract principles.

The mathematically based system of ethics was called moral arithmetic, and it claimed to be able to compute the different accounts of pleasure and of happiness experienced by men in differing circumstances. This need for quantification gave birth to one of the most widespread formulations of the principle of utility - the formula of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. The greatest happiness of the greatest number can be achieved only through good and 'scientific' legislation, based on a scientific knowledge of man and society, and directed towards the attainment of the greatest happiness. The reform of law was of importance for all the utilitarians. And the philosophical radicals fought their greatest battles for the reform of the existing legislation.

The principle of utility applied to the whole of mankind including women. Women constitute 'One-half the Human Race' and could not be excluded without seriously jeopardizing the validity of such a principle. Since women could experience 'Pain and Pleasure', there was no reason to doubt that they could also 'maximise pleasure and minimise pain'. Women could not only experience pains and pleasures, they also had 'interests' which had to be taken into consideration. Whether women had souls or not, or whether they were less intelligent or less rational than men was not relevant. The adoption of the principle of greatest happiness of the greatest number thus also entailed the calculation of the happiness of that half of the population which is female. Such a calculation necessarily implied that a woman's happiness was as important as that of any man in a given society. Utilitarianism brings woman to count as the whole number 'one', not as fractions of one.

Bentham, a utilitarian, advocated for autonomy to be guaranteed to women's legal personality and his conception of women's autonomous legal personality had two main consequences: divorce and the vote. Divorce and women's enfranchisement belong respectively in the private and public spheres, and are founded on the assumption that women have their own interests, which can be incompatible with men's. Divorce and the vote can recognise and protect the

interests of women outside irrespective of the kind of their relationship with men.

The social reforms proposed by the utilitarian thinkers involved fundamental changes in the condition of women. Legislation had to be reformed with the objective of utility and of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, by including women in that number. To use Bentham's words, the reformation of the moral world had to bring about an improvement in women's conditions. From a more general point of view, the emancipation of women from their slavery would have eliminated a cause of suffering and hindrance to the enjoyment of happiness for half of the human race, thus enhancing the overall happiness in society.

According to J.S. Mill, another utilitarian, the emancipation of women would have contributed to the improvement of society as a whole, by doubling the mass of mental faculties available for the higher service of humanity, by creating the stimulus of female competition and by creating at home ' a school of sympathy in equality which would have developed in children the true virtue of human beings, fitness to live together as equals' (Boralevi; 1987:166).

Utilitarians are down-to-earth people. According to them, earthly happiness could no longer be given up or postponed in the name of a future, non-earthly happiness. No

matter what religion and traditional morals say, women should enjoy the same quantity of earthly happiness as men. Women's enfranchisement does not only provide them with equal legal and moral autonomous personality but also confers on them an equal share of the external means of happiness through political power. By promising or refusing their vote, women can force legislators to show more consideration for their interests. Women's natural inferiority is only a pretext for justifying the tyranny which has been exerted by the male sex over the female over the centuries. If it were a true cause, women's natural inferiority would have resulted in a legislation favouring them rather than discriminating against them. The presumed inferiority of women is wholly or mostly due to the conditions in which existing legislation places them and to the kind of education given to them. The excuse of 'Nature' has been used simply to legitimise custom. It is so much accepted that unnatural generally means only uncustomary, and that everything which is usual appears natural. Social and natural causes are not so easily separable. The natural differences between the sexes cannot justify the oppression of the weaker. As inequality of the sexes results from social and modifiable, not physiological and immutable causes, this inequality can be diminished and even eliminated by means of appropriate legislation and education.

In a utilitarian society, the relationship between men and women cannot be based on the criterion of physical superiority characteristic of preceding stages of civilization. Exactly as women were not by nature subjected to men, so they were not necessarily by nature intellectually inferior. The emancipation of women is not only through their enfranchisement but also through equal education. By social conditioning moral biases can also be changed, because the characteristics of chastity, modesty and delicacy, for instance, are prized more than courage in a woman and vice versa in a man.

In the present context equality is not a broad term. Utilitarianism is egalitarian insofar as it postulates the original equality of psychological structure of those who belong to mankind and insofar as it demands equal consideration. But equal consideration does not automatically entail equality of treatment. On the contrary, it might demand compensatory discrimination. Bentham demanded severe punishments for those who have committed violence on women, special measures to be taken by judges in order to preserve 'female dignity and modesty' in tribunal courts, when such cases are debated, on account of the observation of women's inferior physical strength and greater psychological sensibility.

Every utilitarian did not ask for women's vote. James

Stuart Mill advocated universal suffrage, but excluded women on the grounds that all those individuals whose interests are indisputably included in those of other individuals may be struck off with inconvenience and that women were included in this category, since the interests of almost all women is involved either in that of their fathers or in that of their husbands. Bentham consistently spoke in favour of women's enfranchisement, at least in point of principle, although he tended to play down this issue in his later works, fearing that his opponents' scorn for women was also extended to the claim for universal male suffrage.

Utilitarianism and feminism are compatible. Historical feminism, the movement which fought for women's rights was the child of utilitarianism. Classical utilitarianism believed that the reform of society towards a more favourable consideration of women's interests by changing women's conditions, and thus bettering the whole society, was to be carried out through legislation and education. Utilitarians considered the Woman Question from a legal, historical, social and political, even moral point of view, without ever considering the economic aspects. Only a few utilitarian thinkers paid attention to the economic dimension of the question. But no one realised that the woman's condition in society could be changed only by changing the economic order of society. This was great

ideological distance which separated utilitarian feminism from the feminist elements present in other political theories of that time. Yet, some have gone much beyond the scope of classical utilitarianism in preaching the abolition of property and the creation of communities based on cooperation, and in labelling political economy the ideology of dominating classes.

10. Women's Liberation Movement

Feminism had strongly advocated for the abolition of the distinction made by political scientists between the public and private realms. Judith Evans in her article, 'Feminist Theory and Political Analysis', concluded that without radical changes in its assumptions, liberation is unable to further the feminist cause, except in a very limited sense. She has proposed that sociological factors such as the small proportion of women political scientists and the possibly related downgrading of the study of women, have inhibited a radical change to the profession from within.

In the fifteen to twenty years since second wave of feminism began, much has been contributed to various academic disciplines by adherents of the movement. Whether the nature and practice of those disciplines have altered anything is doubtful. We are aware about how women vote,

about their depiction in classic works of political thought, and about their virtual absence from the upper echelons of government. The movement appears to have made practically no impression on the various concepts of politics and the polity that political scientists hold. A major challenge has been mounted to a key assumption of political science: the distinction, commonly thought of as liberal, between the public and the private realms. But the boundary of private and public is uncertain and shifting. It is assumed that the family and analogous groupings constitute the private realm, and all else the public.

There are three major feminist schools of thought - liberal, radical, and Marxist. The liberal feminists wish for a change beyond that of the granting of equal rights for women in employment, education, and so on. They basically wish to make politically pluralist societies live up to their ideals, and believe that they can achieve it through education without massive social and political restructuring.

In the later 1960's women's liberation groups were formed in the US, the UK and Germany. In the US, disillusionment with the civil rights and anti-war movements, and with students for a Democratic Society and its successor, led women to form their own consciousness-raising groups, to show individuals that they were not

alone, and to analyse and understand the women's oppression. In the UK, students and others formed similar groups, largely in response to the elitism, sexism and sexual harassment rife within student socialist societies, and the male dominated left in general. When a group was set up from outside the existing left associations, female socialists were frequently wary of the enterprise, and occasionally hostile to it. In Germany, the same disillusion was felt. However, the movement, always weaker than those of the US and UK, very rapidly became combined to life-style politics, expressed in the establishment of women-only communes as opposed to the mixed communes from which the secession had come. In this context the feminist critique of politics emerged and grew. Its early version is to be regarded as of liberal persuasion.

The Critique, encapsulated in the now famous slogan 'the personal is political', was in its initial formulation two-fold. Firstly, a woman's problems and discontents did not spring from her inadequacies, nor were they unique. They were shared with other women, and were caused by societal factors inimical to female happiness and fulfilment. Thus, it was said, they were political. Secondly, individual relationships with men were unequal: while a woman who challenged the dictates of gender stood alone, a man's view and practices were supported by other men, and by society in general. Thus, again, personal relationships were political;

hence the early 1970's emphasis on sexuality, the sudden triumphant emergence and widespread acceptance of radical feminism and political separatism, and of personal separatism and lesbianism. This two-fold belief was the product of a stage in the women's movement when all (feminist) views were held to be equal, and all feminists, at least potentially, equally capable of articulating them (Evans;1986:105).

Politics is power-based, and is, in effect, everywhere the same. However, the conduct of politics is not immutable. The attributes that accrue to women by reason of their servitude could transform the more of the polity. With new values and goals in our educational system men can also become loving and gentle in their political relationship. Such an education may well encourage introspection and subjectivity, a joining of the private and public spheres. Through a distinction between micro and macro-politics, it is not clear where the demarcation line should be drawn. Although, politics as power-play is everywhere the same, still - given the supposed attributes of women - it might be inferred that different styles of political behaviour predominate at the different levels. It is possible that the polity might indeed be transformed by an influx of female values. But it is more likely that women, reassured of their worth, will be glad to retreat to their traditional habitat.

Heads, men win; tails, women lose.

In the words of Kirkpatrick, 'A woman who becomes an engineer not only does not gain points in the male status ladder or on the female hierarchy, she can lose points for inappropriate behaviour A woman entering politics risks the social and psychological penalties so frequently associated with nonconformity. Disdain, internal conflicts, and failure are widely believed to be her likely reward'. Liberal theory has either approved this situation, or not sought to encompass it. The question remaining is whether it can do so, and yet be liberal (Evans;1986:109).

On the one hand, liberalism is dedicated to personal autonomy and individual liberty, and the state may intervene to ensure their maintenance. On the other hand, liberalism is also dedicated to the separation of the public realm of political action and impersonal social interaction, and the private realm of conjoined individuals; the area where, free from the demands of all but those with whom they choose to associate, people can recuperate, reproduce, rest and play. Paradigmatically, this realm is the family. Women are the servitors of the private realm. It is not, for them a retreat from the public spaces of life. Within marriage, of course, a woman also bears and rears children, cares for her husband's sexual and sartorial well-being and self-respect, shops, cooks and performs other functions thought proper to

her sex. In effect, the public realm depends on the efforts of half the adult inhabitants of the private. The question remains whether sexual parity can be attained without the collapse of the family.

In our society the privacy of private realm is a somewhat artificial one. There is privacy of conforming individuals within that realm, but it is at a very high price for women. The question to be pursued is whether it is possible for measures like laws or practices to bring about sexual equality. Such measures would be educational when they touched on matters such as the division of domestic labour, but coercive when they are concerned with such matters as education, employment, and remuneration. A massive extension of part-time work, not poorly paid and of low prestige, and not primarily the preserve of women, would seem also to be necessary, though more flexible working hours, and more autonomy within work, could act as a substitute. Only then perhaps liberalism could maintain its private realm, with rather less tension than that exists at present. A liberal value of equality of opportunity would be voided by the liberal ideal of tolerance.

Many women have felt at some stage or other that radical feminism is the answer for their discontent. The radical feminism postulates classification by sex as the earliest and most important division in society, encourages

separatism, both political and personal, and is more closely associated with lesbianism than any other feminist grouping. Its proposal consists in regaining control over the means of biological reproduction, though thereafter the vision varies, along a continuum from Firestone's 'test-tube baby' ideal to recognition and celebration of 'natural' maternity.

The concept of patriarchy has been and continues to be the focus of a fierce debate with Marxist feminists. O'Brien writes : Paterfamilias, to preserve his freedom, requires family law, fraternal cooperation and ideological legitimation. He also, then as now, retained the option of brutality to enforce his domestic power. Far from being a paradigm of political power or the social precondition of public renown, patriarchy and the doctrine of potency are the products of political power, the creation of a brotherhood of fathers acting collectively to implement their definition of manhood in social and ideological forms. It is easy to see that acceptance of the concept of patriarchy leads to rejection of the reality of the public/private split, and an appreciation of its strength as an ideological construct. Again to quote O'Brien, 'Only under intense social upheaval does the strength of the abstract wall between public and private tremble, and its feministic nature stands exposed as male invention (Evans;1986:113). Radical feminism more coherently attacks on the split between the private and public realms, than the

liberals, as it spells out the political connections of the 'public' and 'private' more clearly.

Marxist feminists forcefully attacked the notion of patriarchy. For them class division is more important than that of sex, and they regard the concept of patriarchy as employed by radical feminists as static, ahistorical, and incapable of accounting for vast cultural variation in the way male dominance is expressed. For them the concept of 'patriarchy' offers neither a clearly articulated definition of politics, nor an explanation, as opposed to a description, of the condition of women.

Marxist feminists are both helped and hindered by the presence of clearly articulated theoretical framework within and against which to work. They are helped, because Marxism has placed the question of the oppression of women firmly on its agenda, hindered because of the behaviour of certain Marxist groupings. The emphasis on the primacy of class, and the manner in which the oppression of women was supposed to be overcome, has been perceived as inadequate. That is, the entry of women, in massive numbers into the ranks of wage labour has not brought about sexual equality. However, this failure may explain why despite the existence within Marxism of an analysis of the privatised family, counterposed to the public world of production as a problem to be overcome. Marxist feminism has sought to articulate and query the

public/private dichotomy. Though the division between the public and domestic sphere appears not to be challenged, the nature of the domestic realm is attacked in clear terms.

According to Judith Evans, the reasons for the apparent inability of feminist political scientists in US and the UK even to attempt to challenge the basic tenets of their discipline are: Firstly, the small proportion and therefore the small number of political scientists who are women. Not all the women will be feminists (though a surprising number are); among the feminists, not all will be working on topics related to women; and in the 'women and politics' field, most researchers will probably be engaged in study, be it theoretical or empirical, which indeed adds to our knowledge, but has no immediately obvious chance of changing our perception of politics. Secondly, in both the US and the UK, and despite the women's studies publishing boom, the study of women and politics is not, from a purely self-interested point of view, the best enterprise with which to be associated. In the UK, token feminist chapters appear in books on, for example, democratic theory (thus neatly trapping those who want or need publications, or who feel that the message is ultimately more important than the medium, but who nevertheless dislike tokenism). In the US, there is more of a career path, with female patronage; but it is still preferable to be a political scientist who

happens to write about women, rather than a member of a department of, or centre for, women's studies. In the former case it also helps to have made one's name in a different area, prior to undertaking research on women.

PART TWO

WOMAN IN INDIA

P A R I - II

Woman in India

1. Woman as Man's Ardhangi?

The ancient Indian attitude to woman was in fact ambivalent. She was at once a goddess and a slave, a saint and a trumpet. In this chapter, a phenomenological - hermeneutical attempt has been made to elaborate the status of woman in Indian tradition, how she was glorified and at the same time relegated to a position of subordination. Some details of her religious status, her position in marriage, her political status, economic position, the level of education of women, and the problem of divorce are incorporated.

a) Glorification

Woman in the vedic age appears to have enjoyed a comparatively higher status than that enjoyed by her sisters in the post-vedic age. Domestic happiness and conjugal affection are constant topics of allusion in the Rigveda. Manu says "A man continues to be half as long as he remains a bachelor, but after marrying a woman he becomes complete. The Creator having divided his own body into two, became male by one half and female by other half. So divided, a man and woman become a perfect person only when united again in wedlock. The wife is her husband's ardhangi and the marriage ritual seeks to stress and reinforce this conjugal intimacy" (Kapadia;1966:250,251).

In the vedic and epic society we find that the wife was treated with utmost courtesy and regard. It was well recognised that the wife was the ornament of the house. In fact the wife herself was the home. Early Indian literature does not recognise, even theoretically, the power of physical coercion in the husband. In practice also it was probably very rarely exercised in the vedic and epic times. Man is only one half and he is not complete till he is united with a wife and has given birth to children. The wife is the companion friend. Naturally, therefore, the husband cannot even think of pleasure, if his wife cannot participate in it, writes A.L. Basham in Wonder that was India. He says that though the early Indian mind, perhaps, overdid the necessity of wifely obedience, her status was not without honour.

"The Wife is half the man,
the best of friends,
the root of the three ends of
life, and of all that will help
him in other world.

"With a wife a man does mighty deeds
with a wife a man finds courage
a wife is the safest refuge ...

"A man aflame with sorrow in his soul,
or sick with disease, finds comfort
in his wife, as a man perched with heat
finds relief in water.

"Even a man in the grip of rage
will not be harsh to a woman,
remembering that on her depend
the joys of love, happiness, virtue.

"For woman is the overlasting field,
in which the self is born" (Basham;1990:183).

Such passages highlighting the honour and esteem in which women were held are quite numerous. Everywhere it is mentioned that a woman should be lovingly cherished, well fed and cared for, and provided with jewellery and luxuries within the means of her husband. She must not be upbraided, for the gods will not accept the sacrifice of the man who beats his wife.

Wife's presence and co-operation were absolutely necessary in religious rites and ceremonies which naturally increased her religious value. Man could not become a spiritual whole, unless he was accompanied by his wife. Gods do not accept the oblations offered by a bachelor. The husband alone cannot go to heaven, in the symbolic ascent to heaven. In the sacrifice, he has to call his wife to accompany him on the occasion. A son was indispensable for spiritual well-being in the life to come, and he could be had only through the wife. She was thus indispensable from the spiritual and religious point of view. This was responsible for ensuring her a religious status as high as that of her husband.

Altekar notes in The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization that the duty of chanting musically the Sama songs seems to have been usually performed by the wife. She participated with her husband in the preparation of the offering, the consecration of the fire, the offering of the oblations and the concluding ceremonies. She herself had to recite some formulae. Woman's participation in vedic

sacrifices was thus a real and not a formal one. If the husband was away on a journey, the wife alone performed the various sacrifices, which the couple had to offer jointly. Sita sacrifice, Rudrabali, Rudrayaga, etc. were performed by the wife alone to promote prosperity, rich harvest and fertility. Thus her participation in sacrifice was a real one.

In the Indian Society of the pre-Turkish period, the position of women was not altogether disappointing. Though the rights of freedom and honour enjoyed by women in the ancient period gradually dwindled in the social sphere, yet what remained with them was not altogether insignificant. Among the Turks, women seem to occupy a respectable position. They took active part in politics. The Sultans and Kings depended on their wives and other women in the harem for advice in State and political matters. The ladies of royalty enjoyed an exalted position in the Mughal court. They were considered so influential that many persons succeeded in approaching the emperor through them.

As in the most peasant cultures, the dominant image of authority in the peasant cosmology of Bengal has always been feminine. It was that of a mother goddess who was the original or basic power, Adyashakti, and the ultimate, principle of nature and activity, Prakriti. The personification of this principle was Chandi, the traditional goddess of the region. Though apparently

associated with only the Shakti cult, a cult which in turn was associated with the elite castes in Bengal, the mother goddess constituted the basic irreducible elements in Bengal cosmology.

An important part of the cultural identity of women in India had always been the mythological figure of Savitri, the wife who through her tenacious piety brought her husband back from death. It was this identity which widows seemed to deify.

A phenomenological-hermeneutical study of the arguments of Raja Rammohan Roy, other reformers, Gandhi and Nehru give us an insight into the phenomenon of male dominance in the Indian context.

For Raja Rammohan Roy, while men seemed to be naturally weak, and prone to be led astray by temptations of temporary gratifications, women seemed to have firmness of mind, resolution, trustworthiness and virtue. His Brahmoism attacked the matriarchal status of women in the family and religion by emphasising their role in the world of public activities, and it sabotaged the sacred symbols and images with which Bengali women identified and sought compensation from, in their narrow and constricted lives. Instead of their magical powers and magical capability of doing harm, they had in Brahmoism the justification for wielding real and direct power as individuals with the right to live their own lives.

For Gandhi, woman is the incarnation of ahimsa. Ahimsa means infinite love, which again means infinite capacity for suffering. It is only woman, the mother of man, who shows this capacity in a large measure. He likes to mention the case of a woman who refuses to take anesthetic for a painful operation as she thought that it would risk the life of the baby she was carrying. The only anesthetic she had was her love for the baby, to save whom no suffering was too great. Gandhi admired Draupadi for her strength. He says that men and women are characterised by fear as long as both are subject to passions. Draupadi showed as great a strength as Yudhishtara did. She had five husbands at one time and yet has been called chaste. Draupadi is a symbol of mind. And the five Pandavas are the five senses brought under its control. It is indeed desirable that they are so controlled. Since all the five senses were under the control of the mind and had become refined, the mind (Draupadi) can be said to have wedded the five senses (Pandavas). The strength which Draupadi showed was immense. Even Bhima and the Dharmaraj were affraid of her.

In an interview to John Bull, Gandhi exalts Indian women by saying that for centuries women have worked on an equal footing with men. If they ceased to work, then many of the men would starve. In the cultivation of the crops our men and women toil together and their life is a strenuous one.

In Indian ethos the roles of housewife and mother are placed on a high pedestal though with certain restrictions. The household management is primarily the duty of a woman. It is said, the ideal conduct of a housewife is that she has to be open-hearted to her husband, respectful to his brothers and sisters, devoted to his mother, affectionate towards his relations, considerate towards the servants, smiling even to her co-wives, courteous to her husband's friends and useful to his enemies. A wife, who discharges all these duties, was the true pati-vrata. Further, motherhood has been the cherished ideal of every Hindu woman, as producing a son is necessary for achievement of salvation of the father.

b) Subordination

The phenomenon of subordination of woman was set in by fixing the great models of Indian womanhood as Sita and Savitri to emulate. She had little initiative. Her first duty was to wait on her husband, fetching and carrying for him, rubbing his feet when he was weary, rising before him, and eating and sleeping after him.

"She should do nothing independently
even in her own house,
In childhood subject to her father,
in youth to her husband,
And when her husband is dead to her sons,
she should never enjoy independence

"She should always be cheerful,
and skillful in her domestic duties,
with her household vessels well cleansed,
and her hand tight on the purse-strings ...

"In season and out of season
her lord who wed her with sacred rites,
ever gives happiness to his wife,
both here and in the other world.

"Though he be uncouth and prone to pleasure
though he have no good points at all,
the virtuous wife should ever worship
her lord as a god" (Basham;1990:182).

Such passages are not infrequent in literature of a religious and semi-religious type, and stories of obedient and faithful wives are numerous. As per Manu a woman attains paradise not by virtue of any austere penance but as a result of her obedience and devotion to her husband.

Smritis have given subordinate status to women. The wife should ever treat the husband as god. Though he be characterless, sensual and devoid of good qualities, women should follow the word of their husbands. This is their highest duty. A woman has no separate sacrifice, ritual or fasting. She gains a high place in heaven by serving the husband. She who fasts and performs rituals while the husband lives, cuts off the life of the husband and she goes to hell. A woman who wants the sacred waters should wash the feet or the whole body of the husband and drink the water, and she attains the highest place. There is no higher world for the woman than that of the husband. She who displeases the husband, cannot go to his world after death. It is said that woman who prides in her family and disobeys the husband should be made by the king a prey to the dogs in the presence of a big assembly of people. If the wife disobeys the husband when he is given to bad habits or becomes

drunkard or is suffering from physical ailment, then, for three months she should be deprived of her valuable clothes and jewels and kept away. Kapadia writes in Marriage and Family in India that in the Manusmriti we find restrictions that tended to deprive women of her traditional status. The investiture of the sacred thread which initiated a person into the study of the Vedas came to be confined only to male children, the females being entitled to only one sacrament, namely marriage. She was only permitted to participate in religious rites as passive partners. Manu ordains that there are no specific sacrifices for women independently of the husband, nor vratas or fasts without his consent. For her the only duty was to serve and worship her husband, by which she would succeed in attaining heaven. She was not to be independent. Even in the domain said to be hers, the wife does not appear to have exercised a controlling voice. Even in the home nothing should be done by a child, a young or even an old wife (woman) independently.

In order to justify the low status which he is out to assign to the woman, Manu confirms and stresses the prejudicial view in respect of her sexual appetite. Women must particularly be guarded against evil inclinations, however trifling they may appear to be, for if they are not guarded, they will bring sorrow on both the families. Considering it the highest duty of all castes even weak husbands must strive to guard their wives. It can be inferred that Manu fears intimacy between persons of

different varnas, and that in order to regulate sex intimacies on the pattern of social hierarchy embodied in the theory of anuloma and pratiloma marriage he denigrates sexual impulses in woman and justifies rigid control over her behaviour. Manu feels, if a woman is chaste, it is because she has not found a proper man, place or opportunity. It is the nature of woman to seduce man in this world. She is able to lead astray not only the ignorant but even a learned man and make him a slave of lust. She is therefore called pramada, a temptress.

Buddhism and Jainism shared the indifference to or contempt of women, which is almost universal among the advocates of the ascetic ideal. Digambara Jains hold that women can never get salvation except by first being reborn as men. They put a number of restrictions on the nuns. Some of the rules obviously degrade the status of women, who join as nuns. They show a lack of confidence in the character and judgement of women. The admission of a new nun was to be sanctioned by a joint meeting of the monks and nuns. New monks, however, could be admitted without consulting the nuns at all. Nuns were to go out to beg only when led by an experienced matron. The climax of it is, however, reached by the rule which lays down that a nun, though 100 years old, must stand in reverence before a monk, though he may have been just initiated in the church. Altekar surmises that the reader will not now be surprised to learn that a nun could never preach before a Congregation of monks, though the

selected ones among the latter could preach before a Congregation of nuns.

The position of women in Indian society underwent many changes as a result of the social changes in the country. The honoured position which the women enjoyed before the advent of Muslims in India gradually deteriorated during the Turkish rule. While the older tradition of high respect for them continued in a section of society, there were some people who looked down upon them and denounced them as the root cause of the ruin of man. A girl in a Hindu house was taught to respect the members of the family, especially the leaders, from her very childhood. She was supposed to worship her husband like god and obey his commands. She was expected to be true to her husband and serve him even in the time of adversity. She was to follow the pativrata dharma (complete loyalty and devotion to husband) and lead a very chaste life.

Even in the modern day, Shankaracharyas bracket women together with Harijans. This is how caste and patriarchy reinforced each other. The familial outcastes (women) give credence to social outcastes (Harijans) and vice versa. In older days all women were not respected. If there had been equality, there would not have been sexual oppression of the Dasis. S.Das maintains: "Never has man dug a deeper pit for himself than did the Hindu when he worshipped goddesses and degraded women, when he adored the mother and slighted the

wife" (Dandavate;1989:56). The key to intra-gender oppression lies here.

Purdah system puts to shame the concept of a self-conscious woman. During the medieval period many ladies not only confined themselves to the houses but also observed purda. Purda was observed mainly by the Muslims and was not so rigid with the Hindu ladies. With the advent of Turks in India it was also adopted by the Hindu women as a protective measure to save their honour at the hands of the foreign invaders. Purda was mainly confined to the rich and well-to-do classes. Poor women, especially in villages, who worked in fields could not afford to observe purda.

The status of women was further lowered with the malady of dowry. This indicates a loss of status for the girl in her father's family where she becomes a liability rather than an asset. Man has converted woman into a domestic drudge and an instrument of his pleasure, instead of regarding her as a helpmate and a better half. The result is a semi-paralysis of our society. The status of inferiority has unjustly been thrust on her in our tradition.

Even Gandhi argues that in the form there is a vital difference between man and woman and hence the vocations of the two must also be different. The duty of motherhood, which the vast majority of women will always undertake, requires qualities which man need not possess. She is passive, he is active. She is essentially the mistress of

the house. He is the bread-winner, while she is the keeper and distributor of the bread. She is the caretaker in every sense of the term. The art of bringing up the infants of the race is her special and sole prerogative. Without her care the race must become extinct. He thus decided in favour of an earmarked field for the woman.

The sentiments of Indian men are expressed by Gandhi when he says : The duty of woman is to look after what in English is called the hearth and home. Man has never performed this task. He has been content to build forts and ramparts for protection. Will he come forward to protect the home? Even in home he will build fortresses and walls. He will make holes within these to fire bullets from and put glass and nails on walls. In the end, the children, of the house will meet their death by climbing upon these. But we have to bring credit to the home. Hence it is my confirmed opinion that women should get a distinct kind of education. The two have separate spheres of activity, and their training, therefore, should also be different. This does not imply that the work of the one is inferior, while that of the other is superior, the sphere of the two are complementary.

Gandhi said, "Generally it is the father who should be the bread-winner. He will work all the better, knowing that he has a happy home. And it is serious injustice to deprive a child of the tender care which only a mother can give. It is a woman's work to bring up her little ones and mould

their character. Equality in status with men, I desire for women, but if the mother fails in her sacred trust towards her children, then nothing can atone for the loss. Whatever the race, family life is the first and the greatest thing. Its sanctity must remain. Upon it rests the welfare of the nation. For good or for ill home influence persists. Of that there can be no possible doubt, and no state can survive unless the sacred security of its home life is preserved ... but for the mass of the people the preservation of home life is essential" (Joshi;1988:254).

Gandhi further adds that it would indeed be a dreary home of which a woman was not the centre. He cannot imagine a really happy home in which the wife is a typist and scarcely ever in it. He asks, who would look after the children? What, after all, is a home without children, the brightest jewels in the poorest household? Cases might be cited in which a clever woman, might, by going out into the world to earn her living, make more money and do more for the children, paying someone to look after them. Gandhi confirms that exceptional women make necessarily exceptional cases. There are exceptions in every phase of life, but we cannot generalise from exceptions. Thus a woman gets baptised in her childhood to confine herself to home when she grows.

c) Religion

As regards her status in religion, in the early history

man excluded woman from religious service almost everywhere because he regarded her as unclean, mainly on account of her periodical menstruation. In the Vedic age woman enjoyed all the religious rights and privileges, on par with man. They used to receive vedic education, and some of them were even the authors of Vedic hymns. They, therefore, could recite vedic mantras as a matter of course. Some women, especially unmarried ones, are seen offering vedic sacrifices all by themselves. Woman's presence and co-operation were absolutely necessary in religious rites and ceremonies. Man could not become a spiritual whole unless accompanied by his wife. The husband alone cannot go to heaven, in the symbolic ascent to heaven in the sacrifice. He has to call his wife to accompany him on the occasion. She participated with her husband in the preparation of the offering, the consecration of the fire, the offering of the oblations and the concluding ceremonies. Women's participation in vedic sacrifices was thus a real and not a formal one.

Because of their marriages at the age of 16 or 17, they could not devote much time to vedic studies. So short a period was quite insufficient for an efficient grounding in the vedic lore in the age of the Brahmans. Society was not prepared to tolerate dilettante vedic studies, and as a consequence, lady vedic scholars began to become rarer and rarer. As a consequence, the participation of women in sacrifices gradually became a mere matter of formality. For some time wives continued to perform the duties that were

formerly allotted to them in sacrifice, but gradually a tendency arose to allot most the sacrificial work to males. Many sacrificial duties that could be once discharged by the wife alone, came to be assigned to male substitutes in the age of Brahmanas. The wife was originally entitled to offer oblation and the Grihya fire in the absence of the husband. Now a son, or a brother-in-law began to act in her place. She continued to perform the evening sacrifice down to the beginning of the Christian era, but the recitation of the vedic mantras was prohibited to her on the occasion. A few centuries rolled on in this way and then writers like Manu began to advocate that girls' upanayana may be performed, but no vedic mantras should be recited on the occasion.

Buddhism and Jainism placed nuns under a more rigorous discipline than monks. When discipline became slack and unworthy persons began to be admitted into monasteries and nunneries, the tone of moral life deteriorated. Later Hinduism took a lesson from what it saw in Buddhist monasteries and nunneries and declared women to be ineligible for renunciation. It maintained that no renunciation but due discharge of family responsibilities was the most sacred duty of women.

During the Muslim period religion was predominant in the lives of the ladies whether they were Hindus or Muslims. A Hindu lady kept various fasts, visited temples, and read religious books, while a Muslim woman similarly

read Quran, offered prayers and also kept fasts. Both celebrated their religious festivals with great enthusiasm. There were some women who devoted themselves wholly to religion and became saints or mystics.

d) Marriage and Chastity

Marriage is an institution which has been greatly respected. Early in the history of our civilization brides received affectionate and respectful treatment in their new homes and they were grown up and educated at the time of their marriage. The vedic marriage hymn lays down that the bride should immediately take the reins of the household from her elderly relations. Elders of the vedic age treated the brides with very great consideration, regard and affection. They on their part used to observe proper decorum and treat their elders with utmost reverence.

The vedic word for the couple, dampati, etimologically means the joint owners of the house. The vedic marriage ritual, however, does not enjoin the duty of obedience upon the wife. Both parties take the same vows. The supreme authority was clearly vested in the husband and the wife's position was one of honourable subordination. In the vedic and epic society we find that the wife was treated with utmost courtesy and regard. It was well recognised that the wife was the ornament of the house. The home management was under her direct charge and ordinarily, her views were to prevail there. Early Indian literature does not recognise,

even theoretically, the power of physical coercion in the husband. Man is only one half, says a vedic passage, he is not complete unless he is united with a wife and gives birth to children. The wife is the companion friend of a man, says another passage. And the Mahabharata concurs. Buddhist thinkers also have accepted the same view. It is but natural that the husband cannot even think of pleasure, if his wife cannot participate in it. Remarriage of woman was not permitted except when her husband disappears, dies, becomes an ascetic, is impotent or loses caste.

In Indian tradition Manu had a great role in cementing the ideas of female subjugation thereby allowing the phenomenon of male dominance to perpetuate. Manu's views on the chastity of women are degrading. In order to justify the low status given to the women, he confirms and stresses the prejudicial view in respect of her sexual appetite. Women must particularly be guarded against evil inclinations. He says, if they are not guarded, they will bring sorrow on both the families. In order to prevent intimacy between persons of different varnas, he denigrates sexual impulses in women and justifies rigid control over her behaviour. Manu thus rationalises his ideal of life-long fidelity to the husband. He writes, 'Woman was created for infatuating man and hence there is nothing more heinous than woman'. 'Through their passion for men, their unstable temper and inherent heartlessness they become disloyal to their husbands, however carefully they may be guarded, in this

world' (Altekar; 1973:209).

One is confounded to know that flirtation on the part of man is not condemned but glorified. The woman who is a pawn rather than an offender in this mischievous game, is held up as the embodiment of lust and depravity on the other hand. It is like the audacity of thieves who first defraud a person and then cry, 'stop, you thief'. It seems logical to conclude that the ideas of pativrata were eulogized and propagated among the Hindus by glorifying and deifying the characters of Sita and Savitri in order to defend the superior status of man over the woman. As man was the law maker, restrictions were imposed on the woman. For example, when the woman's husband goes abroad the wife should live a life of restraint. This implies that she should avoid amusements, ornamenting the body, participating in social gatherings and festivals, smiling, visiting others' houses etc.

Polygamy, plurality of wives, obviously tends to stress and strengthen man's dominion over woman. While polyandry is unnatural, the polygyny is most natural. Though polygyny was socially approved, the vedic ideal of marriage favoured a monogamy.

Manu prescribes a new pattern of behaviour towards the wives of different varnas. If twice born men wed women of their own and of other varnas, the honour and habitation of these wives must be according to the order of the varnas. Wife from a lower varna was no better than a mistress,

according to Manu. If he has several wives of different varnas, the wife of his own varna enjoys the privilege (of performing the religious duties) even though she is the youngest. If he has no wife of his own varna, or if the wife of his own varna is absent, the wife of the next highest varna usually occupies the next place. But a sudra wife shall always be excluded from this privilege. Before Manu, Gautama had made some distinctions between the wives of different varnas.

The socio-cultural conditioning of an Indian looks at marriage as a life-time bonding of two people who bring more members with their love. Thus, marriages which have expended all their resources of keeping up a pretence of togetherness, have still to keep the show on, much to the misery of every single member of such families. This increases the tension inside the home, reduces the work-efficiency of the members, hampers the mental and physical health and finally makes life a living death. "For better or for worse, till death do us part" is no longer valid literally if the disintegration of the marriage is socially beneficial to all the parties concerned, specially for the children in the marriage. The Indian woman is passing through a transitional phase in her marital life with respect to a disintegration of her married life, says Chatterji in The Indian Women's Search for an Identity.

Education, economic independence of girls in urban

India, and the knowledge of growing incidence of broken marriages in the other countries has induced in us the process of re-thinking about the necessity and efficacy of divorce. There is no silver lining as the tensions and complications surrounding divorce are also increasing. Its corrosive effect on society and the next generation of marriageable young men and women is to be seriously considered and yet one must face facts.

It was only in the 1950s, with the progressive thinking of Nehru, that monogamy was made a law for Hindu marriages through the Hindu Marriage Act and the Hindu woman could have the right to divorce, to remarry, and to share in the joint family property for the first time. The wife can claim maximum maintenance of one fifth of her husband's income and a right over the matrimonial home. The special Marriage Act of 1954 governs marriage and divorce between people of any religion and is ordinarily referred to as a registered marriage. Under the Act, the laws relating to maintenance and child-support are identical to the same laws in the Hindu Marriage Act. Muslims, however, unless they marry under the Special Marriage Act, are governed by their personal laws of marriage and divorce. They regard marriage as a civil contract and not as a binding religious sacrament. The husband can divorce his wife just by pronouncing the word 'talaq' three times either personally or by proxy but the wife cannot do the same. For Christians the Indian Divorce Act, 1869, is the main enactment that

governs divorce among the Christians in India. In the state of Goa, they are covered by the Portuguese Canon law.

Unfortunately, the law in any class-divided and patriarchal society is formulated, legislated and implemented as well as interpreted by the male ruling elite. It reflects and perpetuates the interests of this particular patriarchal class and weighs against the female. A closer observation of the Laws of marriage in case of a conflict will reveal a clear bias against the women in all castes and communities through the personal laws of each community. The greatest discrimination against women is the still uncodified Muslim Personal Law in India from a woman's point of view, because of (i) its legal sanction to polygamy, and (ii) the right of the Muslim husband to divorce his wife by merely repeating the word talaq three times.

Women suffer much more than men by the unequal provisions of the existing personal and statutory laws which do not go well with the ideals of gender equality and the dignity of the individual. A Uniform Civil Code may remove the oppressions of Indian woman irrespective of Caste, class, and community differences. A Uniform Civil Code is a Constitutional ideal but its main thrust is towards social justice. The main concerns are (i) to secularise the law, (ii) to modernise it, and (iii) to recognise it with a view to making it subserve the ideals of liberty, justice and equality.

There has been a great demand in India for a Uniform Civil Code through an enactment of an Act in respect of marriage, registration of such marriage, divorce, maintenance, minority and guardianship. But so far, the efforts in this regard have not fructified. It is worthwhile to note the zeal with which the following statements were expressed. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who piloted the Constitution, hoped that the Uniform Civil Code will be available one day to the people of the country. Ms. Indira Jaishing says : 'The demand for reform (in personal laws in favour of a uniform civil code) must be a demand for equality. It would be better to reformulate the demand so as to focus on the sex discrimination which is written into all personal laws'. Muslim reformist Asghar Ali Engineer says: 'If complete equality between sexes is the basic implication of a uniformity in all personal laws, then I am certain that it does not in any way violate the spirit or the normative aspect of the Quoran'. Mrs. Anasuya Dutt, a matrimonial lawyer says: 'The Indian women remain divided and exploited, more so on account of being divided along the frames set by different personal laws. When brought under the purview of a single statute, women would more easily unite on a common platform and fight more effectively for changes in their favour' (Chatterji;1988:109,111).

e) Political status

As regards the political rights in Indian society of the pre-Turkish period, the position of woman was not

altogether disappointing. Though the rights of freedom and honour enjoyed by women in the ancient period gradually dwindled in the social sphere, yet what remained with them was not altogether insignificant. Among the Turks women seem to occupy a respectable position. They took active part in politics. Razia Sultana occupied the throne. The queens and ladies of the harem during the successive rulers of Delhi during the Muslim period exercised influence in matters of state and took active part in politics. The kings used to consult them in various matters connected with the State and politics.

Later women activists became subsumed in the political struggle during the period of independence movement. Despite the many pronouncements of good intent by the male leaders, most of them still saw a woman's role basically as that of a house-wife with a conservative family structure. The agitation of the early social reformers about the social evils that affected women in the family were supplanted by nationalist issues, resulting in the neglect of women's unequal social and economic position. Sarojini Naidu, and the Home Rule League demanded for female franchise rights. In 1918 the Indian National Congress supported the granting of the vote to women. By 1926 women were also given the right to enter the legislature, after they were allowed to vote in 1921 in Madras province. By breaking the traditional fetters, women even resorted to militancy. Encouraged by their militancy, a regiment for women called Rani of Jhansi

Women's Regiment was started by Subhash Chandra Bose in Indian National Army.

Women in the nationalist struggle did not use the occasion to raise issues that affected them as women. Rather than liberating themselves from traditional constraints and bondage, the women's roles within the family as wives, daughters and mothers were re-emphasised or extended to be in tune with the requirements of the family in a changing society. Thus when Indian women participated in all stages of the movement for national independence, they did so in a way that was acceptable to and was dictated by the male leaders and which conformed to the prevalent ideology on the status of women.

As Mies has pointed that: "To draw women into the political struggle is a tactical necessity for any anticolonial or national liberation struggle. But it depends on the strategic goals of such a movement whether the patriarchal family is protected as the basic social unit or not. The fact that the women themselves accepted their limited tactical function within the independence movement made them excellent instruments in the struggle. But they did not work out a strategy for their own liberation struggle for their own interests. By subordinating these goals to the national cause they conformed to the traditional pativrata or sati ideal of self-sacrificing women" (Jayawardena; 1986:108).

However, the examples of women's militant participation in political struggles as well as their involvement in strikes and working-class protests and peasant rebellion all show that Indian women have played a prominent part in anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and democratic movements of protest over a long period. In contrast to the traditional ideal of womanhood, which even today is propagated in various ways, Indian women have another tradition of militancy and courageous activity in movements for social and political change.

Indian women have played a dynamic role in the national freedom struggle under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, and their sacrifices were of a very high order. In recognition of it, at the Karachi Congress in 1931, Nehru piloted the Fundamental Rights Resolution which accepted the principle of complete equality of men and women in political life. In spite of this, leaders saw women's political participation as an extension of their familial roles. The Gandhian leadership urged women to perform services in the following order: (i) husband, ii) family, iii) country. In case of any conflict arising between duty to family and duty to country, familial duties were expected to be their prime responsibility.

In the backdrop of an impressive record of participation in the freedom struggle, it would only be natural to expect women to play a dynamic role in the

politics of free India. But even after four and a half decades of independence, women are by and large, still marginal to the actual political process. Though the Constitution of free India has guaranteed equal rights to men and women in all fields of activity, this has not helped them to acquire a viable position for themselves in the country's politics.

It is a common experience the world over that despite loud proclamations of Constitutional equality between male and female, the few women that enter politics seldom have political power or are involved in decision making processes. Niroj Sinha writes in *Women 'as Marginals in Politics'*, in Widows, Abandoned and Destitute Women in India that social traditions and norms have helped women to be depicted as cold and career-minded or warm and family minded. The socialization process universally present in all human societies prepares women for one role model mother/wife, with household and family being her only universe. Politics is an alien field because in her role as woman, she is not to be in the arena of power seekers. She is trained to be a passive follower of man who is destined to be the leader, be it in politics, the labour market, or society. The Constitutional declaration of equal rights and freedoms irrespective of sex, has little to do with the actual position of women who continue to exist on the periphery of the socio-economic and political scene. Their basic subordination in society extends into their

marginalization in the work force and political decision-making arena.

The performance of women, both quantitatively and qualitatively, has been rather insignificant in spite of having had a woman Prime Minister who led the country for about seventeen years. Their representation in political bodies such as Union Parliament, Council of Ministers, State Legislatures, Party hierarchy, Chief Ministers and other ministers is impalpable. The numerical strength of women in decision making bodies is meager. They are strictly a very small minority group and very often are driven to the wall in predominantly male-dominated political universe. The few women who have managed to enter the portals of power structures are often unable to take a definite position in support of issues regarding women. Their allegiance is more to the party than to the cause of their sex.

It is argued that though they are half the total voters, unjustly women are under-represented in Parliament. The conflict of interest between women and men is a determining reason for women's entry. Admittedly, women's generally weak economic position is one of the main obstacles to women's involvement in political life. Fighting elections is increasingly becoming a very costly affair. Women sometimes get access to political positions due to their links with well-known male politicians as daughters, wives or widows taking over the place of their deceased husband.

Women's participation in nationalist struggles is accepted and even solicited for a visible impression of the mobilization of an entire people involved in the same cause, but as soon as the objective is achieved the women are persuaded to resume their traditional subordinate role. This is more or less a global phenomenon. This is presented as the best way of preserving the country's cultural identity which is shown as being endangered by the threat to tradition, a good reason to send the women back to their former shadow existence. A close linkage between women in formal political institutions and those in the feminist movement outside could be extremely rewarding, as the feminist movement has made a significant contribution in the realm of political action. Remaining outside institutional politics could be counter-productive for the women's cause, as such feminism would run the risk of being branded sectarian showing a desire to abdicate responsibility while the exclusion of women from the sphere of political activity could result in a state of powerlessness for them, argues Niroj Sinha. It is argued that women's presence in policy-making bodies will at least make a dent in male-dominated patriarchal politico-cultural structures. It will also smash the age-old sex stereotyping, and present alternative role models for aspiring young girls and women, and will put an end to open resistance against women entering politics.

The issue of women's political participation in a country like India which is still bound by traditions that cast women in a very secondary role in all spheres of life, is a complicated one. Women all over the world suffer from economic backwardness, but in India this problem is staggering. Add to this the extremely low rate of literacy among Indian women, and the picture of the marginalization of the Indian woman in all spheres of life is bleak indeed. Especially it is true in the political arena which seems peculiarly hostile to the entry of women and the viable role they could play therein. Further the absence of a strong feminist movement in the country also deprives women of the support structure they need so much.

One question concerning women and politics is the franchise. Women have right to vote in India. But is the vote exercised genuine? Is the purpose of the right served? Why do they vote? This, aspect has been analysed by Soma Chatterji in The Indian Women's Search for an Identity.

The answer will bring out facts that would reflect the position of women in our democratic society where the political right to vote was granted to every adult citizen of India irrespective of sex, right from the time the Constitution became effective and the first free elections were held in a political free India. In other words, unlike women in many of the Western progressive countries, Indian women have never had to fight for the right to vote. It has been there for them to exercise according to their free

will, their political affiliations and awareness and their consciousness of the need to augment social change through the representatives they vote to power.

The individual woman voter from the rural areas has a kind of negative awareness. This means that for her, the vote is a kind of a bid at high stakes. She feels if she did cast her vote, one of these things could happen : a) she will be battered by her husband, b) she will miss the grand lunch that has been promised, c) she will lose her job on the farm or in the master's house, d) she will be thrown out of her home. This means that for the rural woman voter, voting is not a matter of choice. It is coercion, plain and simple and if it is not coercion, it is an unfair choice thrust on her (Chatterji; 1988:119).

The educated voters among the women are urban voters. They are therefore, said to be comparatively aware and conscious. On the other hand, rural voters among the women are generally uneducated and passive, Urban voters among the women are positively active voters.

In the urban family also, the educated woman, wittingly or unwittingly, is always reacting to the actions and directions of some male figure in the family. It could be the father, an elder brother, the husband, the father-in-law, or even a son. Though the right is there for all individual adult women in India, the women have no power to exercise the right unless they get the go-ahead sign from a

third party - the male member.

In case of filial loyalty, her vote is almost a pre-ordained and a calculated one for her by someone else. In case of filial compliance, male opinion is compelled on her by the male member, in view of which rigging is possible. And in the case of filial defiance, she rebels against the suggestion of the male member and thereby satisfies her ego. Thus in all these cases, the vote casted is not genuine. In all these categorizations women are revealed as voters and not as electors mainly because the decisive factor is missing. The participation of women in voting has not made a dent in the social status of Indian women within our society.

The women who did get elected to Parliament have not talked about or done much about any issue that would be of exclusive benefit to women, economically, socially, legally. Thus, whether they are voters, electors, contestants or elected Parliamentarians, women do not gain from elections as women per se. They need uses meant for them because socially and qualitatively, women are not equal in patriarchal society though political equality has been granted to them vide the Constitution. Social conditions reinforce males' superiority in the political sphere which in turn contributes to the phenomenon of perennial male domination.

f) Economic Status

In Indian tradition throughout the ages, women were economically dependent on men, and there was no independence for her in this regard. The father protects her in adolescence, the husband in her youth and the sons in old age. It was thought that a woman does not deserve absolute independence.

The writers of the epic age felt that there was no sense in giving the daughter equality with the son, if the right of the brotherless daughter to succeed was recognised. The Mahabharata allows a husband to give her three thousand coins. It may be inferred that such a right was exercised by the widows as well. In the vedic India, the husband and wife were regarded as joint owners of the household. The theory of joint-ownership of the husband and wife was meant to secure equal position to the wife. But Manu does not give any share to the wife in her husband's property throughout her life. He also says that a wife had no right to own property, and whatever she earned went to her master. He states, 'women should never make hard from the property which is common to many, nor from their own property without their husband's permission' (Vishnoi; 1987:22).

The Jain wife had full right over her Stridhana which was of five kinds, viz., Adhyagnikarta, Adhyavanika, Pritidana, Saudyika and Anvadheya. According to Jain law in case there was no son the daughters were entitled to all the

wealth of her father. In the event of her father's death, an unmarried daughter as a uterine sister of the brothers, was entitled to a fourth part of the share of each brother. The share of married daughter in the property of the father in the presence of her brother, however, was nil. A Jain widow had the powers to use her husband's wealth for expenses on her maintenance and observance of religious ceremonies. She could also sell property for such purposes if the need arose. There is a great divergence in this respect between the Hindu law and Jain law. Under the Hindu law the son is the direct heir to the deceased father in preference to his widowed mother, whereas in the Jain law encoded in Arhantaniti, it is the widow who has a claim over property, in preference to the son.

Buddhism accorded better economic status for women compared to Hinduism. A daughter was recognised as a legal heiress if she had no brothers. It is evident from the testimony of the Canonical literature, that women, as wives, had with their husbands equal authority over property. Widows were allowed to inherit their husband's property and to manage it till the end of their lives. The Buddhist bhikshins lived a community life. As they took shelter in the Sangha to which they owed allegiance, property belonged to the Sangha, and no bhikshini enjoyed any individual ownership. All the same Mahavira and Buddha were religious leaders and had little to do with social aspects like property rights. Their movements were aimed at reforming the

society in the spiritual sphere and property rights, specially those of women, found little scope in their thinking.

In the vedic age the wife had full rights over 'parinahya', which can be termed as Stridhana. It consisted of the gifts given by the parents and relatives to the bride at the time of her marriage. Kautilya states that the sonless widow, faithful to her husband's bed and living with her elders, shall enjoy her stridhana till the end of her life, as stridhana is meant for times of distress. According to Arthashastra in calamities such as disease and famine, in warding off danger and in charitable acts, the husband too may make use of this property. Neither shall there be any complaint against the enjoyment of this property if it is by mutual consent nor shall there be any complaint if this property has been enjoyed by those who are wedded in accordance with the custom of the first four kinds of marriage. Arthashastra mentions that daughters are entitled to maintenance and marriage expenses only. Unmarried daughters, however, shall be paid sufficient dowry (pradahikam) on their marriage.

According to Manu, the wife has no right to spend anything out of her stridhana, without the permission of her husband. A husband could temporarily take this wife's stridhan, if she was inimical to him.

As far as the question of inheritance is concerned,

Manu is of the opinion that after the death of the father and mother, the brothers having come together shall divide equally among themselves the paternal property, as they have no power while the parents are alive. Daughters had no right in their father's property, except for maintenance and marriage. Manu does not give the right to inherit the father's property even to a brotherless daughter. He believed that the one who conferred spiritual benefits on the father had the right to inherit his property, and this could only be done by a son since he only could offer pindas to his parents. The daughter was neither allowed nor supposed to offer pindas.

The modern Indian women are not devoid of economic tensions. The burden of the traditional role hanging on them still continues. The productive work done by her at home is not recognised and a working-woman has to face the burden of work at home as well as outside. Lenin said, 'House-work is the most unproductive, the most barbarous and the most arduous work a woman can do. It is exceptionally petty and does not include anything that would in any way promote the development of the woman' (Chatterji; 1989:13). With no fixed hours, no holiday and no pay the house work is left to be done almost exclusively by women.

In India, 63% of all adult women are engaged in housework which roughly includes eight years of their average life-span of 50 years within the kitchen alone. In the home, housework is the primary occupation of women who

identify, mainly as wives and mothers in spite of the fact that many of them may be employed outside the home. A girl-child is conditioned through brain-washing and socialization processes to such an extent that an average housewife is proud of her house. She is possessive of her kitchen, her backyard, to such an extent that she refuses her husband and other male members acquire even the slightest entry or control over these areas.

According to Soma Chatterji, modern living puts psychological pressures on the housewife: anxiety and depression resulting from constant pressures, isolation and fragmentation of families into small compartments vide large, multi-storied apartment complexes; constant vigilance and control over children who are now increasingly exposed to the hazards of an industrial environment such as air pollution, living in high-rise apartments and so on; the maternal deprivation syndrome which induces anxiety and guilt in working women who cannot constantly attend to their children's need and even for 'just housewives' who have to do too many jobs all at once and cannot solely occupy themselves with children. All this makes the burden of housework all the more tedious and heavy, without relief, relaxation or break.

In India, the definition of housework as per the Census is non-work. The following activities generally fall within the purview of non-work and leisure: cooking, collecting

firewood and water, minding the house and childbearing. Researchers say that it is not possible to determine wages for housework if the goal is to do away with the subordination of women for one thing and to eliminate the sexual division of labour for another. It may commercialise the family unit and disintegrate the members of the family. The social basis of the family will gradually be lost under the economic relationship. Further, if the wife begins to get wages for her housework, her load of labour and responsibility will increase in terms of housework and this may prevent her from seeking a job in the market place. It may also mean further subordination of women because with housework being paid for, she becomes the employee in her own household and loses the importance of being an important member of the family.

With the rapid increase in industrialization and urbanization on the one side, and the increase in poverty and unemployment on the other, women's life-styles in many countries are undergoing a subtle but significant change. In India as well, in terms of family life, women are slowly and steadily shifting away from patterns of early marriage, childbearing and joint families to longer durations of 'singleness'.

There is an increase in female-headed families. It is not however due to poverty alone. Widowhood and divorce are other main reasons. A widow loses her rights over her land through ignorance, illiteracy and manipulation by other male

relatives, and is not recognised even by the government as a group that needs special consideration in job opportunities and assistance. In most cases, widows are forced to live alone and separately due to lack of support from the family and community.

Female-headed families have to face many problems which male headed or married, normal families do not have to face. If the basic income of the female-headed family is derived from agriculture, it is left without help at crucial times of the year, the woman having to look after planting, harvesting all by herself. In a country like India, where the woman is not permitted to touch the plough among the Hindus, we cannot imagine the helpless condition of the widowed wife of a farmer with small children. In agricultural projects and in land reform schemes, female heads of families are often either overlooked or discriminated against because they are women.

Few women are equipped to take on the responsibility of heading a family. Their path to economic security is fraught with hurdles created by the society they live in. They lack education and thereby access to jobs. They have little legal protection and hardly any provision of social service and are denied the least recognition of being an integral and distinct segment of society with problems peculiar to their state and sex. But these women manage to survive and hold their families together.

Another aspect of employment of women is the gain attached to it. No doubt, it is the husband of the working wife who stands to gain more than the working wife herself. Employment for the Indian wife does not change the content or quality of sex roles within the family very much. The rural farm-wife has to adjust her time judiciously between her work at home and her work in the field like the urban wife. The rural farmer will not dream of sharing household chores with the women in the house even if they are temporarily disabled or ill. The urban husband will try to cooperate, but the lifestyle, the economic and employment infrastructure, the social and traditional Indian mores and ethos make it impossible for him to significantly alter his role within the family to suit the altered role of his wife within the same family.

For a married working woman, the job increases her burden of work and responsibility rather than to reduce it: It increases her physical labour as she now has to manage two fronts - the home and the job. It increases her financial responsibility with the first pay check she receives in addition to the filial responsibility towards the welfare of the husband and children. And it induces and creates feelings of guilt in her for her divided loyalties between her work and the workplace and the work she has to do at home. Thus instead of making her feel proud of her own ability to perform the multiple-roles she now plays, she suffers from feelings of non-existent and fictitious guilt.

In India, the working wife is contributing to inequality between the sexes in favour of the man rather than in favour of women. It is to be realised that with employment, women do not remain objects of social change, but agents of it. Soma Chatterji quotes Nehru (Chatterji;1988:149), who said: "The habit of looking upon marriage as a profession almost and as the sole economic refuge for women will have to go before we can have any freedom. Freedom depends on economic conditions even more than political ones and if a woman is not economically free and self-earning she will have to depend on her husband or on some one else and dependents are never free. The association of man and woman should be of perfect freedom and perfect comradeship with no dependence of one on the other."

As regards the scope of employment, women have a greater problem of unemployment than men both in terms of quality and quantity. Various reasons as quoted by Soma Chatterji are :

- 1) Women are considered as peripheral, secondary wage-earners who enter the labour market.
- 2) They are understood to prefer part-time, low-level jobs that call for little commitment and lesser responsibility.
- 3) They quit or change jobs when the demand for their

labour falls.

- 4) Most women are employed in less skilled jobs such as food packing and simple assembly work that can easily be replaced by machines.
- 5) Women workers are hardly unionised as men workers and are clubbed under general unions where their womanly interests as part of the labour force get subsumed under the large interests of general labour.
- 6) Their part-time and temporary or casual status in the employment hierarchy give them very few rights as labourers.
- 7) They often quit when pregnant and find it difficult to get in after delivery.
- 8) The most important, according to the world's Women Report, their responsibility for domestic work within the family makes it easier for them to forfeit, willingly, circumstantially or through coercion, their jobs without ascertaining economic loss, the loss of personal status, or loss of individual and independent identity (Chatterji;1988:128).

It is found that the agriculturally advanced states in the country show a very low percentage of women participants in farm labour whereas the backward areas have a relatively

better female participation. This highlights the fact that technological innovation has succeeded in pushing the rural women out of work.

It is a known fact that Indian employers shy away from employing women, due to the reason that labour laws favour women on certain grounds. In fact most women are ignorant about the Maternity Benefits Act, 1961 and are often pushed out of their jobs for pregnancy. The Factories Act, 1948 says that a factory employing more than 30 women must provide and maintain a suitable room or rooms for the use of children under the age of six years of these women. This law is flouted either because the women-workers are ignorant of their rights, or because the women-workers are too poor and are afraid to press their demands even if these are within the scope of the law. Furthermore, women are not only bypassed by the unions, but are at times, connived against through a nexus created between the men-dominated trade unions and the employers. Thus economic dependability of women contributes in no small measure to the male ego of superiority.

g) Education

The celebrated seers of Rkhyms and the highly renowned 'brahmavadins' of the upanishads - Gargi and Maitreyi, for example - who displayed talent and termerity in participation in metaphysical discussions, provide us with a measure of the intellectual attainment reached by women of

the vedic age.

The Atharvana Veda observes that a maid can succeed in her marriage only if she has been properly trained during the period of studentship (brahmacharya). In pre-historic times lady poets themselves were composing hymns, some of which were destined to be included even in the vedic samhitas. There is a mention in Sarvankarnika, that there are as many as twenty women among the seers or authors of Rigveda, notes A.S. Altekar in The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization. Brahmavadins were life-long students of theology and philosophy. Sandyadvahas used to prosecute their studies till their marriage at the age of 15 or 16. The short period of 7 or 8 years was quite insufficient for an efficient grouping in the vedic lore in the age of the Brahmanas. Society was not prepared to tolerate dilettante vedic studies and as a consequence, lady vedic scholars began to become rarer and rarer.

Even during the Muslim period the aspect of education of women was not neglected. A fairly important activity of the ladies of royalty was their interest in literacy pursuits. They occupied themselves with reading, writing and composing verses. As regards the education of common women, girls belonging to middle classes did not receive much education. Their studies were hampered due to the practice of early marriages. During the Mughal period though the education of the common women was ignored, yet there were

many ladies who took keen interest in literacy activities.

Gandhi lays great emphasis on education of women (Joshi;1988:17). He says, education is necessary but it must follow the freedom and the way to women's freedom is not through education but through the change of attitude on the part of men and corresponding action. Even without literary education, our women are as cultured as any on the face of the earth. The remedy largely lies in the hands of husbands. He thus delineates literacy from education. Much good and useful work can be done without a knowledge of reading and writing, as one can not always do without a knowledge thereof. It develops and sharpens one's intellect and it stimulates our power of doing good. Education is essential for enabling women to uphold these natural rights, to improve them and to spread them. Again the true knowledge of self is unattainable by the millions who are without such education. Education, therefore is necessary for women as it is for men. Man is supreme in the outward activities of a married pair, and, therefore, in domestic affairs, in the upbringing and education of children, women ought to have more knowledge. Education will help them to safeguard their virtue. According to Gandhi we shall not solve the problem of women's education merely by educating girls.

Regarding the system of education, Gandhi opines that the education of women is as faulty as that of men. His thoughts are very relevant in the present context. No thought has been given to the relations of men and women or

to the place of women in Indian society. Nature has made men and women different. It is women's right to rule the home. Man is master outside it. Man is the earner, woman saves and spends. Woman looks after the feeding of the child. She is responsible for building its character. She is her children's education, and hence, mother to the nation. After a certain period, a father ceases to influence his son, the mother never abdicates her place. If this is the scheme of nature, women should not have to earn her living. Just as, on the one hand, it is wrong to keep women in ignorance and under suppression, so, on the other, it is a sign of decadence and it is tyrannical to burden them with work which is ordinarily done by men.

Gandhi is of the opinion that the women must learn elementary education. When a woman receives this education she would have an environment that will shape her character and enable her to see clearly the evils in society and to avoid them. This is about girls. The education of a widow or a married woman is of course a different matter. The question of breaking down the feminine prejudice is most difficult. The question is not merely of education of girls but it is one of the education of married women. He has therefore repeatedly suggested that every patriotic husband should become the wife's own teacher.

As for illiteracy among the women, Gandhi finds that its cause is not mere laziness and inertia as in the case of

men. A more potent cause is the status of inferiority with which an immemorial tradition has unjustly branded her. Man has converted her into a domestic drudge and an instrument of his pleasure. It is Gandhis' confirmed opinion that women should get distinct kind of education. The two have separate spheres of activity and their training, therefore, should also be different. This does not imply that the work of the one is inferior while that of the other is superior, the spheres of the two are complementary.

The views of Nehru are progressive in respect of female education. He did not agree that there was fixed sphere for women and that education for women should therefore have a different emphasis. He did not agree with the idea that women's place was in the home, that her duty was to be a devoted wife, bringing up children skillfully and dutifully obedient to her elders (Jayawardena;1986:97,98).

Till date we have hardly changed from the Gandhian thought, though gradually attempts are being made to shift towards Nehru's views. Happenings in the world elsewhere and our regular exposure to them are certainly influencing us. Unless our outlook on female education is revolutionized, we shall remain trapped in the clutches of traditional male dominance.

2. Problem of being a Woman in India

Women in India have been inflicted with various special problems which are confined to this sex only. Sati, dowry,

wife-battering, child marriage, are some of them. Added to this widowhood is a curse. A Phenomenological-Hermeneutical study of these evils has been made in this section.

a) Sati

The word Sati means a virtuous woman. Till the 3rd century BC widows were not permitted nor required to die with their husbands on the funeral pyres. There were three courses open for them. They could either pass their remaining life in widowhood, or have some children by lavirate or remarry regularly. The first was of course the most honourable course, but there were many who followed the second or the third alternative. Sati was the practice of widow's burning themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands. The rite had been prevalent among upper caste Indians for at least two thousand years without ever becoming a standard practice.

The general prevalence of this custom among the primitive warlike tribes is not difficult to understand. Fighting races were very possessive of their women and often preferred to kill them, rather than take the risk of their going astray after their husband's death. There was also the general belief that the warrior will require in his next life all those things that were near and dear to him in this existence. It was therefore as reasonable to bury his clothes, bows, arrows, and horses as to inter his wife, she being the nearest and dearest relation. With the finer

cultural outlook in later years, Vedic Aryans discontinued this practice. They also wanted to increase their race by allowing their widows to remarry or by lavirate (Altekar;1973:118).

The Sati custom became gradually popular from 400 A.D. It continued to gain in popularity among warrior classes. When ascetic ideals were gaining prominence in society, the conduct of a widow boldly burning herself with the remains of her husband appeared to it as the most glorious example of supreme self-sacrifice. The theory of Karma also was modified so as to support the sati custom. Though two persons reach different destinations as per their karmas, Sati was an exception. The merit of her sacrifice was more than sufficient to annihilate her husband's sins and raise to heaven to live in eternal union with his wife.

During the period of 700 to 1100 AD sati became more frequent in Northern India and quite common in Kashmir. It was so deep-rooted in the ruling families that even concubines used to follow it. By 12th and 14th centuries, the custom had spread to South India and penetrated into Brahmana community as well. The average Rajput princess welcomed the opportunity to become a sati and would not allow her husband to be cremated alone. Though, Sikh Gurus condemned the sati custom, in the course of time the sikhs did not like to lag behind Rajputs in following time honoured martial traditions, which enjoined sati as a matter of course. The custom became common in sikh aristocracy

inspite of its prohibition by the Gurus.

The earlier law givers such Manu and Yajnavalkya had only recommended a chaste life for widows. Others, such as Kautilya, allowed widows to remarry under certain circumstances. It was in the second or third century AD that sati was first recommended in Vishnu Dharma Samhita and it was in medieval India that the rite began to gain a new legitimacy. At that time, in some areas of the country ruled by Hindu princelings and under military, political and social pressures from the Muslim rulers of India, Sati became frequent and sometimes even broke out as an epidemic. Contrary to folklore, in Sati or even in Jauhar (mass sati), there was a strong element of compulsion.

During the Muslim period a Hindu widow of the higher classes had to burn herself with the dead body of her husband or had to lead a life of suffering and misery and was treated with contempt by the other members of the family. Society looked down upon the widows who did not perform sati. By this time emphasis was laid on becoming sati after the death of her husband even against her wishes. It was mostly performed by the ladies of the Brahmin, Kshatriya and Baniya communities. Though Aurangzeb issued an order banning the sati, the custom could not be altogether suppressed under the Mughals.

Numerous sati stones that are to be seen in almost all parts of India belonging to the 17th and 18th centuries,

show that the sati custom was frequently followed by the commoners as well. But in many cases even intensely anxious to follow their husbands were recoiling and were jumping out under the agony of the flames of fire. So special funeral arrangements were made in the case of sati. Those who recoil and run away from the funeral pyre, were regarded as untouchables and were not accepted back by their castes and families. This custom was at last prohibited in British India in 1829.

The phenomenon of sati is not simply the aggregate of isolated incidents of Sati. It is manifestation of women in society. According to an early vedic custom, a widow would symbolically lie down briefly alongside her husband's body on the funeral pyre and then step down. Sati came to acquire some legitimacy during medieval period, as age of strife when society came under the pressure of expanding Muslim rule. The compulsions of a social order during a phase of history, a particular region rather than specific sanctions of scriptures appear to have a more important bearing on the practice of sati. It is however, the absolute dependence of life on her husband, and her own self-denial which the Hindu tradition celebrates in its epics and legends and in its ethical order that provide the longer context, as well as the ideological justification of sati (Dandavate;1989:39).

The sudden outbreak of sati in Bengal during the

British period brought an awakening in the people. Social reformers made efforts to eliminate this evil practice. Many reasons for the gradual legitimization of the rite are mentioned: deliberate mistranslation of the sacred texts by the Brahmins, the difficulty of protecting women at times of war, particularly in the middle ages, the decline of Buddhism and its rationalist-pacifist influence, contact with some tribal and other cognate cultures which believed that the comfort of a dead man in his after-life could be ensured by burying with him his wives, jewellery, slaves and other favorite possessions. By the seventeenth century the practice had become mainly voluntary and took place generally during times of war when it became difficult to protect women. In fact, by the beginning of the eighteenth century it had become a rare occurrence.

It was only towards the end of the eighteenth century and in Bengal that the rite suddenly came to acquire the popularity of a legitimate orgy. Widows were being drugged, tied to the bodes of their dead husbands, and forced down with bamboo sticks on to the burning pyres. The practice was preceded by Kalipuja, thus getting the social sanction. On the political plane, the lack of self-confidence of the British colonialists and its social non-interventionism during the first phase of the Raj seemed to endorse the practice.

In times of famine and anomic, widows seemed useless drags on resources - particularly amongst the upper and

middle classes in which women played no direct and manifest economic role. The increasing luxury of the high and middle classes and their expensive imitation of European habits made them eager to avoid the cost of maintaining widows. Thus economic gain was a crucial explanation of the rite. It was popular not among the rural poor or the small peasantry, but among the urban nouveaux riches who lost part of their allegiance to older norms and had no alternative commitments with which to fill the void (Nandi;1980:4,5).

Under the Dayabhaga system of Hindu law operating only in Bengal and some parts of Eastern India, the right to property did not arise at the birth of a male co-sharer, but on religious efficacy. Also, a son had the right to separate or dispose off his property before partition and a widow succeeded to her husband's property on his death without a male issue even if the family was undivided. Women had right to property as wives as well as mothers who could influence the decision of their children co-partners. According to Ashis Nandi these were dangerous privileges to have in a culture where survival was not easy and where there was a high chance that a widow would inherit property and use it for bargaining purposes within the family. Inducing her to commit suicide was an efficient way of checking this. Thus sati helped manipulate the distribution of property in a society that had rigid property rules.

In families seduced away from the path of traditional

virtues by the new colonial culture, sati became a means of securing social status and renown for virtue. The duress exerted on the prospective sati was seen as a test of the piety of a family. Taking advantage of this social sanction, the practitioners of the rite were most ruthless with the widow who, after making the fatal decision to commit sati, later wavered. The sheer misery of widow's life partly negated the prospective suicide's fear of death. Such a future seemed even worse because of childhood prejudices and fantasies about the widow being a bad woman and an evil presence.

Many observers of Indian society saw sati as a conspiracy of Brahmins, as they claimed sacred sanctions for sati. The Bengali Brahmins were not only religious leaders and interpreters of classical texts, traditions and rites but major landholders and financiers who were increasingly co-opted by the colonial system. They were the caste most exposed to westernization and the growing conflict between the old and the new. In their desperate defence of the rite they were also trying to defend their traditional self-esteem and self-definition. These groups felt the pressure to demonstrate, to others as well as to themselves, their ritual purity and allegiance to traditional high culture. To many sati became an important proof of conformity to older norms at a time when these norms had become shaky within nineteenth century policy-makers.

One of the most striking features of the rise in the

popularity of sati was that it coincided with a gradual bifurcation of Chandi image. The sacred authority image of Bengal came to be clearly defined by two co-ordinates: Durga, the demon-killing protective mother as well as the giver of food and nurture, and Kali, the unpredictable, punitive mother, till then the goddess of a few marginal groups like dacoits, thieves, thugs, prostitutes and later of the exposed elites and quasi-elites of greater Calcutta. Ashis Nandi adds that this new psychological environment furthered the belief that the husband's death was due to the wife's poor ritual performance and was her self-created fate. The theory imputed that the wife brought about the death of the man under her protection, by her weak ritual potency and by failing to manipulate natural events and fate. All widows consequently seemed to be failures in propitiation and instances of homicidal wishes magically coming true. They failed to live upto the identity of mythological character Savitri. The contemporary pro-sati literature repeatedly mentions the frailty of women, their subjection to passion, lack of understanding and quarrelsomeness, and their 'want of virtuous knowledge'. All these allegedly made them untrustworthy and fickle.

Sati was therefore an enforced penance, a death penalty through which the widow atoned for responsibility for her husband's death. To some extent, women shared the fantasies about their ritual role and responsibility for the death of their husbands. Sati was also associated with the

introjection of the terrorising maternal aspects of femininity, guilt arising from this self-image, and the tendency to use the defence of turning against one's own self in atonement. Thus the use of widows as scapegoats and the fear of womanhood were related to the culturally typical myths and early experience surrounding mothering.

Ram Mohan Roy found that the peculiar practice of Hindu idolatory was responsible for such a situation. It was the source of prejudice and superstition and of the total destruction of moral principles. The casual relationship between Sati and Hinduism was not so simple and perhaps it would be true to say that it was a rather small group of exposed, marginalised men who sought in Hinduism a support for their anomic response to structural changes. The new and popular version of sati was their creation, and so was the new concept of a more terrorising cosmic motherhood by which they sought to justify it. Roy not only linked sati to the community's mode of worship but challenged its basis by suggesting sex role norms and sexual stereotypes, and by showing the spurious links the practice had with Hindu traditions. The widow by dying with her husband proved that she was true to him and virtuous. He shifted the onus of showing fidelity and rectitude to others. While men seemed to him naturally weak and prone to be led astray by temptations of temporary gratifications, women seemed to have firmness of mind, resolution, trustworthiness and virtue; they were void of duplicity and capable of leading

the austere life of an ascetic.

The incident of sati takes place even today is not surprising if people like Brahma Prakash Sharma eulogize sati if committed out of pure inner conviction, if no force or pressure is allowed to influence the women's free will. What about psychological coercion? According to Indu Prakash and Renuka (Singh;1989:55) eventhough a woman may not be physically compelled to become a sati, the mythologies she has imbibed and the norms which she has internalised all seem to portray her subordinate status. Men for whose benefit the mythologies like Savitri and Satyavan exist, have themselves internalised these norms to such an extent that it is flabbergasting for them to see a widow decked up. A widow is looked down upon and this stigma is enough for her ostracism. To avoid this blemish a woman would prefer sati. What works in her mind is not she herself but the societal forces. Thus the act is pernicious and reprehensible.

Roop Kanwar screamed and begged for mercy and help when the fire partially died out. But the fire was cruelly rekindled by those determined to kill her. Roop Kanwar was not orthodox and she lived with her husband Maalsing for only 20 days. In the present day situation, one cannot believe that she would volunteer for sati. The present day social sanction is condemnable. Among the millions who visited the spot and sought sati mata's blessing were some

well known politicians. Even Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi took 23 days to muster up courage to strongly condemn this incident of sati. For the Sankaracharya, 'women' and 'Harijan' could not study the shastras, but still a woman who commits sati earns salvation for the families of her father and her husband's. It is a grandeur plan to expect that women who are proscribed from reading the shastras can, through their actions, make their overlords (husbands, fathers) attain shastric salvation. The act like sati can never be voluntary. A thousand years of shastric (patriarchal) socialization has compelled women to live and die for patriarchy. You force women to commit sati through ideational, cultural and ritual socialization (satisfaction) and then say: If it is voluntary, the shastras endorse it.

The plight of a widow in our society they highlight is typified by women, for whom Roop Kanwar's act of sati was good only because her life as Rajput widow would otherwise have been hell. She could never have remarried, worn jewellery or good clothes or eaten good food. She would have had to stay indoors for the rest of her life and not even been able to go to the well to draw water. She would have been treated with contempt as an inauspicious person all her life, and would not have been allowed to participate in any happy occasion, ceremonies or rituals of the family. Therefore, it was better for her to have chosen death. Her people were simply covering the injustice done to widow by glorifying an act of helplessness.

sati is one of the various forms of oppression of women. Women's oppression, today, has to be seen in a holistic perspective, according to which what links sati with dowry deaths, female foeticide, sexual harassment, sexual crimes is the fact of woman being regarded as a non-entity, a non-person, with no identity except that bestowed on her as man's daughter, sister, wife and mother etc.

According to Gandhi, who indicated the ideal of 20th century sati, "she would prove her satihood with every breath by her renunciation, sacrificed, self-abnegation and dedication to the service of her husband, his family and the country Satihood is the acme of purity. This purity can be attained only through constant striving, constant immolation of the spirit from day-to-day". For him, "sati would regard marriage not as a means of realising the ideal of a selfless and self-effacing service by completely merging her individuality in her husband. She would prove her sati not by mounting the funeral pyre at her husband's death. She would prove it with every breath" (Joshi;1988:373).

It is a fact that women are culturally (which is synonymous with patriarchy) created and conditioned. Gandhi and our hoary sages have constructed the gender type of woman, as an embodiment of sacrifices. This theme of sacrifice is still filled into the young minds of girls and thus starts the satisfying zeal leading to satisfaction of

a girl who is straight away catapulted into womanhood. It is no wonder that a woman lives for everyone but herself. The process of making a woman feel she is destined to be a subordinate to man, is carried enthusiastically forward by many self-styled guardians of religion. If women make sacrifices it is because this has been taught to them at a tender age. It is therefore confirmed that if they sacrifice their life even on their own it cannot be called voluntary as they are carrying out the commands of their overlords (father, husband, priests etc.).

The burning of Roop Kanwar came as a shock to civilized thinking. But what followed in its wake was incredible. The political and economic opportunism, the refusal of the Government and society to view widow burning as heinous crime, the declaration by a group of persons that this horrific act was part of their sanctified tradition and brought honour and glory to them, and the silence of other groups which strengthened the hands of the more vociferous and blatant supporters of this murder (Mishra;1989:49).

With the abolition of the princely states, the Rajputs' identity has turned to the hoary traditions to try to regain and preserve some of the power and glory that modernity is denying them, and to regain it at the expense of the helpless widows of Rajasthan. Today the Roop Kanwar episode has been both used and created to consolidate not just a Rajput identity, but also a far more pernicious cross-class Hindu patriarchy (Dandavate;1989:39).

What distinguished the sati in Rajasthan is that the miraculous and healing powers of the cult of the Sati Mata forms a significant theme of the legends and folk traditions of Rajasthan. Both in Bengal then, and in Rajasthan now, the intolerably low status of the widow is a central issue; but in Rajasthan more than anywhere else, a woman who becomes sati is candidate for deification. Shrines and temples of sati and sati fairs are almost entirely found in Rajasthan. The deification of sati seemed to have fulfilled two functions. It has legitimised and reinforced the prevailing social order and values by describing the status and behaviour of a virtuous woman in a symbolic manner. At the same time society's one dimensional view of a woman has created a possibility for a woman to become a heroine (not in this life!), but only if she becomes a sati.

Women in tribal groups enjoy a more free and equal positions with men. The lower one goes in the caste hierarchy, the more are the possibilities for widow remarriage. Among the higher castes there is more segregation of the sexes, more purda and dependence of woman on husbands.

The phenomenon of sati denotes the absolute dependence of wife on husband. The wife derives her status and identity through him. In simple words the phenomenon and the obnoxious practice of sati degrades the status of women to unfathomable depths.

b) Dowry

In ancient India the dowry system did not stand as an impediment in daughter's marriage. In pre-historic times woman was regarded as chattel and so it was the bride's father, and not the bridegroom who was regarded as justified in demanding a payment at the time of marriage. The bridegroom carried away the bride and deprived her family of her services. The wife in those early times used to get no proprietary rights in her husband's family. Nor had her father-in-law to provide any expensive education to her husband. Dowry system, therefore, was generally unknown in early societies, and the same was the case with ancient Hindus.

In the vedic age stridhana consisted of the gifts by the parents and relatives to the bride at the time of her marriage. Kautilya states, the sonless widow, faithful to her husband's bed and living with her elders, shall enjoy her stridhana till the end of her life, as stridhana is meant for times of distress. He says the property enjoyed by the husband in the cases of the Gandharva and Asura forms of marriages, shall be restored together with interest. In the case of the 'Rakshasa' and 'Paisacha' forms of marriages, the use of this property by the husband shall be dealt with as a case of theft. In the Jain law, whatever the father gave her at the time of her marriage that alone belonged to her (Vishnoi;1987:26,49).

During Muslim period the marriage of the girl was some

times a difficult problem because of the custom of dowry (dahej). It was given at the time of the marriage of the girl by her parents. It consisted of presents like jewels, ornaments, furniture, elephants, horses, maids, and other articles of luxury. It was an old custom and gradually it became rigorous. This system was prevalent more among the rich than the commoners. Soma Chatterji (Chatterji;1988:86) tries to trace the origin and logic of dowry. Why should he marry for 'nothing'?. The parents of the bride had to make good his 'loss' in marrying her by trying to bridge the value - gap between the girl and the 'loss' by enhancing her 'value' with gifts in cash and kind. These marriages were 'asura' marriages among the richer and higher caste/section of society. They began the practice of 'giving away the daughter' or kanyadan as it came to be known in later years. Giving away of the Kanya or daughter reduced the value of the girl-child to some material property whose possession changed hands from the father to the husband in terms of ownership. This also gave the groom's side an upper hand in bargaining or in dictating the terms of the bargain through which the transfer of ownership could be struck. And the system percolated from the higher echelons of society down to the masses spreading across the lower strata of society, cutting across the barriers of caste, class, language and custom till it turned into a veritable social cancer which could not be remedied under the present socio-economic infrastructure which is feudal and patriarchal at the same

time.

The dowry system is connected with the conception of marriage as a dana or a gift. It was a voluntary gift of pure affection and presented no impediments in the settlement of the daughter's marriage till the middle of the 19th century. It is only during the last 50 or 60 years that the amount of dowry has begun to assume scandalous proportions. A good education, a lucrative appointment, or a good footing in a learned profession improved enormously the social and economic position of a youth, and made him immensely attractive as a son-in-law. He naturally acquired a high price in the marriage market. There were no such factors in the pre-British period, when society was mostly agricultural and government appointments were not so lucrative as they are at present. So, naturally anything like the present scandalous dowry system did not exist.

The malady of dowry has now reached serious proportions and burning of the house wives is not confined to any single part of India. Large sums of cash are transferred along with furniture, gadgetry, costly clothing and jewellery, from the bride's kin to the grooms' kin. In addition, the brides' kin have to meet all the expenses of the wedding including the travel expenses of the groom's party. In South Indian upper caste weddings, the groom's kin assume that it is the duty of the brides kin to keep them pleased and they appear keen to find fault with the arrangements made and the gifts given.

The dowry prevalent in higher caste weddings in India today is a totally new phenomenon, and ought not to be mixed up with traditional ideas such as kanyadan, stridhan, though such confusion is widespread. A gift or dan has to be accompanied, by a subsidiary cash gift (dakshina), and in kanyadan the bride is given as a gift to groom. On this analogy, the dowry becomes the dakshina. Stridhana usually refers to the gifts given to a woman by her natal kin or by her husband at or after the wedding. But modern dowry is not dakshina or stridhan. The amount of money given as dowry is substantial among the higher castes and its payment is demanded directly or indirectly by the groom's kin.

Changing from bride price to dowry is an attempt to improve the social status of a family or group, because dowry is associated with the higher social groups. This change has been reported from different regions and indicates a loss of status for the girl in her father's family where she becomes a liability rather than an asset. This is no doubt a result of the withdrawal of women from production activities and of the loss of their production skills. The dowry money is far from being a capital fund kept on rotation. There is nothing to prevent the parents of the groom from putting the dowry money to any use they like, and it is not always that they have an unmarried daughter to whose spouse the money is given as dowry. What it leads to is certainly the impoverishment of the girl's parents, and it does not always buy security for the girl.

Dowry is an anti-social institution, degrading the status of women and at the same time causing hardship to her family. It is an antithesis to the principle of equality. It is indeed the a kind of sati of the twentieth century. Social violence, including violence related to dowry, is the result of the trauma and disturbance attributable to the current nature of social change and development. The source of such tension can be and should be located in the present and not on the imagined inherited psyche of society of culture. The fact that dowry demands arise out of economic difficulties, greed, aspirations and exploitative tendencies and even as excuses to compensate mismatches, failure and dissatisfactions in marriages or married life stand testimony to such a claim. Looking at the nature, extent and forms of harassment and violence inflicted on the bride and her family, it becomes clear that socio-cultural attitudes and patterns, moulded or cultivated both under the influence of ignorance or illiteracy as well as even lopsided education determines the anatomy of such violence. Similarly, the same factors including aspirations, and helplessness affect both the practice of dowry giving and the suffering of harassment and violence. Even education has proved to be a negligible retardent, perhaps because it has failed to inculcate a sense of dignity and self-confidence in suffering brides (Kumari;1989:10,11).

The harassment of a woman in her husband's family is in the forms of taunts, abuses, threats which generally

escalate into beating and even abetting to suicide or, in some cases, murder. However, what remains not known to us are the experiences of women battered by their husbands - for reasons of inadequate dowry or some other. Blinded by the patriarchal notions about the privacy of family matters and because of their assumed weakness, women seldom choose to get out of these relationships or even complain about them. Not surprisingly, women researchers have found that wife-beating is perhaps the most under-reported crime.

Keeping relationships together, despite violence, is also important for practical reasons such as financial support and shelter. Getting out is almost as bad as staying in the relationship. Women remain within these situations because of real conditions of their lives within a male dominated world. The threat of male violence outside the home is true for women who endure violence within their own homes. Living among constant threats of killing and desertion becomes a daily ordeal for them. The woman does not have even one sympathiser in her marital home. The mother-in-law phobia still persists today. The resentment against the daughter-in-law is so great that she goes out of her way to bring untold misery to her daughter-in-law. The husband seldom protests.

Her endurance of a violent marital home ironically gives her the respectable position of a wife or daughter-in-law in society. Women often cannot cope with living alone.

The consequent lack of self-confidence often acts as a trap to keep them inside a violent home. Parents are afraid of the stigma attached to keeping a married daughter in their home. Their constant advice to her is that maltreatment is nothing unusual or unbearable, and that so many women are coping with it. In most cases of wife murder, suicide and maltreatment, the woman feels so weighed down by the expenditure on her behalf undertaken by her parents, that she feels duty-bound to present a brave picture of 'silent courage'. Both religion and society sanctify and even glorify the patient, all-suffering woman.

The quest for matrimonial home and a husband is for a right of place in society, which she can have only after she marries and lives with her husband. This is the general understanding of the men, of the parents, of the women, and indeed of Indian society in general.

For achieving and keeping marriage surviving, the girl and her parents enter the trap, suffer and tolerate harassment and humiliation often willingly, thus indirectly abetting the perpetuation of this practice. It is true that they are mostly helpless, but they cannot disown the responsibility for the pathetic condition of helplessness through their faith in the institution of marriage as an unavoidable panacea for their economic, social, emotional, cultural and biological existence.

c) The Widow

Side by side with Niyoga, the widow remarriage also prevailed in vedic society. Widow remarriages, however, gradually came into disrepute during the period 300 BC to 200 BC. When urged to make peace on the last day of the war, Duryodhana says that he is disinclined to enjoy the earth as a man is to marry a widow. Due to growing influence of the ascetic ideals, the opposition to widow remarriage began to grow stronger from 200 AD. Vishnu recommends celibacy to the widow. Manu lays down that a widow should never even think of remarriage after her husband's death.

From 1000 AD, the prohibition of remarriage began to be extended to even the cases of child widows. Widow remarriage disappeared almost completely from society from about 1100 AD. Even a child widow could not be married. From then on widows have been caught between the proverbial demon and deep sea.

One of the humiliating experiences for a woman is to get tonsured. But the custom of tonsure was imposed on her with the ostensible reason that it would help in creating an ascetic atmosphere around the widow, so necessary for her resolution to lead a celibate life. In reality the procedure was aimed to destroy her beauty. This custom which was unknown before 500 AD became general from about 1200 AD. It was quite common till the end of the last century and is prevalent in many parts of India even today. A widow was regarded as impure and ineligible for association with

religious rites and functions as long as she had not removed her hair to the extent that orthodox people would not take any water or food touched by her.

In the Muslim period the greatest tragedy in the life of Hindu woman was the death of her husband. Unlike the Muslims, widow-remarriage was not permitted among the Hindus, except in some lower classes. A widow had to burn herself with the dead body of her husband or had to lead a life of suffering and misery and was treated with contempt by the other members of the family. Society looked down upon the widows who did not perform sati. They were not allowed to grow their hair long or put on ornaments and good dresses. Widowhood was considered as a punishment for the sins of previous lives. The practice of performing sati voluntarily was an ancient custom, but generally emphasis was laid on being a sati after the death of her husband even against her wishes. It was an enforced penance, a death penalty through which the widow had to atone for her failure to protect her husband's life.

With the advent of western ideas during the second quarter of the last century, some thinkers began to realise the inequality of compelling widows to lead a life of enforced celibacy. Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar was the chief among them, and he succeeded in getting the necessary legislation passed in 1856 permitting widow remarriage under certain conditions. In these days social and religious

boycott was a terrible weapon. Women were proverbially conservative, even in matters that affect their own welfare. With the widespread influence of western education, reason began to reassert itself. Smriti texts began to lose their hold, and reformers could point out earlier and more authoritative works which permitted widow remarriage. Hindu reformers launched a most determined attack against the custom in the nineties of the last century. As a result the custom began to disappear rapidly in the first quarter of the 20th century.

Yet there were people who were against prohibition of remarriage. Vivekananda justifies the prohibition of widow remarriage. He asserts that the Rishis are not wicked men to introduce the law pertaining to it. Notwithstanding the desire of men to keep women completely under their control, they never could succeed in introducing those laws without betaking themselves to the aid of the social necessity of the time. Gandhiji opines that Hinduism has denied to women the right to remarry. But if they must remarry, let them select as their partner a widow who is desirous of remarrying. According to him it would be proper for a man or woman not to marry again after the death of the partner, as the basis of Hinduism is self-control.

Gandhi says, there is beauty in widowhood, if only we can see it. He believed that a real Hindu widow is a treasure and that she is one of the gifts of Hinduism to humanity.

Gandhi pleads for the rights or latitudes which are allowed to widowers to be allowed to widows as well. Otherwise widows become victims of coercion which is violence, out of which only harm can come. The questions roused about widows are not raised about widowers because laws applying to women have been framed by men. If law making had been the business of women they would not have given themselves fewer rights than men enjoy. In countries where women have a hand in law-making they have had the necessary laws enacted for themselves. It is the duty of the father to marry off his young widowed daughter. No obstacles should be placed in the way of those who wish to remarry. Yet Gandhi advocates that voluntary widowhood is a priceless boon in Hinduism while enforced widowhood is a curse.

Gandhi is aware of the plight of a widow and he says "In no other country are widows insulted so much as they are in our country. But I place them in the category of spiritual rishis. I do not have the least hesitation to advising you and other sisters to organise yourselves and see that if widows are not allowed to be present on auspicious occasions, or if restrictions are imposed on their diet or dress, the same rules apply to widowers. It is another matter if a wife voluntarily makes a sacrifice on the death of her husband. But I have no doubt that the rigidity of social customs and conventions must be broken" (Joshi; 1988:361).

d) Devadasis

Bhavanis in Goa, Kudikar on the West coast, Bhogamvandlu in Andhra Pradesh, Thevadiyar in Tamil Nadu and Murali and Aradhini in Maharashtra, Basavi in Karnataka - the Devadasi wherever she be, or known by whatever name, still remains a woman suffering in her own peculiar predicament.

The Devadasi phenomenon is not of recent origin but an ancient system that underwent transformation with time. This system can be traced to a period in history earlier than the Aryan influx into India. South of the Vindhyas among other Dravidians, the matriarchal society existed and what remains of the system is a relic of the matriarchal society. To elaborate and to quote a similarity in the matriarchal societies where woman had an exalted position and was not one man's property, the genealogy of a child was traced only to the mother, for obvious reason. Similar is the Devadasi system of today in which we see their children, who are illegitimate children, entering 'Basavi' in the slot meant for 'father' in the school application forms (Dandavate; 1989:27).

The Basavi system began to spread to different castes and actually began to exist separately as the economic possibilities with religious sanction (while not involving religious functions) became apparent. This led to the genesis of the various forms of Basavis. Mane Basavi (woman of the house) catering to the needs of the sons of one

family. Balaga Basavi who entertained members of a particular branch of the family or a circle of relatives. Jati Basavi looking after the sexual needs of the members of a particular caste. Beedi Basavi, who is a commercial prostitute.

It is argued that the Devadasi system is derived from the concept of the worship of Mother Earth or the Goddess of Fertility. Goddess Yellamma (also known as Renuka, Mookamba, Jagdmaba) as also Durgavva and Marikamba, etc. known by various names are the deities to whom these Devadasis are dedicated.

The communities which dedicate their girls give various reasons like not having a son, vow to Goddess etc. for the ritual. Whatever may be its ritualistic reasons, the dedication is nothing but an excuse to turn the girl into a prostitute. Superstition is another major factor that leads to the dedication of the young girls. At times when a pregnant woman takes a vow that, should she bear a daughter, she will give her to Goddess Yellamma in return for some favour sought. The wish for material gain still stands as a strong reason for the prevalence of this custom even today.

With the increasing trend in Harijan families to educate their children, school-going children of Devadasis face a crisis of identity. They have no choice but to enter 'Basavi' in the slot meant for father's name in the school application form. This often humiliates them, and makes them

objects of curiosity among other children. They also face a boycott in the marriage market. Fear of humiliation remains an impediment to marry into Devadasi families.

e) The Child marriage

Girls were married at a fairly advanced age in vedic period. Maidens were wedded usually at the age of 15 or 16. Post-puberty marriages continued as local customs also in some of the areas that continued to under the influence of the old pre-Aryan culture. A 15th century commentator observes that the attainment of puberty before the marriage was not regarded as a blemish. The influence of the matriarchate is responsible for Marbar's bold stand against child marriages.

Child marriage had become a popular feature of the social life in the Mughal period. Girls were generally married before they reached the age of nine years. Both the Hindus and the Muslims had fallen prey to this evil practice. This evil practice had its origin in the vedic period itself. Writers of this period began to advocate the view that the different divine husbands (Soma, Gandharva and Agni are the earlier divine husbands of the bride) get jurisdiction over the girl when different signs of impending puberty manifest themselves at different ages. They pointed out that one should forestall all by marrying the girl at the age of 8 or 9.

Gandhi steadfastly advocated against this custom. He considered the custom of child marriage is amoral as well as a physical evil, for it undermined our morals and induced physical degeneration. A man who has no thought of the tender age of a girl has none of God. He opined that though legislation was being promoted to raise the age of consent, it is not legislation that will cure a popular evil, it is enlightened public opinion that can do it. Ordinarily, a girl under 18 years should never be given in marriage. He wondered what was kanyadan in the case of little children and asked whether a father has any rights of property over his children. Father is their protector. How can a donation be made to a child who is incapable of receiving a gift? There is no gift where the capacity to receive is lacking. Surely, Kanyadan is a mystic, religious rite with a spiritual significance. To use such terms in their literal sense is an abuse of language and religion. Such a marriage, should be declared null and void from the beginning. Gandhi proudly mentions that Ushathai Dange had been a child widow and had defied orthodox opinion against widow remarriage by remarrying S.A. Dange, the communist leader.

He asserts that his views notwithstanding, so long as the practice of child marriage continues and so long as men are free to marry as often as they choose, we should not stop a girl, who has become a widow while yet a child, from remarrying if she so desires, but should respect her wishes. Though he does not propagate the idea of remarriage of a

child widow, he would not regard her action as sinful, if she remarries.

f) Wife battering

Traditionally, in all societies, the family is considered to be one of society's most sacred institutions. It is the source of comfort and nurturance for the members within it. According to Soma Chatterji all marital problems are said to lie at the door of the two individuals who go to make a marriage. But so far as aggression or violence go, she asks who is the more aggressive between the two? The husband, or the wife? Some more questions arise. Does the sex of the individual have anything to do with the amount and quality of aggressive behaviour leading to violence? Or do power relations existing between the two partners in a marriage determine the degree of aggressiveness of one partner over another? And since we live in a society which is largely patriarchal and therefore, male-dominated, would it imply that marital violence is mostly directed by the husband against the wife?

Manu has himself gone on record to say that there is nothing wrong in hitting a woman when she annoys a man. He has also said that a turbulent wife should be castigated with a bamboo stick to bring her to her senses. Who is to decide the quality or otherwise of 'turbulence' in a wife? What 'does 'to bring her to her senses' mean? How does Manu define 'annoyance' for a man? To these inconvenient questions, Manu cannot provide answers. Soma Chatterji adds,

it was fine for him to run away from these questions because, in those days, no one questioned him, much less a woman who was directly implicated in his saying. However, for the man, Manu's guidance gave them the sanction to beat up their wives. Tulsidas, the revered poet-Saint who penned the Ram Charitamanas went one better on Manu and compared women with - a drum, a rustic, an untouchable and an animal - adding that all of these are meant to be beaten.

In spite of the provisions of Arts. 14 and 15 of the Indian Constitution, our treatment of women in this regard has not changed. More credence is given to the tradition than to law.

There is a new awakening now ten years ago women did not talk about being battered. If they fought back, society and they themselves thought they were wrong to do it. They pleaded guilty and they went to jail. The climate has changed now so that more battered women are ready to fight to end at 'He' or 'She'. One cannot really assert oneself until one feels that she has a self to defend, and that is what women are finally developing.

3. Woman : Her Body as her Trap

A Hermeneutical study of the Woman Question enlightens about various bondages she is tied in her life due to which she is trapped, exploited and oppressed. Though a majority in number, women form a minority in treatment. Neither the

social legislation, nor women's movements have rectified the situation and her status of subordination remains a status quo. A silver lining is that there is increasing awareness of the intentions of their suppression and this awakening is expected to rationalise man's thinking towards her.

a) The bonded sex

Women are born in bondage. Firstly, the woman is bonded unto her body. Since biology has structured all living beings in such a manner that the mind and the body cannot be separated, the woman finds it almost impossible to have a progressive mind when the body is itself retrogressive and places her nicely within its trap, holding her within the trap till she dies. The moment a girl attains puberty, she is made to learn that her body is a liability before marriage, so she must be prepared to offer it to her husband and child. She is made to understand that motherhood and wifehood are the two main reasons for her existence and she thinks that her life is without meaning unless she is a wife and a mother. With this mental preparation she enters into the second filial bondage in her life - that of marriage.

The woman enters into marriage - a new life with a new name when she has to discard the old one because she has now shifted her loyalties to the new God in her life - from father, brothers to the husband. After the initial grandeur wanes out, her status within the family after the first year of her marriage depends on her giving birth to a child

and in particular a male child. If the marriage is barren, the wife is blamed for this even by those who are fully aware of the fact that fertility of a marriage is the result of the fertility of either partner at the same time.

The scriptures, the mythological stories, the religious histories are full of stories of brave, courageous and glorified wives and mothers. Daughters born in Hindu families are till today religiously named after the Goddesses and mythological characters Sita, Savitri, Lakshmi, Saraswati, so that some of the virtues of the Goddesses will be imbibed by them.

Motherhood is a bondage while fatherhood is not. Whether a woman is rural, or urban, educated or uneducated, married or unmarried, working or non-working, the mantle of motherhood has to be worn like a crown of achievement. She finds fulfilment in nourishing her child, in tending to its needs, in watching it grow up, sprout wings and take flight. But motherhood is also a mirage which never materialises in terms of emotional returns. She is so unwittingly bonded into the motherhood trap that she is not even aware of it.

A woman is not bonded upto her work-life also, whether at home or in the market-place. Her work is only a means to satisfy other people's ends. Her housework remains unremunerated and reduces her to the role of an unproductive consumer when in reality, she is the lowest consumer of goods and services within the family. In the market-place,

she is expected to work fulfilling her social norms and filial requirements.

Women are in bondage even during this period of transition of ideologies about the Woman-Question. The question is what woman is expected to be in a more utopian social setup where more egalitarian roles have been earmarked for members of either sex. The total socio-economic structure gives the woman an apparent security that makes the woman shy away from defying social norms or from questioning old values. At the same time, women have not yet been able to form a clear concept of new values that could replace old and outdated ones without disturbing the balance of basic human relationships.

Soma Chatterji advocates that the religious bondage has to be broken down which a) makes the woman carry the burden of rituals and practices without giving them any place in the hierarchy of the priestal structure, b) confirms and perpetuates the subordinate position of woman, and c) takes advantage of women's illiteracy and ignorance that creates religious vulnerability to make them strong believers and perpetuators of faith (Chatterji;1988:117). The textbooks for school children, the advertisements in the mass media, the new reports, the cinema, even fiction and literature till today largely abound in propagating the bondage idiom. It is time we realised the unwantedness as well as weakness of these bonds inspite of their historical strength and went ahead to break them, to help the woman to climb out of the

trap.

b) The oppressed minority

Oppression is a woman problem. Whether it is Shah Bano or Shahnaz Hussain, or Mathura or Maya Tyagi, it is only a difference in the degree of oppression that differentiates a Muslim woman from a Hindu one, or a high caste Hindu woman from the tribal or Harijan woman. It has to be fought as a Woman-Question because, qualitatively, women remain a minority (Chatterji;1988:79).

Article 14 of the Indian Constitution states that all persons, male and female, are equal before the law and shall get equal protection before law. Article 15 says that there shall be no discrimination against any person on grounds of sex. Article 16 guarantees equality of opportunity in matters of public employment irrespective of sex.

But the equality enshrined in the laws is still elusive to women. In terms of quantity, the country's half population is women. In qualitative terms, however, women are a minority, because in the patriarchal society in which they live, the productive factors, the institution of private property, family lineage and inheritance are all passed on from the father to the son. Thus, power dominance, force and strength are vested in the man of the community. When one particular sex has so much of power in their hands obviously the other sex, women, do not have these avenues of

power and strength. In other words, equality is a myth where men are dominating and women are dominated. For example, in an Indian marriage, irrespective of religion, patriarchy and male dominance prevail.

This patriarchal ideology has certainly an adverse effect on the position of women irrespective of whether the women are functioning within their traditional domestic sphere or outside it. According to Engels, the original relation between men and women was one of mutual dependence. But this status of equality between the sexes and their work gradually changed to that of inequality and subjugation of women along with the evolution of the privatization and ownership vested in men and not in women. The main reason for this was that since men were responsible for the procurement of food and other needs of subsistence as a natural corollary it would be men who would come to own the means and the results of production. With the beginning of private property, the economic unit of the family made men the controllers and women the controlled.

According to Karl Marx, the woman was just another victim as the worker was, in the class division of labour. Marx and Engels did not separate the issue of sexual definition of roles, purposes, activities etc. and the resultant division of labour within the family from that of class exploitation. The relationship of the husband and the wife within the family was the same as that between the bourgeoisie and proletariat. The radical feminist for the

first time, established that a patriarchal organization in society is determined basically by the male hierarchical order which enjoys economic and political power. And it is this kind of patriarchal organization that defines the position of the women in this hierarchy of power. The patriarchal system sustains itself through marriage and family. Patriarchy rooted in the woman's biological role in reproduction gives rise to this sexual division of power. Class structure and the women's role in it is not considered of significance.

The concept of biological determinism is too simplistic to explain the low status of women in the world because the question of women's oppression is a complex, socially and historically constructed phenomenon. Besides this drawback, by assuming that men and women are biologically different and their natural biological difference makes the woman a merely reproductive instrument and thus, places her lower down on the rung of economic status, we must also accept that such a position between the sexes will never lend itself to either change or modification or contemporization, says Chatterji in The Indian Woman's Search for an Identity.

She further adds, a synthesising of the Marxist approach with that of the radical feminists gives rise to what is termed as socialist feminism as propounded by Zilla Eisenstein. In her attempt to put forth a more scientific and pragmatic approach to the question of women's

oppression, she has drawn clear lines of distinction between oppression and exploitation. In her opinion, exploitation applies to women and to minorities as they are defined within patriarchal, racist, and capitalist relations. In other words, while men and women are both exploited in a capitalist society as workers in the labour force, women are oppressed in the same society not only as wage-labourers but also as the sexually lower class in the socio-sexual hierarchy within and without the family.

Suguna Paul says (Chatterji;1988:82) that in social relations of production and reproduction, women face oppression due to two major men-held concepts: a) that men are more important than women, and b) that women are pleasure-givers and help men by coping and adjusting to their needs and demands all the time and thus the women are to be placed on a pedestal for all this sacrifice. As such, women are controlled in the patriarchal socialization process in the following ways: i) it defines women, ii) it defines the external world and defines women's position within it, and iii) provides women's definition of others and their relationship with them. This points out clearly that a women's participation in the social process and her identity is determined through and by the men in her life.

Social conditioning and individual coercion within the family unit is so complete, specially in the Indian situation, that most of the women, educated or not, are not even aware of it. Educated and professional women themselves

have been reported to talk about sexual subjugation within the family - subjugation means wilful subservience to male demands - subsuming the priorities of the self to the needs and demands of the family. And this is what cuts across all barriers of caste, class, communities and language.

As outlined above, women are definitely a minority from the power - politics point of view, from the view of ownership of economic assets, from the point of view of status.

The social and economic violence is also generated against woman. Mathura was not raped because she was a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian, but because she was a woman. Shah Bano had to ask for maintenance and raise a hornet's nest about the Muslim Personal Law because she is woman first and a Muslim only afterwards. Of course, all personal laws on marriage, maintenance, inheritance etc., for Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsees and so on have been framed by the men, and it is doubtful whether a single woman has been consulted in the framing of the laws. Similarly, rape, prostitution, dowry-deaths, wife-battering, domestic violence on the wife by the in-laws, are all problems pertaining to women alone.

It is presumed that westernization will lead to the evolution and growth of rational and secular values and people are expected to cast away their narrow, primordial bonds of traditional more and structural prejudice. This

includes blind and outdated dogmas related to the practice of different religions. To a certain extent, this may have happened, but women have not been included in any such westernized reform of mental values.

The development process also has not helped to raise the status and position of women. On the contrary development has actually taken place at the expense of women. The bias against her, especially with regard to her participation in the allocation of power or in the distribution of the community's resources, has become more pronounced with development than it was before development. For instance, technology and advancement in medical science has permitted us to tailor the size of our family. But the methods of contraception, are again mostly so designed that they can mostly be taken by the women. Men generally avoid taking active steps to curtail their fertility because, despite development, male fertility is linked to masculinity and the male ego. Thus a woman is a victim of her own fertility.

Modernization, an inevitable consequence of development, has also given rise to a revival of obscurantist and traditional notions that go to reinforce the inferior status of women. Special programmes conceived for the upliftment of women do not ever aim at a reduction of inequalities between the sexes. They are only directed at the backward and the poor, or rural women per se and not as women who can compare

equally with men (Chatterji;1988:84). Division of women into whatever oppressed or exploited category cannot solve the problem or lift them from their inferior position. Even Gandhi who inspired women to come out of their kitchens to participate in the freedom struggle did not wish women to take up such jobs or employment which would come in the way of their traditional mother, wife roles.

c) Some feministic remedies

Since the recorded history of the development of the position of women in Hindu society, barring the Vedic age, a girl has always been thought of as paraya dhan (someone else's wealth). This particular view determines our approach to female children. There is always a feeling that whatever is spent on her education or training is for someone else's benefit, as she will leave her parent's home at her marriage, to enter her matrimonial home as a permanent member. This narrow outlook ignores the fact that a bride endowed with knowledge and ability, would be able to contribute to the family although trained by someone else. And so far there has not been a radical change in this thinking.

In modern times, although there is a marked improvement in the position of a female child, the pre-eminence of the male child in the family has not suffered the slightest erosion. The bias against female child will continue as long as Hindu priests hold the field and old concepts hold sway.

For example, the belief that spiritual benefits for one's ancestors can only be assured through the offering of oblations by a son, and that a female child is parayadhan. The modern manifestation of this outlook is prevalence of amniocentesis tests and the termination of pregnancy if the foetus is found to be female.

The vedic period was a golden age for women, assert some historians. In those days, apparently there was no difference in the treatment of male and female children in their education, and women were more often trained in arts and crafts. The highly respectable status for women in the Vedic period was based on their position in pre-vedic times when there existed a pre-hunting state in which social organization and importance centered around women's food gathering, bearing and rearing of children. However, during the post-vedic pastoral economy, when agriculture was becoming a vocation, male authority became dominant and the position of women became increasingly more dependent. The Arthshastra-society was one of the historical stages in the process of development. Self-consumption or barter were the principal facets of the economy. Women's labour was considered useful and hence necessary for social existence. There was therefore, no denying a place to women in the family and in the social system.

The feudal period saw the establishment of the institution of private property, the division of society into castes, and the superimposition of the influence of the

mercchantile community. This period saw the exploitation of the weak by the strong in as much as there were no fixed hours and the wages were very low. Women worked as helpers or as assistants to men. This enclosed and parochial feudal system rigidified the caste system and created a wide disparity between feudatories and the peasantry, and bred some barbaric practices like torture and human sacrifice. The seclusion of women became an accepted custom, though lower caste women did enjoy a certain measure of freedom. Among the upper caste women, extreme forms of seclusion provoked banal intrigue, and amorous adventures ... Sati became a mark of feudal prestige among the upper castes. Though ownership of Stridhan by women came to be recognised, it excluded any property inherited from a male or a female concept of stridhan. The family became a unit and concept of karta (responsible head) which permits only a male to be one, came to be established (Desai;1989:5).

And now, women as a class are coming out of hibernation, and assessing themselves with regard to their status, position and right to property. In sharp contrast is the mounting cruelty against them, with the culprits going scot free. There is an erroneous belief that women in modern times are better off than their earlier counterparts in the matter of rights to property. Until 1936, a widow was not entitled to a share in her deceased husband's rights in the copercenary property. Statutes like the Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act and the provisions of the Hindu Succession

Act are magnified beyond proportion to establish this contrast between ancient and modern rights of women. But the comparison is superficial.

Once the consciousness grew that under the modern textual law, a daughter would inherit to the some extent as a son, the tendency to dispose off property by will, more or less excluding the daughter, has manifested itself. In this context, Muslim women are comparatively at an advantage, as Muslim law restricts the power of an owner of property to dispose it off by will. There is no such restriction in Hindu Law except that in the event of exclusion, maintenance can be claimed. It is high time that a movement is launched for radically altering Hindu Law, by providing that no holder of property will be entitled to exclude nearest relations such as wife, daughter, widow, daughter-in-law, etc. from inheriting his property. Some kind of restriction of disposal by will would be in the interest of the wife, daughters and others.

A destitute woman once married and discarded may seek maintenance in the Hindu Law. The Muslim women, however, are at a comparative disadvantage in view of the Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986.

Another important area in which a movement should be launched is the relation of marriage. Marriage in one's life brings about basic alteration in relationships. The girl leaves the parental home and walks into an unfamiliar

environment, in which she has no rights except through husband. Measures must be taken to bring about such a change as would make the wife or the husband as the case may be, an equal sharer in every kind of property to include tenancy rights, nominations in insurance policies, provident fund and gratuity accounts, community property and any other acquisitions brought about by joint ventures.

Even while computing the GNP the contribution of a woman in the family is totally ignored if she is not a working woman. It is said that running a house, bringing up the children and allied activities do not bring in any economic regeneration in the family. From the time of marriage, all acquisition of property should be considered as the outcome of joint ventures of both the partners entailing equal rights.

In the case of destitute women, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, the state should make effective provisions for their security, for providing work, education, and for securing public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement and in other cases of under-served want. This is a social overhead, a measure of social justice and an obligation on society to look after the destitute.

Desai rightly said that in the development of women's rights, the conclusion is 'little done and vast undone'. Those who have enjoyed rights against women will not easily

give up their entrenched position. Concessions and privileges will have to be snatched (Desai;1989:8).

d) Social legislation

Legislation by itself can never bring about change in society. Social legislation devoid of political will is a weak and blunt weapon which cannot beat age old traditions and prejudices. Progressive forces need to instil values of equality through education and reformist movements into society and mobilise public opinion to fight against an evil system.

Our society is basically feudal, built on hierarchal structures which proclaim the inequality of human beings. The Chaturvarna system (the division of Hindu society into four basic castes) has infiltrated into every religious group: even Islam and Christianity still cling to these basic inequalities which are deeply rooted in the social psyche of the masses.

Women are treated either as goddesses or as slaves. Increasing lust for material gain or pleasure has reduced them to commodities through which these passions are satisfied. Dowry deaths, rapes, prostitution or sati are different facets of the greed filled society. Killing woman for dowry or having her burnt as a sati has an economic dimension also. She brings financial gain to her husband's family, as they acquire her property, while the woman committing sati adds social and religious acclaim to the

family's material benefits.

Pramila Dandavate wonders that in Bengal an otherwise advanced state although enlightened men advocated widow remarriage from 1817 onwards, today also Bengali widows are disfigured and abandoned on the ghats of the Ganga. A shopkeeper at Deorala - Roop Kanwar's sati site - interviewed by the JAC against sati had remarked : let Rajputs allow their widows to remarry. Then see how many widows commit suicide (Dandavate; 1989:88).

A recent study of dowry victims in Delhi has indicated that incidence of dowry victims cases is astronomically higher than official police records. Similarly outraging the modesty of women, prostitution, rape etc. are also mounting at an alarming rate. According to the data collected by the BPR&D, crimes against women registered under the IPC including rapes, have more than doubled since the 1970s.

Inspite of the fact that the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1984 provided for enhanced punishment for the accused in matters of custodial rape, and shifted the onus of proof of innocence on the accused, reports of gang rapes by the police continue to occupy space in newspapers.

During the last few years there has been a spurt in legislation meant ostensibly to protect women from violence. Dandavate comments that the existing Laws are

being amended and new ones enacted mostly as a cosmetic measure to hoodwink the public. This is exposed when the retrogressive Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights and Divorce) Act, 1986 was passed after the ruling party had issued a whip to its members. This legislation has indeed been a great blow to the emancipation of women, and has pushed them back by two centuries, and has given new lease of life to religious fundamentalists and obscurantists who can now perpetrate injustice on women in the name of religion with impunity.

The murder of Roop Kanwar was glorified as Sati, inspite of the fact that its obnoxious practice was abolished in 1829 after the tireless efforts of Raja Rammohan Roy and William Bentinck in the face of opposition from orthodox Hindus. It required another law in 1987 to contain the unwanted glorification by the fundamentalists of the Sati. But a hue and cry was needed to awaken the Government in the absence of a political will. Law makers must be made to realise that sati is never a voluntary act and is invariably forced on a woman. Cultural conditioning through the ages forces her to prefer a death that grants her an honourable place as a goddess to a contempt-ridden shadow existence as a widow. Sati is a murder. It is surprising that the authorities failed to take action for Shankaracharya Niranjan Dev's inflammatory speeches condemning the anti-sati legislation.

Social reform movements of the 19th century created enlightened public opinion in favour of a widow having as much of an inherent right to dignity in a new life after her husband's death as the husband himself has after his wife's death. A galaxy of social reformers spearheaded this movement, using every weapon in their armoury to change social attitudes concerning women. Raja Rammohan Roy strove to abolish sati. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Pandita Ramabai, Dayanand Saraswati, Lok Hitwadi (G.H.Deshmuchi), Jyotiba Phule, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Karsandus Mulji, Madhvas, Maharishi Karve and many others worked for the acceptance of widow remarriage. Among other attitudinal changes, they called for a ban on the shaving of the heads of widows. This movement worked tirelessly for women's education and economic independence.

Later the dynamism of Mahatma Gandhi made social reform an integral part of the freedom struggle. Women of every stratum of society were knit together and brought into the mainstream of politics. Their contribution to the freedom struggle was recognised by the framers of our Constitution when they gave men and women equal status and an equal right to adult franchise.

After forty five years of independence, Pramila Dandavate avers, India is facing a moral crisis. Social

equality and justice are being sacrificed for political expediency. The need of the hour is to create the political will necessary to defeat religious fundamentalism and obscurantism. Women who constitute half the electorate must assert their political power to create this will and turn the tide from its present downward sweep to regression and slavery upwards again towards independence, dignity and freedom. Unless this is done a simple legislation cannot change the existing system.

e) The Awakening

Over the past decade, thinking persons have become very much aware of the many dangers that threaten a woman and keep her from occupying her rightful place in Indian life. Religious fundamentalism, excessive zeal for patriarchal attitudes and obscurantism continue to strengthen the hands of those who feel threatened by women's endemic strength. There is a concerted effort to condition her into accepting a life of subservience and virtuous sacrifice as an ideal existence in the glad assurance of deification, after her death.

More and more social organizations actively involved with problems of powerless women are springing up. Pressure is being mounted on law-makers to redefine outdated laws and voices around the country are calling for speedy implementation. Attitudinal changes on the social and

economic front are being discussed more openly by activists, thinkers and organizations concerned about the existing low status of women in India.

There is need for a strong women's movement. Women in Indian society is fast becoming a saleable commodity. She is present at most weddings as an adjunct to dowry. Heavier and heavier demands for more and more luxury goods even after marriage bring economic pressure on the bride and her family, or else there is harassment and torture. This phenomenon is linked with the current socio-economic environment rather than as a legacy of tradition.

Thousands of girls are driven into a life-time of sexual exploitation and an insecure future by superstition and economic distress. The Devadasi system functions under vineer of religion. It was abolished by the British by the Devadasi Protection Act 1934. However, the pernicious system is alive and strong in today's India.

Although the phenomenon of Sati is fairly regionalised in India and exists by now almost entirely in Rajasthan, the culture of sati is widespread arising from the same nurture bed as all the evils that assail the Indian women. The conditioning of the young school girl as she bows before the Ma Sati goddess whether in her mind or in a temple makes her internalise a desire to sacrifice herself for the man

who will one day be her lord in the glad assurance of ultimate deification. The deification of a woman who burns herself on her husband's funeral pyre legitimises and reinforces traditional societal attitudes towards woman. The development of sati culture is traced from female foeticide onwards, and it is advocated that an enduring personal and societal transformation is needed to meet the challenge of patri-politics.

How does a woman wishing to enter politics cope with a hostile atmosphere in the area of her work? The assurance of equal rights as enshrined in the Constitution remains in the document itself. There is growing awareness that a woman's point of view in policy-making is essential to the total health of a developing society. Now the question is whether patriarchal political structures will allow the development of another dimension or will the sign 'Men Only' stay on the doors.

A woman's life ends with her husband's death. Who remembers the widows who beg for money to pay for their own funeral rites on the ghats of Varanasi? These one time happy brides, now the flotsam and jetsam of political upheaval, child marriages and family property disputes, sing religious songs for a corner to sleep, and a handful of rice and dal to eat, and a pittance to exist on. They will sing and die while society looks the other way, says Pramila Dandavate (Dandavate;1989:X).

Has social legislation ostensibly enacted to protect women, the most vulnerable section of Indian society, accomplished this laudable objective? The answer is an emphatic No. It is argued that the laws and amendments are cosmetic measures meant only to allay public fears. The graph of crimes against women climbs steeply upwards even as protective legislation for women is enacted. Dowry deaths, rape and sati flourish while the guardians of the law stand ineffectively by. It is pleaded for a sorely needed injection of political will to convert the moral crisis of present day India into an ambience conducive to public health and progress.

4. Feminism in India

A number of social reformers and statesmen contributed to the movement of feminism in India. The study in this section covers the historical aspect of it. At the same time the views of Raja Rammohan Roy, Gandhi, Nehru and others who fought against the social evils which are a consequence of oppression of the female sex gives us a great reading of the phenomenological-hermeneutical reasons for women's suppression in Indian tradition. But inspite of a tremendous contribution from all these leaders, the desired change has not come. So far there is only an illusion of change in the status of woman. She is still a subordinate even in the

literal sense of the word.

a) The beginning

The status of women in India has varied in different historical periods and in different regions of the country, and has also been subject to differentiation according to class, religion and ethnicity. The overall situation, however, was one of their suppression and domination within the bounds of a patriarchal system. Whether she belonged to a peasant family and was compelled to drudgery in the field and home or to a high caste family living a life of leisure, she was the victim of a set of values and mores which demanded implicit obedience to male domination, and of many other social practices that circumscribed her life.

Imperialist domination and the attempted imposition of an alien culture, ideology and religion on India produced, several movements of religious and social reform among Hindus and Muslims. These movements - such as the Brahma Samaj which started in Bengal - were intended to cleanse Hinduism of certain corrupt and decadent practices and to counter missionary propaganda. Social reform also became a popular issue among Indian intellectuals, who inspired either by liberal views of social change or in the hope of preventing drastic social change, launched movements to abolish or correct some of the worst abuses that prevailed in the Indian society of the period.

Western education had exposed Bengalis to the late 18th century European ideas of the Enlightenment which emphasised the basic rights of man, and opposition to tyranny. They were also influenced by the parliamentary government, and the right to opposition and rebellion. James Mill, Jeremy Bentham, Bacon, Locke, Hume, Paine and the French 18th century thinkers influenced the reformers. Radical thought and rationalism which encouraged to doubt and question everything instead of blind acceptance of authority were imbibed. Rationalism, individualism, and nationalism were promoted.

The issue of women's emancipation in India under British colonial rule, was closely linked with two important movements: one, a political movement against imperialism, and the other, a social movement to reform traditional structure. The struggle to assert and obtain national independence from western imperialism, influenced the growth of feminism in India. The other movement, which is linked to women's liberation is the social movement to reform traditional structures, which rested on Hinduism. The doctrine of Karma and the social organization of caste play an important role in the good and evil of the Hindu social system in India, which are in turn governed by the patriarchal rules.

With cultural cross-fertilization, Muslim women also become subject, just as much as Hindu women, to all the oppressions of a patriarchal, caste-bound society, and 19th century Islamic reformers fought against many of these practices side by side with Hindu reformers. While the English attributed the low status of Indian women as a whole to the reflection of the general backwardness of the country, the Indian reformers were keen to show that women's status had been high in Indian history, by citing the examples of Sultana Razia, Nurjehan, Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi and others irrespective of their status in the contemporary period.

Movements of reform against the social evil that affected women began in the 19th century. Various reasons have been attributed, such as the impact of English education, missionary activities, the promotion of the nuclear, monogamous family, and liberal ideas from the West, and to internal movements such as the nationalist agitation against imperialism and a religious cultural resistance to the challenge of Christianity and Western culture. The issues tackled by the reform movement including Sati, widow remarriage, polygamy and women's property rights were all problems of women. The basic assumptions of the reformers were that social reform and female education would revitalise and preserve the patriarchal family system, produce more cordial wives and better mothers, and therefore

have stabilising effect on society. It was suspected that middle-class family structures were endangered by the prevailing social evils and was thought that social rigidity, child marriage with its necessary consequences, child-widows, the social taint involved in widow remarriage, all combine to create in society a new class of women who were prone to prostitution. With increasing urbanization, prostitution became more commercialised and the large number of young high-caste widows, helpless victims of family neglect and even torture, was an obvious recruiting ground. This danger could not be ignored by those who wanted to preserve the family and its economy from destruction.

Under the influence of liberalism or using slogans of cultural revival, the bourgeoisie in India were thus enabled, through the reform movement, to prohibit the more extreme abuses affecting women. Since all areas of social reform concerned the family, the effect of the reforms may have been 'to increase conservatism and far from liberating women merely to make conditions within the family structure less deplorable (Jayawardena;1986:80). The social reformers began to agitate on the practice of sati and the ban on widow remarriage. These issues could be easily tackled because they had not existed in very early times and were confined to the upper castes and classes, and if corrected would give India the appearance of being 'civilized' without

endangering the traditional family structures.

b) Raja Rammohan Roy

The pioneer in the agitation for women's rights in India was Raja Rammohan Roy, who had been influenced by Western liberal thought and had attempted to reform and revitalise Hinduism. This was a period when the question of women's emancipation was eagerly discussed in Europe, especially by the radicals and Unitarians in Britain. While the British radicals were directly influenced by the philosophers of the Enlightenment of France (Voltaire, Montesquieu and Rousseau) and by the events of the French Revolution, the Unitarians (liberal Christians who believed in the single personality of God the Father, as opposed to the Trinity) advocated reason and tolerance in the religious sphere and civil liberty in politics, and were at the forefront of reformist and democratic movements.

Roy championed women's rights on four issues: sati, polygamy, women's education and women's property rights. He pointed out that, at marriage wife was recognised as half of her husband, while in after-conduct she was treated worse than inferior animals. The woman was employed to do work of a slave in the house like cleaning the place and dishes, washing the floor, cooking night and day, preparing and serving food for her husband, mother-in-law, etc.

He was particularly horrified by the various types of violence used against women. He noted that amongst the lower

classes, and those even of the better classes, the wife, on the slightest fault, or even on bare suspicion of her misconduct, was chastised as a thief. He reasoned out that respect to virtue and their reputation generally made them forgive even this treatment. If unable to bear such cruel usage, a wife left her husband's house to live separately from him. Then the influence of the husband with the magisterial authority was generally sufficient to place her again in his hands, when in revenge for her quitting him, he seized every pretext to torment her in various ways, and sometimes even put her privately to death. Women were thus dependent and exposed to every misery and one felt for them no compassion, that might exempt them from being tied down and burnt to death.

Roy and other enlightened Bengalis formed the Brahmo Samaj, which drew inspiration from many religions and aimed at changing the debased form of Hinduism that prevailed. The Brahmos challenged all forms of obscurantism and ritual as well as female oppression associated with orthodox beliefs, and many of the later activists who took up issues of women's emancipation were from this group of Brahmo Samaj reformers.

First, Roy tried to banish the older Gods from the lives of all Bengalis. He rejected Kali, Shiva, Krishna. Not only themes of homicidal mother and acquiescent father, but

also those of matricide and infanticide had to be eliminated from the Hindu projective system. Instead, for the first time in a modern Hindu sect the concept of the deity was sought to be made patriarchal.

Brahmoism attacked the matriarchal status of women in the family and religion by emphasising their role in the world of public activities, and it sabotaged the sacred symbols and images with which Bengali women identified and sought compensation from in their narrow and constricted lives. Instead of their magical powers and magical capability of doing harm, they had in Brahmoism the justification for wielding real and direct power as individuals with the right to live their own lives. The emphasis on monism strengthened the social position of women by separating the feminine principles of nature and feminine god-heads from the social role of women. Unlike in the West where the concept of a patriarchal god has often legitimised male dominance, in India divine matriarchy burdened women with the task of coping with shared fantasies of womanly responsibility for failures of nature and nurture. Raja Rammohan Roy's theology was an attempt to liberate Indian women from this responsibility (Nandi;1980: 23).

c) Other reformers

Subsequently other reformers took up issues like widow

remarriage, polygamy, child marriage etc. With the support of the press and British officials, their agitation led to the Act of 1856 which legally permitted the remarriage of widows. Social custom was difficult to change by legislation, however, and it was only the very daring who defied tradition. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Rabindranath Tagore, Dayanand Saraswati were the main propagators. The ideal of the reformers was the monogamous, nuclear family. Polygamy in India was practiced by both Muslims and Hindus of high-caste and class, the Muslims being allowed four wives, the kulin brahmins for example were permitted an indefinite number of wives. The issue of polygamy was campaigned against by the reformers, especially by Vidyasagar. Government policy at that time, however, was against too much interference in traditional practices affecting family life.

The issue of child marriage was also taken up by the reformers. Unlike sati, polygamy and ban on widow remarriage, which affected the upper segments of the society, child marriage was widespread among Hindus (but not practiced by tribal groups). It was considered a religious and social obligation by higher castes, and a means by which to protect their daughters from men with economic power by the lower castes. It was also an economic saving, since male children command lower dowries. Vidyasagar pointed out that child marriage was linked to the problem of Indian

widows because many of the child brides were widowed at early age. K.C. Sen argued that the practice of child marriage was a corruption of the scriptures and wrote that, the custom of premature marriage, as it prevails in this country was injurious to the moral, social and physical interests of the people and was one of the main obstacles in the way of their advancement. Dayanand Saraswati recommended that girls should be educated and only allowed to marry at 16 or 18, arguing that because of child marriage, the Hindus were the children of children.

Regarding property rights of Hindu women, the existing practice was particularly harsh on Hindu widow who had no claim on her husband's property except the right of maintenance, as a result of which she was at the mercy of her husband's relatives. In 1874, the Right of Property Act gave a widow a life interest in her husband's share of the property and a share equal to that of a son; however, the Act did not give a widow the right to own or dispose off this property, and daughters continued to be excluded from rights of inheritance.

Jotirao Phule's anti-Brahmin struggle was also linked to the Women's struggle. He opposed polygamy and child marriage and advocated women's education and widow remarriage, and pointed that the subordination of women was crucial to the general hierarchal organization of caste

society. He doubted whether any husband would become sati by being immolated on the funeral pyre of his wife. G.H. Deshmuch known as Loka Hitwadi, attacked Brahmin traditional practices, including the caste system, child marriage and the treatment of widows. He urged the use of English texts or translations to foster scientific thought and advocated the rejection of Brahmin learning. The Woman-Question remained an important issue of the non-Brahmin movement. Tilak was violently opposed and driven away from a meeting when he opposed free compulsory female education by arguing that there were funds only for male education. Tilak had opposed the setting of higher age limits for marriage for girls, by arguing that it was an unwarranted interference by the British in local custom. His nationalistic ideals clashed with the women liberation movement. (Jayawardena; 1986:83,84,85).

Rabindranath Tagore's Santiniketan was open to women also. He placed great emphasis on the conditions necessary for the release of creative potential in women. He was against traditional customs and practices, while adopting a modern attitude to the role and status of women in society. He had attacked superstitious practices. At the same time, he was a believer in the unique contribution of woman through her special qualities, to the harmonious continuance of human society.

In South India, E.V. Ramaswami Naichar, advocated for equal rights for women and marriages based on 'self-respect' were popularised. This meant that there should be equal consent between the man and the woman at a marriage. Subramanya Bharati, denounced inequitable distribution of wealth in India and the subordination of women. He was insistent on female education and the rights of women, and criticised Tamil conservative society for keeping women in subjection. He often used the image of 'Mother India' and linked the subjection of India with the subjection of women. While many Indian nationalists like Gandhi chose to idealise Sita, the monogamous, chaste, self-sacrificing spouse of Rama, as the model for Indian womanhood, Bharati in contrast wrote poems on Draupadi, the strong-willed, passionate, revengeful, polyandrous wife of the five Pandavas of the Mahabharata. Chandu Menon, from Kerala advocated women's education, stressing the importance of English education to realise that she is of the same creation as man, that she is as free agent as man and that woman is not the slave of man.

There had been many educated women in the upper classes, including famous women writers and poets, but no general education was available for women. Many liberal and conservative reformers campaigned in favour of female education. As in other countries, Indian reformers thought that social evils could best be eliminated through education. However, the concept of education was limited to

producing good house-makers and perpetuating orthodox ideology. Education would not turn the women away from their familial roles, but improve their efficiency as wives and mothers and strengthen the hold of traditional values on society as women are better carriers of these values (Jayawardena; 1987:87).

Although some women were benefited from access to schools and universities, even in the most educationally advanced states of India the vast majority of girls did not attend school. Moreover, education for women was mainly confined to the larger cities and towns and served the needs of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. The policies of promoting women's education and the type of education provided were not intended to promote women's emancipation or independence, but to reinforce patriarchy and the class system. The class bias of the reform movement was most pronounced in the field of education. The plea that education would only improve women's efficiency as wives and mothers left its indelible mark on the education policy.

However, education enabled some women to break into avenues of employment that had previously been denied to them, like doctors, advocates, teachers, nurses and midwives. Rukmabai rebelled against Indian traditionalism.

For the early pioneers of social and religious reform,

women were at first objects of their emancipatory efforts, but in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries they became more and more subjects in the political and social spheres. The women themselves started to overstep the home and family limits envisaged for them by the reformers. Using the argument that women had held high positions in ancient India, Ramabai made an all-out attack against the orthodox priests. She wrote a book, Sthri Dharma Neeti (Women's religious law), which advocated women's emancipation and attacked traditional practices harmful to women.

Many of the issues that agitated the Hindus did not apply to Muslim women since Muslim Law allowed for widow remarriage, divorce and a share of parental property. However, concern was expressed by Muslim male social reformers on issues such as polygamy, purdah and female education. Syed Ahmad Khan, founder of Muslim University at Aligarh, believed that the decline of the Muslims was due to their reluctance to adopt Western-style education, and advocated modern education for both men and women. He also opposed polygamy, taking the view that since a man could not treat all his wives equally (as enjoined in the Qoran), polygamy was not permissible under Islam. He challenged the orthodox views that Islam advocated purda (seclusion) for women or that it discouraged women's education. Hydari writes: "while the education of a boy helps him only, the education of a girl lifts the whole family to a higher state

of mental and moral life" (Jayawardena; 1986:92).

A number of Muslim women also attempted to promote education. Many of them joined the satyagraha and non-cooperation movements. While participation in political activities was more easily tolerated, Muslim opinion was not prepared for changes in laws regulating women's social position.

The active participation of women in life outside the home, began with the political struggle against imperialism. In doing so, they had the support of many nationalist political leaders. The expansion of women's education had produced a number of English educated, middle-class women and they made their presence felt in political activities. The Indian National Congress allowed women to become members. Many women, who had been educated in English had retained traditional values, adhered to certain orthodox values and to the traditional ideal of female religious devotion.

d) Gandhi and women's rights

Gandhi's ideas on women's rights were equality in some spheres and opportunities for self-development and self-realisation. His view of women's equality was within the limits of the patriarchal system, projecting the women's role as being complementary to that of men and embodying virtues of

sacrifice and suffering. For him the female sex is not the weaker sex. It is the nobler of the two as even today it is the embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith and knowledge.

He believed that woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities, and realised that her contemporary subordinate position was the result of domination by man. He said, woman has been suppressed under custom and law for which man was responsible and in the shaping of which she had no hand and argued that the rules of social conduct must be developed only on the basis of co-operation and consultation, and should not be imposed by one sex on the other. Men have considered themselves to be lords and masters of women instead of considering them as their friends and co-workers. Though rural women hold on their own menfolk, the legal and customary status of women is bad enough throughout and demands radical alteration (Joshi;1988:19).

He therefore argues that woman should labour under no legal disability not suffered by men and denounces the sheer force of vicious circumstances by means of which even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority over women which they do not deserve and ought not to have. Yet he thought that there was a particular sphere appropriate for women. This is evident in his views

on female education. He feels, man is supreme in the outward activities of a married pair and therefore, it is in the fitness of things that he should have a greater knowledge thereof. On the other hand, home life is entirely the sphere of women, and therefore, in domestic affairs, in the upbringing and education of children, women ought to have more knowledge. He believed that courses of instruction for men and women should be based on a discriminating application of these basic principles if the fullest life of man and woman is to be developed.

Gandhi was against enforced widowhood, and argued that voluntary widowhood consciously adopted by a woman who has felt the affection of a partner adds grace and dignity to life, sanctifies the home and uplifts religion itself. Widowhood imposed by religion or custom is an unbearable yoke and defiles the home by secret vice and degrades religion.

Regarding chastity of women, Gandhi spoke against double standards for men and women. He questions why there is all this morbid anxiety about female purity when we hear nothing of women's anxiety about men's chastity. Why should men arrogate themselves the right to regulate female purity? To him, self-restraint in sexual matters was a great virtue, but it had to come from within the individual. For Gandhi, marriage was a sacrament, dowry debased marriage, reducing

it to an arrangement for money. Divorce was preferable to the continuance of a marriage which had ceased to be a vehicle for self-realisation. Gandhi's ideal woman was the mythical Sita, the self-sacrificing, monogamous wife of the Ramayana, who guarded chastity and remained loyal to Ram in spite of many provocations. Thus his ideal woman contained in fact many traits of the Puritan-Victorian ideal of woman.

Gandhi had no notion of economic equality of women. As Mies remarks: In Gandhi's idealised image of women her economic activity, especially the aspect of her economic independence, is not emphasised. On the economic independence of women he speaks evasively. The image of the modern independent career woman does not fit into Gandhi's conception of the ideal woman (Jayawardena;1986:96,97).

As regards the issue of non-violent struggle, he exhorted women to join the nationalist movement by recognising their great ability to endure suffering. He claimed that the principle of non-violence and political non-violent resistance suited to women, as they were by nature non-violent, and for the courage of self-sacrifice woman is superior to man. He therefore, asserted that in order to play her full and destined role in world affairs, in the solution of conflicts by non-violent means, women must extend their hearts and interests beyond the narrow confines of their homes and family and embrace the whole of

humanity.

Gandhi advocated for equal rights of freedom and liberty for woman with man. She is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his. He realised that many of our movements stop half-way because of the condition of our women. He pointed out from time to time that there was no justification for men to deprive women or to deny them equal rights on the grounds of their illiteracy, but education was essential for enabling women to uphold these natural rights, to improve them and to spread them. As true knowledge of self was unattainable by the millions who were without such education, Gandhi opined that education was necessary for women as it was for men.

For Gandhi man is supreme in the outward activities of a married pair and, therefore, in domestic affairs, in the upbringing and education of children, women ought to have more knowledge. Not that knowledge should be divided into water tight compartments or that some branch of knowledge should be closed to any one; but unless courses of instruction are based on a discriminating appreciation of these basic principles, the fullest life of man and woman cannot be developed. For him the first task in the country is to educate women. Education will help them to safeguard their virtue. For doing this what we require is not much erudition but strength of character (Joshi;1988:20).

The solution to the question of breaking down the feminine prejudice is in female education, according to Gandhi. And in this, it is a question not merely of education of girls but it is one of the education of married women. He advocates that man and woman have separate spheres of activity and their training therefore, should also be different. The duty of women is to look after hearth and home. This does not imply that work of one is inferior while that of other superior, the spheres of the two are complimentary.

Gandhi says, education is necessary, but it must follow the freedom. We need not wait for literacy education to restore womanhood to its proper state, as without literacy education also our women are as cultured as any other on the face of the earth. He therefore, places remedy largely in the hands of husbands.

For him equally important is the question of the status of women. They can no longer be treated either as dolls, or slaves without the social body remaining in a condition of social paralysis. The way to women's freedom is not through education, but through the change of attitude on the part of men and corresponding action.

Gandhi feels, just as on the one hand it is wrong to keep women in ignorance and under suppression, so on the

other hand, it is a sign of decadence, and it is tyrannical to burden them with work which is ordinarily done by men. He says there are men to whom their women are no better than animals. For this sad state, some of the sanskrit sayings and the well-known doha of Tulsidas may be held responsible. Either, this couplet is an interpolation or, if it is his, he must have written it without much reflection, following the tradition in his time, opines Gandhi. He says, as to the sanskrit sayings, people seem to labour under the impression that every verse in that language was a scriptural precept. We must fight this impression and pluck out from its very root the general habit of regarding women as inferior beings. On the other hand, blinded by passion, many among us regarded women as beautiful dolls to be adored as so many goddesses and decorate them with ornaments just as we have Thaorhi dressed up in new finery every few hours. We must keep away from this evil also (Joshi; 1988:14,15,16).

Gandhi writes : It is said that women are jealous, but this does not mean that men are free from this failing or that all women are jealous. Women have to stay indoors for all the twenty-four hours and therefore their jealousy becomes more conspicuous. His ideal is : A man should remain man and yet should become woman; similarly a woman should remain woman and yet become man. This means that man should cultivate the gentleness and discrimination of a woman, and

woman should cast off her timidity and become brave and courageous.

Regarding women's rights, he writes "why should women have either to beg or to fight in order to win back their birth right? It is strange and also tragically comic to hear man born of woman talk loftily of 'the weaker sex' and nobly promising 'to give' us our due. Where is the nobility and chivalry in restoring the people that which has been unlawfully wrested from them by those having brute power in their hands?" (Joshi;1988:215).

He opines that just as fundamentally man and woman are one, their problem must be one in essence. Each is a compliment of the other. But somehow or other man has dominated woman from ages, and so woman has developed an inferiority complex. She has believed in the truth of man's interested teaching that she is inferior to him. At the same time he argues that she is essentially mistress of the house. He is the bread-winner, she is the keeper and distributor of the bread. The art of bringing up the infants of the race is her special and sole prerogative.

He further adds, men and women work on the fields, the heaviest work being done by the males. The women keep and manage the homes. They supplement the meager resources of the family, but man remains the main bread-winner.

For him, woman is the incarnation of ahimsa. Ahimsa means infinite love, which again means infinite capacity for suffering. Who but women, the mother of man, shows this capacity in the largest measure, he asks. She shows it as she carries the infant and feeds it during nine months and derives joy in the suffering involved. In the joy of creating she forgets the pangs of labour.

He encourages that while cultivating self-confidence and courage, women should exercise wisely their natural qualities of humility, simplicity and kindness with which God has endowed them. Indian women were never weak, are not so even today and will not be so in future. While admitting that today women have taken the downward path, he admonishes them that in their craze for equality with men, they have forgotten their duty.

He argues, "what to do with the smritis that contain texts, that are in conflict with other texts in the same smritis and that are repugnant to the moral sense ... all that is printed in the name of scriptures need not be taken as the word of God or the inspired word. But everyone cannot decide what is good and authentic and what is bad and interpolated. There should therefore be some authoritative body that would revise all that passes under the name of scriptures, expurgate all texts that have no moral values or are contrary to the fundamentals of religion and morality,

and present such an edition for the guidance of Hindus (Joshi;1988:300).

For him family is first and women's position at home is also first. It would be a dreary home of which woman was not the centre. Such a woman would have a subsumed relation with her husband. She is Sati. Gandhi opines that a sati would regard marriage as a means of realising the ideal of selfless and self-effacing service by completely merging her individuality in her husband. She would prove her sati not by mounting the funeral pyre at her husband's death, but by proving it with every breath that she breathes.

e) Nehru and Women's rights

Having sympathised with the cause of the suffragists while in Britain, and having been exposed to the liberal and socialist debates on the 'Woman Question', he took what was at that time a 'progressive' stand on women's issues.

He was rather suspicious of constant evocations of the past: "I must confess to you that I am intensely dissatisfied with the lot of the Indian women today. We hear a good deal about Sita and Savitri. They are revered names in India and rightly so, but I have a feeling that these echoes from the past are raised chiefly to hide our present deficiencies and to prevent us from attacking the root cause of women's degradation in India today" (Jayawardena;1986:98).

He particularly emphasized the necessity for women to work outside the home, to be economically independent, and not to regard marriage as a profession. Freedom depends on economic conditions even more than political and if a woman is not economically free and self-earning, she will have to depend on her husband or someone else and dependents are never free. He realised that this economic bondage was 'the root cause of the troubles of the Indian women', and clearly perceived that superficial reforms would not serve the cause of their emancipation. 'The joint family system of the Hindus, a relic of a feudal age utterly out of keeping with modern conditions, must go and so also many other customs and traditions. But the ultimate solution lies only in complete refashioning of our society' (Jayawardena; 1986: 97,98).

He did not agree that there was a fixed sphere for women and that education for women should therefore have a different emphasis. He did not also agree that women's place was in the home, that her duty was to be a devoted wife, bringing up her children skillfully, and dutifully obedient to her elders. He criticised this thinking as follows : "May I say that I do not agree with this idea of women's life or education? What does it signify? It means that woman has one profession and one only, that is the profession of marriage and it is our chief business to train her for this profession. Even in this profession her lot is to be of secondary

importance. She is always to be the devoted help-mate, the follower and the obedient slave of her husband and others. I wonder if any of you here read Ibsen's Doll's House, if so, you will perhaps appreciate the word 'doll' when I use it in this connection. The future of India cannot consist of dolls and playthings and if you make half the population of a country the mere playthings of the other half, an encumbrance on others, how will you ever make progress? Therefore, I say that you must face the problem boldly and attack the roots of evil" (Jayawardena;1986:99).

f) The illusion of change

Despite the many pronouncements of good intent by the male leaders, however, most of them still saw a women's role basically as that of a housewife within a conservative family structure. Women activists became subsumed in the political struggle; women were lauded for being good satyagrahis but the real issues that concerned them as women were regarded by the men as of secondary importance. The agitation of the early social reformers about the social evils that affected women in the family were supplanted by nationalist issues, resulting in the neglect of women's unequal social and economic position. What is more, the few women's issues that were taken up were those that interested the middle-class women's organizations, such as the suffrage questions.

The emphasis of people like Sarojini Naidu was on harmony and comradely cooperation between men and women in the common struggle for freedom and progress, not on confrontation.

The most striking aspect has been the essential conservatism of what on the surface seemed like radical change. While highlighting and legally abolishing the worst exercises (like sati), emphasising female education, and mobilising women for satyagraha, the movement gave the illusion of change while women were kept within the structural confines of family and society. Revolutionary alternatives or radical social changes affecting women's lives did not become an essential part of the demands of the nationalist movement at any stage of the long struggle for independence, and a revolutionary feminist consciousness did not arise within the movement for national liberation, writes Jayawardena (Jayawardena;1986:107).

Women in the national struggle did not use the occasion to raise issues that affected them as women. Instead of liberating themselves from traditional constraints and bondage the women's roles within the family as wives, daughters and mothers were reiterated and re-established in tune with the requirements of the family in the changing society. Thus, while Indian women were to participate in all

stages of the movement for national independence, their performance was as per the dictates of the male leaders and was in conformity with the prevalent ideology on the position of women.

Women's oppression today, has to be seen in a holistic perspective. What is the link between sati, dowry deaths, female foeticide, sexual harassment, sexual crimes and the status of women being regarded as a non-entity, a non-person, with no identity except that bestowed on her as some men's daughter, sister, wife, mother etc. It is said these very forms of oppression of women are rotten fruits delivered by the vicious and decadent tree of Indian patriarchy. The eulogization of satihood and justification of prohibition of widow-marriage by patriarchs like Vivekananda, Gandhi etc. has proved detrimental to Indian women today as it has indoctrinated a new breed of patriarchs be it the priests, police or politicians. There cannot be a free will, when the mythology imbibed and norms which she has internalised portray her subordinate status and provide psychological anesthetization. She is not seen as an independent entity who can live unblemished as a widow or a divorcee. A thousand years of shastric (patriarchal) socialization has compelled women to live and die for patriarchy.

When it comes to the evil of dowry, some may think that

the solution lies in a stern piece of legislation which prescribes deterrent punishment for those who demand dowry and those guilty of bride-burning. But deterrent legislation may not be enough. The police, judiciary, especially judiciary at the lower levels, and the general public need to be educated about dowry, the hardship it causes to poor and middle class parents and how it degrades those who receive it while impoverishing those who pay it.

Judges must look for clear and indisputable evidence especially in a case where a person is charged with having committed murder. But can such evidence be available in cases where the husband, his mother and brothers all conspire to do away with the husband's wife who is staying with them? A number of victims are educated women, some are even working women. Yet they seldom show independence of mind to leave their husband's homes, and choose instead to remain there and suffer persecution. It is the fear of social stigma that prevents them from remaining alone? The movement to combat dowry should be built around the core idea that men and women are equals and should have equal access to education, employment, property etc. It may be a very difficult idea to accept.

Women will be able to free themselves from all social and economic dependence as soon as they are economically independent. This will automatically render dowry invalid.

And once dowry is uprooted as incidental to social change, the bond of marriage as a sacred instrument for binding social relationships between two families and two individuals will become stronger and lose the commercial touch of the economic laws of demand and supply.

With an improvement in economic condition, and more and more education, the traditional bias against the female child is expected to disappear. A female will no longer be a non-entity or a non-person. But such a status does not appear to be so near. A conscientious effort has to be continued to be made.

PART THREE

**ON HER WAY TO
SELF - IDENTITY**

P A R T - III

On Her Way to Self Identity

I. The Feminine Freedom

Woman's status has been evaluated by Simone De Beauvoir on the basis of existentialist philosophy in her book Second-Sex. Most of the ideas of this famous thinker I would like to tilt towards in this part.

The relation of man to woman is the most natural relation of human being to human being. By it is shown to what point the natural behaviour of man has become human or to what point the human being has become his natural being, to what point his human nature has become his nature. It is for man to establish the reign of liberty in the midst of the world of the given. To gain the supreme victory, it is necessary that by and through their natural differentiation men and women unequally affirm their brotherhood.

To emancipate woman is to refuse to confine her to the relations she bears to man, not to deny them to her. Let her have her independent existence and she will continue none the less to exist for him also, mutually recognising each other as subject, each will yet remain for the other an other. When we abolish the slavery of half of humanity along with the hypocrisy that it implies, then the division of humanity will reveal its genuine significance and the human couple will find its true form.

The battle of sexes is not implicit in the anatomy of man and woman. It is only taken for granted that a battle is being waged between those vague essences, the Eternal Feminine and the Eternal Masculine. The fact is that today neither men nor women are satisfied with each other. They are opposed, merely marks a transitional moment in human history. Even with the extreme bad faith, it is impossible to demonstrate the existence of rivalry between the human male and female of a truly physiological nature. Their hostility may be considered intermediate between biology and psychology: psycho-analysis.

The central thesis of de Beauvoir's work is that since patriarchal times women have in general been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world in relation to men, a position comparable in many respects with that of racial minorities inspite of the fact that women constitute numerically atleast half of the human race, and further that this secondary standing is not imposed of necessity by natural 'feminine' characteristics but rather by strong environmental forces of educational and social tradition under the purposeful control of men. This has resulted in the general failure of women to take a place of human dignity as free and independent existents, associated with men on a plane of intellectual and professional equality, a condition that not only has limited their achievement in

many fields but also has given rise to pervasive social evils.

Feminine literature, she remarks, is in our society today animated less by a wish to demand women's rights than an effort towards clarity and understanding. With approval the independent woman today, in the end gives persuasive expression to her vision of the future. Her philosophy is focused in the existentialism of Sartre.

One wonders if women still exist. It is recognised that females exist in the human species, and yet we are told that femininity is in danger. Women are exhorted to be women, remain women, become women. It would appear then, that every female human being is not necessarily a woman. Surely woman, like man, is a human-being. Such a declaration is abstract. To decline to accept such notions as the Eternal Feminine, the Black Soul, the Jewish Character, is not to deny that Jews, Negroes, Women exist today - this denial does not represent a liberation for those concerned, but rather a flight from reality. She was denying her feminine weakness, but it was for love of a militant male whose equal she wished to be. In truth, humanity is divided into two classes of individuals whose clothes, faces, bodies, smiles, gaits, interests, and occupations are manifestly different. Perhaps these differences are superficial, but they do most obviously exist.

Today the conflict between man and woman takes a different shape. She no longer wants to drag him into the realms of immanence but herself wants to emerge into the light of transcendence. However, the attitude of the males creates a new conflict. He is very well pleased to remain the sovereign subject, the absolute superior, the essential being and therefore refuses to accept his companion as an equal in any concrete way. She assumes an aggressive attitude. Instead of displaying mutual recognition, each free being wishes to dominate the other.

The innumerable conflicts that set them against one another arise because neither is prepared to assume all the consequences of the situation which the one has offered and the other accepted. The truth is that for man she is an amusement, a pleasure, a company, an inessential boon. He is for her the meaning, the justification of her existence. For a man normally integrated in society, time is of positive value: money, reputation, pleasure. For the idle, bored woman, on the contrary, it is a burden she wishes to get rid of. When she succeeds in killing time, it is a benefit to her.

It was later in the eighteenth century that genuinely democratic men began to view the matter objectively. Diderot, among others, strove to show that woman is, like

man, a human being. Later John Stuart Mill came fervently to her defence. But these philosophers displayed unusual impartiality. In the 19th century the feminist quarrel became again a quarrel of partisans. One of the consequences of the industrial revolution was the entrance of women into productive labour, and it was just here that the claims of the feminists emerged from the realm of theory and acquired an economic basis, while their opponents became the more aggressive. Woman was ordered back into the home the more harshly as her emancipation would be a real menace. Even within the working class the men endeavoured to restrain woman's liberation, because they began to see the women as dangerous competitors - more so because they were accustomed to work for lower wages. In proving woman's inferiority, the anti-feminists then began to draw not only upon religion, philosophy, and theology, as before, but also upon science - biology, experimental psychology etc. At most they were willing to grant equality in difference to the other sex. The similarity just noted is in no way due to chance, for whether it is race, a caste, a class, or a sex that is reduced to a position of inferiority, the methods of justification are the same. The Eternal Feminine corresponds to the 'Black Soul' and the 'the Jewish Character'. Both are being emancipated today from a like paternalism, and the former master class wishes to 'keep them in their place' - that is, the place chosen for them.

We shall be able to understand how the hierarchy of the sexes was established by reviewing the data of pre-historic research and ethnography in the light of existentialist philosophy. In the pre-agricultural period, she had hard work to do, and in particular it was she who carried the burdens. In many cases the women were strong and tough enough to take part in the warrior's expeditions. However, pregnancy, childbirth, and menstruation reduced their capacity for work and made them at times wholly dependent upon the men for protection and food. As childbirth and suckling are natural functions, woman found in them no reason for a lofty affirmation of her existence. The domestic labours that fell to her lot, because they were reconcilable with the cares of maternity, imprisoned her in repetition and immanence.

It is not in giving life but in risking life that man is raised above the animal; that is why superiority has been accorded in humanity not to the sex that brings forth but to that which kills. But man assures the repetition of life while transcending life through existence. Woman is basically an existent who gives life and does not risk her life. In truth women have never set up female values in opposition to male values. It is man who, desirous of maintaining masculine prerogatives has invented that divergence. A existentialist perspective has enabled us,

then, to understand how the biological and economic conditions of the primitive horde must have led to male supremacy. It is male activity that in creating values has made of existence itself a value. This activity has prevailed over the confused forces of life, it has subdued Nature and Woman.

It is regardless of sex that the existent seeks self-justification through transcendence - the very submission of women is proof of that statement. What they demand today is to be recognised as existents by the same right as men and not to subordinate existence to life, the human being to its animality. No institution ratified the inequality of the sexes. Indeed there were no institutions - no property, no inheritance, no jurisprudence, no religion as neuter.

In agricultural communities woman was often clothed in an extraordinary prestige. Marriage involved no servitude for the wife, for she was still integrated with her clan. This existentialist position alone enabled us to understand the identification that has existed up to the present time between the clan, the tribe, or the family, and property. In place of the outlook of the nomadic tribes, living only for the moment, the agricultural community substituted the concept of a life rooted in the past and connected with the future. Very often the children belonged to their mother's clan, carried its name, and shared its rights and

privileges, particularly in the use of the land held by the clan. The matrilineal regime was characterised by a veritable assimilation of woman to the earth. Everywhere she creates life; if she kills, she also revives the dead. Luxurious, cruel as Nature, at once propitious and fearsome, woman occupied a very lofty situation.

From the feminine point of view, the Brahmanic epoch shows regression from that of the Rig-Veda, and the later from that of the preceding primitive stage. When a veritable reign of women existed: the matriarchy. Passage from the matriarchate to the patriarchate is the great historical defeat of the feminine sex. The actual condition of woman has not been affected by the type of filiation (mode of tracing descent) that prevails in the society to which she belongs. Whether the system be patrilineal, matrilineal, bilateral, or non-differentiated, she is always under the guardianship of the males. As man is the master of the fertile earth, she is fated to be subjected, owned, exploited like the Nature, whose magical fertility she embodies. The devaluation of woman represents a necessary stage in the history of humanity, for it is not upon her positive value but upon man's weakness that her prestige is founded. Woman was venerated only to the degree that man made himself. It was in terror and not in love that he worshipped her. Their biological advantage has enabled the males to affirm their status as sole and sovereign

subjects. Condemned to play the part of the other, woman was also condemned to hold only uncertain power: slave or idol. It was never she who chose her lot. Men make the gods and women worship them. Women's position in society is always that which men assign to her. Never has she imposed her own law.

The male did not recognise in her being like himself. Since she seemed in his eyes to have the aspect of the other, man could not be otherwise than her oppressor. When he became owner of the land, he claimed also ownership of woman. In primitive times there was no more important ideological revolution than that which replaces matrilineal with patrilineal descent. Thereafter, the mother fell to the rank of nurse and servant, while authority and rights belonged to the father. In making posterity wholly his, man achieved domination of the world and subjugation of woman.

Ancient Greek philosophy showed that alterity, otherness, is the same thing as negation, therefore evil. To pose the other is to define a Manichaeism. That is why religions and codes of law treat woman with such hostility as they do. While setting up the machinery of woman's oppression, the legislators are afraid of her. 'There is a good principle, which has created chaos, darkness, and woman', so said Pythagoras. The laws of Manu define woman as a vile being who should be held in slavery. Laviticus likens

her to the beasts of burden owned by the patriarch. The laws of Solon give her no rights. The Roman code puts her under guardianship and asserts her 'imbecility'. Canon law regards her as a 'devil's doorway'. The Qoran treats woman with utter scorn. How to make of the wife at once a servant and a companion is one of the problems man seeks to solve. His attitude will evolve through the centuries and that will entail an evolution also in the destiny of woman.

Woman was dethroned by the advent of private property, and her lot through the centuries has been linked up with private property. Her history in large part is involved with that of the patrimony. At the time of patriarchal power, man wrested from woman all her rights to possess and bequeath property. The history of woman in the East, in India, in China, has been in effect that of a long and unchanging slavery. But, universally, because she owns nothing, woman does not enjoy the dignity of being a person. She herself forms a part of the patrimony of a man: first of her father, then of her husband. Attached to her husband's hearth, she is no more than his chattel and the chattel of the clan into which she has been put.

Since the oppression of woman has its cause in the will to perpetuate the family and to keep the patrimony intact, woman escapes complete dependency to the degree in which she escapes from the family. If a society that forbids private

property also rejects the family, the lot of woman in it is bound to be considerably ameliorated. In Rome it was the conflict between family and State that determined the history of woman. As per Manu, the husband replaced the father or other guardian; his wife became like one of his daughters, and he had complete control henceforth over her person and her property. Legally more enslaved than the Greek, the woman of Rome was in practice much more deeply integrated in society. The Roman woman of the old Republic has a place on the earth, but she was chained to it for lack of abstract rights and economic independence. The Roman woman of the Decline was the typical product of false emancipation, having only an empty liberty in a world of which man remained in fact the sole master. She was free - but for nothing.

From the Greeks to our own times, woman's condition has remained the same through superficial changes, and it is this condition, that determines what is called 'character' of woman: she revels in immanence, she is contrary, she is prudent and petty, she has no sense of fact or accuracy, she lacks morality, she is contemptibly utilitarian, she is false, theatrical, self-seeking, and so on. There is an element of truth in all this. This will involve a certain amount of repetition, but it will enable us to apprehend the Eternal Feminine, in the totality of her economic, social,

and historical conditioning. They form an integral part of the group, which is governed by males and in which they have a subordinate place. Hence the paradox of their situation: they belong at one and the same time to the male world and to a sphere in which that world is challenged.

Woman herself recognised that world is masculine on the whole. Shut up in her flesh, her home, she sees herself as passive before the men, who set goals and establish values. She believes in magic. She feels that she is surrounded by waves, radiations, mystic fluids, she believes in telepathy, astrology, radiotherapy, mesmerism, theosophy, table-tapping, clairvoyants, faith healers, and her religion is full of primitive superstition. She is doomed to repetitions, she sees in the future only a duplication of the past. They accept them not through sound judgment but by an act of faith - and faith is blind, impassioned, obstinate, stupid, what it declares, it declares unconditionally, against reason, against history, against all denial.

She respects the law simply because it is the law, since her faith is blind. Women are always trying to conserve, to adapt, to arrange, rather than to destroy and build anew. They prefer compromise and adjustment to revolution. In the nineteenth century, women were one of the greatest obstacles in the way of the effort to free the

workers.

The real reason why she does not believe in a liberation is that she has never put the powers of liberty to a test; the world seems to her to be ruled by an obscure destiny against which it is presumptuous to rise in protest. Let the future be opened to her and she will not any longer cling desperately to the past. They are as bold and courageous as men. Many of the faults for which women are reproached - mediocrity, laziness, frivolity, servility - simply express the fact that their horizon is closed.

No existent can be satisfied with an inessential role. Woman is shut up in a kitchen or in a boudoir, and astonishment is expressed that her horizon is limited. Her wings are clipped, and it is found deplorable that she cannot fly. Let but the future be opened to her, and she will no longer be compelled to linger in the present. She insists on living in her situation precisely as she does - that is, in a state of impotent rage. She has been protesting against her condition since her adolescence, ever since her childhood. She protests against men, against life, against her situation, but she does not make good her escape from them. In a sense her whole existence is waiting, since she is confined in the limbo of immanence and contingency, and since her justification is always in the hands of others. She is only one element in masculine life while man is her

whole existence.

It is evident that woman's character - her convictions, her values, her wisdom, her morality, her tastes, her behaviour - are to be explained by her situation. Their vain arrogance, their radical incapability, their obstinate ignorance, make them the most useless non-entities ever produced by the human species. The inevitable result is that masculine accomplishment is far superior to that of women. Simply from the fact that liberty in women is still abstract and empty, she can exercise it only in revolt. Resignedness is only abdication and flight. There is no other way out for woman than to work for her liberation. This liberation must be collective, and it requires first of all that the economic evolution of woman's condition, be accomplished.

The evolution of woman's condition was not a continuous process. Christian ideology has contributed no little to the oppression of woman. St. Paul enjoined self-effacement and discretion upon women. He based the subordination of woman to man upon both the old and the New Testament. St. Ambrose said: 'Adam was led to sin by Eve and not Eve by Adam. It is just and right that woman accept as lord and master him whom she led to sin'. St. Thomas was true to this tradition when he declared that woman is only an 'occasional' and incomplete being, a kind of imperfect man. Woman's inferiority was due to physical weakness and was not moral,

and since women could act as priestesses and prophetesses, they have been better educated than the men. These traditions were continued into the Middle Ages, woman being in a state of absolute dependence on father and husband. Feudalism involved confusion of authority between sovereignty and property, between public and private rights and powers. This explains why woman was alternately elevated and abased under this regime. Neither feudalism nor the Church freed woman. It was rather in emerging from serfdom that the passage from the patriarchal to the truly conjugal family was accomplished. When serfdom was abolished, poverty remained; husband and wife lived on a footing of equality in small rural communities and among the workers. In free labour woman found real autonomy because she played an economic and social part of real importance. By the sixteenth century codified laws denied woman access to 'masculine' positions, deprived her of all civil capacities. All the European legal codes were erected on the basis of Canon law, Roman law, and German law - all unfavourable to woman. On the whole, men in the Middle ages held a rather unfavourable opinion of women.

Woman's legal status, remained almost unchanged from the beginning of the fifteenth century to the nineteenth century, but in the privileged classes her actual situation did improve. In the eighteenth century woman's freedom continued to increase. The mores were still strict: the

young girl got only a sketchy education, and she was married off or sent into a convent without being consulted. The rising middle class imposed a strict morality upon wives. Women did not enjoy that material independence which is one of the necessary conditions for inner liberty. In England, Virginia Woolf remarks, women writers always aroused hostility. The very successes of women aroused new attacks against them. But when society underwent reorganization, she was firmly enslaved anew. From the feminist point of view, France was ahead of other countries, but unfortunately for the modern French woman, her status was decided during a military dictatorship; the Code Napoleon fixing her lot for a century, greatly retarded her emancipation. The coming of the machine destroyed landed property and furthered the emancipation of the working class along with that of women. All forms of socialism, wresting woman away from the family, favour her liberation.

Women regained an economic importance that had been lost since prehistoric times, because she escaped from the hearth and assumed in the factory a new part in production. That was the grand revolution of the nineteenth century, which transformed the lot of woman and opened for her a new era. Engels showed that the lot of woman has been closely tied to the history of private property. But the industrial revolution was the counterpart of that loss of rights and

would lead to feminine emancipation. It is understandable that they made haste to get out into the factories. Besides, it was not long before nothing was left to do outside the workshops except needle-work, laundering, and house work—all slave's work, earning feminine wages. Even lace making etc. were monopolised by the factories. Women were used especially in spinning and weaving mills.

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole what produces this creature. In reality it is not anatomical fate that dictates her attitude. The passivity, that is the essential characteristic of the feminine woman is a trait that develops in her from the earliest years. It is in fact a destiny imposed upon her by teachers and by society. The historical and literary culture to which she belongs, the songs and legends with which she is lulled to sleep, are one long exaltation of man. If the girls want to struggle with the boys and fight for their rights, they are reprimanded.

What is a Woman? The term masculine and feminine are used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers. Just as the oblique was defined with reference to the absolute vertical, the woman was compared to the absolute human type, the masculine. He thinks of his body as

a direct and normal connection with the world, whereas he regards the body of woman as a hindrance, a prison, weighed down by everything peculiar to it. Thus humanity is male and man defines woman relative to him. She is not regarded as an autonomous being. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her. She is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the Absolute - she is the Other. here, 'the Other' is as primordial as consciousness itself.

It is further elaborated, otherness is a fundamental category of human thought. No group ever sets itself up as the one without at once setting up the other over against itself. But the other consciousness, the other ego, sets up a reciprocal claim.-No subject will readily volunteer to become the object, the inessential. But if the other is not to regain the status being the one, he must be submissive enough to accept this alien point of view. But women are not a minority, like the American Negroes or the Jews, there are as many women as men on earth.

Men profit in many subtle ways from the otherness, the alterity of woman. Here is a miraculous balm for those afflicted with an inferiority complex. Refusal to pose oneself as the subject, unique and absolute, requires great self-denial. They do not postulate woman as inferior, for today they are too thoroughly imbued with the ideal of

democracy not to recognise all human beings as equals. He respects woman as wife, and mother, and in the concrete events of conjugal life she stands there before him as a free being. He can therefore feel that social subordination as between the sexes no longer exists and that on the whole, inspite of differences, woman is an equal.

When he is in a co-operative and benevolent relation with woman, his theme is the principle of abstract equality. But when he is in conflict with her, the situation is reversed: his theme will be existing inequality, and he will even take it as justification for denying abstract equality. So it is that many men will affirm as if in good faith that women are the equals of man and that they have nothing to clamour for, while at the same time they will say that women can never be the equals of man and that their demands are in vain. The most sympathetic of men never fully comprehend women's concrete situation.

Women on the whole are today inferior to men; that is, their situation affords them fewer possibilities. The conservative bourgeoisie still see in the emancipation of women a menace to their morality and their interests. Some men dread feminine competition. And economic interests are not the only ones concerned. One of the benefits that oppression confers upon the oppressors is that the most humble among them is made to feel superior. The most

mediocre of males feels himself a demigod as compared with women.

The quarrel will go on as long as men and women fail to recognise each other as equals, that is to say, as long as feminity is perpetuated as such. It is easier to accuse one sex than to excuse the other, says Montaigne. The truth is that if the vicious circle is so hard to break, it is because the two sexes are each the victim at once of the other and of itself. Each blames the other for the unhappiness he or she has incurred in yielding to the temptations of the easy way. What man and woman loathe in each other is the shattering frustration of each one's own bad faith and baseness.

The feminine woman in making herself prey tries to reduce man, also, to her carnal passivity. She occupies herself in catching him in her trap, in enchaining him by means of the desire she arouses in him and submissively making herself a thing. The emancipated woman, on the contrary, wants to be active, a taker, and refuses the passivity man means to impose on her. The modern woman accepts masculine values. She prides herself on thinking, taking action, working, creating, on the same terms as men, instead of seeking to disparage them, she declares herself their equal.

But in men's defence it must be said that women are

wont to confuse the issue. Many women, in order to show by their successes their equivalence to men, try to secure male support by sexual means. They play on both sides, demanding old fashioned respect and modern esteem. She stands before man not as a subject but as an object paradoxically endowed with subjectivity. Man, however, becomes indignant when he treats her as a free and independent being and then realises that she is still a trap for him. If he gratifies and satisfies her in her posture as prey, he finds her claims to autonomy irritating; whatever he does, he feels tricked and she feels wronged.

For both parties marriage is at the same time a burden and a benefit; but there is no symmetry in the relations of two sexes; for girls marriage is the only means of integration with the community, and if they remain unwanted, they are, socially viewed, so much wastage. Boys look to marriage for an enlargement, a confirmation of their existence, but not the mere right to exist, it is a charge they assume voluntarily. In marrying, woman gets some share in the world as her own; legal guarantees protect her against capricious action by man; but she becomes his vassal. She becomes his half. She breaks more or less decisively with her past, becoming attached to her husband's universe. She gives him her person, virginity and a rigorous fidelity being required. She loses some of the rights

legally belonging to the unmarried woman. Roman Law placed the wife in the husband's hands in the position of a daughter. Early nineteenth century writer Bonald pronounced the wife to be her husband as the child is to its mother.

Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society. Economic evolution in woman's situation is in process of upsetting the institution of marriage. It is becoming a union freely entered upon by two independent persons. The obligations of the two contrasting parties are personal and reciprocal. Woman is no longer limited to the reproductive function, which has lost in large part its character as natural servitude and has come to be regarded as a function to be voluntarily assumed; and it is compatible with productive labour, since, in many cases, the time off required by a pregnancy is taken by the mother at the expense of the state or the employer. In primitive societies woman was treated almost like a thing. She was included in deals agreed upon by two groups. The situation is not much modified when marriage assumes a contractual form in the course of its evolution; when dowered or having her share in heritage, woman would seem to have civil standing as a person, but dowry and inheritance still enslave her to her family. Only widows then enjoyed economic independence.

Woman is doomed to the continuation of the species and

the care of the home - that is to say, to immanence. She has no other job than to maintain and provide for everyday life in an orderly way.

Marriage today still retains, for the most part, this traditional form. It enslaves woman to a man, but it makes her mistress of a home. Even when she is more emancipated, she is led to prefer marriage to a career because of the economic advantages held by men. There was general agreement that girls expected marriage to increase their freedom, and therefore were more active than young men in seeking marriage and taking the initiative in the matter. It is of greater benefit to her than to the man, and hence she is more eager for it than he is; but it also means greater sacrifices for her, in particular because it implies a more drastic rupture with the past. Marriages, then, are not generally founded upon love. In patriarchal regimes - as today among certain Mohammedans - it may happen that engaged persons chosen by parental authority have not even seen each other's faces before the wedding day.

Man is woman's justification. She has only to put her existence in his hands and he will give it meaning. This presupposes a humble renunciation on her part. But she is compensated because, under the guidance and protection of masculine strength, she will escape the effects of the original renunciation. She will once more become essential.

Queen in her hive, tranquility at rest within her domain, but borne by man out into limitless space and time, wife, mother, mistress of the home, woman finds in marriage at once energy for living and meaning for her life.

Today the house has lost its patriarchal splendour. For the majority of men it is only a place to live in. But still woman is all for giving her 'interior' the meaning and value that the true house and home once had. Her attitude towards her home is dictated by the same dialectic that defines her situation in general. The home becomes the centre of the world, refuge, retreat, grotto, womb, it gives shelter from outside dangers. In domestic work woman makes her home her own, finds social justification, and provides herself with an occupation, an activity, that deals successfully and satisfactorily with material objects, but provides no escape from immanence and little affirmation of individuality. The housewife makes nothing, simply perpetuates the present. Her labour does not even tend toward the creation of anything durable. Woman is tempted to regard her work as an end itself.

On the whole marriage is today a surviving relic of dead ways of life, and the situation of the wife is more ungrateful than formerly, because, she still performs the same duties but they no longer confer the same rights, privileges, and honours. Man marries today to obtain an

anchorage in immanence, but not to be himself confined therein. Her work within the home gives her no autonomy; it is not directly useful to society, it does not open out on the future, it produces nothing. Woman is not allowed to do something positive in her work and in consequence win recognition as a complete person. However respected she may be, she is subordinate, secondary, parasitic. Because marriage normally subordinates wife to husband, the problem of their mutual relations is posed most sharply to the female. The husband is a demigod endowed with virile prestige and destined to replace her father: protector, provider, teacher, guide, the wife's existence is to unfold in his shadow. He is the custodian of values, the sponsor of truth, the ethical vindication of the couple. He is so firm in his rights that the slightest sign of independence on her part seems to him a rebellion.

The ideal would be for entirely self-sufficient human beings to form unions one with another only in accordance with the untrammelled dictates of their mutual love. In certain privileged cases the wife may succeed in becoming her husband's true companion, discussing his projects, giving him counsel, collaborating in his works. But for a great many women the day passes in much the same fashion. Certain avenues of escape are open to women; but in practice they are not available to all. In the country, especially, the chains of marriage are heavy, and the wife must somehow

accommodate herself to a situation from which she cannot escape. It has been said that marriage diminishes man, which is often true; but almost always it annihilates woman. Many nuances are possible in the relations between a man and a woman; in comradeship, pleasure, trust, fondness, cooperation, love, they can be for each other the most abundant source of joy, richness, and power available to human beings.

The traditional form of marriage is now undergoing modification but it still involves oppression, which the two spouses feel in different ways. The wife does not necessarily spend her days awaiting her husband's return; she may go in for sports, belong to clubs, associations, musical organizations, and the like, she is often busy outside the home, she may even have an occupation that brings her in a little money. Being more positively integrated in society than his wife, he guides the couple in intellectual, political and moral matters. But the basic inequality still lies in the fact that the husband finds concrete self-realisation in work action, whereas for the wife, as such, liberty has only a negative aspect; the situation of young American woman, among others, recalls that of the emancipated Roman woman of the decadent period. Many American wives remain 'home-bodies', in conformity with the traditional model. The rest for the most part only waste

their time and energy.

The fact is that it is the masculine code, it is the society developed by the males and in their interest, that has established woman's situation in a form that is at present a source of torment for both sexes. It is for their common welfare that the situation must be altered by prohibiting marriage as a career for woman. Woman leans heavily upon man because she is not allowed to rely on herself; he will free himself in freeing her, that is to day, in giving her something to do in the world. There are young women who are already endeavouring to win this, positive, active independence; but there are few who persevere for long in their studies or profession. There are women who find true independence in a profession, but there are a great many for whom 'outside work' represents within the frame of marriage only a matter of added fatigue. Besides, it is very difficult to reconcile work and maternity under present conditions.

If as wife, she is not a complete individual, she becomes such as mother: the child is her happiness and her justification. Through the child she is supposed to find self-realisation, sexually and socially; through child bearing, then, the institution of marriage gets its meaning and attains its purpose.

Becoming a mother in her turn, the woman in a sense

takes the place of her own mother. It means complete emancipation for her. If she sincerely desires it, she will be delighted with her pregnancy and will have the courage to go through with it by herself. Maternity is usually a strange mixture of narcissism, altruism, idle day-dreaming, sincerity, bad faith, devotion and cynicism. The great danger which threatens the infant in our culture lies in the fact that the mother to whom it is confided in all its helplessness is almost always a discontented woman. Socially she feels herself inferior to man. She has no independent grasp on the world or on the future. She will seek to compensate for all these frustrations through her child.

Most women simultaneously demand and detest their feminine condition; they live it through in a state of resentment. The disgust they have for their sex might well lead them to give their daughters a man's education, but they are rarely large minded enough. Vexed at having produced a woman, the mother greets her with this ambiguous course : 'you shall be a woman'. It is intolerable for her to have her daughter boldly assert herself as an other, an independent person.

Woman's inferiority originated in her being at first limited to repeating life, where as man invented reasons for living more essential. To restrict woman to maternity would be to perpetuate this situation. She demands today to have a

part in that mode of activity in which humanity tries continually to find justification through transcendence, through movement towards new goals and accomplishments. She cannot be a mother without endeavouring to play a role in the economic, political, and social life of the times. The woman who enjoys the richest individual life will have the most to give her children and will demand the least from them. If too often, today, woman can hardly reconcile with the best interests of her children, it is because feminine employment is still too often a kind of slavery, and no effort has been made to provide for the care, protection and education of children outside the home. This is a matter of negligence on the part of society. But it is false to justify it on the pretence that some law of nature, requires that mother and child belong exclusively to one another. This restriction constitutes in fact only a double and baneful oppression.

It is only in marriage that the mother is glorified, that is, only when she is subordinated to a husband. As long as the latter remains the economic head of the family, the children are much more dependent on him than on her, though she is much more occupied with them than he is. That is the reason why the relation of the mother to her children is intimately affected by that which she maintains with her husband. Affectionately united with her husband, the wife

can cheerfully carry the housekeeping load. Happy in her children, she will be forbearing with her husband. But such harmony is not easy to attain, for the various functions assigned to woman are out of tune with one another. Maternal love often loses itself in the angry scolding that goes with the care of a well-kept home. In many rural populations a woman is only a female domesticated animal, esteemed according to the work she does and replaced without regret if she disappears. But modern woman wants, to feel that people distinguish her as this house-keeper, this wife, this mother, this woman. That is the satisfaction she will seek in social life.

The parallel drawn by Bebel between women and the proletariat is valid in that neither ever formed a minority or a separate collective unit of mankind. Throughout history women have always been subordinated to men, and hence their dependency is not the result of a historical event or a social change - it was not something that occurred. The reason why otherness in this case seems to be an absolute is in part that it lacks the contingent or incidental nature of historical facts.

If woman seems to be the inessential which never becomes the essential, it is because she herself fails to bring about this change. Proletarians say 'we'; Negroes also. Regarding themselves as subjects, they transform the

bourgeois, the whites, into 'others'. But women do not say 'we' except at some congress of feminists or similar formal demonstration. They do not authentically assume a subjective attitude.

They have gained only what men have been willing to grant. And the reason for this is that women lack concrete means for organising themselves into a unit which can stand face to face with the correlative unit. They have no past, no history, no religion of their own; and they have no such solidarity of work and interest as that of the proletariat. They live dispersed among the males, attached through residence, house work, economic condition, and social standing to certain men - fathers or husbands - more firmly than they are to other women. If they belong to the bourgeoisie, they feel solidarity with men of that class, not with proletarian women. The division of the sexes is a biological fact, not an event in human history. The couple is a fundamental unity with its two halves riveted together, and the cleavage of society along the line of sex is impossible. Here is to be found the basic trait of woman: She is the other in a totality of which the two components are necessary to one another.

The home is also the expression of the couple's standard of life, its financial status, its tests. It is essentially the woman's part to direct this social life. The

life of society demands that she make a showing, that she put herself on exhibition, but not that she establish any true communication between herself and others. It does not take her out of her isolation. Man finds company everywhere, constantly makes new contacts. Woman in her restricted sphere and isolation does not know the joys of the comradeship implied in the common pursuit of certain aims.

The devaluation of feminity has been a necessary step in human evolution, but it might have led to collaboration between the two sexes. Oppression is to be explained by the tendency of the existent to flee from himself by means of identification with the other, whom he oppresses to that end. The husband wants to find himself in his wife, in the form of a stone image. Man is concerned with the effort to appear male, important, superior. He feels hostility for women because he is afraid of them. He is afraid of them because he is afraid of the personage, the image, with which he identifies himself.

To forbid her working, to keep her at home, is to defend her against herself and to assure her happiness. We have seen what poetic veils are thrown over her monotonous burdens of housekeeping and maternity: in exchange for her liberty she has received the false treasures of her 'femininity'. They enjoy the incomparable privilege: irresponsibility. Free from troublesome burdens and cares,

she obviously has the better part. Because of her complicity, males take authorization to declare that she has desired destiny they have imposed on her. Society in general - beginning with her respected parents - lies to her by praising the lofty values of love, devotion, the gift of herself, and then concealing from her the fact that neither lover nor husband nor yet her children will be inclined to accept the burdensome charge of all that. She cheerfully believes these lies. Throughout her life from childhood on, they damage and corrupt her by designating as her true vocation this submission, which is the temptation of every existent in the anxiety of liberty.

Justice can never be done in the midst of injustice. The position of woman is like that of a parasite sucking out of the living strength of another organism. Let them be provided with living strength of their own, let them have the means to attack the world and wrest from it their own subsistence, and their dependence will be abolished - that of man also. A world where man and woman would be equal is easy to visualise, for that precisely is what the Society Revolution promised: women reared and trained exactly like men were to work under the same conditions and for the same wages. Erotic liberty was to be recognised by custom, but the sexual act was not to be considered a 'service' to be paid for. Woman was to be obliged to provide herself with other ways of earning a living. Their children were to have

exactly the same rights, in or out of marriage. Pregnancy leaves were to be paid for by the State, which would assume charge of the children, signifying not that they would be taken away from their parents, but that they would not be abandoned to them.

If the little girl were brought up from the first with the same demands and rewards, the same severity and the same freedom, as her brothers, taking part in the same studies, the same games, promised the same future, surrounded with women and men who seemed to her undoubtedly equals, the meanings of the castration complex and of the oedipus complex would be profoundly modified. The child would perceive around her an androgynous world and not a masculine world. Correlatively the boy would not have a superiority complex if it were not instilled into him and if he looked upto women with as much respect as to men. The little girl would not seek, sterile compensation in narcissism and dreaming, she would not take her fate for granted; she would be interested in what she was doing, she would throw herself without reserve into undertakings.

As Cecile Sauvage puts it: 'A woman is non-existent without a master. Without a master, she is a scattered bouquet'. An inessential creature is incapable of sensing the absolute at the heart of her subjectivity, a being deemed to immanence cannot find self-realisation in acts.

She chooses to desire her enslavement so ardently that it will seem to her the expression of her liberty. She will humble herself to nothingness before him. Love becomes for her a religion.

In giving her pleasure the man increases her attachment, he does not liberate her. A woman, in assuming her role as the inessential, accepting a total dependence, creates a hell for herself. If he is necessary to her, it means that she is evading her liberty. The dependence accepted by woman comes from her weakness; how, therefore, could she find a reciprocal dependence in the man she loves, in his strength? She accepts her servitude without demanding the same in return.

But on the day when it will be possible for woman to love not in her weakness but in her strength, not to escape herself but to find herself, not to abase herself but to assert herself - on that day love will become for her, as for man, a source of life and not of mortal danger.

The traditional belief that man should be the provider has remained strong, especially in middle-class circles, in spite of the fact that many women are gainfully employed, and the social and psychological problems involved seem to occupy an increasing place in the press, the radio, etc. The situation, with its attendant problems, is not new, since it

originated in the industrial revolution, the rise of the factory system, and the entrance of women into business mostly on lower levels of employment, but it has gained new interest and importance from, on the one hand, wartime demands for woman's participation in ever widening fields of activity, and on the other, a growing realisation of the bearing of home atmosphere upon the psychological development of children and their ultimate welfare as adults.

Now, woman has always been man's dependent, if not his slave. The two sexes have never shared the world in equality. And even today woman is heavily handicapped, though her situation is beginning to change. Almost nowhere is her legal status the same as man's, and frequently it is much to her disadvantage. Even when her rights are legally recognised in the abstract, long-standing custom prevents their full expression in the mores. In the economic sphere men and women can almost be said to make up two castes. Other things being equal, the former hold the jobs, get higher wages, and have more opportunity for success than their new competitors. In industry and politics man have a great many more positions and they monopolise the most important posts. At the present time, when women are beginning to take part in the affairs of the world, it is still a world, that belongs to men. Man-the-sovereign will provide women-the-liege with material protection and will undertake the moral

justification of her existence. Woman may fail to lay claim to the status of subject because she lacks definite resources, because she feels the necessary bond that ties her to man regardless of reciprocity, and because she is often very well pleased with her role as the other.

It is easy to see that the duality of the sexes, gives rise to conflict. And doubtless the winner will assume the status of Absolute. The very fact that woman is the other tends to cast suspicion upon all the justification that men have ever been able to provide for it. All that has been written about women by men should be suspect, for the men are at once judge and party to the law suit. Being men, those who have made and compiled the laws have favoured their own sex, and jurists have elevated these laws into principles. Legislators, priests, philosophers, writers, and scientists have striven to show that the subordinate position of woman is willed in heaven and advantageous on earth. Women are not in the wrong when they decline to accept the rules laid down for them, since the men make these rules without consulting them.

Narcissism in a well-defined process of identification, in which the ego is regarded as an absolute and the subject takes refuge from himself in it. Conditions lead woman more than man to turn towards herself and devote her love to herself. As subject she feels frustrated. She does not get

recognition as an individual through her functioning as wife, mother, house-keeper. Not being able to fulfil herself through projects and objectives, she is forced to find her reality in the immanence of her person. Ineffective, isolated, she can neither find her place nor take her own measure. Painting, sculpture, literature, all are disciplines that require a hard apprenticeship and demand solitary effort, many women try them, but they soon give up unless driven by a positive desire to create. One of the defects that plague a great many women writers is a love for themselves that poisons their sincerity, limits them, and reduces their stature. Being the centre of her own universe and knowing no other universe than hers, she becomes the absolute centre of the world.

It would be quite wrong to suppose that she escapes dependence in choosing herself as supreme end in view. On the contrary, she dooms herself to the most complete slavery. She does not stand on her independence but makes of herself an object that is imperilled by the world and by other conscious beings. A woman, who would be men's idol, makes herself the slave of her admirers,. She dresses, lives, breathes, only through men and for them. The paradox of her attitude lies in the fact that she claims to be given values by a world she must consider valueless, since she alone counts in her own opinion.

Is it enough to change laws, institutions, customs, public opinion, and the whole social context, for men and women to become truly equal? Women will always be women, say the sceptics. Other seers prophesy that in casting off their femininity they will not succeed in changing themselves into men and they will become monsters. Woman is determined not by her hormones or by mysterious instincts, but by the manner in which her body and her relation to the world are modified through the actions of others than herself. The abyss that separates the adolescent boy and girl has been deliberately widened between them since earliest childhood. Later on, woman could not be other than what she was made, and that past was bound to shadow her for life. If we appreciate its influence, we clearly visualise that her destiny is not predetermined for all eternity.

A change in woman's economic condition alone is enough to transform her, though this factor has been and remains the basic factor in her revolution. But until it has brought about the moral, social, cultural, and other consequences that it promises and requires, the new woman cannot appear. At this moment, the woman of today is torn between the past and the future. She must shed her old skin and cut her own new clothes. This she could do only through a social evolution. If she is brought up like a boy, the young girl feels she is an oddity and thereby she is given a new kind

of sex specification. Stendhal understood this when he said : 'The forest must be planted all at once'. But if we imagine, on the contrary, a society in which the equality of the sexes would be concretely realised, this equality would find new expression in each individual.

Civil liberties like right to vote remain theoretical as long as they are unaccompanied by economic freedom. A woman supported by man is not emancipated from the male because she has a vote. So she persists in the vain pursuit of her true being through narcissism, love, or religion. When she is productive, active, she regains her transcendence.

The fact of being a woman today poses peculiar problems for an independent human individual. It is required of woman that in order to realise her femininity she must make herself object and prey, which is to say that she must renounce her claims as sovereign subject. It is this conflict that especially marks the situation of the emancipated woman.

It is not regard for the opinion of others alone that leads her to give time and care to her appearance and her housekeeping. She wants to retain her womanliness for her own satisfaction. She wants to live at once like a man and like a woman and in that way she multiplies her tasks and adds to her fatigue. Today the woman who works is less

neglectful of her femininity than formerly, and she does not lose her sexual attractiveness. This success, though already indicating progress towards equilibrium, is not yet complete.

The independent woman considers that in marrying she has assumed duties from which her personal life does not exempt her. She does not want to feel that her husband is deprived of advantages he would have obtained if he had married a 'true woman'. She wants to be presentable, a good housekeeper, a devoted mother - such as traditionally wives are. Through twenty years of waiting, dreaming, hoping, the young girl has cherished the myth of the liberating saviour-hero, and hence the independence she has won through work is not enough to abolish her desire for a glorious abdication.

There is one feminine function that is actually almost impossible to perform in complete liberty. It is maternity. In spite of convenient day nurseries and kindergartens, having a child is enough to paralyse a woman's activity entirely; she can go on working only if she abandons it to relatives, friends, or servants. Thus the independent woman of today is torn between her professional interests and the problems of her sexual life; it is difficult for her to strike a balance between the two. She undertakes a career in a mentally harassing situation and while still under the

personal burdens implied traditionally by her femininity.

Insofar as a woman wishes to be a woman, her independent status gives rise to an inferiority complex: on the other hand, her femininity makes her doubtful of her professional future. The young girl is convinced that she has limited capacities. Because parents and teachers concede that the girls' level is lower than that of boys, the pupils readily concede it also. In consequence of this defeatism, woman is easily reconciled to a moderate success; she does not dare to aim too high. The independent woman is justifiably disturbed by the idea that people do not have confidence in her. The initial inferiority complex ordinarily leads to a defence reaction in the form of an exaggerated affection of authority. As in her studies, she lacks ease, dash, audacity. In the effort to achieve she gets tense. Her activity is a succession of challenges and self-affirmations.

Newly come into the world of men, poorly seconded by them, woman is still too busily occupied to search for herself. A great actress will aim higher yet. She will go beyond the given by the way she expresses it. She will be truly an artist, a creator, who gives meaning to her life by lending meaning to the world. Instead of integrating her narcissistic self-indulgence and her sexual liberty with artistic life, the actress very often sinks into self-

worship or into gallantry. Desire for an feminine destiny - husband, home, children - and the enchantment of love are not always easy to reconcile with the will to succeed.

Today woman's situation inclines her to seek salvation in literature and art. Very often, she continues to torn between her narcissism and an inferiority complex. Woman's narcissism impoverishes her instead of enriching her. By dint of doing nothing but contemplate herself, she annihilates herself. Women novelists have gained fame and wealth, but have surely not enriched our vision of the world.

The restrictions that education and custom impose on woman now limit her grasp on the universe. When the struggle to find one's place in this world is too arduous, there can be no question of getting away from it. Now, one must first emerge from it into a sovereign solitude if one wants to try to regain grasp upon it. What woman needs first of all is to undertake, in anguish and pride, her apprenticeship in abandonment and transcendence, that is, in liberty.

The constraints that surround her and the whole tradition that weighs her down prevent her from feeling responsible for the universe, and that is the deep-seated reason for her mediocrity. As long as she has to struggle to become a human being, she cannot become a creator.

In 1909 leave with pay was guaranteed to women for childbirth. In 1913 the periods of rest before and after childbirth were regulated in detail and dangerous and excessive forms of labour were forbidden. One of the basic problems of woman, is the reconciliation of her reproductive role and her role in productive labour. Now protected in large part from the slavery of reproduction, she is in a position to assume the economic role that is offered her and will assure her of complete independence. The evolution of woman's condition is to be explained by the current action of these two factors: sharing in productive labour and being freed from slavery to reproduction. The feminist movement, sketched out in France by Condorcet, in England by Mary Wollstonecraft and taken up again at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the Saint Simonists, had been unable to accomplish definite results, as it lacked concrete bases. As for political rights, they were not easily achieved in France, England and the United States. In Russia Lenin bound the emancipation of women to that of the workers, and gave them political and economic equality. Woman there enjoys the same rights as man in all aspects of economic, official, cultural, public and political life. There is social equality of man and woman before the law and in practical life.

Russian women took a great part in the last war, penetrating even into masculine aspects of production such as metallurgy and mining, rafting of timber, and railway

construction. Women also distinguished themselves as aviators and parachute troops, and they formed partisan armies. This activity of women in public life raised a difficult problem. What should be woman's role in family life? During a whole period means had been sought to free her from domestic bonds. The respect thereupon accorded to free unions. The facility of divorce, and the legalising of abortions assured woman's liberty with relation to the male. Laws concerning maternity leave, day nurseries, kindergartens, and the like alleviated the cares of maternity. The family now appears as the elementary cell of society, and woman is both worker and housekeeper. Sexual morality is of the strictest. Adultery is condemned by custom. Strictly subordinated to the State like all workers, strictly bound to the home, but having access to political life and to the dignity conferred by productive labour, the Russian woman is in a singular condition which would repay the close study.

The United Nations Commission on the status of women demanded that equality in rights of the two sexes be recognised in all countries, and it passed several motions tending to make this legal statute a concrete reality. If we cast a general glance over this history, we see several conclusions that stand out from it. The whole of feminine history has been man-made. They created values, mores, religions. Never have women disputed this empire with them. Men have always held the lot of woman in their hands and

they have determined that it should be, not according to her interest, but rather with regard to their own projects, their fears, and their needs. When they revered the Goddess Mother, it was because they feared Nature. When the bronze loot allowed them to face Nature boldly, they instituted the patriarchy. Then it became the conflict between family and state that defined woman's status. The Christian's attitude towards God, the world, and his own flesh was reflected in the situation to which he consigned her. What was called in the Middle Ages 'the quarrel of women' was a quarrel between the clerics and laymen over marriage and celibacy. It was the social regime founded on private property that entailed the guardianship of the married woman, and it is the technological evolution accomplished by men that emancipated the woman of today. It was a transformation in masculine ethics that brought about a reduction in family size through birth control and partially freed woman from bondage to maternity.

The classes in which women enjoyed some economic independence and took part in production were the oppressed classes. In the ruling classes woman was a parasite and as such was subjected to masculine laws. In both cases it was practically impossible for woman to take action. It is only since women have begun to feel themselves at home on the earth that we have seen a Rosa Luxemburg, a Mme Curie, Indira Gandhi appear. They brilliantly demonstrate that it is not the inferiority of women that has caused their

historical insignificance that has doomed them to inferiority.

The anti-feminists obtain from the study of history two contradictory arguments : (1) Women have never created anything great, 2) the situation of women has never prevented the flowering of great feminine personalities. That is why a great many women today demand a new status. And once again their demand is not that they be exalted in their femininity. They wish that in themselves, as in humanity in general, transcendence may prevail over immanence. They wish to be accorded at least the abstract rights and concrete possibilities without the concurrence of which liberty is only a mockery. This wish is on the way to fulfilment. But the period in which we live is a period of transition. This world, which has always belonged to men, is still in their hands. The institutions and the values of the patriarchal civilization still survive in large part. Abstract rights have never sufficed to assure to women a definite hold on the world. True equality between the two sexes does not exist even today. The care of children like the upkeep of the home is still undertaken almost exclusively by woman. The result is that it is more difficult for woman than for man to reconcile her family life with her role as worker.

For the most part rural labour reduces woman to the condition of a beast of burden. The business-woman and the female employer who runs a small enterprise have always been

among the privileged. Things are quite otherwise for the woman worker or employee, the secretary, the saleswoman, all of whom go to work outside the home. It is much more difficult for them to combine their employment with household duties, which would seem to require at least three and a half hours a day, with perhaps six hours on Sunday - a good deal to add to the hours in a factory or office. As for the learned professions, even if women lawyers, doctors, and professors obtain some house-keeping help, the home and children are for them also a burden that is a heavy handicap. The elegant appearance required of the working-woman imposes upon her another obligation, and she remains responsible for house and children. Furthermore, the woman who seeks independence through work has less favourable possibilities than her masculine competitors. Her wages in most jobs are lower than those of men; her tasks are less specialised and therefore not so well paid as those of skilled labourers and for equal work she does not get equal pay. Men and women, economically speaking, constitute two castes.

The fact that governs woman's actual condition is the obstinate survival of extremely antique traditions into the new civilization that is just appearing in vague outline. This is so pertinent to societies of the Third World, and certainly to India. We open the factories, the offices, the faculties to woman, but we continue to hold that marriage is for her a most honourable career, freeing her from the need

of any other participation in the collective life. In this regard, the urban Indians have not changed much. Modern woman is everywhere permitted to regard her body as capital for exploitation. Prostitution is tolerated, everything still encourages the young girl to expect fortune and happiness from some Prince charming rather than to attempt by herself their difficult and uncertain conquest. Parents still bring up their daughters with a view to marriage rather than to furthering her personal development; she sees so many advantages in it that she herself wishes for it. The result is that she is often less specially trained than her brothers. She is less deeply involved in her profession. In this way she dooms herself to remain inferior. And the vicious circle is formed. This professional inferiority reinforces her desire to find a husband.

A woman no longer accepts domestic subjection with docility. What she would hope is that the reconciliation of family life with a job should not require of her an exhausting, difficult performance. The present epoch invites, even compels women to work. But it flashes before their eyes paradises of idleness and delight. The privileged place held by men in economic life, their social usefulness, the prestige of marriage, the value of masculine backing, all this makes woman wish ardently to please men. It follows that women sees herself and makes her choices not in accordance with her true nature in itself, but as man defines her.

Man is at once a judge and party to the case, but so is woman. We are no longer like out partisan elders. By and large we have won the game. In the debates on the status of women the United Nations has persistently maintained that the equality of the sexes is now becoming a reality, and already some of us have never had to sense in our femininity an inconvenience or an obstacle. Still, we know the feminine world more intimately than do the men because we have our roots in it, we grasp more immediately than do men what it means to a human being to be feminine; and we are more concerned with such knowledge. What opportunities precisely have been given us and what withheld? It is significant that books by women on women are in general animated in our day less by a wish to demand our rights than by an effort towards clarity and understanding.

If the 'Woman Question' seems trivial, it is because masculine arrogance has made of it a 'quarrel'. And when quarrelling one no longer reasons well. People have tirelessly sought to prove that woman is superior, inferior, or equal to man. Some say that, having been created after Adam, she is evidently a secondary being. Others say on the contrary that Adam was only a rough draft and that God succeeded in producing the human being in perfection when He created Eve. If we are to gain understanding we must discard the vague notions of superiority, inferiority, equality which have hitherto corrupted every discussion of the

subject and start afresh.

Woman cannot be transformed unless society has first made her really the equal of man. The fact is that oppressors cannot be expected to make a move of gratuitous generosity. It remains only of women to continue their ascent, and the successes they are obtaining are an encouragement for them to do so. It seems almost certain that sooner or later they will arrive at a complete economic and social equality; which will bring about an inner metamorphosis.

Every time transcendence falls back into immanence, stagnation, there is a degradation of existence into what Simone de Beauvoir calls "ensoi" - the brutish life of subjection to given conditions- and of liberty into constraint and contingency. Every individual concerned to justify his existence feels that his existence involves an undefined need to transcend himself, to engage in freely chosen project.

At the same time when woman is 'the same' as her male, life will lose its salt and spice. It is quite true that doing away with the slave trade meant death to the great plantations, it meant ruin to the whole refined southern civilization. When the 'charming woman' shows herself in all her splendour, she is a much more exalting object than the 'idiotic paintings, over doors, scenery, showman's garish signs'. One can appreciate the beauty of flowers, the charm

of women, and appreciate them at their true value. If these treasures cost blood or misery, they must be sacrificed.

The individual life history of woman depends more upon her physiological destiny. She is allowed to hold on to the world save through the mediation of some man. When the first hints come of that fated and irreversible process which is to destroy the whole edifice built up during puberty, she feels the fatal touch of death itself. One might think that the woman most ardently enraptured with her youth and beauty would be the one to be most disturbed, barring the narcissist who is too concerned with her person not to have foreseen its inevitable decline. Cases of pathological jealousy are most numerous between the ages of fifty and fifty five. As for her children, they are old enough to get along without her, they are getting married, they are leaving home. Rid of her duties, she finds freedom at last. But she finds this freedom at the very time when she can make no use of it.

Towards fifty, remarks Simone de Beauvoir, a woman is in full possession of her powers. She feels she is rich in experience. That is the age at which men attain the highest positions, the most important posts. As for her, she is put into retirement. Useless unjustified, she looks forward to the long, unpromising years she has yet to live. The woman who has chanced to give birth late in life has an advantage. She is still a young mother when other women become grandmothers. She realises she is useless. All her life-long the

middle-class woman has often had to solve the ridiculous problem of how to kill time. But when the children are grown, the husband, a made man or at least settled down, the time must still be killed somehow. Not being specialists in politics, or in economics, or in any technical branch, the old ladies have no concrete grasp upon society. They are ignorant of the problems that call for action. They are incapable of working out any constructive programme. They attack what does exist in order to eliminate evils. This explains why they always unite against something: alcohol, prostitution, pornography. They do not realise that a purely negative effort is doomed to failure.

When the man has given up his public functions, he becomes entirely, useless. His wife atleast still runs the house. She is necessary to her husband, whereas he is merely a nuisance. Old women take pride in their independence. They begin at last to view the world through their own eyes. They note that they have been duped and deceived all their lives. Sane and mistrustful, they often develop a pungent cynicism. Amused or bitter, the wisdom of the old woman still remains wholly negative. In her thinking as in her acts, the highest form of liberty available to the woman parasite is stoical defiance or sceptical irony. At no time of life does she succeed in being at once effective and independent.

Now, what peculiarly signalises the situation of women is that she - a free and autonomous being like all human -

creatures - nevertheless finds herself living in the world where men compel her to assume the status of the other. They propose to stabilise her as an object and to doom her to immanence since her transcendence is to be overshadowed and for ever transcended by another ego (conscience) which is essential and sovereign. The drama of woman lies in this conflict between the fundamental aspirations of every subject (ego) - who always regards the self as the essential. De Beauvoir is interested in the fortunes of the individual as defined not in terms of happiness but in terms of liberty.

The woman of today are in a fair way to dethrone the myth of femininity. They are beginning to affirm their independence in concrete ways. But they do not easily succeed in living completely the life of a human being. Reared by women within a feminine world their normal destiny is marriage, which still means practically subordination to man, for masculine prestige is far from extinct, resting still upon solid economic and social foundations. With so much understood we shall be able to comprehend the problems of women, the heirs of a burdensome past, who are striving to build a new future. Indications are that woman is in a vigorous process of asserting her right to liberty, to selfhood, to self-realisation.

PART FOUR

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

The objective of the study in the previous three part of my thesis has been to probe into the feminine life-world, from a philosophical angle. As I have already mentioned, though the problem undertaken is apparently of sociological nature, efforts have been made to evolve a philosophical perspective by examining the problem from the phenomenological point of view and following an interpretive or Hermeneutical method.

The phenomenon studied is that in the feminine life-world there is dominance and exercise of authority by the male over the female. The female is subjected and subjugated. She is treated as the 'other'. In spite of her relegation to a position of abject subordination she does not protest. Without any bitterness she accepts this status and permits man to dominate over her in every field, inside the house and outside in public sphere. Though by birth both sexes are equal barring some biological differences, one may wonder how the phenomenon of male dominance and female subordination has resulted. My effort in this thesis has been to explain the phenomenon, by delving deeper to find the root cause for male power and authority at the cost of the females.

A study of history and culture of various social groups in the world permits us to take an authentic stand that man

always likes to arrogate himself with the idea of dominating as a master and treating woman as a subject. His conscience does not allow him to treat her as an equal and one with him, rather he likes to consider her as the 'other'.

A study of the situation in the west as examined and explained by various philosophers and feminists confirms male attitude to consider woman not as his equal but as inferior to him in every respect in the world. This includes biological, intellectual and emotional aspects which in turn make her ineligible to compete with him in economic and political spheres, that is the world outside her home. Man's psyche is intolerant to the feminine propensities within himself. He sometimes loves and hates the female in him. The assumption of her intellectual inferiority and being a slave of feelings and emotions are considered to be the obstacles for her entry to the public life. The male dominance is manifest in his constant urge to underestimate and ignore her capabilities to participate and to govern the affairs of the state, as also to overpower her sexually, socially and politically, in essence to treat her as his equal. With his urge to keep up his acquired superiority man has suppressed, subordinated and victimised woman. She on her part did not do much to resist and to restore her lost status and meekly surrendered herself.

As observed by Ellen Kennedy and Susan mendus, woman was consistently denied full citizenship and political

equality. She was confined to hearth and home, that is, the private sphere, by denying her right to vote and entry in the public sphere. It was assumed that her biological nature was responsible of her lack of political status. She was considered suitable for rearing citizens but not to being citizen herself. Psychologically she was considered gentle, submissive, emotional and irrational. Until after the First World War woman did not receive the minimal right to citizenship in democracy, the right to vote.

The Public-Private distinction as envisaged by Rousseau turned out to be a distinction between male and female. While the woman was confined to the private life, it was assumed that male could be suited to both the spheres. It was assumed that due to her biological nature and her supposed psychological character she was not suitable to participate in the public life. Jane Rendall points out that the distinction also separates two areas of morality. The private realm became associated with virtue, whereas the public realm was associated with rights. Hegel, Adam Smith and Rousseau placed the supposed homogeneity, simplicity, and integrity of women's life in stark contrast to the disunity and fragmentation of man's life. According to Hegel, women are destined only to give birth to children to look after them and to manage the household. While men could have the choice of private or public existences, women do not have such choices.

Rousseau regards woman as a subversive influence,

because he sees the demands of justice and universality part of the public sphere. Woman is construed as a slave to her passions, capable of emotional responses to the situations she finds herself in.

Woman's existence within the private sphere is justified by her nature. Her exclusion in public life is reinforced by her social role and her social role reinforces, in turn, her inherent nature. In response to this dilemma, some contemporary feminists take a view that her exclusion is to her disadvantage, as the males would continue to dominate. The feminists demanded equal rights both political and civil, as well as social. Women's emancipation was asked for. One school of thought was Romanticism. They wanted gentle masculinity, and self-reliant femininity, as they would be good and beautiful compared to the ugly situation of exaggerated masculinity and over-emphasised femininity.

Humboldt demanded self-reliant womanhood, and was not concerned with equal political rights. Hegel in his Philosophy of Right excluded women from political life. He had declared woman as the enemy of the community. Utilitarians J.S. Mill and Bentham used the terms Pain and Pleasure for satisfying the criterion of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. They assume the fundamental equality in the structure of human-psychology for both men and women. The principle of utility is the

formula of the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

Nietzsche advocated natural "will to power" and confines only men to achieve this. For him virtues of pity, love and caution are feministic and slave-minded. For him feminism is a weakness which erodes the will to power by taming its natural force. Schopenhaur says woman is irrational and childish, shortsighted - a kind of middle stage between the child and the man.

In India, woman was glorified at times and pushed down to the lowest levels of subordination, and equated with the animals. In the status of subordination she is comparable to her sister in the west. However, she is beset with some more problems which are peculiar to Indian context. Social evils like child marriage, devadasis, the pernicious dowry system, abominable Sati, as well as the status accorded to a widow in India add to her woes.

Except during the golden Vedic and puranic periods, when she was given a position of prominence, she has always been relegated to a status of subordination or of honourable subordination to man. Sati and dowry are definite symbols of male domination. They laid the laws and evolved the codes of conduct to suit their needs. Women have been treated like animals many a time. What else can be said when Tulasidas opines that animals, Harijans, drums and women require beating. The constant undoubted domination of the male society and the patriarchy has been responsible for the

lower status of women.

The early Vedic custom in which the widow would symbolically lay down briefly alongside her husband's body on the funeral pyre and then step down subsequently turned out to be a fearful practice of forcing the widow to burn herself on the same pyre. The tradition brain-washes the women from childhood itself to be mentally prepared for such an eventuality by the inducement of deification. The absolute dependence of wife on her husband and her own self-denial, in Indian tradition, appears to be responsible for this phenomenon. When the mythology imbibed and the norms internalised by her portray her subordinate status, as well as provide a psychological anaesthetization, how can one accept the argument that Sati is committed out of pure inner conviction and of free will. When a widow is considered an enigma and is looked down upon as a bad omen, it is not surprising that she prefers to die by committing suicide. The tragedy is that even today cases of sati are being heard and are being justified. Undoubtedly centuries of patriarchal socialization forces her to die for patriarchy.

Dowry is the modern-day version of Sati. Suicide or homicidal deaths are so common, because of harassment of dowry. Though stringent laws are available for punishing the guilty, the solution is still not in sight. On the contrary, the wildfire of dowry problem is spreading so fast into various strata of society cutting across caste, religion and regions, whether educated or uneducated, rich or poor. It is

an antisocial institution which degrades the status of Indian woman.

In Indian tradition throughout the ages, women were economically dependent on men, and there was no independence for her in this regard. The father protects her in adolescence, the husband in her youth and the sons in old age. It was thought that a woman does not deserve absolute independence. The modern Indian women are not devoid of economic tensions. The burden of the traditional role hanging on them still continues. The productive work done by her at home is not recognised while working woman has to face the burden of work at home as well as outside.

The issue of women's political participation in a country like India which is still bound by traditions that cast women in a very secondary role in all spheres of life, is a complicated one. Women all over the world suffer from economic backwardness, but in India this problem is staggering. Add to this the extremely low rate of literacy among Indian women. And the picture of the marginalization of the Indian woman, in all spheres of life is bleak indeed. Most especially it is true in the political arena, which seems peculiarly hostile to the entry of women and the viable role they could play therein. The absence of a strong feminist movement in the country also deprives women of the support structure they need so much, says Niroj Sinha.

One question concerning woman and politics is the

franchise. Women have right to vote in India. Unlike women in many of the western progressive countries, Indian women never have had to fight for the right to vote. It has been there for them to exercise according to their free will, their political affiliations and awareness and their consciousness of the need to augment social change through the representatives they vote to power.

The educated voters among the woman are urban voters. They are therefore said to be comparatively aware and conscious. On the other hand, rural voters among the women are often and mostly, uneducated, passive and also aware - but in a different connotation altogether. Urban voters among the woman are positively active voters.

The individual women voter from the rural areas has a kind of negative awareness. If she does not cast her vote these things could happen: she will be battered by her husband, she may miss the grand lunch that has been promised, she may lose her job, she will be thrown out of her house. This means for rural woman voter, voting is not matter of choice.

In the urban family also, though the woman may be educated, wittingly or unwittingly, she is always reacting to the actions and directions of some male figure in the family. The right is there for all individual adult women in India. But the women have no power to exercise the right unless they get the go ahead sign from a third party - the

male member.

Regarding women's rights Gandhi writes, "Why should women have either to beg or to fight in order to win back their birth right? It is strange and also tragically comic to hear man born of woman talk loftily of the weaker sex and nobly promising to give us our due. Where is the nobility and chivalry in restoring the people that which has been unlawfully wrested from them by those having brute power in their hands".

Gandhi expresses, the question of breaking down the feminine prejudice is most difficult. It is in reality, a question of female education. And in this, it is a question not merely of education of girls but it is one of the education of married women. He advocates that man and woman have separate spheres of activity and their training therefore, should also be different. The duty of women is to look after hearth and home. This does ~~not imply that work of~~ one is inferior while that of other superior, the spheres of the two are complimentary. But Nehru did not agree that there was a fixed sphere for women. He did not agree that woman's place was in the home, that her duty was to be a devoted wife, bringing up children, and dutifully obedient to her elders. He criticised this thinking as follows: "May I say that I do not agree with this idea of women's life or education? What does it signify? It means that woman has one profession and one only, that is the profession of marriage

and it is our chief business to train her for this profession. Even in this profession her lot is to be of secondary importance. She is always to be the devoted help-mate, the follower and the obedient slave of her husband and others".

Thus not only the tradition in India and the west give the position of subordination for the women, but also the attitudes of many Indian and western thinkers and feminists who have been advocates of the same traditions confirmed the same status for the females.

Simone de Beauvoir bases her work on the existential Philosophy of Satre. The phenomenon of subordination of women in various ages, have been examined by her and justified by her through existential philosophy. She opines that an awakened woman transcends her biological limitations. The modern woman is basically concerned with her image about herself. She no longer looks at herself as the man would want her. On the other hand she would want him to perceive her in her own image. This is a way to achieve the independent status in society which she has been striving for. She can do away with the imposed inferiority only by destroying superiority.

Today the conflict between man and woman takes a different shape . Instead of wishing to put man in the prison, woman endeavours to escape from one. She no longer seeks to drag him into the realms of immanence but to

emerge, herself, into the light of transcendence. However, the attitude of the males creates a new conflict. He is very well pleased to remain the sovereign subject, the absolute superior, the essential being, and therefore, refuses to accept his companion as an equal in any concrete way. She replies to his lack of confidence in her by assuming an aggressive attitude. Instead of displaying mutual recognition, each free-being wishes to dominate the other.

It is not enough to change laws, institutions, customs, public opinions and the whole social context, for men and women to become truly equal. Woman is determined not by her hormones or by mysterious instincts, but by the manner in which her body and her relation to the world are modified through the actions of others than herself. A change in woman's economic condition alone is not enough to transform her, though this factor has been and remains the basic factor in her evolution. But until it has brought about the moral, social, cultural, and other consequences that it promises and requires, the new woman cannot appear. Woman cannot be transformed unless society has first made her really the equal of man. The fact is that oppressors cannot be expected to make a move of gratuitous generosity. But at one time the revolt of the oppressed, at another time even the very evolution of the privileged cast itself, creates a new situation. Thus men have been led, in their own interest to give partial emancipation to women. It seems almost certain that sooner or later they will arrive at complete

economic and social equality, which will bring about an inner metamorphosis.

To emancipate woman is to refuse to confine her to the relations she bears to man, not to deny them to her, let her have her independent existence and she will continue nonetheless exist for him also: mutually recognising each other as subject, each will yet remain for the other an other. When we abolish the slavery of half of humanity, together with the whole system of hypocrisy that it implies, than the division of humanity will reveal its genuine significance and the human couple finds its true form.

As I conclude my work, I cannot help quoting the warning Justice P.N. Bhagwati, a member of a distinguished panel of five judges from different countries appointed to set recommendations on Women's Rights for the United Nations gives. Justice Bhagwati writes in the vein of a feminist phenomenologist :

"Do not then depend upon men to help you. They have exercised power and domination over women for centuries, and power has to be wrestled from unwilling hands. Women must empower themselves, united from all parts of the world. Let women raise the battle cry and freedom will be theirs" (The Times of India, June 19, 1993).

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