

1) The essence of gender justice lies in transcending biological differences to recognize the universal human potential for equality and empowerment. (100 Marks)

In his theory of "Androgyny", Freud, explained that every person naturally by birth has both male and female characteristics. In every man there is a woman and in every woman there is a man. Only later, one acquires gender characteristics by rejecting one and accepting the other. Freud found that men naturally rejects feminine characteristics and women suppresses their manly nature.

This theory throws light on the existence of biological differences and at the same time role of social construct in shaping these differences. In our essay we will analyze how transcending biological differences help in achieving gender justice.

The biological theory attributes genes and hormones for differences among males and females in our society. It proposes that biological sex creates gendered behavior. Hormones like estrogen and androgen influence

their respective behaviour, orientation and identity, without any external influence of Society, Culture or environment. Based on various research of some biological theorists, it is established that biological hormones have an influence on male and female behaviour. By manipulating the genes, behaviour also changes.

This outright rejection of social construction of roles and identities is criticized by social theorists. According to them gender differences are socially created based on the biological makeup. Emile Durkheim in his theory of division of labour argues that the roles of men and women in the society is not to discriminate but to maintain social cohesion. These pre-defined roles are in existence even before the patriarchal regime. Men performing the role of breadwinners by hunting and gathering, while women stayed home for cooking and childcare. The assignment and definition of roles for respective gender was done in the pretext of maintaining the stability in society.

However, gradually this concept of social cohesion and biological difference resulted into gender disparity, covertly delegates women to the background. As rightly said by Simone de

Beauvoir in her book "The Second Sex" —

"Her wings are cut and then she is blamed for not knowing how to fly!"

That is women are inferior not because their job is insignificant but because they have been isolated intentionally. This social discrimination based on natural differences is the reason of gender trap, where women are confined in rigid roles. The narrative of maintaining natural order and ensuring social cohesion is a shallow approach of looking beyond gender based roles. We need to go beyond these differences to recognize the real human potential. The essence of justice lies in the equality and empowerment of both the genders.

John Rawls in his "theory of Justice" gave the Analogy of a chain — A society's overall well-being is only as strong as its weakest link.

That is the betterment of the least advantaged group ensures the betterment of the society as a whole. When we go beyond the biological differences, gender justice automatically comes in. Making the workforce gender neutral by normalising female participation in labour force, ~~This~~ gives way for the economic empowerment of women,

Who is one of the marginalized group in our society. Their economic strength has a simple effect where we can see the economic growth of the country as a whole. Economic empowerment is the precursor of political empowerment.

With political empowerment comes the power of decision making. It gives proper representation to the women-centre issues. Politics being male dominated, gender justice was never the topic of public discourse. In the wave of feminism, the phrase "Personal is Political" came into prominence. It means women's personal problems are because of socio-political structure of our society. Thus, increasing the women participation in politics is one way to transcend the biological differences and ensure justice. Through 33% reservation in Panchayati Sangh institutions, Nir Van丹 Achemes etc, government is also trying to bridge the gender gap.

By empowering women in economic and political sphere, gender justice can be ensured. Equal participation of men and women in all fields regardless of their gender is the need of the hour. It will lead to equality, access to opportunities, just allocation of resources,

Prevention of gender-based violence etc. Once women are given opportunities and responsibilities beyond their stereotypical and rigid roles, gender justice will be realised. It helps breaking the gender dichotomy by challenging the gender stereotypes, discussing gender equality in schools / workplaces, lobbying for policies against intersectional discrimination etc.

Progress towards gender justice will eventually unlock the human potential to achieve equality and empowerment. When men and women are not judged based on their gender, there is a high chance of achieving equality and empowerment. Today women face exponential form of marginalisation and oppression due to intersectionality. Here multiple forms of inequality like race, religion, gender, class, etc. confound themselves and create obstacles. There is a need to address these problems at multiple levels, so that women as an individual becomes equal and empowered as much as their male counterpart.

The social rigidity towards biological differences is explained by Simone de Beauvoir -

"A man is defined as a human being and a woman as a female. Whenever she behaves as a human

being she is said to imitate the male."

These lines show that whenever a woman is trying to transcend the pre-defined gender roles, they are tagged as "man" in a derogatory way. It is also true that going beyond gender rigidity helps in empowerment of women. Gender neutral roles need to be normalised - Care work and household chores should not be done by female only, property ownership needs to be gender neutral, social stigma of widowhood or singlehood to be addressed, investment in education for job rather than marriage etc. When a man there are few steps that can help emancipate a woman in realising their full potential. They will be able to lead a more fulfilling life. This automatically transforms into a more stable society as opposed to the traditional division of labour.

In this essay, so far, we have discussed the existing differences at biological and social level. How it is important to transcend these differences to achieve gender justice. And at last achieving equality and empowerment by challenging this gender rigidity. The idea of social cohesion through social conformity is already proven wrong in many instances.

Now it is time that we look beyond it, that we let our women live at their full potential as a human, that we realise essence of justice lies in gender neutrality, that we let go of our pre-conceived notion, that we create a safe space for our women to grow. Then finally equality and empowerment will come and will both become a norm, man and women will be seen as a human full of immense potential regardless of their gender or sex.

2) Challenging the social construct of gender through a philosophical exploration of empowerment rooted in individuality and freedom.

Hellen Simon-de Beauvoir said - "One is not born a woman, One becomes one", she was implying the social construct of gender. When a woman conform to the social expectations of what it means to be a woman, she is denying herself the freedom and individuality needed for being empowered. Ability to make choices, pursue goals, develop own identity without any fear of violence or discrimination are essential components of empowerment. We are going to explore these core expulsions in our essay.

Since time immemorial society is defining the role of men and women. In primitive time, women involved in childcare and domestic chores while men primarily acted as hunters. Though division of labour existed based on gender, both their jobs considered significant. However, gradually with introduction of agriculture and property ownership this division started to turn into discrimination. Based on biological differences, men were given preference owing to their physical strength and women were delegated to the background.

From the time of early vedic period where women used to participate in Sabha and Samiti, we have also witnessed women behind their veils and Jharkhas during mughal period. This contrasting leap in the position of females showed the isolation of women in this contemporary society. This isolation and discrimination is continuing even today in different forms.

Gender discrimination is not just limited to the division of labour or their participation in Society. It is deeply ingrained in our upbringing and conditioning. Women are taught to act in a certain way giving fuel to gender stereotypes and biases. Since early childhood girls are often encouraged to be polite, obedient and nurturing. Through various social institutions like family, school, religion, media etc.

Social Construct are being reinforced. It is impacting women in many ways like lack of self-esteem, lack of career opportunities, less assertive, prioritizing others' happiness over their own etc.

This social construction of Gender leads to inequalities and discrimination, which is intersecting with other factors like race, class,

disability, poverty, etc. Like a poor Dalit woman may experience additional challenges due to her economic situation combined with her gender and caste. This deeply rooted overlapping form of discrimination is resulting in a layered and compounded form of marginalization. That is why women as a group cannot be considered as monolithic. They have a wide range of experiences and characteristics which need a multifaceted approach acknowledging interplay of different forms of oppressions.

This complex mix of discrimination starts even before the birth of a girl child. In many cultures, male children are preferred due to deeply rooted factors like family lineage continuation, performing important religious rituals, daughters leaving the family unit after marriage, cost of dowry etc. Disturbing social phenomena like these affects the women, their identity, their freedom etc all at once. To explain the phenomena of unwanted girl child, Prof. A. M. Sen has coined a term "Missing women" in 1986.

It shows the disparity between the number of women in a population and the number that would be expected.

The missing woman concept reflects the curse of femininity. A set of socially constructed rules are as actually defining the roles for women. This missing woman disparity is caused by Sex-Selective abortions, female infanticide, inadequate healthcare etc. Introduction of ultrasound technology in 1980s may have contributed to this phenomena. It is more prevalent in families with adequate economic resources. This clearly shows how being economically sound and educated doesn't guarantee values. Need for a value based society that could defy these social construct, is what he aspire.

Having this socially constructed mindset is the reason being behind tragedy of womanhood. Feminisation of elderly people, feminisation of poverty, feminisation of agriculture etc. are nothing but the manifestation of this tragedy that woman is facing. Women generally outlive men and thus becoming victim of social alienation and isolation. Due to lack of resources and opportunity, they face brunt of poverty more severely than men. This highly biased structure of society has made woman a marginal character. Their plight has gone unnoticed in a male dominated world.

Even women, to some extent, accepted this as their fate. They somehow trying & climb the ladder without in order to gain their independence, emancipation and individuality. However, the invisible barriers, that they themselves are not aware of, is preventing them to reach the heights. "Glass Ceiling" is the metaphor being used to describe this invisible barrier. Even despite being talented and advanced in gender equality, women still face unique obstacles.

These unique obstacles are explained by early feminist Emma Goldman in her book "the tragedy of women's emancipation". It refers to the idea that while achieving economic and social independence, women might face unintended negative consequences - Like feeling isolated, burdened from competing in a male-dominated world etc. Then, <sup>so that</sup> these rigid social mores need to be challenged, individuality and freedom led empowerment can be realised in its true sense.

Gender injustice is deep-rooted in social norms. Many of them are presented as fixed and have negative consequences. That is why gender advocates are challenging to change these mores,

So that empowerment is achieved. We need to address the enabling environment where women's participation in decision-making will be a key. It allows them to directly influence policies that affect their lives leading to greater agency and control over their choices. This way one can challenge gender stereotypes and promote social norms that support gender equality. Result will be improved development outcomes for the entire community. Women's some female leaders at executive level will support women's career advancement and work-life balance. It is important to understand that all individuals, regardless of gender, are entitled to unrestricted ability to pursue their aspirations.

Women's empowerment is not only a societal objective, but also a moral imperative. It reflects a profound shift in our understanding of individuality and freedom. There is a need to give every woman the freedom and agency to determine her own fate. Challenging the social construct of gender calls for the collaborative effort to realize the vision of empowerment. This inspires women to chart her own path, to take her own decision, to build her own future and thus able to enjoy her individuality and freedom.

- 3) Women empowerment lies in resolving the tension between Patriarchalistic interventions and the freedom of individual agency and choice. (100 M)

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When Simone-de Beauvoir quote, "Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own viewpoint, which they confute with absolute truth," she was aiming to expose and challenge the power dynamics that perpetuate male dominance in society. This dominance slowly convert the women into a passive recipient of empowerment and thus creating the need for agency approach and freedom of choice. Now, the question is - "If our women are really empowered or are mere beneficiaries of policies enacted by men?". Let us explore the answer through our essay.

Since the time a child is born and sex is determined, the socially defined gender norms started to apply on them. It is about how men and women should behave and interact with others. Social institutions and structure of our society are driving these roles, which are mostly rigid in nature. In early human society, the men

Objective was to find a way to organize those tasks. With time, gender division became social norm and social norm became necessary for Social Stability. In the name of Social Cohesion these norms are being imposed on its members. This is what we call paternalistic intervention. When one person asking other to follow some rules against their will, claiming to be acting in their best interests.

When these norms converted into discrimination, status of women was going downhill. To pull women from this worsening situation, Paternalistic intervention approach came to light. Here women are given rights, opportunities, resources etc. at their disposal. However, mostly it goes unnoticed that when we give somebody something, we put ourselves in an authoritative position by robbing them of their autonomy or agency or freedom of choice. Like when a woman being told what career path to pursue by her family or society, disregarding her strength and interest. When Mrs. Sudha Murty was doing her masters, she saw a notice about hiring at Telco, Pune. In that notice engineers were offered job. However, what caught attention of Mrs. Murty was - "Lady students need not apply".

This incident is the classic example of paternalistic intervention where women are allowed to do job but the kind of job is not at her discretion. Social institutions like family or an organisation is deciding what kind of empowerment they need. This is delegating women to be a passive recipient instead of being an active participant. A woman passively accepting a decision made for her without expressing her own opinion.

Though the paternalistic intervention seems to be in the best interest, it also snatches away the right to take own decision. This approach is often criticized for narrow perspective of things. Like Khaps Panchayats not permitting inter-caste marriages in the pretext of maintaining social order or deciding on the clothing of female. It is nothing but ill-informed feudal selfish perpetuating gender inequality and outdated rigid norms. In the families, women are losing their freedom of individual agency and choice.

What does it mean for a woman to have agency?  
It means that she has the ability to make her own choices and possess control over her decisions.

Agency is at the heart of women empowerment where women and girls take purposeful action and pursue goals free from the threat of violence or retribution. Jeevika didi of Bihar government is one such example where state is going away from its paternalistic welfare measures and giving way to agency based approach. In JEEVIKA scheme, group of 12-15 rural women form SHGs - They meet regularly to save money and lend to each other. This way they are becoming ~~self-sufficient~~ self-sufficient with their self-sustaining lending model. With agency comes freedom of choice and their empowerment.

The three core expressions of Agency - decision making, leadership and collective action - is very much needed to let women act independently, let her make own decisions. Here women are free to set their goals and make choices about how to achieve these goals. Taking on leadership roles and working together help them gain skills and resources. Here women are not solely following societal expectations. It goes beyond just benefitting from programs as women are actively engaged

in shaping their own lives and communities. Exercising agency can mean challenging traditional gender roles and speaking out against inequalities.

Now that we have seen both the paternalistic and agency approach of women empowerment, it is important to strike a balance by resolving the tension between them. This way the potential of women's humanity can be realised to its fullest. When we focus only on empowering women as a duty, they become a passive receiver. And when we focus on enabling women to empower themselves, they become an active participant. To make paternalistic intervention more inclusive, women representation need to be increased. Merely keeping them at the receiving end of welfare measures is only going to perpetuate gender dichotomy. A more empowering approach would be providing them with the tools to actively engage in the process of change. Like Self help groups, micro loans to women etc. are such tools.

There is a need to shift from women's development to women-led development, where they themselves

Participate in the developmental process. With more female legislatures, more political representation, there will be more active role of women in shaping and driving the progress of a society. This way more women can be brought into focus alongwith men. It would help in developing the understanding of distinct ways women and men experience livelihood. Better accounting of these differences helps in negotiating gender norms, thereby promoting greater individual agency.

It is high time that we shift our focus from being gender-blind to gender-sensitive. This could be one of the best solutions to resolve the tension between Paternalistic intervention and individual agency. Empowerment should not be looked as some charity work instead it should be about enhancing the assets and capabilities of an individual. As we are entering into the Amrit kaal, let us pledge -

that we could go towards women empowerment,  
that we could reach women-led empowerment,  
that we could practise Compulsory,  
that we could globalise feminism.

As we don't need women Ads.



प्रश्नों  
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संख्या  
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As we don't need women as passive Onlooker,  
instead we need women as an active Change  
maker.

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