

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FEMINISM: DAINISM: JUSTICE: ECOFEMINISM

The issue of whether or not the efforts made by women for better treatment at the hands of man in the periods of history can really be called 'feminism' at all is still debated. However, in a massive verity of ways in the forms of thought, writings and action it has raised its head. For the purpose of this chapter 'feminism' may be defined as any attempt to contend with 'patriarchy' in its many manifestations. The term 'Patriarchy' refers to power relations in which women's interests are subordinated to the interests of men. These power relations take on many forms, from the sexual divisions of labour and the social organization of procreation to the internalized norms of femininity by which we live. Patriarchal power rests on social meaning given to biological sexual difference.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the different waves of feminism, to show how patriarchy in its hydra headedness work to dominate the so called passivity of women or femininity and to observe feminism and philosophy.

As we do understand, any group seeking public recognition is to create a sense of history, and in fact to own and determine that history up to its own pleasure or suitability. As such classical philosophy, the scriptures and the early Church all pronounced upon women in almost exclusively masculine voice. Aristotelian philosophy deemed a woman to be 'inferior man' and this was corroborated by the interpretation of the creation of Eve as 'posterior et inferior' (last and lesser). Even in Medieval Europe there was a debate in which male writes attacked and defended women; the humanist writers of the Renaissance also showed the same trend. They had their enlightened views in regard to women, but with the caveat that their education and learning should

confine to the private, domestic sphere. It was not until the later sixteenth century in England that women entered the debate in their own voices. According to Jane Anger, a feminist English writer the concept of the phrase 'posterior et inferior' is wrong. As she states, in the progression of God's creation and that too point out logically, Eve is the best being in the modified and sophisticated form. Rachel Spight also stated in the same tone and argued that if women are the weaker sex, then Eve cannot take full responsibility for the fall because the stronger Adam should have protected her. The protestant view about marriage and ideal of women was antipapal and as such mutuality and cooperation between husband and wife was stressed. The protestant writers remind us of the fact that God created Eve from Adam's side (as opposed to his head or foot), signifying that she should be his equal (as opposed to his ruler or servant). Furthermore, it is a contention of the protestants that if a woman is intellectually inferior to a man, it is because she is denied the same opportunities. To invite Makin, as historical exemplar, women's inferiority, rather than being natural, is culturally imposed. The evidence is that women could, under the right circumstances, reach the same levels of intellectual development as men. In 'An Essay to Revive the Ancient Education of Gentle women' (1673) Bathusa Makin develops oxile's argument:

"Custom, when it is inveterate, hath a mighty influence: it hath the force of Nature itself. The Barbarous custom to breed women low, is grown general amongst us, and hath prevailed so far, and it is verily believed that women are not educated with Reason, as Men; or capable of improvement by Education as they are. It is looked upon as a monstrous thing, to pretend the contrary. ...I verily think, women were formerly educated in the knowledge of Arts and Tongues, and

by their Education, many did rise to a great height in learning, were women thus educated now, I am confident the advantage would be very great ...<sup>54</sup>

The increasing number of voices making feminists statements by the end of the seventeenth century did not, however, affect the legal and constitutional position of women; their overall material and economic conditions had not improved much either. The feminism of the period 1550-1700 fought its battles in cultural and social arenas. The change in attitudes that they helped to shape was crucial in laying the foundation for more radical changes in the centuries to come.

First wave feminism begins with Mary Wollstonecraft's 'vindication of the Rights of Women' Wollstonecraft's vindication emerged from the social and political turbulence caused by the French Revolution as such the nineteenth century feminism evolved very much as a response to the specific difficulties individual women encountered in their lives. As understood by the key personalities of the movement, understood till women are more rationally educated the progress of human virtues and improvement in knowledge would receive continual checks. It is very clear in Wollstonecraft's writings that women are intellectually and morally uplifted, and their improvement in morality and intellect would not stand a bar in the usual social fabric. As has been understood from the feminism of this period the most middle class women would marry and remain at home, their education would be to prepare them for the possibility of economic independence, to give them freedom and dignity, rather than the ability to fascinate potential husbands. Their first object to laudable ambition is to obtain a character as a human being, regardless of the distinction of sex. Their motto was to show that 'elegance is inferior to virtue'.

---

<sup>54</sup> Makin, B, *An Essay to Revive the Ancient Education of Gentlewomen* 1679, edit. *Feminism: its History and Cultural context*, London and New York 1998, P-11.

Celebrated feminist writers of their wave like J.S. Mill and William Thompson had negative maintenance as to the rights of women. J.S. Mill in his 'Essay on Governments' (1821) maintained that neither women nor the working classes needed to be enfranchised, because, their interest were already taken care of. To this, Thompson replied back that women whom society treated as fortunate and settled were privately suffering from unacknowledged needs and repressive treatment from men. Dividing women into three separate categories- wives, adult daughters living with their fathers, and women with neither husbands nor father- he drew attention to the different problems faced by all these.

In another polemics as to women's rights J.S. Mill and Raskin approached 'woman question' from a distinctly peculiar and idiosyncratic standpoints, their totally opposed attitudes emphasizing the profound disunity of so called 'Victorian' thinking about women's rights in Victorian's heydays, and the unrepresentative nature of the chief exponents. Ruskin saw the women's great function as praiseonly. She enters into no contest, but infallibly adjudges the crown of the contest – as in a medieval tournament. Mill is also very much vocal about women's cause; as such he argues that the legal subordination of women is based on nothing more than the facts that men are physically stronger, which Mill proves to be an absurd reason for wanting to give one group of people power over another. Mill's insistence is that the legal relations of the sexes have corrupted their nature. This, as he says, can be corrected by equality of rights. Regarding Mill, modern commentators state that his interests are too narrow and they go ahead to restate that Mill says nothing about the plight of a single women, and assumes like Ruskin that most women will marry. His efforts look focused on improving the status quo rather than suggesting any radical departure from it.

Along with the Britain and European feminism, American feminism emerged with the Seneca Falls convention of 1848, a meeting mostly represented by

women to demand an end to discrimination based on sex. The issue of women's rights emerged together with debate about the rights of black slaves. Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) and Cady Stanton happened to be the main campaigners for married women's property rights and the vote. Sarah Grimke and Margaret Fuller were the key theorists for the cause of women. The most significant difference between Britain and America, in terms of first wave feminist development, however, was that in America, different state legislatures passed reform measures independently of the central government as such some states witnessed franchise while northern states remained unfranchised. Hence, once activated, American feminism had similar colours of reform as those of Britain.

Victorian feminism is a difficult concept to be analyzed. Campaigners like Caroline Norton, Florence Nightingale, Emily Davies and such others were ambivalent as to the extent of their own feminism and hence were over-anxious to distance themselves from unconventional ways of things and life. Moreover, they seemed concerned mainly with the plight of intelligent middle class single women. Though the vote (right to vote) was granted, the remains of a 'separate spheres' philosophy persisted into the twentieth century, a deep rooted belief that most 'normal' women would live quite at home with their husbands & children. Beginning initially with spasmodic bursts of activism, first wave feminism gathered pace through the work of specific individuals working for specific ends, until the momentum of events made concern for woman's full participation in social & political life. However, it worked a niche for future road to.

The first wave feminism, though an advance, could not address the most of the problems faced by women. Their liberation and subjectivity were yet to be addressed and as such in the changed socio political context women needed a

sharper and far more radical feminist consciousness. To be clear ‘old feminism’ was individualist and reformist, but ‘women’s liberation’ was collective and revolutionary which emerged to be resurgent. To quote Kate Millet, (sexual politics 1970), “at last accomplish its aim of freeing half the race from its immemorial subordination”<sup>55</sup> was the slogan of the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave.

Kate Millet, Sulamith Firestone, Robin Morgan and such other feminist theorists contributed to the cause of women liberation in the USA. In Britain also Germaine Greer and Eva Figa had their own theories of feminism and Patriarchy in the 70’s. But to understand this wave of theoretical writing, we have to refer to Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949). For it is de Beauvoir’s account of the cultural construction of women as ‘other’ which delved the foundation for much of the theoretical work of the 1970’s. As she (Beauvoir’s) observes 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 that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. To speak in the language of Simone de Beauvoir, “the category of the ‘other’, she argues, is fundamental in the formation of all human subjectivity, since our sense of self can be produced only in opposition to something which is not-self. But men have claimed the category of self or subject exclusively for themselves and relegated women to the states of eternal other. The category ‘women’ has thus no substance, being merely a projection of male fantasies (the myth of the eternal feminine) and fears. Since all cultural representations of the world presently available to us – whether in myth, religion, literature or popular culture – are the work of men, women too have internalised these definitions and learned to ‘dream through the dreams of

---

<sup>55</sup> Millet, K. *Sexual Politics*, article; Second wave feminism by Sue Thornhan, feminism: it is History and cultural context, London and New York, 1970, P-29.

men'. Indeed a 'true woman' is required to accept herself as 'other' for man: she must 'make herself object... renounces her autonomy.'<sup>56</sup>

In her analysis of how women became the other, de Beauvoir considers the explanations of biologists, Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxists. All three, she argues, are unacceptably determinist. She states that biological science reduces a matter to physiology, psychoanalysis a matter to unconscious drives, and Marxism to a matter of economic subordination which is in fact socially and culturally produced. As such, it is capable of being changed if women can grasp the subjecthood they have been so far denied. De Beauvoir's conclusion then is a mixture of optimism and exhortation. To her, economic self-interest has led men to give partial social and economic emancipation to women. Women must seize this opportunity to achieve complete economic and social equality. If this is done, an inner metamorphosis will follow. Women will exist for her, she will be a subject as man is a subject, and other for him only in so far as he is for her.

De Beauvoir's argument that the key to women's oppression lies in their cultural construction as 'other' was taken up with varying degrees of theoretical sophistication by many American second wave feminists. Among them Betty Friedan is celebrated one. Friedan calls for a drastic reshaping of the cultural image of femininity that will permit women to reach maturity, identity and completeness of self.

Like De Beauvoir, Millett, one of the celebrated feminists of the second wave, argues that women have internalized the ideology of femininity, and with their inferior states.

Feminists whether of liberal or radical backgrounds, together with other representatives of early second wave feminism, have in common a view of

---

<sup>56</sup> Gamble, S. "*Feminism and Post feminism*," edit, Routledge companion London and New York, P-34.

culture as political: its images, meanings, representations working to define and control women. But between liberal feminists, who see change as possible within current socio-political structure, and radical feminists who argue that nothing short of revolution will affect such change, there are major theoretical differences. To speak in the language of Sushila Singh- “The radical conception of human nature is neo-Freudian- this is the only feminist theory which argues explicitly that women’s liberation also necessitates children’s liberation.”<sup>57</sup>

Hence, the radical feminists conclude that women’s liberation requires a biological revolution. They believe that only through technology women can be liberated from the fundamental inequalities of the bearing & rearing of children.

Alongside the developments of radical feminism some other strands of feminism namely, socialist, Marxist and psychoanalytic feminism come up. As this type of feminism states, a woman’s position is reduced to that of a commodity meant to be used and disposed. As such it advocates the economic emancipation of or independence of women. But at the same time there is a serious limitation of Marxist feminism i, e., it regards the class system of capitalism as the only one cause of women’s oppression. Friedrich Engel’s the origin of the family, private property, and the state and Eli Zaretsky’s Socialist Revolution point out that women are often looked at and treated as property of man. According to it, women’s oppression is deeply embedded in existing social and economic structures and hence it challenges the power relation in patriarchal capitalist system. Thus, socialist feminist struggle is not against male domination alone, but against patriarchy and capitalism. Juliet Mitchell in her essay “women: the largest revolution” (1966) attacks Marxism’s failure to

---

<sup>57</sup> Singh, S. *Theory , Criticism Analysis*, Delhi, Pencraft International , 2004, P-30.

offer any materialist analysis of women's oppression. Marxist/socialist theory, as she argues, sees women's liberation as merely an adjunct to class analysis. Together with Sheila Rowbotham, Mitchell offers that socialist feminist must seek to transform 'the inner world' of bodily experience, psychological colonization and cultural silencing, as well as the outer world of material conditions. Mitchell offers her psychoanalytic theory by criticizing the dominant view of psychoanalysis of Oedipus complex. She sees that women's oppression operates largely through ideology, an ideology manifest in the psychology of 'femininity' and lived out in women's roles within the 'personal' sphere of sexuality and the family. But women's oppression takes place always in specific historical circumstances; its analysis requires both a radical feminist consciousness and the tools of historical materialism. As Mitchell puts, it is the product of four distinct but overlapping structures: those of production, reproduction, sexuality and the socialization of children. Mitchell further holds that transformation of all four structures must be achieved if the movements towards women's liberation are to succeed.

Though with a slight variation, French Feminists also used psychoanalysis as an explanatory tool. Like the American movement feminists, the French feminists distinguished their feminism from earlier reformist groups. Whereas Kate Millet denounced Freud as a key agent of patriarchy, French theorists Irigaray, Helen Cixous and such others followed de Beauvoir's analysis of women's construction as 'other' by seeking to explore the ways in which language and culture construct sexual difference, and to interpret this they did refer to French psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan. Lacan had described the infant's entry into culture as occurring through, firstly, its identification with its own mirror-image and consequent sense of possessing an independent identity; and secondly, its entry into the 'Symbolic order' via the acquisition of

language. Lacan argues that the symbolic order is 'patriarchal' constructing meaning through sets of binary opposition – for example, men/woman, mind/body (nature), activity/passivity in which the 'male' term is always privileged. It is the law of the father; and the signifier being the phallus. It is this view of sexual difference as constructed in and by knowledge that was to influence the development of French feminist theory. In various ways French feminists sought to establish a female identity, language and writing which would subject and deconstruct the Phallogocentricity of the symbolic order. In doing so, they opened up for feminist investigation questions about the relationship between desire and language and about the constructedness of identity and as such their work was taken up by Anglo-American feminist theorists in literary, cultural and film studies in the 1980's. But challenge to this was put up by materialist feminists who stressed the social and economic roots of women's oppression within language. As they observe, French feminist theory, like other forms of feminism which draw on psychoanalysis, undermines a feminist political struggle which must be based on a shared social identity and shared social and political goals.

There had been always clashing political as well as theoretical positions among the feminists of the wave. It was admitted that during the thirty years period since the beginnings of the second wave, feminism has acquired an academic voice both within and beyond women's studies. But as a political identity, it has fractured along the line of multiple differences between women, and both young and high profile media women seem to believe that 'second wave' feminism' has dissolved into 'post feminism'. To make it clear we can refer to the comments of participants of the Ruskin college conference "We were criticized for being all white and middle class: neither criticism was wholly true, but there was a real truth behind the criticism. As sisters we were similar;

or in stressing sisterhood and our common oppression and strengths as women we repressed and ignored difference which should have been recognized'. This should not mean, however, an abandonment of the project of second wave feminism: The political and personal struggle now needs a larger, more diverse "we", who will combine in resistance to all the overlapping oppressions. I hope I'll go on being part of that."<sup>58</sup>

With the discussion of the waves of feminism our attempt is to look in to the treatment of feminism from the post feminist points of view. As it has been found it is critical of any definition of women as victim who is unable to control their own lives. It is skewed in favour of liberal humanism; it embraces flexible ideology which can be adapted to suit individual needs and desires. As it tends to be implicitly heterosexist in orientation, post feminism commonly seeks to develop an agenda which can find place for men, as lovers, husbands and fathers as well as friends. Originated from within media in early 1980's it has tended to be a movement against the shackles of feminist movement. In the nineteenth edition of the concise oxford Dictionary 'Postfeminism' is defined as of relating to the ideas, attitude, etc. which ignores or rejects feminist ideas of the 1960's and subsequent decades. However, many with 'postfeminism label' do not involve themselves as a part of anti feminist movement. But here the post does not refer to rejection. Again turning to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, the word 'post' is defined as 'after in time or order', but not as denoting rejection.

Writes like Flaudi, Susan comes forward to say that post feminism is the backlash and its triumph lies in its ability to define itself as an ironic, pseudo intellectual critique on the feminist movement, rather than an overtly hostile response to it. To reinforce it Flaudi attempts to unmask post feminism as a

---

<sup>58</sup> Wandor, M. *Once a feminist*, edit. By Gamble, Sarah, "Feminism and Post feminism" the Routledge Companion, P-42.

wolf in sheep's clothing. It is interesting to note that some of the women predominantly identified with post feminism have themselves employed the backlash arguments in attack on second wave feminism.

Rene Denfeld, a post feminist just gives the opposite view about feminism. As she opines second wave feminism has fostered an inappropriate image of female victimization. To speak in her language, "In the name of feminism, these extremists have embarked on a moral and spiritual crusade that would take us back to a time worse than our mother's day – back to the nineteenth century alive of sexual morality, spiritual purity, and political helplessness. Through a combination of influential voices and unquestioned causes, current feminism would create the very same morally pure yet helplessly martyred role that women suffered from a century ago".<sup>59</sup> From the above statements it is crystal clear that post feminism is critical about feminism. With the same elements of feminism carried on its trial. As has been observed by Seigel, both feminism and post feminism are involved in a dialectical opposition, with both parties attempting to lay claim to some of 'pure' and 'correct' version of feminism. Here we can welcome another observation made by Wolf in her '*fire with fire*'. Wolf is critical of feminism in this book. She states that much of the responsibility for feminism's image problem lies at the door of the popular media, that have mounted a campaign of 'lies', distortion and caricature against the movement. She further states that there is no good on bad feminism, instead, it is a media orchestrated misunderstanding which women must surmount in order to embrace 'power feminism', the aims of which are equality, economic empowerment, and the confidence to act both collectively and individually to achieve these goals. But her simplistic ways of understanding the feministic aspects cannot go scot free. Her entire argument rests on the assumption that power is there for the taking, but it is not easy as it appears to be. If one is a white, middle class, educated and solvent American,

---

<sup>59</sup> Denfeld, R. *A young women's challenge to the old feminist order*, edit, feminism and post feminism, Sarah, "*Feminism and Post feminism*" the Routledge Companion, London and New York, P-17..

the case is different, but if one is a black, poor, or subject to an oppressive political, military or religious regime, the positions would be quite different. Wolf seems to omit these considerations.

The claims of post feminist like Brooks are that it replaces dualism with diversity, consensus with variety and thus establishes dynamism shaping the intellectual climate from modernity to post modernity. But her claim also cannot stand the test of time. Critics are of the opinion that although Brooks maintains that post feminism 'facilitates a broad based, pluralistic conception of the application of feminism, and addresses the demands of marginalized, diasporic and colonised cultures of a non-hegemonic feminism capable of giving voice to local, indigenous and post – colonised feminism, it remains difficult to see how these debates can be translated into concrete action.

Now we have to consider whether post feminism can be placed as third wave. In 1970 Germaine Greer published her celebrated book '*The Female Eunuch*'. In it she has criticized post feminism to reestablish feminism. As she states feminism like all other ideologies, must respond to the exigencies of a changing world – and any failure to address younger women must be addressed and hence she asserts that the post feminist phenomenon which was always a primarily media led movement has already reached an impasse out of which a coherent solution cannot be reached. That is why to accommodate itself to changing times a number of third wave groups of women have sprung up to and they feel at ease with contradictions unlike second wave feminists, because they have been brought up within competing feminist structure, for which they accept pluralism. Moreover, its links with political activism should ensure that the third wave is more than just a theory, but an approach that will work against the social injustice which still form part of the everyday experience of many women.

Any attempt to differentiate the third wave from the post feminism may be achieving nothing more than a little juggling with semantics. It is argued that whatever the third wave states, it is simply a hipper, slicker branch of post feminism. Even then it can be said that the third wave feminism – is capable, as post feminism is not, of describing a position from which post feminism can be both celebrated and critiqued, and new strategies evolved. The state of economic, political and technological flux which characterizes modernity presents opportunities and dangers for women which the feminist of the first & 2<sup>nd</sup> waves could not have imagined. But whatever we call it, and whatever form it takes, it is essential that women continue to advance their cause in the days to come and hence the word ‘feminism’ must not be meaningless.

In the long march of the history of philosophy women have not been represented as the focal point or important subject of discussion. On the contrary, problems and concerns about her have been pushed back to the realm of ‘the other’ by both Anglo American & European philosophers. Here an attempt would be made to look into feminist concern in the historical perceptive of philosophy in order to clear the dominant male philosophy viz-a-viz feminist philosophy.

Philosophers themselves might claim to be ‘non-feminist’ in so far as western philosophy has been premised on a supposed neutrality or impartiality. However, feminist philosophy emerged gradually in the United States during the 1970’s on the questions and perspectives of first wave feminist on equality and second wave feminist identity and gender hierarchy. As such it has been observed that the initial impact of feminist question belonged to the realm of ethics & political philosophy. Though the emergence of feminist philosophy could be felt in France during 1960-70’s, yet it was with detached thought of

Anglo American analytic philosophers. Along with the European and French philosophers engagement in existentialism, Marxism, structuralism & poststructuralism, feminism, philosophers from Simone de Beauvoir to Luce Irigaray engaged themselves in the new developments. Feminist philosophers irrespective of geographical context would seem to follow three stages resulting in its three enduring aspects.

First stage of feminist philosophy is the development of critique on dominant philosophy. It stresses the ways of the dominant philosophy and how it has excluded women, and masculinist biases in regard to specific philosophical canons and arguments. The critique refers to implicit suggestions for reconstruction of Western philosophy, its canons, conceptions and claims. Australian philosopher Genevieve Lloyd book – “The Man of Reason” “Male and Female” in Western philosophy substantiates feminist critique of reason. Historically, maleness, as represented in western philosophy does not carry the same symbolic association with body, nature and passion and it does with mind and reason but embodiment has been conceived as closely associated with women. Lloyd points out that Descartes rejects Aristotle’s account of soul containing both rational and irrational elements; he replaces the Aristotelian soul with a dualism of rational mind and irrational body. Feminists are of the opinion that though Descartes’ alternative is different from Aristotle’s it does not have much better implications for the philosopher’s understanding of women’s symbolic gender. Despite Descartes’ own concern to create an equalitarian philosophy where reason is a priori possessed equally by all human minds, given that women are symbolically associated with the body, his dualistic philosophy of rational mind and irrational body aligns women symbolically with irrationality and men with rationality. Basically Lloyd’s critique reveals that reason in western philosophy has been symbolically male

and that the symbolic connections of reason and gender are complex; and hence these conclusions are meant to encourage the rereading and reconstruction of the philosophical canon with sensitivity to the contingency of the maleness of reason.

In second stage feminist philosophy involves the creation of new philosophical interpretation, arguments and approaches. Here considerable advances in ethics and political philosophy along with advances made in epistemology, metaphysics and philosophy of science are notable. Both the former, the soft branches of philosophy and the latter 'hard core' of philosophy are challenged by feminist perspectives. The call was to 'root out sexist distortions and perversion in the hand of abstract reasoning thought most immune to infiltration by social values and to identify how masculine perspectives have shaped the aspects of thought supposedly most gender neutral.' The second stage or aspect of feminist philosophy remained contained within various, discrete subdivisions of the main branches of philosophy; hence there we find feminist ethics, feminist epistemology, feminist philosophy of science; and each of these subdivisions is shaped by a specific problematic, key texts and specialist insight. As for example, since the mid of 1980's the proliferation of feminist epistemological projects have contested the most fundamental presuppositions of traditional epistemology with highly detailed and varied alternatives.

The third stage of feminist philosophy is assimilative and as such it incorporates within the more general domain of philosophy. The challenge is no longer to maintain feminist subdivisions within the separate domains of philosophy; instead the need is for the general assimilation into philosophy of feminist critiques, reconstructions and novel insights. However, the goal of feminist incorporation and assimilation has not been realized in most branches

of philosophy. Though women philosopher whether feminist or non-feminists have had much impact on ethics, yet feminist interventions in logic, a part of the hard core of philosophy, have not been so evident. As a positive reaction Lloyd enters the third stage of assimilation and incorporation. Lloyd has entered the general domain of philosophy that had most recent work on Spinoza. Notably, she invites philosopher generally to discover in Spinoza new conceptions of old philosophical problems, especially concerning human embodiment. It has been found that the basic ignorance of feminist philosopher's basic impact upon philosophy generally tends to create a resistance to feminist as something wrongly feared, save ethics. Students tend to have at least a distinctive awareness of the feminist influence in both ethical theory and practice. But more than the fear of feminism born out of ignorance, the lack of accurate knowledge also results in a failure to recognize that feminist philosophy is not peripheral issues. On the contrary, today feminist philosophers are doing vital work in philosophy by transforming conceptions at its very heart including objectivity, reason, intuition and imagination. In fact, feminists are working on the essentially contested concepts at the core of philosophy as it tries to give new life to a discipline that thrives on intellectual debate and critique.

Despite these, an exigency persists to ensure that feminist philosophy is not relegated to the other philosophy, but is an integral element in the ever developing history of philosophy as it moves into the twenty first century. If properly presented, feminist philosophy can entice and engage both philosophers and non-philosophers in the contemporary cultural debates or feminism and post feminism. Philosophical analysis of and attention to notions such as knowledge, power, reason and experience which remain central to students and teachers of philosophy may be attractive to any discipline which

tries to take on board the appropriate impact of feminist and other cultural critique of its subject matter and its methodology. Hence good accessible accounts of feminist critique and reconstructions should be welcomed. Considering interdisciplinarity of feminist philosophy, three particular areas could be singled out as potentially formative for feminist philosophy. Here we can invite psycholinguistic as shaped by feminist after Jaques Lacan and Jaques Derrida, discourse analysis as inferred by Michel Foucault and film theory especially its tools for exploring subjectivity which will open up new vistas of feminist philosophy in the days to come.

### **Dainism: A Practice of Witch-Hunting**

In the long march of orientation, reorientation and resultant upheavals of culture humanity has witnessed, and as such it is hoped, life would be dawned upon with illumination, wisdom shaking off the odds and 'detrimental beliefs on the way that have taken inroads and eating into the vitals of life; but to the contrary, just the opposite has been experienced at times leading to the marginalization and victimization of a section of society – the owes of which frustrate the very spirit of advancement in life situations. Apparently, we claim to be of high cultured and knowledge society, but the ugly hands of the Dark Age are haunting and pushing to some obnoxious, dismal and unbecoming ways of life. Here in this part of the chapter attempts would be made to show how a section of women of a particular community or communities are marginalized on flimsy grounds of dream medicine or supernatural evil powers. As to these, this supposedly called witch, locally called 'daini' that refers to a section of destitute women neglected and victimized by the already prevalent male domination would be drawn into discussion and examination. The problem being a feminist one, the eastern as well as western concepts of 'witch' that has ready reference to patriarchy and value dualism has been

attempted to be examined and in this regard patriarchy and value dualism of dominant philosophy have been ascertained as the root of thing ugly ‘witch hunting’ and ‘daini killing’ particularly in the Bodo, Chaotal and Adibashi communities of Assam, and together with this we have made an attempt to prove feminist position against human caused degradation of nature and the consequent trouble particular women have suffered owing to these exigencies. Here to substantiate this point we can refer to Vandana Shiva, an environmentalist of great repute. To Shiva – “Pakriti is a popular category, and one through which ordinary women in rural India relate to nature. It is also a highly evolved philosophical category in Indian cosmology. Even these philosophical streams of Indian thought were patriarchal and did not give the supreme place to divinity of a woman, a mother, were permeated by the prehistoric cults and the living little traditions of nature as the primordial mother goddess.”<sup>60</sup> Hence the objective of this part of the chapter is to study the socio-cultural aspects of witch hunting with dominant philosophy behind it. As the beliefs about the existence of witches are widely and deeply rooted in the minds of some tribal communities, it may have some links with herbal medicines and midwifery as such with nature dependence of women. Such linkage has been addressed and tried to be found out.



A Projected Dain

The term ‘dain’, ‘dakan’ or ‘dayan’ has English meaning equivalent as witch’ meaning intelligent or wise women. Etymologically it refers to a women engaged in midwifery and herbal medicines. Another derivation of the term

---

<sup>60</sup> Shiva, V. *Staying Alive*, Zed Books limited, London, 1989, P-38.

daini, as scholars say, is from 'dakini' – a Sanskrit origin. Scholars say 'dakini' is from the root, 'daka or dakapurusa'. There is an addition to these that from goddess Durga's attendant dakini the term has been derived. Whatever the etymology might be, the personality under reference once enjoyed a very high status in the society, i.e., people used to look at her with some feeling of awe and reverence. As the personality under reference goes to the jungle nearby looking out for some, herbs people start calling her bad names – dain, Jokhini, a notorious women associating her with evil spirits, evil powers and holding her responsible for the disease and deaths in the neighborhood. She is so branded and believed by others to have power which can harm any other person through magic, mantras (verses or phrases chanted with spiritual powers) bad (evil) eye or any other method. Further, she is supposed to the know and practice, the rituals of witchcraft by which she harm others. People very often fail to perceive her closeness with nature. This point may be made clear by citing Vandana Shiva: "Women in sustenance economics, producing and reproducing wealth in partnership with nature, have been experts in their own rights of a holistic and ecological knowledge of nature's process. But these alternative modes of knowing, which are oriented in the social benefits and sustenance needs, are not recognized by the reductionist paradigm, because, it fails to perceive the interconnectedness of nature, of the connection of women's lives, work and knowledge with the creation of wealth."<sup>61</sup> Here we can refer to the philosophy of feminism grounded in women's affinity to the forces of nature as opposed to man's urge to control and manipulate the natural world. It would again be clear when we refer to Maria Mies. Mies has called women's work in producing sustenance the 'produces of life' and views that it

---

<sup>61</sup> Shiva, V. *Staying Alive*, Zed Books Ltd, India, South Asia, 1989, P-24.

is truly productive in relationship to nature. She further states women not only collect and consume that grow in nature but they make things grow.

Of late 'daini' cases has been taking place among the Bodos and tea tribes (Mundas and Chaotal of Assam). The otherwise nature dependence of the Bodos and Chaotal women maintain close proximity with nature for their livelihood and as such in many cases, not all, they lead a more independent economic status than other communities women. By virtue of their long dependence on nature or other, they tend to enjoy monopoly over medicinal plants locally found. These practices do continue and transfer from mothers to daughters. Hence they do develop a kind of authority over herbal medicine (a crude method of preparation of such medicine) Together with this, in Bodo and Chaotal societies, women have more access to land use rights in comparison to their counterparts in other society. Even unmarried women, widows do enjoy land use rights and other property rights as the traditions go. Sometimes its so warrants that they have to assert their rights with much difficulty. The very moment they do assert their rights, attempts are made to call them bad names and ultimately they are, without rhyme and reason, branded dains, witches, jokhinis etc. The motto behind this is to check the woman folk against any assertion through deterrence and in such cases the punishment would be exemplary before other women. Here some findings from socio political studies may help understand the facts clearly and distinctly. The cases of Subhadra Basumatary of Dudhnoi, Goalpara (Assam) (The statesman, 14<sup>th</sup> sept. 2000) and pedkider, Kherbandha, Bihar (the sentinel 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1999) are the cases in points that corroborate the facts that male chauvinism is handy in this menace and the very motive, the ulterior motive is of grabbing their money land, assets and property. One very important cause of branding women as dains or Dayans is property dispute because this is the easiest way to grab the

fixed assets of a woman who is a widow or a single woman and lacks male protection. Even the village quacks (witch doctors) who often fail to heal the patients resort to shifting the responsibility to the woman (allegedly) called daini, a daini with supernatural evil power; here they do have high flown words against the targeted woman. In this we can refer to the Bhautah phenomenon, Kaskari Sangathan, Socialist Health Review, the 12<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1994, Page 89. The whole system of branding women as witches is well organized. The ojhas (witch doctors) in the village claim to be one who can counter the evil influence of witches. Rumours are spread against a particular woman and often large section of the community participates in witch hunting. If the woman is eliminated or driven away, her assets are appropriated by persons remaining behind in the village.

It is to be noted that the Bhagat - the witch-doctor takes the initiative in determining a dain or bhutali. The oja or the Bhagat becomes prominent in the locality and as such sometimes he is hired for other distant places to determine the dain. The oja performs a test to determine whether the framed woman is a witch, and his confirmation is believed by all. In doing so, he is seen to take some hints from the males of the society. Personal grudges and envy in the otherwise strife torn society pave the way for this heinous practice. In this moves she not only loses her identity, but also her property, house, cattle, family, friends and access to entire tribal community. It is believed that the daini devours life through the spell of her supernatural power. As the Amar Asom of 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2001 published that under suspicion of 'daini' two tribal women (tea tribe) aged 55 and 52 were burnt alive and later on were killed with crude weapons – spears, knives, axes, swords etc. and were buried in the garden itself. Another feature of witch hunting is that in many cases it takes place amongst its own people, i.e. among the relatives even. In such cases,

sudden death of any member of a group of people or the tribe is suspected to be due to dain; sometimes such incidence of woman marginalisation takes place among the relatives, only the witch doctor being the outsider. In many cases it so happens that the branded witch's family is also compelled to kill her to save their wealth and such killings or witch hunting are considered pious. At times, the family of the witch flees with her to save themselves. From this it could be inferred that such incidence of daini takes place in a strife-torn small society i.e. society being always at discords as to property rights or land use rights. Why is a woman to blame? The answer seems very simple & distinct. In such societies women do enjoy a high and respectable position. This state of affair tends to develop in men a complex, i.e., as if the women take the helm of affairs in every matter as such the males are very apprehensive about their domination. Hence, they do systematically marginalize women – the branded witch being killed in public in the tribe; sometimes even the own people of the destitute woman get involved in the torturing and killing the evil power (as they assume) for the cause of society and its purification of (as they are made to understand by the influential) and no body informs the police. If a woman tries to seek help from the police or tries to flee, she is tortured even more. In such cases the police officer might be a tribal one and hence his loyalties would not allow him to register a case in her favour. A non-tribal policeman might join hands with the witch-doctor with the motive of extorting money. When a woman is killed in the name of witchcraft, no enquiry is made thereto. The root of this problem must be in the social fabric of that particular tribal society, which prescribes different treatment for the two genders. Here we can refer to Samar Basu Mallick. He has observed and said – “it is a design of a patriarchal society to do away with non-patriarchal society.”<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Basu, S, M. *Gender Relation and Witches among the indigenous communities of Jharkhand*. P-346.

Now, as the problem of witch or dain has reference to European as well as English history, we can see the issue (problem) in the light of the same. The English equivalent of dain is witch which is from the root 'wicca' referring to a wise woman having expertise in some fields of medicines or therapy. To refer to Basu Mullik, it is from 'dakini' an attendant of goddess Kali – having peculiar knowledge over medicines. Even in the Renaissance England the cases of witch hunting were there for that people would hire the witch-doctor from outside where the so called witch doctor used to take away the long preserved and treasured medicines from the women on some pretext or other. Here we can refer to the Penguin Medical English Encyclopedia (1972, P-459) "withering, an English doctor (1741-99) took away the long preserved medicine of heart disease from a woman of Shropshire." (Preserved a secret by an old woman of Shropshire)

The medicine, which is considered tainted with evil power in the hands of women, becomes pure and great in the hands of men. Her hard earned and hard owned experience is nullified associating and branding her with the Devil. To make this point prominent we can refer to Madam Curie. In the twentieth century Madam Curie herself took up the work of boiling pitchblende and as a result she made her celebrated discovery of radium. Women are the finders of secrets by taking much pain, even to the risk of life. To quote Shakespeare, -

"Double, double, toil and trouble,  
Fire burn and cauldron bubble."<sup>63</sup>

From the above discussion it is crystal clear that one is awarded Nobel Prize and the other is burnt alive, buried alive and stabbed to death. How horrible the fate of woman is! If we look to the history of England we can find the king of England James one to have legislated a law against witches. The branded

---

<sup>63</sup> Shakespeare, W. *Macbeth*, LBS Publishers Distributions Ltd. New Delhi, 1996, P-196.

women were persecuted and tortured and to such acts., not to speak of the laity, even the Christian institutions and the state administration had ugly hands in the torture of the determined witches. The Seventeenth Century North America also witnessed the same notoriety of the witch hunting. The twentieth century Africa had a bitter taste of torture and killing of women, particularly in the name of witchcraft. In the similar way we can see the witch hunting hysteria which was aimed at annihilating women in Europe as knowers and experts and that too was contemporaneous with two centuries of glorious scientific revolution. It reached its peak with Galileo's Dialogue concerning the two Chief world systems and died with the emergence of the Royal Society of London and the Paris Academy of Sciences. The above understanding would be clear if we refer to Brian Easlea, -

“The introduction of witches as a symbol for the interrogation of nature, the courtroom as model for its inquisition, and torture through mechanical devices as a tool for the subjugation of disorder were fundamental to the scientific method as power. For Bacon, as for Harvey, sexual politics helped to structure the nature of the empirical method that would produce a new form of knowledge and a new ideology of objectivity seemingly devoid of cultural and political assumptions.”<sup>64</sup>

Of late, along with the stray cases of the incident in parts of India (Jarkhand, Maharastra), the phenomenon of witch hunting or killing (daini killing) has reached its pinnacle recently in the Bodo and Chautal societies of Assam. We

---

<sup>64</sup> Brain, E. *Science and Sexual Oppression: Patriarchy's confrontation with Woman and Nature*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1981, P-64.

need to find out the locus. The root of this vexed and unbecoming problem has to be found out. As the problem relates to feminism, an examination must be made to look into the opposite issue of feminism the analysis of which may help us to find out the root of this vexed problem. Feminism being a philosophical movement always refers to patriarchy and hence examination of patriarchal paradigm may help us find out the locus of the under reference problem. As we know, patriarchy is a system that refers to power relations in which women's interests are subordinated to the interest of man, this system or conceptual framework has to be looked into. So far the patriarchal conceptual framework is concerned, man is considered superior to women. The term 'conceptual framework' is understood as a set of beliefs, values, attitudes and assumptions which shape and reflect how one views oneself and one's world. It is supposed to be a socially constructed lens through which we perceive ourselves and others. As in witch hunting or daini killing women are, basically targeted in the name of witchcraft, it is in most of the cases patriarchal in nature. From this we can come to a decision that the root of the vexed problem or menace lies in patriarchal framework which justifies, maintains and explains domination of women by men. Another point that refers to patriarchy is that the branded women do not have easy access to law enforcement institution as they are patriarchal in nature and as such the victimised women fail to gather courage to approach them. This point can be highlighted by referring to eco-feminists. As they say modern science has been consciously gendered, patriarchal activity. Here nature as well as women has come to be seen to be raped and denuded. Science has become a male venture based on the subjugation of female nature and female sex. But this conceptual framework is very much detrimental to the society, detrimental to the sustained living and wholesale rise of the society. Along with patriarchy another feature of

conceptual framework that happens to be catalytic in marginalization of women and nature and thereby leading to the daini problem is value-dualism. Value dualism itself is an instrument of oppressive conceptual framework. In its workings, it admits disjunctive pairs in which the disjuncts are seen as oppositional rather than complementary; exclusive rather than inclusive. Accordingly, one disjunct enjoys superiority over the other. In value-dualism, if human beings are classified in to male and female, i.e. in the disjunctive pairs, value-dualism bestows higher value and status to males who are similarised with 'mind' and 'reason' than females identified as 'body' and 'emotion'. We may locate the problem in the very workings of patriarchy and its origin. As to the origin of patriarchy different philosophers have their own theories. So what the theories might be, the debate is as to whether patriarchy is natural or universal or man-made.

New reductionist development of science and technology has introduced patriarchal practice of dominating women and nature more in comparison to earlier modes of development. The ultimate reductionism is achieved when nature is linked with a view of economic activity in which money is the only gauge of value and wealth, and hence commercialization of economy and creation of surplus and profit has provoked men immensely. Such system of western patriarchy dominates and exploits nature, women and the poor and as a result displacement, poverty and marginalization have become rampant. In fact, the notion of development has been based on exploitation and exclusion of women, degradation of nature and erosion of culture. Thus women have to bear the burden without being benefited.

Another mode of reductionism which has of late dislodged women of their earlier position in nature as land right user, has been the too much owning of land for private as well as public use. Cultivation of commercial crops like tea

plants, cotton, jute etc. in place of life sustaining and life giving sources of women and the poor have created enormous burden and as such they have been pushed to scanty resources to feed their children and cattle while their males are forced to work as laborers under some capitalists. This, in fact, has reduced women's self sustaining ways of life and life supporting capacity. It is this asymmetry that accounts for a deepening of ecological crisis as a decrease in nature's life producing potential, along with an increase in capital accumulation and the expansion of development as a process of replacing the currency of life and sustenance with the currency of cash and profit. Since women and nature are supposed to be passive, the dominant groups deny their very beings and as such the dominant groups come forward with their much acclaimed improved techniques to fertilize nature; likewise, women, tribels and peasants similarised to nature have been made passive and unproductive for economic growth. To speak in the tone of Vandana Shiva, "Development thus is equivalent to male development, a development bereft of the feminine, the conservation, the ecological principles. The neglect of nature's work as renewing herself, and women's work in producing sustenance in form of basic, vital needs is an essential part of the paradigm of maldevelopment, which sees all work that does produce profits and capital as non-productive work."<sup>65</sup>

Though modernization is a way of life, yet it is mostly patriarchal in nature and as such it has become a design in the hands of patriarchy. Our discussion or investigation has already confirmed that modernization through industrialization and advancement in science and technology invites maldevelopment and patriarchal domination of nature and women in reality. Here it is pertinent to note that maldevelopment defies integrity, harmony and interconnectedness among the different species of biotic community which

---

<sup>65</sup> Shiva, V. *Staying Alive*, Published in India and South Asia by Kali for women, New Delhi, 1989, P-4.

thereby generates exploitation, inequality injustice and violence. Hence, maldevelopment in the name of modernization ruptures the harmony and integrity between the masculine and the feminine. It places men above nature and women, and thereby aggravates domination of the so-called passive women by the so-called active men. From the place of the creators and sustainers of life, women and nature are reduced to passive object or crude resources in the fragmented anti life model of maldevelopment. Thus development sans the interest of women and nature, i.e. maldevelopment has devalued women first as their work is equated with nature's process, work which satisfies the basic needs and ensures sustenance in general.

So far we have discussed and examined the problems of daini and daini killing in the light of their socio-philosophical backgrounds: value dualism and patriarchal conceptual framework. From this it is pertinent that daini killing, (witch hunting) so much it is held to be disease; it is rather a symptom of other diseases. Certainly it stands on the sustained growth and progress of society. So what the society might be, whether it be the Bodo society, or the Chaotal Society, the idea behind the phenomenon of daini, along with other causes of blind beliefs and superstitions, is mainly to empower the males on the one hand, and to dominate the females on the other. The very tendency to undermine the femalefolk is very clear in patriarchal society. But in those societies under reference, the phenomenon has been profusely witnessed during their transition- transition from nature dependence to agriculture; transition from agriculture to industries or such other occupations. It has also reference to the scarcity of food and such items of living. Here we should refer to a journal, the Bhutali phenomenon, Kashtakari Sangathan, "The scarcity of food in these societies has link with the depletion of forests and other natural

resources.”<sup>66</sup> However, as Sydney Endle (an English writer on the faiths and cultures of the Bodos) observes the folk tales and mythologies do not support the concept of daini. As he observes, there was once the concept of daina only and the daina proclaimed himself to be the most knowledgeable person. The following nursery rhyme would substantiate this point and hence we may refer to S. Endle.

“Aang Gaurang Gaurang daina gaurang  
Dau Khito Angni Khitho.

The English translation of this rhyme may be:

I am wise, I am wise Daina  
Birds are far behind me in the race, so  
I am more powerful.”<sup>67</sup>

This nursery rhyme suggests that the concept daini which refers to a witch, a branded woman with supernatural evil powers is a borrowed one from a patriarchal mainstream society. Bodo mythology and folk literature never supports such idea to have been a part of their lives. It must have been an borrowed idea which was the result of assimilation with other cultures. Also, the daini concept among the Bodos cannot be associated with their primitive beliefs i.e. there was no such concept among them in their primitive cultures. Obviously, the root lies in the workings of modernization. The very move of modernization, depletion of natural resources and displacement of the aborigines from their nature homes, together with utter individualism and materialistic ideas of life have caused instability in the society. Co-operation, sharing and caring have come to an almost half in these society. The weaker women, an unmarried one, the widowed and the poverty smitten have been marginalized as daini- a witch having supernatural and black power. Also, in

---

<sup>66</sup> *The Bhutali Phenomenon, Kasstakari Sangathan Socialist Review*, 1,2, sept. 1984, P-89.

<sup>67</sup> Endle, S. *Kacharis*, 1911, Reprint, Delhi-1990.

the modern development framework women and nature are considered to be economically unproductive and hence devalued. In these matters ecofeminists are very much vocal. According to them, women's productivity or nature's productive capacity should be measured in terms of their sharing, caring and loving attitude towards the society. The attitude of love and care, which is often termed as an 'ethics of care' is, in fact, the key to proper understanding of women and nature.

The belief in dain is the result of belief in the authority of mainstream patriarchal society together with superstition, and hence it has far reaching consequences. The root of this belief has to be understood and found out in relation to its own society taking into consideration other dominant societies. Imitation of the mainstream society, which may cause complete loss of one's self identity, should not be given a way. One's long cherished and practiced culture has to be enriched or reoriented, if it seems better and ecofriendly, through cultural assimilation of sustainability and participation. Only then the long talked of the results of women empowerment, value ethic may be realized putting an end to the vexed problem of dain. It is hoped, along with the dain ailing and wallowing society, philosophers and intelligentsia would come forward with social movements with proper concepts of better society, which would not be imposing rather be reciprocating and as such these would help brush up the minds of the people. In this respect, a broad socio-philosophical vision would dawn in the minds of the concerned.

### **Plato's Theory of Justice**

In this part of the chapter we will try to make an investigation into the nature of Justice in the eyes of philosophers like Plato, Aristotle and Rawls so that we can establish a link between ecofeminism and theories of justice. Inquiry into

justice has been a moot point for philosophers for centuries and as such there have been sustained efforts for mankind to establish it in different walks of life. Let us see how the celebrated philosopher in Plato viewed it and what enquiries he made into before establishing his own.

The ideal of justice occupies an important place in Plato's Philosophy. He used the Greek word "Dikaisyne" for justice who comes very near to the words of 'morality' or 'righteousness', it properly includes within it the whole duty of man. Plato contends that justice is the quality of soul in virtue of which men set aside irrational desires. Plato was very much dissatisfied with the prevailing degenerating conditions in Athens. Selfishness and such other brute passions ruined Athens and ultimately it led to the death of Socrates. Plato wanted a remedy out of it and as such he saw in justice the only remedy to save Athens from the decay and ruin from political selfishness. At the same time Sophistic teaching of ethics of self-satisfaction added to the fuel and thereby it divided Athens to two hostile camps of the rich and the poor, the oppressors, and the oppressed. Evidently, Plato wanted to get rid of the two factors of amateur meddlesomeness and individualism. His attack on the two evils came in the form of the construction of an ideal society in which justice would reign supreme. Thus we are to enquire here the nature of justice as propounded by Plato as a fundamental principle of well-ordered society.

Before looking into Plato's theory, it would be worthwhile to have a glance at the already prevalent theories of justice which he rejected. Cephalous, a representative of the ancient trading class established the traditional theory of justice. To him, justice consists in speaking the truth and paying ones' debt. Thus Cephalous identifies justice with right conduct. Polemarchus also holds the same view of justice with a little alteration. According to him, "Justice

seems to consist in giving what is proper to him.” This is also a traditional maxim of Greek morality.

Plato criticized the views propounded by Cephalous and Polemarchus. The view by Cephalous does not stand as a universal principle of justice as it may involve the spirit of right. In the similar way the contention of Polemarchus was also criticized by Plato on the ground that it is only easy to speak of giving good to friends and evil to enemies. But in reality, a friend may be an enemy in the guise of a friend. Again to do evil to anybody including one’s enemies is inconsistent with the most elementary conception of morality. Thus, the conception of justice regulates the relations between individuals on individualistic principles and ignores the society as a whole.

Thrasymachus, propounder of the radical theory of justice, defines justice as ‘the interest of the stronger’ or ‘might is right’. For him, every man acts for himself and tries to get what he can, the strongest is sure to get what he wants and as in the state the Government is the strongest, it will try to get and it will get.

At this juncture a new point of view is stated by Glaucon and he puts forward a type of social contract theory. Glaucon describes the historical evolution of the society where justice as a necessity has been the shield of the weaker. To this he refers to the primitive stage of society without law and government. In such stage, the stronger few enjoyed the life at the suffering of the weaker. To rid this they came to an agreement and preached the philosophy of justice. So for Glaucon, justice is something artificial and unnatural.

Plato realizes that all theories propounded by Cephalous, Thrasymachus and Glaucon contained one common element. That one common element was that all of them treated justice as something external: “an accomplishment, an

importation, or a convention they have, none of them has carried it into the soul or considered it in the place of its habitation.”<sup>68</sup>

Thus, after criticizing the conventional ideas of justice presented by Cephalus, Polymarchus, Thrasymachus and Glaucon, Plato now gives us his own theory of justice. In order to make his contention prominent, he brings analogy between human organism and social organism. Human organism, according to Plato, contains three elements – Reason, spirit and Appetite. An individual is just when each part of the person performs its function without interference with. To make this clear Plato states that, the element of reason should rule on behalf the entire soul with wisdom and forethought. The element of spirit will subordinate itself to the rule of reason. Those two elements are brought into harmony by combination of mental and bodily training. They are set in command over the appetites which form the greater part of man’s soul. Therefore, the reason and spirit have to control these appetites. These appetites should not be allowed to enslave the other elements and usurp the domination to which they have no right.

Plato holds that corresponding to these elements in human nature there are three classes in the social organism – philosophers class or the ruling class which is the representative of reason; auxiliaries – a class of warriors or defenders of the country is the representative of the spirit; and the appetite community which consists of farmers, artisans and such others lowest rung of the ladder. Thus weaving a web between the human organism and the social organism, Plato asserts that functional specialization demands from every social class to specialize itself in the station of life allotted to it. It exists both in the individual and the society. But it exists on a larger scale and in more visible

---

<sup>68</sup> Foster, M.B. *On Plato’s Conception of justice in the Republic*, Blackwell publishing for Philosophical Quarterly Vol. I, apr. P-206.

form in the society. Individually “justice is a ‘human virtue’ that makes a man self consistent and good, socially – justice is a social consciousness that makes a society internally harmonious and good.”

Justice is thus a sort of specialization. It is simply the will to fulfil the duties of one’s station and not to meddle with the duties of another’s station, and its habitation is, therefore, in the mind of every citizen who does his duties in his appointed place. True justice to Plato, therefore, consists in the principle of non-interference. The state has been considered by Plato as a perfect whole in which each individual which is its element, functions not for itself but for the health of the whole. Justice in the Platonic state would, therefore, be like the harmony of relationship where the planets are held together in the orderly movement. Plato was convinced that a society which is so organized is fit for survival. Where men are out of their natural places, there the co-ordination of parts is destroyed, the society disintegrates and dissolves. Justice, therefore, is the citizen sense of duties.

Justice is, for Plato, at once part of human virtue and the bond, which joins men together in society. Justice is an order and duty of the parts of the soul. It is to the soul as health is to the body. Plato says that justice is not mere strength, but it is a harmonious strength. Justice is not the right of the stronger, but the effective harmony of the whole. All moral conceptions revolve about the good of the whole individual as well as social.

### **Aristotle’s Theory of Justice**

Today it is all the rage for political theorists and philosophers to have and expound theories of justice. But if we look back on the history of Political thought, we cannot but find that many philosophers did not take justice and

theories of justice so seriously. Among those who did not was Aristotle. He made enquiries into the theories of justice but could not arrive at a theoretically and practically satisfactory and sound theory of justice.

Aristotle could understand justice with reference to ethics. Ethics as a whole is meant to be comprehensive investigations of the end of human action, which is the human good, or happiness. To Aristotle, Ethics is a sort of Political Science and as such both political science and ethics aim at human virtues. Hence, Aristotle opines that justice is the last of the virtues of human character. For Aristotle, the demand for a theory of justice arises from political practice. So he begins his inquiry into justice as he begins all such inquiries. The minimal demands for a theory of justice adequate to common opinions are, then, that it enables us, first, to distinguish just from unjust actions. Aristotle opines that in common parlance we hold that whatever is legal that is just. Hence, legality refers to law abidingness. If the legal is the just, then justice as law-abidingness must be the whole of virtue, but Aristotle says that it differs essentially from virtue. Aristotle considers first not justice as virtue as a whole, or law-abidingness, but the justice which he insists is a part of virtue. Hence he talks of partial justice. In the discussion of partial justice Aristotle makes us assume the perspective of a legislator, or at least of a judge. Partial justice refers to the two forms of justice: distributive and corrective. Distributive justice provides the principle underlying the distribution of goods and honors to political community. The general principle that equal persons must have equal shares and unequals, unequal shares, can be stated with mathematical certitude. Corrective justice provides the principle applied in the courts of law when contracts must be rectified. Here the partners of the contract are not taken into, but the loser gains in the contract. At this Aristotle remarks that neither form of justice is simple reciprocity or retaliation. Also Aristotle warns us on occasions

that we ought not to expect mathematical rigor in matters of political justice as the subject matter of political science does not lend itself to such treatments. Aristotle holds that the judge must rectify the murderer's gain and the victim's loss; but how the dead victim's loss is rectified by the murderer's fitting loss of life is not obvious. He further holds that 'justice necessary to political communities is in truth not grounded in a nature or divinity as conceived of by either mathematical physicist or the pious.' Here we can refer to Gauthier Rene, "..... we must nevertheless see that they obscure that variation. The just established by means of laws and conventions is necessary, but it is apparently not natural".<sup>69</sup> He insists that the politically just while conventional, is partly conventional and is also partly natural. The evidence given in support of the conventionalists' argument is that human laws and conventions vary whereas natural laws seem to be unchanging. Aristotle responds that natural as well as conventional is changeable. The example of natural changeability is that the right hand is stronger by nature, although it is possible to become ambidextrous. Nature, in giving us capacities, seems to sanction our development of them. In giving us two hands, nature suggests to us the possibility of going beyond what she has done for us, although not beyond what she herself has shown us. Aristotle stresses that ambidexterity, the consequence of an unusually gifted nature and training, is both possible and undoubtedly superior to the 'universal' phenomenon of right-handedness. Moreover, right-handedness in the light of this possibility enables us to be more tolerant of left-handedness.

From the above discussion it seems clear that justice as law abidingness has limitation as it involves the fear of punishment. Furthermore, it cannot explain actions done out of passions as reactions to supposed injustice. In the similar

---

<sup>69</sup> Gauthier, R. A. *Lethique a Nicomaque*, Universitaires de Louvain 1958-59, P-190.

way, mathematical rigors of proportion to rectification as proposed suffers from its own limitations. Hence, Aristotle turns his critique on justice to equity. We often say that equity is good, praising it even more highly than justice. As is understood the equitable man characteristically does not demand his just share, taking less than he is legally entitled to. But from the point of justice we have already concluded that such a man is unjust. Justice and equity, therefore, seem to be opposed to each other and we might wonder how two opposed things can both be good. Aristotle says that we must reconcile the two by understanding equity as something which although different from legal justice, is another sort of justice, not generically different from it. We understand it as a necessary correction of legal justice and superior to it; in so understanding it, however, we acknowledge the necessary insufficiency of law or of any statement of the universally just. Of course, Aristotle never says that equity should replace rather than supplement justice. We are left with the necessity of reconciling a universal with a particular which is distinct from and opposed to it. This theoretical difficulty remains unsolved in the context of the teaching about justice in book 5 by Aristotle.

The demand for justice and for a theory of justice must be met. Aristotle advances to friendship to search for justice. Friendship occupies an important place in Aristotle's philosophy. Indeed, we are told that friendship holds cities together and as such legislators are more serious about it than justice, and that while friendship does not need justice, the just still need friendship. Aristotle means to show us that the problems that arise in politics can be solved only in the spirit of friendship, trust and good will, not in the spirit of punitive justice or even impartiality. By means of an examination of friendship, Aristotle attempts to make intelligible all human associations, both human beings and within human beings, who have composite nature, and perhaps all association,

or wholes. So, friendship, as Aristotle holds, exists for the sake of any of the tree ends: the good, who love the good, befriend others like themselves because of their goodness. In practice, friendship is meant to be a supplement to justice, because perfect friendship is rare and not universally practicable. Aristotle teaches about justice and never denies the necessity of the kind of justice in which the theory of justice tends issue. Aristotle, rather than proposing that friendship replaces justice, uses the teaching on friendship to justify the most comprehensive laws.

To conclude, Aristotle's implicitly contends that the attempt to formulate a satisfactory theory of justice leads us to see for ourselves that what we desire when we demand justice and formulae for justice, and therefore a general political solution is properly supplied in a friendship of the virtuous, which is rare, but possible, non-political solution. Aristotle's critique of his own attempt at the theory of justice points to the conclusion that our demand might be better served if shown to point elsewhere than justice. What we really demand is a theory which, although undeniably valid, is not necessarily universally applicable, which is consistent with the necessity of human nature, intends a good in which all doers as well as sufferers of deeds can perceive their share; and which, nonetheless does have just consequences.

### **Rawls' Theory of Justice**

The expressed aim of John Rawls' theory of justice is to present a fully elaborated alternative to the various Utilitarian – inspired conceptions of justice that are predominant on the contemporary scene. Rawls accounts for the predominance of utilitarianism by the facts that its great spokesmen (Hume, Smith, Bentham, Mill) were not only incisive philosophers but were also concerned to embed their moral doctrines in a comprehensive social and

economic theory. Accordingly, in his attempt to generalize and carry to a higher order of abstraction the social contract conception of justice in the tradition of Locke, Rousseau and Kant, Rawls will be equally concerned to give his philosophical speculation this concrete setting. As such Rawls articulates and argues for the normative theory of justice that is implicit in contract tradition, for it is his conviction that this conception best approximates our considered judgments of justice and provides for the most appropriate moral foundation for a democratic society.

Rawls conceives of philosophical explanation as analogous to scientific explanation. Hence, the construction of a theory of justice should be subject to the same rules of method as any attempt at the theoretical explanation in science. To Rawls, a philosophical explanation is a matter of the dialectical interaction between theoretical construction and particular observation, in this cases our considered moral judgment. Its acceptability is ultimately a matter of its being able to account for the body of these considered judgments better than any alternative theory that has been advanced. The canons of simplicity, modeling and even mathematization play central roles in Rawls' elaboration. Rawls' is a pragmatic conception of philosophy and hence has invited criticism.

The most severe critic has been R.M. Hare, and his principal criticism bears on the alleged analogy between the enterprise of moral philosophy and the kind of interplay between theory and data that occurs in empirical science. Hare maintains that Rawls' attempt to construe the considered judgments of men as analogous to the facts of observation reduces his philosophical efforts to a kind of subjectivism of the narrowest variety because it makes any justification a matter of his own personal preference or at best, a matter of consensus. But whatever we may say about justification, this much is clear: in its systematic

character and in the working out of concrete details and implication, Rawls has put forward a theory of justice in a significant sense of the term rather than simply another instance of “my views about” or “the way I see things” that so frequently pass for moral or political theory.

The exposition of the theory of justice, as Rawls has shown, falls in three parts. First, we have the presentation and elaboration of the theory. Secondly, we have the working out of some specific implications of the theory to show how they compare with our considered judgments on these matters. And thirdly, we explore the ultimate acceptability of the theory, given a concrete account of the nature of man.

The heart of Rawls’ theory consists of his two principles of justice and his technique for deriving them. It is in his technique for deriving the principles that Rawls identifies himself with the contract tradition. We are to imagine a hypothetical situation wherein a group of people gather together to agree upon a set of principles of justice to govern their conduct. The correct principles are the ones that these people would choose if subject to certain conditions. The conditions of knowledge guarantee impartiality or fairness. These hypothetical choosers know some general scientific principles (economics, sociology, psychology) and know that conflicting interests and moderate scarcity accrue, but they are shielded by a ‘veil of ignorance’ from a knowledge of their own conception of the good, their own talents, their own social position and the stage of development of their particular society. By starting with only self interested individuals, Rawls’ general strategy is to reduce the ‘ought’ of morality to the ‘ought’ of prudence by conferring a universal point of view on the prudential outlook. In this way the more problematic can be reduced to the less problematic. To refer to Gordon, S. – “In short, the original position is so characterized that the forthcoming principles are those that it would be

prudential for men to adopt if they were not prejudiced by special interests arising out of their actual positions in the society.”<sup>70</sup>

The normative principles that Rawls in fact argues for are the following

First Principle: Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all.

Second Principle : Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both : (a) to the greatest benefit to the least advantaged consistent with the just savings principles and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.

There is a lexical order to the principles such that the first always takes priority over the second. The principles are summarized in what Rawls calls his general conception of justice: all social primary goods – liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the basis of self respect are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods is to the advantage of the least favoured.

The basic liberties referred to in the first principle are (a) Political liberty, i.e., the right to vote and hold office, (b) freedom of speech and assembly, (c) liberty of thoughts and conscience, (d) freedom to hold personal property, and (e) freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure.

The second principle is the most controversial. It is not strongly egalitarian (as the first principle) inasmuch as it provides for unequal distribution, but it could be said to be derivatively egalitarian for it implies that inequalities are to be justified. The crux of the principle is what Rawls calls the “difference principle” which directs us to distribute all social primary goods so as to maximize the expectations of the most disadvantaged. This is simply an application of the maximin rule for choice under uncertainty.

---

<sup>70</sup> Gordon, S. *Jhon Rawls Difference Principle*, the journal of philosophy, 1973, P-275-280.

To the degree that his arguments are compelling, the two principles of justice are seen to be preferable to those of either total or average utility, and hence the contract view to be preferable to utilitarianism. Rawls sees the real difference between the two alternatives to be their interpretation of impartiality. Instead of defining impartiality from the standpoint of a sympathetic observer as the utilitarians inclined to do, Rawls defines it from the standpoint of the litigants themselves. The utilitarians do not take seriously the plurality and distinctiveness of individuals and hence confuses impartiality with impersonality. "The contract approach achieves impartiality without compromising the integrity of the individual person."<sup>71</sup> By means of his scheme Rawls attempts not to reconstruct history but to set out a series of points of view from which the different kinds of problems of justice are to be arbitrated, each point of view inheriting the constraints of the preceding stages. A just constitution is one that would be chosen at the second stage, just laws are those which would be enacted at the third stage, just particular judgments are those that would be made at the final stage.

After discussing the principles of justice for institutions, Rawls goes on to take up the principles of natural duty and obligation that apply to individual within a constitutional framework. Rawls completes his theory of justice by exploring its grounding in human thought and feeling and its ties with our ends and aspirations. Hence, an important feature of a conception of justice is that it should generate its own support; its principles should be such that when they are embodied in the basic structure of the society men tend to develop a desire to act in accordance with them.

Rawls begins by discussing the acquisition of a sense of justice by the members of a well ordered society. Moving through the stage of authority, association

---

<sup>71</sup> Nagal, T. *Rawls on Justice* Philosophical Review, 1973, P-220-234.

and principles, Rawls gives an account of our moral sentiments, and then goes on to compare his conception of justice with other conceptions with respect to potential stability. The principles of justice are to be preferred to the principles of utility because their greater specificity would be psychologically more apt for securing their hold on the mind. Allowing the priority of liberty again to play a central role, Rawls argues that his conception of justice would give rise to social institutions which would enable men to express their natures as free and equal moral persons. Given that an effective sense of justice would then belong to a person's own good, the tendencies to instability would be effectively kept in check.

To conclude, Rawls admits that while he has not strictly proven anything, he does hope to have shown that a finally adequate theory of justice will look more like his contract view than any of the other alternatives considered. It is very clear that Rawls theory of justice works as a pointer to anyone whoever proposes to deal with any of the topic it touches and as such he must first come to terms with it if he expects the scholarly community to take him seriously.

### **Ecofeminism**

The last four decades can be broadly termed the era of environmentalism. The multiple environmental crises in the worked have awakened society to the need to pay attention to the earth we live in. In this renewed awareness, it has emerged that it is practically impossible to talk of environmental issues without reference to women. Women through different ages in different societies have been actively involved in the use and management of natural resources. The current crises in the depletion and poisoning of these resources directly affect women who are often responsible in most societies for basic livelihood tasks. Thus, addressing environmental issues has meant addressing women, and

women's issues. This has led scholars and activists to intensively study, hypothesize and explain the linkages between women and the environment. Different scholars have addressed the issue of the link between women's concerns and environmental concerns in disparate ways. Ecological feminism refers to a whole range of women nature linkages – historical, conceptual, literary, ethical, spiritual connections on how women and the environment are treated in society, and hence it has become one of the most influential paradigms establishing a connection between gender theories and environmental thinking. As such it has been a popular framework that highlights the inter connectedness between the domination of women and the domination of nature. The affinities and perceived similarities between women and nature – such as passivity and giving nurturing qualities are highlighted. On the one hand, these affinities make them both equally vulnerable to male domination, on the other, this association gives women a special stake in solving today's environmental problems. This understanding of the system of twin domination is then used to construct an ecofeminist philosophy or worldview. Solutions for solving the environmental crises of our times as well as gender inequality are then based on this need philosophy.

Though the term was first used by Francoise D' Eaubonne, it has become popular in the context of numerous protests and activities against environmental destruction, sparked-off initially by recurring ecological disasters. The ecofeminist principle looking for connections, where capitalist patriarchy and its warrior science are engaged in disconnecting what forms a living whole, also informs this movement. Thus those involved look not only at the implications of these technologies for women, but also for animals, plants, for agriculture in the third world as in the industrialized North. They

understand that the liberation of women cannot be achieved in isolation, but only as a part of a larger struggle for the preservation of life on this planet.

As women in various movements - ecology, peace, feminist and especially health have rediscovered the interdependence and connectedness of everything, they have also rediscovered what is called the spiritual dimension of life – realization of this interconnectedness is sometimes called spirituality. Capitalists and Marxist materialism, both of which see the achievement of human happiness as basically conditional on the expansion of material goods production, deny or denigrate this dimension. To refer to Maria and Shiva, “Feminist also began to realize the significance of the ‘witch-hunts’ at the beginning of our modern era in so far as patriarchal science and technology was developed and only after these women (the witches) had been murdered and, concomitantly, their knowledge, wisdom and close relationship with nature had been destroyed.”<sup>72</sup> Then what is the way out? The remedy may be the desire to recover, to regenerate this wisdom as a means to liberate women and nature from patriarchal destruction which will lead to spirituality. The interpretation of spirituality in ecofeminists’ sense is largely identical to women’s sensuality, their more precious life force which link them to each other, to other forms of life and the elements. It is the energy which enables women to love and celebrate life. This sensual spirituality, rather than ‘other-worldly’ is centered on and thus abolishes the opposition between spirit and matter, transcendence and immanence. This spirit is inherent in everything and particularly our sensuous experience, because we ourselves with our bodies cannot separate the material from the spiritual.

Of late the interest in things spiritual is a manifestation of western patriarchal capitalist civilization’s deep crisis. While in the west the spiritual aspects of life

---

<sup>72</sup> Mies, M. Shiva, V. “*Ecofeminism*”, London Zed Books, 1993, P-7.

have more and more been eroded, people now look towards the 'East', towards the preindustrial traditions. This search obviously stems from a deep human need for wholeness, but the fragmented and co-modified way in which it takes place is to be criticized. The ecofeminist spirituality as we understand, it is not to be confused with a other worldly spirituality that simply wants food without sweat. Our basic understanding of ecofeminism starts from the fundamental necessities of life; we call the subsistence perspective. Our opinion is that women are nearer to this perspective than men yet all women and man have a body which is directly affected by the destructions of the industrial system. Therefore, all women and finally also all men have a 'material base' from which to analyze and change these processes.

Now, when we look to Plato's theory of justice in the light of ecofeminism we find that Plato discovered meddlingness as an obstacle on the way to justice. In the light of ecofeminism too interference to women and nature causes much damage and as such it leads to environmental as well as feminist injustice. Both women and nature are deprived of their dues owing to a kind of meddlingness. This has to be addressed and tried to be redressed. True justice, to Plato, consists in non-interference. In this case, Plato's theory of justice can be a finger point against the domination of nature and women.

To refer to Aristotle, justice consists in law-abidingness; but such law-abidingness may be imposing and patriarchal in style and as such it may be remedied. To refer to Aristotle himself, nature has given us two hands, of which the right one is usually stronger. In giving us two hands, nature suggests to us the possibility of going beyond what she has done for us, shown us. Ambidexterity, the consequence of an unusually gifted nature and training, is both possible and undoubtedly superior to the 'universal' phenomenon of right handedness. Moreover, seeing right handedness in the light this possibility enables us to be more tolerant of left-handedness. So, if we go by the above

exposition made by Aristotle, it would be clear enough that the weaker sections of the society – women, nature and such others would be tolerated and sympathized which is an ecofeminist truth.

Rawls is a prominent champion of justice. To him, liberty plays a central role. He argues that his conception of justice would give rise to social institutions which would enable men to express their natures as free and equal moral persons as such the tendencies to instability would be kept in check. In this case, Rawls goes near to an ecofeminist who advocates free and equal personality of the weaker sections of the society. Hence, justice to women may be possible in the Paradigm advanced by Rawls as well as ecofeminists. In this respect Rawls two principles of justice may be applied truly.

