

## DISORDERING ORDERS, EMBODYING JUSTICE: A RESPONSE TO FEMINIST REFLECTIONS ON JUSTICE FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH BY NIVEDITA MENON

---

I want to begin by expressing my profound gratitude for the presentation we have just heard. It has provided a rich, challenging, and necessary framework for thinking about justice not as a static destination, but as a dynamic and disruptive process. It is a challenging message, one that echoes through both Scripture and social reality, demanding that we unlearn much of what we have been taught to regard as sacred, natural, or inevitable.

From a Christian standpoint, this invitation to disorder is not rebellion for its own sake. Rather, it is a participation in God's redemptive work - the divine pattern of bringing new life out of chaos. In Genesis, God does not create from neatness and symmetry but from formlessness and void. The incarnation of Christ itself represents a divine interruption of human order - the Word made flesh, born among the poor, unsettling religious and political systems that thrived on hierarchy and exclusion. Thus, to disrupt order in the pursuit of justice is to act in the spirit of the God who "makes all things new" (Revelation 21:5).

Appreciating that Professor Menon speaks from a feminist perspective, I acknowledge and accept her powerful, though provocative, proposition that patriarchy, from which I benefit, as a man, must be one of those orders to be disordered. This is my starting point. I confess that this is a necessary and uncomfortable starting point, and it frames my own engagement not as an ally who stands outside, but as a beneficiary who must work from within to dismantle the very structure that privileges me. To unlearn patriarchal privilege is an act of repentance - of turning away from control and entitlement toward humility and partnership.

Building upon the foundation laid out, I would like to emphasise two other orders from the presentation that resonate deeply, and then I will add a third for our collective consideration.

### **First, the order of international immigration policies and practices.**

The presentation poignantly deconstructed the "homelandist imagination" and reframed migration as a natural human flow suddenly, perhaps more methodically or intentionally, rendered "illegal" by the arbitrary lines of nation-states. Following thinkers like Samaddar and Mamdani, we are pushed to see the migrant not as a threat to security, but as a living critique of the violent, exclusionary order of the nation-state itself. The call for a postnational politics "from below" is, in essence, a call to disorder this border regime, to re-legitimise the right to movement, and to attach rights to labour and presence, not to the accident of birth. This is a fundamental disorder required for any contemporary conception of global justice. I am pleased that I was able to enter this country without the need for a non-immigrant visa, a reminder that this is possible. But I am

the recipient of countless unnecessary and expensive demands to secure visa for my legitimate visit to nation states; and even having to suffer the indignity of being escorted to the aircraft from which I alighted in Bangladesh, having applied for the entry visa and told, despite my insistence, that there was only visa on arrival available to Jamaicans. Yes, my passport was confiscated and handed over to aircraft attendants, while I shamefully reenter the aircraft from which I earlier alighted, with all eyes on me for a crime of entering a sacred border. This is the plight of the 2-thirds world.

**Second, I want to emphasise the disordering of ability as a social category through the lens of liminality.**

The story of the blind colleague and the sighted visitor was not merely an anecdote about perspective; it was a radical epistemological shift. It illustrated that disability is not an inherent, personal tragedy but a social relation produced by a world built for a specific, assumed norm. This framing positions liminality - the state of being betwixt and between established categories—not as a rare exception affecting a minority, but as a fundamental factor of the human condition. We are all, at various points, the “outside” that stumbles in the dark, disabled by an environment not designed for us. And yes, I speak personally again. When I visited the Caribbean Christian Centre for the Deaf in my country, I became acutely aware that those categorized as disabled were all communicating with one another. I was unable to join the conversation because of my disability. I suggest that recognising this, should universalise the need for a justice that is designed for diversity and difference, not for a mythical sameness. It disorders the very idea of a “normal” body and mind.

Theologically, this insight echoes Paul’s image of the body in 1 Corinthians 12: “The parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.” Justice, then, cannot mean sameness. It must mean *equity* — the recognition and accommodation of difference as essential to the whole.

**This brings me to the third order I wish to place on the table for disordering: the philanthropic-industrial complex of reparation.**

The presentation’s historical lens is crucial here. If, as we heard, “justice requires us to think like a historian” and recognise that the “now has a history” of violence, then our response to that history must be equally scrutinised.

Drawing from feminist reflections on justice from the Global South, particularly the work of scholars like Nivedita Menon, I argue that true reparation must be understood as **relinquishment**, not as a mission programme to be designed, managed, and controlled by donor agencies, be they church or para-church organisations, civil society, or governments partners who not only design the programme, but determine its scope, language, and beneficiaries.

The current model of development and reparation often replicates the very colonial and patriarchal power dynamics it claims to remedy. It positions the Global North, or elite national institutions, as the benevolent architects of justice, the holders of knowledge on how to “fix” the problems of the

marginalised. This is a form of epistemic violence. It designs projects, controls budgets, sets benchmarks, and demands accountability **to the donor**, not to the community seeking justice. It is, in effect, a new mission civilisatrice, a programme of ordering the disordered according to a pre-approved, manageable blueprint.

A feminist understanding of justice as relinquishment calls for a different path. It demands that those who have historically benefited from the orders of colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism - be they states, corporations, or individuals like myself - must actively relinquish power, capital, and control. This is not about designing a better programme **for** others; it is about ceding the very right to design. It is about repatriating land, redistributing wealth unconditionally, and transferring decision-making power directly into the hands of those who have been dispossessed.

This is the ultimate “disorder” for the humanitarian and development sector. It means the end of their raison d’être as managers of poverty and injustice. It is a justice that is not administered but embodied; not a transaction, but a transformation of power relations. It aligns with the degrowth and food sovereignty principles mentioned, which prioritise self-determination and local control over corporate and state-dominated systems.

**In conclusion**, I receive this presentation as both indictment and invitation - a reminder that God’s justice will not be tamed by our comfort. To follow Christ is to embrace disorder when “order” sustains oppression; to abandon control so that grace may reorder creation. Our speaker has gifted us with a vision of justice as a daily, nibbling disorder. To that, I add that this nibbling must be directed not only at the visible structures of patriarchy, borders, and ableism but also at the insidious architectures of saviourism that too often masquerade as solutions. The path to justice is paved not by better managers of the old orders, but by their active and courageous dismantling, through the relinquishment of power to the multiple, vibrant, and self-determining “outsides” that are already forging a just future. If the Church dares to walk this path, we may yet glimpse the Kingdom - not as distant perfection, but as an ever-emerging, borderless communion of the free and the forgiven.

Thank you.