

MGS-001 GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPTS, APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES

BLOCK 1 CONCEPTS OF GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

- UNIT 1 Basic Concepts 1
- UNIT 2 Basic Concepts 2
- UNIT 3 Social Construction, Deconstruction, Reconstruction
- UNIT 4 Genesis: Trends in Feminism

BLOCK 2 APPROACHES TO GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

- UNIT 5 Development Discourses
- UNIT 6 WID-WAD-GAD — Part I
- UNIT 7 WID-WAD-GAD — Part II
- UNIT 8 GAD Indicators
- UNIT 9 Gender Dimensions in Planning and Policy Making

BLOCK 3 STRATEGIES IN GAD

- UNIT 10 Gender Planning and Policy Making
- UNIT 11 Affirmative Action, Inclusive Policy and Substantive Equality
- UNIT 12 Engendering Governance

BLOCK 4 GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN POLICY MAKING

- UNIT 13 Definition, Concept and Principles of Gender Mainstreaming
- UNIT 14 Implementing Gender Mainstreaming Strategy: Origin, Approach and Methodology
- UNIT 15 Gender Mainstreaming in Policy Research, Programmes and Schemes
- UNIT 16 Gender Mainstreaming of Structures and Mechanisms

BLOCK 5 GENDER AND MARKET ECONOMIES

- UNIT 17 Gender and the Process of Economic Development
- UNIT 18 Enterprise Development
- UNIT 19 Gendered Impact on Agriculture, Environment and Ecological Concerns
- UNIT 20 Formal and Informal Economy
- UNIT 21 Neo-liberal Policies

BLOCK 6 GENDER, WORK AND HEALTH

- UNIT 22 Paid and Unpaid Work
- UNIT 23 Paid and Unpaid Work of Women: Some Theoretical Reflections
- UNIT 24 Livelihoods And Subsistence Production
- UNIT 25 Work-Life Balance
- UNIT 26 Gender, Health and Well-being
- UNIT 27 Sexual Harassment
- UNIT 28 Gender Occupational Safety and Health
- UNIT 29 Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights

Unit 1: Basic Concepts – I

Sex and Gender

Sex is defined as the anatomical and physiological characteristics that signifies the biological maleness and femaleness of an individual. Gender emphasises the social construction of masculinity and femininity. It explains that masculinity and femininity are products of social cultural and psychological factors which are acquired by an individual in the process of becoming man or a woman.

The distinction between sex and gender is often called into questions. One of the problems created by this distinction was it has treated sex as a phenomenon which is 'given' or a 'natural division'. Therefore many feminists have opposed the disassociation of gender from sex as this approach is unable to capture the interplay between women's specific embodiments and the socio cultural factors those devalued women's position in a society within a particular point of time. Another difficulty associated with the distinction of sex and gender is that often gender seems to be relevant only to women, as feminists have adopted the concept of gender to reflect women's subordinated position in the society. Therefore the term gender seems to be applied to women while focussing on the construction of femininity. Feminist critiques often argue that the distinction between sex and gender has led to a failure to introspect the nature of sex itself. For instance this distinction has failed to question the ways in which a society constructs and understand the category of sex. Therefore sex is primarily seen as division and a container which is universal.

The resurgence of feminism in 1970s has critically looked at the distinction between sex and gender. Further they adopted the concept of gender to define the social construction of masculinity and femininity along with emphasising on the social ordering of relations between women and men. Gender explains the existing hierarchical division between men and women which are grounded in both social institutions and practices. It is described as a socio structural phenomenon which is produced, negotiated and sustained in every day interactions. (Jackson and Scott, 2002:p1). In the present context, gender intersects with other divisions and inequalities such as race, class, ethnicity and sexualities. Therefore the meaning of sex and gender, femininity and masculinity varies within societies and across.

This type of analysis of gender destabilises the division between the sex and gender and has led some feminists like Delphy argue that gender precedes sex. In Gender Trouble Butler points out that if gender does not follow automatically from sex there is no reason to believe

that they are inevitably only two genders. Once the immutability of the sex is contested it becomes apparent that 'this construct called "sex" is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed perhaps it was always already gender' (Butler 1990, p.7). If sex, as well as gender, is a construct it follows that the body does not have a pre-given essential sex. Rather bodies are rendered intelligible through gender and cannot be set to have a significant existence prior to the mark of their gender. Jackson and Scott, 2002 p.19) Bodies become gendered through the continual performance of gender. In contrast Butler attempted to deconstruct sex and gender distinction along with other binary distinction like nature and culture. Deconstruction of both the sex and gender leads to liberation of body from any natural attributes and social construction. Wittig maintains that sex is nothing more than a social construct and that the division between men and women merely a product of social power relations with no basis in nature and human biology. According to Wittig women are nothing more than oppressed social class. The disappearance of oppression and therefore of the dominant and the dominated will see the elimination of women and of men as distinct groups of human beings. In this world where sex classes will no longer exist, Freedom for all human beings will be attained beyond the categorisation of sex. And both the concept and real existence of men and women will give way to the 'advent, of individual subjects' (Wittig 1996: p.20). Precisely the deconstruction emphasises the social construction of sex and gender as well. Some feminists have criticised this approach and argued that the social construction of sex leads to the rejection of gender as a term which creates confusion.

Sex Categorization

Men and women exist as distinct and separate categories. There are biological similarities as well as differences that exist between the bodies of women and men. It is asserted that sex categorization determines two physically and genetically specific groups of people. This claim is called sexual dimorphism. Scholars consider sexual dimorphism as biological fact. It is argued that sexual differentiation creates two "structurally distinguishable" categories of humans.

Sex Assignment

This category explains the process of the interlinking of social meaning to biological sex. This process happens at birth or before birth. It is the identification of people as male or female. In other words it is their identification with sex category. For instance, it is identified through the external genitalia. There are exemptions that some infants can not be easily identified in live births. They cannot be identified as female or male. In certain cases, sex chromosomes, external genitalia and internal reproductive system do not confirm to the males and females. Those individuals are called intersexuals.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy means the rule by the male head of social units like family or tribe. The patriarch denotes a societal elder who has legitimate power over others to rule in the social unit. Feminists in early 20th century have used the concept patriarchy to explain the social system of masculine domination over women. Within gender studies three theoretical developments such as Radical feminist, Marxist feminist and dual system theory have used patriarchy as their central concept in analysis. Radical feminist analysed patriarchy in the context of men having control over women's body. This analysis has been used in feminist views on pornography. Is a pornography essential element of men's control over women that is damaging women's interest or can pornography in the right circumstances' used by women as part of sexual liberation? For feminist like MacKinnon to see sexuality is central to male's control over women, pornography is the vital element of the male domination. Pornography is seen as a central element in men's control over women and is closely linked to sexual violence and rape. Morgan argues pornography is the theory and rape is the practice. Feminist have argues against pornography for three broad reasons. It encourages sexual violence and rape against women. Secondly, its humiliation of women it is itself form of sexual violence. Third women are hurt and economically sexually exploited in the production of pornography. (Freedman, 2002: p64)

Further, Marxist feminist have argued that patriarchy arises from the working of the capitalist economic system. For example women's unpaid domestic labour benefits the capitalist system to progress. Therefore the subordination of women to men is viewed as a product of capitalist systems subordination of labour. Barrett argues class inequality is the central feature of the society and it determines and reinforces gender inequality. Some feminist writers have moved beyond economic explanation of women's suppression and looked at how ideology creates gender division. Barrett had argues ideology plays key role in the construction of gender through the institutions of family and ideology of familialism. (ibid p49) Some Marxist feminist have moved beyond the limits of conventional Marxist feminism and analyses women's oppression by conflicting capitalism and patriarchy in the theory of dual systems.

Dual system theory has been central concern in the works of Mitchell, Hartmann and Walby. The dual systems theory has prioritise two systems such as capitalism in patriarchy in its analysis. These theories have understood capitalism in patriarchy as independent and mutually accommodative systems of operation, and both the structures benefit from women's subordination. (Pilcher and Whelehen, 2005). Hartmann argues that capitalism and patriarchy are linked but that patriarchy proceeds capitalism and is not unique to capitalist societies. She argues sexual division of labour is the means for women's subordination and this division does existent non capitalist society. Therefore patriarchy and capitalism are independent but linked. These two systems are intertwined and interdependent and show solidarity among men, which allows men to dominate the women. (Freedman, 2002: p50) Over the period, Patriarchy as a subject has been used and abused in the context of feminist

analysis. There are number of criticism over the context of patriarchy and its use in the interpretation of gender relations. The number one criticism is the interpretation of patriarchy seems to display tendency towards a historicism. Secondly, often theorists have adopted a reductionist approach in the analysis of patriarchy. For example the explanation on patriarchy has been reduced to factors like biology or capitalism or family. Thirdly, Patriarchy supports to develop a narrow conceptualisation of gender relation that occurs between men and women. Fourthly theories have described the concept of patriarchy as universal. This analysis of patriarchy fails to recognise the variations exist within the culture, community and sexuality. Fifthly, theories employing the concept have been criticised to over emphasises for the use of abstract structuralism. Walby's reconstruction of patriarchy claims to have overcome this criticism and define patriarchy as a system of social structure and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. He identifies six structures of patriarchy such as household production, paid work, male violence, culture, state and sexuality. Walby's analyses of patriarchy has shown the changes which has occurred in history. For example her understanding of patriarchy from private form to public form. Private patriarchy describes the subordination and exploitation of women around family and household. The public patriarchy explains the exclusion of women from public life and reflects various forms of discrimination faced by women in public space. Walby comprehends that patriarchy as change its form, as she puts it, rather than being restricted to the household women have the whole society in which to roam and be exploited. (1990 p201)

Matriarchy

There are two uses of the term matriarchy. The first is identical to common usage, denoting a type of social organization in which mother hates families and descent may be reckoned through them. The occurrence may be idiosyncratic rather than the basis of social structure.

Then second usage which is speculative and based in evolutionary theories refers to societies in which mother holds the main positions. This theory was popular in the 19th century ,it was, for example , a vital ingredient Friedrich Engel's *Origin of the families, private property and state*,1884.Engels argued that early hunter gatherer societies in which property rights did not exist would have been ruled by women because of their reproductive powers. However, once land and goods becomes private property in the development of sedentary agriculture or pastoralism, it became important for a man to ensure the legitimacy of their offspring in order to transform wealth by descent .Thus, arose the system of patriarchy in which men began to control the reproductive power of women who lost the political power they had enjoyed under matriarchy. Like all evolutionary theories they claim human prehistory was characterized by a shift from mother-rights to father-rights fell out of favour in the early 20th century. Despite the attractiveness of this speculation for feminist theory there is accredited

evidence from either archeology or anthropology for the existence of matriarchy in the second sense, at anytime in history or any human society.

Socialization

Socialization is defined as the process through which self acquire the rules, social receipes, conceptions of appropriate contact and knowledge that allows them to act in their socio-cultural political world. It is a mechanism of cultural transmission. Gender socialization means the process by which the individual if taught to internalize socially determined values of appropriate masculine traits and feminine traits.

Gender Socialization

Socialization is the process that enables people to think about the expectations of society about them. People identify with the categories of feminine and masculine in this process. It is about the expected behavioural patterns and norms for men and women to exist within the society. The transmission of such values, norms happens in this process. People are exposed to social world through the cultural information of parents, care takers and so on. This process helps us to understand the embedded nature of gender in the process of socialization.

Gender Roles

Roles in the society are gendered in nature. Patriarchy determines the role of men and women. It is the mode of patriarchal ideology which prescribes specific role to men and women and they have to confirm those roles. Violation of gender roles become a taboo in the society. For instance role reversals are considered as deviances according to dominant male centred ethos of the society.

Gender Identity

It is the sense of people as male or female. It is related to our existence as male or female. The sense of identity creates interest in their life. For instance children imbibe the values and norms of the elderly people. It affects their sense of gender identity. Social construction of gender as well as the sexual difference are very much part of the process of gender identity. It is recognition of one's own identity. It is conditioned according to the dominant norms and values of the society.

Gender Bias

Society produces bias that is structured on the basis of gender identities. Patriarchy strengthens the gender bias and recognises the society as a male dominated space. Thus, women face bias from the dominant patriarchal society. Practices of gender bias differ according to the diverse social stratification of societies. For instance girl children are killed because they are considered inferior to boys. Due to socialization process men tend to control women and women are forced to behave according to the interest of the men in the society. Thus gender bias is the construction of socialization process and it is the extension of patriarchal ideology.

Feminism

The basic idea of feminism interprets the subordination of women by men. Feminism believes in the liberation of women from such subordination. They argue that it is only possible through the annihilation of patriarchy. Consequentially, it will result in a world which understands the social location of the women. Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women in 1792* is one of the pioneering work which combined feminist theory and feminist activism. Feminism, in the earlier stage, focused on the equality of women in the political and economic realms. For instance, Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) founded in 1903 dealt with the question of suffrage. The second wave feminists explores the impact of cultural oppression of the subordination of women, Feminists reject the notions of universalized male and advocate their understanding based on experience and identities. On the other hand, Marxist feminists argue that oppression of women is linked to social and economic structure. Radical feminists explore the subordination women through the sexuality and assert that sexual oppression is the invasion of male on the sexuality of women. Psycho-analytical stream of feminism focuses on the subjectivity of women with in the cultural field of sex. Socialist feminists examine the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy. The homogenous as well as universal feminist models are being challenged by the differences based on sexual orientation, race, caste and so on.

Liberal Feminism

Women's position in society became a debated topic during the 19th century in England and the United States for liberal feminism. Some of the defenders of liberalism as a political philosophy were Thomas Hobbes, John Lockes, Jerry Bentham and James Stuart Mill. Both

Hobbes and Locke theorized that civil society is a private sphere where individuals can exercise their rights freely without the interventions of state. They hold that humans lived in a state of nature prior to the establishment of civil society and the State; in order to have security over life, property and personal freedom, man voluntarily established the civil society and the state by social contract whereby they renounced part of their rights in order to enjoy freedom. In the sphere of economics, Adam Smith propagated minimum state interference. According to him, total societal happiness will increase if individual happiness is increased. This can happen only if everyone is allowed to invest for maximum private profit without any interference from the state. Thus, political liberalism coincided with the rise of capitalism in England. Whelehan says, "it is often argued that the origin of liberal philosophy are coexistent with the rise of capitalism, so that the language of autonomy and self improvement becomes inextricably linked to the property interest of middle classes". Liberal feminism sprang within the context of economic and political liberalism in England. Philosophically, liberal feminist assumed the absolute authority of the "natural light of reason" as an inherent trait of all human beings, regardless of sex by which individual can reach universal neutral unbiased value judgments without the help of any external authority. For liberal feminists, individuals living in society should have political and legal rights irrespective of their sexes. Thus, women should have right to vote, equal legal rights as husband, right to education, right to be integrated in the political process via representation; further, liberal feminists critiqued the relegation of women to 'private' domestic spheres as women's natural place. Whelehan says "the concept of public and private spheres are used to identify the limits of state intervention in individual existence. The 'public' comes to mean aspects of social life where state intervention is legitimate: where the private sphere is the realm of abstract individualism-where 'man' maintains his domination free from the fetters of civic interventions. This is where the term 'manifestly gendered'; male nature belongs to the paradigm of social interaction by default, female nature belongs to the home and to their irrational side of human nature, associated with qualities such as nurturance and emotions." Mary Wollstonecraft, a 19th century feminist, was a champion of the women's suffrage movement. She believed in an essential human nature that is common to each individual who irrespective of his or her sex can reach universal through rational judgment. According to Mary Wollstonecraft, each individual has natural rights in society irrespective of his or her sex. In her book, *Vindications of the Rights of Women*, Mary Wollstonecraft argues that democracy is not "true" unless women get the right to vote. Also, Mary Wollstonecraft criticized women's confinement to the "private space" outside of the public

arena. Women's proper dignity can come through education and getting access to public work outside of home.

Marxist Feminism

Karl Marx argues that the fundamental way in which humans relate to non-human nature is by production of basic necessities such as food and shelter. The production systems of any society form the economic or material base or structure of that society. In negotiating with nature, to produce things humans actually engage in social relations with each other to form the relations of production which constitutes a society's non material base on which the entire super structure of politico-legal system, ideology, philosophy, religion and culture of a particular society rests. History moves, according to Marx, by contractions between the structure and the super structure. First, there is a primitive stage of hunting and gathering system in which the modes of production was socially owned (primitive communism); with the invention of new forces or tools of production there was a contradiction between the production and the relation of production resulting in the agricultural mode of production, where people primarily produced via sowing and tilling the land; accordingly, there developed a corresponding relations of production. The next two stages of history for Marx are the feudal and capitalist system. In each stage of production, there is class division according to those who controls the means of production and those who do not. A new society is born out of the old one by class struggle in which the ruling class, that is the class controlling the system of production, are overthrown and a new class ceases control of system of production. According to Marx, capitalist system is the first economic system that saw the evolution of commodities, wage labour, the separation of use and exchange value and a priority of exchange over use value. For Marx, a thing becomes a commodity when it is brought in to the market for the purpose of being sold. Thus drawing the major argument from this premises Marxist feminists argue that oppression of women is linked to social and economic structure.

They explore the dialectical relationship between biological aspects, practices and physical/social worlds of women. They emphasise on the productivity and labour of women. Class is an important category to understand the interlinkages of labour and productivity. They depend upon the perspective of Marx and Friedrich Engel's sexual division of labour which determines the social location of women. Marxist feminists argue that capitalism

appropriates its strength by maintaining the divide between family and economy. Thus, they foregrounded reflections on the different aspects of class, patriarchy, women and capitalism.

Socialist Feminism

The origin of socialist feminist writings can be seen in the experiential accounts of socialist women activists. They recognize that issues of women are sidelined in the male dominated socialist parties. For instance, parties such as British Labour Party had differences with the idea of the suffrage campaign for women. They argued that such campaign will only strengthen the interests of middleclass. Male political leaders ignored the impact of day to day forms of patriarchy in the lives of women. On the contrary, socialist feminists focused on the relationship between women workers and capitalism. Simultaneously, they supported the work of women which provides autonomy to them. They also addressed procreative and sexual work of the women within the home. Socialist feminists argue that differences between men and women are socially constructed and it can be changed through social interventions. They contended that abolition of capitalism and male dominance are important for the liberation of women. They explored the alienation of women as sexual beings. For instance, women are alienated as mothers and wives. Socialist feminists deploy discourse of culture for their propaganda. In other words, they assert that creation of culture is important to create political consciousness among the women. They opine that community based activities are essential to forge political solidarity.

Psychoanalytic Feminism

Feminist developed a critique of the psychoanalytic perspective of Sigmund Freud by debunking its inherent biases. Freud dealt with the questions of psychosexual development and argues that deficient genitalia attributer inferiority to woman. Feminist argue that this perspective of Freud is biologically determined and reduced woman to mere biological aspects. For instance, Karen Horney, a feminist critic of Sigmund Freud argued that difference on the bases of social location plays vital role in determining the differences between sexes than sexes in genitalia. She contended that woman are envious of greater social

power of men rather than genitalia, Simon de Beauvoir argued that Freud's interpretations of male as human norms and the female as 'mutilated male'. Thus, Beauvoir equates Freud's position of woman as a deviation from male to that of cultural construction of woman.

However, Jacques Lacan re-interpreted Sigmund Freud by replacing Freud's under tag of sexual differences and genitalia by language, phallus and law. Thus, they focused on the location of women out side the discourse of language. Julit Mitchel emphasised on understanding of human being about themselves and there interaction between people. She argued that Freud's work provided an approach to the study of subject. She further argues that Freud's works are essential to understand the development of woman and her being.

Black Feminism

Black Feminism deconstructed the white Universalist biases of the dominant feminism. Thus, it is rapture from the hegemonic forms of feminism. Black women struggle against racial, sexual, hetero –sexual forms including class oppression. Black feminist argues that they gain their perspectives from historical realities of the struggle of Afro-American women for there survival. However, they emphasized on the intricacies of sexual and racial identity, hence they formed National Feminist Orgainzation in New York in the year 1973. They were also connected with movements related to Civil Rights such as Black Nationalism, Black Panther and so on. It draws its basic premises from the personal lives of Black women. However, they place there movements with in the field of contemporary economy and Black politics. Thus, contend that race and gender are related to there political repression. For instance, rape of black woman by white man is political repression for them. At the same time, they are conscious of the challenges of such as capitalism and imperialism. By claiming their position on liberation of Black, they argue that if one is not free, how they can liberate others. Hence, they are liberating black men too. Therefore, they provide critical dimension to there struggle against racial and patriarchal domination. Black feminist positioned themselves as the most oppressed, marginal and degraded communities. The middle class black women are represented in Black feminist writing as the agency which has potential to create consciousness among the poor black women by establishing communes. For instance, Patrcia Hill Collins , one of the most pioneering black feminist argues that black women are the 'Outside within' their community as well as in the dominant –non black –white community. Black feminist thus offers powerful critique of multifaceted aspects of race and gender.

Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is a perspective which put forth people from environmental and feminist's struggles to fight against the common cause, i.e., what cause the oppression of both women and environment? It is a movement in which both elements such as women and environment seem to be united to voice against the dominance of men. The term "ecofeminism" was coined by French writer Francoise d'Eaubonne in 1974 to represent women's capacity for bringing an ecological movement while challenging the dominant perspective of West towards development i.e., human being's dominants over nature is in parallel to man's dominants over women. Ecofeminism is a response to the perception of the society in which both women and nature have been devalued in Western culture and, therefore, both can be elevated and liberated through direct political action or collective struggle. For instance, earth or nature is exploited by the dominance of modern science and technology, and industrialization. Women, on the other hand, are being dominated and governed by the complex patterns of social institution called capitalist patriarchy in which men's labor is valued by the market economy and women labor in the home is completely devalued and neglected.

In United States, ecofeminism as a perspective has originated during the Second Wave of feminism when people within the peace movement started to think on the interrelationship between militarism, racism, classism, and the environmental damage. Towards late 1980s and the early 1990s, feminists began to theorize environmental damage and women's oppression by relating these two conditions in the context of developing countries. Further, the development of science and technology was viewed to be patriarchal and masculine in nature. For example, the developments in biotechnology and reproductive technology denied the freedom of nature and women respectively. As Mies and Shiva pointed, these technological developments have aimed to dispossess women for their generative capacity (reproductive) and nature for its productive capacity. Therefore, within this discourse, women became instrumental in going against ecological destructions such as women peasants were actively protested against the construction of nuclear power plants in Germany, in India, women in *Chipko* movement strongly protested the construction of mega dams, and the women of Kenya's greenbelt movement come together to plant millions of trees in arid deforested region.

The basic argument of ecofeminists centers on the idea that women symbolize nature due to their similar role of biological reproduction. Women are perceived to be closer to nature because of their capacity of childbearing and therefore, both women and nature are subjected to the male-driven technological progress and subjugation. Women's role in defense of their family and home, served as a strong source to carry out a political struggle in defense of ecology and its conservation and sustaining their livelihood. There are many types of thoughts emerged within the ecofeminist movement. As Merchant have categories ecofeminism in four types such as liberal, cultural, social, and socialist. Similarly, Mies and Shiva discussed spiritual and political types of ecofeminism across the world.

Womanism

The notion of womanism is the opposite of stereotypes such as girlish, frivolous, irresponsible and so on. It represents a paradigm shifts in the Afro-American feminist ideologies. It signifies the black folk expression which is common among the dialogues between black mothers to their female children. According to Alice Walker, "Acting womanish means 'acting like a woman'". For her it is a commonly refused to audacious, outrageous, willful or courageous behavior. This stream of feminism encourages intellectual inquiry of Afro-American women. Thus, it associates with intellectual maturity.

Womenism explores the importance of love among women, sexual and asexual engagements and so on. It also encourages culture, emotional flexibility and strength of women. This stream of feminism also not negates sexual as well as asexual love for women. At the same time, Alice Walker argues that womanist is not a separatist. Womanism also emphasis on aesthetes, sprits, struggle and so on.

Post modernist feminism

Post modernist feminist provides a critical reading of feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint. In other words, it questions the feminist meta- narratives and focuses on the multiplicities of feminist assertion, theories and so on. Post modernist feminism confronts universalism, subject and self, reason, science, progress in a special fashion. This category of feminism reflects the wilderness of feminist theories as the strength of the feminist assertions. Postmodern feminist deploy the postmodern critique of the subjectivity. Thus, they engage themselves in endless displacements of critical enquires. Though such intellectual endeavors,

they detach themselves from the authentic forms of knowledge of gender. A post modern feminist scholar explores how the social entities such as man and woman are culturally conditioned within the discourse. Postmodern feminist scholarship also examines the role of autobiographies and constructions of 'the natural'. They explore different forms of oppression in categories such as class, racism, homophobia, basis of ability and discrimination.

Postcolonial feminism

Postcolonial feminism derives its philosophical premises from post colonial studies. Scholars describe the category of 'post colony' in the manner in which formerly colonized nation states produce new forms of power that have relation to their colonial past. They argue that persistence of the authenticity of type still lack in the vestiges of coeval nature and natural elitist cliques. Post colonial feminist group which belong to newly decolonized spaces/regions explored their identity within the gendered space of new nation state. Scholars debunked the politics of the colonial missionary projects and their ways of empowering women in non-western countries. The representation of women within the discourse linked to colonial patriarchies produced as a culture of othering. For instance, studies on Sati, Veiling, which are conducted by eurocentric scholars reproduce ethnocentric judgments on non-western ways of living. Post colonial feminist scholars also resisted romanization of postcolonial ways of life by the first world scholarship on feminism. Thus, they are engaging with the gendered binary oppositions which constructs /operate in the spaces of coloniality and post- coloniality.

Dalit feminism

Dalit feminism emerged as a critique to the value free, dominant, mainstream feminist trends in India. Dalit feminist emphasize that Dalit women are oppressed on the basis of social factors such as caste, gender and class. Thus, they challenged the dominant feminist framework which focused on class and gender.

Dalit feminist established an autonomous organization called National Federation of Dalit women (NFDW) in the year 1995. It is argued by them that caste is interlinked to the oppression of Dalit women. For instance, Indian society is based on the hierarchy of caste. Occupations in India are divided on the basis of caste such as manual scavengers, cobblers

and so on. Dalit feminist situate their critique by engaging with the multifaceted unequal statuses of Dalit women. They raised the difference of 'internal' and 'external' patriarchy as a fundamental premise of their critical enquiry. According to them, 'internal' patriarchy refers to the oppression of Dalit women by Dalit men. On the other hand, the 'external' patriarchy deals with their oppression by the dominant /non-dalit / men and women. For instance, victims of rape as dalit women, bonded dalit women labourers undergo internal as well as external patriarchies. At the same time, they argue, Dalit women have the authenticity to represent themselves in the domain of politics. However, Dalit feminist assert that question of agency is important for the overall development of lives of Dalit women. Thus, they also deploy the writings of Dalit women such as autobiographies to foreground their distinct and stigmatized socialization.

Post colonialism

Post colonialism refers to range of global cultural developments which occurred in the aftermath of the Second World War to this current era. There are historical and theoretical dimensions to this term. On the one hand, post colonialism means the cultural economic, and the social events which have determined the decline of 'European imperialism'. Postcolonial theories also deal with questions such as cultural identity, gender, nationality, race and ethnicity, language and power, subjectivities that faced imperialism and so on. Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) is one of the prominent thinkers who argued about the oppressed consciousness of colonized subjects. He contends that imperialism started the process of 'internalization' in which those who are subjected to it experience economic, political and social inferiority not in 'external' terms but in a fashion that affected the sense of their identity. Therefore, economic inferiority creates a condition of racial and cultural inferiority. Fanon also tried to demonstrate how the language played a role within this process of colonization. For instance, he mentions about the colonized persons who are compelled to speak in the language or logic of the imperialistic forces. Thus, language plays a vital role in the subjugation of the people. This category also represents the cultural partialities that are ingrained in the European discourses. It denotes the cultural diversity of the post-colonial conditions. It shows the new forms of colonialism which exists through the transmission of the culture by the imperialistic forces.

Post Modernism

Postmodernism refers to style or movements with in literature, paintings, plastic arts and architecture. Scholars such as Anthony Giddens argue that it deals with aspects of *aesthetic reflections* upon the nature of modernity. A postmodern scholar rejects the authenticity which is attributed to the rationality of the enlightenment. Scholars such as David Harvey contended that a greater flexibility and change in capitalism is related to the post modern transitions. There are different meanings for postmodernism in different field. Linguistic abundance, stylistic anarchy and lexical exhibitionism are feature of the post modern literature. It becomes resistance against the functional element in the architecture. Jean-Francois Lyotard argues that postmodernism marks the collapse of grand narratives such as Marxism and replace them with little narratives. However, postmodern scholarship engages with the multiplicity of truth.

Nation-state

Nation state is the political community that is distinct from other forms of community because of its autonomy with regard to legal codes and governmental structures, head of the state, boundaries, system of military defense and so on. It also possesses a lot of symbolic features which act to signify its identity in homogenous terms For instance, a flag, national anthem; a popular self-image is essential part of its structure. Nation state is different from the possession of nationhood. However, the 19th century witness us in the struggle to achieve the nationalistic vision with out the accommodation of political autonomy of the nation state, for instance , the Italian states, or the unification of the German leadership of Prussia in 1872. Even today there are number of a nation which does not essentially have an accompanying status of statehood, for example Wales and Scotland in the United Kingdom. From this discourse we can understand that a nation state is may not be determined particularly, with reference to such notions as nationality, ethnicity, culture or language. It is, rather, the social, political and economic modes, but the fundamental features of nation state have different norms, political autonomy, cods with respects to their system of social relations and economic identity also.

UNIT 2 BASIC CONCEPTS-II

Power

Power can be defined as the degree of control exercised by certain people/institutions/organizations over material, human, intellectual and financial resources. The control of these resources becomes the source of power. It is dynamic and relational and exercised in the social, economic and political relation between individuals and groups. It is also distributed unequally where some individuals or groups have greater control over the resources and others having little or no control. The access to and control over resources determines the extent of power one exercises. Different degrees of power are sustained and perpetuated through social stratification like gender, class, caste etc. (Sri latha batliwala) Power can be understood as operating in a number of different ways:

- *power over*: This power involves an either/or relationship of domination/subordination. Ultimately, it is based on socially sanctioned threats of violence and intimidation, it requires constant vigilance to maintain, and it invites active and passive resistance;
- *power to*: This power relates to having decision-making authority, power to solve problems and can be creative and enabling;
- *power with*: This power involves people organising with a common purpose or common understanding to achieve collective goals;
- *power within*: This power refers to self confidence, self awareness and assertiveness. It relates to how can individuals can recognise through analysing their experience how power operates in their lives, and gain the confidence to act to influence and change this. (Williams *et al*, 1994).

Subordination

According to Webster dictionary Subordination means

1. One who stands in order or rank below another; -- distinguished from a principal.
2. Inferior in order, nature, dignity, power, importance, or the like.
3. To place in a lower order or class; to make or consider as of less value or importance; as, to subordinate one creature to another.
4. To make subject; to subject or subdue; as, to subordinate the passions to reason.
5. Placed in a lower order, class, or rank; holding a lower or inferior position.

Women's subordination refers to social norms, culture and customs which maintain men as primary, superior and paramount and women are secondary and subordinate to men. This excludes and restricts women entering into public domain, taking decisions on their own, occupying positions and so on. Women's conference in Beijing has said that there is no

nation under heaven, where women are not subordinated. Thus women's subordination is a global phenomenon which is considered as the result of the manifestation of the patriarchy.

Empowerment

Merriam Webster dictionary defines empowerment as to give official authority or legal power to the powerless; to promote the self actualization. It is providing opportunity to the people to come out of their subordination, deprivation and seek their entitlement. Srilatha Batliwala defines empowerment as a range of activities from individual self assertion to collective resistance, protest and mobilization that challenge basic power relations. For individuals and groups where class, caste, ethnicity and gender determine their access to resources and power, their empowerment begins when they not only recognize the systemic forces that oppress them, but act to change existing power relationships. Empowerment, therefore, is a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systemic forces that marginalize women and other disadvantaged sectors in a given context.

Asian activists define women's empowerment as "the process and the result of the process" of

- challenging the ideology of male domination and women's subordination;
- enabling women to gain equal access to and control over resources (material, human, intellectual, financial); and
- transforming the systems, institutions (family, education, religion, media, etc.) and structures (legal, political, economic, social) through which the ideology and practice of subordination is reinforced and reproduced

Srilatha Batliwala, "The Meaning of Women's Empowerment: New Concepts from Action" in Population Policies Revisited, Sen.

Discrimination

The term discrimination refers to differential treatment taken against a person/group because they belong to certain class, caste, gender etc which is considered as lower in the society. Discrimination is the differential behaviour towards another group. It involves excluding or restricting members of one group from accessing opportunities that are available to other groups. Discriminatory behaviour takes many forms and involves in social, political and economic exclusion. This disadvantages lead to different kinds of discrimination and injustice. The economic disadvantage may be seen as one of the root causes of discrimination. Unequal distribution of income gives advantages to the working classes than others. Apart from economic causes people with socially despised sexualities as well as

people suffering from different types of illness also discriminated. In this scenario the gender discrimination is more predominant. Gender encompasses elements of injustice which stems from the dominant value of the society. The devaluation of women in the society leads to their discrimination. This discrimination manifests in the form of dowry, son preference, sex trafficking, unpaid labour, abuse, nutritional deprivation, lack of education, lack of opportunities in the labour market, domestic violence, other economic, social and political disadvantages.

This discrimination takes different forms in different context. In US race structures plays an important role that too women from disadvantaged race is paid low, have low status, do menial jobs and they are mostly in domestic occupation. In Indian context caste is also associated with this discrimination. The lower caste women has triple burden of being a woman, hailing from lower caste and being poor. Contact of any kind through touching, having sexual relation, dinning, drinking from the same well and so on between institutionally upper caste and lower caste is socially not accepted. According to Arjan De Haan these discriminations and deprivations is multi dimensional. For example a landless female daily labourer of scheduled caste is very likely to be poor, illiterate, with poor health status, have little social capital and she finds difficult to exercise her constitutional rights. Her quality of life is less because of discrimination. The lower castes are segregated on space and they are confined to the margins of village. This distance and social disadvantage made them socially, economically, culturally disadvantaged. By taking this disadvantage the upper caste formulated their demands and fulfils their interest. And women are mostly deprived because of this inequality.

The Constitution of India guarantees to all Indian women equality (Article 14), no discrimination by the State (Article 15(1)), equality of opportunity (Article 16), equal pay for equal work (Article 39(d)). In addition, it allows special provisions to be made by the State in favour of women and children (Article 15(3)), renounces practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e)), and also allows for provisions to be made by the State for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42). In spite of these measures women discrimination in India is not rooted out. Social commitment and political will has an significant role in uprooting the discriminatory practice against women.

Entitlement

Entitlement means the appropriate rights and claims. It is the right guaranteed by the law/statute and provides certain benefits to the deprived and underprivileged group. In the context of gender, women do not have access and control over tangible and intangible

resources and their equal rights with men are deprived because of patriarchal norms. The low status of women is thus an effect of the entitlement failure. Family, other social institution confines the capacity of women, restricts their independent activity and making them to consider the needs of others above their own. Therefore to seek gender justice entitlement is the primary requirement.

Entitlement in economics is often associated with the right to property. Many believe that empowerment of women can happen if they have access and control over resources and properties. Looking from this perspective it can be said that resources and properties are still male domain and women don't have their claim towards it access and control. Women also lack inheritance to property rights. In view of this the commission on status of women in India 1975 has given many recommendations regarding the entitlement of women. Some of them are:

- Legal recognition should be given to the economic value of the contribution made by the wife through household work for purposes of determining ownership of matrimonial property, instead of continuing the archaic test of actual financial contribution.
- On divorce or separation, the wife should be entitled to at least one-third of the assets acquired at the time of and during the marriage.
- Sections 15 and 16 of the Indian Succession Act 1925 to be amended, removing mandatory linkage of wife's domicile with that of the husband.
- Equal distribution of not only separate or self acquired properties of the deceased male, but also of undivided interests in co-parcenary property.

In order to ensure the entitlement of women legal reforms are mandatory. Even when law is there is to ensure the rights of women social conventions and practices restricts women from exercising their rights. Attitudinal change has to be brought in the society. Social reform movement is necessary for creating awareness and changing the mindset of the people. Dr.Sarala Gopalan, former secretary to Government of India has given following recommendations to ensure women's entitlement.

- Increase awareness of laws through education institutions, general awareness and legal awareness programmes;
- Sensitize Judiciary, administrators and legislators about implementation of laws in letter and spirit;
- Consider long pending recommendations for amendments of legal provisions on inheritance;

- Introduce compulsory registration of marriages and strengthen the administrative machinery for the purpose.

Needs and Rights

Needs

From 1970 onwards low status and condition of women was brought into focus. To improve their status and conditions gender planning is an important tool. The gender planning concerns the fact that women and men not only play different roles in the society but also their strategic and practical needs are different. When identifying interest it is useful to differentiate between “women interests”, strategic gender interest and practical gender interest following the three fold conceptualization made by Maxine Molyneux. (Caroline O.N. Moser, Gender Planning and development: Theory, Practice and Training, Routledge, London, 1999). After identifying different interest of women this can be translated into planning needs and their concerns may be satisfied. The further concerning women’s needs divided into strategic gender needs and practical gender needs. For example the strategic needs more concern about the equality in the society. On the other hand practical gender needs talks about day to day survival like getting drinking water, fuel, fodder etc. Strategic gender needs (SGN) are the needs women identify because of their subordinate position to men in the society. SGN vary according to particular context. They relate to gender division of labour, power and control and may include such issues as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages and women’s control over their bodies. Meeting SGN helps women to achieve greater equality. It also changes existing roles and therefore challenges women’s subordinate position. With regard to practical Gender Needs (PGN) are the needs that women identify in their socially accepted roles in the society. PGN don’t challenge the gender division of labour or women’s subordinate position in society, although rising out of them. PGN are a response to immediate perceived necessity, identified within a specific context. They are practical in nature and often concern with inadequacies in living condition such as water provision, health care and employment.

Rights

The term women's rights refer to freedoms and entitlements of women and girls of all ages. These rights may or may not be institutionalized, ignored or suppressed by law, local custom, and behavior in a particular society. These liberties are grouped together and differentiated from broader notions of human rights because they often differ from the freedoms inherently

possessed by or recognized for men and boys, and because activists for this issue claim an inherent historical and traditional bias against the exercise of rights by women and girls.

Issues commonly associated with notions of women's rights include, though are not limited to, the right: to bodily integrity and autonomy; to vote (suffrage); to hold public office; to work; to fair wages or equal pay; to own property; to education; to serve in the military or be conscripted; to enter into legal contracts; and to have marital, parental and religious rights. Women and their supporters have campaigned and in some places continue to campaign for the same rights as mens.

Women in Development (WID) The WID approach aims to integrate women into the existing development process by targeting them, often in women-specific activities. Women are usually passive recipients in WID projects, which often emphasize making women more efficient producers and increasing their income. Although many WID projects have improved health, income or resources in the short term, because they did not transform unequal relationships, a significant number were not sustainable. A common shortcoming of WID projects is that they do not consider women's multiple roles or that they miscalculate the elasticity of women's time and labour. An other, is that such projects tend to be blind to men's roles and responsibilities in women's (dis)empowerment.

The biggest difference between WID and GAD is that WID projects traditionally were not grounded in a comprehensive gender analysis. The GAD approach is gender-analysis driven. There is definitely a need for women-specific and men-specific interventions at times. These complement gender initiatives. Research shows that the success of both sex-specific and gender activities is directly linked with the depth of the gender analysis that informs them.

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is the public policy concept of assessing the different implications for women and men of any planned policy action, including legislation and programmes, in all areas and levels.

The concept of gender mainstreaming was first proposed at the 1985 Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi. The idea has been developed in the United Nations development community. The idea was formally featured in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

Most definitions conform to the UN Economic and Social Council formally defined concept:

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and

at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

United Nations has defined Gender Mainstreaming as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. Gender mainstreaming is not only a question of social justice, but is necessary for ensuring equitable sustainable human development by the most effective and efficient means.

Literacy Gender Parity Index (GPI) is the ratio of the female to male adult literacy rates which measures progress towards gender equity in literacy and the level of learning opportunities available for women in relation to those available to men. It serves also as a significant indicator of the empowerment of women in society.

GAD

GAD, which shares elements with the empowerment approach, gained popularity in the 1980s and attempts to address the loopholes of WID. It is rooted in post-development theory and post-structuralist critiques in feminism.

GAD does not consider women as a uniform group. It maintains that women's situation should be seen in the context of the socio-economic, racial and other factors that shape a particular society. It points to the importance of understanding the relationship between women and men and how society influences their respective roles. Development to be meaningful will have to take all these factors into consideration.

This approach rejects the dichotomy between the public and the private. It focuses attention on the oppression of women in the family, within the private sphere of the household. It emphasizes the state's role in providing social services to promote women's emancipation. Women are seen as agents of change rather than passive recipients of development.

The focus is on strengthening women's legal rights. It also talks in terms of upsetting the existing power relations in society. Gender is an issue that cuts across all economic, social

and political processes. The GAD approach attempts to identify both the practical gender needs of women as well as the strategic gender needs that are closely related.

The problem with GAD is that it is easy in the name of gender, to disguise and even side track real issues that affect women. Gender can rise above the personal, which means the personal can remain behind the scene, despite all the efforts that go into the analysis of 'social construction of gender'.

Most often, however, GAD is seen as just a new label for the same old women's programmes which do not address power relations in society or women's oppression. Though it is popular among funding agencies and NGOs and has the potential to be different, it has become institutionalized like WID.

Gender Planning

Gender planning is the recognition of existing gender inequalities in the society and helps to formulate the policies to mitigate gender inequalities in the society. It aims to improve the status and conditions of women by formulating appropriate policies and programmes. The existing planning approach treats all as equal and it will make a plan for all without considering the inequalities existing in the society. Gender planning helps to expose, analyze and resolve the inequalities existing in social, economic, culture, legal and family structures and serves to initiate processes of change to address inequalities in such structures and processes.

Gender Budgeting

A budget is one of the most important instruments which reflect the economic policy of the government. It can also be a powerful tool in transforming the economy at different levels of State, District or Grassroots level of village Panchayats. It reflects the choices that the government chooses in order to achieve the economic and developmental goals. Of late, Gender budgeting has emerged as a new process. This ensures the care for women's needs and priorities in the total budget. This has become an effective mechanism to bring about gender equity. A Gender Responsive Budget is a budget that acknowledges the gender patterns in the society and allocates money to implement policies and programmes that changes these patterns in a way that moves towards a more gender-equal society. Gender budget initiatives are exercises that aim to move the country in the direction of a gender-responsive budget.

Gender Auditing

Gender auditing is the analysis of the system and process of finance of any government. Gender auditing implies auditing the income and expenditure of governments

from a gender perspective and also analyzing the development process including the process of legislation, guidelines, taxes and social development projects. It understands that policies have a differential impact on men and women by recognizing the roles and responsibilities of men in the society form the basis for gender auditing. Gender auditing is the one aspect of social auditing.

GDI and GEM

Inter -district, Inter-state and Cross country comparisons of women's empowerment are obtained from Gender related Development Index (GDI). GDI owes its origin to its precursor, the HDI (Human Development Index), three main components of which are per capita income, educational attainment and life-expectancy which is a proxy for health attainment. Gender disparities are measured keeping these three indicators into consideration. "An additional measure, gender empowerment measure (GEM) has been formulated to take into account aspects relating to economic participation and decision-making by women. The indicators used in GEM are share in income, share in parliamentary seats and an index that includes share in administrative and managerial jobs and share in professional and technical posts".

It was in 1995 that the UNDP brought out the Gender-related Development Index as a method for assessing gender inequality. The variables used in GDI are similar to those used for the Human Development Index; these being education, health and income. While the HDI measures average achievement, the GDI adjusts the average achievement to reflect the inequalities between men and women in the following dimensions:

- A long and healthy life, as measured by life expectancy at birth.
- Knowledge as measured by the adult literacy rate and the combined primary, tertiary and gross enrolment ratio.
- A decent standard of living, as measured by estimated earned income (PPP US\$).

Focusing on women's opportunities rather than their capabilities, the GEM captures gender inequality in three key areas:

- Political participation and decision making power, as measured by women's and men's percentage share of parliamentary seats.
- Economic participation and decision-making power, as measured by two indicators – women's and men's percentage shares of positions as legislators, senior officials and managers and women's and men's percentage share of professional and technical positions.

- Power over economic resources, as measured by women's and men's estimated earned income (PPP US\$).

Gender Blind Approach

“Gender-blind approach does not consider these differences existing between men and women, rather it views men and women belong” to the same category. Gender-blindness refers to a failure to identify or acknowledge difference on the basis of gender where it is significant. This approach does not recognize gender as an essential factor that determines the choices for men and women separately in the society. Persons or institutions or policies based on this approach consider both men and women as a homogeneous category and they become blind towards their differential needs. This approach does not question the existing norms and values that discriminate against women and focuses only on the development of communities, households, agricultural sector in general. Moreover, gender-blind policies display ignorance about the gender differences in the allocation of roles and resources and accept the universal norms of the society as such which is patriarchal in nature. Therefore the gender policies even though meant for development cannot be fruitful as they ignore the differences in resources, entitlements, opportunities, influence between men and women. Women are hence left out and do not get benefits.

Rights Based Approach

A Rights based approach aims at promoting and protecting human rights based on international human rights standards. It serves as a conceptual framework in the process of human development. Discriminatory practices, inequalities, unjust distribution of power are some of the factors which serve as hurdles in the wholistic and inclusive development process. A Rights based approach seeks to analyze these problems which impede progress of development. Under a human rights-based approach, the plans, policies and processes of development are anchored in a system of rights and corresponding obligations are established by international law. This helps to promote the sustainability of development work, empowering people themselves— especially the most marginalized—to participate in policy formulation and hold accountable those who have a duty to act. While there's no universal recipe for a rights-based approach, international organizations and rights-based organizations have come together to fight for the rights of deprived and marginalized communities. Based

Strategic Gender Needs

“Strategic gender needs are the needs women identify because of their subordinate position to men in their society. Strategic gender needs vary according to the particular context. They relate gender divisions of labour, power and control and may include such

issues as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages and women's control over their body. Meeting strategic gender needs helps women to achieve greater gender equality. It also changes existing gender roles and therefore challenges women's subordinate position". Strategic gender needs are those needs that are formulated from the analysis of women's subordination to men. While formulating strategic gender needs it also considers the nature and structure of relationship between men and women in the society. It also considers sociopolitical cultural context. By deriving from these analyses, strategic gender needs provide equality in the society. on this, advocacy is being done to develop policies and programmes to fulfill human rights.

Practical Gender Needs

"Practical Gender needs are the needs women identify in their socially accepted roles in the society. Practical gender needs do not challenge the gender division of labour or women's subordinate position in the society although rising out of them. Practical gender needs are a response to immediate perceived necessity identified within a specific context. They are practical in nature and often are concerned with inadequacies in living conditions such as water provision, health care and employment".

Unlike strategic gender needs, practical gender needs are formulated from the experiences of women. It includes their day-to-day survival like food, fuel, fodder, water, access to health, etc. The practical gender needs can be sorted out at the grassroots level if local governments and the decision making structure closest to the society are sensitive towards women's issues. As Molyneux has written they do not generally entail a strategic goal such as women's emancipation or gender equality..... nor do they challenge the prevailing forms of subordination even though they arise directly out of them. As women they have dual roles by managing household chores as well as earning. When the planners make policies to meet practical gender needs they have to consider both women's needs with reference to the domestic as well as income earning activities and also requirements of the community like access to health and sanitation, access to education, proper connectivity to basic services, opportunities to participate in community life. These needs concern not only the women, but also for the entire community needs. Yet, due to the gender division of labour, society imposes these activities on women. So planners consider these issues and effectively implement practical gender needs at the grassroots level.

Gender Analysis

Gender analysis refers to the variety of approaches, and methods used to assess and understand the **differences in the lives** of women and men, girls and boys and **the**

relationships between and amongst them including: their access to resources and opportunities, their activities, and the constraints they face relative to each other. It is a process that identifies the **varied and different roles and responsibilities** that women, men, girls and boys have in the family, the community, and in economic, legal, political, and social structures.

A gender analysis is an essential component of an overall analytical process that a successful development program of social change requires. It is a simple equation, really: if we do not fully understand the trends and dynamics that define and perpetuate gender inequality – a core dimension of labor exploitation - we will be unable to mount a successful strategy to promote gender equality and women rights. Knowing key facts, labor market trends in the organized and unorganized sector, power dynamics of women within the family, institutions and society, are critical factors for grounding the analytical and strategic work of gender equality and development programming in reality. It also helps develop a snapshot of that reality against which the impact of development programs and strategies can be measured.

Gender analysis is a way of seeing / analyzing problems, situations and solutions with awareness of gender relations and in order to identify gender issues. The key elements of a gender analysis should include identification of similarities and differences between men and women and amongst women.

Gender Gap Index

The Gender Gap Index assesses countries on how well they are dividing their resources and opportunities among their male and female populations, regardless of the overall levels of these resources and opportunities. By providing a comprehensible framework for assessing and comparing global gender gaps and by revealing those countries that are role models in dividing these resources equitably between women and men, the Index serves as a catalyst for greater awareness as well as greater exchange between policymakers. It examines four critical areas of inequality between men and women:

1. Economic participation and opportunity – outcomes on salaries, participation levels and access to high-skilled employment;
2. Educational attainment – outcomes on access to basic and higher level education;
3. Political empowerment – outcomes on representation in decision-making structures; and
4. Health and survival – outcomes on life expectancy and sex ratio.

Gender Policy

A gender policy is an integral part of all its organizational policies, programmes and projects and involves building a culture that understands the issues and policies, which respect

diversity and gender, related concerns. A mere statement of policy and objectives does not ensure the concerns relating to addressing the gender. Towards achieving the objectives, clear indicators need to be defined to evaluate and assess the organization's commitment towards gender equity on a periodic basis. The policy seeks to ensure greater consistency of gender principles, policies and practices across the organisation and to provide an accountability framework in relation to gender, against which all staff can be accountable and against which the organization can audit itself.

UNIT 3 TRENDS IN FEMINISM

Structure

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Objectives

3.3 Liberal Feminism

3.3.1 Liberal Thought

3.3.2 Classical Liberal Feminism

3.3.3 Second Wave Liberal Feminism

3.3.4 Weakness/Limitations of the Liberal Feminism

3.3.5 Contribution to the Women's Movement

3.4 Marxist Feminism

3.4.1 Foundations of Marxist Feminism

3.4.2 Other Key Elements in Marxist Feminism

3.4.3 Limitations of Marxist Feminism

3.4.4 Contribution to the Women's Movement

3.5 Psychoanalytic Feminism

3.5.1 The Beginnings of Psychoanalytic Feminism – Countering Freudian Theories

3.5.2 Explanation by other Theorists

3.5.3 Limitations of Psychoanalytic Feminism

3.5.4 Contribution to the Women's Movement

3.6 Radical feminism

3.6.1 Definition

3.6.2 The influences that shaped Radical Feminism

3.6.3 What are the variations of Radical Feminism?

3.6.3.1 Radical- Libertarian Feminism

3.6.3.2 Radical-Cultural Feminism

3.6.4 Radical Feminism – Its Structure

3.6.5 The Outcomes of the Movement

3.6.6 Critiques of Radical Feminism

3.6.7 Contribution to the Women's Movement

3.7 Postmodern Feminism

3.7.1 Postmodern Thought

3.7.2 Postmodern rethinking of psychological explanation of gender

3.7.3 Postmodern Feminist

3.7.4 Limitations of Postmodern feminism

3.7.5 Contribution to the women's Movement

3.8 Black Feminism and Womanism

3.8.1 The Beginnings of Black Feminism

3.9 Cyber Feminism

3.9.1 Origin of Cyber Feminism

3.9.2 Definition of the 100 Anti Thesis

3.9.3 Cyber art and its relation to Cyber feminism

3.9.4 Cyber Feminism – Practical Manifestation

3.9.5 Cyber Feminism challenges and its future

3.10 Let Us Sum up

3.11 Answers to Check Your Progress

3.12 Unit End Questions

3.13 References

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The second half of the twentieth century has seen a new impetus to the women's movement. There are many factors responsible for this. One of the main factors, however, has been the recognition of a common experience of marginalisation between various groups of subjugated peoples, and the development of various subaltern voices and movements that articulate, analyse and protest against the various forms of oppressive power that have left them outside of the mainstream of culture, tradition and life in each situation. The subaltern has realised that it has been perceived as the Other, the different, the deviant. This attitude has been the source of its marginalisation, the rationalisation that justifies the inhuman treatment of human beings by other human beings. At the initial stages of any subaltern movement, the tendency is to accept the value-systems of the dominant group, the mainstream, even while one recognises that one has been excluded from that mainstream. At this stage, the values of the oppressor remain the yardstick, the paradigm that is the norm, and the subaltern endeavour is to prove itself of value *in those terms*. 'Anything you can do, I can do just as well', might well be the slogan of this stage: the subaltern is struggling at this stage to prove that, despite the difference in colour, race, sex, caste, economic situation etc, there is no *essential* difference between the oppressor and the oppressed. The same humanness characterises both groups, and given the same opportunities, both would be equally capable of achievement.

The next stage is, perhaps, a more positive one. The subaltern has reached a stage of being able to look more objectively at both sets of value systems, the dominant and the dominated. At this stage, it is possible for the subaltern to appreciate and value even those facets of its culture and tradition in which it most differs from the dominant. This stage involves, then, a recognition and a celebration of what is viewed as the 'intrinsic' value of the subaltern, *on its own terms*. This, by challenging the monopoly of the dominant value-system, subtly subverts its authority, creating a space for an alternative *weltanschauung*, an alternative mode of existence and of relating. 'From margin to center,' Bell Hooks's famous phrase (cited in Warhol and Herndl, 1991: 687) might well be the *leitmotif* of this stage, for with the legitimising of the alternatives, the peripheries are now centre-stage, the subaltern is now dictating the terms of political correctness.

Together with other subaltern movements, the women's movement has moved through these stages. When we think of feminism today, we imply three levels of activity:

1. A description of the oppression and subjugation experienced by women and an analysis of its causes.
2. An action-plan or prescription that suggests ways of transforming the situation, so as to liberate and empower women.
3. A celebration of the strengths and gifts of womanhood and an exploration of the alternative ways of functioning that are part of the modus operandi of women. (This point with its suggestion of essentialism in its understanding of 'woman' is hotly debated by feminists of various schools of thought.)

3.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit you should be able to

- understand clearly the way in which the various schools of feminist thought describe the oppression and subjugation experienced by women.
- discuss the way in which each of these schools explain and analyse the causes of this oppression.
- perceive clearly the strategies recommended by each of these schools to liberate and empower women.
- comprehend the weaknesses/limitations of each of these approaches.
- assess the contribution of each of these approaches to the women's movement as a whole.

Liberal feminism draws heavily upon the world-view presented by the liberal humanist philosophy in which it has its roots. Very simply, liberal philosophy and liberal political thought hold the opinion that human beings are characterised by the use of reason: liberals tend to define the use in either moral or prudential terms. When the moral aspect is emphasised, the focus is on the value of individual autonomy; when reason is perceived as the best means to a desired end, the value of self-fulfilment is highlighted. A just society then is one which allows individuals to exercise their autonomy and to fulfil themselves: the ideal state maintains and preserves a system of individual rights which allows each person to pursue his or her own understanding of the desirable good, provided the rights of no other individual are thereby restricted.

Within the liberal framework, there is a distinction between the classical liberals and the welfare liberals. The former expect the state to concentrate on protecting the civil liberties of each citizen, and without interfering with the free market, to provide all individuals with an equal opportunity to function within that market. The latter focus more on the need for positive intervention from the state in order to correct situations of gross injustice that are the legacy of past injustice – e.g. reservations for SC/ST students and candidates for jobs. Welfare liberals assert that without such positive intervention from the state, these individuals would not be able to compete on the open market with even a remote semblance of an equal chance.

3.3.2 Classical Liberal Feminism

This extremely simplistic understanding of liberal political thought gives us a framework for our understanding of the workings of liberal feminism. There has been a shift from the classical position of the early liberal feminists of the 19th century to the welfare liberalism of the 20th century liberal feminists, who are more concerned with equality of opportunity which would then lead to a redistribution of wealth and thus a further equalisation of opportunity for all people.

The classical liberal feminist text is, of course, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). In this truly revolutionary work, Wollstonecraft asserts that much of what is perceived as “feminine” and biologically determined, is rather a social construct, viz. Gender. While Wollstonecraft does not use these terms, she denies that women are by nature more focussed on pleasure and less capable of rationality than men.

She reasoned that if men were confined to the same cages women find themselves locked in, they would develop the same characters. If denied the chance to develop their rational powers, to become moral persons who have concerns, causes and commitments beyond personal pleasure, men would become overly “emotional”.... (Tong, 1989: 14)

Wollstonecraft is outraged by the trend in 18th century society to trivialise and de-rationalise the life and education of the affluent middle-class woman. She demands that girls and women be given an education that sharpen and focus the mind, enabling them to develop their rational and moral capacities. She posits this need not just for utilitarian purposes (women need to be equipped to perform their wifely and motherly duties in a sensible and

satisfactory manner!) but also because if rationality is what distinguishes human beings from animals, then, as human beings, girls are entitled to an education that would enable them to develop their human potential to the fullest:

Contending for the rights of woman, my main argument is built on this simple principle, that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue; for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice. And how can woman be expected to co-operate unless she knows why she ought to be virtuous? unless freedom strengthens her reason till she comprehends her duty, and sees in what manner it is connected with her real good. (Wollstonecraft, 1982: 10)

At the same time she claims for women, the right to autonomy, the right to make their own decisions about right and wrong:

Consider...whether, when men contend for their freedom, and to be allowed to judge for themselves respecting their own happiness, it be not inconsistent and unjust to subjugate women, even though you firmly believe that you are acting in the manner best calculated to promote their happiness? Who made man the exclusive judge, if woman partake with him of the gift of reason? (Wollstonecraft, 1982: 11)

What Wollstonecraft wanted for women was the right to be fully human, fully autonomous persons. She rebelled against a frame of mind that saw women as mere appendages, created as a means to the end of masculine fulfilment, and she spoke out fiercely against both masculine and feminine reinforcement of this perspective. But though she demands an equal education for women, she seems to overlook the fact that the socio-economic condition of women at the time did not afford them the opportunity to exercise that education in any sphere other than the strictly domestic.

Other liberal thinkers who spoke out against the subjection particularly of the middle-class woman of the 18th and 19th centuries, were John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill. Writing nearly a hundred years after Wollstonecraft, they join her in celebrating reason. Their liberalism is more conditioned by the utilitarian approach to life, however, and they insist that equality between men and women is only possible if women are accorded the same civil liberties and economic opportunities that men enjoy. Though the two wrote several joint essays, notably on the subject of marriage and the divorce laws of the time, they differed on a number of subjects, especially on issues relating to working women. For instance, while Mill

believed that full liberation would be visible when women were allowed to enter and leave the workforce at will, Taylor believed that liberation was only possible when all women were actually working, regardless of financial necessity. Where Mills emphasises the need for education and for collegiality in the formation and administration of laws, Taylor frequently stresses the aspect of an equal partnership in the area of productive work; only so can women be the partners rather than the servants of their husbands.

Where both Wollstonecraft and Taylor concentrate on the ordinary woman, tending to downplay the exceptional woman, Mill uses the exceptional woman as proof that makes nonsense of the patriarchal claim that all men are more intelligent, rational and capable than all women. At the same time, all three recognise and seek to counter the double standard that has been set up in society. It is interesting to note that of the three it is Mill who, in *The Subjection of Women* (1869) makes the most radical claims for woman's intellect and gifts (attention to detail, use of concrete examples, intuitiveness). It is Mill who makes the most revolutionary assertions about the effects of education and social conditioning on the development of women in psychological and moral terms. It is Mill who analyses in clear-sighted terms the position of the wife under English law. Yet, oddly, it is Mill who believes that given the possibility of choice, given every opportunity, both educational and economic that would make the choice a viable one, liberated women would still opt to make a career of wifery and mothering:

Like a man when he chooses a profession, so, when a woman marries, it may in general be understood that she makes choice of the management of a household, and the bringing up of a family, as the first call upon her exertions, during as many years of her life as may be required for the purpose; and that she renounces, not all other objects and occupations, but all which are not consistent with the requirements of this. (Mill, 1982: 264)

The arguments of Wollstonecraft, Taylor and Mill shaped and oriented the women's movement in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The suffragette movement, the struggle for women's education, the efforts to change the legal system in order to achieve a greater equality between men and women, all speak eloquently of the impact of liberal humanism on the women's movement.

3.3.3 Second Wave Liberal Feminism

That, however, this was not enough is apparent from the fact that in the 50s and 60s, women began once again to articulate their condition, asserting that the so-called gains of the last hundred years or so had not in fact changed the essential evils of their situation. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1957) with its uncompromising demand for a room, a space that a woman can call her own, in which she can choose to do whatever *she* wants, and her belief that real creativity can only take place away from the domestic preoccupations that seem a woman's lot, expressed something of a sense of dissatisfaction with the achievements won so far. This dissatisfaction is underlined by the caustic comparison between the austerity of Fernham (the fictional women's college described in the essay) and the almost sybaritic luxury of the neighbouring Cantabrigian colleges for men.

In *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Betty Friedan points out that the assumption that women can find fulfilment exclusively in the traditional roles/functions of wife and mother is fallacious, leaving middle-class urban housewives with an inner wasteland of emptiness and frustration. This inner misery will inevitably affect their relationships with their husbands and children, creating either resentment and rebellion or an excessive and unhealthy dependence. Friedan insists that the only way out of this bind is for all women to be equipped with educational and professional qualifications that will enable them to find some meaningful work outside of the home, even if it is only part-time: this is necessary for the physical and emotional health of the women themselves as well as for their families. While Friedan is not asking women to give up marriage and families of their own in favour of careers, she is combating the assumption that all "normal" women, all "good" women, would choose marriage and motherhood over a career. It is, according to Friedan, possible to combine a commitment to both marriage and motherhood and to a career. Indeed, for many women, both commitments exercise an equal attraction.

This concept she stresses in her book *The Second Stage* (1981):

In our reaction against the feminine mystique, which defined women solely in terms of their relation to men as wives, mothers and homemakers, we sometimes seemed to fall into a *feminist* mystique which denied that core of women's personhood that is fulfilled through love, nurture, home. (Friedan, 1981: 27)

In recommending that women can and should opt for both family and career, she recommends that concepts like flexitime be introduced in the workplace. At the same time, however, she still continues to perceive the tasks of homemaking and childrearing as being

the responsibility of women. Like her predecessors, Friedan too had sent women out into the public sphere before an adequate sharing out of domestic responsibilities between men and women. This tendency she tries to correct in her second book by balancing “women’s assimilation into the workplace with a counter assimilation of men into the family” (Tong, 1989: 26)

Liberal feminists today occupy various positions, ranging from the classical liberal to the welfare liberal, both of which rely heavily on legal interventions and remedies to redress the inequalities between sexes/genders. However, there also seems to be a movement today in the direction of the development of the androgynous personality, combining traits that are both masculine and feminine. Carolyn Heilbrun discusses this possibility in her book *Towards the Promise of Androgyny* (1973):

Androgyny...seeks to liberate the individual from the confines of the appropriate. ...[It] suggests ... a full range of experience open to individuals who may, as women, be aggressive, as men, tender; it suggests a spectrum upon which human beings choose their places without regard to propriety or custom. (Heilbrun 1973: x-xi.)

3.3.4 Weaknesses/Limitations of the Liberal Approach

One criticism levelled against the liberal feminists is that all too often their interiorisation of masculine ideals and value-systems has resulted in their substituting masculine for human. By insisting that women are just as capable of rationality and efficiency as men, they are reinforcing a value-system that valorizes these qualities over and above the so-called feminine qualities of sensitivity, nurturing and tenderness. The liberals seem to believe that women want to be like men. Instead, claim other feminists, there is a value and a power to the “roles” of mother and wife that transcend the patriarchal attempt to institutionalise them and thus control the exercise of these functions and identities.

Mothering is *not* a “role” on par with being a file clerk, a scientist, or a member of the Air Force. Mothering is a complicated, rich, ambivalent, vexing, joyous activity which is biological, natural, social, symbolic and emotional. It carries profoundly resonant emotional and sexual imperatives. A tendency to downplay the differences that pertain between, say, mothering and holding a job, not only drains our private relations of much of their significance, but also over-simplifies what can or should be done to alter things for women, who are frequently urged to change roles in order to solve their problems. (Elshtain, 1981: 253)

The socialist feminists level yet another criticism against the liberals. Not only have liberal feminists been too ready to accept and own masculine values, their very idea of the self as an autonomous, rational agent is a fundamentally male concept – and a concept related to the WASP mentality, at that. Other ways of perceiving and defining the human person could use the framework of relationships and kinship, could valorize qualities other than rationality, could stress “being” rather than “agency” as the key condition of humanness.

Western liberal thought has accepted a dualistic view of the world, which creates a problem for feminists, since this tends to devalue activities and functions related to the body, at the expense of those related to the mind. (The former are usually associated with women, where the latter are associated with men.) At the same time, the liberal view of the world can lead to two questionable assumptions:

- The rational, autonomous person is seen as being isolated, with needs and interests separate from, and even in opposition to, those of every other individual.
- By placing such a premium on human liberty and the individual’s rights, the liberals seem to believe that there is no common answer to the fundamental questions of political philosophy.

Socialist feminists assert that all persons are in community and it is the network of relatedness in these communities that shape the individual.

3.3.5 Contribution to the Women’s Movement

However, in spite of its limitations, liberal feminism has contributed much to the women’s movement. It was the liberal feminists who agitated for and won educational and legal reforms that have changed life so drastically for women, who enabled women to attain a professional and occupational stature within the workplace. That there is feminism is undeniable, but we cannot afford to trivialise their efforts, or even to relegate them to the past, for the struggle to ensure that all women benefit from educational, legal and professional reforms, still continues.

Check your Progress

1. What are the main principles underlying liberal thought?
2. What are the differences between classical liberal feminism and welfare liberal feminism?
3. What do you understand by Second Wave feminism?
4. What action, according to liberal feminists, would lead to greater equality and empowerment for women?
5. What are the limitations of the liberal school of feminism?
6. How has liberal feminism contributed to the women's movement?

3.4 MARXIST FEMINISM

3.4.1 Foundations of Marxist Feminism

The parallels between Marxism and feminism are immediately apparent. Where Marxism offers the working-classes or the proletariat, first, the tools for analysis of the causes of and reasons for their oppression, and second, the means whereby they can redress these inequalities and exploitation, feminism offers women a similar agenda: analysis, followed by strategies for empowerment.

Another parallel may be traced. In its articulation of “historical materialism”, Marxism fosters the development of a “class consciousness” that draws together similarly situated people with the same needs, problems and aspirations, through an arduous process of shared reflection and struggle. The class consciousness described enables workers to recognise that their interests, concerns and problems are shared by all their fellow-workers, and the best interests of all would be served by mutual support and solidarity, rather than by competing against each other. Feminism, too, makes evident that, while patriarchy is not a monolith (its manifestations vary from society to society, from community to community), yet all women experience subjugation and oppression in one form or another, and our best interests will be served by sisterhood and solidarity rather than by rivalry and antagonism inspired and reinforced by patriarchal structures.

Though Marxists in general treat women's oppression as part of and secondary to their primary concern – the oppression of the worker – Engels addressed the problem of why women are oppressed in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884). He traces the origins of the family and its subsequent development through complex and highly cohesive clan and joint family systems to the splintered nuclear family of his time (and of the present day). He ascribes the movement from one stage to the next to changes in the mode of production. From the earliest and most primitive form of subsistence, when the work of each member of the tribe was essential for the survival of all, and gender relations were characterised by what he calls “promiscuous intercourse”, the human race moved to a state of pairing-for-life, or marriage, because of the biological need to exclude the possibility of intercourse with various kinds of blood relatives and the subsequent reduction in the number of women available to each man. In the earlier stages (when the mode of production and the small wealth owned by the family, centred around the house, with women's work being vital for the tribe, and women producing wealth that could be passed on to the next generation), this pairing-for-life meant that the man would go into the woman's house and live there with her: societies at this stage, Engels suggests, tend to be matrilineal and even matriarchal in organisation, with much economic, social and political power invested in women.

With the domestication of animals and the breeding of herds, the site of production shifted from the household to outside. New wealth was generated, this time controlled by men, and women lost much of the power they once had. As the work of men gained in economic importance and prestige, there was a concomitant decrease in the value and importance ascribed to women's work. More important, with the generation of an actual surplus controlled by men, they suddenly wanted to ensure that their wealth was transmitted to *their* children. As Engels put it, “mother-right had to be overthrown, and overthrown it was.”

This move was pivotal and constituted “the world-historic defeat of the female sex”, according to Engels. Man took charge of the household by virtue of his economic power: “he is the bourgeois and the wife represents the proletariat”. Further, since biologically, motherhood is easily proved, while paternity – until the days of DNA testing – remained a belief, it was necessary to curtail and control women's sexuality, so that men could ensure that only their own children would inherit their wealth. So sprang up an ideological superstructure, with many accretions of mythic prescriptions and scriptural dicta through the

centuries: a superstructure that valorized chastity and fidelity, equating these with virtue among women. Religion, law, tradition, education, social mores – all reinforced this in various ways in different communities, but the fact remained. (The transition from the matrilineal system among the Nairs in Kerala, with the relative freedom it offered the Nair women, to the patrilineal system visible today, would appear to support this analysis, though the transition must have been at least partially inspired by exposure to other societies, structured both patriarchally and patrilineally.)

As societies move from the pastoral/nomadic to slave societies and thence to the feudal system, as wealth is concentrated more and more in the hands of men, as ideological and institutional superstructures continue to buttress men's power, women's inferior position is reinforced, and over the years, internalised and transmitted to future generations by women themselves. However, as Engels points out, while societies remained agrarian, women's work was still of direct economic value and they retained a degree of importance in the community. It is only with industrialisation and capitalism that the devaluation of women is complete. Once workplace and home are separated, once women's work no longer brings in direct economic advantage to family and community, women are reduced to nonentities. Interestingly, Engels holds that this devaluation is more acute among bourgeois women than among proletarian women, whose labour is visibly necessary for the survival of the family. In fact, he compares the bourgeois marriage to "the crassest prostitution" in which the wife "sells her body into slavery once and for all".

Tracing much of the evil of women's position to the institution of private property and the consequent development of the monogamous marriage, Engels argues that women's liberation can only take place with the abolition of private property, and with women gaining economic independence from men. He posits the need for, first, the reintroduction of women into public industry and, second, the socialisation of housework and child-rearing.

3.4.2 Other Key Elements in Marxist Feminism

Other key Marxist concepts are also crucial in shaping the Marxist feminists' understanding of the oppressive forces at work in patriarchy. Marxists believe that the supremely humanising activity is work, i.e. the transformation of our environment in order to produce our means of subsistence. Men and women through their work create a society that then shapes them. Not consciousness but material existence determines our perceptions and

patterns of living. The forces of production and the relations of production generate a superstructure that in turn supports and sanctions the mode of production that has generated it. This concept is taken up and emphasized by Marxist feminists who point out that the nature of woman's work and her role both in family and at workplace reinforce her social and economic subordination to men.

According to Marxist theory, capitalism is not a system of voluntary exchange relations, as the Liberal view has it. Rather, it is a system of exploitative power relations. The employers' monopoly over the means of production enables them to exploit the workers. The surplus value generated by the worker, i.e. the difference between the wage he is paid and the value that is actually created by his work, forms the capitalist's profit. Workers may be free in that there is no overt coercion forcing them to work at a particular job (as there would be in slavery). But is the worker really free? If the choice is between accepting the job offered by the capitalist or starving, what becomes of the freedom?

Apart from the monopoly capitalists exercise over the means of production, they also exercise another tactic to bolster their exploitation of the workers. By presenting the view that all life is a colossal network of exchange relations, capitalist ideologues lead workers and employers to accept what Marx termed "the fetishism of commodities" as one of the imponderable givens in life. Thus the exercise of power that underlies the surface exchange transaction is obscured. Marxist feminists claim that even as this fetishism of commodities deludes the worker, it provides a theoretical underpinning for the easy acquiescence of society in such relations as prostitution and surrogate motherhood, seeing them as being an exercise in free choice. How free is the woman who "decides" to sell her sexual or reproductive services only because she has nothing else to offer in the marketplace?

Marxist class analysis, too, has enabled feminists to understand their own oppression better, while at the same time raising the pertinent question of whether women in themselves constitute a class. There is, assert Marxist feminists, a vertical division of gender that cuts across the horizontal stratification of class; an oppression and a marginalisation experienced by all women regardless of their economic condition (or rather, the economic condition of father, husband, son). Though the ways in which this is experienced may differ, the fact of its existence is universal. It is this that enables women to perceive themselves as a class. The feminist struggle, both for equal wages and in campaigns like the one for "Wages for

Housework” has helped women move towards a class consciousness that rejects as false consciousness all attempts to convince them that wifely and motherly duties cannot be recompensed as work because they are undertaken out of love. Marxist feminists also point out that though women’s work under capitalism is trivialised and women seen primarily as consumers rather than producers, they are in fact primarily producers.

Alienation is yet another concept that gained special significance in Marxist ideology and has served Marxist and Socialist feminists well as a unifying concept. Marxist thought identifies multiple levels of alienation experienced by workers under capitalism:

- Alienation from the product of their labour which is no longer determined or controlled by themselves
- Alienation from themselves, since the supremely humanising activity has been reduced to a monotonous, repetitive, soul-deadening exercise on the assembly-line
- Alienation from other human beings who could have been colleagues and friends, but have been turned into competitors and enemies
- Alienation from nature since the very process of industrialisation has resulted in a perception of nature as a threat or an obstacle to survival.

Marxist and Socialist feminists, like Ann Foreman and Alison Jaggar, show that not only does all this apply to woman as worker, it also applies to her very being as woman. The reification of woman and especially of the female body, as a result of the combination of patriarchy and capitalism, has created multiple layers of alienation experienced by woman. She is alienated from her own body, from herself, from other women and from nature, as she works away at her body, struggling to make it conform to an externally-imposed standard of perfection. Motherhood, too, becomes institutionalised, and often becomes an alienating experience in a similar manner, as does the attempt to exercise her intellectual capabilities in the academic world.

3.4.3 Limitations of Marxist Feminism

Convincing as Engels’ argument appears, it has been challenged by feminists. As Millett points out:

Engels ignores the fact that woman is viewed, emotionally and psychologically, as chattel property by the poor as well as, and often even more than, the rich. Lacking

other claims to status a working class male is still more prone to seek them in sexual rank, often brutally asserted. (Millett, 1990: 122)

Simone de Beauvoir, tracing the oppression of women to their position as the Other in her book *The Second Sex*, insists that the relations between men and women will not automatically change with the change from capitalism to socialism, for women are just as likely to remain the Other in the latter as in the former. Engels's assertion that men's will to power may be traced to the institution of private property is erroneous, she claims: "If the human consciousness had not included ...an original aspiration to dominate the Other, the invention of the bronze tool could not have caused the oppression of women." (de Beauvoir, 1986: 89)

Marxist feminists themselves raise objections to Engels's theory. In an article entitled "Do Feminists Need Marxism?" (Flax, 1981: 174-85), Jane Flax holds that Engels has stressed the importance of production at the expense of reproduction. She is convinced that the overthrow of mother-right probably reflected a change in the perception of reproduction ("such as men discovering their role in reproduction and/or asserting control over reproduction") as much as in the method of production.

Another flaw in Engels' theory is that he does not in any way explain why women were charged with household work while men engaged in productive work, The sexual division of labour, for Engels as for Marx, seems to originate with "the division of labour in the sexual act". However, Socialist feminists like Alison Jaggar protest that this would seem to imply that there is no hope of abolishing the sexual division of labour as long as the "division of labour in the sex act" remains unchanged. (Jaggar, 1983: 69)

3.4.4 Contribution to the Women's Movement

While classical Marxist ideology would suggest that women's oppression is but one aspect of the exploitation of the worker and that both would be redressed when capitalism is replaced by socialism, feminists have disagreed with this from the earliest days. Marching side by side with their brothers in protest against injustice, they found that even the champions of workers' rights were unable at times to perceive the nature of the injustice experienced by women. From the earliest revolutionaries in Russia – Alexandra Kollontai, Clara Zetkin and others – to the present day Socialists, feminists realised that there is a real need for women to

understand the forms that oppression takes in the “private” as well as the “public” domain. Recognising that patriarchy has predated capitalism and will probably outlive it, Socialist feminists combine the firm material base offered by Marxist analysis with the insights offered by psychoanalytical and radical feminists to arrive at a more holistic understanding of an oppression and injustice that touches every aspect of women’s lives. Yet, by grounding the discourse in a solid material base, Marxism has rooted the feminist movement in reality and enabled it to join hands with all other liberation movements.

Check your progress:

1. How does Engels explain the reasons for the oppression of women?
2. How do other thinkers refute some of his arguments?
3. What are the parallels between Marxist thought and feminist thought?
4. What do you understand by the Marxist use of the terms “class consciousness” and “alienation”? How have feminists used these terms?
5. What, according to Marxist feminists, action should be taken in order to enable women’s liberation and empowerment?
6. What limitations do you see in Marxist feminism?
7. How has Marxist feminism contributed to the women’s movement?

3.5.1 The Beginnings of Psychoanalytic Feminism – countering Freudian theories

Psychoanalytic feminism has its roots in a feminist critique of Freud’s theories about sexuality and his theories about the development of both sexuality and morality in children. These theories have been challenged both by men – Adler, Lacan – as well as by women – Dinnerstein, Chodorow, Mitchell, Gilligan (all psychologists) as well as by other feminists like Millett, Firestone and Friedan.

Very simply, Freud’s theories on the subject (expressed in his *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sexuality*) may be summarised as dealing with

- the way in which anatomy as well as the process of development contributes to the way in which each individual experiences and expresses sexuality

- the stages of sexuality through which each individual passes in a movement from “perverse” to “normal” sexuality
- the Oedipus and the castration complexes, which need to be successfully resolved if the child is to grow into a “normal” “healthy” adult
- the link between sexuality and morality in the development of the superego
- the effect of penis envy on female sexuality and morality

The main problems that feminists find in Freud’s conclusions is that they tend towards a biological determinism that implies that biology is destiny in a way that is not open to change. Secondly, Freud’s assumption is that boys learn to internalise the values of a patriarchal society when they successfully resolve the Oedipus complex and learn to identify with the father. This identification can never really happen in the case of a girl: on the one hand she is spared the traumatising fear of castration, but on the other hand, she is, as a result, never pushed into a situation in which she has to internalise the patriarchal value-system – the value-system that characterises ‘civilised’ human beings. Her assumption of these values remain superficial, she is less capable of conscientious morality. In a famous essay on “Femininity”(1933), Freud wrote:

The fact that women must be regarded as having little sense of justice is no doubt related to the predominance of envy in their mental life. ... We also regard women as weaker in their social interests and as having less capacity for sublimating their instincts than men...(Ruth, 1980: 138)

This highly unflattering picture of woman, which was taken as the last word on feminine psychology until the middle of the 20th century, angered many feminists who countered the stereotype vehemently, arguing that women’s social position and powerlessness had little to do with biology and almost everything to do with social constructs of gender.

Friedan attacked Freud for his biological determinism, and claimed that he was largely conditioned by Victorian ideas about culture and morality. She questioned the assumption that a woman’s reproductive role and identity as well as her sexual preference were dependent on her lack of a penis and her ability or inability to come to terms with that fact. At the same time, she challenged the view that alternative ways of perceiving and living out one’s reproductive and sexual identity were necessarily “abnormal”. Finally, she quarrels

with the fact that for Freud the inquiry centres around sexuality. Such an emphasis on sexuality further underscores the stereotypical identification of woman as a sex object and/or a baby machine.

Firestone, on the other hand, appreciates Freud's frank emphasis on sexuality as one of the key elements in human life. However, she questions the apolitical interpretation of female sexuality, which leaves out the issue of power relations between the sexes. Her assertion is that Freud erred in viewing the penis as the object of desire and envy in itself: rather it should be viewed as symbol of the power that is vested in the male in a patriarchal society. As a result, Freudian therapy seeks to help the nonconformist/rebel adapt to the hierarchy of power within the family and within society, rather than question and transform the unjust structures and practices that are being perpetuated. It is "reactionary to the core, its potential as a serious discipline undermined by its usefulness to those in power" (Firestone, 1970: 69)

Millett is angered by the Freudian attempt to explain the woman's desire to give birth as a pathetic compensation for her lack of a penis, rather than as an impressive achievement in its own right. She also challenges the assumption that male sexual aggression is a biological given, built into all relations between sexes. Finally, she holds that if Freud were not so convinced of the centrality of the penis to all theories about sexuality, he would have been able to be more balanced in his interpretation of the neuroses of his patients.

3.5.2 Explanations by other theorists

Psychologists like Adler, Horney and Thompson reject Freud's claims about woman's nature, contending that human experience of sexuality is, in the main, socially constructed. Recognising that society is constructed in such a way as to privilege the man, they hold that women's neuroses and other psychological problems are actually ways of protesting their helplessness in a patriarchal world. Further, they see development as a growth away from the basic instincts of one's biological nature and toward integration into the socio-cultural environment. Sexuality is also shaped and structured by this development. They offer a political understanding of the forces that control human behaviour and psychology, they see creativity, action and growth as gender-blind in themselves, and they refuse to accept the theory that there is only one way to be a normal healthy male, and only one way to be a normal healthy female.

Feminist psychologists have also explored these areas of human experience. Both Dorothy Dinnerstein in *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* (1977) and Nancy Chodorow in *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) have analysed the aspects of sexuality and motherhood in an attempt to understand gender relations and the way they affect our lives. While the theories are too detailed to enter into at this stage, both insist that many of the problems of unjust gender relations stem from the fact that in a patriarchal society it is almost always the woman who does all the mothering and becomes therefore the scapegoat for all that is wrong in our world. Dinnerstein emphasises that adult gender relations are coloured (usually negatively) by experiences in childhood and infancy with capricious female power. Chodorow, on the other hand, speaks of the desire of both men and women to re-experience in adult life the intimate symbiotic relationship they had known as infants. Both posit dual parenting as the solution: only when men and women are equally responsible for childrearing, equally linked to their children in intimacy, will the sexual/gender divisions break down, and men and women be equally free to develop their potential in both public and private domains.

3.5.3 Limitations of Psychoanalytic Feminism:

Interesting though these theories are, they fail to take into account the effects of other factors in the environment. The family does not determine society: it is the other way around. In addition, while their theories might hold good for a Western, nuclear, middle-class, two-parent family, they will not hold good inter-culturally or even intra-culturally. They have assumed that the kind of family that they are most familiar with is the universal Family – an idea that has never had any real manifestation. Finally, many feminists insist that Dinnerstein and Chodorow have chosen the wrong remedy – one that will not necessarily solve all the problems in gender relations, and which might in fact have a counter-effect in the long run, since it will involve surrendering the woman's power in one of the very few areas in which she has any power at all.

The question of morality is also raised by Carol Gilligan, who claims in her book *In a Different Voice* (1982) that men and women have different, but equally valid concepts of morality and justice. The problem arises in that the male concept is the one that is valorised and reinforced by the structures in our world. Where men tend to think much more in terms of abstract norms and paradigms, women function much more on the level of the specific, the concrete, the real.

Juliet Mitchell, on the other hand, addresses the issue of the Oedipus Complex. She points out that it had meaning in the days when families depended on an exchange of women for procreation and when the taboo on incest was most necessary. It is no longer necessary today, she claims, but lingers as a remnant of an outworn patriarchal structure. However, other feminists question her work, pointing out that she does not explain the reason why men were valued so highly and women devalued.

3.5.4 Contribution to the Women's Movement

Psychoanalytic explanations for women's oppression do not provide a complete explanation for women's subjugation and oppression. Nor are the remedies proposed sufficient in themselves. But the psychoanalytic feminists do give us insights that mesh in with our experience of life, of relationships and of ourselves. And they do present us with an understanding of the inner working of our own psyche that must be faced and transformed, together with external structures, if we are to arrive at true liberation.

Check your Progress

1. Why do later psychologists as well as feminists reject many of Freud's theories about sexuality and behaviour?
2. How do psychoanalytic feminists explain the oppression of women?
3. What strategies do they suggest for achieving liberation and equality for women?
4. What are the main limitations of psychoanalytic feminism?
5. How has this school of feminist thought contributed to the women's

3.6 RADICAL FEMINISM

3.6.1 Definition

Radical feminism (radical as “getting to the root”) is a philosophy emphasizing the

patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women, or, more specifically, social dominance of women by men.

Radical feminism views patriarchy as dividing rights, privileges and power primarily by gender, and as a result oppressing women and privileging men. (Jone Johnson Lewis) THE FEMINISTS, a group of radical feminist formed in New York in October 1968, said in their manifesto: 'women, or "female", were the first class to be separated out from humanity and thus denied their humanity'.¹⁵

Second wave' radical feminism has from the beginning been concerned with forms of oppression which affect the life chances and human dignity of women, that is, with all forms of oppression. By attributing all forms of oppression to male domination, the early radical feminist accounts linked these together, and provided the beginnings of framework for understanding all forms of invidious hierarchical distinctions between categories of human beings. Denise Thompson asserts that this early radical feminist account was never challenged, despite its intrinsic faults.

One of those problems was a tendency to locate the primacy of male domination in 'history'. The oppression of women, it was argued, provided the model for all other forms of oppression because it happened first in human history. Women were the first social group to be enslaved. Once men learned that other human beings, namely women, could be enslaved, they applied that model to other groups of men.

The New York Redstockings said in 1970:

Male supremacy is the oldest, most basic form of domination. All other forms of exploitation and oppression (racism, capitalism, imperialism, etc.) are extensions of male supremacy: men dominate women, a few men-dominated and male-oriented (Redstockings, 1970: 599)

Shulamith Firestone said:

The natural reproductive difference between the sexes led directly to the first division of labour at the origins of class, as well as furnishing the paradigm of caste (discrimination based on biological characteristics)...[Radical feminism] see feminist issues not only as women's first priority, but as central to any larger revolutionary analysis...the current leftist

analysis...does not relate the structures of the economic class system to its origins in the sexual class system, the model for all other exploitive systems, and thus the tapeworm which must to be eliminated first by any true revolution. (Firestone 1981: 9, 37)¹⁶

A poster for Radical Feminism



Fight porn culture!

Feminists were not convinced by the rationale that was repeatedly provided by male politicians that the liberation of women could wait until after the socialist revolution, that, because women's subordination was connected to the private ownership of the means of production, the abolition of that private ownership would automatically mean the abolition of women's subordination.

For radical feminists the aim was not simply to establish political priorities, although it was certainly that. It was also a radically different way of looking at the world, from the male dominant status quo. It placed the interests of women first, and from that standpoint spoke in the name of the universal human by asserting that the overcoming of women's subordination would mean the overcoming of all other forms of subordination as well. For Ti-Grace Atkinson, for example, the oppression of women by men created a world where no one could be free:

A human being is not born from the womb; it must create itself. It must be free, self-generative. A human being must feel that it can grow in a world where injustice, inequality, hatred, sadism are not directed at it. No person can grow into a life within these conditions: it is enough of a miracle to survive as a functioning organism. (Atkinson, 1974:5)¹⁷

Radical feminism does not accept existing political and social organization in general because they are tied to patriarchy. Instead, it supports cultural change that undermines patriarchy and associated hierarchical structures. Radical feminism opposes patriarchy, not men. To equate

radical feminism to man-hating is to assume that patriarchy and men are inseparable, philosophically and politically.

Where liberal feminism focussed on the issue of equal opportunities for women, in law, in education, etc., and Marxist feminism concentrated on the issue of the economic exploitation of women and the systematic devaluation of women's work, radical feminism explores a number of different topics – art, religion, literature, ecology, reproduction and mothering, sexuality and so on. The work of radical feminists has illumined a number of areas, and has transformed our perceptions of many things that we have hitherto taken for granted. But whatever area of human life the radical feminist discusses, each of them agrees on one thing: *the oppression of women is “the first, the most widespread and the deepest form of human oppression”*¹⁸

Liberal feminist thinking is a more reasoned, intellectual perspective than the radical feminist position, which has both emotional and political centring in its logical expressions. It has been said of the radical feminists that their tactics and their philosophy are inseparable.”¹⁹ This is understandable, since their focus is on widespread cultural awakening rather than on scholarly debate.”²⁰ Their political vibrancy comes in part from the fact that (1) they are saying something relevant and true about men that can almost universally be appreciated by women, and (2) their logical standards are predicated on politics rather than precise theory and thus they become the be-all and end-all for a diversity of people.

Gerda Lerner defines the radical position in the following manner:

*"Reforms and legal changes, while ameliorating the condition of women and an essential part of the process of emancipating them, will not basically change patriarchy. Such reforms need to be integrated within a vast cultural revolution in order to transform patriarchy and thus abolish it."*²¹



Symbol of Radical Feminism

The oppression of women by men is assumed to be of the same intensity among all men, yet obviously as Imelda Whelehan has pointed out, “Men have different degrees of access to [the] mechanisms of oppression.”²² Radical feminism focuses on men as oppressors, yet says little about the possibility of the woman being an oppressor of other women or of men.”²³ Radical feminists do not view prostitution as a harmless private transaction. On the contrary, they believe that it reinforces and perpetuates the objectification, subordination, and exploitation of women.”²⁴ They see men as universally believing myths regarding their own sexuality. Two myths are: (1) that men need more sex than women and (2) that they are genetically the stronger sex and therefore should be dominant in relationships with women. Feminist writer Alison M. Jaggar describes the radical feminist view as one in which “almost every man/woman encounter has sexual overtones and typically is designed to reinforce the sexual dominance of men.”²⁵

“According to the radical feminist view, men are socialized to have sexual desires and to feel entitled to have those desires met, whereas women are socialized to meet those desires and to internalize accepted definitions of femininity and sexual objectification.”²⁶ As men cling to the idea that their sexuality is an absolute expression of their need and dominance, they prevent women from effecting new attitudes, self-realizations, and behaviors.

As discussed earlier, when radical feminists speak of “degradation,” they inappropriately apply the term in ethical statements setting forth right or wrong behaviour. What they mainly are talking about is degradation in a social sense and not a moral sense, although they allude to their ideas as morally sound. In a social sense they seem to see degradation as existing over a broad spectrum of society in which everything that men do, from opening doors for women to sexual assault, reinforces their view of men as “dominating.”

In spite of the fact that radical feminists tend to overemphasize concepts such as degradation, they appear to more than compensate for it by making several assertions that have high credibility. One of these assertions is that human sexuality derives essentially from culture and not from biology. This idea is reasonable and consistent with contemporary biological theories which emphasize the role of culture rather than genetics in viewing the evolution of human societies. For example, zoologist Theodosius Dobzhansky would recognize the radical feminist assertion framed in biological and genetic terms. He views culture as an instrument of human adaptation that is virtually inseparable from biology.²⁷

”Dobzhansky separates biological and cultural theories into three categories: ectogenic,

autogenic, and biological.”²⁸ Thus, there is a certain degree of support for the radical feminist view that people are not necessarily responding to biological forces that are exclusive of cultural influences.

In the same way that biological knowledge can expand the ground of support for the arguments of feminists, so too can the study of ethics. The exploitation and oppression of human beings is considered to be an immoral act. Once women’s oppression is framed in moral terms, it becomes easier to understand that there are other moral influences that can cause and exacerbate oppression.

3.6.2 The Influences That Have Shaped Radical Feminism

Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex* was a pioneering work that shaped many of the thought processes that influenced several other feminist scholars, like Kate Millett, who took up De Beauvoir's ideas.

As Rosi Braidotti lucidly points out in her book *Nomadic Subjects* this description of the difference between men and women resulted in a dichotomy where 'normal subjectivity' is masculine subjectivity which is then phallogocentric, universal, rational, capable of transcendence, self-regulating, conscious and denying bodily origins, whereas the female is then conceived as the lack, the other-than-the-subject (which is then seen as an automatic devaluation), irrational, uncontrolled, immanent and identified with the body. De Beauvoir thus thought that the best feminist political and theoretical thing to do for women was to gain the same entitlement to subjectivity as men. Women thus had to go for transcendence and rationality in order to bring their existence, which De Beauvoir thought as being yet unrepresented, into representation.²⁹

This idea of Woman as lack is closely connected to the model of power as developed by Marx and which was also taken over by various feminist scholars in order to describe the oppression of women in a patriarchal society and the feminist answer to this. In Marx' view power consisted of the binary 'oppressors versus oppressed'. The oppressors are then the group who have something (power that is) and the oppressed group are the mere victims of the oppressors. In her ground-breaking article De Lauretis states that thinking of gender as

sexual difference now keep feminist theory stuck in a patriarchal dichotomy which therefore gets universalized: woman as the difference from man. This concept prohibits analyzing differences among women, let alone differences within women, says De Lauretis; feminist theory is thus complicit to the sustaining of a binary that is invoked by patriarchal ideology. She gives a critique of feminist theory working with the Marxist notion of power relations, as it relies on a universal and homogeneous oppression of women prior to their entry in the social and historical field. Furthermore, this concept of gender as sexual difference keeps attempts of radical feminist thinking of conceiving the subject in a totally different way, in this case other than the dominant 'masculine' notion of rational and unified subjectivity, at a long distance. De Lauretis thus draws attention to the epistemological framework with which feminist theory was working.³⁰

Women are not the mere victims of patriarchal oppression as their historical and cultural backgrounds give them a certain amount of agency in their specific patriarchal ideologies for as we can see with the Foucaulian model of power, power has also a positive side to it as you are not only subjected to it but it also gives you a potency for certain entitlements. In other words, because of ideology and power structures you can make an investment to work out your subjectivity. The next question then will be, of course, whose investments yield more relative power.

A shift rather similar to De Lauretis' one, only on a different field, is taken up by Chandra Mohanty in her article "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses". In short, she uses this De Lauretis-shift not only on gender, but also on ethnicity, thus proposing a anti-white-centrism (as De Lauretis was proposing an anti-hetero-centrism). In this article Mohanty wants to give a criticism of hegemonic Western scholarship on the big scale and of the colonialism in Western feminist scholarship in particular. In fact, she does a renaming of the feminist position coming from the post-colonialist other.³¹

This project is, as well as De Lauretis' project, typical for feminist theory in the eighties which was a reaction to certain ideas in feminist theory in the seventies.³²

The 19th Amendment, which was passed in 1920, is seen as the marking point of the separation between liberal feminists and radical feminists. Some aspects of its philosophy might be seen to have their roots in the American cultural feminist tradition in the nineteenth

and early twentieth centuries. There seem to be particular links with the works of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and her woman-identified utopia Herland (1911).

The locus of radical activism has traditionally been the consciousness-raising (CR) group. In the early 70's, these consensus-based groups concluded that the linchpin of patriarchy is the institution of heterosexuality and the nuclear family. As long as society eroticizes male dominance and female subordination and thinks women's unpaid family labour is a fair deal, we're not going to have real justice. With such startling insights, no wonder both the FBI and the Socialist Workers Party planted provocateurs in these groups. However, most radicals will admit that other problems also weakened the movement.³³ Intense disputes over power sharing, racism, classism, and in particular, heterosexuality and lesbianism corroded the "sisterhood" and in 1975, the majority of CR groups died.

Gloria Steinem says, "I'm not sure feminism should require an adjective."

3.6.3 What Are The Variations Of Radical Feminism?

Radical feminism is known for its activism. It popularized the slogan, 'Personal is the Political.' Some of those actions can be seen as staged sit-ins, acted out dramatizations, and marches. There are essentially two forms of radical feminism: radical-libertarian and radical-cultural feminists.

3.6.3.1 Radical-Libertarian Feminism

According to Tong, Radical-Libertarian feminists tend to hold the Radical feminist views of the 1960's and 1970's. They often argue that women's reproductive capabilities and sexual roles and responsibilities serve to oppress them in a patriarchal society, and limit their ability to be full human persons. They long for androgyny and hence embrace reproductive technologies as they can help women escape from the chains of motherhood and childbirth. "As we shall see, radical-libertarian feminists are convinced the fewer women are involved in the reproductive process, the more time and energy they will have to engage in society's productive processes." Beliefs stem from the idea that gender is an aspect that is separated from sex, and that male dominated societies place unyielding gender rules to

control women. Patriarchy is the primary oppressor, not individual men. They believe that deconstruction of the nuclear family in favour of the communal family and contracted motherhood would also break chains of mothering stereotypes.³⁴

3.6.3.2 Radical-Cultural Feminism

This group of feminists sees femaleness as empowering and therefore believe women should embrace the values traditionally associated with femininity such as community, sharing, and body to name a few. Radical-cultural feminists see women's power to create new life as the ultimate source of our power and believe it is in women's best interests to procreate naturally.

Radical-cultural feminists theorize that women's oppression is not caused by female biology and reproductive possibilities but rather by men's jealousy of women's reproductive abilities and their desire to control them through new reproductive technologies. Many earlier Radical feminists believed that reproduction was at the root of women's oppression and that we would be emancipated if we could free ourselves from "the tyranny of reproduction".³⁵ At that point in time, "Technology was viewed as liberating women".³⁶ Things have changed since those days, and today the more popular consensus is that technology is not the liberation Radical feminists thought it would be. Instead of freeing women, our bodies are simply being controlled by men in even greater capacities in the areas of in-vitro fertilization, artificial insemination and other technological methods of reproduction by predominantly male doctors and scientists.³⁷ This however cannot be said for all Radical feminists.

Radical-cultural feminists conclude that the idea of heterosexuality is male domination over females, and it sets the stage for a number of vices such as rape, sexual harassment, abuse, and prostitution. They also believe that men should be educated about women, and shown that their attitudes are detrimental to women. Only after this could men and women band together to change patriarchy. Susan Brownmiller in her book, '*Against Our Will*' has done a threadbare analysis of rape.

3.6.4 Radical Feminism –Its Structure

Radical feminists, possessing no single core doctrine which informed their ideology, were fragmented from the start, a process exacerbated by their preference for small group formation, where each individual woman could find a voice, and where all tasks could be shared out equally.

Daly's *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (1978) argues that men throughout history have sought to oppress women. In this book she moves beyond her previous thoughts on the history of patriarchy to the focus on the actual practices that, in her view, perpetuate patriarchy, which she calls a religion.

Radical feminism's 'invisibility' as an 'organisation' with no identifiable leaders and centres was perceived to be a major strength by its adherents: they did not subscribe to any one tradition in political thought and were therefore at liberty to constantly reinvent themselves.

Much of their energies were focused on discussions around gender as a social construct from which permeated all other forms of material and ideological female oppression. In order to explore the nature of such oppression more thoroughly, radicals concentrated on the experiences of the individual woman in society, often using writing and art forms as a vehicle to communicate their own narratives of pain, and to convey their passionate belief that sexism lies at the heart of women's oppression.

In terms of activity, sex role assigns domestic service and attendance upon infants to the female, the rest of the human achievement, interest and ambition to the male. The limited role allotted to the female tends to arrest her at the level of biological experience.³⁸

3.6.5 The Outcomes Of This Movement

Radical feminists chose both theory and practice and a combination of the personal and political as a means by which women might transform their lifestyles. They were also militant in their approach for social transformation. The belief that radical feminism needs 'to

question every single aspect of our lives that we have previously accepted as normal/given/standard/acceptable and to find new ways of doing things' ³⁹, resulted in a speech for alternative lifestyles removed from the stifling effects of patriarchy.

Communes, businesses, cafes, women's festivals and other women-only concerns were established to allow women to pursue and construct their own identities unfettered by pre-given social institutions such as the family, marriage and domestic labour.

Germaine Greer, one of the most significant feminist voices, has created controversy ever since her book *The Female Eunuch* became an international best-seller in 1970, turning her into a household name and bringing her both adulation and opposition. She is also the author of many other books including, *Sex and Destiny: The Politics of Human Fertility* (1984); *The Change: Women, Ageing and the Menopause* (1991) and *Shakespeare's Wife* (2007). She currently serves as Professor Emeritus of English Literature and Comparative Studies at the University of Warwick.

Germaine Greer has defined her goal as 'women's liberation' as distinct from 'equality with men'. "The title is an indication of the problem," Greer told the *New York Times* in 1971, "Women have somehow been separated from their libido, from their faculty of desire, from their sexuality. They've become suspicious about it. Like beasts, for example. who are castrated in farming in order to serve their master's ulterior motives

Womyn is one of a number of alternative spellings of the word "women". "Womyn" will be used for simplicity, although there are many alternative spellings, including "womon" and "womin". The term has been used in modern times tied to the concept of feminism, as a form of the word without the connotations of a patriarchal society.

Betty Friedan was a leading figure in the "Second Wave" of the U.S. Women's Movement, her 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique* is sometimes credited with sparking the "second wave" of feminism. Friedan co-founded National Organization for Women in 1966 which aimed to bring women "into the mainstream of American society now [in] fully equal partnership with men". In 1970, Friedan organized the nation-wide Women's Strike for Equality on August 26, the 50th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution granting women the right to vote. The national strike was successful beyond expectations in broadening the feminist movement. The New York City march alone attracted over 50,000 women. Friedan joined other leading feminists (including Gloria

Steinem, Shirley Chisholm, Fannie Lou Hamer, Bella Abzug, and Myrlie Evers-Williams) in founding the National Women's Political Caucus in 1971.

All radical feminists agreed upon the need for separatism, but the scale of separatism varied considerably, ranging from political separatism (women-only discussion groups, dealing purely with issues that affect women), to complete separatism (communes, etc.) – or as complete as was economically or practically viable. Separatism is one of the most lambasted features of radical feminist policy.

3.6.6 Critiques Of Radical Feminism

The most common criticism of radical feminism are that its view of patriarchy remains uninterrogated. Critiques feel that many of its arguments lapse into biologism of a reductive kind, and its focus on women's personal experiences makes it politically ineffectual, or at worst prescriptive – if, for example, it is seen to argue that 'lesbian sexuality does serve as a paradigm for female sexuality'. It lacks meta-theory but does not question subordination – domination relationship between women of different classes, castes, race, religions and ethnic backgrounds.

3.6.7 Contribution to the Women's Movement

We cannot deny however, that their contribution to the women's movement has been immense. They have transformed our perceptions of our own bodies, our sexuality, our understanding of the ways in which we have been shaped and conditioned by the patriarchal society we inhabit; they have highlighted the connections between these and pornography, rape, wife-battering, child-abuse, as well as the impact of the technological invasion into the area of reproduction on the role and status of women. And so one of their most important contributions has been to bring the issue of violence against women in the public domain. Rape is shown as a patriarchal way to keep women in a perpetual state of terrorization, humiliation, degradation and subjugation.

Indeed, if the media had really wanted to find feminists who didn't stand by their man during the Clinton scandals, they could have easily interviewed the radicals--some in their 20s--who wrote pungent, sophisticated critiques on the World Wide Web. And if the Women's Studies

community really wants to give students a feminist education, it cannot afford to view "radfem" as an outdated anachronism, especially after reading **Radically Speaking: Feminism Reclaimed**, Diane Bell and Renate Klein's bold, witty, and incisive anthology of contemporary radical activism around the world

Radical feminists have pushed for many women's rights we know today, such as contraceptives, improvements to the Pill, legalization of abortion, and in-vitro fertilization. Radical feminists gained a lot of ground and respect from the LGBT movements, in helping to ease the fear and hate of homosexuality.

Contrary to rumors, "radfem" in the 90's is not dead. Radicals are far less numerous than their liberal counterparts (Kathleen Trigiani but they've made an undeniable impact on American society. They made the world treat rape in Bosnia as a war crime. They persuaded the medical community to admit that it's wrong to do "generic" research on white, middle class males only. They challenged those who opposed gay/lesbian sex to start taking homophobic hate crimes seriously. And these feminists who "brainwashed women" even forced John Gray to admit "women should have great sex", although for male-oriented reasons. Although financially leaner than liberal groups, such radical organizations as Women Against Pornography, Men Against Pornography, International Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Sisterhood Is Global Institute, and the Feminist International Network of Resistance to Reproductive and Genetic Engineering (FINRRAGE) are still alive and kicking.

3.7 POSTMODERN FEMINISM

Postmodern feminism has often been termed French feminism, since most of its significant practitioners have been French. However, today it is a term that is applicable to all those who use a certain methodology – deconstruction – and who share a philosophical perspective that is characterised by certain features that were first articulated by theorists like Derrida, Foucault and others.

3.7.1 Postmodern Thought

Briefly, this perspective may be considered both a manifestation of and a contributor to what may be termed a "legitimation crisis". In other words, postmodernism challenges the grand metanarratives of Western civilisation, the assumptions that were taken for granted. (e.g.

Enlightenment faith in a historically progressive science.) At the same time, postmodernists like Foucault critique and resist the grand institutions of Western civilisation, seeing them as reifying, dominative disciplinary practices. In Foucault's monumental work, *Discipline and Punish* (1977, first published in French, 1975), he posits a homology between liberatory bureaucratic institutions like schools and more rigidly controlled institutions like prisons and armies. Both depend on regimental subordination of a kind that affects every dimension of the individual's life and definitively shapes his or her attitudes and thought. Foucault calls for an insurrection of subjugated knowledges. (The very use of a plural in a noun that traditionally is only used in the singular indicates a polyphonic understanding of "Truth", "Knowledge" and other such ideas that were once considered to represent an objective and absolute reality.) In other words, these metanarratives and grand institutions, now considered forms of tyranny, are to be opposed and destabilised by shifting the epistemological ground for such theories and institutions, so as to allow local and historically contextual truths/practices to emerge and be heard. It is in this endeavour that postmodernism seems to be an ally of feminism.

In short, postmodernism rejects all theory and all generalisations, indiscriminately. The obvious drawback to such an approach is that, taken to its logical extreme, it would result in an extreme nominalism in which only individual particulars have legitimacy. All theories, all generic statements are suspect.

Three postmodern thinkers have been extremely influential in the development of postmodern feminism. The first of these is Michel Foucault, with his questioning of the metanarratives and grand institutions of civilisation. The second, Jacques Derrida, is responsible for giving the world the concept and the tool of deconstruction. Derrida tried to liberate thinking from the assumption of singularity. He questioned the existence of one single truth or essence, of a transcendental signified which exists in and of itself as a giver of meaning. He tried to show how traditional interpretations of texts (anything communicated through language) have suppressed alternative interpretations.

A totally anti-essentialist philosophical perspective, deconstruction critiques everything: ideas, social injustices, structures, language, systems. It views any search for universal definitions as valueless, and challenges traditional boundaries between oppositions as well as

between disciplines. Deconstructionists questions two fundamental assumptions that have underpinned the edifice of Western philosophy for centuries:

- The essential unity of the self through space and time: how is self-identity possible, they ask, given that psychology has enabled us to understand that the workings of the unconscious mind are often inaccessible to us?
- The essential relationship between language and reality that has traditionally been termed truth: both language and reality are seen as variable and shifting, constantly missing each other in a kind of Heraclitean flux. (There is an inherent paradox here, of course, in that the postmoderns are challenging the assumptions and perspectives of tradition in the very language that is created to maintain it. This point will be dealt with in greater detail when we consider the Symbolic Order)

3.7.2 Postmodern Rethinking of Psychological Explanation of Gender

The third significant contribution to postmodern feminism came from a psychologist, Jacques Lacan. Lacan reinterpreted Freud, offering an alternative understanding of the process of development that a child undergoes in the journey from infancy to adulthood and pointing out that the subconscious is structured like a language – the Symbolic Order – which has to be internalised and submitted to if we wish to fit into society. He holds that there are three stages in the development of any child: the pre-Oedipal, the mirror and the Oedipal. During the pre-Oedipal (also called the Imaginary phase, since it is the opposite of the Symbolic Order), the child is totally unaware of ego-boundaries, with an almost symbiotic relationship between child and mother. During the mirror stage (also part of the Imaginary), the child has begun to recognise its own identity: this is the stage at which the child can look into a mirror and realise that the mirror image and the real flesh-and-blood self are different. This brings in a very significant point: like Derrida's concept of *difference*, this implies that part of our understanding not just of external objects, but of our own selves, is a recognition of that in which we differ from the Other. The communication at these two earlier stages is conducted in semiotic language, marked by rhythm, images, repetition, nonsense syllables and other characteristics of speech between mother and child.

At the next stage, i.e. the Oedipal stage, there is a definite estrangement between the child and its mother. The mother is now viewed as the Other and is associated with the silent, undifferentiated womb state which the child now seeks to leave behind. There is incomplete

communication because of the limitations of the “adult” language that the child is now beginning to learn. At this stage, the father represents the Symbolic Order, since the Symbolic Order is the vehicle of patriarchal authority – in fact, there is a very deep and integral relationship between the two. The male child identifies with the father and so enters subjecthood and individuality. Internalizing the value-laden roles of the dominant order, the boy is born again into language and the patriarchal structure that is created by and creates it. The girl child, however, can only experience incomplete identification with the father. Freud, as we saw earlier, had asserted that because of this, there is an incomplete development of the moral sense in women. Lacan, on the other hand, interprets the situation rather differently. Because there can be no complete identification between the girl and her father, women find themselves excluded from and marginalised by the Symbolic Order. Forced unwillingly into a Symbolic Order that disadvantages them, women are repressed, for they cannot internalise the “law of the fathers”: it has to be imposed upon them, superimposed over their natural beings. Femininity is squelched, silenced, straitjacketed by language. This is an immeasurable and profound loss, for the only language we as women have at our disposal is unable to express the way we feel. “*Jouissance*”, a term that communicates something of the sexual experience of women at the moment of orgasm, cannot be known because it cannot be expressed in phallic language. It can only be glimpsed, it exists only at the level of potentiality. If *jouissance* could be thought and spoken, the Symbolic Order would be destroyed.

Three aspects of the Symbolic Order, in particular, are seen as oppressive by postmodern feminists. First, it is extremely logocentric: emphasising the primacy of the spoken Word. Second, its phallocentrism implies a single unitary drive to a single attainable goal. Third, it functions in a dualistic mode in which everything is traced to pairs of binary opposites. Because of these three features, it privileges a certain kind of communication and mode of thought that has been associated with “masculinity” in gender constructs. There is, as we saw earlier, a built-in paradox here, since feminists are struggling to challenge the Symbolic Order, but the only weapon they have – language – was in fact created to maintain the Symbolic Order and in turn, creates and perpetuates it.

Though the Lacanian interpretation identifies and clearly articulates the repression of women in a patriarchal society, where Freud saw women as being inherently less moral and less capable of full personhood because they were women, both Freud and Lacan place women

outside the Symbolic Order, as permanent outsiders because of their biological nature. This is a point that has been challenged by the postmodern feminists, even while they accept much of Lacan's interpretation.

3.7.3 Postmodern Feminists

For the postmodern feminists, the basic premise is that woman, the Other, the feminine, has been left unthematized and silent in the gap that blocks the union between language and reality. They critique the dominant totalising structures of patriarchy like language, systems of knowledge, etc., rejecting labels and generalisations since they carry with them the "phallogocentric drive to stabilise, organise and rationalise our conceptual universe," as Moi puts it in her book *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985: 130-1).

The other point on the postmodern agenda, while using a term suggested by the existentialists, yet points to a major difference between the existentialist feminists and their postmodern sisters. Both speak of "the Other", but while de Beauvoir sees Otherness as an undesirable state, as something that is objectionable, the postmodern feminists celebrate Otherness and valorise the very qualities that were once used as negative epithets.

There are three main figures – Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva – who have been responsible for postmodern feminism as we know it today, though the ideas and the orientation have been taken over and further developed by later feminists.

Helene Cixous is a novelist experimenting with literary style as well as a literary theorist. She applies Derrida's notion of *difference* to writing, and contrasts *littérature*, which she associates with white, European, ruling class and patriarchal structures, with *l'écriture féminine*. She objects to the binary oppositions and the dichotomies that abound in masculine writing and thought. These "dual hierarchized oppositions," as she terms them in "Sorties" (Lodge, 1990:287) find their inspiration in the fundamental opposition between man and woman in which the first is the concept and the second, the deviation. Man is the self, she claims, in the same essay, woman is his Other. Thus woman exists in man's world on his terms. She is either the Other for man, or she is unthought. After man is done thinking about woman, "what is left of her is unthinkable, unthought." (Lodge, 1990: 288)

Cixous challenges women to write themselves out of the world men have constructed by putting into words, the unthinkable, the unthought. According to her, men's writing, in being canonised, has been petrified. It cannot move or change. Women's writing is characterised by marking, scratching, scribbling, jotting, which makes of it a Heraclitean everchanging river. In "The Laugh of the Medusa", she asserts that women's writing holds within itself "the very possibility of change, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural standards" (Warhol and Herndl, 1991: 337)

Cixous also draws analogies between male sexuality and masculine writing, on the one hand, and female sexuality and feminine writing, on the other. The former are both characterised by a pointedness and singularity which is, for Cixous, ultimately limited and boring. The latter are open and multiple, varied and rhythmic, full of pleasures and possibilities. "Her writing can only keep going, without ever inscribing or discerning contours....Her language does not contain, it carries; it does not hold back, it makes possible." (Warhol and Herndl, 1991)

Cixous's own writings are characterised by an optimism and a joy that are lacking in both Derrida (who believed that logocentrism is inevitable) and Lacan (for whom the phallus will always dominate). Cixous, in contrast, believes that we can escape our dichotomous prisons, and that women can lead the revolt that will liberate men and women alike. "Now women return from afar, from always: from 'without', from the heath where witches are kept alive; from beneath, from beyond culture." (Warhol & Herndl, 1991: 335)

The next key figure in this school is Luce Irigaray, who further developed and challenged Lacanian ideals. For her, the feminist enterprise was to empower women to move into the subject position – becoming "subjects and protagonists of their own reality, rather than objects and antagonists in the Father's drama." The quest is to discover the feminine feminine (as opposed to a patriarchal construct of femininity) that has been entrapped in an Imaginary stage full of untapped possibilities; to enable mothers and daughters and wives to become women.

Irigaray suggests three strategies of subversion. First, she invites women to develop and deepen their awareness of language and to discover a language that is neither masculine nor

“neutral” (there is no such stance, it merely gives one the illusion of objectivity). Next, she invites us to an exploration of the multi-faceted terrain of the human body in order that we may find ways of expressing women’s experience, and learn to speak words, think thoughts, that will blow the phallus over and set the feminine feminine free. And finally, she suggest that we mime – and exaggerate – the roles men have imposed upon women. This subtle specular move, mirroring the mimicry of all women, subverts the effects and the authority of phallocentric discourse, simply by making the process conscious through exaggeration.

At the same time, there is a tension between the conviction that we must end the process of labelling and categorising, and the antithetical conviction that we cannot help but engage in this.

The third feminist in this group is Julia Kristeva, who shares an orientation with the other two, but at the same time disagrees with them. Primarily, she disagrees with the collapse of language into biology as being part of the patriarchal straitjacket. The equation of male author and *literatur*, female author and *l’écriture féminin* is rejected, for Kristeva insists that boys can identify with mothers and girls with fathers. Boys can exist and write in a feminine mode and girls in a masculine mode.

Another point of difference between the other two and Kristeva is that the latter adheres radically to the notion that even if the feminine exists, it must not be. “Woman, as such, does not exist,” she proclaims. Concepts like “woman” and “the feminine” are rooted in the essentialist philosophy that deconstruction seeks to deconstruct. At the same time, the fact that woman cannot be on this deeper level – always becoming, never being – allies her with other marginalised “misfit” groups: minorities, Jews, homosexuals, etc. Kristeva was preoccupied with the scapegoating of such groups, which she held was grounded in the “abject” – a sense of irrational disgust traceable to pre-Oedipal experiences of excrement, blood and mucus. As a sense of sex difference develops, this becomes associated with “the feminine”. Society’s fundamental problem is with the abject: the feminine is just one angle of it.

Kristeva wants society to come to terms with the abject. All that has been marginalised, repressed by culture - the discourses of madness, of the maternal, the sexual, the irrational – must release their energies into language. She links social revolution to poetic revolution:

“the historical and political experiences of the twentieth century have demonstrated that one cannot be transformed without the other,” she asserts in *Revolution in Poetic Languages* (1982).

Using Lacan’s framework, Kristeva posits a contrast between the “semiotic” and the “symbolic”. Phallogocentric thought is based on a repression of the semiotic (and by extension, of the sexually unidentified pre-Oedipal maternal body). Maternal space is characterised by a different perception of time. Where symbolic time is historical, linear, pointing to a goal, semiotic time is cyclic, monumental, rhythmic and eternal. Symbolic writing, too is linear, rational, objective, repressed, decent, with normal syntax. Semiotic writing emphasises rhythm, sound, colour, with breaks in syntax and grammar; unrepressed, it has room for the repugnant, the horrific. A truly liberated person is able to acknowledge the interplay of the semiotic and the symbolic, the continual vacillation between chaos and order, and is able to avail of both with equal facility.

3.7.4 Limitations of Postmodern Feminism

The postmodern feminists have been criticised on several grounds. They seem to delight in their own opacity and are often dismissed as ivory-tower academicians, irrelevant to the majority of women who cannot even access their work.

The content of their work seems to border on a kind of biological essentialism, preaching the salvation of women through women’s bodies. However, this may be a matter of inadequate translation, since most postmodern feminists do maintain that there is a difference between woman as a biological entity and woman as a social construct. Further there seems to be a valorization of female and feminine over male and masculine which could result in a fascistic matriarchy replacing the fascistic patriarchy that feminists are challenging.

And finally, the philosophical underpinnings of postmodernism can lead us to chaos. Can we sustain any sort of community in total multiplicity, diversity, profusion. The issue here is a profoundly philosophical, political and personal one. Is difference a threat or an opportunity? Postmodern feminists have thematised the “many”, but the problem of creating community is as much ours as theirs.

In “Women’s Time”, Kristeva herself points out that “The reality of a world that is provisional in meanings, where logic is denigrated as a mode of thought, where all

interpretations are valid and values are upset but not replaced, would be impossible.” (Warhol & Herndl, 1991) Deconstructing our world, our codes, is one thing, but it will not provide us with new conceptual frameworks, new values and priorities, new boundaries. However different in scope and nature to the ones with which we are familiar, these things have to be for a society or a community to survive.

3.7.5 Contribution to the Women’s Movement

However, the basic contribution of postmodern feminism to the women’s movement is undeniable. They have given us an appreciation for the latent possibilities in nothingness, absence, the marginal, the peripheral, the repressed. They have also challenged us to think in non-binary, non-oppositional terms: no word (*logos*) but a myriad voices open to any number of interpretations. And with their celebration of multiplicity they have provided a new conceptual start that includes the ostracised and alienated, the abnormal, the deviant. They have reminded us that even if we cannot be One, we can be Many.

Check your Progress

1. What are the characteristic features of postmodern thought?
2. What, according to postmodern feminism, are the causes of women’s oppression?
3. What suggestions do postmodern feminists offer to help women transform their lives for the better?
4. What are the limitations of postmodern feminism?
5. What has postmodern feminism contributed to the women’s movement?

3.8 BLACK FEMINISM AND WOMANISM

3.8.1 The Beginnings of Black Feminism

All the Women are White, All the Men are Black, but Some of us are Brave. The title of this anthology, edited by Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell Scott and Barbara Smith in 1982, clearly indicates the roots of black feminism. Black women realised that they were the ultimate silenced Other in both black and feminist discourse. While the black movement took little note of the problems specific to black women, feminists too seemed to use racist assumptions

of universality as a foundation on which to build their arguments. 'Black women's existence, experience, and culture and the brutally complex systems of oppression which shape these,' comments Smith, 'are in the "real world" of white and/or male consciousness beneath consideration, invisible, unknown.' (1982:157)

3.9 CYBER FEMINISM

"Cyber feminism emerged at a particular moment in time, 1992, simultaneously at three different points on the globe. In Canada, Nancy Paterson, a celebrated high tech installation artist, penned an article called "Cyber feminism" for Stacy Horn's Echo Gopher server. In Australia, VNS Matrix Josephine Starrs, Julianne Pierce, Francesca da Rimini and Virginia Barratt coined the term to label their radical feminist acts and their blatantly viral agenda: *to insert women, bodily fluids and political consciousness into electronic spaces*.

In a similar year, British cultural theorist Sadie Plant formulated a term to describe her recipe for defining the feminizing influence of technology on Western society and its inhabitants.¹ In 1997 at the first International Cyber feminist conference in Germany, the Old Boys' Network (OBN), the organization that had arisen to be the central hub of Cyber feminist thinking, refused to define the school of thought, but instead drafted the "100 Anti-Theses of Cyber feminism" in order to make it open and free of classification. Their methodology to draw it was multilingual and non-restrictive. The underlying assumption was that there can be no definition because that limits what Cyber feminism means?²

According to Jennifer Brayton- Cyber feminism, takes feminism as its starting point, and turns its focus upon contemporary technologies, exploring the intersections between gender identity, the body, culture and technology.³

Cyber feminism is a way of redefining the conjunctions of identities, genders, bodies and technologies, specifically as they relate to power dynamics. It is a celebration of multiplicity Carolyn G. Guertin, Quantum Feminist Mnemotechnics.⁴

However, they simplify and argue that Cyber feminism refers to feminism(s) applied to and/or performed in cyberspace. An authoritative definition of cyber feminism is difficult to find in written works due to the fact that early cyberfeminists deliberately evaded a rigid

elucidation. At the first International cyberfeminist conference, delegates avoided stating what cyberfeminism was and instead devised the 100 anti-theses and defined what cyberfeminism was not. The idea of defining/not defining it through several overlapping ideas (anti-theses) is appropriate to post-modern feminist ideals of a fluid worldview rather than a rigid binary oppositional view and reflects the diversity of theoretical positions in contemporary feminism denoting cyberfeminism as an International movement. This combination of serious real world action mixed with a good dose of irony and sense of fun is also evident in many cyberfeminist artworks. Carolyn Guertin has perhaps lucidly dubbed cyberfeminism: "a way of redefining the conjunctions of identities, genders, bodies and technologies, specifically as they relate to power dynamics" in an interview for CKLN-FM in Toronto.⁵

Cyberfeminism is a feminist community, philosophy and set of practices concerned with feminism's interactions with and acts in cyberspace.

3.9.1 Origin Of Cyber Feminism

Equity studies have documented the massive historical resistance to women getting the education, credentials, and jobs available to similarly talented men; Rossiter (1982b); Walsh (1977). They have also identified the psychological and social mechanisms through which discrimination is informally maintained even when the formal barriers have been eliminated. Motivation studies have shown why boys and men more often want to excel in science, engineering, and maths than do girls and women.

Some of these studies show how the uses and abuses of biology, the social sciences, and their technologies, reveal the ways science is used in the service of sexist, racist, homophobic and classist and social projects. Oppressive reproductive policies; white men's management of all women's domestic labour; the stigmatization of, discrimination against, and medical "cure" of homosexuals; gender discrimination in workplaces – all these have been justified on the basis of sexist research and maintained through technologies, developed out of this research, that move control of women's life from women to men of the dominant group.⁶

In her 1997 book, *Zeros and Ones: Digital Women and the New Techno-culture*, Sadie Plant takes up what was – at the time – an emerging, though still relatively unexplored, connection between feminism and 'cyber culture', through a cultural historical and poststructuralist

philosophical exploration of the history of technology via the development of the first computing machines in the industrial age of the 19th century. Plant's analysis shows the essential role played by a woman in the development of the difference engine through the example of the mathematician Ada Lovelace. It is by drawing attention to the contributions of Lovelace that Plant shows how women have generally been excluded from the narrative discourses supplying the established history of industrial and post-industrial technologies, and thereby it is women, in this case Lovelace, who provide a condition of possibility for the development of these world-changing inventions.

Donna Haraway is the inspiration and genesis for cyber feminism with her 1991 essay "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" in "Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature" (1991). Cyber feminism was born mainly as a reaction to "the pessimism of the 1980s feminist approaches that stressed the inherently masculine nature of techno-science", ⁷ so it became a counter movement against the 'toys for boys' perception of new Internet technologies. As cyber feminist artist Faith Wilding argued "If feminism is to be adequate to its cyber potential then it must mutate to keep up with the shifting complexities of social realities and life conditions as they are changed by the profound impact communications technologies and techno science have on all our lives". ⁸

Contemporary science fiction is full of cyborgs – creatures simultaneously animal and machine, who populate worlds ambiguously natural and crafted. Modern medicine is also full of cyborgs, of couplings between organism and machine, each conceived as coded devices. ⁹

Neelam Kumar outlines in "*Gender and Stratification in Science: An Empirical Study in the Indian Setting*" how women in India have been marginalized, excluded or even barred

entry to many science institutions in the 19th century, and how issues such as neo- liberal policies of globalization, privatization of research, reduced Government aid and the increased cost of education in the 20th century have only worsened this exclusion. One of the feminist paradoxes - one that challenges many of its optimistic histories - is how patriarchy remains persistent over time. In this context Kumar seeks to show women in 19th and 20th century India as historical protagonists through their involvement and active participation in science and scientific research. There exists a gender gap in institutions of science in India, which has deepened even after independence

Cyber feminism and its usage

RAWA, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, was established in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1977 as an independent political/social organization of Afghan women fighting for human rights and for social justice in Afghanistan. It projected Afghani women's voices to the outside world during its many political crises', particularly during the years when the Taliban held sway in this troubled country.¹⁰

3.9.2 Definition of The 100 Anti-Theses

The 100 anti-theses range from the serious and instructional, for example "Cyberfeminism is not just using words with no knowledge of numbers" (i.e. cyberfeminism requires active engagement with technology in addition to theory), to the whimsical, for example "Cyberfeminismo es no una banana". The 100 Anti-theses is written primarily in English but includes several other languages in line with the 100th anti-theses "cyberfeminism has not only one language" denoting cyber feminism as an international movement. The 'definitions' exist only in opposition. The underlying assumption is that there can be no definition because that only limits what cyberfeminism is. These definitions are given only in opposition eg. Cyberfeminism is "not a structure," but is "not without connectivity," and being neither "a lack," "a wound" or "a trauma," it is also "not an empty space." This combination of serious real world action mixed with a good dose of irony and sense of fun is also evident in many cyberfeminist artworks. The idea of defining/not defining it through several overlapping ideas (anti-theses) is appropriate to post-modern feminist ideals of a fluid worldview rather than a rigid binary oppositional view and reflects the diversity of theoretical positions in contemporary feminism.¹¹

3.9.3 Cyber Art and Its Relation to Cyber Feminism

The practice of cyber feminist art has a deep connection with cyber feminist theory. The 100 anti-theses makes it clear that cyber feminism is not just about theory, but that it requires

participation too. As one member of the cyber feminist collective of the Old Boys Network writes, cyber feminism is “linked to aesthetic and ironic strategies as intrinsic tools within the growing importance of design and aesthetics in the new world order of flowing pancapitalism”. Cyber feminism also has strong connections with the DIY feminism movement, as noted in the seminal text *DIY Feminism*, a grass roots movement that encourages active participation, especially as a solo practitioner or a small collective.

Around the late nineties several cyber feminist artists and theorists gained recognition for their works, including the VNS Matrix and their *Cyber feminist Manifesto*¹² for the 21st century, and Faith Wilding and Critical Art Ensemble. Some of the better known examples of cyber feminist work include Olia Lialina’s *My Boyfriend Came Back From the War*, a browser based art work that plays with the conventions of HTML; Linda Dement’s *Cyberflesh Girlmonster* a hypertext work that incorporates images of women’s body parts and remixes them to create new monstrous yet beautiful shapes; and Shu Lea Cheang with the 1998 work *Brandon* which was the first Internet based artwork to be commissioned and collected by the Guggenheim.

3.9.4 Cyber Feminism In - Practical Manifestation

Women have appropriated this space and used it with great creativity and innovation for a variety of purposes: creating solidarity, networking, building pressure groups, information sharing, giving a higher profile to women’s contributions in the various fields. Often it has given voice to women’s concerns and in some instances acted as the medium through which women have challenged tyranny, misogyny, political crisis etc. and given voice to their concerns. In UK, Discover! clubs have been devised as learning spaces dedicated to changing dominant cultural attitudes and to widening access and recruitment of Women into STEM Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths; subject and occupational fields traditionally dominated by men¹³. They are a learning tool devised to capture the imagination and interest of young school aged girls, close to selecting their General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) first choices. They provide a learning zone where dominant gendered constructions of curriculum and occupation that discourage young women from pursuing STEM are potentially disassembled.

Shireen Ebadi Nobel Prize in Peace 2003 known for her work for the rights of women and children used the net as a means for speaking against the political establishment. Tatania

Mamonova was the first feminist dissident exiled from the Soviet Union in 1980 for re-igniting the Russian women's movement; initiating her organization, then called Woman and Russia, the first NGO promoting the human rights of women from the Soviet Union and connecting Russian speaking women's voices and needs with the international community; and editing and publishing the samizdat Woman and Russia Almanac, now called Woman and Earth Almanac, an art and literary journal containing the first collection of Soviet feminist writings, which has now been published in 11 languages and in over 22 countries.

In India too the cyber world has opened up new spaces for those women who have been marginalised from the outside world, either because of economic compulsions or traditional environments. NGOs working with women's issues such as Women Work & Health Initiative, India, Sampark and Jagori have tried to build cyber communities amongst the women, as a first step to providing knowledge access and thus empowerment.

3.9.5 Cyber Feminism Challenges And The Future

The goals of cyber feminist are many as there is no one 'feminism but rather many feminisms'. 'Cyber feminists face myriad challenges, such as: how to work for a feminist

The National Women's Museum

The National Women's History Museum researches, collects and exhibits the contributions of women to the social, cultural, economic and political life of our nation in a context of world history. The museum will use innovative and engaging means including permanent and online exhibits, educational programs, and outreach efforts to communicate the breadth of women's experiences and accomplishments to the widest possible audience. The sharing of this knowledge will illuminate and encourage women and men, people of all classes, races and cultures to move into the future with respect, equal confidence, greater partnership, and opportunity. The NWHM Board is bound together by the aspiration to honour the women who came before us and to ensure that their many traditional and non-traditional roles are systematically explored and acknowledged and brought into the mainstream culture.¹⁴

political and cultural environment on the Net? What are various areas of feminist research and net activity that are already beginning to emerge as cyber feminist practice? Faith Wilding gives the

example of The 1st Cyber feminist International during Documenta X in Kassel, which can be the prototype cell of feminist Net organis(m)ation . She describes how a varying and diverse group of more than thirty women-- worked and lived together during the CI .The areas that were considered important for more research and further work included Creating a list of cyberfeminist artists, theorists and speakers to be sent to media festivals, presenting institutions, museums, and other public venues. Creating and publishing cyberfeminist theory, net criticism, position papers, bibliographies, data bases, image banks. Creating a feminist search engine which could link cyberfeminist websites; feminist lists, country by country reports of netactivity and cyberorganization for women. Creating coalitions with female technologists, programmers, scientists and hackers, to link feminist Net theory, content and practice with technological research and invention. Cyberfeminist education projects (for both men and women) in technology, programming, and software and hardware design, which address traditional gender constructions and biases built into technology. A translational cyber feminist action alert site. Creating new avatars, databodies, new self (ves) representations which disrupt and recode the gender biases usual in current commercially available ones. Cyberfeminist meetings at all media festivals, activist conferences, exhibitions, and on other occasions whenever possible.

Despite the many contributions made by women to the invention and development of computing technology, the Internet, which has its origins as a system to serve war technologies, is today a part of masculine institutions. While the net poses great promise and possibilities, feminists recognize that these can be realised only by recognising the thought processes that guided its origin and the political conditions. This being so, it can be seen as a radical act to insert the word feminism into cyber space, to interrupt the flow of masculine codes by boldly declaring the intention to bastardize, hybridize, provoke, and infect the male order of things by politicizing the environment of the Net. Cyberfeminism will work to bring in the feminist view point by dismantling the patriarchal conditions which produce the codes, languages, images, and structures that define the net.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

- Q.1. What is cyberfeminism?
- Q.2. What is the meaning of 100 anti-theses?
- Q.3. What is the origin of cyberfeminism?
- Q.4. What structures inform cyberfeminism?

UNIT 4: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER

Structure

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Objectives

4.3 Introducing the Topic

4.4 What is Social Construction?

4.5 Social Construction and Gender

4.6 Construction of a Girl Child

4.7 Sex Segregation

4.8 Division of Labour and the Sphere of Work

4.9 Summing Up

4.10 Glossary

4.11 Answer to Check Your Progress Exercises

4.12 Questions for Reflections and Practice

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As the title of the unit goes, our main aim is to develop familiarity with the meaning, various dimensions of social construction of gender for women in development through case studies and citing examples. Sociologically, the social construction of gender speaks about the relationship of gender with various institutions like caste, kinship, marriage and so on. From the perspective of gender and development, the process of gender construction can be explained in relation to the aspects of women's life like work, decision-making, honour killing, and the notion of autonomy and freedom. The gender construction operates both at the macro and micro level and very much embedded in the institutional arrangements of the society. In this course, the gender construction will be explained from both sociological and development perspectives to understand the complex phenomenon of women's discrimination and inequality face by women on the account of sex.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit you should be able to

- Explain the processes of gender construction in relation to the culture and ordering of the society.
- Examine the implications of gender construction in relation to development indicators like sex segregation, division of labour, decision-making, and socialization.
- Examine the relationship between gender and the structural arrangements of the society.
- Analyse the necessary features of the universal position of gender construction

4.3 INTRODUCING THE TOPIC

The unit discusses the meaning of social construction of gender. It starts with explaining the meaning of social construction and understanding gender in relation to culture,

sex segregation, work – force participation, decision-making, honour killing , and notion of autonomy and freedom. To begin with, the section on the gender construction focuses broadly on the culture and various structures like work, sex segregation and division of labour, which are perpetuating the existing gender divisions on the basis of sex difference. Similarly, in the section on work and the sexual division of labour, we discuss gender as an analytical tool to understand the inequalities those are reflected in ways of hierarchization of tasks, unequal distribution of resources, invisibility of women's work in agriculture and informal economy, and the sex segregation in sphere of work within the household.

4.4 WHAT IS SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION?

It is very often said that there is no such thing as a social reality and what are 'social constructions'. Similarly in reality there is nothing intrinsically 'good' or 'bad', these are but social constructions. In other words, morality is the acquired vision of a society. How is the vision of a society or its social construction shaped? Is it shaped automatically? Is it culture specific? Let us examine this process of social construction. Everyday we observe various objects, experience a lot of events and related with various social interactions. These entire phenomenon those are experienced individually help to develop an image of the society or the world. Indeed we filter everything that happens to us everyday through the lens or screen of our understanding of our world. This everyday sense of the world or thing forms the basis of social reality or construction of social reality (IGNOU material p: 6).

Social construction is a social process in which both individual and other social processes are intrinsically related. Every construction or image of the world is influenced by the individual's experience of the society and his/her interaction with various social

processes. Therefore, many often it is argued that the social construction itself carries subjective biases as it is shaped by individual experience. Social construction is also influenced and dominated by the interests of a particular group or class of people. For instance, in Pakistan power and education rest with a few elite who don't take interest in the development of the human resources of the majority. In this sense, the culture, norms, ideologies, and values of the dominant group are used to justify and sustain a particular form of social construction. Hence social constructions through which we understand the everyday life try to classify people on the basis of caste, class, religion, community, kinship, gender and so on. The classification of people is the product of social construction and also forms an integral part of the social processes. Social processes such as primary socialization and the presence of social institutions help to produce an accepted kind of social construction. Hence, gender is the product of such social construction.

Check Your Progress Exercise: 1

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. What is social construction?

4.5 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION AND GENDER

Sex and Gender

Understanding of the social construction of gender starts with explaining the two concepts, i.e., gender and sex. Often these two terms have been used interchangeably; however, they bear different meanings as concepts. Gender refers to differences, hierarchies, rankings which exist between two sexes. Gender explains cultural constructions of various roles that are played by women and men in the society. Further, gender analyses the aspect of shaping women's behaviour according to the normative order of the society. Gender as a conceptual tool is used to analyse the structural relationships of inequality that exist between women and men, as it is reflected in various aspects of life such as household, labour market, education and political institutions. Sex on the other hand, refers to the biological differences between female and male which are the same across time and place. Gender can therefore be defined as a notion that offers a set of frameworks within which the social and ideological construction and representation of differences between the sexes are explained (IGNOU p: 7). For instance, gender explains the structured relations between women and men within the society. In Singapore, housework continues to be understood as a gender-based issue, as it is intrinsically linked to women's role and activities. The gender-specificity of domestic work remains central to Singapore's social life and its state policy making (Phua and Yeoh 2008). Therefore, women's association with housework and men's proximity with public work are the products of socio-cultural contexts; further, this notion of separation/difference brings discrimination between two-sexed persons. Social expectations of women as natural mothers,

wives, daughters, and homemakers are not only exist at the ideological level, but also operate at the material environment. Some feminist's geographers have argued that space and gender are socially constructed and women's body, their activities, and socialization process are limited to certain physical territory and structure. Sex on the other hand connects the individual with her/his sex categorization and eventually restricts the individual with the social notion of femininity and masculinity.

Cultural Construction of Gender

Gender is being the complex phenomena is socially constructed and culturally determined. Culture describes as a web of relationships that expresses the meaning, pattern of living, and values of the institutions. Culture covers almost every aspects of life ranging from organization of production, structure of family and institutions, ideologies and normative patterns of the society and forms of interactions or relations. Cultural construction of gender talks about the construction of masculinity and femininity in the context of socialization, i.e., the individual acquires the gendered bodies of being feminine or masculine in the course of social development. The construction of femininity and masculinity plays an important role in shaping the institutions of family, economic organisation, political, and religious. The understanding of gender in relation to culture reflects the structure of stratification, existing power relations between women and men, and the process of acquiring the accepted roles and behaviour. Gender construction in relation to culture can be explained through the following points;

- **Gender Construction support the system of dominance:** The gender categories are never neutral nor they are equal. This construction of gender perpetuates the system of

dominance across the society. Gender as a system of unequal relations provides a range of choices to women and men in spheres of work, production process, access to resources and power, accepting the specific gender roles, and sex segregation in the work and labour market.

- **Gender construction vis-a-vis Individual Expression of Gender:** Feminist psycho-analysis assess that gender can not be seen as exclusively cultural, linguistic, and political constructions, therefore, we need to make distinction between prescriptive construction of gender and individual reflections of these constructions. Prescriptive construction of gender are those images which are socially, historically, culturally determined. For example, the socialization of a girl child like a housewife by internalizing some of the socially accepted behaviour ranging from dress code and good conduct to care and nurture. In addition to the socio-cultural construction of gender behaviour according to the sex identity there is individual's notion of expressing gender behaviour. Individual inflections are made by the interaction of an individual psyche with socio-political or cultural or historical norms. For example, if a boy/girl undergoes sex transformation, there are couple of questions such as how do societies respond to variations in individual's expression of gender identity, to what extent societies internalize various gender roles and behaviours. This point brings us the discussion of doing gender as the concept within the social construction of gender. Doing gender involves a complex set of socially governed perceptual, interactional and micro-political activities that cast particular action as expression of masculine or feminine nature (West and Zimmerman 1991). Gender is an achieved action that is located in a particular social situation. Therefore, it is an observed feature of social situation, i.e., gender outcome of and produced social arrangements. For example, the

newborn only carries the sex identity that is imposed upon the individual by the society. Eventually, through continuous interaction with the parents or primary caretakers, the infant accomplishes gender identity. Often, the unequal treatment of parents towards boys' vis-à-vis girls creates gender difference and turned into gender discrimination. Doing gender is process that legitimizes the fundamental division of the society.

Box: 1 The case of Agnes: A transsexual boy

West and Zimmerman discuss the three analytical categories such as sex, sex category, and gender to understand the notion of doing gender. Garfinkel's case study of Agnes, a transsexual boy would be an apt example for understanding gender construction. Agnes adopted a female identity at the age of seventeen and underwent sex reassignment surgery some years later to understand the gender construction. She possessed male genital and required to project herself as a woman. She was obliged to learn the feminine features and analysing the conception of feminity within the socially structured situation. She did not possess the socially agreed of the biological category to be classified herself as the female sex. More central to this argument is Kessler and McKenna's position, i.e., Biological criteria (sex) is hidden from the public perception and individual continues to behave according to the socially agreed criteria of male or female. Male or female are the products of gender attribution process and form an important part of gender accomplishment/activities. For example, if a child sees a picture of a person with suit and tie, immediately the child connects the picture

with the image of a man. The sex category is socially situated and acquired by the individual through everyday interaction. People perceive the activity of an individual and deduce the category of sex. In this context, gender is understood to be the product of culture and society.

The above-mentioned example shows that the categories of masculinity and femininity are socially constructed and the gender identity can only be established in conformation with the biological identity. Femininity and masculinity is nothing but accepting and showing conformity with socially accepted gender behaviours and roles. Gender identity is subjective in nature, therefore, these categories do not stay static in the history and culture of the society.

- **Socialization**

Socialization is the process by which the child transforms into the social being by adhering social values, norms, and socially desired behaviour. Many feminists see socialization process to be a self-perpetuating system and have shown concern in the aspect of sex role socialization. Sex role socialization is a means to women's oppression at the larger context. Stanley and Wise argue that sex role is often understood as gender role, i.e., expressing attributes of femininity or masculinity. The moment you perceive socialization to be a system, we understand the process as a system of patriarchy, which only perpetuate the expected values and norms. Family as an institution helps in internalizing two concepts such as socialization and gender

roles. Mother or primary caretaker responds differently to the child on the basis of the sex categorization. The differential attitude includes touching, caring, and ideas about autonomy of boys and absence of autonomy of girls. The more parents display differential behaviour like exposing children to specific types of toys, more the child will express gender stereotypes. Parents are seen as channels through which gender stereotypes are communicated to the children and later the children internalize the multiple stereotypes (Stanley and Sue Wise).

Check Your Progress Exercise: 2

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

2. What is cultural construction of gender?

4.6 CONSTRUCTION OF A GIRL CHILD

The construction of a girl child discusses the processes of growing a girl into a female in the patrilineal and patriarchal societies like India. It will reflect on the issue of constraints that a girl faces in the process of socializing herself as a female,

adhering to differential values attached with the male vis-à-vis female child, how does she acquire appropriate roles to her gender identity, and what are the mechanisms which help her in internalizing cultural values and visualizing the image of her future.

Dube (2000) refers the process of socialization as female as how women are produced as gendered subjects. She further discusses the process to create gendered subjects through the medium of language, rituals, ceremonies and practices. The construction of a gender subject, i.e., carrying the identity of femininity or masculinity is both socially and culturally produced. For example, in every culture the notion of gender difference is thought to be rooted in biology or preordained nature. In Indian Hindu families, the notion of gender difference begins with the sphere of reproduction – both mother and father share different role in relation to procreation. It is culturally considered that father is the provider of seeds and mother provides the platform to receive the seeds and nurture it further. These role differences are culturally imagined, and get reflected in other social institutions like family, marriage, and kinship. The social construction of gender questions the preconceived idea to assign unequal roles to male and female, and to analyse how other gender roles are learnt within the complex of relationships and institutions. It is evident that gender identity is created through learning gender roles and therefore, it becomes essential to understand the process of gender construction in the wider context of family and kinship structure. Family and kinship are central to the understanding of socialization. In the process of socialization, family plays two major roles such as 1. rules of recruitment of members in the family and 2. configuration of roles on the basis of gender and age divisions and providing training in acquisition of future roles. These roles of family have become agencies in imparting the characters of growing up female in Indian society.

Girl child and the Natal Home

The construction of femininity is a continuous and complex process and is conveyed through language, proverbs, and rituals. The context of natal home for both married and unmarried daughters is widely used in form of proverbs in the process of socialization. The desire for a boy child is explicit in day today conversation in forms of saying. For instance, parents who are having only daughters often commented as ‘future is black as they are not having any support’ (Dube 2000: 90). Similarly, in regions like Maharastra, girls are honoured with accomplishments as girls are always associated with home and the household works. In the process of acquiring femininity, the parental home is always refereed to be temporary shelter, therefore, girls grow up with the notion of having their own house in future. Girls grow up with the desire to have own house evaluate and instruct their lives to learning socially appropriate behaviors. Proverbs and rituals give the realization of this inevitable fact of transferring the girl’s membership from her natal home to the home of the husband. Dube in her book documented some of the proverbs spoken in various parts of India like in Orissa, there is a saying that “equates daughter with ghee”. The meaning of the proverb is both the things are valuable, however both start to stink if not disposed of on time. Similarly, there are festivals like Durga puja and Gauri puja which reiterates the idea of ‘home coming’ in the context of goddess. These festivals are full of rituals which convey the message to young girls of their reality to leave mother’s home and will be invited to the natal home in these festivals. In this context, the girls socialization takes place through rituals, proverbs and festivities that emphasis the need to learn adequate feminine behaviour of obedience, submissiveness,

accommodative and so on. The construction of a girl child begins with the feeling of getting temporary membership at the parental place, and the inevitability of learning some of ideal feminine characters.

The process of socialization of girl child involves the inherent steps of construction of femininity at the pre-pubertal and post-pubertal phases. In the pre-pubertal phase there is differential value attached to the son vis-à-vis daughters. Sons are preferred for continuation of descent and daughters are valued to maintaining the sense of pre-pubertal purity in the society. The importance of pre-pubertal purity amongst the girls has given special recognition in rituals of various region of India like Maharastra, West-Bengal, Karnataka and North-India. In these regions, a little girl is associated with different customs like marriage, name giving ceremony, observing seclusion during menstruation and celebrating Navaratra by feeding pre-pubertal girls. These celebrations implicitly emphasis the auspiciousness and purity of the girl child or virgin woman.

Box 2: Case Analysis

In Navaratri, the customs of worshipping and feeding virgin girls are widely practice across India. On the eightieth day of the festival, pre-pubertal girls are invited for worship and food. The girls represent Mother Goddess and they were worshiped and offered food along with other gifts as part of the ritual. Two points can be inferred from this analysis, 1. In this festival the forms assigned to the girls are essentially feminine in nature, 2. The consciousness of femininity is constructed through their dressing style and from the gifts offered to them, and 3. a sharp distinction can be

made between the phases of pre-puberty and post-puberty, and consequently, there is a sense of purity and sacredness associated with the pre-pubertal phase of women's life. The construction of femininity is symbolized in these rituals and the sense of feminine features is systematically built into the minds of the girl child.

The onset of puberty is the phase, which is marked by changes and transformation in women's life. This phase is associated with several pubertal rituals, dietary prescriptions and seclusion of girls for a certain days and these are practiced widely across India in various forms. These pubertal rituals are expressing the significance of sexuality and motherhood for a girl child and the notion of controlled sexuality in this phase of women's vulnerability and adulthood. Marriage and motherhood as two goals are highly valued for the girls in this age and often made obvious to them through allocating specific roles to young girls, observance of complete seclusion and imposing food restrictions during menstruation and so on. The construction of a girl in Hindu family is indicative of the fact of learning feminine behaviour and socialize by adopting the structured role of an imaginary wife and mother.

4.7 SEX SEGREGATION

There is a linear relationship between economic structure and sex segregation.

The notion of sex segregation has become apparent with the advancement of industrialization and capitalist economy. Sex segregation is mostly observed and studied within occupation and economic structure, which reflects women's entering

into a particular kind of profession in the regime of any economic reform. Purdah or the practice of female seclusion is widely followed across countries and communities and it prescribes obvious gender segregation in rural tasks and activities. In

Bangladesh, the practice of female seclusion operated according to the inside/outside divide (Kabeer 1990). The author says that the poor women in Bangladesh are

subjected to the twofold process of stereotyping. On the one hand, poor women are perceived to be passive and vulnerable, and on the other hand, they regarded as the target groups of policy makers and development practitioners. These images of women have been reinenforced through cultural constructions like women have

always in need of male protection for their survival. The social norms and practices have portrayed women to be passive and dependant in the larger context of society.

For example, the notion of inside/outside divide has curtailed women's freedom to move beyond the premises of household. Therefore, they perform activities within the sphere of domesticity. In the agricultural process, the activities located near to the homestead by performed and governed by women exclusively. Women's engagement with specific nature of activities are shaped by the culture and society at large.

In the labour market, there is a wide division between men and women in terms of differential wage, access to MGNREGS job card, nature of work and the amount of work. Traditionally, women have perceived to be dependent as far as employment is concerned. For instance, within the family women have access to resources through the male counter part, similarly women in the labour market go through the male channels in accessing wage and other job opportunities. The employment figures of Census 1991 shows severe male-female disparities in accessing the available opportunities. In the labour market, predominant number of

women are non-workers and out of 89.77 of women workforce, substantial percentage of women belong to marginal workers. Further, majority of women are concentrated in the unorganized sector as compared to male workforce. The ratio of female to male workers in the unorganized sectors seems unfavorable to women. In the unorganized sector, 95.79 per cent of females concentrated as compared to 89.77 per cent of male workers. In the organized sector, there is larger concentration of women in the public sector as compared to the private sector. There is segregation on the basis of gender within the labour market and this division has led to rising socio-economic insecurities for women working in unorganized and private sectors (Seth 2001). The author indicated that the states having low female status are into low paid and hazardous employment. The proportion of women in the central government services is extremely low as compared to men. Having an understanding of women's employment in all sectors of labour market, it can be argued that women are mostly concentrated in low paid jobs and they are low in status hierarchies. Similarly, women's participation in the field of political and technical employments is very low. In the agricultural sector, women's have substantial contribution; however they are mostly employed as marginal workers. With the agriculture, there is sex segregation with regard to nature of work assigned to women and men. In most of the states in India, men are engaged in ploughing and irrigation related activities and women have exclusively engaged in works like sowing, nurturing of plants, and harvesting. It is seen that men are mostly associated with marketing operations of the agricultural produce, and the control of resource and surplus is considered to be the domain of man. Therefore, the benefits of the new government scheme and the new improvised farming practices do not percolate down to women. Women's having less accessibility to monetary resources and new schemes are led them to resort to low

wages and deprived of any labour benefits. The structure of patriarchy of private domain gets reflected in the structures of public domain. The social construction of gender reveals the discrimination and inequality existing in the domain of family, work and employment.

Over the past 20 years, globalization has led to an export oriented economy in countries like India, which in turn created number of manufacturing jobs and brought majority of women into the paid workforce. Women engaged in manufacturing jobs to some extent have increased their quality of life and have received higher authority by earning money. However, in developing countries like India, the sex segregation within the labour market has remained to be the sole determinant in the process of women's decision making and wage negotiation. In the developing countries, women are less educated compared to the men, therefore, the women have always gone for temporary, part-time, and risk prone jobs without having labour and health benefits. Within the unorganized sector, women are resorting to the jobs which are low in hierarchy as compared to the male. For instance, in Bangladesh and Cambodia, 85 percent and 90 percent of factory jobs are hold by the women, particularly in the garment industry. In Colombia and Zimbabwe, 65 percent and 87 percent of jobs in the cut flower industry are hold by women, respectively. In the fruit industry of South Africa, women comprise 69 percent of temporary and seasonal workers. The data shows that women substantially concentrated in the unorganized workforce, however, they have no formal contract as employees and exposed to poor safety conditions and other vulnerabilities. Women as the workforce are primary important to global economy and at the same time devoid of health and labour protection.

Check Your Progress Exercise: 3

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

3. How does sex segregation help to understand gender construction?

4.8 DIVISION OF LABOUR AND THE SPHERE OF WORK

Gender relations are situated within the sexual division of labour and often create gender conflict. African agriculture is often perceived to be the female system of farming. African women carry out agricultural work independent of their household and family. Within the agriculture, the sphere of work is divided along the gender lines. Women and men's work was located within the sexual division of labour that is the product of existing domestic and kinship arrangements. In Africa, the separation of the sphere of work between women and men implies the social exchange of labour between women and men. However, women's sphere of work is surrounded by a complex set of claims and obligations. As Whitehead argued, two different kinds of social environment govern the women's economic activity in

Africa. In women's sphere of work, they have access to resources like land and the produce was shared with her children, husband, and other family members. On the contrary, women have the obligation to work for their husband and other family members, but there is no direct return for the women's labour. Here, women's sphere of work is independent of the domesticity, at the same time women's labour is constructed within the social climate of rights and obligations. Women's work in the husband's field is conceptualised under her general rights to welfare and maintenance as the household member. In the African female system of farming, women have the autonomy in contributing their labour, however, with other activities related to production like disposal of food crops and access to land are embedded in the social environment and structural arrangements.

Boserup's model on women's role in economic development was widely acknowledged within the field of women's work. The model explicitly discussed the notion of sexual division of labour in the context of modernisation. To begin with, the author argued for a female system of farming and the relegation of women's agricultural work with the wake of modernisation. African agriculture exhibited a dualism based on gender, i.e., the cash crop sector is managed by the men folk and the food crop sector is organised through women's labour and their traditional methods of farming. This model emphasized the feminine nature of subsistence farming and women's inability to participate in the modern farming sector. Though this model had shown a clear cut sexual division of labour that exists in the agricultural sector, at the same time was criticized on the ground that it completely neglected women's contribution in modern food production. Whitehead argues, to meet the increasing

cash needs of the African households; women have significantly contributed in the family labour for cash cropping or increased trading. Women's contribution towards cash crop sector is also conceptualised according to the household arrangements. For instance, in Africa the assumption is that the well being of women is depended on the well being of the household. Therefore, in spite of women having an independent domain of work, their activities, claims, and obligations are tied with the structural arrangements.

Work is often understood to be physical and mental labour. According to Hochschild coined the term 'emotional labour' that reflects a particular kind of work associated with care and nurture. The emotional labour is associated with female occupation both at the domain of family and work sphere. Within family, women's unpaid work is described as labour of love.

Box 3: Labour of Love

Have you many children? The doctor asked.

God has not been kind to me. Of fifteen born, only nine live.

Does your wife work.

No, she stays at home.

I see, how does she spend her day? Doctor asked.

Well, she gets up at four in the morning, fetches water, and wood, makes the fire and

cooks breakfast. Then she goes to the river and washes clothes. After that she goes to town to get corn ground and buys what we need in the market. Then she cooks the midday meal. She brings the meal to the field.

She takes care of the hens and pigs, and of course she looks after the children. Then she prepares supper so it is ready when I come home (Mitter 2000).

The above-mentioned describes the nature of labour associated with females and considered to be feminine in nature. Even in the context of world economy, women continue to work in low-paid wages and bear the image of casual or temporary labourers. The image of peripheral workers or casual workers that women bear reflect the notion of job insecurity and women's inaccessibility to any other forms benefits and career progression. Within the work sphere, women have limited freedom and autonomy.

4.9 SUMMING UP

The unit discusses the concept of gender while making the distinction between biological sex and social gender. The unit contributes the understanding of gender both as social and cultural constructions. Gender as a social division has impacted women and men differentially in the contexts of socialization, work, sex segregation, and division of labour.

4.10 GLOSSARY

Kinship

Honour Killing

4.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1:

1. Social construction is a social process in which both individual and other social processes are intrinsically related. Every construction or image of the world is influenced by the individual's experience of the society and his/her interaction with various social processes. Therefore, many often it is argued that the social construction itself carries subjective biases as it is shaped by individual experience. Social construction is also influenced and dominated by the interests of a particular group or class of people.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2:

1. Gender is being the complex phenomena is socially constructed and culturally determined. Culture describes as a web of relationships that expresses the meaning, pattern of living, and values of the institutions. Culture covers almost every aspects of life ranging from organization of production, structure of family and institutions, ideologies and normative patterns of the society and forms of interactions or relations. Cultural construction of gender talks about the construction of masculinity and femininity in the context of socialization.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3:

1. There is a linear relationship between economic structure and sex segregation. The notion of sex segregation has become apparent with the advancement of industrialization and capitalist economy. Sex segregation is mostly observed and studied within occupation and economic structure, which reflects women's entering into a particular kind of profession in the regime of any economic reform. Purdah or the practice of female seclusion is widely followed across countries and communities and it prescribes obvious gender segregation in rural tasks and activities.

4.12 QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND PRACTICE

1. Is gender socially constructed? Substantiate your arguments with suitable examples.
2. Explain, gender is a product of society and culture.
3. How do aspects like division of labour and sex segregation explain the notion of femininity and masculinity?