

the ethnic movements such as that conducted by American blacks – has taken on the responsibility of bridging a long-standing cultural gap between an ideology of individual freedom and equality and a reality in which women (and some of the ethnic minorities) are discriminated against severely.

India is, as yet, new to the ideology of personal freedom. Both Indian men and Indian women have hitherto functioned under rigid hierarchies; learned to curb their freedom; condition themselves to suppress their needs, silence their senses, and sublimate their selves in a philosophy of self-denial, self-effacement and service. Political freedom from British rule and the adoption of democracy and its accompanying value system have opened up for them totally new opportunities for personal freedom, self-hood and autonomy. The challenge to feminism in India is to help Indian women realize this self-hood in full measure.

The temptation to follow the paths blazed by Western feminists, in research as well as in action, may be irresistible. However, one hopes for a revival of sensitivity to the uniqueness of the Indian situation and of the capacity to respond to this uniqueness by forging new ways.

¹Hans Weiler, "Knowledge and Legitimation: The National and International Politics of Educational Research." Paper presented at Fifth World Congress of Comparative Education, Paris, July 2-6, 1984.

²Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, N.J.: Anchor Books, 1967).

³*Towards Equality: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India* (Delhi: Government of India, December, 1974).

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METAPHOR

Woman – the cork, bobbing on the vast sea of multifold myth,
Riding upon the conflicting waves, follows the stronger,
The more mysterious, the more profound,
Riding sagely, innocently, and majestically.
Looking at the familiar blue of the sky above
And the familiar grey of the sea beneath,
She rides with the friendly sky and fluid sea as allies,
And she reflects with satisfaction the inner constancy of her buoyancy
To ride: the true, the pure, the unsubmersive cork she is.
She rides a sea so vast and liquid,
Its ebb and flow so buoyant, so charming, and so changeful,
It grants itself immortality.
Waves rise and crest, waves fall and rest, as eddy meets eddy
In mystical mechanical monolithical authority.
When alas, the cork is hoisted upon the crest of a monstrous wave,
She glimpses at the apex of a multitude of similar heights,
And as swiftly, she glides swooningly down to rest,
Overcome by the two great waves on both sides of her trough.

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