
UNIT 9 DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

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9.1 INTRODUCTION

Development discourse refers to the process of articulating knowledge and power through which particular concepts, theories, and practices for social change are created and reproduced (Escobar 1995; 1999; 2000; Crush 1996). Historically, the approach to development in terms of discourse has evolved out of debates on '! modernisation and Marxist dependency theory rooted in social evolutionism ('! Dependency Theories). Departing from the linear models of social progress, this approach to development seeks to articulate the processes and meanings of more nuanced social control and challenges. With Decolonisation of the globe around mid 20th century, New Nation States emerged in Asia, West Asia, Latin America and almost all of Africa having become the arbiter of their destiny. Many of these newly independent countries, now generally known as developing countries, embarked on development path with the main objective of catching up for the 'Lost -Time' as colonies or otherwise.

Aims and Objectives

This Unit would enable you to understand

- The holistic view of development;
- Difference between growth and development, its measurement and dimensions;
- The main theories of development and
- Gandhi's idea of development.

9.2 GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Historically, economic development is a concept which dates earlier than economic growth. In literature, the classical theory of economic development beginning Adam Smith, Marxian Theory of economic development and in the beginning of the 20th century, Schumpeter's Theory of economic development are known as 'Grand Theories of Development'. Much of development literature till the Keynesian revolution revolves around the ideas contained in these theories. It was the impact of new approach of Keynesian economics which led to theories of economic growth beginning with the seminal work of Harrod and Domar. From the beginning, economic growth was perceived as quantitative in nature, concerned with maintenance of full-employment of labour and of capital and other resources along with the quest for equilibrium growth. The period 1940-1970 is characterised by emergence of various growth models with growing degree of sophistication, but generally addressing the problems of developed economies. The distinguishing features of such economies were seen as larger scope of free enterprise, less government regulations, historically high standard of living, easier generation and assimilation of technical knowhow and relatively more efficiently working markets. Economists had started making distinction between economic growth and economic development.

In general, economic development became the problem of the developing economies. These are labour abundant with fractured markets, low standard of living, low rates of saving and investments and characterised by low productivity of labour and capital. Most of them have been predominantly primary producing economies. Economists realised that in such economies mere infusion of capital and technology will not go very far. While this may be a startup for development, it will not be enough to sustain the process of economic development. Myrdal came up with the 'Asian Drama' to emphasise that developing economies generally lack social, political and economic institutions which make economic development a sustainable process over a period of time. Though economic development may be seen as economic growth plus change, the strengthening of institutional mechanism makes it better organisation of economic activities across the sector of the economy. For these reasons, economic development is qualitative in nature. While economic growth may be linear and incremental in nature, economic development is non-linear and a more complex process.

9.2.1 What is Development?

Thinkers and economists are not unanimous about defining economic development. Although many countries are classified as developing countries for which economic development is a desired goal, this conglomerate is not homogeneous. Countries differ in terms of natural resource endowments, population base and its growth, the quality of human resources, abundance or scarcity of capital and geographical factors. There are

also substantive differences in socio-political context of these countries. They view economic development differently. It may be industrialisation of the economy or raising the standard of living or removing unemployment, poverty of masses etc. Most of these countries have low per capita incomes, high incidence of poverty; lop sided industrial activities, high unemployment rate and lack of bargaining and competitive power vis-à-vis developed countries.

Therefore, most economists see economic development as a process. It means that economic development is a result of some forces, in this case economic factors or variables, which operate and interact with each other in order to take the economy in desired direction. Thus accumulation of savings and its convergence into requisite employment opportunities along with technological development may lead to the continuance of the above process of development. Economic development is sustained growth of real national income over a period of time. Later on, concerned with the low standard of living economists emphasised the concept of economic development to mean sustained rise in the real per capita income over a period of time. They also emphasised that over a period of time economic development should also lead to reduction in income and wealth inequalities. (You must note that this reduction in inequalities in income in the process of economic development is the qualitative aspect which institutional changes may bring about. In our country the initial phases of land reform were oriented at establishing and enhancing the income generating capacity of rural market. Bank nationalisation in 1969 has another institutional reform to further strengthen rural capabilities).

9.2.2 Measuring Economic Development

The thinkers considered development as akin to economic growth and were generally satisfied with measuring development in terms of growth of GDP, per capita GDP and improvement in distribution of income over time. However, the problem of low standard of living, wide spread unemployment and poverty creates special problems and therefore, these must also reflect in reckoning economic development. In the recent past, the economists have recognised that socio-economic aspects of development are equally important. Therefore, social concerns like health and health facilities, levels of education, literacy and its spread, safe housing and sanitation, the degree of urbanisation lay strong claim to the concept of economic development. Infact, concerns with the slow improvement in standard of living and almost intractable poverty - unemployment relationship, several economists questioned the access to opportunities that are opened in the process of economic development and become available to vast masses.

Therefore, development economists developed two indices:

9.2.3 Physical Quality of Life Index

The physical quality-of-life index (PQLI) is an attempt to measure the quality of life or well-being of a country. The value is the average of three statistics: basic literacy rate, infant mortality, and life expectancy at age one, all equally weighted on a 0 to 100 scale. It was developed for the Overseas Development Council in the mid-1970s by Morris David Morris, as one of a number of measures created due to dissatisfaction with the use of GNP as an indicator of development. PQLI might be regarded as an improvement but shares the general problems of measuring quality of life in a quantitative way. It has been criticised because of overlap between infant mortality and life expectancy.

The PQLI is a summation of complex social interrelationships on which no theoretical

explanation imposes any given weights/biases. Equal weight is assigned to each component. It informs about the changing distribution of social benefits among countries, between the sexes, among ethnic groups, and by region and sector. It facilitates international and regional comparisons by minimising developmental and cultural ethnocentricities. As the gap closes between current performance and maximum attainable performance, the gaps between PQLI indices should close. The PQLI, with signs of lowered infant mortality and lengthened life expectancy, paints a less fatalistic pessimistic picture than the GNP.

9.2.4 Human Development Index

The Human Development Index (HDI) is an index used to rank countries by level of “human development”, which usually also implies whether a country is a developed, developing, or underdeveloped country. The HDI combines three basic dimensions:

- Life expectancy at birth, as an index of population health and longevity
- Knowledge and education, as measured by the adult literacy rate (with two-thirds weighting) and the combined primary, secondary, and tertiary Gross Enrollment Ratio (with one-third weighting).
- Standard of living, as measured by the natural logarithm of Gross Domestic Product per capita

Human development, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), refers to the process of widening the options of persons, giving them greater opportunities for education, health care, income, employment, etc. The basic use of HDI is to measure a country's development. Although the Indian economy has performed relatively well in the last ten years [1998-2008] as evidenced by higher rate of growth of GDP, infrastructure development and substantial increases in public expenditure, the HDI of India has not improved. It points to the difficulties that India exhibits when several features of being a developed economy is placed internationally in company of very poor countries of the world.

9.2.5 Gender Aspects of Development

Since the quality of improvement through economic activities is considered as the essence of economic development, it is natural that economists enquire into opportunities and participation of all the population in the process of economic development. Development process per se is not neutral between genders if left to itself. The educational level and attainment of girl child and grown up females has lagged behind that of their male counterparts. Arguably, an illiterate female has lesser range of choices as to income opportunities, participation in decision-making process about herself, family and the community. She is burdened with age old prejudices, dogmas and discrimination which severally restrict her role in the family and society. The development process, therefore, contains strong degree of exclusion, so far as women are concerned. Whenever and wherever women are involved in work, they carry the tag of weaker sex and discriminated in employment opportunities, work conditions, wages and service conditions. Gender inequalities have only tended to rise.

In most of the countries gender disparities do exist in political participation and representation at all levels of government. They have limited command over productive resources and weaker ability to generate incomes. It constrains women power to influence resource allocation and investment decision. Further, households regularly transmit gender roles to

the next generation. The gender differences also emanate in terms of 'time-spend' by males and females in households-courses or income earning activities. Undoubtedly, females have lesser bargaining power than males with regards to decision-making. The researchers have started talking about 'missing women' which relates generally to excess mortality of females over males or significant differences there of to the detriment of females. There is a sharp decline in gender ratio and deliberate discrimination against girl child and female feticides. Resultantly, States have embarked on gender aspect of budgeting and gender-specific public expenditure programme. In India also gender accounting in central and state budget has begun.

The **Gender-related Development Index (GDI)** is an indication of the standard of living in a country, developed by the United Nations (UN). It is one of the five indicators used by the United Nations Development Programme in its annual Human Development Report that shows the inequalities between men and women in the areas of healthy life, knowledge, and decent standard of living.

9.3 ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

There has been an increasing concern of the effect of diversifying economic activities on ecology and environment protection and conservation. This has been exhibited for the industrial and other activities in developed economies since 1060s though seminal work for W.J. Boumal. Environmental problems differ very significantly between less and more developed economies, because many forms of environmental degradation tend to remain constant and often grow with economic growth. It may also be noted that environmental regeneration involves prohibitive cost and is often beyond the means of developing economies.

Simon Kuznets formalised the relation between economic development and environmental degradation through an invert 'U' curve, known as 'Environmental Kuznet's Curve'. It shows that as development proceeds with time, growing economic activities cause increasing environmental degradation and environmental health degradation reaches a maximum point. With further economic development and due to rising concerns for environmental protection, the environmental degradation gradually declines.

The environmental concerns of economic development have led development economists to think in terms of sustainable development so that future generations have same access to the use of natural resources such as land, water, air, forest etc. as the present generation. Economic activities should be organised in a manner, which neither endangers environment permanently, nor exhaust non-renewable resources for the benefit of the present only to the detriment of the future. Sustainable development necessarily entails creating and maintaining wealth. The effects of depleting natural resources and degrading the environment have not been quantified until recently and considered in measurement of national savings. In order to assess and monitor the extent of environmental pollution / degradation, economists have developed the concept of 'Green National Accounting'. It aims at incorporating in the social account of a country assessment of a quantitative measure of environmental depletion/ restoration. To put differently in green accounting we measure by how much the savings of a country increase due to prudent environmental policies or deplete due to reckless economic activities. In this approach therefore a quantitative estimate is also made of the extent of natural resource depletion for conversely of resource restoration (Piers & Atkins, 1993).

9.4 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSMISSION MECHANISM

It is by now clear that economic development is for the benefit of society and therefore its fruits must reach all sections of society. The spread of the benefits depends primarily on the efficiency of market mechanism. The concept of economic development is often called the '*trickle down approach*'. This approach is followed in the capitalistic economy. Many developing countries earlier on relied upon 'trickle down' to deliver the 'goods' of economic development. In our country, it was realised by the end of the Third Plan that whatever development has taken place, it has not trickled down to all sections of population. This resulted in high incidence of poverty and unemployment to low labour participation rate and poor social achievements. The ideology of this approach pre-supposes – markets fail to deliver- and therefore the state should step-in.

This approach is inspired by erstwhile experience of former socialist economies such as Soviet Russia. It relies on managing the economy and economic planning. It accords high premium to state intervention in economic activities through greater regulatory control and restricting the range of free economic activities. 'Nationalization', 'licensing', and others are the techniques employed to direct the efforts and fruits of development to reach the masses –the vulnerable section of the society. Government intervention programmes such as public distribution systems, poverty alleviation and employment programmes, distribution of incomes through fiscal mechanism, subsidies, institutionalised concession, economic and social empowerment through legislative means are all part of managing the nature, direction of economic development and the fruits that flow from it.

The economic stagnation in Russia and its subsequent breakup has again swung the pendulum of economic management in favour of markets. Just as markets can fail to deliver, the state can also fail to effectively manage and govern the economy. The recent economic crises in India in 1991, and rediscovering the role of international trade in development has underscored the importance of greater freedom for market mechanism. The new economic policy based on liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation is the direct consequence of this thinking. We have achieved higher growth rates and relatively larger role in international trade, but the problems of low standard of living, poverty and unemployment have not thawed to a greater extent. The high growth experience of Indian economy in the 1990's and the first decade of the 21st century have resulted in the need to particulate growth process and its benefits to vulnerable classes. Thus, the participatory process is being strengthened through Micro finance institution and facilities, organisation of SHGs to achieve "inclusive growth" as enshrined in the Eleven Five Year Plan.

9.5 APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT

We have mentioned earlier about the three grand theories of development. We briefly discuss the main characteristics of these-

9.5.1 The Classical Theory of Development

This earliest most celebrated theory of development is a collection of economic concepts and ideas developed by Classical economists such as: Adam Smith, David Ricardo, T.R. Malthus, J.B. Say, and J.S. Mill. Of these, Ricardo is credited with providing coherent theory of development.

Adam Smith was the first to emphasize the role of nature in process of economic development, and less state interference in economic activities. For him capital accumulation for the industrial development is the result of surplus (revenue over cost) accruing to producers. According to him, the surplus is directly related to productivity of labour. Smith's 'division of labour' meant assigning different task of a production process to different labours; the division of labour depends upon the 'extent of market'. Related to this is his concept of specialization of labour. According to him, labour acquires dexterity (skill) when he works on a particular job over a period of time. The specialization increases the productivity of labour, results in time saving in production process, and economy of use of resources and raw material in production process. Both these concepts increase the productivity of labour and surplus in production process. Larger profits enhance larger capital accumulation. Smith emphasized the role of technological development (to which he was witness due to industrial revolution taking place in England and other countries of Europe). Adequate capital accumulation is the very condition of technological development and there is little role of wages influencing the process of development.

Ricardo developed a complete theory of development. Some of the salient features of his theory of development are:

- Ricardo believed in a free enterprise economy with little state interference in economic system.
- Ricardo considered economy mainly consisting of industrial sector and agriculture sector; the former is the dynamic sector with continuous technological improvement, higher factor productivity. Technology remains static in agricultural sector.
- Industry is responsible for surplus and lead to larger capital accumulation; capital accumulation promotes technological development.
- The agriculture sector, managed by landlords and serfs, was the lagging sector. Surplus in agriculture did not result in capital accumulation to be utilised for further development of the economy.
- Agriculture sector is subject to diminishing returns. Ricardo develops the theory of Rent. According to which as the demand for 'corn' increases, more and more inferior quality land is brought under cultivation, whose yield is lower than the previous superior quality land. Difference between the yields on two qualities of land is appropriated by the landlords as rent. As economic development proceeds and population grows, more and more demand for food grains compels extensive cultivation of inferior quality land resulting in larger accrual of agricultural income as rent on superior quality land.
- Classical economists generally assumed that the real wages in economy settle in the long run around the subsistence wage. This is custom determined and affords the labour class to live in reasonable comfort; there is no clash between producers/capitalists and the wage earners.
- In Ricardian theory of development as time passes, the share of rent in National Output increases, wage remains constant and profit is gradually squeezed to a level where only replacement of capital is possible. In this state no new investment takes place.

- Ricardo called this state of affairs –‘A Stationary stage’. When the economy reaches this state, new economic activities in industrial sector come to a halt. The economy stops growing and expending. Economic activities merely repeat themselves. Ricardo pessimistically concludes with regard to future of a capitalist economy as it embarks on the path of development.

Classical Pessimism or Optimism

J.S. Mill interpreted the Ricardo’s conclusions differently. To him, capitalist society will definitely experience near zero rate of profit, which will cause stationary state to exist. This state will be an estate of contentment, of great achievement, as by the time economy will experience stationary states, it would have reached full-employment where labour will enjoy custom determined comfortable real wage. The productive capacity of the economy would have expanded vastly. With no economic dissatisfaction, society will strive and attain perfections in literary art, painting, music and other higher forms of learning and would think about ethics, philosophy behind welfare and such higher pursuits of knowledge. Therefore, he argued that there is a reason to be satisfied with capitalist development, and no reason to be pessimistic about the future of capitalist society.

9.5.2 Marxian Theory of Development

As a critique of classical theory of development, Marx propounded his theory of capitalistic development as a part of general scheme of social change. Marx accorded primacy to economic factors as a cause of not only economic phenomenon, social, political phenomenon but also to evolution and changing in psychological and philosophical attitudes and doctrines. He emphatically argued that the changes in the society are caused by clash in two propositions: which Marx called the ‘Mode of Production’. This is conditioned by (a) – the place of labour in the sphere of production and economy, the skills that it possesses ; by this we mean what importance of labour is recorded vis-à-vis capital, machines etc. Gandhi also emphasised the need to accord dignity of labour in the society. It placed labour over capital in economic organisation as compared to what we find in capitalism. (b) – Geographical factors and (c) – the technological relations in production which have the effect of changing the relative importance of labour and capital. Another important concept is ‘Relation in Production’, by which Marx meant the state of property relations i.e. the pattern and manner in which means of production are owned and distributed over a period of time. Each society develops its own mechanism of ensuring the safety of ownership rights and the means of transferring ownership right. There will be either those who own the means of production or those who do not own the means of production i.e. the labour class. Marx views the society as composed of two classes divided on economic factors defined by the ‘Relations in Production’.

Marx argued that in the scheme of social development with time, the mode of production and the relation in production may be consistent with each other. In such situation social development will proceed in harmony, but this state of affairs can change with time. Due to force of technological advancement, the ‘Relation in Production’ can change on their own. As this change persists, it comes in clash with the relation in production. ‘Relation in production’ can change exogenously but mode in production change as a consequence. This clash among the two entities is the basis of change in society because when relation in production changes, it means new classes are emerging which define a new social order. The above process of change in form of society is true for every capitalist society. He also argued that early entrepreneurial capitalism will convert itself into monopoly

capitalism. The state of monopoly capitalism burdened by its anachronism will give way to socialism and thence to communism. According to Marx, this is how society will change. He based his theory of social change on cause (economic factors) and effect relationship; later thinkers called his theory of social change, scientific socialism as linear in nature.

The Theory of Capitalist Development

Some of the salient features of Marxian theory of development are:

- i) Marx considers the future progress of a industrially advanced economy, such as some of the European economies at his time
- ii) Marx is primarily concerned with the happenings in the industrial sector. There are very few references to state of affairs in agriculture sector. (c.f. Classical development)
- iii) Marx assumes technological development will be autonomous in nature, which is not necessarily continuous with respect to time; each technological development is more capital intensive than its predecessor. Deliberately or otherwise capitalists always aim at and succeed in replacing labour by capital.
- iv) The wages of labour are fixed not by custom or historical reasons but by the relative weight of unemployed population
- v) Marx contends 'profit and more profit' is the mantra of capitalism. Producers organise activities to earn profits and viciously compete with each other to earn more profits.
- vi) In order to pursue larger profits, producers, try to appropriate as much surplus in production as possible.

The Theory of Surplus Value

Marx accorded special properties to labour. All other factors of production except labour transfer their own value cost in the production process. Raw materials and capital do not add value to the product. It is only labour, according to Marx, who, when combined with other factors creates new value in the product. The basis of surplus creation in Marx's analysis is the special property of labour, which Marx called 'Labour Power'.

Labour has another characteristic, which is that it is made to work for its own existence. Thus in a eight hour work day, it may be labour works for 4 hours to justify the wages being paid to it. The additional 4 hours that he works is the basis of value creation in the process of production. Capitalists appropriate this surplus themselves and this becomes the basis for profits and capital accumulation. This is siphoned off by capitalists through the capitalist movement process; the weak bargaining power of labour and the time labour works for producers can be usurped by them, resulting in labour exploitation.

Producers try to increase the rate of exploitation (a) - by making labour work for a longer day, (b) – by hiring women and child to do the same work but paying them less because of their physical capacities. These are short-term measures. In the long run the rate of exploitation is pushed up by using more capital and less labour. The new technology is more capital-intensive. As development proceeds and producers are forced to compete for larger profits, the use of fixed capital relative to total labour employed rises. Marx called this ratio 'organic composition of labour'. As productive processes are

necessarily becoming more capital-intensive, more and more labour is being displaced. Hence a secular tendency for unemployment to rise. Marx called this unemployed pool, the industrial reserve army which goes on increasing. It is this industrial reserve army which does not allow the real wages to rise above the subsistence level and it is responsible for exploitation of labour.

Immutable Laws of Development

Based on above analysis, Marx argued that each capitalist society in process of development experiences

- i) The growth in abject poverty of masses because of extreme exploitation of labour class
- ii) A sustained rise in organic composition of capital due to technology is also increasing competition among the capitalist,
- iii) Eventually in a capitalist society, the rate of profit will decline to very low level because while the productive capacity of economy is expanding, the general demand for products is not only increasing but also may be shrinking (wages constant and employment declining) the profits of the producers are therefore, threatened.

According to Marx these three tendencies are the causes of crises of capitalism. The misery and squalor of the society increases; other heightened competition among the capitalists create distrust among them. Marx gave the call to labour class to overthrow violently the inequities' system. He justifies use of force on behalf of labour to emancipate itself. A capitalist society is burdened by the clash between the 'modes of production' and the 'relations of production' destroys itself. Marx argued that the capitalist class perishes and the proletariat emerges victorious. All the means of production are owned by the State and the state of socialism has arrived. The onset of crises in capitalisation can be postponed by capitalists acquiring economic interest in less developed countries for procurement of raw materials and market for their products. This interplay of economic factors ultimately led to political subjugation of other countries, as colonies of the developed countries. Thus Marx developed his theory of imperialism.

An Appraisal

However, all his prophecies have not come true.

- The standard of the labour class has continuously risen since industrial revolution.
- The capitalist society has acquired very high levels of full employment.
- There is no episode of any capitalist society being violently overthrown.
- The Russian Revolution [1917] took place while the Russia was an agrarian economy and not a highly industrialised economy as Marx would argue. Same is also true for Chinese Revolution in 1949.

Despite these overwhelming evidences, the appeal to Marxism is universal and does not diminish.

9.5.3 Schumpeter's Theory of Development

Schumpeter, a great economist and socio-political thinker of all times, viewed economic development as discontinuous process characterised by periods of high growth followed

by stagnation. His important starting point is innovation and the innovator, who is different from a producer. The innovator takes the risk and if his innovation proves successful, he is able to realise abnormal profit. The innovation can be of many types such as

1. New product 2. A new method of production 3. A substitute product such as polyester for cotton, plastic for metals and wood etc, 4. A new market product and 5. A new method of industrial organisation such as corporate firm, limited liability, in house etc.

When one or combination of these innovations takes place, economic activity is heightened and economic development proceeds with expansion of output, employment and general rise in demand for sectors and services. Schumpeter freed the investment process in financing economic development from the constraints of current savings. To him banks and the NBFS facilitate the expansion of creating credit and other forms of financial derivatives. But there is limit for banks to create the credit. Bank bear the further expansion of credit is risky, they apply breaks to credit expansion and this acts as a signal for economic slowdown and subsequent stagnation. The economy may standstill, unless some other innovation restarts the expansion. Schumpeter explains capitalist development in terms of trade cycle phenomena. To him pure capitalism is an ideal and is not found in practice. He was doubtful about the future of capitalism.

To him success of capitalism will lead to a form of corporatism and a fostering of values hostile to the spirit and free play capitalism, especially among intellectuals. The intellectual and social climate needed to allow entrepreneurship to thrive will not exist in advanced capitalism. There will not be a revolution, but merely a trend in parliaments to elect social democratic parties of one stripe or another. Capitalism's collapse from within will come about as democratic majorities vote for the creation of a welfare state and place restrictions upon entrepreneurship that will burden and eventually destroy the capitalist structure. Schumpeter emphasises the analyzing trends, not engaging in political advocacy. "If a doctor predicts that his patient will die presently," he wrote, "this does not mean that he desires it."

The intellectual class will play an important role in capitalism's demise. His analysis is similar to that of the philosopher Robert Nozick, who argued that intellectuals were bitter that the skills so rewarded in school were less rewarded in the job market, and so turned against capitalism, even though they enjoyed vastly more enjoyable lives under it than under alternative systems. While Schumpeter is sympathetic to Marx's theory that capitalism will collapse and will be replaced by socialism, Schumpeter concludes that this will not come about in the way Marx predicted. To describe it he borrowed the phrase "Creative Destruction," and made it famous by using it to describe a process in which the old ways of doing things are endogenously destroyed and replaced by new ways.

The success of capitalism will lead to a form of corporatism and a fostering of values hostile to capitalism, especially among intellectuals. The intellectual and social climate needed to allow entrepreneurship to thrive will not exist in advanced capitalism; it will be replaced by socialism in some form. Socialism will ensure that the production of goods and services is directed towards meeting the authentic needs of people and will overcome some innate tendencies of capitalism such as conjecture fluctuation, unemployment and waning acceptance of the system.

9.5.4 Theory of Stages of Growth

(Rostow, W.W.)

This theory explains the long-term processes of economic development from the point of view of economic history by describing five ideal types of stages through which all societies pass:

- The 'traditional society' has more than 75% of the population engaged in food production; political power is in the hands of landowners or a central authority supported by the army and the civil servants.
- The 'transitional stage' creates the preconditions for take-off by bringing about radical changes in the non-industrial sectors. Export of raw material gains momentum; a new class of businessmen emerges; and the idea of economic progress coming from outside spreads through the elite.
- The 'take-off stage' brings a sharp increase in the rate of investment in the per capita output. This is accompanied by radical changes in the production techniques. Expansion takes place in a small group of leading sectors at first and, on the social side, is accompanied by the domination of the modern section of society over the traditional one.
- The 'drive to maturity brings a spread of growth from the leading to the other sectors and a broader application of modern technology followed by necessary changes in the society at large.
- The 'stage of high mass consumption' can be reached after attaining a certain level of national income and formulating an economic policy giving priority to increased private consumption.

In the 'take-off stage' the net investment rates have to increase from 5 to 10% of the national product and during which the political, social, and institutional framework has to be built in order to reach a situation of self-sustained growth. The financial resources must be accumulated internally by higher saving rates. Income distribution favouring classes and strata which are willing and able to use capital more productively than others has the same effect.

While this theory became widely known, perhaps because of its author's political post and the fact that it is a counter-position to Marxian approaches, this "time-table of development" does little to explain why some societies go ahead on this ladder and others not. Its value for forecasting the results of development activities is limited. The rather fixed stages hardly allow for alternative goals and processes of development and incorporate a high degree of ethnocentrism.

9.5.5 Theory of Balanced Growth

This theory sees the main obstacles to development in the narrow market and, thus, in the limited market opportunities. Under these circumstances, only a bundle of complementary investments realised at the same time has the chance of creating mutual demand. The theory refers to Say's theorem and requests investments in such sectors which have a high relation between supply, purchasing power, and demand as in consumer goods industry, food production, etc.

The earlier version of this theory is associated with the name of Gunnar Myrdal and is based on a balanced package of private enterprise, supporting each others' demand and supply chains. The later version is associated with Prof. P. N. Rosenstein Rodan who advocated Big Push and Harvey Liebenstien who propagated the Critical Minimum Effort. Both the latter ones are seen as State interventions to accelerate the development process. The real bottleneck is seen here in the shortage of capital, and all potential sources have to be mobilised. If capital is available, investments will be made. In order to ensure the balanced growth, there is a need for investment planning by the governments.

Development is seen here as expansion of market and an increase of production including agriculture. The possibility of structural hindrances is not included in the line of thinking, as are market dependencies. The emphasis is on capital investment, not on the ways and means of achieving capital formation. It is assumed that, in a traditional society, there is ability and willingness for rational investment decisions along the requirements of the theory. As this will most likely be limited to small sectors of the society, it is not unlikely that this approach will lead to super-imposing a modern sector on the traditional economy, i.e., to economic dualism.

9.5.6 Theory of Unbalanced Growth

In Hirschman's opinion, the real bottleneck is not the shortage of capital, but lack of entrepreneurial abilities. Potential entrepreneurs are hindered in their decision-making by institutional factors: either group considerations play a great role and hinder the potential entrepreneur, or entrepreneurs aim at personal gains at the cost of others and are thus equally detrimental to development. There is a need for a mechanism of incentive and pressure which will automatically result in the required decisions. According to Hirschman, not a balanced growth should be aimed at, but rather existing imbalances, whose symptoms are profit and losses, must be maintained. This approach relies upon the input output linkages among industries to leverage the imbalances. Thus a push to develop consumer good industry will encourage development of industries which provide intermediate goods and basic goods including infrastructure. Unbalanced growth can begin by provision of basic infrastructure which would then spur higher order goods closer to consumption. Investments should not be spread evenly but concentrated in such projects in which they cause additional investments because of their backward and forward linkages without being too demanding on entrepreneurial abilities. Manufacturing industries and import substitutions are relevant examples. These first investments initiate further investments which are made by lesser entrepreneurs. Thus, the strategy overcomes the bottleneck of entrepreneurial ability. The theory gives no hints as to how the attitude of entrepreneurs and their institutional influence will be changed in time.

9.5.7 Dualism and Development

Dualism theory assume a split of economic and social structures of different sectors so that they differ in organisation, level of development, and goal structures. Usually, the concept of economic dualism (BOEKE) differentiates between two sectors of economy:

- The traditional subsistence sector consists of small-scale agriculture handicraft and petty trade, has a high degree of labour intensity but low capital intensity and little division of labour;
- The modern sector of capital-intensive industry and plantation agriculture produces for the world market with a capital-intensive mode of production with a high division of labour.

The two sectors have little relation and interdependence and develop according to its own pattern. The modern sector usually is an economic enclave of industrial countries, and its multiplier and growth effects will benefit the industrial countries but have little effect on the internal market.

Technological dualism refers to a gap between labour and capital-intensive sectors. We can think of regional dualism as a lack of communications and exchange between regions. Economic, technological, and regional dualism are often the consequence of a social dualism, the absence of relationships between people of different race, religion, and language, which is a legacy of colonialism.

Development in dualism is the suppression of the traditional sector by concentrating on and expanding the modern sector over time; it is assumed that the trickle-down effects will reduce and abolish dualism. In general, agriculture has to provide the resources, labour as well as capital, for expanding the modern sector. In details, the strategies vary. Some authors, like Lewis and Fei Ranis, assumed that a reduction of the labour force in agriculture, because of the widespread disguised unemployment, would not reduce agricultural production. The productive employment of these labourers in the modern sector would increase the total production of the economy and hence priority of investment in industry is necessary. Concentration on the modern sector led to an increasing regional disparity, rural urban migration, urban unemployment, a decrease in agricultural production, and hindrance in industrial development because of a lack of purchasing power in the rural areas. The anticipated trickle-down effects hardly ever happened. In praxis, development plans following this line of thinking led to failures like the early Indian development planning. Therefore, other authors, like Jorgenson, Lele and Mellor emphasise the important role of agriculture at the beginning of development, i.e., preceding or parallel to industrial development in order to provide enough internal resources for the development process.

9.5.8 Dependency Theory of Development

Dependency theory is a body of social science theories which are predicated on the notion that resources flow from a “periphery” of poor and underdeveloped states to a “core” of wealthy states, enriching the latter at the expense of the former. The central contention is that poor states are impoverished and rich ones enriched by the way poor states are integrated into the “world system.” This is based on the Marxist analysis of inequalities within the world system, but contrasts with the view of free market economists who argue that free trade advances poor states along an enriching path to full economic integration. As such, dependency theory features prominently in the debate over as to how process of underdevelopment can be understood and how poor countries can best be enriched or developed.

The premises of dependency theory are as follows:

- Poor nations are at a disadvantage in their market interactions with wealthy nations. A high proportion of the developing nations’ economic activity consists of exports and imports from the developed nations. By contrast, only a small proportion of the economic activity of the developed nations consists of trade with the developing nations; a developed nation’s trade consists mostly of internal trade and trade with other developed nations. This asymmetry puts a poor nation in a weak bargaining position *vis a vis* a developed nation. The poor nations are mostly former colonies

of the developed nations; their economies were built to serve the developed nations in a two-fold capacity: as sources of cheap raw materials and as highly populous markets for the absorption of the developed nations manufactured output.

- Wealthy nations actively perpetuate a state of dependence by involving economics, media control, politics, banking and finance, education, culture, sport, and all aspects of human resource development.
- Wealthy nations actively counter attempt dependent nations to resist their influences by means of trade barriers economic sanctions and/or at times with the use of military force.

Dependency theory first emerged as a reaction to liberal free trade theories in the 1950s, advocated by Raúl Prebisch, whose research with the Economic Commission on Latin America (ECLA) suggested that decreases in the wealth of poor nations coincided with increases in the wealth of rich nations. Paul A. Baran developed dependency theory from Marxian analysis. The theory quickly divided into diverse schools. Some, like Andre Gunder Frank, adapted it to Marxism. “Standard” dependency theory differs from Marxism, however, in arguing against internationalism and any hope of progress in less developed nations towards industrialisation and a liberating revolution. Theotonio dos Santos described a ‘new dependency’ with a focus on both the internal and external relations of less-developed countries of the periphery. Cardoso wrote extensively on dependency theory as an approach to studying the economic disparities between the centre and periphery. American sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein refined the Marxist aspect of the theory, and called it the “World-system.”

Quantitative Dependency Theory and the Globalisation of the Dependency Argument

Dependency authors explain backwardness and stagnation by the insertion of these countries as dependents in the world economy, stressed the unequal and socially imbalanced nature of development in regions that are highly dependent on investment from the highly developed countries. Short-term spurts of growth notwithstanding, long-term growth will be imbalanced and unequal, and will tend towards high negative current account balances.

Mahatma Gandhi and Economic Development

Gandhi’s thinking on Economic and Social issues continuously evolved over the period of India’s Struggle for political freedom. He realised at an early stage that India’s basic problems are a creation of British Policy. The pitiable conditions in villages were the result of break-down of traditional structure and methods of economic and social organisation, particularly the village economy. This created intractable problems of poverty, unemployment and migration to cities. Widespread ignorance, literacy and poor health and sanitation further aggravated the economic malaise. Gandhi distrusted the western concept of industrialisation through large-scale industry. He sensed the loss of employment of labour through machine. The latter symbolised the exploitation as well as lust for profit and power. Gandhi advocated for rejuvenation of village industry based on ample use of labour. This would cater to local demand and provide employment and economic security. He was not anti-industry but opposed those which came in conflict with small and village industry. Gandhi placed greater emphasis on dignity of labour; he sought to minimise socio-economic prejudices and bias against labour. He wanted labour everywhere to play

an important role in the nation building. Social fallout of Gandhi's view on labour would be more homogeneous social order.

Gandhi also advocated the use of profits earned by capital for larger social benefits. He urged the capitalist to be the Trustee to the nation. His advocacy for social corporate responsibility was a device to bridge the gap between the haves and have nots in a dynamic framework. This was Gandhi's important contribution to bridge the hiatus between capital and labour which was created by Marx and held responsible for the crisis of capitalistic society. Gandhi's concept of Ram Rajya, a utopia was based on his concept of Gram Swaraj: a society based on harmony of interest catering to larger socio-economic welfare. Thus, Gandhi's economic ideas form a complete alternative to modern technology and self-interest based model of consumerism. Such economic progress is anti-nature and also destroys ecology and environment. The western model of growth is not sustainable over a long period of time. Gandhi felt that the way out of the quagmire of blind race for material prosperity is by making villages self-sufficient through decentralisation. Thus by substituting the enlightened self-interest (of classical economists) and self-interest of capitalists (of Karl Marx), by *interest of the society* advocated by Mahatma Gandhi, Gram Swaraj can be achieved.

9.6 SUMMARY

Most economists see economic development as a process and that economic development is a result of some forces, in this case economic factors or variables, which operate and interact with each other in order to take the economy in desired direction. Thus accumulation of savings and its convergence into requisite employment opportunities along with technological development may lead to the continuance of the above process of development. Economic development is sustained growth of real national income over a period of time. Later on, concerned with the low standard of living economists emphasised the concept of economic development to mean sustained rise in the real per capita income over a period of time. They also emphasised that over a period of time economic development should also lead to reduction in income and wealth inequalities. In this context economists like Adam Smith, Ricardo, Marx and others came up with different theories regarding the development discourse. Nevertheless, it is Gandhi's concept of development that holds a holistic welfare view and is deemed as the most practical in this age of globalisation.

9.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on classical theory of development.
2. Comment on Marxian theory of social change.
3. Distinguish between balanced and unbalanced growth approach to economic development.
4. Summarise the claim of dependency theory as an explanation of underdevelopment.
5. Elucidate Gandhi's view on development.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 10 POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

Structure

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10.1 INTRODUCTION

Women constitute 70% of the world's poor population of 1.3 billion. But in terms of holistic development they are worse than men. They occupy only a subordinate position in political, economic and social life. Various types of movements have helped in raising their status in literacy, life expectancy and maternal mortality. Yet their position has not improved much. Further, the public/private divide is constituted and operated in gender terms. They are forced to be confined to the private sphere of life and their existence is restricted to domestic roles. To overcome these problems, states have taken a number of steps after realising the importance of the role played by women even in the decision-making process.

Since the late 18th century, social scientists have developed a variety of theories to explain differences persisting among human beings. Feminist anthropologists have argued that the organisation of social and production relations such as social stratification, the monogamous family, ownership of property, and forms of work and production have greatly influenced the differences in gender relations around the world.

Aims and Objectives

After studying this Unit, you should be able to understand

- The reasons for the exclusion of women from economic and political participation.
- The need for women's economic and political participation.

- The status of women in economic and political sphere.
- The efforts taken at international level and national level to increase women's participation in economics and politics.

10.2 INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO

At the international level, the United Nations has contributed a major share in bringing to universal notice the status and the condition of women and incorporated women's issues in all development agenda.

Eleanor Roosevelt raised the issue of women's rights in the United Nations General Assembly in the year 1948. The women's rights movement started as a movement for women's suffrage during the 19th century. The Inter-American Commission on the status of women, established in 1920, was one of the groups instrumental in getting the equal rights provision into the Charter of the newly established United Nations. The International Council of Women and the International Alliance of Women were among the Non Governmental Organisations which had consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and therefore membership in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established to satisfy the mandate of the UN Charter in 1947.

Three international movements, namely, the Women's Rights Movement, the Human Rights Movement, and the Movement Against Colonialism and the women who were part of the struggle paved the way for the starting of the women's movement. This led to the United Nations declaring 1975 as the International Women's Year. Subsequently the United Nations organised four international conferences for women. The concept of women and development originated during the 1950s and the 1960s. During this period, as many as 50 countries got independence. Women who had been part of the independence movement joined men in building their nations.

10.3 DEVELOPMENT DECADES

10.3.1 United Nations First Development Decade

In the year 1970, the United Nations reviewed the results of the first development decade of the 1960s. Based on the review, various approaches to women development were found. The review concluded that both men and women must be lifted from poverty and both men and women must benefit from development efforts. The first international conference in Mexico City was organised to mark the celebration of the International Women's Year in the year 1975. The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Women (later called the United Nations Development Fund for Women) and the International Training and Research Centre for women were soon established within the United Nations system.

In the meantime feminists in the United States lobbied to integrate women's issues into the policy of the government, especially in the USAID policy. Their constant efforts resulted in bringing in a new amendment called the Percy Amendment in the year 1973. This paved the way for integrating gender sensitive social impact studies in all development projects. The feminists also started using the term "Women in Development" (WID) which comes under liberal feminism.

10.3.2 Second Development Decade

In the mid 1980s, development experts started concentrating on basic human needs. In the meantime the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was designed to reduce government expenditure and to increase the market force. According to liberal feminists, economic prosperity will automatically bring about the development of women. Many development theories agreed that the SAP would benefit men and women in the long run but momentarily affect women and children: In the meantime, some feminists and development theorists maintained that both the “Women in Development” (WID) and the “Women and Development” (WAD) approaches did not address gender inequalities. So they propounded the gender and development approach, referred to as the “Empowerment Approach” or “Gender Aware Planning”.

The Gender and Development (GAD) approach emerged from the grassroots organisational experiences and writings of Third World feminists and has been most clearly articulated by a group called the Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN). The process of developing this new paradigm began in the early 1980s. The DAWN was launched publicly at the 1985 Nairobi International NGO Forum. It called for an approach to women’s development that recognises the importance of global and gender inequities. The GAD approach emerged from the experiences and analysis of western socialist feminists interested in development issues.

10.3.3 Third Development Decade

In the year 1985, the third United Nations Conference was held in Nairobi. The decade of women (1975-85) provided an opportunity for women from the economic South to grow more visible. Nairobi provided a platform to show the leadership of the women movement from the economic South. Third World women had come into their own in the international community and, with a great sense of their own identity, were now ready to redefine the notion of global sisterhood into global solidarity among women. While the North–South divide did not disappear, there was a new confidence among women from the South that facilitated the creation of a partnership between them in the struggle for a better world. The final report of the Forum, for the record Forum 85, summarised the meaning of the event to women as follows: “Today women see themselves as the force for change, not just for women but for the whole of society. Women seek the power and the strength to work equally with men to change the social, political and economic structure in the direction of integral and equitable development”.

Since the participants expressed little hope for the ability or willingness of present governments to help realise women’s alternative visions, they repeatedly stressed the need for women to organise independently for political action to assume responsibility to challenge existing policies and programmes and to work to bring about an integral development. Central to feminist alternative vision is a people-centred international order. It is concerned about the poorest and most oppressed. Stress is also placed on the importance of understanding class, race, ethnicity, gender and age. All these are essential factors in the analysis and design of strategies not only in relation to society as a whole, but also among women themselves.

10.4 BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

One of the recommendations from the Nairobi Conference was that the United Nations should hold another world conference on women in ten years, to take stock of the

implementation of the platform of action formulated in Nairobi. This conference took place in Beijing in 1995. One of the significant goals set out by the fourth world conference on women, in Beijing in the year 1995, was adequate representation of women in all decision-making bodies (Beijing Platform Action, 1995). It suggested that in any representative body there should be a logical balance of men and women to voice the concerns of the society. Good governance means being participatory, accountable and transparent, which reasonably calls for a gender balance in political decision-making. It is believed that women's rights and values of governance can enhance and enrich the overall decision-making process. It is also generally assumed that women at the local level are more sensitive to community issues. The Beijing Platform for Action also recommended:

- Setting a firm time table to end all legal discrimination against women along the lines of United Nations Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as well as establishing a framework to promote legal equality initiating specific measures targeted at acquiring a short-term threshold of 30% for women in national decision-making positions, with a long term aim of 50%.
- Mobilising national and international efforts to facilitate for everyone, and for women in particular, greater access to economic and political opportunities.

10.5 WOMEN AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

In 1997, in Cairo, the Inter Parliamentary Union Council adopted the universal declaration on democracy and urged governments and parliaments throughout the world to be guided by the context. The total members of parliament in the world are 44,204. Out of this only 7,160 are women (16.3%). The percentage of women in parliament (lower house and upper house) in the following countries is:

Table – 1

Women in Parliament

Sl.No.	Countries	Percentage
1.	Nordic countries	40
2.	Americas	20
3.	Europe – OSCE excluding Nordic Countries	16.8
4.	Sub-Saharan Africa	16.6
5.	Asia	15.9
6.	Pacific	13.9
7.	Arab States	6.8

Source: www.ipu.org

Table-2 Women in national parliaments: South Asia
Directly elected chambers; as of February 2006

Country	Election year	No. of seats	No. of women seats	% of women seats
Bangladesh	2001	345	51	14.8
India	2004	543	45	8.3
Nepal	1999	189	12	5.9
Pakistan	2002	342	73	21.3
Sri Lanka	2004	225	11	4.9
South Asia		1,644	192	11.7

Box1: Women's Political Participation in South Asia

Notwithstanding their public stance, the failure of parties to ensure adequate representation of women in party committees and legislatures is a glaring omission. Parties can think of providing rules in party constitutions to ensure a minimum presence of women leaders in party bodies. Differences persist as to whether an increased presence of women in the legislatures should be achieved through instituting internal party quotas for women or by reserving a proportion of seats in the legislatures. Therefore, the issue can be addressed at two different levels.

- Reserving a certain percentage of positions in party committees and offices for women. As has already been seen, some parties have such provisions. While these parties must try to enforce these provisions, other parties can incorporate such provisions in their constitutions and implement them.
- As for the legislative bodies, if seats are reserved for women by bringing amendments to the country's constitution, parties will be compelled to put up women candidates in such seats. Since four of the five South Asian countries follow the plurality system, based on single-member territorial constituencies, it may not be feasible to leave it to the parties to field a certain percentage of women candidates.

In a given party system where parties in the alliance may field candidates in few or several constituencies, it is possible that women would not get elected in sufficient number as parties may place them in losing constituencies. It is better to reserve constituencies for women. However, as seen in Sri Lanka which follows the PR system, it is possible to bind parties legally to include a certain number of women candidates in their lists.

The under-representation of women in high offices in politics and government is well documented. There have been some women heads of state or government (24 Presidents and 30 Prime Ministers from 1954 to 1999), and the number of women ministers across the world doubled between 1987 and 1996. This represented an increase from 3.4% to 6.8% but this is not an impressive figure. Moreover, 48 (out of 187) countries had no women in ministerial position at all. In fact, in the Asia-Pacific region and Eastern Europe, the proportion of women ministers has been under 5%. There is also an unmistakable

pattern in the nature of portfolios held by women. In 1999, the most substantial concentration of women ministers worldwide was in ministries of social affairs, health, women affairs, family, children, youth, culture and heritage, education, environment and labour. Very few ministers held portfolios related to defence, finance and trade and only one country had a woman minister of home affairs (www.ipu.org).

As for the representation of women in national legislatures, only 8 countries have achieved the so-called Critical Mass of 30% (Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Netherlands, Germany and South Africa). An assessment of the “Beijing Effect” on women’s representation in parliament suggests that the percentage of women parliamentarians worldwide increased from 11.3% in 1995 to 12.9% in 1999, a rather meagre increase of +1.6%. In the same period, the percentage of female presiding officers of a house of parliament registered a marginal decline (www.ipu.org).

In the countries of Eastern Europe, the percentage of women in national parliaments has actually declined in the last decade, partly as a backlash to the perception that participation under communist regimes was forced. In terms of regional representation, it is notable that female representation is lowest in the Arab countries, followed by the countries of South Asia (with the notable exception of Bangladesh) where representation is even lower than in East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

In 1995, the United Nations Development Programme posed two cautionary arguments. First, the very definition of governance needs to be engendered before we embark upon the project of engendering governance itself. Secondly, the project of engendering governance should be received in terms more exacting than simply placing women at the higher echelons of governance – of the state, the private sector and NGOs.

For women who have minimal exposure to the public realm, politics and processes of the state may be equated almost exclusively with electoral politics and voting. Others who have greater mobility and cause to challenge the state and its policies, whether by accident or design, including politically active students and workers, may see politics as an expression of the competitive tendency and contests for power that permeate all levels of government.

Notions of governance may include ideas about

- (1) The legitimacy of government, which is linked with participatory process and the consent of those who are governed;
- (2) The accountability of government officials for their actions and the existence of mechanisms by which individuals and institutions can be held accountable;
- (3) The competence of a government to formulate appropriate policies, make timely decisions, implement them effectively and deliver services; and
- (4) The respect of human rights and the rule of law to guarantee individual and group rights and security in order to provide a framework for political, economic and social activity.

A negative conception of rights (in terms of liberty or freedom) alone is an inadequate instrument because the principle of freedom from the state has often (from the liberal political philosopher John Locke to the contemporary libertarian philosopher Robert Nozick) been invoked to assert the indefensibility of state interference in the private

sphere. From the feminist point of view, negative rights are suspect because social practices are often oppressive and patriarchal, and the absence of state interference may give licence to such forces. A positive conception of rights has the merit of providing not just a formal structure of rights, but also enabling conditions that make their fulfillment possible. A gendered view of governance must be a rights-based view in this latter sense, because it has to engage with and address long histories of exclusion, marginalisation and invisibility. Women's claim to voice, and to recognition of their contribution to the productive life of society, have therefore to be couched in the language of rights.

The main policy response to the under-representation of women in the formal structures of politics has been the attempt to enhance representation through quotas, whether in political parties or in legislatures. The case for quotas is often justified by an appeal to argument that the politics of ideas (political choice between the policies and programmes of political parties rather than on the basis of group concerns and interests) does not include adequate policy concerns for groups which are marginalised or excluded. This suggests the importance of a politics of presence in which women, ethnic minorities and other similarly excluded groups are guaranteed fair representation.

The issue of quotas is contentious for at least two sets of reasons. The first relates to the lack of genuine commitment in the political parties to increasing women's representation. There are ways in which political parties may effectively circumvent the quota by putting up candidates in constituencies where the party is weak and unlikely to win anyway, or treating the quota as a ceiling rather than a minimum to be improved upon, or nominating women candidates who will be pliable because they are dependent on the male party leadership. Of course there are exceptions like the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa which adopted a self-administered quota of 30% even if many of the women candidates were clustered at the bottom 15% of the list. Other parties in that country followed the African National Congress's (ANC) example, with the result that women comprise 27% of the national legislature.

10.5.1 Women's Political Participation in India

In India, this process started in the 1930s. Women's organisations like the All India Women's Council, the National Council for Women in India and the Women's India Association demanded women's political participation. So the issue of reservation for women has been on the political agenda since pre-independence days. But in the spate of issues before the rationalist movement this issue receded to the background. Women's organisations have since long advocated the need to promote and harness the political resources of women in nation building. The question of women's political participation and reservations has also evolved over the last 60 years and a considerable degree of debate, discussions and social searching has ensued.

In the post-independence era, the issue came back in focus through the Kalekar Commission for Backward Classes (1950), but the debate was not pursued and no further action was taken. In 1975 the Committee on the Status of Women in India recommended electoral reservation for women. This was also endorsed in 1988 in the policy document. With a national perspective plan for women under the leadership of the late Rajiv Gandhi, the government in power initiated a Panchayati Raj bill, but it was passed only in the Lok Sabha.

In the meantime, in 1993-94, after the passage of the 73rd and the 74th Amendments, one third women members were elected to local bodies. While discharging their duties,

these Elected Women Representatives in the grassroots level institutions have been facing numerous problems in their social, political, administrative settings, apart from their families since their entry into the local bodies. They do not have a common platform to express their grievances and get them redressed. Even though the 73rd Amendment Act provided greater opportunities to women to actively participate in and to become leaders of rural local bodies in the governing and decision-making process, it is imperative to recognise the true nature of the social inequalities and disabilities that hamper them.

Before the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, special opportunities had been provided to women by way of co-option or nomination in the social bodies and cooperatives. But it was a kind of tokenism. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment to the Indian Constitution made a decade ago brought to the fore one million women at the helm of affairs in their villages in a meaningful way. The 33.3% reservation (Now amendment has been made to increase the reservation to 50 %) of seats in the rural local bodies for women has provided opportunity to exercise political power for the social and economic development of their area. This critical mass of women is expected to perform a critical function and thereby the process of development will take a new turn and women's participation in governance will produce far reaching implications in the lives of the people. The decentralisation process has opened up opportunities for women and other marginalised groups to influence the process of governance. This is the greatest experiment in the contemporary situation by transferring decision making power to one million elected local government representatives. The new dispensation has opened up an opportunity for many women with different socio-economic backgrounds to climb up the ladder of power with different sets of limitations and disabilities. However there are a variety of barriers to women hailing from marginalised sections exercising power. It is a challenge to work for the social, economic and political empowerment of women, particularly of the marginalised sections. No doubt it is necessary to work for the goal of empowering women for which the oppressive power of the existing gender relations is to be exposed, challenged and shaped.

Effective political participation by women at the grassroots level is crucial for democratic decentralisation. The political process in India so far has allowed very limited opportunities for women's participation in the electoral process. Furthermore patriarchy and socio-economic marginalisation have driven women into the backwaters of politics. In other words, half of the population was denied the basic human right of participation in political institutions. In the above context, the Government of India enacted the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in the Parliament.

10.6 WOMEN AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

According to India's Nobel Laureate for Developmental Economics Amartya Sen, organising women to experiment with forms of constructive dissent raises questions regarding their state and society and helping them arrive at answers as a natural guarantor of development. In reality, Elected Women Representatives are demonstrating their leadership and ability. Equity and equality between women and men are slowly emerging.

Women are dealing with power relations in their daily lives through their coping strategies at socio-cultural and economic levels. Even though the common perception of formal politics fails to include women, politics in various forms and manifestations is present in the daily lives of women. This may be attributed to the patriarchal system and the socio-

cultural economic and religious norms and practices. Women have been excluded from the political power structures which have resulted in inequitable sharing of resources.

The ideology of division of labour forces, women to be confined to the private sphere of life and restricts women's very existence within domestic roles as wives and mothers. Male hegemony prevails in the decision-making process in the private as well as the public sectors. Politics should be a democratic, participatory accountable and transparent means to bring about a just, humane and equitable society. The political system should incorporate the interests of and be accessible to all sections of society of which women constitute half. High cost of electioneering, improper and illegal practices, violence and corruption are some of the reasons that prevent women from participating in politics.

In the states of South Asia, the public/private divide is constituted and operated in gendered terms. Masculinity is associated with the public, worldly space and femininity with the private, domestic realm. This appears to hold even when the classification of any given activity as feminine or masculine, private or public varies by state and within a state, depending on the nature of the activity.

For women, the split between the public and the private is informed by gendered notions of legitimate and illegitimate social behaviour where chastity and modernity are privileged as markers of "good" womanhood. To be a female public actor is a contradiction in terms. Complying with the prescriptions of good behaviour translates as confining oneself to the domestic realm, desisting from association with men outside the prescribed kin group and especially ensuring that one is not implicated in any activity that may be scripted as immodest and therefore immoral. This restriction has important consequences for women's material independence and access to education, both determining entry into public spaces, and both essentially locating women as autonomous citizens complementary to their position within their families and communities. Its implications for women as political actors are debilitating. To expose oneself outside the domestic space may place one's reputation at risk, an argument that is also employed to blame women who are sexually harassed or assaulted while engaging in non-domestic activity, and to justify such violence.

The tensions in the sexual division of labour and the attendant demarcations of private and public may also be implicated in the community-state relation. While devolving power to communities, the state could resist the consideration that women are better placed than men to manage certain essential resources such as potable water. Women occupy this place because they are most likely to need and utilise such resources in their daily labouring for the benefit of families and the community. Due to the sexual division of labour, it can be argued that women are in fact primary mediators of the resources consumption or utility, but the state continues to see women as unqualified. This resistance by the state is compounded where women themselves may take it for granted that they cannot possibly be engaged in resource management that is deemed a public/communal matter.

Table No.3 Comparative data

	Brazil	China	France	Germany	India	Spain	Sweden	United States
Labour force participation (female-to-male ratio)	0.71	0.84	0.79	0.77	0.41	0.66	0.87	0.82
Gender Gap Index Performance out of 115 countries	67	63	70	5	98	11	1	23
Literacy rate (female-to-male ratio)	1	0.91	1	1	0.65	0.98	1	1
Enrolment in primary education (female-to-male ratio)	0.94	1	1	1	0.94	0.99	1	0.96
Enrolment in secondary education (female-to-male ratio)	1.1	0.97	1.02	0.98	0.79	1.04	1.03	1.02
Enrolment in tertiary education (female-to-male ratio)	1.02	0.85	1.28	1	0.66	1.22	1.55	1.39
Sex ratio at birth (female-to-male ratio)	0.95	0.89	0.95	0.94	0.95	0.93	0.94	0.95
Women in parliament (%)	9	25	14	47	9	56	9	18
Year women got the right to vote	1934	1949	1944	1918	1950	1931	1862	1920
Length of paid maternity leave, in days	120	Min 90	112	98	84	112	480	0
% of salary paid during maternity leave	100	100	100 up to ceiling	100	100	100	80 to 100	0
Time off including paid leave	0	0	3 years	3 years	0	3 years	1.5 years	84 days

International Labour Organization, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Health Organization, Inter-Parliamentary Union, World Economic Forum, government web sites

Table No.4 Work Participation Rate in India

All India	Total population			Total Workers			Work Participation rate		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Male	Female
2001									
Total	1025251059	530422415	494828644	402512190	275463736	127048454	39.26	51.93	25.68
Rural	740255371	380438194	359817177	310655339	199199602	111455737	41.97	52.36	30.98
Urban	284995688	149984221	135011467	91856851	76264134	15592717	32.23	50.85	11.55

Source: Census of India, 2001

Box2: Global Gender Gap

The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2010 reveals India's dismal position. Out of 134 countries surveyed, India is among the lowest ranked countries at the 112th position, with a score of 0.6155. The index ranks 134 economies according to the size of the gaps between men and women. India (112) occupies one of the last places in the regional rankings. India and Pakistan perform above average on the political empowerment of women, particularly India, but lag behind in the other three categories of economic participation, educational attainment and health. In particular, the persistent health, education and economic participation gaps will be detrimental to India's growth; India is the lowest ranked of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) economies featured in the Index. The study predicts that over the next five years, these effects will be seen most clearly in China and Russia, and to a lesser extent in Vietnam, Mexico, Brazil and Indonesia. In the subsequent decade (2015-25), these dynamics are likely to remain strong in Mexico and Russia, and to continue to strengthen in China, Indonesia, Vietnam, India and the Philippines. India's middle class will see rapid growth of a very low base, but the shifts in spending that are outlined are likely to remain constrained by women's relatively low status, at least for the next 10 to 15 years. The Global Gender Gap Report's index assesses 134 countries on how well they divide resources and opportunities amongst male and female populations, regardless of the overall levels of these resources. The report measures the size of the gender inequality gap in four areas:

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

India:

Economic Participation and Opportunity: Rank 128; score 0.403; global average 0.590

Educational Attainment: Rank 120; score 0.837; global average 0.929

Health and Survival: Rank 132; score 0.931; global average 0.955

Political Empowerment: Rank 23; score 0.291; global average 0.179

Though women enter the public sphere (through nationalist struggles or revolutionary movements, for instance) and actively participate in it, there is nothing immutable about this. They frequently retreat into the more cloistered private sphere – either because the state and the law force them to do so, or because patriarchal ideology in society reasserts itself. Three very different experiences validate this point: (1) in East Europe, as already mentioned, the Communist project of gender equality was perceived as forced emancipation while democratic transition was perceived as providing freedom for women to retreat into the private sphere. Further even where women want more time for child rearing and family than a career permits this is because the rules by which the public sphere is constituted are male oriented: concepts of work, time are the crucial indicators of these for example, late night meetings long hours etc. (2) in Iran, the modern secular-albeit elite- woman of the mid-20th century was transformed by the Islamic revolution into the modern militant Muslim woman. Women's employment came to be confined to those professions which were seen to be "feminine" in nature (such as teaching or nursing) or compatible with family responsibilities. A survey of government recruitment agencies in 1985 showed that only 6% of public sector jobs were open to women and the remaining 94% were open exclusively to men. (3) A study of women's politics in North Bihar, India, contrasts the role of women politics in the 1930s with that in 1989. The participation of women in the freedom movement was widespread (albeit in clandestine activities, because they were less likely to be searched by the police), but in 1989, a kind of "political purdah" had come into being so that women experienced and participated in local politics through a system outside the electoral arena. Therefore whether women move from active participation in an anti-colonial nationalist movement, or in an Islamic revolutionary movement, or indeed a post-communist transition to democracy the results appear not to be markedly different.

In the meanwhile, the globalisation of the economy has exerted different types of impacts on the Indian women at different levels with differences of intensity. Likewise the localisation of the political process is going to make an impact on the life of the women. The negative impact of the globalisation cannot be overcome through the localisation of the political process if women are not properly oriented, trained, capacitated, consciensitised and associated. The enhancement of the overall empowerment of women to draw women into the public space could be achieved through localisation of the political process.

The globalisation process has driven a variety of social groups into poverty and the poverty alleviation task has become quite complicated. Further, all the routes to access to resources for women, particularly poor women, have been closed as the market-driven approach has taken away all the common resources. In the competitive market process, the rights of women and the marginalised sections are the casualties. How to protect their rights enshrined in the Constitution and secure their livelihood are the major issues being faced by the women who are in the thick of the women's movement.

10.7 SUMMARY

The decentralisation process has opened up opportunities for women and other marginalised groups to influence the allocation of government and community resources in their favour and protect and promote the women rights. However, there are a variety of barriers to women hailing from the marginalised sections exercising their powers. It is a challenge to work for the social, economic and political empowerment of women, particularly those

from marginalised sections. No doubt it is necessary to work for the goal of empowering women for which the oppressive power of the existing gender relations is to be exposed and challenged. Further the gender relations have to be reshaped. This exercise could be started at the level of the Elected Women Representatives of rural local bodies as they constitute a critical mass since one third of seats have been reserved for women. The critical mass will be able to perform the critical function only if they are oriented, consciensitised and trained in the methodology of deconstruction and reconstruction of gender relations.

10.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Analyse the efforts of United Nations for the empowerment of women.
2. Explain the participation of women's economic activities by using few countries' data.
3. Analyse the issue of women's political participation in India.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 11 WOMEN AND ENVIRONMENT

Structure

11.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

11.2 Women as Nurturers of Nature

11.3 Gender and Environment Debate

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11.5 Women's Works on Environment

11.6 Summary

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Suggested Readings

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Throughout the ages, it has been an accepted fact that women have been crucial in taking care of the household and surroundings. While men went out for hunting for food, it women who took care of the household, nurturing children, taking adequate care of their food, clothing and other necessities. They took up jobs as varied as spinning, weaving, educating the children, taking care of the elders in the family and so on. Therefore, the roles that were defined were traditional in nature. Gradually, through passage of time, the roles of women in urban and rural areas too differed, with the urban women taking up jobs in offices and education fields, rural women mostly engaged in agricultural fields. Therefore, it has been assumed that women are the prime caretakers in whatever they do. The identity of women in this culture, as in most others is tied to caring. By caring we mean the physical and economical supports that women give others as part of their daily activities. They are taught to care for children, men and the sick, elderly and disabled dependents in the family, and therefore, by extension, in the community (Parveen, Uzma, 2009, p.25). Due to their traditional roles, women have been specially recognised as caretakers of natural environment and ecology too for they travel long distances in search of wood for cooking, carrying water and other items necessary for household consumption.

Aims and Objectives

This Unit would enable you to understand

- The traditional role of women as caretakers of environment;
- Various debates on the role of women and
- The concept of eco-feminism.

11.2 WOMEN AS NURTURERS OF NATURE

The stories of women for their valour as well as capacity are manifold. Throughout history, their deeds have been glorified in innumerable words. Their struggles, sacrifices

and saga of achievements are diverse. Women have been worshipped as Goddesses of wealth, knowledge, wisdom, for creation and sustenance of this whole creation. They have been hailed as the form of 'shakti' (divine power) that would care for this humanity, destroy the evil and nurture the good on this earth. Therefore, their reverence and care for nature has been duly recognised all through the ages and history. "Women hold up half of the sky, make up one half of the world's task force, and fulfil one half of the planet's potential. In women lie nature's best qualities of motherhood, compassion, humanity and love. Because they have been blessed with the capacity for giving and nurturing life, women also have the capacity for a deep commitment for preserving and nourishing not only their own offspring, but of the entire planet as well" (The Times of India, 9th March, 2003). As Uzma observes, women are in direct and daily contact with environment through their use of resource (food, fuel and water) and through their efforts to maintain secure and healthy environment for their families. They have a major role in managing natural resources- soil, water, forests and energy. Their tasks in agriculture and animal husbandry as well as in the household make them daily managers of the family living environments (Songsore, J and McGranahan, G, 1996. Cit in Parveen, Uzma, pp.26-27).

Women are said to have more capacity than men in meeting environmental challenges, the crisis that emanates during natural calamities or other forms of environmental degradation like pollution of all sorts. They work harder than men in keeping the entire household and surroundings clean and maintain hygiene. In the urban settings, the task is all the more arduous because in lower income groups, the families often end up living in slums and unhygienic conditions, making the task of women all the more difficult. The task of fetching water is more or less similar in the roles of urban and rural women. While in rural areas, women go as far as seven or ten kilometers to fetch water, in urban areas, it varies from 20-100 metres distance. In both the cases, by spending so much time on these activities, women give an extra time to fulfil these household duties. Water is one natural resource that has become scarce in nature and over which many conflicts have arisen.

Fuel is another resource for which women struggle to meet their ends. While in urban areas, the liquid petroleum gas (LPG) cylinder is used widely, its scarce availability often puts the women in difficult positions. In rural areas, women walk long distances trying to find wood that could be used for cooking purposes. The energy from solar and bio-fuels are yet to be tapped. The use of wood, dung and coal often prove to be harmful but women undergo these troubles in the long-term interests of their household sustenance. This, in a way, reduces their average life expectancy and mortality levels.

Noted academic Bina Agarwal observes that, "the gathering of food alone demands an elaborate knowledge of the nutritional and medicinal properties of plants, roots and trees, including a wide reserve knowledge of edible plants not normally used but critical for coping with prolonged shortages during climatic disasters". It is women who have kept alive these traditional resource management and knowledge and have greatly contributed to devising coping up mechanisms during any kind of disasters. The caring of nature has thus a gender-specific dimension, wherein women are often taken as surviving any calamity and responsible for restoration of nature to its originality. Women, as Guha says, are more likely to perceive scarcity and shortage and are thus more keen to combat or overcome it. Their energetic participation in protest movements has been something of a surprise in this traditional, convention-bound society (Guha, 2006, p.59).

The role of women in various environmental movements is highly recognised and lauded. They have been at the forefront preventing the destruction of environment and saving the surrounding ecology and as well as inhabitants. Two prime examples in our country include The Chipko Movement (literally meaning Hug the Trees Movement) and Narmada Bachao Movement (Save Narmada Movement). While the former prevented the felling of trees in the Himalayan region for commercial purposes, the latter sought to rehabilitate and provide adequate compensation to those displaced due to flooding of the villages because of dam construction. In both the cases, women have taken lead to protect and preserve the natural environment.

A striking feature of environmental movements in modern India, as Ramachandra Guha says, has been the crucial role played by women. They have taken to the streets to protest forest felling, unregulated mining, displacement, and overfishing. They have also taken the lead in programs of environmental restoration; in the planting up of bare hillsides, in the conservation of local sources of water supply, and in the promotion of energy-efficient technologies (Guha, 2006, p.58).

11.3 GENDER AND ENVIRONMENT DEBATE

The debate on gender and environment has two dimensions: (1) that gender mediates human/environment interactions and all environmental use, knowledge, and assessment; and (2) that gender roles, responsibilities, expectations, norms and the division of labour shape all forms of human relationships to the environment. "The ancient identity of nature as a nurturing mother links women's history with the history of the environment and ecological change....In investigating the roots of our current environmental dilemma and its connections to science, technology, and the economy, we must re-examine the formation of a world view and a science that, by reconceptualizing reality as a machine rather than a living organism, sanctioned the domination of both nature and women" (Carolyn Merchant). Since ages, it has been categorised that men are more attached to culture while women are attached to nature. Since nature is considered as inferior to culture, women got dominated over by men. This is the traditional perspective over which many perspectives and thoughts emerged over a period of time. As Sherry Ortner argued, the connection between women and nature was clearly rooted in the biological processes of reproduction. Many others did not subscribe to the nature-culture dichotomy but would agree that biologically and ideologically, women are more attached to nature. To quote Merchant further, "between sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the scientific revolution and the growth of a market-oriented culture in Europe undermined the image of an organic cosmos with a living female, earth at its centre. This image gave way to a mechanistic world-view in which nature was reconceived as something to be mastered and controlled by humans. The twin ideas of mechanism and of dominance over nature supported both the denudation of nature and male domination over women".

The concept of male domination over women and its equating with control over nature has gained wide acceptance. Men are usually seen as materialistic in their outlook and women as nurturers. As for example, in the case of the Chipko Movement, the male members of the region did concede to the demand from the commercial companies and gave a go-ahead for the felling of the trees. But the women, sensing the presence of the commercial companies' efforts to cut down the forests, gathered together to save the trees from felling by making a human chain around the trees. The role of women in various environmental movements have come to gain more prominence thereby making the

environmental movements synonymous with women's inclination towards nature's protection and their role as caretakers of natural environment.

Furthermore, women were involved in bringing the issue of environmental degradation and the necessity to take care of nature; this further strengthens the view of women being more sympathetic to nature. Even the policy-making, under women, was more pro-environment. For example, Mrs. Indira Gandhi was the first prime minister who recognised the importance of environmental conservation and represented India at the Stockholm Convention in 1972. She also brought a halt to the tree-felling activities in the Himalayan region that came under threat for commercial use.

The policy of development that is more oriented towards expanding the urban areas and which has come to be identified as against the tenets of natural environment is associated with the policy-making process by male members. As Vandana Shiva observed, "Modern reductionist science, like development, turns out to be a patriarchal project, which has excluded women as experts, and has simultaneously excluded ecology and holistic ways of knowing which understand and respect nature's processes and interconnectedness as science". She opines that the traditional knowledge systems with which women are well-versed have been affected and continue to do so under the impact of modern science. The reasons for understanding man's and woman's relationship with nature is said to have been rooted in "material reality". Men are viewed as materialistic in nature and giving into the demands of modern civilisation and its so called progress; on the other hand, women are taken as the first victims of whatsoever damage is done to the society in any form. It is even more so in the case of environmental degradation. Since they are the gatherers of the household necessities, their problems become manifold.

With more and more parts of the world reeling under the impact of environmental degradation, problems like natural resource depletion, deforestation, deteriorating soil conditions and perennial water problems apart from pollutions of all kinds have multiplied. The trend is towards taking away the rights of local communities with regard to the environment. Many a system have been affected in the process and there is a gradual erosion of traditional resource management system, knowledge and wisdom that once greatly contributed to the sustenance of the communities on the whole. Increasing urbanisation, settlements, advances in science and technology and the materialistic and consumerist culture are gradually eroding the value systems towards sustaining the natural environment. In this context, the debates have centred on issues relating to man's and woman's relationship with nature. The perception has widely been that men are at the forefront of policy-making that is not conducive to environmental conservation and which is tilted more towards development that compromises environmental conservation. Women are perceived, because of their strong ideological leanings towards nature, as being the caretakers and nurturers of nature and as opposing 'development that is destructive'. The contemporary catchword is 'development without destruction' in this context.

The world over, more so in the developing world, women are participating in more and more ecological movements as the regional conditions prompt them to do so. The challenges of development in the developing world are manifold wherein, to catch up with the developed West, the nations are pursuing the policies of liberalisation and privatisation that are capital-oriented. In this scheme of development, the tilt is obviously towards compromising the environmental standards that one ought to follow. In the name of development, numerous projects are being undertaken that are greatly destroying the

environment and depleting natural resources. Therefore, the development vs environment is seen more in gender interactive terms and has marked the beginnings of gender-environment debates.

11.4 ECO-FEMINISM

The reasons for the emergence of eco-feminism are manifold. The reasons are enumerated as follows. Firstly, the nature is viewed in terms of feminine principle. Through ancient ages, women in general are considered as an inseparable part of nature. At one level, nature is symbolised as the embodiment of the feminine principle, and at another, she is nurtured by the feminine to produce life and provide sustenance (Vandana Shiva, 1988, p.38). This is a manifestation of shakti or energy, from which all existence arises. This energy is called nature (Prakriti). Nature, both animate and inanimate is thus an expression of shakti, the feminine and creative principle of the cosmos; in conjunction with the masculine principle (Purusha), Prakriti creates the world. Nature is inherently active, a powerful, productive force in the dialect of creation, renewal and sustenance of all life (Ibid). The world derives its activity and diversity manifest in the form of life on earth-mountains, trees, rivers, animals etc. The human being is to live in consonance with nature. Unfortunately, man's attitude towards nature has turned into that of a dominant force, who can subjugate nature to the maximum extent. This symbolises man's eternal urge to demonstrate domination over woman.

Vandana Shiva identifies women as traditional natural scientists, whose knowledge is ecological and plural, reflecting both the diversity of natural ecosystems and the diversity in cultures that nature based living gives rise to (p.41). She credits women with producing and reproducing life not merely biologically but also in terms of providing sustenance, more so a social role. Mies, who worked on 'Ecofeminism', describes woman's special relationship with nature. The relationship is based on mutual reciprocal process, mutual cooperation and as producers of new life. With the disharmony between both created by the affluent and consumerist culture, the natural relationship finds enormous strains. Shiva observes that the disharmony is triggered 'by the arrival of masculinist, reductionist, industrial, colonising forces of Western culture'.

The large number of women participating in the ecological movements, and even defying their men, demonstrates their innate power or shakti. In India, inspite of women's suppression, there is a universal agreement, even if grudgingly, that women are nurturers of nature. The ancient civilisation and texts have often put women on a higher pedestal in the context of ecological/ environmental concerns. This view finds a wide spread critique among the Western scholars, thus bringing to the fore the cultural differences and the perception of nature as a sacred force to be restored and not exploited.

The active participation of women in environmental movements has been widely recognised all over the world. As Guha says, 'some writers have interpreted this "feminization" of the environmental movements in terms of culture. Hindu women, they suggest, are intrinsically closer to nature than their Christian or pagan sisters. Other scholars have- more plausibly in my view- argued that the participation of women in environmental movements is better explained in terms of the division of labor within the farm household, which mandates that women and girls, and not men, forage for fuel, fodder, and water' (Guha, 2006, pp.58-59). He cites Anil Agarwal's view wherein he says that 'the destruction of the environment clearly poses the biggest threat to marginal cultures and

occupations like that of tribals, nomads, fisherfolk and artisans, which have always been heavily dependent on their immediate environment for their survival. But the maximum impact of the destruction of biomass sources is on women. Women in all rural cultures are affected, especially women from poor landless, marginal and small farming families. 'Seen from the point of view of these women, it can be argued that all development is ignorant of women's needs, and often anti-women, literally designed to increase their work burden' (Ibid, p.59).

Susan Buckingham-Hatfield explains at length about eco-feminism. Eco-feminism was coined as a term in 1974 when Frenchwoman Francoise d' Eubonne called for an ecological revolution to be led by women in order to save planet Earth. Eco-feminism has evolved both as an analysis of society-nature relations and as a prescription for how these relations can be transformed. Broadly, these analyses fall within two areas: cultural eco-feminism and social eco-feminism. Cultural eco-feminism identifies a powerful and positive link between women and nature, particularly through such female reproductive functions as childbirth and menstruation. This connection between women and nature is used to argue that women are better placed than men as advocates of nature. Social eco-feminism argues that because women and nature have both been subjugated by a society dominated by men, women, through the roles they play, are in a better position than men to speak for nature, because of this shared experience of domination. Social eco-feminists contest that there is anything more natural in a woman's body than in man's and disagree with cultural eco-feminists' belief that there is something which constitutes a woman's essence (Susan Buckingham-Hatfield, 2000, p.35).

The cultural eco-feminists basically attempt to reverse the traditional hierarchy of male domination over women demonstrating the positive side of those characteristics previously held to be inferior and stressing the importance of women-nature links to the survival of nature. On the other hand, social eco-feminist perspective argues that it is the social role ascribed to women which identifies women more closely with nature. Women's closeness to nature, they argue, is more out of the social construction through generations. It is because of this that the women find themselves unable to distance themselves from nature and experience subjugation and discrimination based on their socially ascribed caring role. These two perspectives are often incorporated in the eco-feminist arguments with ecological and social analysis.

Eco-Feminism as a broad, diverse, world-wide movement

Unique eco-feminist approaches

- Liberal eco-feminists who seek reform from within existing political and economic structures.
- Radical eco-feminists who wish to dismantle those very structures through direct action.
- Cultural eco-feminists who focus on the cultural manifestations of the women-nature connection, earth-based spirituality, goddess religions and witchcraft.
- Social eco-feminists who would build on the social ecology movement of the American anarchist philosopher Murray Bookchin in an attempt to restructure hierarchical society into egalitarian, decentralised bioregional communities.

- Socialist eco-feminists who draw on neo-Marxist philosophies to focus on the relationship between production and reproduction and on women's work in the continued biological and social reproduction of life on Earth.
- Ecological eco-feminists who strive to show the respects in which eco-feminism and the science of ecology (specifically eco-system ecology) share vital similarities.
- Deep ecological eco-feminists who draw on the work of the Norwegian philosopher, Arne Naess, and strive to dismantle both anthropocentrism (human-centredness) and androcentrism (male-centredness).
- Critical or transformative eco-feminists who wish to transform the very categories of masculine and feminine and the divisive nature of dualistic rationality.
- Aboriginal or native eco-feminists who live close to nature, nurturing sacred lands and reconsecrating degraded spaces.
- Eco-feminism of the Third world who criticise maldevelopment in the First World and show us how women of colour may be in a privileged position because their minds are not yet colonized and because they do not profit from the oppression of others.

Source: Hallen (1994: 207).

There are also varied opinions regarding the subject of eco-feminism. For example, Val Plumwood is apprehensive about the focus on women's proximity to nature, which is rather a burdensome perspective and can lead to women's role in cleaning up the environment by appealing to their feelings of guilt and motherly duty. Janet Biehl expressed the view that women are being asked to take the fall to save the planet. Carolyn Merchant proposes a partnership ethic in which men and women enjoy a non-hierarchical partnership with nature. Karen Warren too shares this view by advocating the interpersonal relationships of mutuality, care, reciprocity, friendship, appropriate trust and love. Plumwood specifically propounds that the feminine traits of caring, naturalness and embodiedness are the result of domination and this led to the dualistic thinking, which she proposes to do away with.

Cecile Jackson criticises eco-feminism for too much of idealising women and for obscuring the differences and conflicts between them. She particularly identifies the tension between women in the North and South, where the former tend to construct the latter as 'victims'. In South, she argues, women's relationship to each other and to the environment is heavily influenced by their class, age and position in the family and that any of these factors might result in treating the environment less favourably than eco-feminists would expect (cited in Susan Buckingham, pp.38-41). Biehl specifically denounces the role of women as special custodians of nature and advocates more of a society in which men and women aspire to an ethic of humanity. In spite of the differing views, most of them agree to the fact that eco-feminism should be more inclusive and pluralistic and should give space to many of the voiceless people.

11.5 WOMEN'S WORKS ON ENVIRONMENT

Some of the most illuminating works on nature/ environment have been written by women who held pioneering positions in their respective fields. In the following paragraphs, we enumerate the works of six prominent women who contributed extensively to the subject

of nature/ environment. **Anna Botsford Comstock** (1854-1930) was one such distinguished women who greatly contributed to the nature study. Around 1893, a serious agricultural depression in the north-eastern part of the United States of America drove many a people to migrate to the cities. This led to a natural concern for the rural life and led her to work extensively on the American nature-study movement. Born into a Quaker family, her higher education consisted of her inquiry into the peripheries of science in art, popularization, and children's education. As Pamela Henson states, Comstock found it more comfortable to incorporate her aesthetic appreciation of nature into scientific interpretation for children and a popular audience. This appreciation was part of her overall sense of subjective connectedness to the world around her. Anna Comstock experienced the natural world in emotional terms and felt a sense of personal relationship and responsibility to living things around her. She was able to channel her own feeling for nature and her progressive social ideals into an educational and environmental philosophy much needed in her cultural period in America. Her philosophy was that at the heart of a fully human existence is the cultivated imagination and insight for truth and beauty, as found in nature (Peter Blaze Corcoran, p.139). She opined that nature was a nurse for human health and she reiterated these opinions through her writings. In 1911, she published her famous work 'Handbook of Nature-Study'. She actively advocated educational reform and nature conservation and saw the love for nature as the best motivator.

Rachel Carson (1907-1964) was also a distinguished writer and thinker on the subject of nature. A renowned biologist, she wrote extensively in three volumes on the subject of sea and came to be known as the biographer of the sea. She raised certain fundamental questions about the human knowledge of the nature and how science can reveal such knowledge to the human beings. Rachel Carson's philosophy of environmental education speaks of sensory creatures in a sensory world, humble citizens of a mysterious universe, and people free to place themselves under the influences of earth, sea, and sky and their amazing life'. In 1958, she decided to write a brief article on the impact of DDT spraying upon bird life that led to one of the most extensive researches and one that became a path breaking work *Silent Spring*. Translated into every possible language, 'it crystallized an ethic of the environment which inspired grassroots environmentalism, the deep ecology movement and the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and its state counterparts; it influenced the ecofeminist movement and feminist scientists'. Carson's environmental philosophy raises questions about the nature of nature and human knowledge of it; it invites the reader to stand in wonder at the depth of nature's influence upon values and attitudes; and it calls a people to their responsibility to halt its destruction. Indeed, the recent intellectual history of environmental thought owes much to the wisdom of this remarkable scientist, writer, educator, elder and lover of nature (Joy Palmer, p.199).

Dr.Gro Harlem Brundtland (born 1939), Norwegian by birth, is known for her great interest in the field of public health issues and environmental concerns and these concerns that reflected in her writings, catapulted her to international repute. It brought to the fore the global environmental thinking that is the hallmark of every nation's policy on environment. She was also an active public figure who worked for the Norwegian Labour Movement and became the Minister of the Environment in 1974. She became the Prime Minister of Norway at a young age of 41 years and continued to hold the post for more than a decade. It was during this time that she gained international recognition for championing and promoting the principle of sustainable development. In 1983, she was invited by the then United Nations Secretary General to establish and chair the World

Commission of Environment and Development. The Commission published its seminal report *Our Common Future* or what is also called as *The Brundtland Report*. This Report also led to the holding of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The Report highlights the points that the basic needs of humanity should be given over-riding priority and that there are limits to development as the capacity of the earth is limited to absorb human activities. It calls for ensuring a sustainable level of population, conserving the resource base and merging of the environment and economics in policy decision-making processes. Touching upon the common concerns, challenges and endeavours, the Report brought to the fore the necessity of reformulating the policies on environment and development and bring about a positive amalgamation of both. Indeed Dr.Brundtland's contribution is remarkable and would continue to inspire future generations too.

Val Plumwood (born 1939) began her work on environmental philosophy alongwith her husband Richard Routley in the early 1970s. Much known as an eco-feminist, she articulated her views in her work *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993); she opines that dualism has deeply marked the concepts of nature and reason. The environmental crisis, according to her, is a crisis of this dualistic reason, a form of rationality expressed especially in the contemporary global market, which conceives rationality as self-interest in opposition both to the emotions and to the ecologically situated body. Plumwood argues from an eco-socialist perspective against the treatment of animals and nature as property under capitalism and for the ecological virtues of more egalitarian and democratic social systems.

Another eminent thinker and contemporary feminist poet, **Susan Griffin** (born 1943) reflected her concerns on nature although her works, especially in her prose-poem, *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (1978). It stands out as a key text of environmental thought and a germinative work of ecofeminism. In her works, she diagnosed the ills of the Western mind and also constantly focused on the ill-treatment meted out to the nature and women in the patriarchal culture. She writes that 'we belong to a civilization which is bent upon suicide, which is secretly committed to destroying nature and destroying the self that is Nature'. In the context of environmental thought, Griffin's profound insight that gender issues and ecological issues are interconnected has been responsible for transforming both feminism and environmental thought' (Joy Palmer, p.301).

Vandana Shiva (born 1952) is one of the most articulate environmentalists of India and has gained international repute with many of her seminal works in the field of environment. She devoted her time to take up environmental activism and founded the Research Foundation for Science Technology and Ecology to articulate the emerging social and ecological issues. She is a prolific author, encompassing multi-disciplinary scholarship, on the subjects biodiversity, biopiracy, ecofeminism, food security and so on. Her work *Staying Alive* gives an insight into the plight of women in the developing world; she called for a turn-around in the development mindset, and for the feminine principle to be applied to substitute the sanctity of life for the sanctified development concept rooted in patriarchy. She brought to the fore agricultural ills through her work *The Violence of the Green Revolution*. She took up an untiring crusade against Monsanto's agenda to monopolise the global water supplies. For her outstanding contribution to the field of environment, she continues to receive worldwide recognition and numerous awards. As Lynne Dumble says, Vandana Shiva's presence is one of the authority, carrying weight

within government and non-government, academic and non-academic, feminist and non-feminist, rural and urban, and national and international circles. She stands as a beacon of hope for the global Green movement and the world's expanding underclass of poverty-stricken farmers, most found in developing regions, and the majority of women, prey for transnational corporations carrying the global order's imprimatur to turn life resources into money-making commodities in the third millennium' (Joy Palmer, p.320).

11.6 SUMMARY

In this Unit, you have learnt about the women's contribution to the field of environment and how traditionally as well as in modern times, they have come to be identified as nurturers of nature. The debates on gender and environment have been given an insight in this Unit. The Unit also highlights the eco-feminism debate, its support and critique base. It also highlights the outstanding contribution of some of the women throughout history and in the contemporary times by citing the case studies of six eminent women. In final, we need to understand the role of women in multi-dimensional approach, taking into view the feminist and non-feminist approaches.

11.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss briefly the role of women as nurturers of nature.
2. Discuss at length, in your own words, the gender-environment debate.
3. What do you understand by eco-feminism? Examine the various aspects associated with it.
4. Discuss in detail the outstanding contribution of women in the field of environment. Cite case studies as examples.

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UNIT 12 CASE STUDIES (GREEN BELT, SEWA, GRAMEEN BANK AND SELF-HELP GROUPS)

Structure

12.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

12.2 Green Belt Movement

12.3 SEWA

12.4 Grameen Bank

12.5 DWCRA Self-Help Groups

12.6 Summary

12.7 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Peace is achieved through numerous methods; through pacts, social work, through cultural exchanges, and many such endeavours. Women are perceived as sincere in these efforts, and numerous cases have surfaced over the ages proving that they are indeed at the forefront in making peace a goal that could be realised through sustainable amicable methods. Not only are the women leading such endeavours but are also joining such efforts where men are taking the lead, for an equal number of men too have contributed to achieving and sustaining peace in their respective areas of work. In this Unit, we would discuss some such case studies where efforts have been made to bring peace in fields as varied as environment, social work, economic endeavours, especially through self-help groups. Self-help groups reflect the aims, aspirations and successful implementation of the welfare schemes when taken up with right means and goals. These groups continue to grow from strength to strength and have proved useful all over the world in achieving many noble goals like securing environment; alleviating rural poverty and hunger; promote women empowerment and entrepreneurship; and finally towards peaceful and nonviolent society. As Gandhi often reiterated, women are stronger in every way. He also stressed that they need to be empowered for their empowerment would contribute to the betterment of the society on the whole. Many leaders have taken lead in ensuring the success of these methods, especially by following the Gandhian line of thought and action. They continue to influence the replication of such methods all through the world and make them worthy of emulation.

Aims and Objectives

This Unit would enable you to understand

- The dynamics involved in the system of self-help groups;

- The evolution and successful functioning of self-help groups around the world;
- Their importance and significant work that helped in alleviating poverty and hunger.

12.2 GREEN BELT MOVEMENT

By awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to Wangari Maathai of Kenya for her efforts towards conserving trees, the Nobel Peace Committee acknowledged the fact that ‘Peace depends on our ability to secure our environment’. This is first time in the history of the peace prize awards that environment also came to be considered as a necessary requisite if peace is to be established in the society. Maathai was the founder of the Green Belt Movement in Kenya. The movement started in Central Kenya in 1976, organised local groups to plant an estimated 30 million trees in the regions of Eastern and Southern Africa. The reasons for the onset of this movement are numerous: the reduction of forest cover to 2.5-3 percent; massive malnutrition and lack of clean water and fire wood for cooking; the region being arid, semi-arid and desert; drying up of rivers; incapacity of the lands to absorb the rain water; 80-90 percent of population that lives in rural areas depends on natural resources and energy for survival; increasing urban settlements that put enormous pressure on natural resources; pressure on land resources and threats to survival. The movement aimed at planting of trees, cultivation of nurseries, follow-up of taking care of trees, liaison with government foresters, dissemination of basic knowledge of tree planting and maintenance, mobilising public support. People were organised into communities, where they discussed their problems, and tried to find solutions. Soon, they realised that they could put their own knowledge and skills into the movement instead of waiting for governmental support. For their work, these tree-planters earned a nominal amount of money for each tree they planted and ensured their survival for six months. Wangari Maathai too began instructing people to plant trees and take care of them. By the year 2000, the members of the Green Belt Movement planted over thirty million trees in Kenya. The Green Belt groups, as they came to be known as, involved thousands of men and women, who manage over 6000 tree nurseries in the country today.

The movement and its techniques were shared by leaders of other countries who initiated this movement in their respective countries. The Programme emphasised the role of women under the aegis of National Council of Women of Kenya. The movement had its own share of troubles as it encountered resistance from the government officials, who were involved in giving away forest and park areas to garner support for the government. Further, there was a vicious campaigning about the movement, its negative effects, spreading rumours regarding the personal life of the leaders, forcing dissenters to quit jobs, and imprisoning the leaders, spreading fear among the public, and other such negative tactics. Nevertheless, The Green Belt groups followed the non-violent means to counter the vicious campaign by writing to the government officials, sending petitions, writings in newspapers and so on.

Today this movement has an existing network of over 4,000 community groups in Kenya that counter problems like climate change. The voluntary workforce of women and men makes it one of the most successful movements in the arena of the natural environment protection. The groups are actively involved in countering the environmental crisis through three methods: (1) mitigation of carbon sequestration through tree planting and ecosystem conservation and management; (2) adaptation, promoting tree planting and sustainable agricultural techniques including growing of indigenous food crops to enhance food security, harvesting rain water and curbing soil erosion to build resilience; (3) promotion

of sustainable development, livelihood diversification and education to become more economically resilient and make progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). (www.greenbeltmovement.org). The Movement marked the finding of local solutions to global problems; addressing local needs through effective networking and sharing of knowledge; and evolving a model of environment conservation that could be emulated worldwide. It also emphasises the need to create effective community networks for long-term solutions to the impending problems everywhere.

In final, it is necessary to recollect the words of Wangari Maathai in her acceptance speech of Nobel peace Prize regarding the movement and its work: “The women we worked with recounted that unlike in the past, they were unable to meet their basic needs. This was due to the degradation of their immediate environment as well as the introduction of commercial farming, which replaced the growing of household food crops. But international trade controlled the price of the exports from these small-scale farmers and a reasonable and just income could not be guaranteed. I came to understand that when the environment is destroyed, plundered or mismanaged, we undermine our quality of life and that of future generations. Tree planting became a natural choice to address some of the initial basic needs identified by women. Also, tree planting is simple, attainable and guarantees quick, successful results within a reasonable amount of time. This sustains interest and commitment. So, together, we have planted over 30 million trees that provide fuel, food, shelter, and income to support their children’s education and household needs. The activity also creates employment and improves soils and watersheds. Through their involvement, women gain some degree of power over their lives, especially their social and economic position and relevance in the family. This work continues”.

12.3 SEWA

The Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA), formed in 1972, and founded by Ela R Bhatt, is a formidable group that operates like a trade union and organises women force into cooperatives. The major functioning of this group is non-violent in nature, following the Gandhian lines. Ela Bhatt is widely recognised as an extraordinary entrepreneur in grassroots development. She devoted her life to improve the lives of poorest and most oppressed women workers. She was also a former member of the Parliament. She followed Gandhiji’s principles and ideals all through her life and put them into practice. Its emphasis is on women empowerment and providing them a source of livelihood and also organise them into cooperatives wherein they can empower themselves through their work in small businesses and other unorganised sectors. These women belong to economically weaker sections, traditional crafts and occupations, and have access to little or no assets. Most of these women are self-employed and belong to informal sector where they do not get regular wages nor do they have any savings owing to extremely poor conditions. They are also mostly engaged in agricultural sector or sell home-based products.

These self-employed women could be divided into the following groups: (a) home-based producers: work relates to weaving, pottery, rolling of bidi, making agarbati, papad (wafers) and make ready-made garments, spin yarn, or those who do embroidery work; (b) petty vendors and hawkers, who sell vegetables, fruits, and other household items from their carts or makeshift stores; and (c) service providers: manual laborers such as agricultural laborers, construction workers, contract laborers, laundry and domestic workers. They also include rag pickers and workers who gather forest products (SEWA, 1995, p.

Most of the SEWA's members are based in the rural areas (Rekha Datta, 2003, p.351). Since their foundation in 1972, SEWA has transformed itself from a trade organization of poor, self-employed workers to a labor, cooperative, and women's movement, which has contributed significantly to the economic and social well being of large numbers of women and households. An Executive Committee consisting of twenty-five trade leaders and four staff organizers runs the organization. The meeting takes place once a month to discuss strategies and resolutions for the public and government. These issues relate to wages, social problems such as alcoholism, and domestic violence and so on (Ibid). The focus of SEWA is on women's struggle to address these issues.

SEWA aims at achieving women empowerment through remuneration, job opportunities, skill development in marginal sectors. It seeks to focus on issues of self-help, strengthening women's bargaining power, provides new alternatives, and gives them opportunities of economic self-sufficiency. The members function on need-based model, seeks opinion from the fellow workers by asking questions as to an increasing number of members getting better income, food and nutrition, health, child care, housing, assets, organizational strength, leadership, and self-reliance at an individual or collective level. They also seek opinion on specific matters like the type of work, remuneration or security of the women need. This is also used as a benchmark for estimating the organisation's success. The other functions of SEWA include unionising self-employed women workers, providing credit through the SEWA bank, and research and training in several areas such as health care, childcare, literacy. SEWA thus operates as a union, cooperatives, bank, and services.

The rural households in India, for their livelihood needs and income, depend on agriculture, livestock, handlooms and handicrafts. There are numerous small scale or village industries that provide them employment for meeting their minimum basic needs. SEWA helps women belonging to this kind of sections in earning incomes or making benefits through the production and sale of products and services. The reliance of women on these alternative sources of income reduced their dependence on traditional practices and seasonal employment during the times of need. SEWA provided the necessary leadership to organise them into groups and established milk, child care, and health cooperatives, handicrafts, and credit and savings groups. In some districts they organised women dairy producers. In some other districts, the crafts-women were linked to markets to sell their products at much higher prices for this would eliminate the involvement of middlemen who would buy these products at a lower price and sell them in the market at much higher rates. SEWA also helped women in recycling paper, sell garments and vegetables. The women were often harassed by the middlemen and police and pay bribes to them to allow them to sell their products. These would leave them with little income thus pushing them into further deprivation. SEWA organisers, in order to help women who faced regular extortion, often held meetings with the police so as to stop the harassment of women.

The SEWA cooperatives thus helped women in getting economic and social security. It also transformed the workers into producers of goods and services, owners, consumers, and managers thus honing their entrepreneurial skills. For over two decades, SEWA has helped increase rural women's employment in the areas of land- and livestock based work and home crafts. "For self-employed workers who have no control over capital and other resources, and no economic security," cooperatives provide year-round employment (SEWA, 1997, p. 13). They are empowered to ask for higher wages and "interact with

economic and social structure with self-respect and dignity, as equals” (SEWA, 1998, p. 21). In turn, this strengthens the “union and hence, the workers’ movement as a whole” (SEWA, 1997, p. 29).

Self-employed women, who participate in SEWA as a union, often lend voice to their collective struggle and assist each other in generating more income and power and helps members to overcome inequality. Cooperatives, which are independent and have their own management teams, focus on employment, financial services, health and childcare, and other related tasks. “While the union mainly concentrates on struggle and cooperatives focus on development, there are elements of struggle and development in the action and activities of both” (SEWA 2000, p. 5). The union undertakes the job of grooming leaders and promotes awareness about laws and the rights of self-employed women. They have also learnt to wage struggles against unscrupulous middlemen who obstruct their access to markets. Since the women lack working capital and do not own assets, they are provided credit and financial help from the SEWA bank that provides them loans. This not only enabled them in asset creation but also increase their savings and provide best education and health care to their families.

As the founder member, Ela Bhatt says, “SEWA has been working to transform the traditional economy and its women into a modern economy while maintaining the traditional systems. Not only India, but Indian women, Indian poor women, are coming to centre stage. The dynamism in them comes from two sources, as SEWA members indicated to us: a powerful commitment to join the mainstream and the selective adaptation of enduring values, spirituality, relations, aesthetics, and knowledge system. The selective adaptation of the early years has helped Indian poor women move more rapidly into the future than ever before in India’s or Women’s history”. She also reiterates that “Gandhi’s thinking has shown us the way, a clear direction leading us to commitment, sustained efforts, a gentle but firm belief in women’s leadership in social change, and a willingness to see beyond the present. What has been inspiring about this search is realising how much we achieved, but at the same time realising that we can do much much more. We realised how significantly we were able to transform the place and time we have been through, and what is more inspiring is that it never occurred to us not to”.

12.4 GRAMEEN BANK (BANGLADESH)

The Grameen Bank model is one of the most successful experiments to alleviate rural poverty and deprivation through micro-credit system. While efforts are on everywhere to alleviate poverty through fiscal measures via existing financial institutions, it is the cooperative models that have yielded some of the best results and Grameen Bank is one such exemplary model. It has also resulted in long-term, large-scale beneficial social changes. Prof. Muhammad Yunus, eager to participate in the Bangladeshi freedom movement, left a lucrative job in the US and post-independence took up the profession of teaching. The famine of 1974 brought along certain negative effects that include the breakdown of the infrastructure, collapse of transportation system and numerous refugees, inadequate international assistance, plummeting income and levels and agricultural production, and so on. This resulted in an economic downturn for the new-born nation. Prof. Yunus evolved certain measures to improve agricultural productivity through irrigation, fertilizer and seed supplies to farmers so as to counter massive hunger and malnutrition.

The poverty levels further increased due to the common man’s inability to cope up with the hardships; also, their skills in various crafts were of no use due to the money lenders’

charging of high interest rates on money lent to the poor. The banks too declared the poor as not credit-worthy. This led to the evolution of the Grameen (Village) Bank that help disburse credit to the poor. As Prof. Yunus says, “At Grameen Bank, we challenged the financial apartheid. We dared to give the poorest people bank credit. We included destitute women who had never in their lives even touched any money...But Grameen Bank neither exploded nor disappeared. Instead, it expanded and reached more and more people. Today, it gives loans to over seven million poor people, 97 percent of whom are women, in 78,000 villages in Bangladesh”.

Since its inception, the Bank disbursed the loan amount totaling the equivalent of \$ 6 billion and the repayment rate is 98.6 percent. It makes a profit, just as any well-managed bank should do. Financially, it is self-reliant and has not taken donor money since 1995. Deposits and other resources of Grameen Bank today amount to 156 percent of all outstanding loans. The Bank has been profitable every year of its existence except 1983, 1991 and 1992. And most significant of all, according to Grameen Bank’s internal survey, 64 percent of our borrowers who have been with the bank for five years or more have crossed the poverty line (Muhammad Yunus, 2007, p.52). The Bank extends credit to poor women who are much more efficient when it comes to repayment of loans than men. Lending to women had its own benefits as it was spent on the family and children and to turn the situation to better. Housing loans were extended to them and the legal ownership of the house belonged to women. This resulted in both economic and social benefits and more than these benefits, it gave the people a sense of dignity and hope for the future. It rid them of the stigma of poverty altogether. The Bank had special social agenda and not just economic improvement in its overall scheme.

The members are divided into small groups, five in each, and for taking loan, they need the approval of each other. Although each borrower is responsible for her own loan, the group functions as a small social network that provides encouragement, psychological support, and at times practical assistance in bearing the unfamiliar burden of debt and steering the individual member through the unfamiliar world of business. Neither does the group of five stand alone. Ten to twelve such groups come together for a weekly meeting in a center; there are over 13,000 centers around the country (Bangladesh), each serving fifty to sixty Grameen Bank members. At the weekly meeting, loan repayments are collected by a local branch office, applications for new loans are submitted, and various inspirational, instructional, and practical activities are undertaken, from discussions about new business ideas to presentations about health or financial topics to brief periods of group exercise. The central leadership is elected democratically (Ibid, pp.57-58). The members take a pledge on Sixteen Decisions that would be followed by them with utmost faith. Some of these include: discipline, unity, courage, and hard work; look after one’s own household needs like growing vegetables, constructing new houses etc; take care of health of oneself and family; keep the environment clean; collectively pledge not to practice child marriages; help each other and restore discipline among members; take part in social activities collectively.

As Prof. Yunus reiterates, the very purpose of the Bank is to recognise and honour human motivations and incentives that transcend purely economic; human beings also play the role of parents, children etc apart from being what they are professionally. They value relationships and try to do maximum good for others: ‘for traditional bankers, these human concerns don’t exist. But they are at the heart of what makes up Grameen Bank. The credit we offer the poor is not just a matter of entries in a ledger book or even a handful

of bills handed over to a person. It is a tool for reshaping lives, and neither the staff of Grameen Bank nor our borrowers ever lose sight of that reality'. Undoubtedly the main beneficiaries of this Bank are the women; for they are the anchor, life and sustainers of this astounding scheme that has changed their lives for better.

12.5 DW CRA (DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN RURAL AREAS) SELF-HELP GROUPS

The self-help groups (SHGs) are the biggest source of economic and social security for women in both rural and urban settings. These operate at local level, based on local resources and small scale industries. These also make use of vast manpower and available raw resources for development purposes. Through micro-credit schemes, the SHGs act as coordinating bodies with effective networking for the betterment of the small groups constituting the SHGs and society. Therein lies its success if it is implemented with utmost sincerity and zeal for improvement. In short, a SHG is a small group of persons who come together with the intention of finding a solution to a common problem such as medical issues, livelihood generation or watershed management, with a degree of self-sufficiency (Joy Deshmukh-Ranadive, p.1).

Self-help groups also empower poor women, more than 4.8 million of whom are mobilized into SHGs. Early programs sought to provide self-employment, empower, and incorporate rural poor women into the development process. Homogenous groups of women would choose and collectively undertake an economic activity suited to their skills and resources, supplemented by state matching grants (Ibid). These groups have been operational since 1979 in Andhra Pradesh but did not take off in a big way. The latter years saw a gigantic transformation in the functioning of these groups that have tremendously contributed to women empowerment. Further, the enthusiasm of the women to alleviate their poverty-ridden life and turn to new and better phases in life saw them sail through their difficulties and gave them new hope towards a dignified and decent life. Initially started as Velugu (meaning light), this programme aimed to reach 2.9 million of the poorest in the rural areas.

One of the best ways to tackle rural poverty and deprivation and address socio-economic issues is through the successful implementation of the welfare schemes by the Self-Help groups; through thrift and savings, women can ably pursue a dignified way of life and shape their future destiny. In Andhra Pradesh, the development agenda has been, since few decades, the upliftment and empowerment of the rural poor and especially, women's status. It has facilitated the formation of a large number of Self-Help Groups throughout the length and breadth of the State. The women members of these groups are able to save more money and is getting an able support from the state government towards this end. The government is also consciously making an effort to assist these Self Help Groups by providing Revolving Fund under DW CRA. In the World Micro Credit Summit, held in Washington, it has been recognized that women's Self Help movement is one of the most important themes to tackle socio-economic poverty. As per the theme of the summit a total of 100 million women in the world are to be mobilized with Self Help Groups (DV Rao and Vijay Kumar, 2001).

The DW CRA groups opted for Thrift and Credit System as they realised that banks are unable to lend them loan. This enabled them to be self-reliant and hone their entrepreneurial

skills. The aims and objectives of these groups are as follows:

- Improving the Status and quality of life of poor women and children in the rural areas.
- Improving the impact of ongoing development programmes by stimulating, supplementing, strengthening and integrating them.
- Involving the community in planning and implementing the programme so that need based development activity will be carried on by the communities even after outside assistant is withdrawn.

Further, the success of a DWCRA groups depends on

1. Groups of women in poverty with a purpose.
2. Savings as an entry point for the members to get together.
3. Democratically managed and collective decision making groups.
4. Least dependence on external marketing support. (CS Ramalakshmi, p.2)

These groups undergo training in four phases that include group formation, team-building; presentation and communication skills; community participation and skill upgradation; health care of women and children; education of children and adults and improving literacy rate; awareness programmes on environmental conservation; improvement of clean water facility; sanitation and hygiene; group-lending skills; marketing skills; display and sale of products manufactured by women through self-help groups. Training is imparted to improve skills in sectors such as agriculture; horticulture; floriculture; minor irrigation projects like borewells; work in non-farm sectors like dairy farming; household consumption products like pickles and spices; agarbatti; bakery products; handloom products; poultry development and pisciculture.

The most important achievement has been the marketing of the DWCRA products that have become popular as quality and cost-effective products. The government has helped, from time to time, to organise the display and sale of these products thus making the real producers of these goods the real beneficiaries. This eliminated the reliance on middlemen and their manipulation. These have also facilitated the producer's interaction with consumers; helped them in capacity building and higher self-esteem; and significantly helped them to acquire better manufacturing and production technologies, methods and techniques and promote networks for further interaction relating to development work. The dependence on the moneylenders was completely done away with. The women became well aware of their rights and empowerment; started following small family norms; achieved better education levels; improved health and hygiene standards; discouraged child labour; women became active partners of government in improving economic and social welfare; there were no defaulters for loan repayment; evolved group insurance; women felt heightened self-confidence and esteem and became more aware of their rights and responsibilities.

12.6 SUMMARY

In this Unit the importance of self-help groups towards achieving women empowerment has been highlighted through various case studies. These include two international and two national exemplary models that are significant for all times to come. One of the most

important factors has been the initiative and sustenance of these movements inspite of adverse situations and negative campaigns. It is to be noted that Governments play significant role and their support is imminent in carrying further the welfare schemes meant for poverty alleviation and elimination of hunger. Women in different societies have transformed their lives into social workers and able entrepreneurs and lead a life of hope, dignity and self-esteem. In a way, they have empowered themselves so as to achieve better standards of life, health, hygiene and education and also in the process, acquire altruistic character. The self-help groups are powerful tools to bring women together from remote areas on one platform and enable them to unfetter from their otherwise poverty-ridden life. The SHGs are powerful tools to transform the lives of women and the society towards better prospects.

12.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What are self-help groups and how do they facilitate in women empowerment. Give the answer in your own words.
2. Examine briefly the aims and achievements of the Green Belt Movement in Kenya.
3. Discuss briefly the evolution and success of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh.
4. How did SEWA help in achieving the women empowerment?
5. Discuss briefly the beginnings and successful implementation of the DWCRA groups.

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DWCRA - A Successful Experiment to Emancipate Rural Women in Andhra Pradesh

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