

Responses to Manushi

A Husband's Resolve

I will try to respond to *Confession of a Male Ingenue: Love as Manipulation* (No. 96) on the basis of my experience. I am now in my mid forties and so is my wife. We had what you may call a 'love marriage' as opposed to 'an arranged marriage'. We were classmates in college and got married three years after falling in love. It was a very pleasant experience. I was in love before I realised it. Those days we spent long hours together and I used to think of her quite a lot. I had a nice feeling whenever she was around. There was also a strong urge for physical expression of our 'love'. But I can't say for sure what initially attracted me to my wife. May be it was my mother's image in her — her simplicity, straightforwardness, and kindness were immediately apparent. Though she is good looking, physical attraction was not the primary factor that drew me to her. However, once the relationship got going, the physical side of the relationship often tended to dominate since I felt such a strong physical attraction for her.

Since marriage I continue to enjoy my wife's company. But I don't think it has been the same for her. Only after she pointed it out repeatedly did I realise that I was largely obsessed with myself—my ideas and my ideals, my goals and how to achieve them.



There seemed to be little space for her activities, her ideas, and her plans. They were not, or could not, form a part of my agenda. What should she do? What would she like to do? I still find it difficult to think along these lines. As a result, she finds more solace in seeking a spiritual guru. There is an emptiness in our relationship because her plans and mine are so separate. My activities away from home take up a great deal of my time, compelling her to spend a large part of her time in domestic work leaving her little free time to pursue anything of her own. There seems to be much less scope for her individual expression beyond or apart from her domestic activities.

This is how men have traditionally behaved and this is how I also seem to be behaving. While I recognise this serious lacuna in my behaviour, I have done precious little about it. Yet, I think I love my wife. It's not just the physical desire for her — her very presence fills me with joy. I don't think

that I am pretending or that the affection I feel for my wife is a duty, kindness, or some such thing. I like it very much when she is around. I also do help her in small ways but the main problem remains — there doesn't seem to be enough space in my thinking about her apart from me. Perhaps this means that I have to grow, to reach out to a higher level of caring. In practical terms I guess it means cutting down on my outside activities to give her enough time, empathising with her ideas and helping her to live them out.

Name withheld on request

Power Hunger

There is a great deal of talk these days regarding women's empowerment. However, I feel that even decent people become exploiters after being empowered. At that point their topmost priority becomes how to hold on to that position of power rather than how to serve others. Wives and daughters of bureaucrats, businessmen, and political leaders are a class by themselves. Aren't they abetting corruption by misusing the various facilities provided to their husbands and enjoying their ill-gotten wealth? All countries of the Indian subcontinent - India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Srilanka have had women prime ministers. The status of women, however, has not improved

in these countries as a result. Nor has this fact made even the slightest difference in any other sphere. All these women prime ministers are part of what Madhu Kishwar calls the 'Biwi-Beti Brigade'. This is the reason that their becoming prime ministers has not made things better in their respective countries. Chandrika Kumaratunga of Sri Lanka is perhaps an exception to some extent.

Men and women of the affluent classes have the same perception of things and attitudes and so behave and perform in exactly the same way. Pramila Dandavate's answers to the first four questions in **Manushi** (No. 96, p. 14) are very sensible. Her suggestion that there be "state funding for women's candidates, with the government making a minimum of funds available to every woman candidate as well as provide internship programmes to train potential MLAs and MPs" are really worthwhile to pursue.

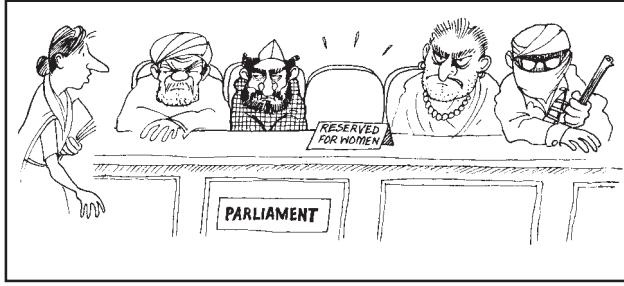
At the moment all our political parties are so corrupt that it would be difficult for an honest, and decent woman to survive in them, however capable she may be. If independent women candidates are state funded they will be able to stand without anybody controlling them. After being elected they will also be able to work without interference.

As a safeguard against the formation of the 'Biwi-Beti-Brigades', I suggest that *Biwis* and *Betis* (and eventually sons and nephews also) of ex-MPs, MLAs and standing candidates for parliament and assemblies be disallowed from standing from constituencies reserved for women.

Lakshmi Bhargava, Bhopal, M.P.

A Correction

I happened to go through an old issue (No. 95, 1996) of **Manushi** in a



library. I would like to make a few corrections of the English translations of some verses and phrases in Sanskrit.

Firstly, the subtitle, "*Na Shariram Nadhi*" of the book review, "In Our Own Hands" p.33) has been translated as, "My Body is Mine". *Na Shariram Nadhi* should be read as "*na shariram, na adhi,*" meaning, "no body, no disease" which of course can ultimately indicate that disease is caused in the body and therefore the body should be looked

after. By analogy, one could conclude that "my body is mine". But the way you had put it, one would think that it is the literal translation and that is not the case.

Secondly, the verses from the *Ishavasyopanishad*,

Oum, Poornamada,

Poornatnidam, Poornat

Poornamudachyate,

Poornasya Poornamaday,

Poor name va vshishyate!

Oum Shanti, Shanti, Shantihi.

should be read as ,

That is Whole,

This is Whole,

From the Whole,

emanates the Whole.

When the Whole is taken out of the Whole,

What remains, is the Whole.

S. Siddhartha, Delhi.

The Dilemma

and Other Stories

By Vijaydan Detha

Translator: Ruth Vanita

Editor: Madhu Kishwar

Vijaydan Detha's stories provide a scintillating glimpse of the rich repertoire of folk tales of Rajasthan — stories in which women challenge and subvert male defined institutions and norms without

losing their dignity and femininity. This collection stands out for affirming the joy of living and its vision of a more egalitarian and mutually satisfying man-woman relationship.

169 pages ♦ Paperback ♦ Price: Rs 150(India), US\$ 15(Abroad)

First Edition: Manushi Prakashan, New Delhi, 1997