

# GENDER STUDIES

COURSE CODE: B21SO05DC

Undergraduate Programme in Sociology

Discipline Core Course

Self Learning Material



SREENARAYANAGURU  
OPEN UNIVERSITY

## SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

# SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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## Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.

# Gender Studies

Course Code: B21SO05DC

Semester - V

**Discipline Core Course**  
**Undergraduate Programme in Sociology**  
**Self Learning Material**  
(With Model Question Paper Sets)



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Semester- V

Discipline Core Course

Undergraduate Programme in Sociology

## Academic Committee

Rakhi N.  
Dr. N.K. Sunil Kumar  
Dr. M.S. Jayakumar  
Dr. Sarita R.  
Dr. Sindhu C.A.  
Dr. Rekhasree K.R.  
Dr. Uthara Soman  
Dr. Suba Lekshmi G.S.  
Dr. Leela P.U.  
Dr. Jyothi S. Nair

## Development of the Content

Dr. Jan Elizabeth Joseph  
Dr. Aswathi Kunjumon  
Dr. Soorya Gopi  
Dr. Abdul Razak Kunnathodi  
Nithin Maxual  
Remyamol M.R.

## Review and Edit

Dr. Nisha Jolly Nelson

## Linguistics

Dr. Nisha Jolly Nelson

## Scrutiny

Dr. Jan Elizabeth Joseph  
Dr. Abdul Razak Kunnathodi  
Fousia Shukoor  
Dr. Ahammadu Zirajuddeen  
Dr. Maya Raveendran

## Design Control

Azeem Babu T.A.

## Cover Design

Jobin J.

## Co-ordination

Director, MDDC :

Dr. I.G. Shibi

Asst. Director, MDDC :

Dr. Sajeekumar G.

Coordinator, Development:

Dr. Anfal M.

Coordinator, Distribution:

Dr. Sanitha K.K.



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Regards,  
Dr. Jagathy Raj V.P.

01-07-2025

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**BLOCK**

# **Gender Studies: An Introduction**



# UNIT

## Gender Studies

### Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the genesis of gender studies at National and International level
- ◆ examine the importance of gender and women studies in the academics
- ◆ discuss about the significant events, movements which led to the emergence of gender studies

### Prerequisites

What is meant by women studies? Is it relevant to study as a separate discipline? Let's delve into the epistemological development of the discipline. Women studies belongs to the interdisciplinary part of the epistemology which place women lives and experiences at the centre of the study. Advent of deconstruction theory as part of post-colonial nuances encouraged the identical search and studies of every social categories such as Dalit studies, Women studies, Subaltern studies etc. Emergence of feminist movements in the West produced affirmative social contexts coining of women studies as an academic discipline in the second half of twentieth century and gender studies in a later period. While women studies significantly associated with the distinctions of men and women in the natural world, Gender Studies moves beyond binary classifications. It critically engages with how gender roles are produced, maintained, and contested in society. This includes analyzing structures of power, the politics of representation, and the distribution of resources across gendered lines. Thus, both fields though distinct in scope are united by their commitment to questioning hegemonic knowledge, promoting inclusivity, and advocating for social justice.



## Keywords

Sex, Gender, Feminist movement, Women, Equality

## Discussion

### 1.1.1 Genesis of Women Studies

The term Women's Studies is usually referred to the body of knowledge which discuss, explain and place social, political and economic status of women in the centre. The discipline interrogates historical and cultural contexts which cultivated this status and search for women's voice, expression and presence in history and arts & literature. Evolution of Women's Studies had explicitly influenced wave of feminism just after the World War II and however the discipline was limited to the universities and higher education institutes in the initial phase. Looking at the growth of Women's Studies in India, two things are very important; firstly knowledge produced on the status of women in India largely came out of the academic circle; universities and higher institutes and secondly since the teaching and research on the status of women in India flourished in the aftermath of independence had least connection with the feminist movement.

Even though women movement in India appeared in the nineteenth century, integration of women studies into the academia largely happened after the World War II. In 1947, the Indian Constitution promulgated women's equality with men as citizens and placed them under 'weaker section of society' for special treatment. In India, the government prompted research and studies on women and initiated institutionalization of mechanism required for upliftment of women in the country. Primarily this was after the pressure from the

UN General Assembly's proclamation which declared female equality as international goal in 1967 and encouraging the member states to take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in areas such as education, employment, and political participation. Subsequently, in 1971, the Government of India appointed a committee to examine the status of women in the country and the committee submitted its report in January 1975. The report titled '*Towards Equality....*' unveiled the extreme exploitation of women in the family, society and the economy; their inequality in rights related to marriage, property, adoption; women's severe neglect in health, nutrition and education. The report exposed vulnerabilities and the poor living conditions which women are undergoing and underlined the socio-political gap with their counterparts.

The publication of the report was coincided with two major events. Firstly, the year 1975 was declared as the International Women's Year by United Nations and secondly Non-Aligned Nations' summit was to be held in Colombo in 1976 bearing the motto of '*Women in Development*'. Both the events helped to produce favorable conditions to the women progress by publishing facts and figures exposing the real live conditions and sufferings of the women worldwide. The Colombo Conference played crucial role in generating sufficient awareness regarding women integration and equality among the third world countries and it alerted against the deprivations and negligence of women in the socio-political and economic



spheres where their dearth will destabilize the pace of development. In the aftermath, the Government of India realized the vacuum and introduced multiple initiatives at policy level to ensure women participation in the development.

Acting towards women equality and their advancement, the government established several Ministries, departments and special cells. In 1975, the Ministry of Labour and Employment set up a special cell for women and the Ministry of Social Welfare opened a new division for Women's welfare. In 1976, the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi formed a National Committee under her chairmanship to monitor women empowerment policies. A special responsibility was given to the National Commission on Agriculture to examine the role of women in agriculture in 1976 and consequently, after the recommendation of the committee, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development started a new special division to encourage women's involvement in the rural development activities. Under the Ministry of Rural Development, working groups on women were organized in the Planning Commission and in the Adult Education Program Unit. Moreover, the role of the government of India in generating research and writings on women is significant. The Report of the Committee on the Status of Women submitted in 1975 served as the authentic source of data upon Indian women. The Report of the National Commission on Self-Employed Women (1988) also contributed to the existing information. Additionally, several committees and bodies authorized by government, semi-government and non-government institutions produced huge information which helped to understand women status in the country and promoted rehabilitation and empowerment programs launched by the government.

Apart from the United Nations, several international organizations like ESCAP, the World Bank and the International Labor

Organization promoted women issues and sponsored research and studies on women empowerment. Major aspects of women lives in these studies were their economic status, health, education and fertility which incorporated the concerns of International organizations and Indian women. Simultaneously, social activists and feminists from India produced their own research agenda where in many ways reflected critical to the government's development policies. In 1976, Indian Council for Social Science Research; the quasi-governmental agency strongly supported the women studies and urged to integrate to the academia. Responding to the report of the committee on the status of women, ICSSR included research on women in its five year plan and published the program objectives as following:

1. Generation and analysis of data to uncover significant trends in patterns of social and economic organization which affect women's position in the log-run.
2. Developing new perspectives in the social sciences through examining basic assumptions, methodological approaches and concepts such as family, household, women's work, economic activity, productivity etc. to compensate the neglect and underassessment of women's contribution to society.
3. Reviving the social debate on the women's question that was initiated during the freedom movement.

Based on these three points, the Council identified five priority areas for research; the changing occupational structure and employment patterns of women, the impact of migration on women, the women's movement

in India, family organization and socialization and women and development. To attract social scientists especially women social scientists, the Council offered doctoral fellowships and research grants and promoted research on subjects within the prioritized areas. The Council also set up a Centre for Women's Development Studies at New Delhi. Under the leadership of the Council, a network of researchers was formed including experts from government, voluntary bodies, higher education institutes, activists working for women from India as well as from international organizations like UNO, ILO etc.

Feminist movements that emerged in the late 1970s played a significant role in reshaping the direction of Women's Studies in the country. Before the rise of the feminist movement, various governmental and non-governmental organizations had already begun conducting studies and research on the status of women. However, it was the feminist movement that actively pressured the government to revise gender-biased and insensitive terminology such as "work" and "household" commonly found in census data and policy documents, advocating instead for language that more accurately reflected the principles of gender equality. Further, the feminist leaders interacted with the government in the issues related to production, distribution, technology and other modes of economy to expose various forms of exploitation, oppression and marginalization of women. Women activism and their fight was instrumental in major developmental projects such as World Bank funded Narmada Valley project where the activists raised their voice not only against sufferings of women but against the destruction of environment in terms of garbage disposal, soil preservation and destroying of traditional modes of cultivation. Indian feminists explained that gender discrimination and exploitation are causing poverty

and the deprivation of women in the society where the gender defined role expectations are functional.

### 1.1.2 Women Studies in Higher Education

The integration of Women's Studies into universities and higher education institutions in India progressed slowly due to resistance toward teaching and conducting research on women related issues. Hence, women studies developed outside of universities through the efforts of governmental and international organizations. The feminist movement also enriched the growth. Universities in India established during the British period were not equipped to become advanced centres of excellence and knowledge rather operated as infrastructure for governing India. University system in the country lacked the potential to offer program for a free society or never encouraged studies across the disciplines which existed by the time in European universities. They operated largely for two limited purposes. Firstly, to produce an 'elite group' accustomed with European culture and values and secondly to cultivate trained Indians who will help the British in colonial administration, commerce and serve their needs in law, medicine and teaching. Similarly, these universities failed to absorb the Indian realities, social circumstances and economic requirements in their curriculum and practice instead replicated the European satellites.

In the aftermath of independence, these problems were identified by Indian scholars and many of them were addressed. New higher institutes were established in engineering, medicine, management, technology and other fields neglected by the British and these institutes were given the status of 'deemed universities'. Additionally, multiple number of specialized research institutes at national and state level were



An important development that happened during this time was the formation of National Association for Women Studies in 1980s. Responding to the reluctance of Indian universities to the Women Studies, the platform worked actively to disseminate ideas and research inputs on women studies. The association demanded the extension of women studies to the universities and in 1984 it pressured the government and UGC to take necessary steps to the development of the field at the higher institutes. The University Grants Commission reiterated its commitment to the development of the discipline emphasizing that “Women’s studies should not be narrowly defined as studies about women or mere academic improvement...” it promised teaching, research, workshops, extension activities etc., as well as logistical assistance, grants for books, journals, seminars, travel, financing of visit and exchange of faculty, fellowships

A central point of debate was whether Women's Studies should function as an interdisciplinary program centered on specific themes such as women and development or women and health or be incorporated into conventional disciplines like History, Philosophy, and Sociology. Despite some recent changes, universities have largely remained reluctant in adopting women's studies as interdisciplinary course.

As discussed, Women's Studies is often used interchangeably with Gender Studies. It emerged in the 19th century and gradually evolved over time into an independent academic discipline. According to Vina Mazumdar, the growth and development of Women Studies falls into five phases beginning as a central topic in social debates among reformers and ultimately emerging as a recognized academic discipline in the contemporary era.





speaking out against the unfair treatment of women, marking the beginning of efforts to bring about change.

The second phase is known for the emergence of cultural nationalism and revivalism which turned as a counter attack to the influence of Western values among the younger generation. The revivalists supported women education and raised their voice against women exploitation to preserve indigenous culture and traditions. They propagated that educating women will strengthen traditional hold upon the family and thus they termed women as the custodians of traditional cultural values. In 1890s Jyotiba Phule fought against the hegemony of the high castes saying that the subordination of women is used as an instrument to maintain Brahminical dominance in Indian society. Another social reformist B. M. Malabari actively campaigned for 'Age of Consent Bill' and urged the press to publish real life accounts of women's experiences in order to raise public awareness and promote social change.

By the third phase, the women issues began to get involved in the nationalist movement. As the movement turned into mass mobilization, women's participation was crucial and many of them were active in revolutionary activities. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women were the greater victims of colonization of Indian economy where they were worked as the backbone of the industry and agriculture. In Bengal, 30 lakhs of women; 1/5 of the total women population earned their livelihood from the cotton industry. A similar decline happened to the silk and jute industry, women disappeared from 50% of jute industry, village markets. Tribal women

were uprooted from the agriculture sector. Sensing the serious dearth and livelihood problems of women, many of them actively joined nationalist movement.

The fourth phase began with the independence of the country, when the women questions were resolved through the principle of equality in the constitution. Women got access to education, vote and entry into professions, public services and political offices. During this period, the women organizations which fought for women rights in 30s and 40s turned as welfare agencies for the people operating with the grants provided by the government.

The fifth and the last phase is noted for the publication of the report set up by the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1974) which revealed serious discrimination and increasing inequality towards the women. Marginalization of women in the society and economy, the declining sex-ratio, disparity in the life expectancy and death rates of men and women were highlighted in the report. The report worked like a candle light for the government and other bodies in framing policies and initiating empowerment programs for the welfare of the women.

The evolution of Women's Studies has progressed through different stages from its early focus on women's issues during the colonial period to its later development under the influence of Western feminist movements. Although the discipline initially witnessed substantial advancement in research and teaching, its momentum declined in the post-independence era as many women's organizations redirected their efforts toward welfare oriented programs.



## Recap

- ◆ The term Women's Studies usually referred to the body of knowledge which discuss, explain and place social, political and economic status of women in the centre.
- ◆ In 1971, the Government of India appointed a committee to examine the status of women in the country and the committee submitted its report in January 1975.
- ◆ The Colombo Conference played crucial role in generating sufficient awareness regarding women integration and equality among the third world countries.
- ◆ Several international organizations like ESCAP, the World Bank and the International Labor Organization promoted women issues and sponsored research and studies on women empowerment.
- ◆ In 1976, Indian Council for Social Science Research; the quasi-governmental agency strongly supported the women studies and urged to integrate to the academia.
- ◆ Feminist movements took root in the end of seventies had significant role in reshaping direction of women studies in the country.
- ◆ The first centre for women studies was established in 1974 at the SNDT Women's University, Bombay with financial assistance from the Ford Foundation, the American based philanthropic organization.
- ◆ The universities that offer courses on women studies increased from 23 to 37 during the period of 1981-1988.
- ◆ The second phase is known for the emergence of cultural nationalism and revivalism which turned as a counter attack to the influence of Western values among the new generation.
- ◆ In the third phase, the women issues began to get involved in the nationalist movement.
- ◆ The fourth phase began with the independence of the country when the women questions were resolved by the principle of equality in the constitution.

- ◆ The last phase is noted for the publication of the report set up by the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1974) which revealed serious discrimination and increasing inequality towards the women.
- ◆ In 1890s Jyotiba Phule fought against hegemony of the high castes saying that the subordination of women is used as an instrument to maintain Brahminical dominance in Indian society.

## Objective Questions

1. When was the committee on the status of women appointed by the Government of India?
2. In which year the committee on the status of women submitted their report?
3. How many universities were offering courses on women during 1981-88?
4. In which year the first centre on women studies was established?
5. Where was the first centre on women studies established?
6. Who funded the first centre on women studies?
7. Which conference played crucial role in generating sufficient awareness regarding women integration and equality among the third world countries?
8. In which year Colombo conference was held?
9. Who fought against Brahminical hegemony of high castes in 1890s?
10. Who introduced 'Age of Consent Bill'?

## Answers

1. 1971
2. 1975



3. 37
4. 1974
5. SNDT University, Bombay
6. The Ford Foundation
7. Colombo Conference
8. 1976
9. Jyotibha Phule
10. BM Malabari

## Assignments

1. Discuss in detail the genesis of women studies in India.
2. Assess the role of ICSSR in consolidating women studies as an academic discipline.
3. Explain how women studies were accommodated in the higher education sector.
4. Evaluate the five phases in the evolution of gender studies in India.

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## Suggested Reading

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# UNIT

## Basic Concepts

### Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the basic concepts in gender studies
- ◆ explore gender based terminologies and their meaning within the context of gender studies
- ◆ compare and contrast key terms and their implications to understand social structure

### Prerequisites

What do you mean by the term ‘gender’? Does it have a similar meaning to ‘sex’? In Sociology, both terms have different meaning. While the first indicates social constructs based on men and women the latter is referred to the biological differences on male and female. In the previous unit, we studied about the emergence of women/gender studies in India and various factors that led to the evolution of it as a discipline. In this unit, we will study various concepts related to gender studies. The connotations of each usage and its comparison with other similar terms will be elaborated. Let us explore in detail

### Keywords

Social construct, Gender, Stereotype, Identity, LGBTIQ

## Discussion

### 1.2.1 Gender

Gender is the social and cultural concept related to the construction of roles, attitudes, values, status and characters of male and female. According to Ann Oakley, Gender is a matter of culture; it refers to the societal classification into Masculine and Feminine. The term denotes sexualized identity of the individuals based on customs, traditions, and ways of life. It is a culturally relative concepts which vary from one culture to the other in terms of formation and specificity of the roles attached. The society as a whole contributes to the formation of gender identity as each custom, traditions influence the male and female to behave in a particular way.

According to Juliet C.W. Mitchel, the concept of gender emerged in the early 1970s is tremendously characterized with social attributes from 'sex'. The term 'gender' is inclusive, that include biological and social aspects of men and women and it is not a replacement of the term 'women' in academics. When we discuss the term

'gender', its meaning extends to think of men and women as well as to think of women and women or men and men. Margaret Mead, the American Sociologist in her study about three societies in the New Guinea Islands had discussed the evolution of the term gender in the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. In her perspective, gender roles were developed on the basis of a complementary relation between men and women and sexual division of labour looking to create a stable social order. According to Lorber, gender is something more than performed roles like economies are broad than jobs carried out by individuals.

### 1.2.2 Difference Between Sex and Gender

As we discussed Gender takes to the meanings and perceptions which are socially constructed in relation with men and women. Sex is conceptualized as the totality of elements inherited by male and female biologically. Sex is an ascribed status



Fig 1.2.1 Sex and Gender Symbols

which does not change over time and nor differs from place to place. In turn, gender, the roles related and the meanings are produced in accordance with the time and space. Socio-political and economic factors have a strong influence in directing gender nuances and determining related roles.

Feminist scholars have argued that gender is learned and performed and it may vary according to the socio-cultural variations. On the other hand, sex, being related with the biological category, it has a nominal role in the feminist theory. Cultural distinctiveness, customs, rituals have tremendous influence in building up the social status, role and social structure. Scholars like Kendall and Barbara F. McManus have discussed the difference between sex and gender. Among these scholars, Ann Oakley's work *Sex, Gender and Society* (1972) popularized sex and gender discussion in Sociology. For Oakley, sex is the physical difference between male and female such as the variations in the genitalia and the procreation system. Ariyabandu had presented gender in other terms that it is more about the biological or sexual differences between men and women in relation to how they respond to needs of the family, kinship, caste, community, society and the state. These are termed as gender roles characterized by the process of socialization, customs, norms, historical traditions and the government system.

Gender roles and the differences among men and women have extensively influenced the power relations in the society. According to Simone De Beauvoir, one is not born but rather becomes a woman. She argued that the existing gender roles in society make men superior like their status as breadwinners.

### 1.2.3 Gender Identity

An individual's understanding of oneself as male or female or any other forms of gender and society's perception upon you is called as

gender identity. There is a close relationship between gender roles of a person and their gender identity. According to Burke (1980), all the nuances and meanings produced and applied upon identification of ones' gender are involved in the gender identity and these nuances are working as source of motivation for gender based behavior. In some instances, society imposes gender identity upon the individuals and may be the result of the observable factors in the society such as behavior and appearance. Generally, gender identity and gender roles are considered as same except in circumstances of cultural differences take one's gender role. In some other cases, the distinction between the two is accepted as part of cultural norms.

### 1.2.4 Gender Stereotype

Gender stereotype is the assignment of roles, functions and responsibilities to a particular gender on the basis of biased or preconceived notions. Stereotyping is the process in which children are socialized into gender roles in terms they might lose their opportunity for individual progress. Negative aspect of the gender stereotype is that it works on the past speculations about other people and never share truthful information about others. Hence it is considered as the amalgam of gender characteristics, variations and role differences of individuals and groups. When people are engaged with these gender assumptions and trying to apply in the society, they become propagators of the stereotype.

Gender stereotyping may reveal traditional perceptions of society about men and women and their roles in the society. Sometimes, they are related with the characteristics of men and women and their work area. The notions such as 'women are not great drivers' and 'women love gossiping', 'men are stronger than women' are a few examples. Traditional Indian women have been portrayed as a symbol of submissiveness, piousness and obedience and her roles have been understood

as serving her husband, looking after her children, cooking and cleaning. In traditional families, these gender stereotyping has significant role in maintaining the family structure and interactions. On the other hand, men are perceived as the symbols of authority and power and centre of economy. Being breadwinner of the family, men enjoy the upper hand than their counterparts. Apparently, gender stereotypes are seen in marriage, family and community relationships.

### 1.2.5 Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination or stratification indicates the unequal distribution of power, status and other resources on the basis of gender. Therefore, men and women are enjoying unequal access to power and resources. In fact, each and every child is socialized according to the existing social system; gender identities and gender roles. Generally, a boy is reserved in terms of education, wealth and social status than a girl in most of the societies. Largely, in the public sphere, men possess more visibility and space than woman.

In India, patriarchal system which is dominant in most of the families has positioned men at the centre of power and resources. Men dominate women everywhere in terms of authority and inheritance and social status. This is an exception in matrilineal system, where descent is traced through the mother's line or maternal ancestors. In India, the Garo and Khasi tribes in Meghalaya, Kalpeni tribe of Lakshadweep and the Nairs of Kerala are matrilineal societies. However, whether in patrilineal or matrilineal societies, gender works as a crucial factor in determining the roles and responsibilities of individuals within the family as well as society.

### 1.2.6 Gendered Division of Labour

According to Mitchel, the organization of work into various compartments in which each part would be handled by a separate person or a group of persons is called division of labour. Division of labour is a common phenomenon found in all most all societies. Division may be based on various factors like age, sex, class, race, caste etc., and the division based on sex is one of the most basic divisions found universally. Allocation of work between men and women is called as gendered division of labour. In the traditional societies, each and every work has special assignment in terms of gender and they are performed in the forms of rituals and customs. In fact, not only in the traditional but in the contemporary societies, women possess a subordinate position.

Multiple perspectives which explain the origin and influence of male dominated gendered division of labour in the society exists. According to traditionalists, male domination is natural, divine and theologically essential for the continuance of human race. For them the root of the division belonged to the biological differences between men and women and it has originated in the prehistoric cultures. They put forth the argument that the physical weakness of women largely led to the allocation of hard jobs to men and soft jobs to women. Vina Mazumdar and Kunmud Sharma have argued that the heterogeneity of the gendered division of labour during time, space, cultures, regions and classes refutes this biological determinism. Marxists scholars have argued that the male domination and female subordination is a result of emergence of social classes due to the changes in the modes of production and subsequent economic structure. Another significant perspective is offered by Ann Oakely, who argues that sex based division of labour is shaped more by cultural factors than by biological differences.





### 1.2.7 Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity is analysed as the assumption that the ‘default’ or the ‘normal’ sexual orientation is heterosexual. It considered relationships between men and women as normal and anything outside of these norms as abnormal and inferior. Heteronormativity rejects the idea that sexual orientation toward the opposite sex is purely cultural or shaped by socialization. As a result, sexual minorities, including LGBTIQ+ individuals, are excluded from what is considered socially “normal” in terms of relationships and identities.

Michael Warner for the first time used the term heteronormativity in his book *‘Fear of a Queer Planet’*. Even though, the terms heterosexuality and homosexuality were introduced much before by Karl Maria Kerbeny; heterosexual and heteronormative relationships were considered as the ‘norm’. Critics like Adrienne Rich has rejected the normativity of heterosexuality and heteronormativity arguing that heterosexuality is a socialized cultural norm that makes women inferior to men and not an innate preference. She called it as compulsory heterosexuality.

Heteronormativity is largely related with the social institutions and policies that promotes people as heterosexual and views sex and gender as natural binaries. In heteronormative culture, heterosexuality is preferred and perceived as natural which facilitates the way for LGBTIQ+ individuals are discriminated against in marriage and social opportunities. Cultural anthropologist Gayle Rubin has argued that heteronormativity has created a sex based hierarchy in the society and classified morally as “good sex” and “bad sex”. According to this argument, the monogamous and reproductive sexual relations between heterosexual individuals are considered as “good” while any sexual activities or individuals beyond this level are labelled as “bad”. Patrick McCreery

has criticized this moral categorization and argued that this hierarchy will stigmatize sexual practice of vulnerable groups like gay people, leading to social discrimination in the workplace and social policies.

### 1.2.8 LGBTIQ+

The phrase include various gender identities such as lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people, intersex and queer people. Intersex people are those with bodies that do not have male or female characteristics due to variations in chromosomes, sex hormones and genitals. The people who are involved in same sex relations and not ready to be included in lesbian, gay or bisexual preferring to be known as queer or two spirited. Male-female dichotomy has created challenges to their survival as human beings. This has led to the study is proposed to bring notice into the violation of basic human rights and the necessity for ensuring equal opportunities like other individuals.

Homosexuality, the word is derived from ancient Greek *‘Aiuo’* meaning same and Latin *‘sexus’*, meaning “sex”. It stands for the sexual attraction between the same sex and “enduring relationships of emotional, romantic and sexual attractions” of people with same sex. Homosexuality is one of the three sexual orientations along with bisexuality and heterosexuality. It is understood as not as choice but causation of a complex circumstances where genetic, hormonal and environmental aspects are interlinked. Homosexual people are known as lesbian for female and gay for males. Hesitation in openly identifying as lesbians or gays is due to homophobia and heterosexist discrimination.

For transsexual individuals people with gender identity is not culturally associated with the sex which they are born and aspire to permanently get changed into the other sex

using medical assistance (such as hormone replacement or sex reassignment therapies). Even though transsexual people reject their association with the transgender, they are considered as the subsidiary of transgender.

Transgender are the persons who are included in the third gender and broadly the term include cross-genders irrespective of their gender identities. In recent times, the term has been used as an umbrella term

to include people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth, as well as those who do not identify strictly as masculine or feminine. Transgender identity is independent of sexual orientation. Transgender individuals may not align with traditional sexual orientation categories, but they can identify as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, asexual, or otherwise, based on their personal sense of attraction.

## Recap

- ◆ Gender is the social and cultural concept related to the construction of roles, attitudes, values, status and characters of male and female.
- ◆ According to Ann Oakely, Gender is a matter of culture; it refers to the societal classification into Masculine and Feminine.
- ◆ According to Juliet C.W. Mitchel, the concept of gender emerged in the early 1970s has tremendously characterized with social attributes from 'sex' which largely reserved for.
- ◆ According to Lorber, gender is something more than performed roles like economies are broad than jobs carried out by individuals.
- ◆ Sex is an ascribed status which does not change over the time and nor differs from place to place.
- ◆ Feminist scholars have argued that gender is learned and performed and it may vary according to the socio-cultural variations.
- ◆ Ann Oakley's work *Sex, Gender and Society* (1972) popularized sex and gender discussion in Sociology.
- ◆ An individual's understanding of oneself as male or female or any other forms of gender and society's perception upon you is called as gender identity.
- ◆ Gender stereotype is the assignment of roles, functions and responsibilities to a particular gender on the basis of biased or preconceived notions.

- ◆ Gender discrimination or stratification indicates to the unequal distribution of power, status and other resources on the basis of sex.
- ◆ In India, the Garo and Khasi tribes in Meghalaya, Kalpeni tribe of Lakshadweep and the Nairs of Kerala are matrilineal societies.
- ◆ Allocation of work between men and women is called as sexual division of labour.
- ◆ Heteronormativity is analysed as the assumption that the ‘default’ or the ‘normal’ sexual orientation is heterosexual.
- ◆ Gayle Rubin has argued that heteronormativity has created a sex hierarchy in the society and classified as morally “good sex” to “bad sex”.
- ◆ Intersex people are born with physical traits that do not fit typical definitions of male or female, due to natural variations in chromosomes, sex hormones, or reproductive anatomy.
- ◆ Homosexuality, the word is derived from ancient Greek ‘*Aiwo*’ meaning same and Latin ‘*sexus*’, meaning “sex”.
- ◆ Transsexual people have a gender identity that does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth and often seek to permanently transition to the other sex with the help of medical procedures, such as hormone therapy or surgery.
- ◆ Transgender is an umbrella term used to describe a wide range of identities whose appearance and characteristics are perceived as gender atypical including transsexual people, cross-dressers (sometimes referred to as “transvestites”), and people who identify as third gender.

## Objective Questions

1. According to Juliet C.W. Mitchel when did the concept of gender emerge?
2. What is known as an ascribed status?
3. Who authored the book *Sex, Gender and Society*?
4. What term describes the assignment of roles, functions and responsibilities to a particular gender on the basis of biased or preconceived notions?



5. In India, the Garo and Khasi tribes in Meghalaya, Kalpeni tribe of Lakshadweep and the Nairs of Kerala are known for what?
6. Which category are the ones with bodies that do not have male or female characteristics due to variations in chromosomes, sex hormones and genitals?
7. Who identifies with a gender identity not culturally associated with the sex they are born with?
8. Who are the persons categorized to be include in the third gender?

## Answers

1. 1970s
2. Sex
3. Ann Oakley
4. Gender stereotype
5. Matrilineal societies
6. Intersex people
7. Transsexual people
8. Transgenders

## Assignments

1. In your own words define Sex and Gender and discuss how it plays a role in your day to day life.
2. What do you mean by gender identity? Would you agree that gender identity is a social construct? State your reasoning.



3. Identify a scenario of gender stereotype that you have experienced. State the incident, why you have deemed it as gender stereotyping and state possible measures to overcome it.
4. Examine gendered division of labor in the society and assess whether gendered division of labor leads to unequal opportunities.
5. Write a detailed description of the different sexual identities included in LGBTIQ+.

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**BLOCK**

# Feminism



# UNIT

## Waves of Feminism

### Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ trace the ideological evolution of feminism and understand the trajectory of the feminist movement over time
- ♦ explain the key historical events that contributed to the rise and development of feminism in different periods
- ♦ understand the need for gender equality in society

### Prerequisites

Men and women are said to be equals but are treated unequally. Take, for example, the case of advertisements: these are crafted to appeal to the mass interests of society but often reflect and reinforce existing gender stereotypes and biases. In advertisements women are showcased as nurturing, good housewives slaving in the kitchen or they are sexualized to befit the interest of men whereas men are showcased as the bread winners toiling away at work to provide for the family. Are these conceptions of gender based upon a rightful understanding of gender roles and duties? How were these ideas mainstreamed into the society? To understand this, we must realize that men and women are treated unequally across the globe due to their gender. Women are denied the same opportunities that are given to men, they are paid less and discriminated for their gender qualities. Many of these practices came to be as a result of men holding positions of power and authority through which they instilled values that reinforced gender specific roles and duties. Women at first were encouraged to take up secretarial positions preventing them from taking up positions such as CEO or that of manager. After India - became Independent, the

government sought to prepare a voter list without women of the country, excluding them rather, they were addressed as the daughter of, wife of or mother of. This was the plight of women. They were selectively denied basic rights.

Over time, women began to recognize the systematized discrimination and disadvantages they were subjected to within society. In response, they began working toward building a more just and equitable world, free from gender bias. This collective effort gave rise to different waves of feminism, each marked by distinct movements, campaigns, and legislative changes. These waves played a crucial role in shaping the progress toward gender equality that we see today. In this unit, we will explore the different waves of feminism and the milestones that defined them.

## Keywords

Gender, Social movements, Social disparities, Feminists, Intersectionality

## Discussion

The origin of the term 'feminism' can be traced back to Latin. This term combines the word 'femina' (meaning woman in Latin) and the suffix 'ism' which signifies a political position.

In the 1880's the term referred to those defending the rights of women (Cott 1986; Moses 1998). However, over the years, the meaning of feminism has never been constant or fixed. In general, it has ever referred to the political activism of women, for women.

Thus, feminism from the start has been a mix of a movement and an ideology that seeks to acquire all kinds of equal rights for women in society. Though feminism started out in achieving equal rights for women, it slowly branched out to fight for the rights of other genders in the late twentieth century and became intersectional.

Feminist theory sought to empower women worldwide. Feminist theory

emphasized on the historical roots of gender-based discrimination that began with the sexual division of labor. Feminism focuses on learning the women centered approaches and stood for oppressed women of the society. The historical assessment of gender activities and gender-based roles establish the age-old gender inequalities and discrimination women have been subjected to. Feminism may be defined as a movement that traditionally evolved from acts that questioned gender inequality and transitioned to demand for equal rights irrespective of gender. Feminist theory and campaign advocates for gender equality that may be spread across a cross section of society be it home or workspace. Basically, it seeks to effect changes in any aspect of society that creates or promotes gender-based inequalities.

Jean Jacques Rousseau and his likes envisioned an idealistic world where it was essential for the men to be rational

and educated in order to complement and balance the emotional woman. Education was considered to be a goal for the men and not the women. From the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the women have been advocating for equal rights as the men. Early feminist in the United State of America sought access to education for women. The origins of American feminism is found in the abolitionist movement that transpired in the 1830s and Seneca Falls is considered to be the birthplace of the same. In Germany the feminist movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was led by Marianne Weber that sought against the oppressive acts prevalent in the German society. By 1905 another group of women promoted a feminist movement that sought for sexual autonomy and this movement was popularly known as erotic movement. Helene Stocker was the leader of the erotic movement, they focused on the issues of sexual politics and matrimonial law which basically advocated for the right of women to engage in sexual relations irrespective of their marital and legal status. Max Weber criticized this movement and stated that it was promoting the rights for free love and illegitimate children, Marianne Weber also disregarded and criticized the movement and reiterated that the focus should be on equality of women. The Second wave of feminism began in 1960s during this decade the society underwent a lot of structural changes and the world was subjected to many historical events as well. Today the feminists are still concerned with civil rights but the agenda for women's upliftment has been addressed and advocated for more holistically from both the public and private spheres of the society.

As feminism encompasses a wide range of goals, it has become common to classify periodic movements as 'waves' – separate periods where activists tackled different feminist issues. There are four major waves of feminism, each wave was built on its predecessor and added to its repertoire new needs to be tackled. The feminist movement

that took place from 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards till the 21<sup>st</sup> century is broken up as four waves which will be discussed in the coming sections of this chapter.

### 2.1.1 First Wave

The time of the first wave was not the first-time women's issues had been raised but the first wave demarked the first organized political movement in the western world. The goal of the first wave of feminism was to have the world recognize the needs and rights of women and to have women treated as human beings rather than pieces of property. An iconic publication of the time was by Mary Wollstonecraft 'Vindication of the Rights of Woman', this was a revolutionary work and set into motion women's movements.

The origins of the feminist movement can be found in the 1830s abolitionist movement. The feminist in the United States of America first became organized and sought to gain equal rights for women and especially for women's right to education. The birth place of American feminism is Seneca Falls, New York. The first Women's Rights Convention was headed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott in 1848 at Seneca Falls, New York. The convention highlighted many practices and issues in the society that were practiced in order to maintain women as subordinates to men. The social structure of the time favored men more than women. For instance, a married woman of this time did not have any legal right nor any provision for legal claim, a man could easily dispose off property the woman had received from her father without sharing the financial benefit received from it. The first women's convention was held in the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel and was attended by more than 300 women. The convention discussed the prevailing social, religious and civil conditions of women which led to the 'Declaration of Sentiments'. The Declaration of Sentiments was drafted by Elizabeth Cady

and it sought to fight against the prevailing social injustices. The Declaration of Sentiments was drafted following the model of the Declaration of Independence.

*"We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed"*  
*"Declaration of Sentiments"*

causes for divorce, factors and guidelines for separation, guardianship etc. The law thus created by man gave emphasis to man's rights and needs all the while ignoring and compromising women's needs. Man, according to the Declaration of Sentiment has placed himself in a higher social ranking while denying the basic rights to women.

This convention also led to the beginning of the 72-year long battle to attain the right to cast vote in the US. New Zealand was the first country to grant this right in 1893 and US in 1920 became the seventeenth country in the world to facilitate the same. Besides the right to vote, reproductive rights was another issue taken up by the feminists of the time.

The German feminist movement was being led by social thinkers such as Marianne Weber. The German feminist movement had come to be as a result of the oppressive social system that prevailed in Germany. This movement, that prevailed in Germany sought to level the economic and political equality that existed between men and women.

In 1905 another feminist movement took form in Germany this movement prioritized sexual autonomy. The movement was also

known as erotic movement and was led by Helene Stocker. The movement primarily focused on issues related to sexual politics and matrimonial law. This movement advocated for women to engage in sexual relations irrespective of their marital status. This movement gathered a lot of criticism and was often described as a pleasure-seeking movement. Max Weber was an ardent critique of this movement he was of the belief that the erotic movement was just a way to promote free love and illegitimate children.

Marianne Weber who was also leading the feminist movement in Germany shared her husband's view about the erotic movement and emphasized that the focus should be on bridging the gap between the social and economic disparities that were prevalent due to gender-based discriminations. The erotic movement attempted to shift the debate from equality of women to sexual autonomy. Marianne Weber believed in the traditional concepts of marriage and the value marriage set in society and felt the erotic movement threatened the institution of marriage. Weber put forth two ideas regarding marriage firstly that women must be treated equally in the marriage and secondly a marriage is only that between a man and a woman, this idea distanced the lesbian feminist from the movement. Weber's feminist movement was in opposition to the patriarchal practices that was prevalent in Germany at the time. A patriarchal societies framework is such that it gives importance to man and advancement of their goals while the role of women is to be submissive and subordinate to that of man and assist him in further advancing needs. Marianne Weber questioned this system of society and advocated for women's right to reach their potential as well rather than enabling a man to reach his potential alone. Weber was one of the first to demand that women be paid for the domestic chores that is thrust upon them through this idea she was also advocating for women's financial independence.





### 2.1.2 Second Wave

The 1960s was the period of the second wave and this decade was subject to a lot of changes that came upon the society as a result of industrialization and automation, social protests and civil movements all attributed to the women's rights-based feminist movements of the time. The second wave of feminism was dynamic in nature as it involved many civil rights movements such as the black people's movement, homosexual movements and disabled movements. 'Liberation and Empowerment' were the focus of the second wave. Many of the demands and ideas that was propagated by the first wave carried over to the second wave as well. The issues brought to the mainstream by the first wave feminist gathered much attention and support during this time. The second wave is noticeable for its race and gender linkage with participation and representation from the African American feminist. This representation was sufficient in demarking the race-based gender debates. The white feminist advocated more for gender equality whereas the African American feminist were subjected to dual disability with many facing gender and race-based discrimination. Feminization of poverty arose during this time and it emphasized on the fact that women were more likely to be poor than men and that financially disadvantaged women were more likely to be women of color, single women or elderly women living alone. Thus, a criticism was that the white feminist was negligent of the needs put forward by the African American feminist. The previous notion of women as only home makers was challenged and women were able to seek employment opportunity thereby building a career of their own. By 1980s voices of dissent grew from within the second wave feminist as they questioned the universal representation of women's needs which was an inadequate representation of working women, black women and lesbian feminists.

This universalization of women's needs by the second wave feminist was later criticized.

Feminist movements have throughout advocated for equal rights and the contemporary feminism is obsessed with the realization of equal rights but the realization of this through legal reform would not be an ultimate solution of this disparity in the society. This would require all the social institutions in the society to reflect the egalitarian policies.

The second wave was more radical in nature as compared to the first wave which was more liberal. The second wave of feminism had more academic participation with feminist research and theorizing taking place. The second wave feminist also took to challenge the sexist language, beauty pageants, violence against women, the idea that women be paid for domestic and housework etc. were all the more cemented by the academic literature by feminist of the time some of the popular works of the time include 'The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan (1963)', 'Women's Estate by Juliet Mitch (1971)' and 'Dialectic of Sex: The Case of Feminist Revolution by Shulamith Firestone (1970)'.

The Second wave of feminism was unique as it was not a stand-alone movement rather the feminist of this wave made attempts to connect and correlate the feminist movement with the dominant ideologies of the time such as Marxism, socialism, liberalism. Through these collaborations an attempt was made to highlight the gender-based issues prevalent in the society.

***“The personal is political”- A slogan of second wave feminism***

A criticism of the second wave feminism is that it dominantly came from the white feminist perspective which lacked the representation of ideologies and needs of



the colored and other marginalized. Hence the second wave ideologies put forth by the white feminists cannot be considered to be universal. The second wave somewhat concluded by the 1990s and established the fact that indeed the experiences and needs of women across the globe was different and could not be advanced by the ideas the second wave feminist had put forward in the beginning.

### 2.1.3 Third Wave

The third wave of feminism was named so following the article in 1992 'Becoming the third wave by Rebecca Walker' which was in response to the Anita Hill Senate Hearings in 1991 due to the sexual harassment allegation made by Anita Hill against the US Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas. This hearing marked the beginning of the third wave. Another factor that promoted the third wave was the 'Riot grrrl' movement that took place in Washington. This movement focused on sex positivity, politics and rock music

The new feminism or third wave developed in a society that was undergoing drastic changes due to globalization, liberalization, multiculturalism, terrorism, religious extremism, digital revolution, growth and spread of internet. Through the previous waves of feminism women had achieved social and economic rights that were previously and traditionally denied to them. The third wave focused on areas such as violence, sexualization of women, objectification of women in media, trafficking etc., have raised the concern of the new age feminists. Kimberle Williams in 1989 coined the term intersectionality this demarked how class, race, and gender overlap with each other. This was a crucial factor in the third wave. This wave of feminism also criticized the previous women's movement for universalizing the concepts of womanhood and creating a static political identity for women. The new wave

of feminism was borderless and global. The activist of the third wave grew up with many benefits that were accorded to them due to the intervention and demands sought by the feminists of the previous waves. Third-wave feminism sought to reclaim femininity and female sexuality.

The previous waves awarded much success to the feminists in the developed countries in the 20<sup>th</sup> century thus shifting the feminist movement to a post-feminist phase in which the movement became more dormant than radical. The new phases saw feminism being more actively indulged in educational institution realm this was seen as an attempt to integrate it with the mainstream political activity. But this is criticized as a misreading of the contemporary feminist. In reality efforts are ongoing to mainstream gender equality in all social and political realms of the society. On the contrary feminism is very much active and visible in the modern age. Feminism and women's movements are not confined to the west but the feminist politics and issues taken up are more than that of gender inequality in this regard the movements being carried out across the globe identify more with demands for gender equality. The third wave focused on intersectionality, reproductive rights, individual empowerment, violence against women and sexual liberation.

Intersectionality discussed how women were subjected to multiple discrimination such as on the basis of gender, colour, sexual orientation etc. Reproductive rights demanded the right to have legal option for abortion, access to contraceptives and pregnancy and child care. The third wave challenged the universal explanation of womanhood and thus in the third women were celebrated for their individual distinctions. The existence of violence against women in the form of rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment raised the need to equip the legal system more efficiently in order to prevent the persisting



violence against women. Through sexual liberation the women and feminist sought to celebrate their sexuality, 'Slut walks' in Canada was a movement that took place as a form of protest against sexualizing women with stigmatizing certain way of dressing to be like a slut or as a reason for sexual assault. This movement attempted to rephrase the derogatory usage of bitch and slut.

### 2.1.4 Fourth Wave

The twenty-first century has witnessed a revival of feminist discourse, commonly referred to as the 'fourth wave' of feminism. This resurgence, emerging around the 2010s, has been largely driven by the widespread use of social media platforms, which have provided a powerful space for sharing experiences and mobilizing action. A key focus of fourth-wave feminism is opposition to sexual harassment, abuse, and gender-based violence. Several high-profile cases have catalyzed this wave such as the 2012 Nirbhaya rape case in India, the 2014 Bill Cosby allegations, the 2017 Harvey Weinstein scandal and the global #MeToo

movement, and the Westminster sexual misconduct scandals in the UK. These incidents, extensively reported across both print and electronic media, have helped bring attention to the pervasive nature of gender-based violence.

However, fourth-wave feminism is heavily reliant on digital technology, raising concerns about access and inclusivity. As Jóns (2014) notes, the movement is often driven by those with privileged access to digital platforms, revealing an inherent class bias in this phase of feminism. Moreover, critics argue that online activism does not always translate into concrete, on-the-ground action.

Despite the debates surrounding its exact beginning and scope, the fourth wave reflects a renewed feminist energy. The ongoing conversations and mobilizations around gender justice make it clear that feminism remains an active and evolving force in contemporary society not a movement of the past, but one that continues to adapt and respond to present-day challenges.

## Recap

- ◆ Feminism came to be as a social movement that demanded equal rights and worked towards the distribution and access of resources equally for both genders.
- ◆ The goal of the first wave of feminism was to have the world recognize the needs and rights of women and to have women treated as human beings rather than pieces of property.
- ◆ Mary Wollstonecraft 'Vindication of the Rights of Woman', this was a revolutionary work and set into motion women's movements.
- ◆ The Declaration of Sentiments was drafted by Elizabeth Cady and it was monumental in the first wave and sought to fight against the prevailing social injustices.

- ◆ Germany saw two kinds of feminist movement one that fought against the prevailing social injustices and the other demanding sexual autonomy otherwise known as erotic movement.
- ◆ The second wave saw the feminization of poverty which highlighted the different layers of discrimination that was not rooted in gender alone.
- ◆ The Second wave of feminism correlated the feminist movement with the dominant ideologies of the time such as Marxism, socialism, liberalism.
- ◆ The article in 1992 'Becoming the third wave by Rebecca Walker' was detrimental in forging the term third wave.
- ◆ The third wave began in response to the Anita Hill Senate Hearings in 1991 this along with the riot grrrl movement was important in setting in motion the third wave.
- ◆ The third wave focused on intersectionality, reproductive rights, individual empowerment, violence against women and sexual liberation.
- ◆ The twenty-first century has witnessed a revival of feminist discourse, commonly referred to as the 'fourth wave' of feminism. This resurgence, emerging around the 2010s, has been largely driven by the widespread use of social media platforms, which have provided a powerful space for sharing experiences and mobilizing action.

## Objective Questions

1. Which place is known as the birth place of American feminism?
2. Who coined the term 'intersectionality'?
3. What was the slogan of the second wave?
4. Who authored 'Becoming the third wave'?
5. Who was the leader of the 'Erotic Movement'?
6. Which event is marked as the beginning of the third wave?

7. What was the focus of the second wave feminism?
8. Who led the feminist movement in Germany as part of the first wave?
9. Which schools of feminism dominated the second wave?
10. Which country saw the demand for sexual autonomy in the name of erotic movement?
11. Which document was drafted by Elizabeth Cady Stanton as part of the fight against social injustice?
12. Who authored 'Vindication of the Rights of Women'?

## Answers

1. Seneca Falls
2. Kimberle Williams
3. The Personal is Political
4. Rebecca Walker
5. Helene Stocker
6. Anita Hill Senate Hearing
7. Liberation and Empowerment
8. Marianne Weber
9. Marxism, Socialism and Liberalism
10. Germany
11. Declaration of Sentiments
12. Mary Wollstonecraft

## Assignments

1. Compare and critically analyze the historical and socio-political circumstances that led to the emergence of the four distinctive waves of feminism. How did each wave respond to the specific challenges and issues of its time?
2. Assess the events of first wave feminism as it unfolded in the US and Germany?
3. State your opinion regarding the effectiveness of feminism in working towards the achievement of gender equality?
4. 'Third wave sort to reclaim femininity and feminine sexuality.' How successful would you consider this claim?

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# UNIT

## Feminist Perspectives

### Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ explain different schools of feminism
- ◆ analyse the dimensions of gender inequality that is coherent in society
- ◆ discuss the historical operatives of gender inequality

### Prerequisites

Many components form together to become a singular product, concept or group. Let's consider a bureaucratic office: it will have a function and system in place to guide its functioning. The office will have a common function for which they will have a functioning structure inclusive of officers engaged in administrative and non-administrative tasks ranked at different levels of authority, but together they will function to meet the requirements of the office. Here a common function or necessity is realized through different individuals housed under one office likewise, feminism was instituted by likeminded women to become a collective that would advocate for gender inequality and modified to take up issues that affected specifically women in different times frames.

Feminism initially emerged as a collective movement against all forms of gender inequality. However, it failed to fully recognize internal diversity and the varying degrees of intensity among activists, which eventually led to the development of different schools or approaches—each with its own ideologies, principles, and key figures working to advance their specific goals. In this unit, we shall explore different schools namely liberal, radical, Marxist and socialist feminism.

## Keywords

Inequality, White feminism, Patriarchy, Gender socialisation, Equal Pay Act, Sex Discrimination Act

## Discussion

The feminist movement underwent several changes over a period of time that may be correlated with the historical changes that occurred in the society. The feminist movement underwent and developed through three major waves, the first wave occurred during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century which was the time of rapid industrialization. The first wave emphasized on recognition of equal rights and sought for political rights and access to education. The first wave was influenced by the liberal and socialist school of feminist. Second wave may be considered as an extension of the civil rights movements, black movement, gay and lesbian movement. The second was led from a radical perspective of feminism. In this wave primary thought was that women were oppressed by a society that was predominantly rooted in patriarchal ideology.

Third wave expanded in the context of globalization and digital revolution where the society rapidly transformed and this translated to feminist movement in local, national and global levels. Third wave of feminism was different as the women of this wave had the benefit of coming up in a society that was already partially reformed by the preceding waves.

Gender has been a significant idea for social stratification. Roles, functions and opportunities are devised in terms of gender. Each wave of feminism brought about different schools of thought. The first wave was predominantly from a liberal, socialist and even Marxist schools of feminism. Whereas the second wave acted upon the

framework of radical school of feminism, it was more intrusive in its demands for equal rights and opportunities and sought to strongly opposed beauty contests, male violence and sexism in both work space and home. Each wave was led and promoted by different school of thoughts which will be explored in detail in this unit.

### 2.2.1 Feminist Approach

Feminist movement is diverse in nature as it may be observed in different feminist theory or feminist school. Feminist movement is inclusive in nature thus a cohesion or agreement in thought is difficult, the diverse membership in terms of social, economic and racial profile makes universalization of ideas and demands impossible. From this diverse membership rose the need to have diversified branches of feminist theory that followed different philosophies. The prominent feminist approaches or theories are Liberal, Radical, Marxist and Socialist. Apart from these branches there is Black Feminism and Eco Feminism which will be explored in the coming units.

### 2.2.2 Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism is also termed as Egalitarian feminism. It is one of the mainstream perspectives in feminism. Liberal feminism came to be as a response to the conservative feminism. Conservative feminism held that women and men are different and there is oppression on the basis of gender and these differences and oppression should be legalized by law. Liberal feminism is based upon the idea





that all are created equally and must not be differentiated for their gender. Liberal feminism has always sought to explain the gender inequalities from a social and cultural aspect. The English philosopher John Stuart Mill in his essay 'The Subjection of Women (1869)' sought for equal legal and political rights for both sexes, he also demanded for the right to vote. This may be marked as one of the first contribution in terms of liberal feminism. Liberal feminist do not place the oppressive and subordination that women are subjected to as the result of a system that is deeply rooted in patriarchal norms. Liberal feminism fundamentally calls for the right and ability of a women to decide her social role. Liberal feminism attempted to facilitate gender equality through reformation of the existing social systems, it mainly called for reforms in the fields of legal rights of women, educational and political rights, property rights, right to work, marriage and divorce laws etc.

Liberal feminist in the 1970s campaigned against the discrimination of women in media, educational institutions and work-place through these protests they sought to reform and establish legislative laws to rectify sexism. As a result, the Equal Pay Act (1970) and the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) was endorsed by the liberal feminist they believed that legal sanctions and laws was the way to achieve equality in all spheres of life. The liberal feminist may thus be considered as moderates who believe in working the system for the better quality of rights and for the eradication of discrimination on the basis of gender.

Liberal feminist believed that the actualization of gender-based roles led to discrimination and prejudice against women. Women are expected to play the part of a housewife whereas men are considered to be the designated bread winner this leads to a power imbalance between the two gender. Thus, for liberal feminist inequality

is rooted in the denial of equal rights. Liberal feminist held the view that equality will be possible only through legislations and education programs that will reframe expectations regarding gender assigned roles through socialization process. For example, designating specific colors for gender: pink for girls and blue for boys or women being expected to take up secretarial roles while men hold power positions like that of CEOs. Liberal feminist sought that education programs may turn crucial in gender socialization as gender specific behavior, attributes and roles are learned and not inherited.

***Mary Wollstonecraft in her book 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women' criticized the conservative view of feminism and explained the basic idea of liberal feminism: "that women are first and foremost human beings and not sexual beings. Women are rational creatures, they are capable of governing themselves by reason. Hence if women are to be denied natural rights, it must be proved that they have no rational capacity."***

Liberal feminism was often criticized as a bourgeois white women's movement. Even though liberal feminism has greatly contributed to the empowerment of women's rights, the critics of the movement observe that they have not effectively contributed to any fundamental changes in the sphere of women's rights. They failed to realize the systematic oppression of rights of women and rather they focused on independent issues such as unequal pay, sexism, discrimination etc. A criticism by the radical feminist regarding the approaches of the liberal feminist is that they often encourage women to accept a submissive and unequal role in society that is mostly based upon discrimination. Unlike



radical feminism, liberal feminism never sought to overhaul the existing oppressive social systems that validated the patriarchal gender based social oppression thus their movements were limited.

Ultimately liberal feminism held that all individuals are equal and free but liberal feminism failed to address the issue of equality of women parallel to the issues of race and class. Liberal feminism left many questions regarding gender inequality and its inability to explain gender inequality with other oppressive factors led to proving liberal feminism to be limited and ineffective to certain points.

### 2.2.3 Radical Feminism

Radical feminism came to be in the late 1960s with T. Grace Atkinson and Shulamith Firestone in its forefront. They rejected the liberal view which emphasized that the social sanctions and oppressions placed upon women through legislation can be overcome through legislation and legal interventions. Radical feminist correlated between biology and gender stating that the reasons for the social oppression of women is rooted in biology.

Radical feminist finds men to be responsible for the exploitation and oppression of women. They uphold that the systematic oppression through a male dominated system that is rooted in patriarchy is solely the reason for the oppression and discrimination that women face. The core idea of radical feminism is rooted in patriarchy that is dominance of men over women. For radical feminist 'Family and Heterosexuality', are one of the primary sources of patriarchal oppression. The radical feminist often held that men exploit women to attain free domestic labor, by this action the men are able to confine women to their homes and withheld from them the positions of power and authority.

Tong in 1989 explained certain beliefs of

the Radical feminists which are as follows:

1. Women were historically the first group to be oppressed.
2. Women's oppression is widespread: that is, it may be found in every society across the globe.
3. Women's oppression is the deepest: cannot be removed unlike social classes can be.
4. It causes most suffering: creates a false consciousness.
5. Women's oppression may provide a framework or model for understanding the other existing oppressions in the society.

Radical feminist regard patriarchy as the major cause for women's oppression as they consider it an attempt by the men to control women's sexuality. By creating a patriarchal gender socialization, the men attempt to control women's bodies with the possibility to create an acceptable sexual behavior. According to radical feminist men exercise power over women by controlling their sexuality, this exhibition of control may turn violent at times and manifest in different forms such as rape, incest, harassment, battery and domestic violence. This exhibition of control may not always be violent it may manifest in other manner such as by encouraging motherhood, need to be protected, beauty standards etc., are also methods to control women's sexuality. Apart from acts of physical violence towards women nonverbal gestures and communications in the form of interrupting women, intruding women's personal space, servitude attitude also contributes to gender-based inequality. Ultimately the radical feminist considered that the different acts of violence, objectification and conception



of gender roles are all dictated by men in order to create a class of women who adhere to their patriarchal values.

Radical feminist believed that overthrowing patriarchy was the only practical possibility to overcome gender inequality. Radical feminist sought to rectify this through the introduction of an androgynous culture that does not prioritize the differences between male and female. Another solution thought of by the radical feminists is to engage in celibacy, autoeroticism or lesbianism. Radical feminist believed that controlling reproduction or refusing to reproduce was the most effective way for women to overcome patriarchy. Through 'Sex Class' Firestone sought to describe the social position of women and stated that women can only be liberated through the abolition of family and the power relations which define it.

Radical feminist was criticized for their over emphasis on patriarchy as the ultimate reason for oppression. Even though patriarchy is universal and has existed throughout history with cultural variations, the radical feminist failed to interpret women's oppression and gender-based inequality with reference to race, class and ethnicity their primary focus remained on patriarchy.

### 2.2.4 Marxist Feminism

Marx's analysis of capitalism emphasized on those who owned the means of production and those who did not own the means of production otherwise known as the bourgeois and proletariats. According to Marx anyone who owned the resources of production were termed as bourgeois and those who offered their labor were termed as proletariats. Till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women did not have the right to own property or earn profit from their businesses, they were under paid and their wages belonged to their husbands or male family member that was the norm of the time. For Marx housework or the

labor by a housewife did not figure in his idealization of capitalism. It was Marxist feminist who figured housework into the structure of capitalism.

For Marxist feminist housewives and their housework were vital in maintaining the existing capitalist and laborers as well as in the formation of future capitalists and laborers. If a capitalist has a setback or a laborer is unable to work or underpaid more than usual it is upon the wife to engage in both house work and a paid labor either way both the labor was for the benefit of their family. Thus, the Marxist feminist saw family as a source of oppression and exploitation. They highlighted a duality of labor, oppression and exploitation, a house wife engaged in house work is dependent on her husband or children and if the same woman is working, she is expected to fulfill her duties both at home and workplace here a duality of oppression and exploitation maybe seen. The woman is expected to do more work than the man and be underpaid for the same.

Marxist feminist highlighted the fact that the woman's child bearing ability portrays them as caregivers and homemakers all the while the men are portrayed as breadwinners. The Marxist feminist replaced the bourgeois for men and the over exploited proletariats with women. According to Marx it was possible to reach full potential through productive work but as the women are exploited politically and economically in both private and public spheres it is impossible for them to realize their full potential.

Marxist feminist sought for a revolution that would restructure the social relation that was engaged in oppressing and exploiting women along with the reformation of property rights. Women are not included in the productive system they are always subject to oppression and exploitation thus a change in the social system needs to take place in order for the women to access the

means of production. having the ability to engage in paid labor was seen as the first step to attaining gender equality, as a second step the ability to advance towards a managerial post. The ultimate aim is for women to own the means of production. Marxist feminist do not universalize the issues of women across the diverse categories of class, race or ethnicity rather they do realize the class based differences that a bourgeois women and a proletariat women may face. Bourgeois women are owned like a property of man in order to perform acts of servitude, reproduce, nurture and perform sexual acts.

Marxist feminist attempted to envisage a reformation of society that was inclusive of both the bourgeois women and proletariat women with the premise of having a united stance against the political, social and economic oppressive factors that are embedded in the capitalist structure of society.

### 2.2.5 Socialist Feminism

Like Marxist feminists the socialist feminist believe that the inferior ranking of women in social and economic structure is embedded in the class-based capitalism. This is viewed reason for their oppression and exploitation. Unpaid housework is stated as an example to showcase how men and women are treated differently. Unlike Marxist feminist the socialist feminist does not isolate capitalism as the only reason for the oppression of women rather they consider it as one of the significant contributing factors.

Socialist feminism stemmed basically from the dissatisfaction of how women and family were depicted in the Marxist ideology. Socialist feminism may be considered as a combination of radical and Marxist feminism. This branch of feminism sought to adapt the socialist principles in both the private and public sphere that is the home and work space to encourage gender equality. Socialist

feminists believes that in determining the women's status gender relates largely to economic conditions as well. Social change will only be possible if a conscious realization is affected that social structures are premeditated to oppress women.

The links between public sphere and private sphere were established to showcase the connection as in men are often associated with the public sphere which is the work place predominantly whereas women are linked to public sphere which consists of the home. The private sphere is often an invisible element in the factors of production. The socialist feminist considered it their goal to give the lives and labor in the private sphere more visibility. Socialist feminists criticized existing theories of labor and capitalism for valuing only the public sphere as the site of meaningful history, thereby rendering the private sphere and the work typically done by women as inferior. As women are often confined to the private space they are excluded from engaging in a public life thus they are excluded from social, political and economic centers of power and authority.

The socialist feminist put forward two solutions that may have an effect in rectifying their current plight:

1. An increased emphasis on the private sphere and the role of women in the household.
2. Equal opportunities for women in the public sphere.

For socialist feminist, a change in the condition of women is only possible through the reevaluation of the existing social and economic structure. The work that women engage in the private sphere as in their household should be given due social and economic consideration.



## Recap

- ◆ The first wave was predominantly from a liberal, socialist and even Marxist schools of feminism whereas the second wave acted upon the framework of radical school of feminism.
- ◆ Liberal feminism is based upon the idea that all are created equally and must not be differentiated for their gender.
- ◆ Liberal feminism attempted to facilitate gender equality through legal reformation of the existing social systems.
- ◆ Liberal feminist mainly called for reforms in the fields of legal rights of women, educational and political rights, property rights, right to work, marriage and divorce laws etc.
- ◆ Radical feminist regard patriarchy as the major cause for women's oppression as they consider it an attempt by the men to control women's sexuality.
- ◆ Radical feminist saw patriarchal gender socialization as man's attempt to control women's bodies and condition them to engage in acts of servitude, housework, reproduction etc.
- ◆ Radical feminist prompted for an androgynous culture that does not prioritize the differences between male and female.
- ◆ Marxist feminist saw family as a source of oppression and exploitation
- ◆ Marxist feminist sought for a revolution that would restructure the social relation that was engaged in oppressing and exploiting women along with the reformation of property rights.
- ◆ Socialist feminism may be considered as a combination of radical and Marxist feminism.
- ◆ The Socialist branch of feminism sought to adapt the socialist principles in both the private and public sphere that is the home and work space to encourage gender equality.

## Objective Questions

1. Which schools of feminism were predominant in the first wave?
2. Which school of feminism dominated the second wave?
3. What is the slogan of the second wave feminism?
4. What are the concerns of liberal feminism?
5. Who wrote “The Subjection of Women”?
6. Who authored “A Vindication of the Rights of Women”?
7. What according to the radical feminist was the root cause for women’s oppression?
8. What are the sources of patriarchal oppression?
9. Which school considered ‘Family’ as a source of oppression and exploitation?
10. What is the ultimate aim of Marxist feminism?
11. What according to the socialist feminist is an example of gender inequality?
12. Which school of feminism highlighted the link between public and private sphere?

## Answers

1. Liberal and Socialist Feminism
2. Radical
3. The personal is political
4. Educational rights, political rights, right to work, marriage and divorce laws



5. John Stuart Mill
6. Mary Wollstonecraft
7. Patriarchy
8. Family and Heterosexuality
9. Marxist feminist
10. Ownership of the means of production by women
11. Unpaid housework
12. Socialist feminism

## Assignments

1. Distinguish between different schools of feminism on the basis of their characteristics of oppression, intervention and criticism?
2. How does socialist feminism differ from Marxist feminism?
3. Compare and contrast between liberal and radical feminism?
4. Elucidate how the notion of patriarchy is analyzed by each school of feminism?

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# UNIT

## Ecofeminism and Black Feminism

### Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ explain the interconnection between nature and gender
- ◆ analyse feminism from a racial profile
- ◆ discuss the horizon of feminism beyond that of class, patriarchy and capitalism

### Prerequisites

Feminism throughout history gathered to become a collective movement and academic discourse that focused on gender inequality that women were subjected to. This construct has followed different ideologies in different sections of time and history. Feminism came across with the need to tackle gender-based discrimination and oppression but as the collective grew the movement did not hold everyone's interest equally, with failed representation in terms of race and the disregard for nature. Thus two different schools of feminism arose in the name of ecofeminism and black feminism. A minority within a minority so to speak.

The world was once abundant with resources, the rivers ran clear, the air unpolluted, forests over run with varieties of flora and fauna, lifeforms of different sizes and shapes made up the earth. Today mankind is invested in colonizing the solar system: why do we need to set up home in space? Because mans greed has known no bounds, as time progressed the world developed and technology advanced, mankind utilized this to mobilize the resources to satisfy their greed likewise mankind chooses to control and dominate women for their interest as they would do with nature. Women

are denied their basic rights and are owned like a piece of property. Ecofeminism stands to question this.

As the world is diverse in its flora, fauna and life forms mankind is differentiated for their diversity in class, religion, caste, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and so on. Women are at a disadvantage as they are an oppressed class that is subjected to duality of oppression, discrimination and exploitation. Although women as a gendered group have long faced oppression, the reasons for their exploitation are not uniform or universal. This important factor was often overlooked by early mainstream feminists, who largely centered the experiences of white, middle-class women while ignoring the intersecting oppressions faced by women of color.

Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* (2009), a work of historical fiction, highlights this disparity by portraying the lives of African American women working in white households in the early 1960s American South. These women were subjected not only to gender-based discrimination but also to systemic racism. The novel illustrates how Black women were often stereotyped as domestic workers uneducated, submissive, and even criminal reinforcing racial hierarchies and social marginalization.

While *The Help* brings attention to the struggles of Black women, it also draws criticism for framing their experiences largely through the perspective of a white protagonist, thus failing to authentically center their voices. This kind of misrepresentation highlights a broader issue within mainstream feminist discourse—the erasure and silencing of marginalized women's lived realities.

In response to such exclusions, Black feminism emerged as a powerful and necessary movement. It sought to affirm that the experiences of Black women cannot be subsumed under a one-size-fits-all feminist narrative. Instead, it emphasized the need for an intersectional approach that recognizes how race, gender, class, and other social categories interact to produce unique forms of oppression. Black feminism, therefore, arose as both a critique of mainstream feminism's limitations and a platform for the accurate and autonomous representation of Black women's voices, struggles, and identities.

## Keywords

Gender, Nature, Patriarchy, Race, Intersectionality



## Discussion

Feminist approaches were limited to the main stream theoretical practices and ideologies, adhering to the speculations of each individually. Ecofeminism and Black feminism are two streams of feminism that came up in opposition with critical claims against the existing streams of feminism. Both ecofeminism and black feminism came to be due to the lack of integration of diversity in the spectrum of the mainstream feminism. Ecofeminism focused on the connection between women and nature whereas black feminism made known the racial profile while considering gender inequality. Ecofeminism has western origins which sought to highlight the relationship between gender and environment whereas in the context of India ecofeminism came to be in the backdrop of growing environmental destruction. Black Feminism came to be mostly because the conceptualization of feminism and feminist ideology by white feminist were not applicable or relatable to the black feminist thus a lack of integration and need for conceptual clarity that emphasized on racial aspects came to be. Black feminism was an alternative to white feminism, it was inclusive of diverse characteristics like race and class which was depicted from a nonwhite perspective.

### 2.3.1 Eco Feminism

The term Ecofeminism was coined by the French Feminist Francoise d'Eaubonne in 1974. Ecofeminism grew and was established in the mid-1970s and it merged with the second wave feminism. The ecofeminist formed at a time when there were movements taking place against the nuclear proliferation of countries and environmental movements across the globe. Ecofeminism became popular when activists took against environmental destructions began to occur.

The events that unfolded at the Three Mile Island prompted women in the USA to formally organize themselves and participate in the first ecofeminist conference titled 'Women and Life on Earth'. Ynestra King a Feminist theorist is considered to be feminist asset that popularized the concept of Ecofeminism through her article 'What is Ecofeminism?' Through the article she prompted Americans to think of the ways in which their belief system promoted the exploitation of the earth and its resources all the while subjecting women to further oppression.

Ecofeminism is not an association between women and nature, rather advocates of ecofeminism consider this misguided understanding about ecofeminism as a male centric approach to bound ecofeminism within their conceptualization of mother nature. Ecofeminism is rather a parallel understanding between ecology and feminism which would facilitate a different perspective to the issue of oppression and discrimination. In order to understand various factors of discrimination and oppression it is essential to have a grass root level interpretation of associating factors like gender and ecology. Thus, the focus of ecofeminism is basically upon the oppressed categories found among the human and non-human species.

The world is designed in a such a way as to exact the resources without consideration of other beings. As Gandhi said "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed", the world is now engaged in methods of over exploitation and oppression for the interest of a few. Ecofeminist note that this attitude has led to the destruction of the ecosystem. Ecofeminist further apply this centric idea towards the relationship between men and women. Thus,

ecofeminist describe that men have the tendency to exploit women for their benefit as they would nature. Ecofeminism explores the mutually oppressive and exploitative relationship established between gender and ecology.

Mary Mellor in *Feminism & Ecology* depicts ecofeminism as a movement that connects the exploitation and degradation of the natural world with the subordination and oppression of women, ecofeminism has developed itself to be a challenge to both green and feminist concerns.

### Basic Tenets of Ecofeminism

1. Ecofeminism took root as a result of academic discourse that took place in the form of workshops, seminars and conferences.
2. Ecofeminism basically traces the connection between gender and ecology.
3. Ecofeminism establishes an association of patriarchy with the exploitation of nature, man exerts control and exploits nature as they would women.
4. Ecofeminism urged women to work towards ending the patriarchal domination over the environmental resources that sought to oppress and exploit.
5. Ecofeminists criticized the existing ecological theories for its disregard in acknowledging the patriarchal underpinnings in the exploitation and oppression of nature.
6. Ecofeminists were critical of the feminist movements that failed to recognize the relation between

women and nature.

As ecofeminism flourished to become a mainstream school of feminism it diversified into two distinct school of thought as 'Radical Ecofeminism' and 'Cultural Ecofeminism'. Radical Ecofeminism considered that the dominant patriarchal society places nature and women in the same scale with the intent of devaluing and subjecting them to exploitation and oppression. Therefore, radical ecofeminist sought to understand and study patriarchal domination with the intent to end its oppressive power over women and nature. According to radical ecofeminist women and nature are both seen as commodifiable with the possibility for men to exact cheap labor from either. Cultural ecofeminism on the other hand call for a more intimate association between women and nature. According to cultural ecofeminist women tend to have a more sensitive relationship with nature mostly because of the nurturing traits that are attributed to women thus making women more aware of the degradation nature is subjected to. Cultural ecofeminism also has roots in religions that are based upon nature worship.

The divergence of ecofeminism to radical ecofeminism and cultural ecofeminism was not approved by many of its followers as some criticized that a division like cultural ecofeminism if not definitively demarked could possibly lead to the enforcement of gender stereotypes such as women like nature must be rooted in habits of nurturing, motherhood and growth of the next generation.

Ecofeminism was critical of the failure of women in the developed countries to realize how their lifestyle choices were leading to the degradation of the ecological system along with it the degradation of their counter parts in less developed and underdeveloped countries. Factories and sweatshops of mass



production was being run in these developing countries to which the women from the same criticized the white feminist for partaking and promoting the degradation and oppression of women by purchasing goods that were created in such oppressive conditions. Many took offence to the utilization of indigenous culture and religion for the advancement of a particular philosophical position in ecofeminism. Another critical development in ecofeminism was the incorporation of queer perspectives because dominantly the ideologies of ecofeminism seemed to favor the heterosexual women more than the homosexual women. Thus, a critical understanding was attained regarding the route for further development of ecofeminism would have to be one which will emphasize on the diversifying elements such as race, class, sexuality, religion and ethnicity.

### 2.3.2 Black Feminism

Black feminism basically came to be due to the racial differences that is inherent in the society, the needs and troubles of the white, black and brown women are different from each other. From this difference the black feminism took root. Black feminist argue that the mainstream feminist schools universalized the experiences and debates of women's issues without considering the social, economic, racial and ethnic difference. The mainstream feminist schools showcased predominantly the view of the upper- and middle-class white women in developed societies. This generalization was felt to be an inadequate representation of women as whole on the basis of the experiences of a particular group. A generalized or unified understanding of gender inequality is challenging thus an intersectional understanding that is inclusive of gender, class, race and ethnicity is promoted.

Black feminism became a vocal center to decipher and decode the stigma and stereotypes that is associated with gender and

colored skin. The representation or depiction of black women by the white feminists or main stream feminist schools was misguided thus a dedicated school representing the interest of the black women was realized. Black feminist thought consists of ideas that are produced by black women for black women.

Collins (1986) depicted three major themes of black feminism:

1. The Meaning of Self – Definition and Self – Valuation
2. The Interlocking Nature of Oppression
3. The Importance of African – American Women's Culture

Collins in formulating these three major themes of black feminism wrote that the sociological significance lies in the fact that these ideas were created by this specific group of individuals.

Black feminism tends to emphasize on the historical aspects of their category in order to understand their current scenario. The Black American feminist writings portray the history of slavery, segregation and the civil rights movements that had taken place for equal rights. The gender equality campaigns of different sorts that were initiated and led by different schools of feminist were at first supported by the black women but with the realization that a racial difference in the demand for gender equality cannot be affected through these schools led to the rise of black feminism.

The American black feminist bell hooks (name is written in lower case) observed that main stream feminist and black feminist will have different interpretations of the gender equality and mechanisms of social system and social structures that exist in the society. For instance, bell hooks wrote



that from the white feminist perspectives family was seen as a force of oppression or source of patriarchy whereas from the black feminist family is seen as a pillar of strength and source of solidarity against overt and covert forces of racism. According to black feminists for any theory of gender equality to have ground must consider the history of oppression and the factor of race. Black feminist gave importance to intersectionality in the study of gender and its equation to equality, as in for an effective interpretation of gender equality it has to be submitted to intersectional evaluation that will correlate gender with other factors such as race, class, caste, history etc., by adhering to intersectionality black feminists stated that black women endured multiple disadvantage that was rooted in class, race and gender.

Currently in the present wave of feminism the representation of black feminists was loudly echoed through the current and ongoing 'Black Lives Matter Movement' that was started off by Black community members such as Patrisse Khan Cullors, Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi. The movement was initially started to protest against the violence mostly by the police force towards the members of the black community. This movement was unique due to its intersectionality as it emphasized on race, sex, class, sexual orientation, immigrant status, age etc., thus going beyond the confinement of feminism.

Black feminism emerged as a critique of white feminism, highlighting the lack of inclusion and representation of Black women's experiences within mainstream feminist discourse.. Instances of exclusion are found in the history of feminism, during the first wave when the mainstream feminist advocated for the right to vote the white feminists excluded the black feminist from their movement which led to a separate movement by the black feminist for the same cause. In 1981 Angela Davis conveyed

that the dominant feminist schools failed to address the issue of racism and advocated for the rights that were beneficial for the white women while being completely complacent of the multiple facets of exclusion and discrimination that black feminism tried to address. Other criticisms regarding white feminism or mainstream feminism are as follows:

#### Criticisms raised against white feminism

1. During the suffrage movement Elizabeth Cady Stanton was criticized for the racist and discriminatory language she used while campaigning for the right to vote. Stanton like her fellow campaigners urged that white women be allowed to vote before black men are allowed to. She advocated for their rights from a racist perspective.
2. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) focused primarily on the dissatisfaction of middle-class housewives who felt unfulfilled by domestic duties and child care. However, the work was later criticized for overlooking the experiences of working-class and Black women, whose struggles extended beyond domestic boredom to include systemic racism and economic hardship.
3. Friedman's interpretation of working-class women was limited to that of women who sought higher paying jobs all the while disregarding women hired as domestic help, they were put to work in the house employed as well as were supposed to work in their own homes.

Thus, black feminism came to be with the need to address their own issues of oppression, exploitation and discrimination. The black feminist worked toward the need for intersectionality while addressing the issues of gender equality as it could

not be considered as a stand-alone issue. Secondly black feminist sought the right to work without being discriminated for their color which meant being able to access opportunities of power positions

## Recap

- ◆ Ecofeminism was coined by the French Feminist Francoise d'Eaubonne in 1974.
- ◆ Ynestra King popularized the concept of Ecofeminism through her article 'What is Ecofeminism?'
- ◆ Ecofeminism is a parallel understanding between ecology and feminism which would facilitate a different perspective to the issue of oppression and discrimination.
- ◆ The focus of ecofeminism is basically upon the oppressed categories found among the human and non-human species.
- ◆ 'Radical Ecofeminism' and 'Cultural Ecofeminism' are two divisions of ecofeminism.
- ◆ Radical Ecofeminism considered that the dominant patriarchal society places nature and women in the same scale with the intent of devaluing and subjecting them to exploitation and oppression.
- ◆ Cultural ecofeminism promotes a more intimate association between women and nature.
- ◆ According to cultural ecofeminist women tend to have a more sensitive relationship with nature mostly because of the nurturing traits that are attributed to women thus making women more aware of the degradation of the nature.
- ◆ Black feminists argue that the mainstream feminist schools universalized the experiences and debates of women's issues without considering the social, economic, racial and ethnic difference.
- ◆ Gender inequality can be explored through an intersectional understanding that is inclusive of gender, class, race and ethnicity.
- ◆ The Black American feminist writings portray the history of slavery, segregation and the civil rights movements that had taken place for equal rights

- ◆ Only by adhering to intersectionality, the true nature of gender inequality can be understood.
- ◆ Black feminists stated that black women endured multiple disadvantage that was rooted in class, race and gender.

## Objective Questions

1. Who coined the term Ecofeminism?
2. Which ongoing popular movement can be associated with black feminism?
3. What value according to radical feminist underpinned the exploitative relationship that women and nature was subjected to?
4. Who popularized ecofeminist movement?
5. What are the two divisions of ecofeminism?
6. What is a good measure to learn of gender inequality according to black feminists?
7. Who was criticized for their use of racist language while campaigning for right to vote?
8. How did the black feminists perceive family to be?
9. Who addressed the failure of dominant feminist schools in addressing the issue of racism?
10. Which type of feminism emphasized on the intimate relationship between nature and women?

## Answers

1. Francoise D’Faubonne
2. Black Lives Matter
3. Patriarchal
4. Ynestra King
5. Radical Ecofeminism and Cultural Ecofeminism
6. Intersectionality
7. Elizabeth Cady Stanton
8. Source of strength and solidarity
9. Angela Davis
10. Cultural Ecofeminism

## Assignments

1. Critically evaluate the radical ecofeminism and cultural ecofeminism
2. Discuss how laborate on how the oppression and exploitation of nature leads to gender inequality.
3. Substantiate the circumstances that led to the establishment of black feminism?
4. Elaborate the scope of ecofeminism in a developing country like India?
5. Examine historically how intersectionality figured into black feminism while evaluating gender inequality?

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## BLOCK

# Theoretical Perspectives on Gender





# UNIT

## Gender Socialization Theory

### Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ discuss the socialisation of gender roles and the different agents
- ◆ explain the theoretical explanation of Ann Oakley on socialisation of self
- ◆ examine the perspectives of Simon de Beauvoir and gender identity

### Prerequisites

The notion of acceptable gender behavior varies across time periods and societies which highlights the socially constructed nature of gender roles. For example, behaviors considered normal for a young man in postmodern America may be seen as extremely unconventional in other historical eras or societies. Similarly, the expectations for females in Victorian England would not be appropriate in contemporary America. Gender stereotypes often suggests that males are more independent and aggressive, while females are more emotional and communicative. However, these distinctions are not necessarily based in reality. Although aggression is often associated with males, there are many women who exhibit more aggression than men. Additionally, some men may be more emotional and expressive than some women, despite the stereotype that emotionality is a feminine trait.

## Keywords

Gender stereotypes, Femininity, Existentialism, Marginalised

## Discussion

### 3.1.1 Gender Socialisation

Gender norms and roles are acquired by individuals through interactions with key agents of socialisation, including family, social networks and other social institutions. This process is known as gender socialisation, and understanding how it occurs is important for promoting the sustainable development goals which seek to reduce gender inequality and increase opportunities for women. To achieve a sustainable and inclusive development, it is essential to address all forms of inequality, including gender inequality. This requires recognizing the agents and factors that have contributed to unfair gender norms and roles, as well as raising gender awareness that these norms are socially constructed and not inherent. Socialisation is the process by which individuals acquire the knowledge, behaviors, values and cultural practices of their society. Through socialisation, people learn to integrate into their cultural and social groups and to adopt the roles and expectation of their community. It is a means through which society passes on its culture to the next generation and teaches individuals how to navigate their social and cultural environment. As a result, individuals become aware of the accepted behaviours, attitudes and life styles of their community through this process.

Socialisation can be seen as the process of instilling the values, beliefs, and standards of a particular society into all its members, in order to anticipate and facilitate their

behaviours, thoughts, and feelings in a group or society. Although socialisation is a lifelong process, the most difficult years are typically during early and middle childhood. The goal of socialisation is to develop individuals at all stages of life, and this process occurs throughout a person's lifespan. A variety of agents are involved in the socialisation process, including families, educational institutions, peer groups and social media. These agents help children learn from their social roles, which are constructed by society and not inherent to nature. Gender socialisation occurs when boys and girls internalise various values and behavior patterns, thus developing and learning to 'do' gender as they interact with key socialising factors such as their family, social networks and other social institutions.

#### 3.1.1.1 Agents of Gender Socialisation

The primary forces in gender socialisation are family, media, schools and peer groups which play a significant role in shaping children's gender identities, self - concepts, and understanding of gender role across various cultures. Families are considered the most crucial factor in gender socialisation as parents instill distinct behavioral habits and set different standards based on their children's gender including, providing separate toys, clothing, room decor and sports. Parents teach their children various values, dialects, tolerance levels and actions-based gender roles, which greatly influence children's gender identities and roles. The

family provides the foundation for children to understand their gender and appropriate behavior based on it, making it the primary institution for teaching children how to fulfill different roles as a woman or man.

Peers play a significant role in shaping gender stereotypes and gender self-concepts through social interactions, friendships and group norms. As children begin to develop their identities within a social group, their next step is to explore and establish their social selves among peers outside of their family. However, the games, toys, activities, roles and conventions within peer groups are derived from a societal and cultural emphasis on gender. Therefore, boys and girls may be encouraged to engage in different games, roles and activities. As children grow older, they may also begin to separate themselves based on gender, further defining their gender identities.

Peers have a considerable impact on the development of children's gender related beliefs and self-concepts. While children explore and establish their social identities within their peer group, they are exposed to societal and cultural norms that heavily emphasise gender. This exposure can encourage boys and girls to engage in different activities and roles, further defining their gender identities as they grow older.

Education has a considerable impact on gender socialisation, as it teaches students values, behavior patterns, and standards through interactions with teachers, peers, textbooks and curricula within formal education systems. Teachers, in particular, play a vital role in this process by using different toys and activities for boys and girls, which helps shape their gender role and identities. Unfortunately, due to misconceptions about the abilities and needs of girls and boys, teachers may treat and perceive their students differently based on their gender.

The media plays a significant role in the development and internalisation of gender stereotypes as a socialising agent. This perpetuation of stereotypes extends to various minority groups, including immigrant women, women from different races and ethnicities, women from different sexual orientations, abilities and nationalities, among other identification categories. The media's impact on the process of socialisation is significant, as it plays a crucial role in shaping the behaviors and attitudes of specific social groups. Gender stereotypes and roles are learned by people of all ages and social classes through the media. Research into media content shows that women are often underrepresented and portrayed in ways that perpetuate gender stereotypes. Specifically, women are more likely to be portrayed as sexual objects in media, including games, TV shows, movies and advertising than men.

### 3.1.2 Theories of Gender Socialisation

There are several ideas that account for gender socialisation from various perspectives.

The biological theory says that the primary explanations for the socialisation of gender are biological difference between men and women. According to this theory, gender identity is formed depending on one's sex. The theory seeks to explain gender disparities in terms of biological origins. The late 19th and early 20th century psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud served as the foundations for psychoanalytic theory, which now focuses on experiences that shape children's conceptions of gender and sexuality from an early age.

Social learning theory uses the idea of modelling and learning behaviours to explain gender roles. The theory places a strong emphasis on how gender roles are learned through observation. According to cognitive development theory, gender roles are



explained in terms of a child's developmental phases as they begin to comprehend their place in society. This theory seeks to explain how children see, comprehend and interact with their environment. Theory holds that a child has a firm awareness of gender constancy, or the idea that one is either a boy or a girl and that this classification will not change. The theory of gender schemas describes how girls and boys are taught various gender roles using schemas as guides. Children often use their gender schemas as a guide for evaluating information and as a tool to simplify knowledge and make judgements as they encounter new situations or information relating to gender.

### 3.1.3 The Social Construction of Gender Roles – Ann Oakley

Ann Oakley discusses the concept of gender roles and how they are socially constructed, rather than biologically determined. She argues that cultural factors

play a more significant role in shaping masculine and feminine behavior than any inherent differences between men and women. Oakley provides four main ways in which gender roles are socialised into children in modern industrial societies.

Firstly, she describes how the child's self – concept is affected by manipulation. This involves parents and caregivers directing their attention and behaviours towards children, shaping how they view themselves and their gender. For instance, mother tends to pay more attention to girl's appearance, dressing them in 'feminine' clothing and styling their hair in specific ways.

Secondly, Oakley notes that gender differences are achieved through canalisation, where boys and girls are directed towards different objects and toys. Girls are provided with toys that encourage their expected adult roles as mothers and housewives such as dolls, soft toys and miniature domestic objects, while boys are given toys that



Ann Rosamund Oakley

Ann Rosamund Oakley, born in 1944 in London, is a renowned British sociologist, feminist, and author. She founded the Social Science Research Unit at the UCL Institute of Education and has made significant contributions to medical sociology, women's health, and research methodology. Daughter of the influential social policy scholar Richard Titmuss and social worker Kathleen Titmuss, Oakley wrote a biography of her parents and edited her father's works for re-publication. In 2005, she partially retired from academic life to focus on writing, particularly fiction.

Educated at Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls and Somerville College, Oxford, Oakley earned her BA in 1965 and completed a PhD at Bedford College, London in 1969 with a focus on women's attitudes toward housework. Her academic work often centers on the roles and experiences of women in society. Alongside scholarly writing, she has authored several successful novels, most notably *The Men's Room*, adapted for BBC television in 1991.

promote practical, logical and aggressive behaviour such as bricks and toys guns.

Thirdly, verbal appellations, such as 'good girl' or 'naughty boy' can also impact children's gender identities, causing them to identify with their gender and imitate the behaviours of adults of the same gender.

Finally, Oakley highlights how male and female children are exposed to different activities with girls being encouraged to participate in domestic tasks in particular. This can include helping with cooking and cleaning, which reinforces the idea that women are expected to perform such tasks as adults.

Overall, Oakley provides a detailed account of how gender roles are socially constructed and the ways in which this socialisation occurs in modern industrial societies. By understanding the factors that contribute to gender roles, we can begin to challenge and change societal expectations and create more equitable environments for all genders.

### Criticisms

1. According to Nickie Charles, Oakley's approach fails to explain why, in most societies, men are socialised into dominant roles while women are not. Unlike radical and Marxist feminism, sex role theory does not offer an explanation for power imbalances.
2. Oakley's work suggests that there are fixed gender roles to which men and women are socialised within certain societies. However, recent studies on masculinity and postmodern feminism show that gender roles can vary significantly within societies, which cannot be explained by sex role theory.

3. Bob Connell criticises Oakley's portrayal of socialisation as a passive process in which children simply absorb what they learn. Connell argues that this perspective ignores the active pursuit of pleasure in fulfilling gender roles, and overlooks resistance to socialisation, such as boys who dislike sports or girls who aspire to traditionally male dominated careers. Additionally, it fails to address the difficulties that some individuals face in conforming to masculine and feminine roles.

### 3.1.4 Simon de Beauvoir

Simon de Beauvoir was a renowned French philosopher and writer, born on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1908 in Paris. In her book *The Second Sex* de Beauvoir famously declared that 'one is not born, but rather becomes a woman'. She argued that gender identity is a product of upbringing in society dominated by men. *The Second Sex* published in French in 1949, is a well known work in gender studies and is often considered the starting point for the differentiation between gender and sex. According to de Beauvoir, sex is a biological difference while gender is a socially constructed difference that arises from upbringing rather than nature. de Beauvoir contended that throughout history, women have been regarded as the 'other, a deviation from the normative and 'normal' male. As a result of this view, women have always been subject to societal pressures to conform to male norms. de Beauvoir argued that by rejecting this assumption, feminism can move forward.

The *Second Sex* analysed the reasons why women have been historically marginalised and denied freedom compared to men. Simon de Beauvoir's main argument was that women have been forced into a





secondary role to men since ancient times. The entire human experience has been viewed from a male perspective and women have been excluded from the language used to describe it. She explained her argument using three theoretical frameworks: historical materialism, existentialism, and psychoanalysis. By employing historical materialism, de Beauvoir demonstrated how women have been trapped in dependence on men in all aspects of their lives, which has prevented them from having any real power in society and culture. She emphasised how women were regarded as legal minors, similar to children, which hampered their participation in public life on equal terms with men. Due to these reasons, women are absent from the important stories of history. As men have traditionally held more

economic, political and social power, they have had greater influence on cultural and historical events.

de Beauvoir's view, from an existentialist perspective, is that femininity is not inherent but rather socially constructed. This means that a person's nature is shaped by external influences, which contradicts the traditional philosophical belief that human nature is determined at birth. As an existentialist, de Beauvoir argues that individuals are not born with predetermined values but rather create their identities based on their life circumstances. Her work, *Second Sex* famously states that being a woman is not an innate quality but rather a product of socialisation and how women are raised and treated in society.



Simone de Beauvoir

Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986) was a French thinker, writer, feminist, and activist who played a key role in the development of existentialist ideas after World War II. She is best known for her book *The Second Sex* (1949), a major work in feminist philosophy, but she also explored deep ideas about life, freedom, and aging in many of her writings. Though she spent her life engaged in intellectual debates and wrote essays, novels, plays, and more, many people saw her mainly as a supporter of Jean-Paul Sartre, rather than a philosopher in her own right. Beauvoir herself preferred to be called an author, even with her strong background in philosophy. However, over time, especially through the work of feminist scholars, she gained recognition as an important philosopher. Her ideas about ethics, society, gender, and human experience still influence modern thought and continue to be widely studied and discussed today.

In *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir employs psychoanalysis to uncover the inconsistencies and falsehoods in the myths about femininity that are prevalent in art, literature, religion and popular culture. She contends that the societal understanding of femininity is not based on reality, but are rather founded on male anxiety and desire, and that they

reveal men's yearning to possess, control and succeed in the world. In these myths, the female role is inactive and subordinate, and women are only valued for their ability to fulfill men's desires. Without men's pursuit, seduction or marriage proposals women have no significance in society.



## Recap

- ◆ The primary forces in gender socialisation are family, media, schools and peer groups which play a significant role in shaping children's gender identities.
- ◆ Peers play a significant role in shaping gender stereotypes and gender self-concepts through social interactions, friendships and group norms.
- ◆ Teachers, in particular, play a vital role in this process by using different toys and activities for boys and girls, which helps shape their gender role and identities.
- ◆ The media's impact on the process of socialisation is significant, as it plays a crucial role in shaping the behaviors and attitudes of specific social groups.
- ◆ Gender stereotypes and roles are learned by people of all ages and social classes through the media.
- ◆ Sigmund Freud served as the foundations for psychoanalytic theory, which now focuses on experiences that shape children's conceptions of gender and sexuality from an early age.
- ◆ According to cognitive development theory, gender roles are explained in terms of a child's developmental phases as they begin to comprehend their place in society.
- ◆ Oakley notes that gender differences are achieved through canalisation, where boys and girls are directed towards different objects and toys.
- ◆ Oakley's provides a detailed account of how gender roles are socially constructed and the ways in which this socialisation occurs in modern industrial societies.
- ◆ According to de Beauvoir, sex is a biological difference while gender is a socially constructed difference that arises from upbringing rather than nature.
- ◆ de Beauvoir's view, from an existentialist perspective, is that femininity is not inherent but rather socially constructed.

## Objective Questions

1. The process by which members of a given society pick up the knowledge, behaviours, standards, conventions and values of that society is called ?
2. Who is the founder of psychoanalytical theory?
3. Name the theory which uses the idea of modelling and learning behaviours to explain gender roles.
4. Name the theory which explains in terms of child's developmental phase.
5. Recall the theoretical explanation which describes how girls and boys are taught gender roles using schemas.
6. Who is the author of the book *Second Sex*?

## Answers

1. Socialisation
2. Sigmund Freud
3. Social learning Theory
4. Cognitive Development Theory
5. Gender Schemas Theory
6. Simone de Beauvoir

## Assignments

1. Briefly discuss the significance of Gender socialisation in the contemporary society.
2. Narrate the theoretical explanation on 'gender socialisation'.
3. What is gender role?
4. Critically evaluate the social construction of Gender roles by Ann Oakley?
5. What is gender identity?
6. Discuss about Simone de Beauvoir's theoretical explanation on Sex' and 'Gender'?
7. Critically evaluate the work 'Second Sex' by Simone de Beauvoir.

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# UNIT

## Cultural Construction of Gender

### Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ assess the role of social and cultural norms in developing one's gender identity
- ♦ examine the theoretical explanation on gender identity
- ♦ analyse how women's natural procreative function has influenced their cultural and social roles

### Prerequisites

The idea that gender is a social construct has been the subject of academic and feminist discourse for decades. It challenges the belief that gender is determined solely by biology and instead recognises that it is shaped by social and cultural factors such as family upbringing, education, religion, media and societal expectations. The cultural construction of gender refers to the way in which gender identity and roles are shaped by cultural and societal norms rather than biology. The cultural construction of gender has important implications for individuals and society as a whole. It can impact how people perceive themselves and their own gender identity, as well as how they interact with others. It also has significant implications for issues such as gender inequality, discrimination and violence, as cultural construction of gender often reinforces existing power structure and hierarchies.

## Keywords

Gender identity, Natural procreation, Socialisation

## Discussion

Sherry B. Ortner, an American anthropologist, has made significant contributions to the field of cultural anthropology, particularly in the area of gender studies. In her essay “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture” published in the year 1974, argues that other than biological factors gender identity and roles are determined by cultural and societal ones. According to Ortner, gender roles and identities are formed by cultural attitudes, principles, and customs. She believes that people’s perception and execution of gender is not innate or natural, but rather acquired through socialization and perpetuated by cultural entities such as family, education, religion and media. Ortner’s idea challenges the conventional belief that gender is a biological duality, with individuals classified as either male or female based on their physical characteristics. She argues that gender is a social and cultural construct shaped by the norms and standards of society. This means that gender is not permanent, but instead fluid and subject to alteration over time and across different cultures.

### 3.2.1 Nature and Culture

Ortner in the essay *Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture*, discusses how every culture considers women as inferior to men in some way. She put forward three forms of evidences to prove this; (1) Cultural beliefs and statements that directly disparage women and assign them less value than men in terms of their roles, tasks, products and social environment, (2) Symbols that imply

inferiority, such as attributing defilement, and (3) Social structures that prevent women from accessing or being involved in the most powerful aspects of society. She doesn’t argue these points are matter of a particular culture, but rather it is the universality of female subordination.

Ortner, discusses the conventional explanation of the widespread devaluation of women which is biologically determined. She refutes the idea that men are dominant than women due to natural genetic factors but, rather suggests that biological differences between men and women only become significant in terms of superiority or inferiority within the context of culturally defined value system. To explain female subordination, Sherry B. Ortner proposes an alternative to conventional genetic determinism by focusing on universal human experiences shared across all cultures. These include the physical body, consciousness, interpersonal relationships, cultural traditions, connections with nature, experiences of birth and death, and the personal and societal drive for survival. Ortner argues that these common elements shape gender roles and hierarchies in culturally specific ways, rather than being solely biologically determined. What common factor in human existence could lead every culture to devalue women? Ortner explains, the reason for this could be that women are associated with ‘nature’ and therefore considered to be inferior to men who are associated with ‘culture’. Culture sees its mission as transcending nature, so



if women are considered part of nature, it becomes natural for culture to subordinate or oppress them. Women are seen as being closer to nature than men, and that even though they are not equated with nature, they are still seen as representing a lower order of being, less capable of transcending nature than men.

### 3.2.2 Why is Women Seen as Closer to Nature?

Further, Ortner discusses about the impact of women's bodies and their natural procreative functions on their cultural and social roles. Body and the Natural procreative functions are the two factors that impose by culture which connect women with the nature. There are three levels of physiological factors related with the significance of this.

1) Women's bodies are closer to nature compared to men's, which are involved in the project of culture.

2) Women's bodies lead to social roles considered lower in the cultural hierarchy compared to men's.

3) Women's traditional social roles result in a different psychic structure that is also seen as closer to nature. This puts women in a problematic position between nature and culture, compared to men who are seen as less intermediate and more purely cultural.

Ortner exemplifies the feminist thinker Simone de Beauvoir to substantiate the way which women tied with nature. Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* 1953, discuss physiology of women and how it affects their position in society. According to Beauvoir, the female body is more closely tied to nature compared to the male body. She argues that many aspects of the female body, such as the breasts, menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth, serve the needs of the species rather than the individual, leading to discomfort, pain and danger. This

leads de Beauvoir to conclude that women are more "enslaved to the species" and their "animality is more manifest" compared to men.

The perceived roles in society make distinction between men and women by limiting women as just mere reproductive functions, while men are seen as having the ability to creative through the use of technology and symbols. Men create objects with lasting impact, while women are limited to the creation of human beings who will eventually die. Simone de Beauvoir suggests that the distinction between men's and women's roles in society is not based on biological differences, but rather on cultural and social constructions. Since the ancient time itself male activities such as hunting and warfare, which involve the destruction of life, are often given more prestige than women's ability to give birth and create life. It is because these male activities are seen as more "transcendental" or culturally significant, while the process of giving birth is seen as natural and therefore less valued. It highlights the ways in which cultural attitudes and values shape our understanding of gender roles and reinforces the idea that these roles are not biologically determined, but rather socially constructed.

However, women cannot be completely restricted to the category of nature. Women, just like men, are full-fledged human beings with consciousness and the ability to think, speak, and participate in human dialogues. They are capable of generating, communicating, and manipulating symbols, categories, and values. But, women, as conscious members of society, often accept their own devaluation because of the internalized cultural beliefs and arguments about gender roles. Women's acceptance of their own devaluation is a result of societal and cultural beliefs, rather than a reflection of their actual capabilities or potential. Ortner implies that women are capable of much more



than what is currently expected of them, and that it is a tragedy that cultural beliefs limit women's potential and aspirations.

Woman's physiological functions, such as her reproduction and lactation processes may contribute to her being seen as closer to nature. These functions not only shape the way woman sees herself, but also limit her social movement and restrict her to certain social contexts that are seen as closer to nature. Lactating milk for new-born not only suffice the hunger, but also it creates a natural bond between mother and child. Children beyond infancy require constant care and supervision, making the mother the obvious person for this task. As a result, mother's activities are limited by the limitations of her children and she is confined to the domestic family group, with the cultural idea that "a woman's place is in the home".

Sherry B. Ortner discusses the consequences of women's association with the domestic context and how this affects the way they are perceived. She argues that because the family and women are associated with the lower order of social and cultural organization, they are seen as being connected to nature and the specific biological function of the family. This leads to the idea that the family and women represent lower-level, whereas men, who lack a "natural" basis for a familial orientation, are associated with higher-level, universalistic relations. As a result, men are seen as the "natural" proprietors of cultural activities such as religion, politics, art, and other realms in which universalistic statements of spiritual and social synthesis are made. Ortner states, men are not only identified with culture in the sense of human creativity, but also with the finer and higher aspects of human thought.

Women, who are primarily associated with the domestic context, are often viewed as being a lower order of culture than men. Ortner argues that this view is not

entirely accurate because women are not just caretakers of children, they are also responsible for the early socialization of children, teaching them manners and how to behave in a culturally acceptable way. In many societies, certain tasks, such as cooking and child bearing are considered as a lower-status activities and confined to the domestic sphere. These activities demonstrate women's participation in the cultural process. However, in some societies, when the cultural significance of these activities is elevated to a higher level, such as haute cuisine, they are performed by men, perpetuating the idea that men hold a higher cultural status than women.

Ortner further argues that women are perceived as being closer to nature not only physically but also mentally. She argues that women have a different psychic structure from men, which is shaped by the universal female socialization experience. She also suggests that if we accept the existence of a "feminine psyche" with specific characteristics, it would further support the cultural view of women as being closer to nature. It can be difficult to postulate specific traits as universal to the feminine psyche. However, Ortner identifies two dimensions that seem to be applicable across cultures; relative concreteness vs. abstractness and relative subjectivity vs. objectivity. According to Ortner, the feminine personality tends to be more involved with concrete feelings, things, and people and more subjective in their experiences, while the masculine personality tends to be more objective and inclined to relate to abstract categories.

Gender differences in adult life are not innate or genetically determined, but rather they stem from the universal family structure where women are primarily responsible for child care and child rearing. As a result of this structure, both boys and girls develop a personal identification with the mother but the son must eventually shift to a masculine

role identity and identify with the father. The boy's earlier socialization prepares him for the abstract and universalistic nature of the larger social world. Gender identity is formed between boys and girls through socialization. For a young girl, her early personal identification with her mother can persist as she learns what it means to be a woman. The learning process involves the development of her relationship with her mother and sustains her personal identification with her as an individual. This pattern equips the girl for the social realities she will face as an adult, where she will be part of a community of women with reduced formal role distinction and motherhood requires a personal bond with her own children. The cycle of gender identity formation thus begins anew.

### 3.2.3 The Implications of Intermediary

The feminine personality, is argued to have been formed by social-structural arrangements rather than biology. This personality leads to views of women as "closer to nature" and as having more direct and unmediated relationships, which is seen as both a challenge and a contribution to culture. Women are having universally secondary status. The universal secondary status cannot be explained by local variables such as economy, ecology, history, and political and social structures, but by other universal human cultural situations. The reason for universal secondary status of women is that, it rejects the idea of biological determinism and instead argues that women are seen as closer to nature than men, while men being seen as more cultural. Women's association with nature comes from their physiology, socialization, and psychology, which are all rooted in nature.

There exists a universal cultural perception that positions women as occupying an intermediate space between nature and culture. This position, which is seen as lower than men, is believed to be the result of women's role as the primary agent of early socialization and their association with the domestic unit. This position is said to result in restrictions on women's sexual activities, role choices, access to social institutions, and their conservative and traditional views. This situation is related to the important role that women play in ensuring the stability of the domestic unit and the continued viability of the culture by socializing the next generation.

The idea that women are closer to nature and men are closer to culture is a cultural construct and not a fact of nature. Both women and men have consciousness and are mortal, so there is no real difference in their relationship to nature. However, the cultural view of women as being closer to nature affects the social, physical, and psychological aspects of women's lives. It is needed to address both the cultural and institutional aspects in order to achieve significant change in the status of women.

Ortner argues that efforts to change social institutions alone, such as passing equal pay laws, will not have lasting impact if cultural views and language continue to devalue women. On the other hand, efforts to change cultural assumptions alone, through education and media, will not be effective unless the institutional base of the society is changed as well. To achieve a positive change, both men and women need to be equally involved in projects that challenge and change cultural and institutional norms. Only then can women be seen as equal partners in the cultural dialectic with nature.

## Recap

- ◆ Sherry B. Ortner, is an American anthropologist, who has made significant contributions to the field of cultural anthropology, particularly in the area of gender studies.
- ◆ According to Ortner, gender roles and identities are formed by cultural attitudes, principles, and customs.
- ◆ Ortner's idea challenges the conventional belief that gender is a biological duality, with individuals classified as either male or female based on their physical characteristics.
- ◆ Women are seen as being closer to nature than men, and that even though they are not equated with nature, they are still seen as representing a lower order of being, less capable of transcending nature than men.
- ◆ Sherry B. Ortner discussing the consequences of women's association with the domestic context and how this affects the way they are perceived.
- ◆ Ortner states, men are not only identified with culture in the sense of human creativity, but also with the finer and higher aspects of human thought.
- ◆ According to Ortner, the feminine personality tends to be more involved with concrete feelings, things, and people and more subjective in their experiences, while the masculine personality tends to be more objective and inclined to relate to abstract categories.

## Objective Questions

1. Who wrote the essay on *Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture*?
2. What are the two factors that impose by culture which connect women with the nature.
3. In which year was Sherry B. Ortner's essay *Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture* published?
4. According to Ortner, gender identity is shaped primarily by?

5. Which feminist thinker does Ortner refer to in her essay to support her arguments?
6. Why does culture tend to devalue women, according to Ortner?
7. What aspect of women's lives connects them more closely to nature, as discussed by Ortner?
8. What does Ortner identify as necessary for achieving gender equality?

## Answers

1. Sherry B Ortner
2. Body and natural procreative function
3. 1974
4. Cultural and social influences
5. Simone de Beauvoir
6. Women are associated with nature, which culture seeks to transcend
7. Their physiological and reproductive functions
8. Changing both cultural attitudes and institutional structures

## Assignments

1. Briefly discuss on the essay *Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture*.
2. Discuss on how every culture considers women as inferior to Men?
3. What common factors in human existence led every culture to devalue women.
4. Why are women seen as close to nature?

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# UNIT

## Queer Theory Politics

### Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ discuss the concept of sexuality, including its meaning and social construction
- ◆ explore the term queer and its theoretical foundations
- ◆ identify and understand the various terms associated with queer politics

### Prerequisites

Queer is a term that challenges and disrupts traditional binary ideas of gender and sexuality. It rejects the notion of fixed or static identities and instead embraces fluidity and diversity. The term can be reclaimed and used as a form of self-identification by individuals who do not conform to normative sexual or gender categories. Queer theory is a field of study that emerged in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, with its roots in the feminist, gay and lesbian studies. It seeks to understand the ways in which social and cultural norms shape our ideas about sexuality and gender, and how these norms are perpetuated and challenged. Queer theory is characterized by its interdisciplinary approach, drawing from fields such as literary studies, cultural studies, sociology and anthropology. The practices and priorities of queer theory are wide ranging, reflecting the diversity of experience and perspectives within the queer community. Some key areas of inquiry include examining the representation of queer desires and identities in popular culture, analysing the social and political implications of queer identity and exploring the intersections between queerness and race, class and other forms of identity.

## Keywords

LGBTQI, Gender role, Liberation movement, Homosexuality

## Discussion

The term 'gay' and 'lesbian' emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s as part of the gay liberation movement, which sought to challenge the social and cultural norms that had marginalised and stigmatized people with same sex desires. The terms were used as a way of asserting pride and identity, and of rejecting the pathologisation and criminalization of homosexuality that had been prevalent in previous decades. By claiming the label 'gay' or 'lesbian', individuals were asserting their right to self-identity and to define their own experiences, rather than being defined by the medical and legal establishments. This was a powerful form of resistance, as it challenged the idea that same sex desires and relationships were inherently unnatural or abnormal.

The gay and lesbian liberation movements also had important intersections with other social justice movements, such as the feminist and civil rights movements. For example, many lesbians were active in the feminist movement and sought to challenge traditional gender roles and expectations. The gay liberation movement also drew on the tactics and strategies of the civil rights movement, such as civil disobedience and direct action, to bring attention to issues affecting LGBTQ people.

The term 'queer' is often used as a broad label for individuals who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, intersex, transgender, or who reject the traditional LGBTQ labels. However, some people find the term offensive based on factors such as

their race, class, personal experiences, and generation. More recently, some heterosexual individuals who don't conform to society's expectations of gender and sexuality have also adopted the term 'queer' to describe themselves. Queer theory is a framework that challenges the notion that identities are fixed or predetermined, particularly with regard to gender, sex, and sexuality. It aims to critique and problematize previous ways of understanding identity. Heteronormativity assumes that heterosexuality and the binary gender roles associated with it are stable and constant, while queer theory destabilises these assumptions and privileges, recognizing the fluidity and instability of identities. This approach politicises and acknowledges the ways in which identities are constantly changing and challenging dominant norms in both academic study and everyday life.

### 3.3.1 The Construction of Sexuality

One of the key contributions of queer theory to sociology has been to challenge the idea that sexual identities are fixed and stable categories. Instead, queer theorists argue that sexual identities are socially constructed and can change over time and in different contexts. Queer theory also emphasizes the importance of understanding the diversity of sexual experiences and the complexity of the social structures and institutions that shape those experiences.

Michel Foucault, the French philosopher in his work *The History of Sexuality*, asserts

that modern homosexuality is a construct and that it emerged as a specific category of knowledge in the 1870s. This idea was significant in the development of queer theory, which challenges traditional views of sexuality and gender. For Foucault, modern homosexuality was a product of a particular historical and cultural context and should be understood as a constructed category of knowledge, rather than a natural or discovered identity. This perspective challenges the idea that sexual identity is fixed and stable across time and instead emphasizes the role of power relations, social norms, and cultural practices in shaping and defining sexual identities.

Same-sex relationships were condemned in earlier periods such as the renaissance, the nature of this condemnation was different from the way it was approached in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Foucault, the difference was that the 19<sup>th</sup> century marked the emergence of a new way of thinking about sexuality, which involved identifying a distinct “species” of people with abnormal desires. This gave rise to the category of the “homosexual”, which did not exist before this time. In contrast, earlier forms of regulating sexual practices focused on specific acts that were considered sinful or unlawful, rather than on identifying and stigmatizing a particular type of person.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the category “homosexual” emerged in the context of medical science and social order. It argues that the homosexual, along with other groups such as women, children, and working class, became the focus of studies and strategies designed to preserve and nurture a productive and procreative population that met the needs of a developing capitalist system. The key unit of this social order was the bourgeois family, within which the future workforce would be produced. Same-sex desires and practices were considered a problem within this framework because they were

seen as abnormalities from the procreative norm. This led to an unparalleled interest in controlling children’s sexual behaviour and a proliferation of texts and strategies for doing so. The emergence of the category of the “homosexual” was part of a larger social and political project to regulate and control sexuality in the service of a particular vision of society and the economy.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century focus on the homosexual was not primarily on their actions but on their supposed “scientifically” determined condition. This emphasis was different from earlier period where the emphasis was on specific sinful actions such as sodomy. According to Foucault, homosexuality was seen as a form of sexuality that was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny. The homosexual was seen as a species that was totally suffused with sexuality and that this sexuality was present in all of their actions. The category of the “homosexual” was tied to a broader societal concern with protecting the health and purity of the population, and that the homosexual was the subject of inquiry in various discursive fields.

Based on the research conducted by Alfred Kinsey and the Kinsey Institute, which are often referred to informally as the “Kinsey Reports” discusses the idea that homosexuality is a universal phenomenon and it challenged conservative beliefs about sexuality by suggesting that previously taboo practices, such as masturbation, promiscuity, and homosexuality, were much more prevalent than previously acknowledged. The social constructionist perspective suggest that categories associated with sexual pleasure and desire are historical and cultural developments, rather than innate or biologically determined. This perspective applies to all sexual identity categories, including heterosexual and alternative sexual identities like lesbian, gay, and bisexual. While specific sexual



acts may be universal, the relationship of these acts to social concepts of sexuality and sexual identity is not. Jeffrey Weeks, in his book “*Sexuality*” (2003) notes that ‘cultural and societal forces that shape the expression of sexuality vary from society to society.

In the article titled “*The Homosexual Role*” (1968) Mary McIntosh suggested that homosexuality is not an inherent condition of individuals, but rather a social role that is assigned to them. McIntosh argues that social expectations and roles for homosexual men influence both their own self-perception and how others perceive them. In societies where a separate homosexual role is recognized, there is an expectation that those who play the role will be exclusively or predominantly homosexual in their behavior and feelings. Other expectations for those who play homosexual role include being effeminate, having sexuality play a part in all their relations with other men, and being attracted to boys and young women. McIntosh’s use of the term “role” is meant to challenge the notion that sexual behavior can be easily divided into homosexual and heterosexual categories.

Categories of identity, such as heterosexual and homosexual, are not natural or inherent, but rather are created and maintained by social norms, values, and expectations. The dominant group sets the standards for what is considered normal or abnormal sexuality, and this binary opposition creates the basis for the categories of identity. Homosexuality and heterosexuality are not equal and opposite categories, but rather, homosexuality is historically and conceptually prior to heterosexuality. In other word, homosexuality is not simply a variation on the norm of heterosexuality, but is instead a distinct category that is inextricably linked to the existence of heterosexuality.

Homosexuality and heterosexuality may

not always happen naturally, but instead can depend on different situations. People don’t choose their sexual identity, but the way society sees and talks about these identities is shaped by the time period and culture we live in. It is important to separate the ideas of social constructionism and how much control people have over their sexuality. To really understand social constructionism, it is important to understand how different ideas are defined within a certain group or time period.

### 3.3.2 Queer Theory

Queer theory is a way of thinking that challenges traditional assumptions about gender and sexuality. The term “queer” originally referred to people who did not conform to heterosexual norms, but it has been reclaimed as a positive term by some members of the LGBTQ+ community. Key texts that contributed to the development of queer theory include Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality*, Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble*, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *The Epistemology of the Closet*. Queer theory seeks to disrupt binary categories of gender, sex, and sexuality by viewing them as socially constructed rather than innate or essential. While it doesn’t necessarily reject existing categories, it recognizes that they are historical and cultural developments and are not based solely on empirical evidence.

Queer theory is not simply a rejection of the normativity of gay and lesbian identities, but rather it stems from a different understanding of identity and power. Queer theory as an interdisciplinary field of study within the humanities that emerged in the late 1980s. Queer theory draws on poststructuralist theory, which emphasizes the social and cultural construction of identity, knowledge and power. Specifically, queer theory incorporates ideas from Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalytic models of identity, Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction of binary



conceptual and linguistic structures, and Michel Foucault's model of discourse, knowledge and power.

Queer theory is primarily concerned with the politics of representation and the analysis of written and visual culture, including literature, film, and political discourse. While it is often associated with the study of gay and lesbian topics, it also encompasses scientific, legal, and other discourses. The origins of queer theory are not tied to a single moment, but rather to a series of academic conferences that brought together scholars interested in exploring the intersections of poststructuralist theory and gay and lesbian studies.

People usually think about gender and sexuality in binary terms, meaning there are only two categories; male and female, masculine and feminine, and straight and gay. This way of thinking is limiting and doesn't accurately represent the diversity of people's experiences. Queer theory is a different way of thinking about gender and sexuality that avoids these binary categories. It emphasizes that people's identities are not fixed and that we should not try to fit people into narrow boxes. Instead, queer theory recognizes that people's identities are influenced by social factors and are constantly changing. Queer theory is difficult to define, but it describes "gestures or analytical models" that highlight the ways in which traditional ideas about gender and sexuality don't make sense. In other words queer theory encourages us to think beyond binary categories and embrace the complexity of people's experiences.

*Gender Trouble* (1990) by Judith Butler is considered to be very important in the field of queer theory, which explores issues related to gender and sexuality. In the book, Butler builds on the ideas of Michel Foucault, and applies them to feminist theories of gender. She criticizes the way that gender and heterosexuality are often seen as natural

and normal, and argues that they are actually socially constructed. She argues that gender is not a natural or biological identity, but rather something that is produced through cultural and societal practices. She sees gender as a performance that is constructed through language and other social norms.

Butler also argues that gender is not simply an extension of biological sex, as some feminists have suggested. Instead, she believes that gender is shaped by heteronormative taboos against homosexuality, which create the illusion of stable genders that are linked to biological sexes. Butler extends Foucault's argument that the body is not naturally 'sexed,' but rather becomes so through cultural processes. She suggests that we need to question the assumption that sex is a binary opposition between male and female, and recognize that it too is a product of cultural processes. By doing so, we can challenge the normative binary structures of current sex, gender, and libidinal relations, and open up new possibilities for thinking about the relationship between the body, gender and sexuality.

Butler finds a way to develop Foucault's analysis of the body as a mediating boundary that divides inner and outer, to produce the experience of being a stable coherent subject. She suggests that the body, like sexuality, has a genealogy and can be studied in terms of the ways in which it is produced through cultural and discursive practices. Butler also employs ideas from psychoanalytic thinkers such as Freud, Kristeva, Lacan, and Witting to explore how identity effects are produced through the differentiation of subject and Other and the production of a fictional interior core. In doing so, she expands upon Foucault's analysis of power and subjectivity and offers new insights into the ways in which gender, sexuality, and identity are produced and reproduced within cultural and discursive practices.



Theory of “Performativity” by Butler is one of the most influential ideas to emerge from queer theory and feminism. It argues that gender is not something that we naturally possess, but something that we create through repeated performances of gender behaviour. This theory challenges the idea that gender is an innate characteristic, and instead suggests that it is a social construct that can be subverted through acts of resistance. By focusing on performativity, Butler opens up new possibilities for challenging and subverting gender norm, but also calls into question the basis of political movements that seek to liberate repressed or oppressed identities

The concept of performativity can be challenging to grasp and has often been misread or oversimplified. It is not simply a matter of choosing or performing a gender identity like a costume or a role, but rather an ongoing process of enacting and embodying certain behaviours and expressions that are culturally recognized as belonging to a particular gender. This is necessary to make one’s gender intelligible and recognizable within social norms of a given culture or context. The idea of gender performativity challenges the idea that gender is a stable and fixed aspect of a person’s identity, and instead suggest that it is always in flux and subject to change through the repetition and variation of certain bodily acts and gestures.

Judith Butler argues that the self is not a fixed or innate substance, but rather something that is constituted through performance and repeated actions. This process of self-formation is not entirely autonomous; it is made possible only through the recognition and response of others. Thus, the self emerges relationally, shaped by social interactions and cultural norms. This tension between autonomy and recognition is exemplified by the queer body, which must be recognized as a subject while also maintaining a coherent self-fashioning subject. According to Butler, it

is important for a persona to assert themselves as a unique individual in order to fit into society. However, this assertion should also be recognized as something different or “queer”, because it’s not about asserting oneself as different from someone else who is already recognized. Rather, it’s about asserting one’s own unique differences through repetition. Butler believes that identity comes from these repeated differences, rather than from a stable or unchanging subject. Butler’s theory helps us to understand that norms are not always the same and can be affected by various factors.

Everyone’s sexuality is unique to them, and therefore, everyone’s sexuality is queer in some way, even if they identify as heterosexual. This shift in thinking is not about allowing heterosexual people to claim a homosexual identity for their own benefit, but rather about acknowledging that many people have experiences that fall outside of traditional categories of sexuality. Queer theory is not just about including more people under queer umbrella, but also about challenging the idea that any particular category of sexuality is necessary or unchangeable. In other words, while categories like “heterosexual” or “homosexual” may be useful for understanding ourselves and others, they are not the only way to understand sexuality, and they are subject to change over time.

### 3.3.3 Queer Politics

Queer politics is a political ideology that centers on the experiences, perspectives, and needs of LGBTQ+ individuals, with the goal of achieving social and political equality for people who identify as queer. It encompasses a broad range of issues, including anti-discrimination policies, same-sex marriage and adoption rights, access to healthcare, and visibility and acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals in all aspects society. Queer politics also seeks to challenge and dismantle



systems of oppression and inequality, such as heteronormativity, and homophobia, and to create a more inclusive and equitable society for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. It is a constantly evolving and intersectional movement that recognizes the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression, including those based on race, class, ability, and religion and seeks to address these issues in an inclusive and intersectional manner.

Queer politics has its roots in the Stonewall riots of 1969, a series of protests in New York City in response to police raids on gay bars. The riots sparked a movement for LGBTQ+ rights and visibility, which grew throughout the 1970s and 1980s, leading to the founding of organizations such as the Gay Liberation Front and the Human Rights Campaign. The AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s further galvanized the movement, with activists fighting for access to healthcare, anti-discrimination policies, and the right to marry.

The term “Queer” gained more widespread use as a political concept towards the end of the 1980s. However, like all political concepts, it has a lineage and is based on earlier political and theoretical movements. The political use of “Queer” arose in the context of AIDS activism, politics surrounding sexual minorities, and theories influenced by post-structuralism. The feminist thought of the 1980s provided much of the theoretical basics for “Queer”. During that decade, post-structuralism, especially deconstruction, had

a significant impact on academic research in the field of gender and sexuality, and thus played a crucial role in the theoretical development of “Queer”.

In 1999, the first openly visible queer movement emerged during the gay pride event in Kolkata. The queer movement in India is primarily concerned with sexual identity and the rights of individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or hijra. Additionally, this movement operates on a structural level by challenging the norms of heteropatriarchy, which are deeply ingrained in Indian society. The queer movement in India has grown by pushing back against existing laws that criminalize same-sex behavior and any non-normative sexual identities.

The queer movement in India can be seen through two broad perspectives: academic and activist engagement. The academic engagement seeks to provide a historical account of how the movement took shape, developed, and the challenges it faced in a culture dominated by the heteronormativity and strong heteronormative sexual preferences. On the other hand, the activist engagement has been highly active at an organizational level, with numerous LGBTQ organizations across the country providing support to individuals who are struggling with questions about their own identity and how they fit into society. These organizations also voice concerns at the state level and work to influence decisions made by the government.

## Recap

- ◆ The term 'gay' and 'lesbian' emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s as part of the gay liberation movement.
- ◆ The gay and lesbian liberation movements also had important intersections with other social justice movements, such as the feminist and civil rights movements.
- ◆ The term 'queer' is often used as a broad label for individuals who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, intersex, transgender, or who reject the traditional LGBTI labels.
- ◆ Michel Foucault, the French philosopher in his work *The History of Sexuality*, assert that modern homosexuality is a construct and that it emerged as a specific category of knowledge in the 1870s.
- ◆ Earlier forms of regulating sexual practices focused on specific acts that were considered sinful or unlawful, rather than on identifying and stigmatizing a particular type of person.
- ◆ In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the category "homosexual" emerged in the context of medical science and social order.
- ◆ In the article titled *The Homosexual Role* (1968) Mary McIntosh suggested that homosexuality is not an inherent condition of individuals, but rather a social role that is assigned to them.
- ◆ Homosexuality and heterosexuality are not equal and opposite categories, but rather, homosexuality is historically and conceptually prior to heterosexuality.
- ◆ Queer theory is not simply a rejection of the normativity of gay and lesbian identities, but rather it stems from a different understanding of identity and power.
- ◆ *Gender Trouble* (1990) by Judith Butler is considered to be very important text in the field of queer theory, which explores issues related to gender and sexuality.

## Objective Questions

1. The term that challenges and disrupts traditional binary ideas of gender and sexuality?
2. Who is the author of the book *History of Sexuality*.
3. Who is the author of *Sexuality* ?
4. Who is the author of *Gender Trouble*?
5. Who argued that modern homosexuality is a historically constructed category of knowledge, rather than a natural identity?
6. According to queer theory, what is the primary characteristic of sexual and gender identities?
7. What is the central argument of Judith Butler's theory of performativity?
8. What significant finding came from the Kinsey Reports regarding sexuality?
9. Which historical event is considered the root of modern queer politics?
10. What dual approach defines the queer movement in India?

## Answers

1. Queer
2. Michael Foucault
3. Jeffrey Weeks
4. Judith Butler
5. Michel Foucault
6. They are socially constructed and fluid

7. Gender is performed through repeated social acts
8. Previously taboo sexual behaviours are more common than acknowledged
9. The Stonewall riots of 1969
10. Academic analysis and activist organization

## Assignments

1. Define the term Queer.
2. Discuss about liberation movement and its intersection with other social justice movements.
3. Explain the significance of Queer theory in contemporary society.
4. Discuss Michael Foucault explanation on the origin of homosexuality.
5. Discuss McIntosh concept 'Role' in addressing sexuality.
6. Examine the difference between homosexuality and heterosexuality.
7. Discuss about Judith Butler's theory of 'Performativity'.

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4. Singh, A. M., & Viitanen, A. K. (1987). *Invisible hands: Women in home-based production*. Sage Publications / Indian Association for Women's Studies.



**BLOCK**

# Women Movements in India





# UNIT

## Feminist Movements in India

### Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ identify major feminist movements of the 19th century and their role in improving women's status
- ◆ explain women's contributions to the 20th-century freedom struggle
- ◆ trace the evolution of women's movements in India after independence and their impact on society
- ◆ understand the establishment and role of Women's Commissions in addressing gender issues

### Prerequisites

Historically, Indian society was shaped by traditions and customs that systematically disadvantaged women. They were largely confined to the domestic sphere, with limited access to education and few rights to make decisions about their own lives. Practices such as Sati, child marriage, and restrictions on widows reflected deeply entrenched gender inequalities. Women were viewed as subordinate, expected to remain in roles of obedience, service, and silence. But societies don't stay the same forever. Change begins when people start asking, "Is this fair?" In the 19th century, as India experienced the influence of modern ideas from the West, the seeds of reform were sown. A few courageous thinkers began to challenge these inequalities. They believed that women, like men, had the right to be educated, make choices, and live with dignity. These reformers didn't just imagine a better future; they worked to create it, often facing fierce resistance from a society that clung to old ways.

At the same time, India was waking up to the idea of freedom; freedom not just from unfair traditions, but also from British rule. The freedom struggle of the 20th century intertwined with the women's movement, as the fight for equality became linked to the dream of an independent and just India. Women stepped out of their homes to join protests, lead movements, and demand not only national freedom but also their own.

Even after India achieved independence in 1947, the journey was far from over. While the country's constitution promised equality, women still faced challenges; violence, discrimination, and lack of opportunities. These issues gave rise to new movements that aimed to make the promise of equality a reality.

The story of women's movements in India is not just about laws and reforms; it's about courage, resilience, and hope. It's the story of how a society can transform itself by daring to question what is unjust and striving to build a future where everyone, regardless of gender, has the chance to thrive. As we delve into the timeline of these movements; from the 19th century reformers to modern-day activists, we uncover the tale of a nation's ongoing fight for gender equality.

## Keywords

Feminist movements, Social reforms, Freedom movement, Women's commissions, Gender equality

## Discussion

In the past, women in India faced many challenges. They were not allowed to go to school, didn't have the same rights as men, and were treated unfairly because of old traditions. But over time, many brave men and women began to fight for women's rights and equality. These people believed that women should have the same chances as men to live a happy and successful life. They worked hard to change things, like stopping harmful practices such as *Sati* (where widows had to end their lives) and supporting women's education.

In the 19th century, social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra

Vidyasagar, and Savitribai Phule worked to improve the lives of women, making sure they could go to school and have better futures. In the 20th century, as India fought for freedom from British rule, many women joined the struggle for independence. Women like Sarojini Naidu and Kasturba Gandhi fought not just for the country's freedom but also for women's rights.

After India became independent, women's movements grew stronger, with groups working to fight violence, improve legal rights, and create better opportunities for women. The creation of women's commissions also helped women get the

support and protection they needed.

These movements and reforms helped shape the rights of women in India and continue to inspire women to stand up for equality and justice. Today, the fight for women's rights in India is still going strong, with many people working to make sure women are treated fairly and have the same opportunities as men.

### 4.1.1 Social Reform Movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

In 19<sup>th</sup> century India, some brave people started movements to improve women's lives and make society fairer. At that time, women faced many challenges: they were often not allowed to go to school, had few legal rights, and were sometimes treated unfairly because of cultural practices. But reformers, or people working to change society, began to push for better treatment of women. Many of these reformers believed that education was the key to helping women gain independence and improve their status in society.

One of the earliest reformers was Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He was deeply concerned about how women were treated and believed they deserved the same rights as men. One of his main goals was to stop the practice of Sati, where widows were forced to end their lives after their husbands died. He worked very hard to show others how cruel this practice was, and in 1829, he succeeded in getting it banned. Roy also promoted education for women, believing that educated women could play important roles in improving society.

Another important figure was Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, a teacher and social reformer. Vidyasagar believed that widows should be allowed to remarry if they wanted. He fought for the Widow Remarriage Act,

which was passed in 1856, allowing widows to find happiness again. Like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vidyasagar also promoted education for girls, thinking it would help them lead better lives and contribute to society. His efforts helped many people realize that women could make a big difference if given a chance.

One of the most inspiring figures of this movement was Savitribai Phule, who, along with her husband, Jyotiba Phule, was determined to provide education for girls, especially those from lower castes. In 1848, she opened the first school for girls in India, which was a very big step forward. Savitribai and Jyotiba worked to break down unfair caste and gender barriers, believing everyone should have equal rights to learn and succeed. Their work encouraged more people to support women's education and rights.

Pandita Ramabai was another strong advocate for women's rights. She was outspoken about the problems women faced and wanted to see them receive the same opportunities as men. Ramabai, like the other reformers, believed education was essential and worked hard to create schools for women. She also criticized practices that held women back, like strict family rules and lack of legal protections. Through her speeches and writings, she inspired many to think about gender equality.

These reformers laid the foundation for future feminist movements in India by showing that women had an important place in society and deserved respect, rights, and education. They used organizations like the Brahmo Samaj, which was started by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and the Arya Samaj to spread their message and create schools for girls. Many people began to see that educating women could benefit the entire country.



These 19th-century social reform movements in India started to change people's minds about the role of women. By fighting for women's education, widow remarriage, and the end of practices like Sati, these reformers set India on a path toward gender equality. Their work made it possible for later feminist movements to grow and continue the fight for women's rights in India.

### 4.1.2 Feminist Movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

The 20th-century feminist movements in India were closely connected to the fight for freedom from British rule. During this time, Indian women began to step forward and play big roles in the struggle for independence. One of the first major movements they joined was the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-1922), led by Mahatma Gandhi. Women not only joined protests but also helped boycott British goods, choosing instead to support Indian-made products. This was a bold way of showing their opposition to British rule, and it helped women become a visible force in the freedom movement.

Important leaders like Annie Besant, Sarojini Naidu, and Kasturba Gandhi became well-known for their contributions. They not only fought for India's freedom but also for women's rights. They inspired other women to take action and formed groups like the All-India Women's Conference, which worked on important social issues. This organization aimed to improve the lives of women and bring them more opportunities. Through their efforts, women began to see that they could play a bigger role in society, helping lay the foundation for future feminist work in India.

During the Non-Cooperation Movement, women played many important roles. They led efforts to boycott British products like foreign cloth, encouraging people to use homemade Indian cloth, called Khadi. They also held public protests and marched in the streets, standing up to the British by picketing liquor shops and protesting against unfair laws. By taking part in these activities, women broke through traditional barriers that often kept them at home and away from public life.

Women also created support networks and formed their own groups to keep the

#### Women of Nupi Lan: Proving That When Women Rise, Rice Can't Hide!



**The Nupi Lan** (Women's War) of Manipur, especially the Second Nupi Lan in 1939, was a powerful protest led by thousands of Manipuri women against British colonial policies that caused severe food shortages by prioritizing rice exports. This movement highlighted women's leadership and resilience as they organized boycotts and demonstrations, demanding economic reforms and social justice. Celebrated annually on December 12 as Nupi Lan Day, it honors the bravery of these women who fought for their rights and community welfare, leaving a lasting impact on Manipur's political landscape.

movement going. The All-India Women's Conference was one of these organizations, where women came together to discuss their rights and ways to help the freedom movement. Through symbolic acts, such as burning foreign cloth, women sent powerful messages to the British that they wouldn't back down. These actions encouraged more people to join in, making the movement stronger.

However, being part of the freedom struggle wasn't easy for women. They faced many challenges. One big challenge was social stigma, as some people in society didn't approve of women stepping out of traditional roles. Many women faced criticism and even rejection from their families and communities for joining the movement. Additionally, they faced police violence and arrests; women who protested were often beaten, arrested, or even put in jail, which caused both physical and emotional pain.

There were also personal sacrifices. Women who joined the struggle often had to leave their jobs or businesses, which caused financial difficulties. Balancing activism with household responsibilities made it even harder for many of them. Despite these hardships, women showed great bravery, standing strong in the face of danger and proving that they were as committed to India's independence as their male counterparts.

Their participation in the freedom struggle had a lasting impact on their social status. Being part of public protests and activities helped challenge traditional gender roles and brought women into the spotlight. For the first time, society saw women as active participants in politics and public life, not just as caregivers at home. This experience gave women a sense of empowerment they felt confident in demanding their rights and striving for equality.

The contributions of these women left a

legacy that continued after independence. Their work laid the foundation for future feminist movements and social changes. The courage they showed helped inspire later generations of women to stand up for their rights. In this way, the involvement of women in India's freedom struggle not only helped win independence but also transformed the roles women could play in society, proving their strength and resilience.

### 4.1.3 Women's Movement in the post-Independence Period

In post-Independence India, the women's movement grew and changed, working for legal rights, social equality, and economic strength for women. Organizations like the All-India Women's Conference and the National Federation of Indian Women were started to make women's voices heard in society and government. During the 1970s, new movements began focusing on issues like violence against women and fair treatment. These efforts, including the famous Chipko Movement, where women hugged trees to stop them from being cut down, and the Anti-Arrack Movement, which opposed the sale of alcohol, showed women standing up for their rights. However, challenges like violence against women and inequality remain, meaning that this work must continue to achieve true equality.

One of the early groups that helped women was the Women's India Association (WIA), founded in 1917. This organization wanted to change social practices that were unfair to women and also helped shape the Indian Constitution, which includes important rights for women. The WIA supported changes in laws around marriage, education, and ownership, making sure that women had a chance to be part of decisions affecting their lives. They encouraged women to take part in government, and this helped increase women's political awareness. The





WIA's work continues to influence today's feminist movements, which focus on fighting problems like violence and poverty among women.

The Chipko Movement was a powerful example of women's activism. In the 1970s, when trees in India were being cut down, women in rural areas led a movement to save the forests. They depended on these forests for wood, food, and water, so losing them would have made life harder. Women leaders like Gaura Devi even hugged the trees to stop them from being cut, symbolizing their strong connection to nature. This movement didn't just protect the forests; it also challenged traditional views that women should not lead or be involved in big decisions. By taking action, the women showed they were ready to be part of important community decisions, helping to change how people thought about women's roles in society.

The Hindu Code Bill of the 1950s was another big change for women in India. Before this, many laws around marriage, property, and inheritance were unfair to women. The Hindu Code Bill allowed women to have equal rights to property, meaning daughters could inherit along with sons. It also made it easier for women to get a divorce and have control over their own choices in marriage, breaking some traditional rules. Although it faced a lot of opposition, this bill was a major step forward, setting the stage for more reforms and movements to promote gender equality in India.

Feminist movements in the 2000s also made important progress. They worked to change laws to protect women from violence, like the Domestic Violence Act in 2005, which aimed to protect women in their homes. These movements also brought more attention to violence against women, especially after tragic incidents like the 2012 Delhi gang rape, which led to huge protests across the country. Women's groups

organized in communities to fight issues like dowry and sexual harassment at work. They also made sure that the movement considered different experiences, like how women's lives are affected differently based on their caste, class, or religion.

### Breaking Tradition, One Sworn Virgin at a Time – Gender Roles Rewritten!



In some Albanian communities, the tradition of **sworn virgins**—women who live as men—allowed these individuals to inherit property, a right typically denied to women. This practice was a pragmatic response to family needs, altering gender roles out of necessity and providing women with rights and responsibilities usually reserved for men in traditional societies.

In post-Independence India, the communist movement also supported women's rights in unique ways. Communists linked women's issues to broader struggles, like the fight for workers' rights and against economic injustice. They also helped set up groups like the National Federation of Indian Women, which gave women a platform to come together and push for change on issues like domestic violence and economic inequality. By treating women's rights as part of a larger movement against injustice, the communist movement helped women recognize their power and potential to lead.

The Women's India Association (WIA) worked with other groups to create a stronger push for women's rights. They joined forces with groups like the All-India Women's Conference and the All-India Democratic Women's Association to demand better laws



and protections for women. They also held conferences and workshops that allowed women from different areas to share their experiences and learn from one another. Through this collaboration, the WIA helped women's movements grow stronger and achieve more, showing how working together can bring about real social change.

#### 4.1.4 Formation of Women's Commissions

The formation of women's commissions in India represents a critical step in advocating for women's rights and addressing gender-based challenges at both the national and state levels. These commissions aim to empower women, promote equality, and offer platforms for redressal of grievances. The establishment of the National Commission for Women (NCW) in 1992 under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990 marked the start of a structured approach to addressing women's issues across the country. It serves as a central agency dedicated to examining and enhancing the social, economic, and legal status of women in India.

The NCW's primary goals include reviewing the constitutional and legal safeguards for women, facilitating grievance redressal, advising the government on policy matters, and promoting women's representation in various fields. Structured with a Chairperson, five Members, and a Member-Secretary, the NCW handles complaints related to women's rights violations, takes suo motu action on pressing issues, and conducts awareness campaigns. Through its policy recommendations, legal aid, and support for women-centric initiatives, the NCW continues to address issues of violence, discrimination, and inequality.

#### The First Women Leaders: How Indigenous Women Shaped Democracy

Did you know that many Native American tribes had women leaders long before the fight for women's rights began in the West? In the Iroquois Confederacy, women played a big role in decision-making. They helped choose leaders and guided important discussions, proving that women's leadership is a timeless idea!

Following the NCW's formation, many Indian states established their own State Commissions for Women, each focused on state-specific gender issues. For example, the Kerala Women's Commission, formed in 1996, was set up to address unique challenges faced by women in Kerala, while other states followed with similar commissions. Despite the intention to decentralize and tailor women's advocacy efforts to local contexts, not all state commissions are fully functional. Some face issues such as inadequate funding, lack of staff, and limited public awareness, which affects their ability to reach women in need.

These commissions serve as vital advocates for women's rights and empowerment, but they also encounter challenges in fulfilling their mandates effectively. Issues such as political autonomy, resource limitations, and regional disparities impact their performance. While they play essential roles in legislative review, awareness-raising, and case handling, there have been calls for reform to make these bodies more impactful, including updates to governing laws and provisions for better funding and staffing.

Despite these challenges, women's commissions have made significant contributions

by raising awareness, influencing policy changes, and providing platforms for women to seek redressal. Their efforts have led to advancements in women's rights, greater social awareness, and legislative changes that benefit women across various sectors. However, the need for further reform remains, particularly to improve outreach in rural areas, where support systems for women can be lacking.

The creation of women's commissions in India underscores the country's commitment to achieving gender equality and protecting women's rights. Although they face obstacles, these commissions represent a meaningful effort toward empowering women and ensuring a safer, fairer environment. Strengthening their autonomy, resources, and coordination can enhance their impact, especially as they work to bridge the gaps in advocacy and support for women across the nation.

## Recap

- ◆ In the 19th century, social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Savitribai Phule worked to improve the lives of women, making sure they could go to school and have better futures.
- ◆ One of the earliest reformers was Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He was deeply concerned about how women were treated and believed they deserved the same rights as men.
- ◆ Vidyasagar believed that widows should be allowed to remarry if they wanted. He fought for the Widow Remarriage Act, which was passed in 1856, allowing widows to find happiness again.
- ◆ Pandita Ramabai was another strong advocate for women's rights.
- ◆ Important leaders like Annie Besant, Sarojini Naidu, and Kasturba Gandhi became well-known for their contributions.
- ◆ One of the early groups that helped women was the Women's India Association (WIA), founded in 1917.
- ◆ The Chipko Movement was a powerful example of women's activism. In the 1970s, when trees in India were being cut down, women in rural areas led a movement to save the forests.
- ◆ The Hindu Code Bill of the 1950s was another big change for women in India.
- ◆ The Women's India Association (WIA) worked with other groups to create a stronger push for women's rights.
- ◆ NCW's formation, many Indian states established their own State Commissions for Women, each focused-on state-specific gender issues.

## Objective Questions

1. Who was the first social reformer to successfully get the practice of Sati banned in India?
2. Which Act, passed in 1856, allowed widows to remarry?
3. Who opened the first school for girls in India in 1848?
4. Which organization did Raja Ram Mohan Roy establish to promote social reforms?
5. Which movement did Indian women participate in to protest British rule and promote the use of khadi?
6. Who led the Chipko Movement in the 1970s to protect forests in India?
7. Which Act, passed in 1950s, allowed women to inherit property equally as men?
8. Which Commission was formed in 1992 to address women's issues at the national level?
9. In which year was the All-India Women's Conference (AIWC) established?
10. Which event led to the formation of stronger laws and protests against violence against women in India in 2012?

## Answers

1. Raja Ram Mohan Roy
2. Widow Remarriage Act
3. Savitribai Phule
4. Brahmo Samaj
5. Non-Cooperation Movement



6. Gaura Devi
7. Hindu Code Bill
8. National Commission for Women (NCW)
9. 1927
10. Delhi gang rape

## Assignments

1. How did Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Savitribai Phule contribute to the upliftment of women in 19th-century India? Discuss their approaches and the challenges they faced.
2. Explain how the promotion of education for women by reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Savitribai Phule influenced societal attitudes towards women in 19th-century India.
3. What was the practice of Sati, and why was it so detrimental to women's rights in 19th-century India? Discuss how Raja Ram Mohan Roy played a crucial role in its abolition.
4. Describe the role of women in India's freedom struggle, particularly in the Non-Cooperation Movement. How did women's involvement in protests challenge traditional gender roles?
5. Analyze the significance of organizations like the All-India Women's Conference (AIWC) and the Women's India Association (WIA) in advocating for women's rights and their contributions to the independence movement.
6. Discuss the major women's movements in post-independence India, such as the Chipko Movement and the Anti-Arrack Movement. How did these movements help in raising awareness about women's rights?
7. How did the Hindu Code Bill of the 1950s contribute to gender equality in India? Discuss the significance of this legislation for women's rights regarding marriage, inheritance, and divorce.

8. Explain the role of women in the communist movement in India and how it linked women's issues to broader struggles for workers' rights and economic justice.
9. Evaluate the impact of the National Commission for Women (NCW) and state-level commissions on women's rights in India. How have these commissions contributed to policy changes and women's empowerment?
10. Compare the goals and challenges faced by the 19th-century social reform movements with the post-independence women's movements in India. How did the focus and strategies evolve over time?

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**BLOCK**

# **Gender Dynamics in India**





# UNIT

## Social Institutions and Gender Reproduction

### Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to;

- ◆ examine the caste restriction on gender
- ◆ understand religious teachings that are discriminatory towards gender
- ◆ discuss the class division structures that affect women's gender position differently

### Prerequisites

In social institution elements such as caste, class, religion, and marriage play a critical role in shaping and enforcing gender roles many of which are rooted in ancient texts like the Manusmriti. This text reflects a deeply patriarchal worldview, asserting that women must always remain under male authority: “In childhood, a woman must be under the control of her father; in youth, her husband; and in old age, her sons. A woman must never be independent.” Such ideologies have historically positioned women as dependent and subordinate, reinforcing gender hierarchies across generations.

Religious doctrines and sacred texts, including interpretations of the Vedas, have also contributed to the construction of gender roles. While the Vedas contain both empowering and restrictive references to women, later interpretations often emphasized control, purity, and obedience particularly in relation to women’s sexuality, autonomy, and social participation.

These institutional influences have had a lasting impact on gender socialization. From an early age, boys and girls are taught distinct roles, behaviors, and expectations based on these cultural and religious norms. Institutions such as the family, school, and religious communities reinforce these roles, limiting women’s access to education, mobility, and decision-making power.

Thus, the interplay of caste, class, and religion, supported by traditional texts, has played a pivotal role in shaping and sustaining gender inequality in Indian society. Understanding these influences is essential in critically examining how gender roles are produced, normalized, and challenged over time. What impact do the Vedas and religious values have on gender? Let us examine the roles of institutions in gender socialisation.

## Keywords

Gender, Caste endogamy, Occupational restriction, Purity and impurity, Upper class, Middle class, Lower class

## Discussion

We need to consider how institutions like religion, education, and other political and social systems shape and have an impact on society's powerful and deeply ingrained gender structure. The concept of "institutionalised gender" describes how gender is created inside and made evident by these vast social institutions through the behaviours, attitudes, norms, expectations, duties, and obligations assigned to individuals and groups in accordance with gender. Each of these social systems has an impact on shaping gender roles in society. According to this societal norm both genders are treated differently, for example, workplaces are commonly gendered, with one gender predominating in particular departments or even entire professions. Although gender is context-specific and subject to change, men are generally held in higher regard and given more power, access, money, opportunities, and presence in public life than women are. The prevalence of these differences demonstrates how institutionalised gender is because of how deeply ingrained it is.

### 5.1.1 Gender Reproduction and Caste

Let's begin by examining caste as a social

institution. The caste system has historically played a central role in shaping Indian society, including the status and roles of women. To understand the position of women in ancient India, it is essential to refer to the broader system of social stratification, particularly the caste and varna systems. In this hierarchy, individuals are born into castes that determine their social status, duties, and limitations. The system is traditionally structured into four varnas: Brahmins (priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaishyas (traders and merchants), and Shudras (servants and laborers). Outside of this hierarchy are the Dalits, historically labelled as "untouchables," who were subjected to extreme social exclusion and discrimination.

Women within this structure were doubly marginalized first by their caste and secondly by their gender. The caste system enforced strict norms, including rigid endogamy (marrying within one's caste) and occupational restrictions, which not only limited women's mobility and choices but also reinforced patriarchal control over their lives. High-caste women, for instance, were often secluded and denied education,

while women from lower castes faced both gendered and caste-based exploitation, including forced labor and lack of access to resources. Thus, caste as an institution not only stratified society but also deeply influenced the gender roles and social expectations imposed on women, shaping their identities and limiting their agency across generations.

Caste endogamy was a tactic used to enlist and maintain control over the sexuality and labour of women. Ambedkar in his work *Caste in India*, explains how caste is a system of gradated inequality and how women are its entry point because endogamy is associated with the physicality of women. Controlling women's movement and dividing people into groups according to their views on pollution and cleanliness are essential. Caste has an impact on both the social and sexual divisions of labour. While some jobs are meant for males, others require women to perform them.

Under caste rules, physical mobility is also constrained. The fact that women of lower castes are approachable by men of higher castes whereas men of lower castes who dare approach women of higher caste face harsh punishment is a powerful representation of the poor position of women in society. Practices that imply the regulation of libido include early marriage, marriage within the caste, the ban on pratiloma, and marriage as a sacrament whereby a woman is bonded in marriage until she dies. In order to maintain endogamy, there is a strict restriction on upper-caste women's sexuality based on purity. Contrarily, it is believed that upper-caste men can access lower-caste women through the material framework of dominance through rituals like devadasis.

By rigorously guarding women who serve as the structure's core, the purity of the caste can be guaranteed. Caste blood is

always bilateral, meaning that both parents pass on its ritualistic nature to the child. Thus, it is desirable if both parents belong to the same caste. Anuloma and pratiloma marriages are demeaning to women. When a male from an upper caste marries a girl from a lower caste, the union is authorised and referred to as an anuloma; however, pratiloma refers to unions between women from ritually pure groups and men from lower castes. For breaking the rules, severe penalties, including excommunication and even death, may be invoked. The point being made here is that a woman, as the "purity" guardian, should not lower herself but rather be exalted aloft. To re-establish, women's purity was strongly linked to the blood purity of lineages and the place of family within the larger social structure. Women are viewed as the keepers of family honour.

Gendered hierarchies, which frequently show up in occupational stratification and put Dalit women in positions of leadership behind upper-caste women, exist. Dalit women work as maids and manual scavengers in their households, placing them in subordinate social connections and further polarising collective identities. In a caste-based system, women's reality is not yet another; it is intersectional. Caste is merely one factor that influences gendered patterns of labour; class and regional identities also play a role. A large portion of the urban cultural intellectual elite with modern consciousness dislikes "affirmative action" because they view it as an unjust political tactic to appease a minority. The social conflicts in India, which are constantly rearranging claims of class, power, and caste, have only been slightly resolved by education and economic progress.

### 5.1.2 Religious Values and Gender Socialisation

Religion is not merely an abstract system of beliefs; it functions as a system of power

that plays a significant role in shaping societal structures. To fully understand religion's contribution to power dynamics, it is essential to view it as an institution that both reflects and reinforces broader hierarchies, including those based on gender. When examined through the lens of power, the interaction between religion and gender becomes evident.

Religious institutions and practices can either challenge or reinforce existing gendered power structures through both symbolic representations and material realities. Every religion operates within a specific structural relationship to the gender hierarchy of the society in which it exists. Consequently, women's religious experiences often differ markedly from those of men due to socially imposed gender roles, restrictions, and expectations. These differences show how religion not only shapes but is also shaped by gendered power relations.

Gender disparity belongs to the most common types of social inequality and is present everywhere, having varying effects depending on the area. The main causes of these differences are geographic location, historical development, cultural legacies, and last but not least, the prevalent religious norms in society. The importance of religion in various cultures cannot be overstated. It is firmly rooted in peoples' experiences and affects how societies are moving in terms of socioeconomics and politics.

Ancient texts like the Manusmriti are relevant to the social construction of gender in the history of India. Men regard women only to the extent that they carry out their "obligation" of reproduction, which is based on the definition of a woman in ancient Hindu scriptures. As a result, it is ideal to think of every woman as one's mother, sister, wife, or daughter. According to the text, it is a blessing for women to be able

to have children, and having children is a woman's primary duty, or dharma. Having children is also her compensation for past-life transgressions, allowing her to attain karmic balance across her lifetimes. The interpretation of religious scriptures and the cultural and institutional framework of religious communities have an impact on how women are viewed in society. It goes without saying that the role of religion is multifaceted and that it varies over time and geography. Institutional norms, as well as culture and tradition both of which are heavily impacted by religion have an impact on this process. In religions like Hinduism women have extensive, well-developed, and uniquely feminine religious practices, in Islam which has texts that promote male rule and a public realm that is firmly under male control.

Another assumption is that women's lower social status reflects their lower spiritual status, which is why only sons, not daughters, are eligible to inherit a king's reign. Religion still has a significant impact on marital and family life, dominating many aspects of people's private lives. In Islam, there are rules regarding how men and women should interact. In most mosques, men and women have separate places of worship. When in the company of individuals of the opposing sex, both men and women cover their awra (who are not close relations). Similarly, menstruation is regarded as impure in Hinduism, where it is forbidden to enter temples and to worship a deity while having a period.

One of the gender-related concerns among various religions is women's decision to have or not to have an abortion. Abortion is viewed as unethical in many religions. Abortion is not permitted in any situation because the Catholic Church views conception as the beginning of a human life; declared that women who have undergone abortions but

are prepared to adhere to the right to life are granted pardon. Hinduism holds that a woman's human duty is to bear children, and that having an abortion is a violation of that obligation. The ancient sacred sanskrit books known as the Vedas claim that murdering a priest or one's own parents is not more wicked than abortion. The Hindu society rejects the practice of a woman undergoing an abortion as immoral and unethical.

### 5.1.3 Gender Discrimination and Class Division

The concept of class is frequently used in sociological studies to examine the roles individuals occupy in production and market processes, and how these roles influence their material well-being and career opportunities. However, other factors such as gender and sexuality also significantly shape these outcomes. Gender, in particular, plays a crucial role in determining individuals' access to opportunities within the labour market. Understanding the role of class in determining women's status in society is essential to comprehending the patriarchal nature of Indian society. In many analyses, women's roles in the labour force have been characterized as peripheral to the class system. This is often reflected in the practice of determining class position based solely on the occupation of the household head or primary breadwinner, who is typically male.

Generally, every member of the household belonged to the same social class. Men were usually the primary providers and breadwinners; therefore, class position should be evaluated in light of the economic

activity that the man of the house engaged in. However, there were some households that were economically dependent on a woman, and there were some in which both the man and the woman were breadwinners, so it was necessary to have a joint classification model, that is, a model that was capable of combining the attributes of both spouses in determining their class or status. The significant participation of women in wage-earning occupations in advanced capitalist cultures demonstrates the degree to which sex is socially and economically unequal. For instance how would you analyse scenarios where there are two heads of family that belong to different social classes,? It is a debatable question of gender equality.

However, the division of society into economic classes such as upper, middle, and lower shapes women's gender positions in distinct and unequal ways. When comparing the life experiences of middle-class and lower-class women, middle-class women reported having strong relationships with and trust in their family and friends, whereas lower-class women's access to supportive social ties is restricted by the social and economic isolation brought on by poverty, which increases the need for self-reliance. Middle-class and upper-class women may support feminine ideals by emphasising their connections with others, reflecting the realities of their respective employment and domestic spheres, In contrast, lower-class women, facing greater economic and social constraints, may be more likely to deviate from these stereotypical feminine norms as they balance the demands of both work and home.





## Recap

- ◆ Institutions embossed the behaviours, attitudes, norms, expectations, duties, and obligations assigned to individuals and groups in accordance with gender.
- ◆ The caste system deprived women by imposing rigid endogamy and occupational restrictions.
- ◆ Caste endogamy is the strictest restriction on women's sexuality based on purity.
- ◆ Breaking the rules of caste endogamy led to severe penalties, including excommunication and even death, may be invoked.
- ◆ Caste is merely one factor that influences gendered patterns of labour.
- ◆ The interpretation of religious scriptures and the cultural and institutional framework of religious communities have an impact on how women are viewed in society.
- ◆ Religion still has a significant impact on marital and family life, dominating many aspects of people's private lives.
- ◆ Abortion is viewed as unethical in many religions.
- ◆ Gender is a key factor in determining the opportunities that are available to people in the labour market.

## Objective Questions

1. Which type of marriage is restricted for upper caste women based on purity?
2. Which type of marriage describe male dominance of the upper caste men?
3. Which Hindu ancient texts have an ideology of women as one's mother, sister, wife, or daughter?
4. Which religion follow separate places of worship for men and women?
5. Which biological process of women is regarded as impure in Hinduism, where is it forbidden to enter temples and worship a deity?



6. Which class does a woman who has limited access to supportive social ties belong to?
7. What is the cause of lower-class women's restrictive social ties?

## Answers

1. Pratiloma marriage
2. Anuloma
3. Manusmriti
4. Islam
5. Menstruation
6. Lower class
7. Economic deprivation

## Assignments

1. What are the key differences observed across various class strata in society? Analyze their implications on social inequality.
2. Examine the nature of religious discrimination against women in India. Provide examples from different faith traditions and practices.
3. Critically evaluate the concepts of caste endogamy and gender disparity within the caste system. How do they reinforce social hierarchy?
4. Define Anuloma and Pratiloma marriages. Discuss their relevance in the context of gender-based discrimination in traditional Indian society.
5. What is meant by “institutionalised gender”? Critically assess how institutions perpetuate gender inequality through norms and practices.

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# UNIT

## Gender and Economy

### Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to;

- ◆ examine economic relations based on gender differences
- ◆ analyze gender disparities in the workforce
- ◆ identify and evaluate the barriers that limit women's access to financial power

### Prerequisites

We learned about the relationship between gender and class structure in the previous unit. How does economic class subvert gender, and what are the factors involved in it? A person's financial status depends on his assets, salary, and living environment. In India, the percentage of women who are in the work force increased in 2021 compared to the previous year by 0.6 percentage points. The rate was 19.23 percent overall in 2021. The proportion of women over 15 who are employed is known as female labour force participation. This unit explores how these factors differ among individuals of each gender. Prior to that, you must consider the issue of women's low status. Why women were backward? Let us understand the determinative factors that restrict women from achieving their higher status.

### Keywords

Poverty, Inheritance, Gender, Stereotype, Glass ceiling

## Discussion

### 5.2.1 Property Relations

The majority of the literature on gender and property rights highlights the pullback from granting women equal rights to not only land but also to the necessities of life in developed countries. Women have less access to education, healthcare, money, food, and shelter than men, a phenomenon known as the feminization of poverty. The level to which inheritance and marriage laws acknowledge women's property rights varies significantly from country to country.

In India, patrilineal inheritance is the most prevalent type of customary inheritance. Most often, traditional ownership of property and inheritance are transferred to the male child. In such systems, women may be reduced to the role of unpaid servants in households, familial farms, or small-scale production under family supervision. And in situations of widowhood, desertion, singlehood, or divorce, they become subject to great poverty and even homelessness.

What was the root cause of these inequalities? We already mentioned the patriarchal societal notion as a reason for the disparity in household property relations in India. It is important to understand the gender ideology promoted by patriarchal notions. Gender ideology can have different effects on a household depending on its property status. Women's property ownership is linked to their sexuality, marital customs, and familial ties. Women were moved to their husband's house after marriage in a patriarchal family, and with that, inherent property ownership tends to transfer to male members. As a result, after marriage, most women's property passes to the other family name, which is limiting women's property rights. It may affect the freedom of women's

choice of marriage partners and location of residence after marriage, which tend to be controlled by men in order to preserve the property and maintain it under their control.

However, when we analyze disparities across different economic classes, a clear pattern of variation is not always evident among women in terms of property ownership. Both property-owning and property-less households can contribute to the continued seclusion and marginalization of women. Financial differences alone do not fully explain gender norms and related practices. These gendered realities cannot be understood solely through an economic or functionalist angle, as they are deeply embedded in social, cultural, and ideological structures.

Another important factor influencing land relations is the nature of the land itself. Land ownership and access affect men and women differently and can be a source of economic vulnerability for women, both within households and in the broader society. In rural areas, arable land is the most valuable form of property, as it provides power, economic stability, and cultural identity. It is an asset that generates wealth and sustains livelihoods. Access to land may occur through formal ownership and usage rights, but it can also be through informal arrangements, such as concessions granted by individuals to relatives or friends. For example, a man may permit his wife or sister to use a plot of land out of goodwill, but such access is not legally enforceable, nor can the woman claim it as a right.

The majority of women's ownership of property is only recorded in documents; however, women's access to owning land is questionable. If women have the legal right

to their own inherent property, if the claim is not seen as legitimate by society, family members may put pressure on the woman to give it up. It may reflect as a right may remain in a document. The distinction between real control over property and land ownership is most likely misunderstood. (Control can be interpreted in a variety of ways, such as the ability to choose how the land is used, how its produce is used, and whether it can be leased out, mortgaged, sold, and so on.) Legal ownership is sometimes mistakenly assumed to imply the ability to control in all of these ways. In fact, it probably remains a prohibition for women.

### **5.2.1.1 Need for Property Right for Women**

When discussing the need for women's property rights, it is important to go beyond legal entitlements and focus on their effective control and decision-making power over property. Legal ownership alone does not guarantee autonomy or access. For instance, systems of joint ownership where land titles are shared between husband and wife may exist, but they often limit women's actual authority over the property. In many cases, women remain dependent on male consent for use or management of the land. Therefore, there are several compelling reasons to advocate for independent land rights for women, rather than merely joint titles:

First, joint titles may make it challenging for women to take control of their share in the case of a divorce. Second, women would also have a harder time escaping a violent or contentious marriage. Third, given independent rights, wives may have different land use goals than husbands, which would enable them to pursue. Fourth, women who have their own rights would be more capable of handling the produce. Fifth, the issue of how the land will be inherited may be controversial if there are shared titles. This is not to say that joint titles with husbands

would not be better for women than having no property rights at all, but joint titles would not provide them with many of the benefits of owning land.

Furthermore, a woman's economic position cannot be accurately determined by that of her family. In cases of divorce or widowhood, even women from affluent parental or marital backgrounds may face financial vulnerability. A woman's direct access to money or productive assets such as land plays a crucial role in determining her risk of poverty and significantly affects the physical well-being of both herself and her children.

Land plays an important role in empowering women to challenge unequal gender dynamics both within the household and in the society. The case for women's land rights, therefore, has both strategic and welfare-oriented (or practical) dimensions. Strategically, land ownership enhances a woman's bargaining power, influencing how she is treated by family members and increasing her decision-making capacity. From a welfare perspective, securing land titles for economically disadvantaged rural women can lead to improvements in their nutrition, health, and overall well-being.

### **5.2.1.2 Legal Property Rights for Women**

Legal rights to property for women are essential for achieving gender equality and ensuring economic security. In India, various laws grant women rights to own, inherit, and control property. The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 marked a significant step toward gender equality in inheritance by granting equal rights of inheritance to the daughters, widow, and mother of a Hindu man who died intestate. These rights extended beyond mere life interests they provided full ownership. However, despite these legal provisions, significant inequalities persist, particularly



concerning agricultural land. The Act does not apply to agricultural land governed by tenancy rights, which fall under state-level land reform laws. These state laws often undermine women's land rights in practice. For instance, under land ceiling regulations, many states allow farming households to retain additional land based on the number of adult sons but not adult daughters. Moreover, the process of determining surplus land introduces further gender bias. In most states, the landholdings of both spouses are aggregated, creating arbitrary outcomes. There have been documented cases where the small portion of land registered in a wife's name if any has been declared surplus and appropriated by the government, while the husband's land remains untouched. Such practices highlight the gaps between formal legal equality and the discriminatory implementation of land laws.

The Hindu Succession Act, 1956, guarantees equal rights to daughters in a joint Hindu family property. This was accomplished only in 2005. Despite the fact that these laws and precedents affirm women's right to a fair share of property, this right is suppressed in practice for a variety of institutional, social, and cultural reasons. There is a significant lack of complete and accurate data on land ownership in India, especially concerning women's ownership of agricultural land. According to the Centre for Land Governance Index, which draws on data from the 2011 Census, only 12.9% of Indian women are recorded as landowners. This stark gender gap in land ownership stems from multiple factors, including deeply patriarchal norms, the state's inadequate implementation of existing legal provisions, and biased decision-making processes at various administrative levels. In India, gender-based inequality in property rights also results from a lack of proactive measures to raise awareness and facilitate the transfer of a woman's father's or husband's property

to her. These structural barriers continue to limit women's access to one of the most crucial economic and social assets - land.

### 5.2.2 Gender Wage Gap

The gender wage gap is basically covered under the umbrella concept of "inequality." It needs to be understood in terms of structural gender discrimination in labor force. The gender wage gap is generally defined as the disparity between men and women in terms of income. The difference in pay between men and women is typically referred to as the "gender wage gap." It is a measurable indicator of inequality between genders. The difference in the percentage of income that men and women receive that is dependent on their gender is referred to as the "wage gap" also known as the "gender pay gap." The most common way to describe the gender wage gap is the ratio of women's wages to men's earnings. The gap between the median annual wages of men and women who work full-time is commonly used to represent this ratio.

Look at the brief analysis of the earnings received by men and women across states, professions, occupational categories, and sectors of the economy in India. In India, only 28.2% of women in the 15–60 age range are believed to be employed based on an analysis of the data gathered as part of the PLFS (Periodic Labor Force Survey) 2019–2020. Even among working-age women, those who work for their own households' businesses account for the greatest portion, or 30%, with another 5.3% of the workforce being unemployed. So, only around 65% of women who are employed actually make a living. According to the report of periodic labor force survey, In India, there is an approximately INR 4,014 wage gap, or difference in average monthly salaries between men and women. Women make INR 8,034 per month on average, which is roughly 33% less than men's average



monthly wage of INR 12,048.

According to the PLFS 2019–20 data, women tend to make between 20% and 60% less than men across all occupational sectors. The most pronounced wage difference is evident among the self-employed among the three main categories of work, including casual labor, salaried employment, and self-employment. Self-employed women make around 53% less than self-employed men thanks to the INR 5,989 salary difference between the sexes. Only 6.6% of women who work for themselves can make more than INR 12,500 each month. More than half of all women working in the state are employed in agriculture and related businesses. The average income gap in the labor force is INR 3,812, or roughly half of what men earn in agriculture. Similar wage differences persist in the manufacturing and construction industries, with women earning almost 50% less. Women earn 25% less than males in the service industry, where there is the smallest wage gap in percentage terms.

### 5.2.2.1 Causes of Gender Pay Gap

It is very clear that women earn significantly less than men in almost every aspect of their economic engagement. Why do women earn less than men? What are the major indicators that will push women back toward equal pay? While differences in education, work experience, and job tenure contribute to income disparities, they do not fully explain the gender pay gap. One of the primary reasons lies in gendered expectations and stereotypes that shape how women's work is valued. These societal preconceptions influence perceptions of women's productivity, particularly when they first enter the workforce or in the early stages of their careers. Very minor changes in approach can, over time, have a significant impact on salaries, opportunities for growth,

and prestige, including promotions to leadership positions.

Traditionally, women were expected to take care of the home, family, and children, along with performing domestic tasks. As a result, they were often denied the opportunity to pursue higher education and professional careers, unlike men. In Indian society, men were viewed as the primary breadwinners, responsible for financial duties and manual labor. These gendered expectations gradually solidified into social norms that continue to influence occupational choices and opportunities. As women began entering the workforce, a gendered division of labor emerged, reinforcing the belief that certain jobs are more suitable for one gender than the other. For example, professions such as nursing, childcare, and housekeeping became associated with women, while fields like engineering, law, and entrepreneurship were deemed more appropriate for men.

#### a) Feminised Jobs

Gender stereotypes not only shape perceptions of which jobs are “appropriate” for men or women, but also influence how occupations are valued, particularly within hierarchical structures. These stereotypes lead to occupational segregation, where certain roles become dominated by one gender. As a result, women often occupy positions in sectors perceived as “feminine,” such as caregiving, teaching, or clerical work, while men dominate higher-paying roles in fields like engineering, technology, or management. This segregation contributes to the undervaluation of feminised jobs when it comes to wage determination. Occupations predominantly held by women are typically associated with lower pay, even when they require similar levels of skill or education as male-dominated jobs. Furthermore, companies or organizations with a female-majority workforce often offer lower wages compared to those with a predominantly



male workforce. This systemic devaluation of “women’s work” plays a significant role in sustaining the gender wage gap.

### **b) Working Hours**

The way men and women engage with the workforce significantly contributes to the gender wage gap, particularly through differences in working hours. One of the key factors influencing this disparity is the unequal burden of unpaid family responsibilities, such as childcare and eldercare, which disproportionately fall on women. As a result, women often face challenges in committing to the long hours required by many high-paying professions, limiting their advancement and earning potential.

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO) Global Wage Report 2018–2019, women are more likely than men to work part-time, a trend closely linked to their caregiving responsibilities. While part-time work can offer flexibility, it typically does not provide the same benefits, career progression, or income as full-time employment. Over time, this can negatively affect a woman’s total earnings and retirement savings. Moreover, many women do not choose part-time work out of preference, but rather because they have fewer full-time employment opportunities or are constrained by the demands of domestic labor. This imbalance in working hours reflects how deeply gender roles shape not just workforce participation, but also access to economic autonomy and long-term financial security.

### **c) Career Breaks**

More often than men, women leave their jobs to raise children, care for elderly or ill family members, or fulfil other obligations. This implies that they will probably be behind in career growth and stable income when they restart their jobs. And if a person takes a career break, this affects the particular person’s career and achievements, such

as promotions. Part-time work and career breaks may not be a visible issue for many people if domestic workers and extended family assistance are widely available to ensure their financial stability. However, as labor markets alter, this circumstance is subject to change.

If we need to overcome gender segregation in our occupational sector in order to lessen the disparities in average incomes between men and women, societies ought to take more action to overcome the ingrained cultural factors that contribute to the gap’s persistence. This entails encouraging people to make gender-neutral decisions in all aspects of their lives. Encouraging a gender-inclusive workplace culture while taking a comprehensive approach to equitable pay for equally valuable work done by men and women.

## **5.2.3 Unpaid Labor**

We already learned inequity in the public and professional spheres, as well as the term “gender wage gap.” In some way, it has been connected with gender norms and stereotypes. Similarly, gender norms contribute to inequality within households. It can be defined in terms of the “gender care gap,” which refers to the clearly unequal gender allocation of unpaid care and housework. Generally, the term “unpaid work” describes services provided within a household for its residents, such as personal care and housework.

According to gender norms, women and girls are often forced to perform unpaid domestic labour and care because of the gendered structure of domestic and reproductive responsibilities. Whether or not women are working, women have to spend longer on housework than men, and they continue to shoulder more of the responsibility and workload related to child care.

Unpaid care work is typically viewed as having little value and is invisible in traditional economics, which is supported by persistent patriarchal structures and national accounting systems that fail to account for women's full contributions. Unpaid domestic and care work is associated with a greater mental health burden and negative effects on quality of life.

The unequal gender distribution of unpaid caregiving and household labor has substantial effects on their wellbeing. It restricts girls' time for leisure, personal growth, and learning, depriving them of equal opportunities to succeed. Moreover, women's careers have been questioned because of unpaid labor. Its effect on women's entry and continuity in the labor market, as well as the quality of their work. The discussion of women's unpaid work is relevant in the context of India because, as a result of the majority of women investing in the realm of "domestic responsibilities," women's labor force participation rates in India are extremely low.

### 5.2.4 Glass Ceiling

The formal structure for governance includes gender as a component of bureaucracy. Although women are now more likely than men to work in managerial positions, they are still significantly less likely than men to hold jobs that require them to exercise power over resources or people. The term "glass ceiling" refers to this barrier to authority. The term "glass ceiling" implies an invisible barrier that keeps someone from achieving in their career goals at work. It is typically used at work for women, and it basically refers to unseen barriers. These difficulties or obstacles mostly concern women who are unable to advance to the top management positions at their places of employment. The term "glass ceiling" describes the barriers that prevent women

from achieving the achievement and power that would make them on par with males.

Glass ceilings are characterised as subtly discriminating, conscious and unconscious behaviours and attitudes that prevent talented women from obtaining top or senior management positions. These invisible barriers frequently manifest as difficulties receiving wage raises despite being fully qualified, being unable to get a promotion, and other chances and perks. The implied placement of the "glass" makes it so that a woman must approach it or "hit" it in order to view it.

Although the phrase "glass ceiling" was first used in reference to corporate and organisational economic systems, it gradually spread to other fields, such as politics, etc. Although though laws exist, women and people from marginalised social groups and gender identities are nonetheless underrepresented or absent from positions of authority. To demonstrate that they are equally qualified for a post as their male colleagues, women must try and work twice as hard. They must fight unfairly, and that is simply not acceptable. In contrast to their male counterparts, women are frequently the objects of prejudice and bias (conscious or unconscious), which leads to the perception that they lack the necessary knowledge, skills, education, and experience.

Despite the fact that there are more and more women in the workforce now than ever before, this is something that prevents women from rising to leadership roles. Women contribute significantly to the economy both as consumers and in other ways. Aside from the regular casual sexism, negative stereotyping, and wage inequality, among other things, women may now have slightly easier access to entering the job, but advancing to higher positions is very difficult.



## Recap

- ◆ The patriarchal societal was a root cause of economic disparity of gender.
- ◆ The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 granted property right to women.
- ◆ Hindu Succession Act of 1956 does not apply to agricultural land subject to tenancy right.
- ◆ The gender wage gap is basically covered under the umbrella concept of inequality.
- ◆ Expected gender roles and gender stereotyping are the major root causes of the gender wage gap.
- ◆ Women are more invested in unpaid family responsibilities.
- ◆ The term “glass ceiling” implies an invisible barrier that keeps someone from achieving in their career goals at work

## Objective Questions

1. Which act enacted the equal inheritance rights to daughter, widow, and mother of a Hindu man passed away intestate?
2. What did you refer to a phenomenon a women have less access to education, healthcare, money, food, and shelter than men?
3. What is the difference in pay between men and women called?
4. What is the term for managing a career as well as unpaid family responsibilities?
5. What is the term referring to the clearly unequal gender allocation of unpaid care and housework?
6. What is the term implying an invisible barrier that keeps someone from achieving in their career goals at work?

## Answers

1. The Hindu Succession Act of 1956
2. Feminization of poverty
3. Gender wage gap
4. Work-life-balance
5. gender care gap
6. Glass ceiling

## Assignments

1. What is the “glass ceiling”? Critically analyze its impact on women’s career advancement and leadership opportunities.
2. Examine gender segregation in the workplace and the feminization of labour. How do these trends reflect broader gender inequalities in employment?
3. Evaluate the property and inheritance rights of women in India. Discuss legal provisions and their implementation in practice.
4. Differentiate between the “gender care gap” and the “wage gap.” How do both contribute to systemic economic inequality for women?
5. Critically assess the relationship between work-life balance and the persistence of the gender ceiling in professional spaces.

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# UNIT

## Gender Polity

### Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to;

- ◆ discuss the provisions for women's reservation under the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments
- ◆ analyze the patterns and extent of women's political participation in India
- ◆ examine the initiatives and measures undertaken to promote women's active involvement in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)

### Prerequisites

In the previous unit, we learned about women's economic and financial exclusion, along with the barriers that hinder their economic freedom. However, is achieving economic independence alone sufficient to ensure women's empowerment? The government plays a significant role in shaping the social status of its citizens. From this perspective, developmental initiatives must prioritize uplifting the lower strata of society. In India's patriarchal context, political empowerment remains a significant challenge for gender minorities. Although Indira Gandhi served as the nation's first female Prime Minister a milestone in women's political representation her leadership was not reflective of broader gender inclusion. The appointment of Pratibha Patil as the 12th President of India, and the first woman to hold the office, occurred only after decades of male leadership. These achievements, while notable, primarily represent women from elite or upper-class backgrounds. Can this be considered sufficient progress toward gender equality? True empowerment must begin at the grassroots level, which was the core vision behind the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments that established and strengthened the Panchayati Raj system.

## Keywords

Political engagement, Decentralization, Women empowerment

## Discussion

Women have played an equal role in the history of human evolution as men have. In reality, a country's success as a whole can be measured by the position, employment, and job that women undertake in society. A nation's social, economic, or political development will benefit if women are involved in national affairs. How will it be implemented? Hence, since the very first day of independence, philosophers have placed a high priority on the principles of gender equity and equality, as well as the protection of women's rights.

Since Article 14 of the Constitution guarantees equal opportunity for men and women in the political, social, and economic spheres, the concern of the nations for preserving the rights and privileges of women found its finest expression in India's constitution. Several provisions, such as Article 15, explicitly prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex, religion, race, or caste, thereby reinforcing the ideals of social justice and protection. However, despite these constitutional safeguards, the situation on the ground particularly in rural areas remains concerning. Compared to the urban areas, Indian rural women have a more depressing position in social, economic, and political realms. Although they have made substantial contributions to the nation's development, their roles in development programmes have often been overlooked or undervalued, reflecting a persistent gap between policy and practice.

Both the government and society must

actively work to encourage women's participation in politics. The movement toward women's political empowerment in India began at the grassroots level, where local self-governance provided a more accessible platform for rural women to engage in political processes. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have long been recognized as instruments of good governance, particularly in promoting inclusive development. A landmark moment in this direction was the enactment of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in December 1992, which significantly advanced political empowerment at the local level. These amendments institutionalized local self-governance in rural and urban India, respectively. They came into effect on April 24, 1993 bringing into force Part IX of the Constitution, titled "*The Panchayats*," through the 73rd Amendment, and Part IXA, titled "*The Municipalities*," through the 74th Amendment. After 43 years of India becoming a republic, the "Panchayats" and "municipalities" were brought under Parts IX and IXA of the Constitution.

### 5.3.1 Political Empowerment of Women

The empowerment of women and the establishment of a society that values equality between the genders are essential for promoting women's participation across all domains, particularly in the political sphere. It is essential to the pursuit of peace, progress, and equality. It implies political engagement, which includes the right to vote, the ability

to run for office, and to be represented by political parties at all levels. Political engagement effectively shapes decisions, which results in political empowerment. Political empowerment is the process by which women gain the acknowledgment they deserve to participate in society's progress through political institutions as equal partners with men. Political empowerment is defined as "the ability to influence the political system's decision-making, planning, implementation, and assessment processes." Generally, "political empowerment" refers to a specific role for women in the development of policies and influencing the decision-making process through their integration into the political system. Since India's independence, women have been underrepresented in politics. There has been a greater focus on empowering women by boosting their involvement in political institutions.

Political participation encompasses a broad spectrum of activities. It is not limited to the "right to vote" but also includes involvement in political decision-making, awareness of political issues, participation in political movements, and engagement in civic and governance-related actions. In India, women were granted the right to vote in 1950 with the adoption of universal adult suffrage, marking a significant milestone in the journey toward political equality. Women's participation rates in Lok Sabha elections peaked in 1984 at 58.60%, up from 46.63% in 1962. In 1962 and 1984, respectively, male turnout was 63.31% and 68.18%. In India's 2014 general legislative elections, 65.63% of women participated, compared to 67.09% of men. Across 16 of India's 29 states, there were more women voters than men. In all, 260.6 million women exercised their right to vote in the 2014 parliamentary elections in India.

The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional amendment act of 1992 introduced two

significant measures for the inclusion of women in decision-making and the creation of development plans at the municipal level. A requirement of this amendment is that at least one-third of panchayat members and chairpersons must be women. The 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment was passed in the expectations that it would improve governance and give political voice to underrepresented groups in society, such as women and members of scheduled castes and tribes.

Nevertheless, a sizable portion of women are still excluded from the political sphere. Without the equal and proportional participation of men and women at various levels of decision-making, there cannot be a true democracy or true public participation in administration and development. Cultural factors limit the engagement of women in politics. Women's political participation may also be impacted by institutional considerations. A more representative electoral system that uses a proportional seat distribution formula can increase the involvement of women.

Another significant institutional instrument that can ensure a certain percentage of women hold seats in legislature is the quota system. Due to constitutional revisions requiring the reservation of seats for women in local governments or the Panchayati Raj Institution system, they are being elected to local councils in record numbers (PRI). Whether in a single village, a district made up of 100 villages, or a larger territory, the women who the PRI helped enter politics are now in charge. Since the national political and administrative system was restructured in January 1994, it is too early to determine how women's entry into formal government structures will affect things.

In 1994, India created quotas (reservations) via constitutional amendments (the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup>) to reserve 33% of seats in local



governments for women in an effort to address the low participation of women voters. In order to reserve 33% of Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha seats for women, the Women's Reservation Bill (108<sup>th</sup> Amendment) has been introduced in the national parliament. A difference has been made by the sheer quantity of women the PRI has introduced to the political system. As a result of the constitutional amendment, the proportion of women engaged in politics has substantially increased from 4–5 percent to 25–40 percent.

The increasing desire for equal rights is related to women's participation in political parties. In 2004, the INC was able to reclaim its leadership thanks to the involvement of women. By the implementation of a 33% quota for women at all levels of the party, the INC has boosted the engagement of women. The INC backed the election of Pratibha Patil, India's first female president, and nominated a woman to be the chamber's first speaker in June 2009. Among the 40 Lok Sabha seats up for election in the 2019 general election in India, Naam Tamilar Katchi of Tamil Nadu fielded 50% female candidates. It was the first party to offer men and women the same number of seats in India. In the 2021 Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly election, 117 seats were made available to women out of the 234 assembly constituencies, maintaining the same 50:50 ratio. However, there is a qualitative difference because these women are bringing their expertise in civic society governance. By doing this, they increase the state's awareness of issues like poverty, inequality, and gender injustice.

### 5.3.2 Political Systems: 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Act

One-third of the total seats for women members of scheduled castes, backward classes, scheduled tribes, and general castes in the Grampradhan of village Panchayat, block panchayats, and district panchayats are reserved for women candidates under

the 73rd amendment to the constitution of Panchayati Raj Institution. The 33% of seats reserved for women are not only in the general category of seats but also in the seats set aside for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and in reverse ranks.

Conceptually, including women in Panchayati Raj institutions could be seen as a key planning strategy for reducing traditional perceptions of how women are treated in our society, particularly those that place women under the control of men, forbid them from taking advantage of certain opportunities, and have other negative social, cultural, and traditional ties that disadvantage them. As a result of this newly adopted policy, the likelihood of increasing equality in the socioeconomic development process, participation in various activities that foster mutual understanding, status and role to play in the household and activities carried out outside of households, and various family decision-making processes among men and women would increase.

To improve status of women representatives in the social environment of village panchayats, factors like the attitude and intention of elected women towards the initiation of various development programmes and their capacity to make efforts to link different village population segments with the introduced programmes are also very important. As a result, this approach would increase and strengthen women's empowerment.

### 5.3.3 Actions to Encourage Women to Actively Participate in PRIs

The following measures and training programmes must be implemented to increase women's participation and power to make decisions even at the most basic levels of governance and to increase their representation in PRIs.

- ◆ It is necessary to take action to increase the number of women who participate in government.
- ◆ The elected leaders of these institutions must be literate in order to guide and inform the villagers about the various provisions of the PRI Act.
- ◆ The education of rural women is greatly aided by literacy, which also explains the political structure. Hence, improving female literacy is urgently needed, especially in rural regions.
- ◆ Women's leadership and communication skills must be developed in order to improve social mobilisation.
- ◆ Essentially, the goal is to prepare them, find ways to interact with other levels of local self-government within the state, and assert the Panchayat's rights.
- ◆ Introduce them to the state and central governments' initiatives for the development of rural areas, women, and children.
- ◆ When it comes to planning, including the choice and placement of schemes, there shouldn't be any factions or party politics; instead, genuine project implementation is required to improve decentralised planning.
- ◆ To provide them the knowledge they need to recognise and eradicate cultural barriers and enhance their socioeconomic situation.
- ◆ To improve rural women's ability to assume their new roles as local legislators, systemic knowledge is required.
- ◆ The Panchayat members and ordinary villagers should also be given information pertaining to the various provisions of rural development so that they are more familiar with their roles and the various developmental initiatives. Furthermore, Panchayat leaders and common villagers should have access to all the guidelines for rural development programmes.
- ◆ In order to assist the women Panchayat members in analysing and comprehending their roles and obligations in light of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, it is important to train them based on their local experience and engage their participation in the conceptual model process.
- ◆ In the contemporary e-era, innovation must be given a broad scope of importance while empowering women in all disciplines, with due importance to the political field. Women from PRIs should actively participate in using technology for their own and their communities' development in the framework of Digital India.

### 5.3.4 Women and Panchayati Raj

The state administration took ground-breaking action to empower women. A sense of accountability and self-respect has developed among women, who are now taking part in state decision-making. The PRI altered the social climate of the village by having the potential to begin the process of women's empowerment at the village level. The PRIs gave rural women the chance to take on leadership roles and actively participate in the development process. Also, it was an aid in reducing violence against women. So, the following factors had brought people to this



effort on the issue of women's empowerment through PRIs. which are:

- ◆ To provide a healthy environment for women to exercise their rights in rural areas, equal with men.
- ◆ For the advancement and welfare of women; equitable representation of women in decision-making bodies.
- ◆ To use an effective convergence of services, resources, institutions, and manpower in linked sectors, develop an integrated strategy for empowering women.
- ◆ To unite women together as self-help organisations for rural areas' economic emancipation.
- ◆ To increase women's political participation in rural politics and political awareness through PRIs.

**Taking the Initiative to Lead:** Women engage in Women's Leadership activities in the first year following an election that (a) awaken women to their individuality and human rights, (b) inform them of their powers and responsibilities as panchayat leaders, (c) develop their capacity to create a vision and plan actions to achieve it, and (d) link them with local resources and the government. This is furthered by the need-based programmes that women request to improve their communication, financial, and legal knowledge, as well as their understanding of government policies and programmes.

**Leadership for Development:** In the second, they collaborate with panchayats to develop "micro plans," or bottom-up plans, for communities to fulfil fundamental requirements. Bottom-up planning is evaluating the resources at hand and developing plans for activities that individuals may take on their own. These plans are not wish lists. Planning

involves developing strong relationships with local officials when resources from local government are needed.

**Establishing a Federation to Give a Strong voice:** State federations are able to annually mobilise sizable numbers of elected women to call for change at the policy level, while block-level federations are able to offer regular monthly meetings for mutual support.

**Increasing Women's Participation in Election:** As the reserved seats rotate to different areas each term, new women are encouraged to step forward to run for those seats. In addition, women who have already served are encouraged to stand for reelection against men in unreserved seats.

### 5.3.5 Challenges in Women's Participation

Active female participation in political institutions is the first step towards political empowerment for women. The democratic process at the grassroots level places a premium on women's first participation in Panchayati Raj institutions. Women have been used as rubber stamps despite the fact that some reservations have been given to women in local bodies under the democratic system of today.

Husbands intervene in an elected woman's panchayat welfare activities, and their male partners and family members make the majority of actual decisions. Their male family members make the actual decisions. In the Panchayati Raj system, women may have overcome the male stronghold, but in many instances, their husbands or other male family members are still in charge. According to reports, elected women representatives have been replaced with the male relatives.

One of the issues confronting women elected representatives is the dominance



and atrocities committed by elected male members of panchayat, legislative, and parliamentary bodies. The male-dominated political parties that hold power interfere politically with the way panchayat activities are carried out. Due to this gender discrimination, the support of male members is lacking during programme participation and implementation at the panchayat level.

Another one, inadequate awareness campaigns and training sessions, especially for female panchayat representatives. The public's negative perception of rural women's leadership and political participation. The women in rural areas lack sufficient political,

constitutional, and legal knowledge. Women's illiteracy and low level of education, particularly in rural areas.

It is necessary to examine this de facto male rule system and give women in PRIs the respect they deserve. This goal should be achieved at the desired level by establishing a provision for the maximum number of women to link and associate with political activities, even at the most basic level of political action.

## Recap

- ◆ By implanting 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendment act local self-governance was introduced in both rural and urban India.
- ◆ The 73rd Constitutional Amendment aimed to improve governance and give political voice to underrepresented groups in society.
- ◆ According to the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> act of 1992 expect at least one-third of panchayat members and chairpersons must be women in panchayath institution.
- ◆ A significant proportion of women being present in local bodies due to reservations made for them at the Panchayat and Nagarpalikas.
- ◆ For women, one third of the positions in all panchayat institutions are reserved.
- ◆ The 33% of seats reserved for women are not only in the general category of seats but also in the seats set aside for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and in reverse ranks.
- ◆ Women representative was confronting by the male stronghold. But due to the gender discrimination, Women have been used as rubber stamps.

## Objective Questions

1. The Panchayat Raj Institutions came into existence under which act?
2. Which term is used to refer to “the ability to influence the political system’s decision-making, planning, implementation, and assessment processes”?
3. How many posts are reserved for women in village panchayats, block panchayats, and district panchayats under the 73rd amendment to the Panchayati Raj Institution’s constitution?
4. In which system of elected bodies is about one-third of the seating reserved for women?
5. Which bill implemented 33% of the reservation of Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha seats for women?
6. How many percentages of seats are allocated for women through the women’s reservation bill?

## Answers

1. 73<sup>rd</sup> act of 1992
2. Political empowerment
3. One third
4. Panchayat and Municipality
5. Women’s Reservation Bill
6. 33%

## Assignments

1. Critically evaluate the status of women’s political empowerment in India. Consider historical developments, current trends, and policy interventions.

2. Explain the significance of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts in promoting women's political representation at the grassroots level.
3. Differentiate between women's empowerment and political participation. How are they interrelated yet distinct in the context of democratic governance?
4. Analyze the key issues and challenges faced by women in political spaces. Discuss factors such as gender bias, representation, and structural barriers.

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**BLOCK**

# Gender Issues in Contemporary Indian Society



# UNIT

## Gender and Violence

### Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to;

- ◆ understand the concept of domestic violence and its gendered dimensions
- ◆ recognize and differentiate forms of media violence, including categories of cyber violence
- ◆ examine the kinds of violence against women and measures to overcome it

### Prerequisites

The documentary “India’s Daughter” is a BBC-reported film which is based on the gang rape and murder of “Nirbhaya,” a 23-year-old physiotherapy student, in 2012. The incident received in-depth media coverage. It prompted widespread public protest and criticism of the Indian government for not providing enough protection to women. But this is just one instance of gender violence. Reports about crimes against women, including kidnapping, abduction, rape, dowry deaths, and violations of the suppression of Immoral Traffic Act, may be found in newspapers and magazines almost every day.

Gender based violence against females is a wide spread human rights violation with no regard for social, economic or national boundaries. Globally, approximately one in three women are expected to experience physical and sexual abuse at some point in their lives. From the beginning of their life cycle, individuals are exposed to gender based violence. Gender-based violence against women encompasses a range of actions such as rape, sexual assault, spousal abuse, workplace harassment, and child sexual abuse. Often, people view this type of violence as isolated events committed by a small number of men against women. When discussing how media and society interact, we definitely end up analysing how violence depicted in media can have a special impact on viewers. From the turn of the 20th century, studies in this area have consistently shown how violent content affects both people and societies. A problem that results from the need to appeal to a larger audience and protect financial interests is the frequency of violence in today’s media, television, movies, and more popular virtual worlds.



## Keywords

Gender, Violence, Sexual abuse, Cyber bullying, Sexism, Stalking

## Discussion

Gender-based violence stems from an unequal distribution of power and aims to degrade and subjugate an individual or a group of people. This form of violence is closely tied to societal norms, values, and cultural practices, and is often reinforced by a culture of silence and denial. Gender-based violence can occur in both public and private settings and has a disproportionate impact on women.

Although violence can be a traumatic event for anyone, regardless of gender or age, gender-based violence is mainly perpetrated by men against women and girls because of their gender. This type of violence has a significant effect on women's dignity, safety, sexuality, reproductive health, and their autonomy over their bodies. Additionally, gender-based violence has a far-reaching impact on women's physical and mental well-being. This type of violence arises from the power disparity between men and women, which is compounded by socio-economic, cultural, and structural inequalities.

Although the terms “gender-based violence” and “violence against women” are often used interchangeably, there is a subtle difference between the two. Violence against women includes any form of violence directed towards women and girls, including gender-based violence. The term “gender-based violence” recognises the gender dimensions of the violence, taking into account the perspectives of both the perpetrators and the victims. Gender-based violence refers specifically to violence that

targets individuals or groups based on their gender, distinguishing it from other types of violence. This type of violence can occur within the family, in the community, during times of peace or conflict, and can be perpetrated by state agents or non-state actors, acquaintances, strangers, or intimate partners. The term “gender-based violence” is more comprehensive and inclusive than “violence against women”.

Male violence is typically regarded as being motivated by personal factors, with few societal implications, despite the significant emotional damage it causes to the victim. Most people do not recognize it as an example of social patterns in the relationships between men and women. Durkheim's analysis of suicide, which is seen as a highly individualistic act, demonstrated the need for a sociological study of society. Similarly, rape and domestic violence, which are often viewed as individual acts, can be analysed as social phenomena linked to patriarchal social structures.

Gender-based violence perpetuates and amplifies the inequalities between men and women, undermining the health, dignity, safety, and independence of those who experience it. It encompasses various human rights violations. While women and girls experience gender-based violence to a greater extent, it is not exclusively limited to them. Men and boys may also be subjected to gender-based violence, although the extent to which they are impacted is not well-defined. Violence against individuals who identify



as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender is an example of how gender-based violence is linked to the conflict between mainstream and alternative perceptions and practices of sexuality.

The UN special Reporters on Violence against Women have classified violence against women into three categories: violence within the family, violence in the community, and violence endorsed by the state. The different forms of violence against women in these categories are as follows.

**1. Violence within the Family:**

This includes domestic violence, sexual abuse of children within the household, violence related to dowry, rape and incest committed by family members, honour killings, sex-selective abortions and female infanticide, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices that are harmful, violence against lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people, and violations of sexual and reproductive rights.

**2. Violence in the Community:**

This category includes rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment in the workplace and other public places, acid attacks, witch hunts, sati honour crimes, trafficking of women and children, forced prostitution, violence against women with disabilities, communal violence, and violence against Adivasi and Dalit women.

**3. Violence perpetrated or condoned by the State:** This encompasses custodial rapes, torture, and killings, gender-based violence in militarized situations, violence against women migrant

workers, refugees, and internally displaced persons, communal violence, and other scenarios of mass crimes.

Media is one which has the capacity to transmit information to the masses. Media is a versatile platform with different forms of media and communication systems. Media are channels through which information is transmitted to an audience, this transmission is facilitated through different physical devices and this media may be categorized into three such as print media, broadcast media and internet-based media.

**a. Print Media:** Refers to newspapers, magazines, journals, books etc.

**b. Broadcast Media:** Radio and television.

**c. Internet Based Media:** the most dominant form of media in the information society. This consists of emails, blogs, vlogs, social media, podcasts etc. Any media that facilitates transmission of information through an internet-based device may be categorized under this.

With the inception of the internet, media and the use of it has been revolutionized. Internet based media is popular as it enables the users to be a content generator as opposed to a content receiver as it was in traditional media. Previously established media houses dictated the content but with the entry of internet based media every individual has the opportunity to be a content creator if they choose to be and the media of this form is an interactive one.

The growth of media has significantly influenced various aspects of society, yielding both positive and negative outcomes. On



the positive side, media has contributed to cultural diversification, enhanced access to knowledge and information, enabled freedom of content creation, challenged vested interests, and promoted transparency in reporting. However, its negative impacts are also evident, including instances of controlled reporting influenced by vested interests, media intimidation, limited accessibility for marginalized groups, and concerns regarding the consistency and authenticity of transparency.

### 6.1.1 Domestic Violence

The issue of domestic violence is a widespread problem that has serious and long-term impacts on victims, their families and communities. Domestic violence can result in physical harm, psychological trauma and chronic health problems for victims, as well as for the perpetrators and others involved. Domestic violence is a type of abusive and coercive behaviour that involves physical, sexual, psychological and economic attacks by adults or adolescents against their intimate partners. The main features of domestic violence include:

1. Perpetrated by individuals in current or former dating, married or cohabiting relationships regardless of sexual orientation.
2. A consistent pattern of violent and controlling behaviour, including physical, sexual, psychological and economic coercion.
3. The use of various tactics, some of which are criminal, to exert control over victim, carried out over time and in multiple episodes.
4. A combination of physical violence, psychological abuse, and controlling tactics that result in fear and harm for the victim

and their children.

5. A pattern of deliberate behaviour aimed at achieving control or compliance from the victim.

#### 6.1.1.1 Domestic Violence and Gender

Domestic violence is a behaviour that is socially and historically constructed and is specific to a certain gender. Men are socialized to believe that they should control their partners and use physical force if necessary to maintain their dominance. Although male violence is often directed at other men, the majority of victims of domestic violence are women. However, intimate partner violence can also occur in same-sex relationships. The use of male violence against women in intimate relationships is a social problem that is supported by the customs and traditions of a particular society. While there is some debate about whether gender is the sole factor that determines abusive behaviour in intimate relationships or if there are other significant variables, gender is clearly an important issue when considering the prevalence of male to female domestic violence, injuries sustained by female victims, the use of physical force as a means of establishing dominance, and the responses of victims and perpetrators to domestic violence.

In most cases of domestic violence that are reported, men are the ones who perpetrate the violence while women are the victims. Occasionally, women in heterosexual relationships may use physical force, but the severity and frequency of their actions do not match those of men. Studies show that although both men and women may use similar physical behaviours, the physical effects of male violence are much more severe than female aggression, as evidenced by the frequency and severity of injuries. Additionally, the consequences of physical

aggression are different depending on the gender of the victim- women who are victims of male intimate violence experience more harmful effects than men who are victims of female intimate violence.

Research suggests that women use physical force in intimate relationships primarily for self-defence purposes, while men use force to exert power and control over their partners. In cases of homicide, studies show that women are more likely than men to have committed homicide in self-defence, while male perpetrator are more likely to stalk and kill victims or other family members and even commit suicide. Studies on battered women who kill also support the notion that women's use of physical force is often a last resort to protect themselves from the severe violence of male perpetrators.

While the gender pattern of domestic violence is different in same-sex relationships, this does not negate the gender issues present in domestic violence. In same-sex intimate relationships, one partner may still use physical violence or the threat of violence to control and intimidate the other, much like in heterosexual relationships where men are often the perpetrators of violence against women. Therefore, male violence against women in heterosexual relationships serves as a model for understanding intimate violence in same-sex relationships.

Although the gender pattern of domestic violence in same sex relationships is different from heterosexual relationships, gender-related issues still exist. In same relationships, the socialization of gender roles may impact how victims and perpetrators perceive the abuse and how others respond to same sex domestic violence. For instance, male victims of same sex domestic violence may find it challenging to identify as victims due to the perception that it is not "mainly" to be a victim, and the gay community may

ignore the violence because it is considered normal male behaviour. Similarly, the lesbian community may deny that domestic violence occurs in same sex relationships because they believe that women are not violent. Furthermore, the larger homophobic society may dismiss domestic violence as an inherent part of being gay or lesbian.

Victims of domestic violence often have multiple and diverse reasons for remaining in abusive relationships. These reasons can vary from person to person and may include:

1. Fear of the abuser's violence.
2. Being emotionally and physically immobilized by the trauma inflicted on them.
3. Feeling tied to the abuser due to their access to children.
4. Suffering from an illness of being dependent on the abuser for healthcare.
5. Holding onto cultural, familial or religious values that emphasize the importance of preserving the family unit.
6. Believing in the abuser's promises to change and stop the violence.
7. Fearing that the abuser may harm themselves if they leave.
8. Lack of access to support services such as shelters and victim advocacy programs due to insufficient funding and resources.
9. Lack of viable job and financial opportunities, particularly for those with children.
10. Inability to afford legal assistance required to obtain restraining

orders, protection order or custody orders.

11. Lack of affordable housing that could offer safety for themselves and their children.
12. Being told by others that the abuse is happening because of their sexuality and that it would stop if they were different.
13. Being blamed by the abuser, counsellors, courts, police, ministers, family or friends for the violence and being told they could stop it by giving in to the abuser's demands. This reinforces the notion that the systems in place to help will not believe or protect them, forcing the victims to comply in order to try and stop the violence.

### 6.1.2 Rape

Rape is the most violent and fourth-most common type of gender-based violence in India. According to the 2021 annual report of the national crime records bureau (NCRB), 31,677 rape cases were registered across the country. It is classified as a type of sexual violence. Sexual violence is defined as any unwanted sexual comments or advances, sexual activities, act of trafficking, or other coercive acts against a person's sexuality, regardless of the victim's relationship to the offender and regardless of the circumstance. Despite the fact that male and female, as well as transgender people, are victims of gender-based and sexual violence, women, girls, and transgender people continue to be the majority of these victims.

There are numerous misconceptions about rape. For instance, rape is often committed by someone the victim knows, despite the fact that most people connect it with a violent attack by an unknown person.

Another misconception is that rape results in noticeable wounds, which is generally not the case. Just about a third of rape victims experience observable bodily harm. The rape may be followed by physical assault or pressure in the form of threats or blackmail, or the assault may take place when the victim is unconscious or under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, rendering her helpless. So, what exactly is rape? Let us understand how our penal code defines rape.

Indian penal code define "rape " is A male is said to have "raped" a woman if they engaged in sexual activity together under any of the following six circumstances: 1) Against her will, 2) without her consent 3) when she has given consent after being made to fear for her safety or the safety of anyone she cares about 4) with her consent-Because she believes he is another guy to whom she is, or considers herself to be, legally married, she gives him her assent even though she knows he is not her husband 5) with her consent-if, at the time of giving such consent, she is in a state of insanity, intoxication, or has been given any stupefying or harmful drug by him directly or through another person, rendering her incapable of understanding the nature and effects of that to which she gives consent 6) while she is under sixteen years old, with or without her consent. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013 was passed on February 3, 2013, changing the definition and bringing the legal age of a minor up to eighteen.

#### 6.1.2.1 Types of Rape

Rape can be classified in a number of ways, including the conditions under which it occurs, the identity or characteristics of the victim, and the identity or characteristics of the perpetrator. a gang rape, a prison rape, a rape committed while the victim is in custody, etc.

◆ **Date Rape:** The term "date rape"



is used to describe acquaintance rape, a non-domestic rape carried out by a person who knows the victim and in which the victim is purposefully drugged with a date rape substance to render them unconscious. It can even happen between people who are dating and have previously engaged in consensual sex.

- ◆ **Marital Rape:** Spousal rape, often referred to as marital rape, wife rape, husband rape, partner rape, or intimate partner sexual assault (IPSA), is a rape that takes place without the permission of one spouse in a married or de facto relationship. Spousal rape is regarded as a form of sexual abuse and domestic violence.
- ◆ **Gang Rape:** Is when many people take part in the rape of the same victim. a rape committed by two or more offenders. For example, Delhi gang rape and murder case, 2012 (Nirbaya case). In comparison to solo rapes, gang rapes entailed increased usage of alcohol and other drugs, severe sexual assault outcomes, less victim resistance, and fewer weapons.

The rape of a child is a form of child sexual abuse. When committed by another child (usually an older or stronger one) or adolescent, it is called “child-on-child sexual abuse.” It is also incest when carried out by a parent or other close family members; it can cause severe and prolonged psychological anguish.

### 6.1.2.2 Socio-Cultural Indicators of Sexual Violence

**Gender stereotype:** Gender stereotypes contribute to some misconceptions in Indian society: people assume that the victim’s sense of style and women who work late

or go out late are immoral and contributing factors to rape. If the public themselves think that this is the reason for rape in India, then women are not safe in this society. More than that, virginity is considered sacred in Indian society, so no family is willing to admit that a member of their family has been raped, and as a result, victims are frequently advised to avoid the case. The majority of rapes in India are not even reported because of this.

**Patriarchal Notions:** With the concept of masculinity, Indian society elevated the male gender. Many men are taught that the female gender is inferior to them, which leads to rape as a form of subjugation. Many people, blinded by the concept of masculinity, have at times blamed rape victims.

**Lack of Sexual Education:** Sexual assault is a deliberate form of punishment, intimidation, or abuse. Most frequently, sexual violence is committed out of entitlement and want. The high rates of sexual violence are also a result of significant phenomena like the way that men and boys are encouraged to bond over aggressive sexuality or sexual conquests; patterns of who has power over others (because of things like race and gender); and a lack of understanding around sexual consent. Sex education shapes young people’s understanding of sexuality as a whole. Sex education can be a crucial intervention to prevent sexual abuse against children, aggression against intimate partners, and sexual violence. Educating young people about the positive parts of sexuality and relationships can have a significant impact on their health and safety.

### 6.1.3 Initiatives to Prevent Sexual Violence

**Social Support:** Rape victims should receive sociological and psychological help. The stigmatisation of rape victims must end, and all efforts should be directed towards holding the offenders accountable. With





Fig 6.2.1 Gender stereotyping in media

Source: <https://www.timetoast.com/timelines/gender-bias-in-ads-1930-present>

this, rape victims would be able to come forward and report the instances without fear of social exclusion. As a result, the myth surrounding the mute will fade away.

**Proper law and punishment:** Rape offenders are not subject to proper punishment and are occasionally allowed to function freely in society. The worst psychological torture a rape victim can experience is witnessing her attackers roaming around unmolested. For instance, 32033 rape incidents were reported nationwide in India in 2019, or an average of 88 occurrences per day, and in 94.2% of those cases, the offenders were known to the victims, according to the 2019 annual report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

**Equal Upbringing of Both Sexes:** It is important to emphasise that each gender is an individual. When problems develop, no gender should be excused based on gender hierarchy. This will significantly reduce the inherent inferiority of gender.

### 6.1.4 Gender and Media

Gender and media are intertwined where media vehicles gender representation by engaging in gender bias and gender socialization. Media has always been criticized for the role it has played in gender representation. Media often takes to extremes in representation of women with either

confining them to traditional stereotypes or objectifying women sexually. Gender studies have demonstrated that women are often represented in traditional a stereotype that depicts them as homemakers, sexual objects desired by men, engaged in works such as that of educators, secretarial or other roles that highlight them as caretakers.

The above images are both advertisements first from the 1970s and the other from 2010s, these images reiterate the claim that women are depicted as a weaker section whose domain is their household and being engaged in housework is most befitting. A better grasp regarding gender and the roles and duties associated with it have led to changes in this stereotypical depiction, it is not as prominent as earlier. The contradiction remains as women with women shown as confident and independent as well as submissive housewives. This showcase of gender roles is to appeal to the minds of an anticipated mass audience.

Men are also subjected to stereotyping in media, with men shown as masculine, powerful and dominant who lead the family by being the breadwinner and head of the family, the difference between men and women being stereotyped is that women are shown to be a disadvantaged section whereas men are at an advantage with being more powerful and dominant.



The frequent depiction of women and men in particular forms and duties will go a long way in establishing the same in the practice of real-life situations.

#### **6.1.4.1 Feminist Analysis on Gender and Media**

Today's media is often feminist and sometimes anti-feminist. Both ideas seem to be alive at the same time. The problem with analyzing gender representation in movies from a feminist perspective is that the feminist perspective is constantly being revised and expanded to include more. There are different types of feminism today. Liberal feminism believes that women are denied opportunities and limited in their work where gender stereotypes affect it. Laws and schemes are offered as ways for women to access male-dominated jobs. Radical feminism assumes that men and women are different; this difference is encouraged by patriarchal settings enforced in all realms of society. Social feminism identified the subordination of women to the class structure of capitalist society. Black feminism arose in response to criticism from black women that their needs were not being met by feminist organizations.

The purpose of feminist media research is to understand how the production of gender and the image of the media is related to the control, oppression and inequality that women face today. The analysis ranges from ownership groups, audience engagement with content, how content is produced, and how the political economy of media companies affects the final product. Feminist social media has taken many forms; they have called for a positive portrayal of women, protested against offensive content, voiced their objections to beauty pageants, called for greater participation of women in content creation, and reached out to those in power to challenge the current women's show.

Women's organizations have, to some extent, been successful in embedding feminism in media culture. Women are now portrayed on television as working after marriage, running big businesses and getting paid the same as men. All these ideas are not taken as arguments and the radio, television, internet and press give comfort to many feminist and anti-feminist ideas today. Today, the media encourages women to assert their independence.

#### **6.1.5 Media Violence**

Media violence indicates the dissemination of images, content or messages that convey violence to its receptors through different sources of media such as newspapers, magazines, television series, movies, games etc. Media violence is popularly showcased in content generated for or circulated through television content, movies, music and video games. Video games are most popularly pointed out as a source of media violence mostly due to the nature of the game and action a person engaging in takes part in. It encourages its users to engage in violent acts such as murder, rape, assassination, theft etc. Apart from this movie are also cited as a source of media violence. A problematic factor about depiction of violence in the media is that it tends to normalize violence. Let's examine the various consequences of media violence:

##### **Consequences of Media Violence**

- a. Increased aggressive behaviour
- b. Normalisation of violent acts
- c. Desensitization
- d. Attentional problems
- e. Decrease in prosocial behaviour

##### **Regulatory Measures**

Forging and enforcement of regulatory measures is the only possible method to

regulate the content circulated via different sources of media. In India the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) and Prasar Bharati are the governmental bodies in place to regulate media.

**Central Act Legislations by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting:**

**a. The Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867**

An Act for the regulation of Printing-presses and newspapers, for the printed in India, and for the registration of such books and newspapers.

**b. The Cinematograph Act, 1952**

An Act to make provision for the certification of cinematograph films for exhibition and for regulating exhibitions by means of cinematographs.

**c. The Parliamentary Proceedings (Protection of Publication) Act, 1977**

An Act to protect the publication of reports of proceedings of Parliament

**d. The Press Council Act, 1978**

An Act to establish a Press Council for the purpose of preserving the freedom of the Press and of maintaining and improving the standards of newspapers and news agencies in India. Press Council of India (PCI) was established under the PCI Act of 1978 for the purpose of preserving the freedom of the press and of maintaining and improving the standards of newspapers and news agencies in India.

**e. The Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Act, 1990**

An Act to provide for the establishment of a Broadcasting Corporation for India, to be known as Prasar Bharati, to define its

composition, functions and powers and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

**f. The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995**

An Act to regulate the operation of cable television networks in the country and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

**g. The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC)** is a regulatory body that engages in screening of films, documentaries, television shows and advertisements in theaters or broadcasting via television, these may be broadcasted only after getting approval from this regulatory authority. The authority is limited to controlling and screening of content the body does not have any power to issue guidelines. Program and Advertisement Codes for regulating content broadcast on the television, are issued under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995.

**h. The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code), Rules, 2021**, The 2021 Rules replace the Information Technology (Intermediaries Guidelines) Rules, 2011. The earlier set of rules which were only applicable to intermediaries. The new Rules also significantly broadened the area of intermediary oversight, as well as bringing online news content and Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms under its purview. These guidelines and rules are popularised under the Information Technology Act 2000.

Media Violence may be curbed through stricter censorship, levying of fines or

ban to those creators or distributors who promote such content, implementing new technological services for better reporting and removal of content. From the users perspective a digital detoxing by withdrawing from the use of all and any media platforms for a particular time is also recommended.

### 6.1.6 Cyber Violence

The biggest issue the internet is truly struggling in the current scenario is with the violence and harassment. As it is happening in a parallel virtual world, it usually seems unrealistic and vague. 73% of women, according to the United Nations, have already been exposed to or have personally encountered some type of online violence. It is a serious problem that cannot be resolved by quick fixes. This is due to the fact that cyber violence and online abuse are much more widespread and complicated than the snarky attitudes we see in comment sections or the overt threats of violence. Cyber violence is persistent, gendered, and systematic.

Cyber violence against young women has multifaceted tactics that target every social media platform and level. This is a problem that calls for real obligation and change from a variety of sources, including social media platforms and technology firms, government officials and legislators, service providers and advocates, institutions and communities, and particularly from young women themselves.

Cyber violence is described as online behaviours that criminally or non-criminally violate a person's physical, psychological, or emotional well-being or have the potential to do so. It can be carried out or witnessed by a person or group online, through a smart phone, while playing an online game, etc. Even though cyber violence occurs online, it has effects on individuals offline and has ramifications for the real world.

According to a Pew Research Center survey from late last year, 40% of people have been harassed online and 73% of people witnessed someone else being harassed online. We know that many folks, from all walks of life, experience and even perpetuate online gender based violence. However, it comes to scary threats when women, people of colour, and LGBTQ+ folks are disproportionately impacted. Of those who have experienced online harassment, 66% said their most recent incident occurred on a social networking platform.

#### Examples of Cyber Crimes

- ◆ Online harassment
- ◆ Threatening
- ◆ Bullying
- ◆ Blackmailing
- ◆ Unwanted sexting
- ◆ Stalking
- ◆ Hate speech
- ◆ Luring
- ◆ Non-consensual sharing of images
- ◆ Recording & distribution of sexual assault

#### 6.1.6.1 Categories of Cyber Violence

1. **Cyber and Online Harassment:** this category includes individual threats to intentional abuse. This may include trolling, constant hate speeches, initiation for mass hate speeches etc. The target point may be an anonymous person or someone familiar.
2. **Non-Consensual Sharing of Private/ Personal Images:** this category is also called as 'revenge

porn'; in reality it is a type of sexual violence. This harassment includes the sharing of intimate photos to exploit and humiliate.

**3. Recording and Circulation of Sexual Assault:** the video and images of sexual assaults are spread through social media. Basically this is not a matter related to privacy, it is a form of gendered violence which unreasonably affects young women and other marginalized genders.

**4. Digital Dating Abuse and Cyber Stalking:** Continuous controlling, harassment, tracking and harassment of a partner online is the abuse in this category. For example, GPS apps for tracking a woman's movements are used for cyber stalking.

Since "cyber violence" encompasses sexism, racism, homophobia, and transphobia, it is more useful than the term "cyber bullying." More frequently than from online-strangers etc. young women endure abuse and harassment from their families, spouses, and colleagues. Girls and young women should be empowered and encouraged online; adults should be also aware about the risky and bad aspects of online life.

It is interesting to note that ;access to community, access to safe spaces, access to important anti-sexist and anti-racist information, access to content promoting body positivity and sex positivity, and tools to advance as a digital media maker are the concrete advantages that young women and girls discover on social media. But on the other hand, it is important to consider surveillance, monitoring, and censorship as a problem rather than an advantage.

The influence of social media on young women's emotional lives and wellbeing is downplayed by those who see it as educationally "unproductive" and who censor or block it. Young women want their knowledge and skill to be appreciated, and they want to be believed. Monitoring and policing young women's usage of social media presents them as undependable and it also devalues their knowledge and experience. Young women identify their gender as a nonconforming factor and burden which actually makes their online-journey dangerous and difficult.

According to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India, cyber laws give legal validity to electronic documents, provide a framework for e-filing and e-commerce transactions, and also offer a legal framework to lessen and prevent cybercrimes. The Information Technology Act, 2000 and the Indian Criminal Code, 1860 both apply to cybercrimes in India. The Information Technology Act of 2000 is the law that handles matters pertaining to online crime and internet trade.

Violence is a phenomenon with a psychological effect on people that is easily observed in traditional mass media like television, newspapers, or virtual platforms like video games. Clinical research on the subject demonstrates that aggressive, violent tendencies, and introverted personality traits are more common in young people who are exposed to violence. The fact that violence need not be experienced in real life is the situation's most intriguing feature. Exposure to violent material in a video game, on television, or in a movie might easily have a similar impact. Unfortunately, being a vulnerable group, women are exposed to such violence in an easier way. Strict laws and empowerment are effective in handling this harsh scenario.

## Recap

- ◆ Gender based violence is closely tied to societal norms, values, and cultural practices.
- ◆ The terms “gender-based violence” and “violence against women” are often used interchangeably.
- ◆ Violence against women includes any form of violence directed towards women and girls.
- ◆ Gender-based violence refers specifically to violence that targets individuals or group based on their gender, distinguishing it from other types of violence.
- ◆ Domestic violence is a type of abusive and coercive behaviour that involves physical, sexual, psychological and economic attacks by adults or adolescents against their intimate partners.
- ◆ Gender pattern of domestic violence in same sex relationships is different from heterosexual relationships.
- ◆ Rape is the fourth-most common type of gender-based violence in India.
- ◆ Rape is often committed by someone the victim knows.
- ◆ Gender stereotypes, patriarchal notions, and a lack of sexual education contribute to sexual violence.
- ◆ Media holds an influential position in representing different categories thus having the ability to shape values, perceptions and normalise stereotypes.
- ◆ Gender representation in media must often be viewed from a critical perspective as gender roles, duties and stereotypes are instilled in the audience through various depictions in media.
- ◆ Gender and media are interrelated because media vehicles gender representation by engaging in gender bias and gender socialization.
- ◆ Men are also subjected to stereotyping in the media, with men shown as masculine, powerful and dominant.

- ◆ Feminist intervention has led to a decrease in enforcing gender stereotypes.
- ◆ 73% of women, according to the United Nations, have already been exposed to or have personally encountered some type of online violence

## Objective Questions

1. What does the umbrella term used to indicate violence, such as rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, workplace harassment, and child sexual abuse, include?
2. What is the most commonly used term to describe “acquaintance rape”?
3. Which kind of rape is considered a form of domestic violence and sexual abuse?
4. Which type of rape was committed by two or more offenders?
5. Which Ministry is responsible for the regulation of media?
6. What is a positive outcome of media growth?

## Answers

1. Gender based violence
2. Date rape
3. Marital rape
4. Gang rape
5. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
6. Cultural diffusion



## Assignments

1. Describe the statement, “The terms “gender-based violence” and “violence against women” are often used interchangeably, but there is a subtle difference between the two.”
2. Describe the indicators that worsen society’s support system for rape victims.
3. Critically evaluate legal measures against gender-based violence.
4. In your own words, critically analyze the role of media in dictating gender roles?
5. Does the medium promote or demote violence? Justify

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## UNIT

# Issues of Sexual Minorities

### Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to;

- ◆ identify the major sexual minority groups prevalent in Indian society
- ◆ examine the key issues and challenges faced by sexual minorities in India
- ◆ understand the legal rights and constitutional provisions aimed at their protection and empowerment

### Prerequisites

Do you know who belong to sexual minorities? Who are they? How they differ from other social groups? Sexual minorities are individuals whose sexual orientation, identity, or expression differs from the majority of the population. This group primarily includes people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other non-heterosexual orientations. It also encompasses those who identify as transgender, intersex, and non-binary. Unlike dominant social groups that conform to heteronormative gender and sexual roles, sexual minorities often face unique forms of marginalization and exclusion. However, with the rise of gender and sexual rights movements in recent decades, the concerns of sexual minorities have gained visibility and structural recognition in many societies. Governments and international organizations have increasingly taken steps to introduce progressive legislation aimed at ensuring the rights, empowerment, and social inclusion of sexual minorities. In this unit, we will explore the major categories of sexual minorities in India and examine the challenges they face.

## Keywords

Sexual minority, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Non-binary

## Discussion

### 6.2.1 Sexual Minorities

Sexual minorities are groups of people whose sexual orientation, gender identity, or practices differ from those of the majority in society. Lesbians, Gay, transgender, intersex and bi-sex people are major categories included in the sexual minorities. Sexual minorities have historically faced numerous human rights violations and widespread discrimination across socio-political and legal domains. Society has often been reluctant to recognize their identities or ensure their inclusion in social life. This systemic marginalization has significantly limited their participation in economic, political, and power structures, resulting in high levels of unemployment and poverty within these communities. In many cases, such exclusion has forced individuals into begging or engagement in criminalized activities for survival. Later in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, gender movements appeared globally and demanded for more equal treatment from the society as well as authorities. Legal rights for homosexual people, rights for marriage, civil unions, adoption, parenting, employment, military service, access to health care were major demands put forth by these movements.

Homosexuality is one of the major categories within sexual minorities. It refers to a sexual orientation characterized by emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction between individuals of the same sex. It is defined as an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic and sexual attractions to the people of same sex. It is unknown what caused for the

homosexual people in common except that genetic, hormonal and environmental factors are affecting their personality. However, there is a question of what is determining factor in one's sexual orientation? Is it natural? Some believe that homosexuality is unnatural while some argue that parenting and early childhood experiences play major role in fixing the sexual orientation. In fact, scientific research has shown that homosexuality is natural and not a result of any psychological factors. Females with homosexual orientation are known as lesbian and males with same sex attractions are known as gay.

Transgender is an umbrella term that refers to individuals whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Transgender people may also be referred to as trans individuals.

Transsexual individuals are those who seek to transition from their assigned sex at birth to the opposite sex, often through medical interventions such as hormone replacement therapy or gender-affirming surgeries. In many cases, transsexual people prefer not to be identified under the broader term "transgender," as they may view their experiences and identities as distinct. Individuals who identify with a third gender are also generally included under the transgender umbrella. Importantly, the term "transgender" refers to gender identity and is independent of sexual orientation. Transgender people may identify as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, asexual, or with any other orientation. Therefore, sexual orientation and gender identity, while



related, are considered separate aspects of a person's identity.

Same sex or homosexuality has been considered as part of natural evolution of human being. Clellan S. Ford and Frank A. Beach have argued in their work *Patterns of Sexual Behaviour* that homosexuality was prevalent and practiced in 64% of 76 societies they have studied. Looking at substantial documents, they claimed that same sex unions were existed in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Pre Christian Rome, Indian, Chinese, Nepalese, Korean cultures. Hence, the concept of homosexuality is believed not as dominant in sexual history of humankind.

### 6.2.2 Sexual Minorities and Wellbeing

Sexual minorities are encountered with extreme vulnerable situations socially due to physical, sexual, economic and emotional violence from the side of the majority community. The major challenges which they are faced can be divided into two: a) Social neglect b) health deterioration due to the transmission of sexual diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS.

Social neglect is considered as the biggest challenge. It is not a one sided phenomenon rather the majority community has a significant say in the correction methods. Social mentality, inefficiency of social institutions and the lack of willpower of the governments are major factors for this social degradation. Across societies, transgender people experience widespread discrimination and stigmatization. Within families, many are rejected by their parents, which can lead to homelessness, economic insecurity, and social isolation. This often pushes individuals into street dwelling and, in some cases, criminalized activities for survival. Social exclusion and constant humiliation have also contributed to high

rates of suicide within the community. Since they are forced out of the job market, many of them are indulged in the commercial sex industry. Apart from this, alcoholic habit and drugs have affected many of their lives.

Discrimination, social exclusion and stigmatization in other socio-economic sectors put the sexual minorities in more degradable position. Their identity and self-esteem are frequently questioned and challenged by the majority groups. In educational sector, they are not allowed to enter the premises of educational institutions. Hence, illiteracy is a common problem among them which detrimentally caused for high unemployment and their participation is meager in the governmental sector too. At social level, they are denied entry to public places such as hotels, hospitals, cinema halls and government offices. In the industry, their employment is ceased till their identity is revealed. Denial of access to the government offices works as hurdle in obtaining basic identity documents such as Voters ID, ration card, passport, pension and caste certificate. In many occasion, they have to approach courts to get certificates.

### 6.2.3 Sexual Minorities and Human Rights

Universal Declaration on Human Rights proclaimed by the United Nations Organization works as the founding stone for equal treatment of human varieties including vulnerable categories such as women, children, disabled people, religious and ethnic minorities, refugees etc. It is astonishing that sexual minorities are missing from this list and their absence had an echo in the denial of social-economic and political rights for them. Sexual minorities were not part of the discussion in the human rights conferences or treaties later with the advent of gender movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it started to the forefront. For the first time, Amnesty International raised its voice against the

discrimination based on sexuality and for homosexual people. In 1990s, Tasmania's anti-sodomy law was criticized by the Human Rights Committee for lacking the rights to privacy and the right to non-discrimination ensured for all individuals under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This was reflected in the later developments for example, in Scandinavia, the provision for equal rights for sexual minorities including marriage rights was brought in and South African Constitution prohibited discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation.

Homosexuality is seen in all religions as offense and prohibited activities. In India, traditional society perceived as social offense. This was not different in colonial laws due to the influence of Judeo-Christian morality. In Manusmrithi, homosexuality is seen as offence and to be punished by the religious authorities. To Islamic Personal Laws, homosexuality is a serious offence which brings serious punishment. In India, only in the recent times, rights movement based sexuality got coverage and space in the socio-political arena. In 1980, the first gay magazine Bombay Dost was published and in Delhi, a lesbian collective called Sakhi started operated. Both took tremendous strives to bring gay/lesbian/bisexual issues into the public space. Now days, the community have spread and rooted in most of the major cities of India such as Mumbai, Kolkata, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune, Chennai, Patna, Lucknow, Akola, Trichi and Gulbarga. In spite of this a large chunk of organizations, collectives are functional in various fields. Unfortunately, the lack of resources, human power, and government support are reflecting in the premature demise of majority of them.

### 6.2.4 IPC Section 377 and the Legal Support

In India, discrimination against sexual

minorities was historically institutionalized through legal and state mechanisms. One of the most prominent examples of this was the criminalization of homosexuality under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). This colonial-era law, introduced in 1861 by the British, defined same-sex relations as “carnal intercourse against the order of nature” and imposed penalties of imprisonment up to 10 years along with fines. The exact wording of the section read: “Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman, or animal shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.” Section 377 served as a major source of legal and social discrimination, reinforcing stigma and exclusion of sexual minorities. After decades of activism and legal battles, the Government of India referred the matter to the Supreme Court. In a historic judgment delivered on 6th September 2018, the Supreme Court of India ruled in *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India* that Section 377, insofar as it criminalized consensual same-sex relations between adults, was unconstitutional, thereby decriminalizing homosexuality in the country and affirming the dignity and rights of LGBTQ+ individuals.

### 6.2.5 Issues of Sexual Minorities

a. Major categories within sexual minorities in India include Hijras, bisexuals, and lesbians. These groups have historically faced severe neglect, marginalization, and discrimination from society. Unfortunately, constitutional institutions such as the police and other correctional mechanisms have often failed to provide protection and, in some cases, have contributed to their oppression. The major challenges faced by these communities include widespread discrimination, verbal and physical abuse, police harassment, illegal



detention, and social exclusion, including being disowned by their families, caste groups, and communities.

### **b. The Family**

For sexual minorities, the family often becomes the first site of social discrimination. Once an individual's sexual or gender identity is disclosed, many face immediate rejection not only from their family but also from their caste, religious, and community networks. This rejection plays a critical role in shaping the individual's subsequent socio-cultural and economic experiences. Being ousted from the family frequently leads to homelessness, depriving them of emotional security, economic support, and a stable environment for development. The lack of familial acceptance severely disrupts their socialization process during childhood and adolescence, making it difficult to build a healthy sense of self-worth and identity. In many cases, they are denied access to education, inheritance, or community rituals, further alienating them from mainstream society.

### **c. Discrimination in Employment and Education**

Social perceptions and discrimination against sexual minorities serve as significant barriers to accessing suitable employment opportunities. Members of the Hijra community, in particular, face intense prejudice within the job market. They are often denied employment based on their gender identity, regardless of their skills, qualifications, or

aspirations. This systemic exclusion frequently forces them into the informal sector, including sex work, as a means of survival.

The challenges begin early in life. Many children from sexual minority groups are denied admission into educational institutions or face extreme bullying and ostracism when enrolled. The lack of access to quality education results in widespread illiteracy, limiting their future prospects and reinforcing cycles of poverty and marginalization. As a result, the absence of both educational and professional opportunities severely restricts their ability to achieve social and economic mobility.

### **d. Discrimination in the Medical Establishment**

In the medical field, Hijras face two basic problems. The first is when they seek treatment for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV/AIDS. The second occurs when they pursue sex reassignment surgery (SRS). Both situations are compounded by their marginalized social status and lack of familial or legal guardianship, which places their safety and protection at significant risk. Due to widespread stigma and discrimination, Hijras often encounter neglect, disrespect, and even denial of services in healthcare settings. Medical establishments frequently fail to provide appropriate and sensitive care, leading to treatment in hazardous, unhygienic, and substandard conditions.



## Recap

- ◆ A group of people whose sexual orientation, identity and practices are differed from the majority of the society is known as sexual minorities.
- ◆ Later in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, gender movements appeared globally and demanded for more equal treatment from the society as well as authorities.
- ◆ Homosexuality is sexual attraction between same sex people.
- ◆ Transsexual individuals are those who seek to transition from their assigned sex at birth to the opposite gender, typically through medical interventions such as hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and sex reassignment surgery (SRS).
- ◆ Clellan S. Ford and Frank A. Beach have argued in their work *Patterns of Sexual Behaviour* that homosexuality was prevalent and practiced in 64% of 76 societies they have studied.
- ◆ The major challenges which they are faced can be divided into two: a) Social neglect b) health deterioration due to the transmission of sexual diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS.
- ◆ Universal Declaration on Human Rights proclaimed by the United Nations Organization works as the founding stone for equal treatment of human varieties including vulnerable categories such as women, children, disabled people, religious and ethnic minorities, refugees etc.
- ◆ In Manusmrithi, homosexuality is seen as offence and to be punished by the religious authorities.
- ◆ To Islamic Personal Laws, homosexuality is a serious offence which brings serious punishment.
- ◆ In 1980, the first gay magazine Bombay Dost was published and in Delhi, a lesbian collective called Sakhi started operated.
- ◆ Legal discrimination against sexual minorities apparently viewed under the Section 377 of Indian Penal Code.
- ◆ In 2018, the Supreme Court ruled the decriminalization of homosexuality in the country.
- ◆ Major issues they are faced are discrimination, social abuse, the Police oppression, illegal detention and outing from families, caste and communities.

## Objective Questions

1. When gender movements were started in?
2. What is homosexuality?
3. What do you call people who seek sexual reassignment through medical assistance or hormonal therapy to transition from their assigned sex at birth to the opposite sex?
4. Who authored the book of *Patterns of Sexual Behaviour*?
5. What are the two major challenges faced by sexual minorities?
6. Which was the first gay magazine?
7. In which year the Supreme Court decriminalized homosexuality?
8. Which section of IPC promoted legal discrimination towards sexual minorities?

## Answers

1. In the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century
2. Homosexuality is sexual attraction between same sex people.
3. Transsexual people
4. Clellan S. Ford and Frank A. Beach
5. a) Social neglect b) health deterioration due to the transmission of sexual diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS
6. Bombay Dost
7. 2018
8. Section 377

## Assignments

1. Who are sexual minorities? Provide a detailed definition and discuss their place within the broader social structure.
2. Analyze the major human rights violations experienced by sexual minorities. Illustrate with examples from national or global contexts.
3. Who are the Hijras in the Indian context? Critically examine the historical and contemporary forms of social exclusion they face.
4. Evaluate the impact of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code on sexual minorities. How did it contribute to systemic discrimination?
5. Identify and critically discuss the key social, legal, and economic challenges faced by sexual minority communities today.

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2. Fergusons, C. (ed.) (2010) “*Violent Crime, clinical and implications*”. California: Sage Publications.
3. Rege, Sharmila. (2003). *Sociology of Gender*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.



# MODEL QUESTION PAPER SETS



**SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY**

QP CODE: .....

Reg. No : .....

Name : .....

**Model Question Paper- Set-I**  
**FIFTH SEMESTER BA SOCIOLOGY EXAMINATION**  
**DISCIPLINE CORE -B21SO05DC – GENDER STUDIES**  
**(CBCS - UG)**

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

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**Section A**

**Objective Type Questions**

*Answer any ten questions. Each carries one mark (10x1=10 marks)*

1. In which year Colombo conference was held?
2. Who fought against Brahminical hegemony of high castes in 1890s?
3. Who authored the book *Sex, Gender and Society*?
4. Who coined the term intersectionality?
5. Who was the leader of the *Erotic Movement*?
6. Who authored *Vindication of the Rights of Women*?
7. Which school considered 'Family' as a source of oppression and exploitation?
8. Who is the founder of psychoanalytical theory?
9. Who is the author of the book *Second Sex*?
10. Who is the author of *Sexuality*?
11. Who is the author of *Gender Trouble*?
12. Who was the first social reformer banned Sati in India?
13. Who led the Chipko Movement in the 1970s to protect forests in India?



14. Who authored the book *Patterns of Sexual Behaviour*?
15. Which was the first gay magazine?

### **Section B**

#### **Very Short Answers**

*Answer any ten. Each question carries two marks.*

**(10X2=20)**

16. LGBTIQ+
17. Radical Feminism
18. Gender role
19. Theory of Performativity
20. The Hindu Succession Act of 1956
21. Gender wage gap
22. Glass ceiling
23. Eco Feminism
24. Women's Reservation Bill
25. Cyber Violence
26. Gendered Division of Labour
27. Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS)
28. Women's Reservation Bill
29. Feminization of poverty
30. Socialist Feminism

### **Section C**

#### **Short Answers**

*Answer any five. Each question carries four marks.*

**(5X4=20)**

31. Evaluate the five phases in the evolution of gender studies in India.
32. Assess the role of ICSSR in consolidating women studies as an academic discipline.
33. Discuss about Simone De Beauvoir's theoretical explanation on 'Sex' and



‘Gender’.

34. What is the central argument of Judith Butler’s theory of performativity?
35. Critically evaluate the concepts of caste endogamy and gender disparity within the caste system. How do they reinforce social hierarchy?
36. What is meant by ‘Institutionalised gender’? Critically assess how institutions perpetuate gender inequality through norms and practices.
37. Differentiate between the ‘gender care gap’ and the ‘wage gap’. How do both contribute to systemic economic inequality for women?
38. Explain the significance of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts in promoting women’s political representation at the grassroots level.
39. Analyze the key issues and challenges faced by women in political spaces. Discuss factors such as gender bias, representation, and structural barriers.
40. Who are sexual minorities? Provide a detailed definition and discuss their place within the broader social structure.

### Section D

#### Essay/Long Answers

*Answer any two. Each question carries ten marks.*

**(2X10=20)**

41. Distinguish between different schools of feminism on the basis of their characteristics of oppression, intervention and criticism?
42. How did Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Savitribai Phule contribute to the upliftment of women in 19th-century India? Discuss their approaches and the challenges they faced.
43. Discuss the major women’s movements in post-independence India, such as the Chipko Movement and the Anti-Arrack Movement. How did these movements help in raising awareness about women’s rights?
44. Evaluate the impact of the National Commission for Women (NCW) and state-level commissions on women’s rights in India. How have these commissions contributed to policy changes and women’s empowerment?





**SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY**

QP CODE: .....

Reg. No : .....

Name : .....

**Model Question Paper- Set-II**  
**FIFTH SEMESTER BA SOCIOLOGY EXAMINATION**  
**DISCIPLINE CORE -B21SO05DC –GENDER STUDIES**  
**(CBCS - UG)**

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

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**Section A**

**Objective Type Questions**

*Answer any ten questions. Each carries one mark (10x1=10 marks)*

1. In which year the first centre on women studies was established in India?
2. Which conference played crucial role in generating sufficient awareness regarding women integration and equality among the third world countries?
3. Who introduced Age of Consent Bill?
4. When was the committee on the status of women appointed by the Government of India?
5. Which type of marriage is restricted for upper caste women based on purity?
6. Who are the persons categorized as third gender?
7. Which place is known as the birth place of American feminism?
8. What was the slogan of the second wave?
9. Who authored *Becoming the third wave*?
10. Who led the feminist movement in Germany as part of the first wave?
11. Who wrote *The Subjection of Women*?



12. Who coined the term Ecofeminism?
13. Who wrote the essay on *Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture*?
14. Who is the author of the book *History of Sexuality*?
15. Who opened the first school for girls in India in 1848?

### **Section B**

#### **Very Short Answers**

*Answer any ten. Each question carries two marks.*

**(10X2=20)**

16. Gender Stereotype
17. Heteronormativity
18. Liberal Feminism
19. Gender socialization
20. Gender identity
21. Define the term Queer
22. Queer Politics
23. Panchayati Raj Act
24. Black Feminism
25. Marital Rape
26. IPC Section 377
27. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)
28. Caste endogamy
29. Domestic Violence
30. Marxist Feminism

### **Section C**

#### **Short Answers**

*Answer any five. Each question carries four marks.*

**(5X4=20)**

31. Discuss genesis of women studies in India.



32. Elaborate on the scope of ecofeminism in a developing country like India
33. Critically evaluate the social construction of Gender roles by Ann Oakley
34. What common factors in human existence led every culture to devalue women?
35. Why are women seen as close to nature?
36. According to queer theory, what is the primary characteristic of sexual and gender identities?
37. What significant finding came from the Kinsey Reports regarding sexuality?
38. Which historical event is considered the root of modern queer politics?
39. Examine the difference between homosexuality and heterosexuality
40. Evaluate the property and inheritance rights of women in India. Discuss legal provisions and their implementation in practice.

### **Section D**

#### **Essay/Long Answers**

*Answer any two. Each question carries ten marks. (2X10=20)*

41. Compare and critically analyze the historical and socio-political circumstances that led to the emergence of the four distinctive waves of feminism. How did each wave respond to the specific challenges and issues of its time?
42. Describe the role of women in India's freedom struggle, particularly in the Non-Cooperation Movement. How did women's involvement in protests challenge traditional gender roles?
43. Who are the Hijras in the Indian context? Critically examine the historical and contemporary forms of social exclusion they face.
44. Analyze the major human rights violations experienced by sexual minorities. Illustrate with examples from national or global contexts.

## സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യായാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം  
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം  
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം  
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

കുതിരുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ  
സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം  
സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം  
നീതിവൈജയന്തി പാറണം

ശാസ്ത്രവ്യാപ്തിയെന്നുമേകണം  
ജാതിഭേദമാകെ മാറണം  
ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ  
ജ്ഞാനകേന്ദ്രമേ ജ്വലിക്കണേ

കുരിപ്പുഴ ശ്രീകുമാർ

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### Kozhikode

Govt. Arts and Science College  
Meenchantha, Kozhikode,  
Kerala, Pin: 673002  
Ph: 04952920228  
email: rckdirector@sgou.ac.in

### Thalassery

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Kannur, Pin: 670106  
Ph: 04902990494  
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email: rcedirector@sgou.ac.in

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# GENDER STUDIES

COURSE CODE: B21SO05DC



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Kollam, Kerala Pin- 691601, email: [info@sgou.ac.in](mailto:info@sgou.ac.in), [www.sgou.ac.in](http://www.sgou.ac.in) Ph: +91 474 2966841

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