

MASOC 2.3



M.A SOCIOLOGY
SEMESTER - II
REVISED SYLLABUS AS PER NEP 2020

GENDER AND SOCIETY

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M.A SOCIOLOGY

SEMESTER - II

GENDER AND SOCIETY SYLLABUS

[04 Credits, Lecture hours: 60]

[Total Marks: 100. University assessment: 50; Department/College assessment: 50]

Course Objectives

- 1) The course introduces students to a gendered understanding of sociological themes and issues.
- 2) The course maps the early theories that gave rise to gender studies and introduces the students to recent theorisation.
- 3) The course engages with the strategies and forms of resistance as well as the issues around which mobilisation has occurred. It focuses on specific and substantive concerns within gender studies.

Course outcomes

- 1) The students will be able to understand the ways in which gender is naturalized within the social sciences.
- 2) The students will be equipped to examine substantive issues through a gender lens
- 3) The students will be able to deconstruct social reality through feminist theoretical perspectives
- 4) The students will be able to examine issues using feminist research methods.

Unit I: Introduction: Concepts, Histories and Locations [01 Credit, Lecture hours: 15]

- a) Defining Concepts and Histories
- b) Inequalities: Material and Symbolic. Intersectional Locations: Caste/ Class/Ethnicity
- c) Doing Gender: Symbolic interactionism to Gender performativity

Unit II: Explaining Gender: Mapping theories and methods [01 Credit, Lecture hours: 15]

- a) Early theories, Equality/ Difference debates
- b) Cultural turn- Queer theory
- c) Doing Feminist research

Unit III: Organizing Gender: Shifts in Strategies and forms [01 Credit, Lecture hours: 15]

- a) Women in Nationalist movement
- b) 'New' Women's movement- Post 1970s, Contemporary Women's movements- Post 1990s to present
- c) Global Feminist movements

Unit IV: Negotiating Gender in Everyday Life [01 Credit, Lecture hours: 15]

- a) Work and Labour, Education and Health
- b) Politics and Representation
- c) Environment and Livelihoods

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Any other relevant text or reading suggested by the teacher

INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTS, HISTORIES, AND LOCATIONS

DEFINING CONCEPTS AND HISTORIES, INEQUALITIES MATERIAL AND SYMBOLIC

Unit Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Concepts in Gender studies
- 1.3 Inequalities Material
- 1.4 Symbolic Inequalities
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 Questions
- 1.7 References

1.0 OBJECTIVES

- 1. To learn about the basic concepts in Gender studies
- 2. To understand the different inequalities with reference to material and symbols.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter you will learn about the basic concepts in gender studies like that of Sex, Gender, Intersectionality. The chapter also focusses on discussing the history of gender in terms of different waves, origin of gender studies in academics and feminism in the field. The chapter also looks into understanding inequalities in material and symbolic spaces. Studying these topics would help you gain perspective and help you analyse gender practices existing in our society. Let us begin with learning about the basic concepts.

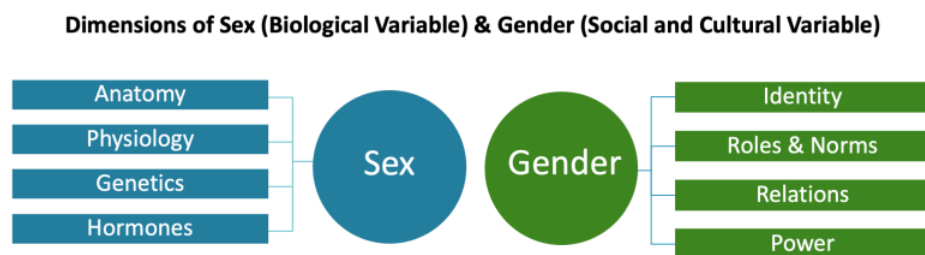
1.2 CONCEPTS IN GENDER STUDIES

• Sex

According to World Health Organisation Sex refers to “the different biological and physiological characteristics of males and females, such as reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormones, etc.” Sex is typically assigned at birth, although there are instances where it is determined later,

such as in cases where a baby's physical sex characteristics are ambiguous, as seen with intersex individuals. However, sex can also be altered, as in the case of transsexual individuals. These individuals are born with the physical traits of one sex but identify with the gender of the opposite sex. In such cases, medical procedures, including sex reassignment surgeries and hormone therapy, are undertaken to align their physical attributes with their gender identity.

Early academic feminists, such as Simone de Beauvoir (1988) and Ann Oakley (1972), along with conservative "sex role" theorists, viewed "sex" as a biological reality and "gender" as a cultural, psychological, and historical construct. They argued that while biological differences exist between the sexes, with most individuals being born male or female (apart from a few cases), the roles and behaviors associated with gender are not inborn but socially learned. Individuals are socialized into specific gender expectations based on their biological sex. For instance, males are taught to adopt masculine roles and behaviors, while females are encouraged to embrace feminine roles and traits. This idea is encapsulated in Simone de Beauvoir's well-known assertion that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."



Source: National Institute of Health

• Gender

Gender is a complex and dynamic reality shaped by cultural and societal influences. It encompasses roles, responsibilities, privileges, relationships, and expectations associated with both men and women, all of which are constructed by society and subject to change over time and across different cultural contexts. As a socially learned concept, gender reflects behavioral distinctions between males and females that are rooted in cultural practices and social learning (Appelbaum & Chambliss, 1997:218).

Despite its inclusive nature, gender is often misunderstood as referring solely to women, even though it addresses the unique social constructions of both men and women. While biological reproduction forms a fundamental distinction between the sexes, it often overshadows other qualitative differences and accomplishments. According to Juliet C.W. Mitchell, the term "gender" emerged in the early 1970s to differentiate social attributes from biological characteristics, traditionally represented by the term "sex." Mitchell argued that gender has since evolved into an inclusive concept that integrates even biological aspects.

She suggested that while gender studies have expanded the scope of inquiry beyond women's issues, the intimate association between women and reproduction is diminishing. In her view, focusing on women typically includes an association with children, whereas thinking about gender involves considering men and women, as well as same-gender relationships, such as women with women or men with men. This broader perspective highlights the evolving and multifaceted nature of gender.

As a domain of gender, power describes the structures and systems of inequity that are based upon gender and which reproduce, shape, and constrain opportunities and experiences for individuals and groups – for example, structural sexism, gender-based violence, and patriarchy. Gender *equality* (the absence of gender-based discrimination) and gender *equity* (ensuring every person has access to care, services, and opportunities tailored to their unique needs, circumstances, and goals) are key to addressing health disparities and advancing health for everyone.

Here's a table to distinguish between **sex** and **gender**:

Aspect	Sex	Gender
Definition	Biological differences between males and females.	Social and cultural roles, behaviors, and expectations assigned to individuals based on their perceived sex.
Basis	Determined by physical attributes such as chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive organs.	Constructed through societal norms, cultural practices, and socialization.
Nature	Biological and universal.	Social, cultural, and variable across time and place.
Characteristics	Includes physical traits like genitalia, secondary sexual characteristics, and reproductive functions.	Includes roles, responsibilities, behaviors, identities, and expressions shaped by society.
Changes Over Time	Generally fixed, but can be altered through medical interventions (e.g., surgery, hormone therapy).	Fluid and can change over time or vary between cultures.
Key Concepts	Male, female, intersex.	Masculinity, femininity, non-binary, genderqueer, etc.

Aspect	Sex	Gender
Determination	Assigned at birth based on biological characteristics.	Learned and performed through socialization and cultural expectations.
Influence	Rooted in genetics and physiology.	Shaped by societal norms, traditions, and ideologies.
Example	A person is biologically classified as male or female.	A person identifies or is socialized as masculine, feminine, or another gender identity.

Gender Identity, Gender Roles, and Gender Expression

Gender identity is an individual's internal understanding of their gender, which may not align with their biological sex. Gender roles are societal expectations for behaviors based on gender. Gender expression is how people present their gender outwardly, through actions, appearance, and interests.

Intersectionality: Intersectionality explores how overlapping identities like race, gender, and class affect individuals' experiences with both privilege and discrimination.

Patriarchy: Patriarchy refers to systems where men hold dominant power, often restricting women's roles and opportunities.

Performativity (Judith Butler): According to Butler, gender is not inherent but is continuously constructed through repeated actions, speech, and rituals. These performances are shaped by societal norms and can be observed through patterns that reinforce gender roles across different contexts.

Gender Inequality: This refers to the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and rights based on gender, often evident in areas like education, wages, health, political representation, and social freedoms.

Gender Expression: This is the outward display of one's gender through clothing, behavior, speech, and body language, which align with societal norms of masculinity, femininity, or non-conformity.

Gendered Spaces: These are physical or symbolic spaces that are associated with specific genders, such as workplaces, schools, or homes, which often reflect and reinforce gender norms and expectations.

Feminism: A social and political movement that seeks to challenge and dismantle patriarchal systems, promoting equality and justice for women and other marginalized groups.

Queer Theory: A critical framework that challenges traditional notions of sex, gender and sexuality highlighting the fluidity and diversity of human experience.

Gender Binary: The idea that there are only two distinct and opposing genders, male and female, which can be limiting and exclusionary for non-binary individuals.

Heteronormativity: The assumption that heterosexuality is the norm which leads to the marginalization of other groups.

History

The term **gender** was initially used interchangeably with biological sex when referring to men and women. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the word gender was used as early as the 1300s to categorize people. However, its first recorded use specifically to describe men or women appeared in 1474, in a letter referencing the "masculine gender." For centuries afterward, gender was often synonymous with biological sex. By the early 20th century, however, *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* notes that the word "sex" became more commonly associated with sexual activity. Due to cultural taboos surrounding discussions of sexual intercourse, many in the United States began using "gender" to describe an individual's classification as male or female, a practice that remains prevalent as of 2022.

In the 1950s, gender psychologists began to conceptualize gender as distinct from biological sex. In 1955, John Money, a prominent researcher in psychology and gender studies, was among the first to use the term gender outside of grammatical contexts to signify something separate from biology. In his article "Hermaphroditism, Gender and Precocity in Hyperadrenocorticism: Psychologic Findings," Money introduced the idea of a **gender role**, which he defined as the ways individuals express their identity as men or women. He argued that gender roles are learned behaviors and not determined by anatomy, although he acknowledged that gender roles generally align with biological sex in most cases. Money continued to explore and use the concept of gender roles in several papers published the same year.

History of Women's Movement

On July 13, 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her friends sparked the Women's Rights Movement during a conversation in a tea party about women's limitations in the new American democracy. They organized the first Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, drafting a "Declaration of Sentiments" that outlined grievances such as lack of voting rights, legal status, and education. Stanton's rallying cry for gender equality resonated, eventually leading to significant social change despite initial backlash and resistance.

The First Women's Rights Convention, held in 1848, endorsed the "Declaration of Sentiments," with some amendments. The central debate was over women's suffrage, which was passed narrowly after Frederick Douglass supported it. The movement faced backlash, but the publicity led to wider awareness. The campaign for women's rights expanded, with major figures like Stanton, Anthony, and Truth leading efforts for suffrage.

The fight continued for 72 years, culminating in the 1920 victory. Post-suffrage, efforts focused on legal equality, birth control, and women's labor rights. With time the **different waves of feminism** emerged like -

First Wave Feminism (late 19th - early 20th century): This focused primarily on legal issues such as women's suffrage and property rights.

Second Wave Feminism (1960s-1980s): Expanded the first wave to address gender equality in the workplace, reproductive rights, and sexual liberation.

Third Wave Feminism (1990s-early 2000s): Emphasized on individual identity, intersectionality, and inclusivity, addressing issues of race, class, and sexual orientation.

Fourth Wave Feminism (2010s-present): Focuses on digital activism, #MeToo, body positivity, and continuing work on gender equality.

• **Women's condition in different societies**

Pre- Modern Societies: In early societies, hunter-gatherer groups roles where not restricted there were cooperative gender roles, while agrarian societies fixed gender divisions linked to agriculture. The shift from matrilineal to patriarchal systems, was often due to property inheritance and religious influences, contributed to male dominance in political and social spheres.

Colonial and Industrial Periods: Colonialism imposed gendered labor divisions (e.g., women's labor in colonies), while industrialization further cemented these roles in factory work and home life. The rise of the public/private divide separated men's public political and economic roles from women's domestic roles.

Modern Era: In the modern era along raising voice for reproductive rights and workplace equality and redefined gender roles. There are several movements like LGBTQ+ communities which have worked for legal recognition and equal rights. Postmodern and contemporary perspectives have also challenged the binary gender roles, advocating for gender fluidity and diverse expressions. Examples include the rise of non-binary identities and trans rights movements.

Feminist Theory

These theories show the evolution of both gender studies and the shift in the society

- **Liberal Feminism** focuses on individual rights and equality under the law.
- **Radical Feminism** emphasizes the need to dismantle patriarchy and explore power structures.

- **Socialist Feminism** links gender inequality to economic exploitation and class structures.
- **Intersectional Feminism** recognizes how overlapping identities (e.g., race, class, gender) intersect and shape experiences of oppression.
- **Symbolic Interactionism and Gender Performativity:** Judith Butler's theory suggests gender is a performative act, constantly constructed through repeated behaviors.
- **Historical Materialism and Gender:** This perspective links gender inequality to the material conditions of society and economic structures, influenced by Marxist theory.

Check Your Progress

1. Discuss Intersectionality

2. What are the different waves of feminism

1.3 Inequalities material

In the book **Locating Difference: Class, Race, and Gender in Social Inequalities"** (Bottero & Irwin, 2003) addresses the intersectionality of class, race, and gender, emphasizing that material inequalities (e.g., income and wealth) are intertwined with symbolic forms of power, such as cultural norms and societal perceptions. The authors argue that understanding inequality requires a dual focus on the tangible and intangible dimensions that perpetuate these disparities. Stratification thus shapes social inequalities.

Let us explore how material and symbolic elements contribute to reinforcing gender inequalities.

Material Inequality:

Material inequalities are grounded in tangible, practical aspects of life that result in unequal access to resources, roles, and opportunities between men and women.

- **Property Rights:** Traditionally, property ownership has been predominantly male-dominated. While laws may allow women to inherit property, social and institutional barriers remain, making it difficult for women to exercise these rights. For example- If the brothers are not ready to give a women's share, she has to approach the Court which is tedious and lengthy process which may take up to decade or more. Property often remains in the name of male family heads, perpetuating material inequalities.

The material inequalities of wage disparities and unequal access to education are deeply connected to broader societal systems of power and privilege, especially in the context of gender. These inequalities are not just isolated issues; they are tangible manifestations of gendered structures that disadvantage women and gender minorities, perpetuating cycles of economic and social disadvantage.

- **Wage Disparities as Material Inequality:** Wage gaps are a clear form of material inequality because they directly impact women's economic security and independence. These disparities are often the result of institutionalized discrimination and gendered expectations in the workplace, where women's labor is undervalued compared to men's, even in similar roles. As a form of material inequality, wage disparities prevent women from achieving financial autonomy and accessing resources essential for their well-being, such as healthcare, housing, and quality education. This lack of financial independence keeps women dependent on patriarchal structures, reinforcing gendered power dynamics in both the family and society at large.
- **Unequal Access to Education as Material Inequality:** Education is a critical resource that can shape individuals' life trajectories, career opportunities, and overall well-being. When women and girls face barriers to education, whether due to cultural norms, economic constraints, or systemic biases, they are deprived of the material resources necessary for social mobility and economic independence. This unequal access to education limits women's ability to enter higher-paying fields, accumulate wealth, and challenge traditional gender roles. In turn, it reinforces their economic dependence and entrenches gendered material inequalities. The limited educational opportunities available to women often push them into lower-paying sectors, perpetuating wage disparities and reinforcing the cycle of material inequality.
- **Clothing:** The material aspect of inequality is often reflected in what men and women are allowed to wear. Women's clothing is often more restricted and symbolic, such as the prohibition on wearing frocks or dresses, Western wear after marriage in some households. A woman's clothing is also linked to the idea of marriage, which carries with it social expectations and constraints. Even, the boys are not allowed to wear frocks even though as a child they may like it. So, we can observe gender segregation in terms of clothing starts at an early age

through use of symbols like car, clothing, dolls etc. Girls are given kitchen set to play in a preparing them for future roles.

- **Division of Labor:** In many families, the material inequality is visible in the unequal distribution of household chores. Despite modern shifts where women may work outside the home, they are still expected to perform domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning, and child-rearing. This perpetuates the notion that women's primary role is in the private sphere of the home, even when they are contributing to the family financially.
- **Access to Public Spaces:** Women's mobility is often restricted by societal expectations, both through direct forms like physical restrictions and indirect ones like social stigmas against women stepping out alone, especially at night. The fear associated with dark spaces often results in the perception that certain areas are "unsafe" for women, thus limiting their autonomy.

1.4 SYMBOLIC INEQUALITY

Symbolic inequality is more abstract and rooted in cultural beliefs, societal norms, and expectations that place women in inferior positions compared to men.

- In the concept Symbolic violence, **Bourdieu** points out that symbolic violence extends beyond the structural dimensions of the educational system and daily educational practices. For instance, teachers may unintentionally defend social hierarchies by favoring students who align with dominant cultural norms and expectations. This may be reflected in biased grading, unequal treatment, or the reinforcement of stereotypes. Symbolic violence is also evident in the hidden curriculum—the implicit messages and values transmitted through the educational system. For example, the focus on obedience, conformity, and competition in schools often serves to sustain existing power dynamics and social inequalities. He also points out that educational systems perpetuate gender and class inequalities.
- **Gender Socialization:** From a young age, boys and girls are socialized into different roles. For example, girls are encouraged to play with dolls, which symbolize care-giving and domesticity, while boys are given cars, which symbolize power and control. This socialization reinforces gender stereotypes that dictate the roles women and men should play in society. Girls are conditioned to be nurturing and passive, while boys are encouraged to be independent and assertive.
- **Family and Gender Roles:** Symbolically, the kitchen is often associated with femininity. The idea that the kitchen is a woman's domain, while men often engage in other public spheres, reflects symbolic inequality. Women are expected to maintain the home, serve food, and be responsible for the well-being of the family, but this role

often has little symbolic power or recognition compared to public or economic roles.

- **Marriage and Symbolic Goods:** Certain objects like the mangalsutra, bangle, and gold are filled with symbolic meaning that reflects a woman's marital status. For example, the act of a woman wearing a sacred thread is deeply symbolic, signifying her role as a married woman and the expectations that come with it. This symbolism can perpetuate a woman's identity being defined by her relationship to a man at times. While men do not have any such compulsory symbols around their body – neck or feet or restricts in clothing, or in their forehead.
- **Social Restrictions:** After marriage or puberty, women often face restrictions not only on their behavior but also on their appearance and choices. The symbolic connotations of purity, modesty, and propriety restrict women from exercising autonomy over their bodies and actions.
- Often it is observed that even abusive language has a reference to it specially in regional languages. This shows how symbols are used in language to degrade status of women.
- In "**Symbolic Capital and Gender Inequality in Health**" (Sweet, 2011), the author explores how symbolic capital—status and societal esteem—interacts with gender-based health disparities. The study emphasizes how cultural norms that undermine the importance of women's health amplify existing material inequalities in healthcare access.
- The book "**Symbolic Representation of Gender in Politics**" by Lombardo and Meier (2019) examines how symbolic representation impacts gender inequality in political settings. The authors argue that while symbolic actions, such as increasing women's visibility in political roles, may seem like progress, they often conceal underlying structural and material inequities. These include disparities in access to resources, political influence, and decision-making opportunities. Symbolic representation refers to the use of imagery, narratives, and gestures to project an image of inclusivity. For example, appointing women to prominent yet low-power positions or emphasizing gender diversity in political campaigns can give the illusion of advancement. However, Lombardo and Meier stress that these actions often fail to address significant material issues, such as unequal funding for campaigns, wage gaps, or systemic obstacles to participation, thereby preserving the dominance of male-centric power structures. The book also explores how cultural norms and societal expectations intersect with symbolic representation to reinforce gendered barriers. Women in politics often face stereotypes and disproportionate scrutiny, which undermine their influence and limit their roles. These symbolic limitations, combined with material inequities, form a dual-layered system of exclusion. To achieve true gender equality, the authors

advocate shifting the focus from symbolic gestures to substantial systemic change. This includes not only increasing the representation of women in politics but also addressing structural inequalities and redistributing power and resources. Tackling both symbolic and material dimensions is essential to moving beyond surface-level inclusion and creating a genuinely equitable political landscape.

- **Stereotypes:** Stereotypes are generalized and often inaccurate beliefs about a group of people based on characteristics like gender, race, class, or ethnicity. These assumptions can influence how individuals are viewed and treated, affecting their access to resources and opportunities. For example, gender stereotypes, like the notion that women are nurturing while men are logical, can affect hiring decisions, career growth, and societal expectations. For women, such stereotypes may encourage them to prioritize caregiving over professional ambitions, thus limiting their career opportunities. Stereotypes also perpetuate racial and ethnic inequalities. For instance, Black individuals may be unfairly stereotyped as being more prone to criminality or aggression, leading to discriminatory treatment by law enforcement or in the workplace. These generalizations reinforce social hierarchies by focusing on group identity rather than individual qualities or abilities.
- **Social Stigma:** Social stigma refers to the negative labeling and marginalization of individuals or groups based on certain characteristics, behaviors, or identities. It can stem from societal views about race, gender, sexuality, mental health, and more. Social stigma can be particularly damaging, leading to exclusion, discrimination, and internalized shame, thus limiting people's self-esteem and their ability to fully participate in society. For instance, women who defy traditional gender expectations—such as being assertive in the workplace or choosing not to follow conventional motherhood roles—may be stigmatized as "too aggressive" or "unfeminine." Similarly, LGBTQ+ individuals often face stigma regarding their sexual orientation or gender identity, resulting in social exclusion and limited opportunities. People with mental health challenges may also experience stigma, which can prevent them from seeking help and reduce their ability to integrate into society.

Check Your Progress

1. Discuss Symbolic Inequalities and Politics

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2. Discuss Wage disparities and material inequality

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1.5 SUMMARY

This chapter focuses on fundamental gender concepts and their connection to material and symbolic inequalities. Core ideas such as sex, gender, gender roles, and intersectionality provide a framework for examining how social structures and cultural norms influence individual experiences and perpetuate social hierarchies. While sex refers to biological distinctions, gender captures the societal and cultural expectations tied to masculinity, femininity, and non-binary identities. Gender roles represent the behaviors and norms assigned to individuals based on their perceived gender, often reinforcing traditional inequalities. Material inequalities, such as wage disparities or unequal access to education, intersect with symbolic inequalities, including stereotypes and social stigma, to create multifaceted systems of disadvantage. This interconnectedness illustrates the significant role gender plays in sustaining both visible and invisible hierarchies. Symbolic inequalities like stereotypes and social stigma are embedded in cultural norms and social systems. Though less visible than material inequalities, they play an equally significant role in perpetuating social inequality. These forms of discrimination often operate quietly, influencing attitudes, behaviors, and choices, while reinforcing larger structures of oppression. Overcoming symbolic inequalities requires a shift in societal beliefs and attitudes to foster greater acceptance, inclusion, and equality for all.

1.6 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Symbolic Inequality
2. Write a note on Material Inequality
3. Discuss in brief the difference between sex and gender
4. Explain basic concepts in Gender studies.

1.7 REFERENCE

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INEQUALITIES: INTERSECTIONAL LOCATIONAL CASTE, CLASS, ETHNICITY

Doing Gender: Symbolic interactionism to gender Performativity

Unit Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Understanding Intersectionality
- 2.3 Doing gender - Symbolic Interaction to Performativity
- 2.4 Judith Butler's Notion of Gender Performativity
- 2.5 Conclusion
- 2.6 Questions
- 2.7 Reference

2.0 OBJECTIVES

To learn about intersectionality with reference to caste, class, ethnicity.

To understand concepts like doing gender, symbolic interactionism, gender performativity.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Studying Intersectionality, Doing Gender, Symbolic Interactionism and Gender Performativity is important as these theories critically analyze how gender norms are established, upheld, and challenged. They offer resources for examining social behaviors, investigating how power relations shape gender, and participating in conversations on social justice, equality, and inclusivity. Understanding human behavior and society systems, as well as tackling inequality challenges, requires this knowledge. Hence, this chapter will teach us about intersectionality and how different locations, like caste, class, and ethnicity, interact daily. We will also look into how gender is being practiced or performed in routine lives.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING INTERSECTIONALITY

Inequality refers to unequal access to resources or opportunities. Different types of inequalities in a society, such as economic, social, and political, arise from discrimination and historical injustices. This further leads to

disparities in various fields and essential services like race, gender, caste, and ethnicity. This adds to poverty and exclusion. Hence, inclusive practices and addressing these inequalities by acknowledging the different intersections is necessary.

The Oxford Dictionary describes intersectionality as the interrelated nature of social classifications such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. Kimberle Crenshaw, a lawyer, first used the term “intersectionality” in 1989 to criticize the US anti-discrimination statute for failing to recognize the interconnectedness and inseparability of Black women’s distinct experiences of racism and sexism. According to her, it is important to observe how racism and sexism are intertwined rather than perceived independently.

Locating Caste, Class, Ethnicity

Intersectionality as a concept describes how different locations and positions across caste, class, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation interact and provide a lack of opportunities and forms of oppression for various groups of people. In India, for example, women are oppressed differently depending on their caste, class, sexual orientation, and ethnic identity. Lesbian, Dalit, and lower-class women's gendered experiences, for example, differ greatly from those of upper-caste, upper-class, heterosexual women. In a similar vein, the experiences of Indigenous women living in rural areas differ from those of metropolitan women. In order to avoid the risks of generalizing or universalizing women's experiences, it is critical to acknowledge these distinctions within the category of "women." Hence, we need to consider a woman's gender identification, not isolation from her other identities, such as caste, class, ethnic location, etc. We cannot consider a woman's "woman-ness, whether she is a poor white woman in 17th-century France or a middle-class Black woman in 20th-century North America.

Women face multidimensional marginalization. Liberal feminists opposed women's subordination and believed that it resulted from their absence from the public realm of labor. Feminism encouraged women's admittance into the public sphere of work and education to address gender inequity. However, the experiences of some women who were seen as the majority, i.e., white, middle-class, or upper-class women in heterosexual marriages, tended to be universalized in this perspective. Not all women's experiences were reflected in this. For example, black women in the United States have long engaged in the public realm and the workplace as paid or bonded laborers.

One fundamental and relevant idea that intersectionality emphasizes is the existence of power disparities not only between men and women but also among women. Who gets a chance to speak and whose stories are valued depends on power relations. Much of the feminist discourse has been influenced by the experiences of wealthy women. Similar events occurred in India during the early discussions of women's rights, which started as a component of the social reform movement headed by male reformers with

higher caste and class education. The unique struggles and experiences of upper caste women—such as Sati, child marriage, purdah, and the prohibition against widow remarriage—were universalized as those of all Indian women. It was readily ignored because women in lower caste households did not engage in these customs. However, they had other issues like poverty or caste and marginalization.

Intersectionality also reveals how ethnic identity and orientation are not synonymous. For example – The Lesbian, Dalit, and lower-class women's gendered experiences differ greatly from those of upper-caste, upper-class, heterosexual women. Similarly, the experiences of Indigenous women living in rural areas differ from those of metropolitan women. In order to avoid the risks of generalizing or universalizing women's experiences, it is critical to acknowledge these distinctions within the category of "women." The violence against women and girls is not based on their gender. Studies point out that Intimate relationship violence affects 44% of lesbian women and 35% of heterosexual women. Domestic violence is two to four times more likely to occur among women and girls with disabilities. Hence, studying gender from an intersectional perspective becomes important.

Understanding Gender

There are multiple ways to understand gender. Often, individuals have a particular belief about the gender they identify with, whether one, multiple, or none. Since gender identity is a personal identity that only an individual experiences, it is not always possible to conclude it from an outsider's point of view. Furthermore, a person's clothing or haircut may not reflect their inner feelings or what society may assume. Pink and sports like ballet and soccer are usually linked to a particular gender. These gender-related concepts are not constant; they change throughout time and among cultures.

There are disparities between what is usually attributed to a particular gender today and what was common for that gender a few decades or a few centuries ago, according to numerous authors. One hundred years ago, pink was not considered feminine, but today it is. Gender norms are, therefore, evolving. Many authors have described the long-held belief that gender is socially created, including Millet (1971), Haslanger (1995), Kimmel (2000), and Mikkola (2017), to mention a few.

Doing Gender

"Doing gender" was initially used in an appendix to Harold Garfinkel's 1967 case study of the intersexual Agnes (quoted under General Overview). Then, in 1978, Kessler and McKenna (quoted under General Overview) addressed the phrase. These authors took inspiration from Goffman's social constructionist theory of performance and showed the difference between sex and gender. Secondly, they showed how gender was something people actively constructed in their daily lives. This concept was later discussed by sociologists Candace West and Don Zimmerman in their paper titled *Doing Gender*, published in 1987. *Doing gender* questions challenges the thought that gender is fixed or has an innate characteristic.

Doing gender is an important concept in sociology as well as gender studies. It examines how gender is lived, created, practiced, and continued in everyday interactions and behaviours.

Inequalities: Intersectional
Locational Caste,
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According to these authors, "doing" gender involves the everyday performance of "a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine 'natures.'" When we view gender as an accomplishment, an achieved property of situated conduct, our attention shifts from matters internal to the individual and focuses on interactional and, ultimately, institutional arenas" (p. 126). West and Zimmerman were primarily focused on understanding how people created gender differences, rather than merely "gender."

Later, theorists like Judith Butler and R.W. Connell critiqued the idea, suggesting that gender can be undone or redefined, especially in the context of transgender experiences. This has led to studying hybrid gender performances and the idea of "redoing" gender. These ideas have evolved in various academic fields, including visual sociology and intersectional studies.

Check Your Progress

1. Do you think gender is practiced in day to day lives – Comment

2 What is your opinion on Intersectionality can you view it in your surroundings?

2.3 DOING GENDER - SYMBOLIC INTERACTION TO PERFORMATIVITY

According to the **Symbolic interactionist perspective**, gender is produced and reinforced through daily interactions and the use of symbols. Scholars of interactionism study how individuals act within society and believe that meaning is produced through interactions. "Doing gender" is the notion that masculinity and femininity are performed gender identities. Gender is something we do or perform, not something we are.

Gender stratification, according to interactionists, occurs because people behave toward one another based on their interpretations of one another, which are shaped by social interaction. Cooley's idea of the "looking-glass self" holds that a person's perception of their gender role is influenced by how society views them. A man will therefore think of himself as masculine if society considers him to be so. "Doing gender" is the notion that

masculinity and femininity are performed gender identities. Gender is something we do or perform, not something we are.

Gender performativity places behaviors within broader discourse and power structures, whereas symbolic interactionism concentrates on the small-scale interactions that uphold gender norms. While performativity criticizes the language and cultural structures that influence and limit those performances, symbolic interactionism emphasizes conformity to social standards during interactions. Both strategies emphasize how gender is variable, but performativity offers a critical perspective demonstrating how these conventions can be broken down. Essentially, "doing gender" links the performative critique and the interactionist viewpoint, demonstrating how gender is both a social construct and a lived experience.

Let us try to understand this from a few examples –

Symbolic Interactionism: A person at a corporate meeting may adopt a "leader" persona based on his past experiences or what he/she has seen and learned about leadership in their culture. This way, the individual could enact behavior like speaking confidently or directing others. So, here, we can see the individual's work based on the roles they have learned as a child or adult. As well as what society expects.

Gender Performativity: A man might perform masculinity by adopting a tough demeanor and refraining from expressing vulnerability. This reflects how societal expectations of masculinity shape his actions, highlighting the role of language, culture, and power structures in determining how gender is enacted rather than an inborn, fixed identity.

Doing Gender: A non-binary individual may express gender fluidity through clothing and behavior that challenges binary gender norms, negotiating their identity within the constraints of societal expectations.

Concept	Focus	Key Idea	Example
Doing Gender	The social construction of gender	Gender is enacted through daily actions and interactions.	A man wearing a traditional clothing to a family event, adhering to social expectations.
Symbolic Interactionism	Micro-level social interactions	Gender is shaped through social interactions and the use of symbols.	A man shaking hands firmly and professionally, signaling strength and authority.
Gender Performativity	Power structures and cultural norms	Gender is a performance shaped by societal norms.	A man wears a pink shirt to challenge traditional gender associations with color.

- **Doing Gender** reflects how gender is shaped through everyday actions.
- **Symbolic Interactionism** focuses on the social symbols (like gestures and actions) reinforcing gender roles.
- **Gender Performativity** illustrates that gender is a performance based on societal expectations, with the possibility of challenging these norms.

2.4 JUDITH BUTLER'S NOTION OF GENDER PERFORMATIVITY

Judith Butler's theory of "gender performativity" was first introduced in *Gender Trouble* and further developed in her essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Feminist Epistemology." The perspective, which links gender to binary way, i.e., male, female is criticized by Butler. Butler believes that gender is a socially constructed identity that is created, perpetuated, and upheld via repeating behaviors, acts, and speech. Therefore, even if gender seems permanent, it can never be a stable identity. She explains that gender and gender roles are like performances we act out in everyday life. These performances shape the common ideas of what it means to be a "man" or "masculine" and a "woman" or "feminine."

If gender is something we perform and repeat daily, it is not just how we see ourselves that defines our gender—it's also how others respond to our actions. Society often reduces women to objects, which helps reinforce the idea that people assumed to be female must fit into the role of "woman." This role typically includes being in heterosexual relationships with men. According to societal norms, women are also expected to act "feminine" and find their sense of self-worth in how well they follow these norms. However, these norms often push women into less powerful or submissive positions. According to Butler, gendered activities do not precede gendered identity. It appears that gender identity and gendered acts coexist. Gendered behaviors are always forming gender identity. It is clear from Butler's remarks regarding gender identity that gender identity is unreliable.

Butler gives this example of repetition, where certain actions are repeatedly performed. Our perception of what is appropriate for young boys to wear will evolve if many boys begin wearing dresses tomorrow and keep doing so for years. Butler (1988, 527) states that gender "is real only to the extent that it is performed." She provides the following justification in the updated preface to *Gender Trouble*: The idea that gender is performative explains how a series of actions shape gender identity. What does the performative nature of gender mean? According to Butler, "the structuring ideas of sex, gender, and sexuality ensure identity." Gender "proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is claimed to be," according to Butler. Gender, in this view, is always a doing.

In Chapter 2 of *Undoing Gender* (2004), Butler mentions various ways gender is regulated. She raises the question of whether gender could exist prior to regulation or if a gendered subject arises from regulation. "It seems fair to say that certain acts are usually interpreted as expressive of a gender

core or identity and that these acts either conform to an expected gender identity. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler questions what identity means. She states that it is assumed that the term *women* refers to a common identity, which she calls problematic. This is problematic because the group of all women contains so many different people that it is impossible to find a common denominator. Butler calls "'being a man' and 'being a woman' internally unstable affairs."

Gender "ought not to be interpreted as a stable identity [...] is an identity slightly created in time, imposed in an exterior space through a patterned repetition of acts," she adds. It is evident from these two sentences that Butler believes gender identity is unreliable. We should likely read Butler's assertion that it is difficult to be a sex or a gender in light of that. Gender is performative, meaning it exists only in the performance. "Genders cannot be true or false; they are only created as the truth if the inner truth of gender is a fabrication, and a true gender is a fantasy established and etched on the surface of bodies."

Butler viewed gender as socially created. According to her gender is also performed. Here, performativity refers primarily to performing something repeatedly rather than the act itself. Gender as a social construct can be seen over time with perceptions and standards, characteristics like (clothes, colors, sports, etc.) What was considered normal for one gender at one point in time may be considered abnormal for the same gender at another point in time. For instance, pink was considered a common color for boys a few hundred years ago, but more recently, it has become associated with girls. Additionally, when examining various cultures, we observe distinctions between gender norms. For example, when people walk in Europe, there is a public display of affection; however, it is not in several other parts of the world.

Judith Butler explains that gender is not something individuals can choose, nor is performativity a matter of free will or radical choice. Instead, performativity involves the repeated enactment of societal gender norms, often restrictive and painful. This repetition creates a framework where these norms constrain individuals, and the challenge lies in navigating these limitations. Butler also points out that it is difficult to determine if an action is truly subversive. Subversion cannot be easily measured or predicted. For a gesture or performance to challenge heterosexual norms, it must imitate these conventions while simultaneously disrupting them.

An example of gender performativity in the Indian context is seen in the way boys and girls are encouraged to participate in sports and extracurricular activities in schools. Boys are often encouraged to play physically demanding sports like cricket or football, while girls are steered toward activities like dance, singing, or art, which are culturally associated with grace and creativity.

These repeated assignments of roles are not consciously chosen by the children but are shaped by societal norms about what is "appropriate" for each gender. Over time, these performances reinforce traditional ideas of masculinity (strength, competitiveness) and femininity (delicacy,

creativity), illustrating Judith Butler's point that gender is constructed through repeated acts rather than being a natural or innate trait.

Numerous writers discuss the formation of these gender roles. Rubin claims that societal interventions that tell people not to act in a particular way because it does not fit their gender are the root cause of gender disparities (Rubin in Mikkola 2017, 1.2). According to Kimmel, the definition of a gender role varies depending on the situation. He notes that "definitions of masculinity and femininity vary" across cultures, time, race, sexuality education, and other factors (Kimmel 2000, 87-88). According to Millet (1971, 29), gender has a "cultural character." As an illustration, we shape genders by discussing and sharing our society's expectations of young women and older adults. Mikkola's (2017) behavior is culturally learned.

According to Haslanger (1995, 98), stating that gender is socially created in some situations is equivalent to stating that social, rather than biological, factors dictate why men are masculine and women are feminine. Butler (1999, 6-7) argues that it is hard to perceive gender independently from the "cultural intersections" that are "produced and maintained" gender because gender is not constant throughout time and fluctuates with race, class, and geography. She questions how gender production occurs if it is socially formed. If humans build gender (Butler 2011, xvi).

Butler claims that gender performativity explains how a series of activities create gender identity. Gender identity is constructed through gendered activities. Consequently, gender is not a fixed identity.

Criticism

Critics have criticized the notion that gender identity is unstable. Butler supports her claim that gender is performative with examples from drag culture and transgender individuals. Prosser and Namaste criticize these examples because they lack context and are inaccurate.

Butler's belief that gender is performative and not a stable identity was unaffected by the criticism of her instances. Butler did, however, provide more explanation due to the criticism of the notion that gender is unstable. Butler argues that we cannot conclude that all gender assignments and identity assertions are inherently unfriendly. This could imply that a stable gender identification claim is not disqualified. Consequently, gender performativity may allow for gender as a fixed identity to some extent.

It is critical to acknowledge that some writers have misconstrued Butler's opinions in *Gender Trouble*. In the updated preface of the 1999 version of *Gender Trouble*, Butler addressed the criticisms she had received for *Gender Trouble* (1990). In her subsequent writings, *Bodies that Matter* (1993)¹ and *Undoing Gender* (2004), she also addressed criticism. In my opinion, she did not agree with the criticism she got. She had never before written that she was mistaken. She mitigates criticism by providing more thorough justifications for her prior claims and defends her earlier work by pointing out that some criticism is predicated on misconceptions.

Check Your Progress

1. What is symbolic interactionism?

2 Discuss one criticism of gender performativity theory

2.5 CONCLUSION

Intersectionality as a concept describes how different locations and positions across caste, class, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation interact and provide a lack of opportunities and forms of oppression for various groups of people. Doing gender involves the everyday performance of "a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine 'natures.'" According to the **Symbolic interactionist perspective**, gender is produced and reinforced through daily interactions and the use of symbols. When Judith Butler first proposed gender performativity theory, it aimed to counter the idea that gender is a fixed, innate identity. According to Butler, gender is not something a person "is," but rather something they "do" through consistent acts and behaviors influenced by social norms and power dynamics. By showing that gender identities are fluid and created through performative activities rather than biological or essential traits, the theory is aimed at deconstructing the binary concept of gender. By questioning rigid ideas of identity, gender performativity is a term that has greatly impacted gender theory and has brought about a flexible understanding of gender.

2.6 QUESTIONS

- Write a note on Intersectionality with reference to class, caste.
- Discuss the theory of doing gender
- Explain in brief the gender performativity.
- Write a note on how gender is viewed in terms of symbolic interactionism and doing gender.

2.7 REFERENCE

Inequalities: Intersectional
Locational Caste,
Class, Ethnicity

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EXPLAINING GENDER: MAPPING THEORIES AND METHODS

EARLY THEORIES, EQUALITY AND DIFFERENCE DEBATES, CULTURAL TURN QUEER THEORY

Unit Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Early Theories, Equality? Difference Debate
- 3.2 Cultural Turn- Queer Theory
- 3.3 History of Queer Theory
- 3.4 Queer Theory: a Rough Introduction
- 3.5 As a Term
- 3.6 Key Concept
- 3.7 Implications of Queer Theory
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 - 3.10.1 Judith Butler
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 - 3.10.3 Gayle Rubin
 - 3.10.4 Eve Kosofsky Sedwick
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- 3.12 Queer Politics, Transformative Politics
- 3.13 Conclusion
- 3.14 Bibliography

3.0 OBJECTIVES

- To Investigate and appreciate the diversity of cultures, ideas, viewpoints, and literatures of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer individuals and communities.
- To examine and appreciate the ways that socioeconomic class, gender (here understood in terms of the various contrasts between non-

normatively gendered and normatively gendered individuals, as well as between women and men), and ethnicity/race shape these diversity.

Early theories, equality and difference debates, cultural turn Queer theory

- To critically consider and evaluate many aspects of human identity and experience that are influenced by gender and sexuality

3.1 EARLY THEORIES, EQUALITY? DIFFERENCE DEBATE

One of the main topics in feminist theory and social justice discourse is the "equality vs. difference" debate. It deals with the conflict between two viewpoints on how to handle gender (and other social differences):

1. The Equality Approach:

According to this viewpoint, people of all genders—men and women—should receive the same treatment in society and the legal system. It makes the case that persons of all genders should have equal access, rights, and opportunities and that discrimination should not be based on a person's gender.

Key Proponents:

1. The 18th-century author *Mary Wollstonecraft* is frequently regarded as a pioneer in the fight for gender equality, especially for her 1792 essay *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, in which she made the case that women ought to have the same access to social and educational possibilities as men.
2. *John Stuart Mill* also made the case for women's equality with males in *The Subjection of Women* (1869), particularly with regard to voting and legal rights.
3. More recent theorists like *Simone de Beauvoir* highlighted the importance of equality in the sense that women are socially constructed to be inferior to males rather than born inferior.

Central Idea:

The goal is to abolish gender-based discrimination and establish a society in which men and women have equal legal and social rights. Its core is the concept of universal human rights, which minimizes gender differences in favor of similarities.

2. The Difference Approach:

The difference approach, on the other hand, values and acknowledges the distinctions between men and women or between genders. It makes the case for acknowledging these distinctions, which may call for various policies, concessions, or treatments, rather than attempting to make women (or any other marginalized group) the same as males.

Key Proponents:

1. **Carol Gilligan**, a well-known feminist ethics expert, gained recognition in the 1980s for her writings that highlighted the value of feminist perspectives and voices in moral and ethical judgment. In contrast to the more justice-focused issues that are prioritized in male-dominated moral systems, she proposed that women frequently place an emphasis on relationships and care.
2. In her 1978 book *The Reproduction of Mothering*, **Nancy Chodorow** argued for a better comprehension of the ways in which women's roles in the home and society are impacted by the gendered division of labor.
3. Gender inequalities are socially manufactured, according to **Luisa Passerini** and other poststructuralist theorists, yet they should be emphasized while developing equitable systems.

Central Idea:

The difference approach emphasizes that gender encompasses important lived experiences as well as biological, psychological, and social distinctions and is not just a social construct. These distinctions should be valued and considered in policies and social institutions.

Key Tensions in the Debate:

1. Uniformity vs. Diversity:

While the difference approach emphasizes the importance of recognizing and celebrating diversity in lived experiences, the equality approach aims for uniformity and universal rights.

2. Justice vs. Care:

While the difference viewpoint may place more emphasis on care (identifying needs, offering support, and recognizing differences), the equality perspective frequently stresses justice (fairness, rights, and equal treatment).

3. Practical Outcomes:

While equality frequently entails treating everyone equally, this may not take into account the particular difficulties that particular groups confront. Even if the difference approach acknowledges discrepancies, it may lead to measures that appear unfair in an attempt to address societal or historical injustices.

Early Theories in the Debate:

Liberal Feminism: Legal and political equality are the main focuses of liberal feminism, which stresses that men and women should have the same rights and opportunities.

Radical Feminism Radical feminism, which occasionally swings toward difference, acknowledges how women's lives are fundamentally different

from men's and contends that patriarchy is so ingrained in society that a drastic overhaul of its institutions is required.

Early theories, equality and
difference debates,
cultural turn Queer theory

Socialist Feminism: Socialist feminism combines equality and difference, claiming that gender inequality is made worse by capitalism and that systems of oppression based on both gender and the economy must be addressed jointly.

Conclusion: In many respects, the equality vs. difference argument is still open because both sides have insightful points to make. While equality campaigners work to eradicate structural inequality and gender-based discrimination, difference theorists highlight how acknowledging differences can result in more complex and practical solutions to inequality. These methods are nonetheless balanced by feminist theory and social justice activism, which investigates strategies for addressing the intricate intersectionality of gender, racism, class, and other axes of identification.

3.2 CULTURAL TURN- QUEER THEORY

Background

This chapter explores the development of queer theory from the 1970s to the present. It begins by elaborating on distinctions between gay and lesbian studies and queer studies before identifying important trends in queer theory.

The 1970s and 1980s saw a boom in lesbian and homosexual activity and study. A 1969 police raid at the Stonewall Inn in New York City set off protests. Following the Stonewall insurrection, lesbian and gay liberation organisations started to struggle for equal rights, and some academics started looking into the backgrounds and cultures of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals.

Then, in 1987, Vito Russo, Larry Kramer, and other activists founded the direct-action group AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) to pressure governments, the medical community, pharmaceutical firms, and the general public to admit there was an AIDS problem. The group's motto was and still is "Silence = Death". In 1990, Queer Nation—an offshoot of ACT UP—was founded to address the rising acts of violence and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people.

3.3 HISTORY OF QUEER THEORY

The local and international histories of gay and lesbian movement are complicated. The most compelling claims made by cis-gender heterosexuals are those made by activists who emphasise the right to privacy, individual liberty, and equal access to social institutions such as marriage and the military. However, queer activism and research oppose conventional liberal concepts of privacy and advocate for formal equality under the law and absorption into established social institutions.

Instead, institutions that restrict gender and sexuality, like marriage and the military, are called into question for their inherent worth and naturalness, and queer theory and action reject these notions. Of course, this highly critical and radical attitude to the normative existed outside of the US and during the years before the late 1980s, but that is the exact moment when queer theory and activism begin to be named and, if carefully, defined.

3.4 QUEER THEORY: A ROUGH INTRODUCTION

It is indeed a challenge to trace the origin about a field of study like Queer Theory. It came from multiple critical and cultural contexts, including feminism, post-structuralist theory, radical movements of people of colour, the gay and lesbian movements, AIDS activism, many sexual subcultural practices such as sadomasochism (psychological tendency of sexual practice characterized by both sadism and masochism), and post colonialism. Although queer theory had its beginnings in the educational sphere, the cultural events surrounding its origin also had a huge impact.

The history of queer activism is entwined with that of queer theory. In addition to being products of their historical context, queer theory and activism are also a response to transformative forces that are reshaping the way that gender and sexuality are viewed within and outside of academia.

Additionally, both queer theory and activism introduced ways of thinking and acting through politics that went beyond normalizing demands for the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in existing social institutions.

Lesbian and gay studies, feminist theory, and gender and sexuality studies all contributed to the development of queer theory as an academic tool. Since it was developed in the 1990s, it is a lot more recent theory. It challenges many of the fixed notions of the more established domains from which it sprang, including the idea of defined and finite identity categories and the norms that construct a binary of good vs poor sexualities. The central argument of queer theorists is to disrupt binary thinking in the hopes of eradicating inequality and difference since they argue that there is no fixed normal, only shifting standards that individuals may or may not fit into.

3.5 AS A TERM

The phrase "queer theory" started to catch on and became widely used in academic settings. The word was first used in February 1990 during a lesbian and homosexual sexualities conference at the University of California, Santa Cruz, by film scholar Teresa de Lauretis. *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* published a special edition of the conference proceedings in 1991. De Lauretis provides a wide overview of queer philosophy in her introduction to the special issue, which has proven to be very durable.

According to her definition, this theory involves at least three interconnected projects:

1. It challenges the notion that lesbian and gay studies is a monolithic discipline,
2. Rejecting heterosexuality as the standard for sexual formations, and
3. Highlights the numerous ways that sexual biasness is shaped by race.

De Lauretis claims that queer theory may take into account each of these critiques and make a thorough reassessment of sexuality possible.

According to De Lauretis, homosexual and lesbian sexualities ought to be investigated on their own terms rather than as variations of heterosexuality. She stated that the Gay and lesbian sexualities should be "understood and imagined as forms of resistance to cultural homogenization, counteracting dominant discourses,"

According to de Lauretis and other queer theorists, lesbian and homosexual sexualities practise non-normative modes of interpersonal and social interaction; they bring new things into the world, and those new things have the power to transform.

In its most popular guises, queer theory sought to explain how sexuality interacted with other social identities, such as gender, race, and class, to maintain social hierarchies. It achieved this by questioning accepted wisdom that supported inequity. In actuality, de Lauretis used the term "queer" to separate lesbian and homosexual studies from other lesbian and gay studies. Lesbian and homosexual studies courses initially arose in the 1970s, and by the 1980s, programs in this field were beginning to take shape. De Lauretis argues that gay men in the middle class enjoy a privileged life and that there is no longer a difference between lesbian and homosexual studies.

She makes the observation that although talking about lesbians and gays became customary in the 1980s, the word "and" concealed rather than emphasised differences. Beyond the "constructed silences" surrounding sexuality, De Lauretis predicted queer theory will reveal and shatter other "constructed silences," such those around race, ethnicity, class, and gender. She wanted to reject the past and turn things around by developing new ideas about sexual identities in the 1990s.

3.6 KEY CONCEPT

Key Concept for comprehending the Queer Theory is to understand it in the context of heteronormativity. One of the principal concepts of queer theory is "heteronormativity," defined as "the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent—that is, organised as a sexuality—but also privileged" (Berlant). A worldview known as heteronormativity, which upholds heterosexuality as the preferred and/or normal sexual orientation, is

supported in society by a number of institutions, including marriage, taxation, employment, and adoption rights. Through institutional systems and widely accepted societal standards, heteronormativity exerts pressure on both straight and gay persons.

3.7 IMPLICATIONS OF QUEER THEORY

Even though the theory has been seen as being restricted to sexuality-related issues, a queer analysis has the power to weaken the basic assumptions that underpin any identity (even though it does so without completely eliminating or dismissing categories of identity). The idea that queer theory is only about sexuality has been refuted by an intersectional approach, which starts with the premise that sexuality cannot be isolated from the other categories of social position and identity. This opens up new ways of thinking about how other factors shape and is shaped by sexuality and allows queer theory to become more multidisciplinary.

3.8 FUTURE OF QUEER THEORY

Even though queer theorists disagree on a wide range of topics, one thing that all of them agree on is that if queer theory is to be understood as a way to test the stable and established categories of identity, it should not be defined too early or at all.

3.9 THE CONSTRUCTIONIST TURN IN SEXUALITY AND GENDER STUDIES

In order to retrieve a lost history and forge a sense of collective identity and continuity in the present, lesbian and gay studies employed lesbians and gays as obvious subjects of investigation. These individuals were examined as significant historical, cultural, or literary figures. Certain individuals contend that studies on lesbians and gays adopted an essentialist perspective on sexuality, presuming that every person had a fixed, innate sexual identity that was trans-historical and universal.

Queer theorists adopt a constructionist perspective on identity that is significantly distinct from other theories. Identity is viewed by constructionists as an ever-changing societal construct. The claim that identities are sociocultural creations is predicated on the idea that, depending on the context and time period, various meanings and values control and shape identity. These meanings and values are created in social institutions like families, schools, and museums and are conveyed through cultural texts like music, films, and television.

3.10 THE CORE THEORISTS WHO HAVE ELABORATED ON QUEER THEORY ARE

Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Michael Foucault, and Gayle Rubin are a few of the key theorists in the creation of queer theory.

3.10.1 Judith Butler

The thinker most commonly linked with challenging popular ideas of gender and sex is Judith Butler, who focuses mostly on gender but heavily draws from Foucault's views as well. She advances the argument in her book *Gender Trouble* that gender is not an innate truth found through one's body, but rather, like sexuality, it is an act that is performed and presented as "reality". She argues that the inflexible premise that there is a "truth" about sex leads solely to heterosexuality because it produces a logical binary of "feminine" and "masculine," making the decision to identify as "male" or "female" the only one that makes sense.

Butler argues that gender performativity could be a method of resistance using examples such as drag, cross-dressing, and the sexually surrealistic representation of butch and femme identities that parody the established gender norms in society. In her next work, *Undoing Gender*, Butler makes it quite clear that performativity and performance are not the same thing. She defined gender performativity as a continuous procedure that persists until the subject is formed. Because it sheds light on the construction of gender and questions the rigidity of prevailing hierarchical binaries, Butler's work is essential to queer theory.

3.10.2 Michael Foucault

The *History of Sexuality*, written by French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault, was published in the middle of the 1970s, traces the history of the modern homosexual identity. In this comprehensive history of sexuality, Foucault proposes a groundbreaking theory regarding the formation of sexual identities. According to Foucault, sexuality "must not be thought of as an obscure domain that knowledge tries gradually to uncover, or as a kind of natural given that power tries to hold in check." It's a label that can be assigned to a historical figure.

Foucault's work questioned how power and sexuality were interpreted in both scholarly and popular discourses by challenging the notion that something called sexuality existed in all of us and is only waiting to be liberated. According to Foucault, power creates the conditions necessary for the emergence of new sexual identities rather than suppressing existing ones. It's critical to distinguish between sexual identities and activities in this context. Sexual behaviours have existed in many forms throughout history and geography, but they only come together to become nameable and manageable identities during specific times.

He views power as more constructive and creative than negative and repressive. His work on sexuality asserted that it is a discursive production rather than an essential aspect of human beings. Stated differently, power operates on the premise that sexuality is a secret that needs to be revealed and understood.

On the other hand, Foucault rejects the notion that sexuality can be clearly defined and instead focusses on the broad construction of sexuality within systems of power and knowledge.

Power, in Foucault's view, is omnipresent yet is not distributed equally. He contends that legal and medical discourses intersected to simultaneously create the need and the means to identify and produce knowledge about sexual identity, particularly "the homosexual." Sexology, in particular, applies scientific principles to the study of sexuality. In this case, the medical and legal authorities held the power.

But labelling the homosexuals had unintended repercussions. Individuals classified as homosexual in medical discourse seized the discourse to reinterpret the category's potential meaning, establish a group, and make demands on the political front. This is demonstrated by the early homophile movement, which is the term for the homosexual rights movement that evolved concurrently with sexology and anti-sodomy laws in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Foucault, help us see how heterosexuality and homosexuality are socially constructed. This challenges the notion that heterosexuality is natural and normal—a concept that has been exploited to marginalise homosexual people—doing significant political and intellectual work.

3.10.3 Gayle Rubin

Gayle Rubin's essay on "Thinking Sex" is frequently cited as one of the foundational works. It continues Foucault's critique of biological explanations of sexuality by taking into account the hierarchical organising of sexual identities and behaviours through systems of sexual classification.

She describes in her essay how people who don't fit into these stereotypes are oppressed since certain sexual expressions are valued more than others. Additionally, Rubin refuted the feminist thesis that claims gender and sexuality are interchangeable or that sexuality is a product of gender.

In her essay "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex." She attempted to pinpoint the historical roots of worldwide subjugation worldwide This constructivist explanation of gender identity links women's subjugation in heterosexual patriarchal cultures to heterosexual kinship and the binary structure of gender (man or woman).

The method by which social interactions result in women being subjugated is referred to by Rubin as the "sex-gender system." Rubin states that "one starts to have a sense of a systematic social apparatus which fashions domesticated women as products and uses females as raw material." In summary, Rubin states that a "sex-gender system" is a society's system of arrangements for transforming biological sexuality into products of human activity and providing for the satisfaction of these transformed sexual demands.

While Rubin's work has had a significant impact on feminist and queer theory, other queer theorists have questioned one of her fundamental hypotheses—that sex is raw material and is not influenced by societal norms.

3.10.4 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick

Rubin's early attempts to start a conversation about the distinction between gender and sexuality provided the groundwork for Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's seminal work, *Epistemology of the Closet* which is regarded as an important contribution in queer theory.

In this work, she argues that there are two main reasons why the homo-hetero distinction in the modern sexual definition is fundamentally skewed: first, homosexuality is seen as a minority and, second, it is gendered as either feminine or masculine.

According to Sedgwick, by the 20th century, everyone in Western civilisation had been given a sexual identity. According to Sedgwick, the history of homosexuality is the history of contemporary Western society rather than the history of a minority. Sedgwick argues that the concept of homosexuality and heterosexuality is essential to the development of the modern nation-state since it shapes contemporary approaches to population control. She presents the concepts of minoritizing and universalising to characterise conflicting and overlapping interpretations of homosexuality that influence our conceptions of sexuality.

According to the minoritizing perspective, homosexuality is solely important to gay people. According to this perspective, gays constitute a distinct minority inside a predominantly heterosexual society. This can be useful, as demonstrated by the homophile movement and the present homosexual (and lesbian) rights movement, in forging a distinct group capable of making demands of the government.

In contrast, the universalising perspective holds that everyone values sexuality and sexual definition. Sedgwick adopts this position in her work when she asserts that sexual definition plays a crucial role in social structure and identity development.

Assuming that the most important aspect of sexuality is one's own gender as well as the gender of the person to whom one is attracted, she makes the point that definitions of sexuality are greatly influenced by the gender of the love partner one chooses. Sedgwick offers examples of sexual variations that go outside of tidy classifications created by the binary distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality. A more thorough analysis of the development and conceptualisation of sex-gender identities are made possible by these examples.

3.10.5 Anne Fausto-Sterling

Queer feminist science professor Anne Fausto-Sterling, in her early 1990s work on intersex categories argues that while social institutions have an interest in preserving a dyadic sex system, this system does not map onto nature. She contends that there are at least five different categories within the spectrum of sex, which ranges from female to male. The words "herms," "ferms," and "merms" are introduced by Fausto-Sterling in order to classify physical, hormonal, and chromosomal variations that do not fit into a male-

female sex binary. Similar to Rubin, Fausto-Sterling viewed sex as biological, natural, and unalterable, viewing it as the raw material from which gender is formed by society. Rubin's and Fausto-Sterling's early research maintain the nature-nurture split and propose that gender and sex are correlated with either nature or nurture.

Fausto-Sterling's research was quickly criticized for drawing undue emphasis on the genitalia. For example, the social psychologist Suzanne Kessler criticised Fausto-Sterling for his insistence on using genitalia to interpret sex; she said that gender was more frequently assigned to bodies through the performance of gender on the body. Since then, Fausto-Sterling has acknowledged Kessler's point. By arguing that the emergence of binary sexed bodies is merely a result of binary gender discourse, binary performances of gender, most queer theoretical engagements with gender deprive the body, and especially the genitalia, as a place of reality. Put differently, a binary system of sex and gender that presumes a relationship between sex and gender is a product of power rather than nature.

3.11 GENDER PERFORMATIVITY

In 1972, the breakthrough ethnography of drag culture, *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America*, was published by cultural anthropologist Esther Newton. A "homosexual male who often, or habitually, dresses in female attire" is what Newton refers to as a drag queen.

The link between sex and gender remained tightly clamped in 1972, despite Newton's separation of the sexed body from the gender expressed on it, implying that there is no natural link between the two, as mentioned in the previous section. According to Newton, the drag system has the effect of severing sex roles from the genital sex that is intended to determine them. Contrary to popular belief, gay persons are aware that sex-typed behaviour is achievable. They understand that engaging in "naturally appropriate" behaviour is not always ensured by the presence of a certain sort of genital equipment.

Newton, like Rubin, was writing prior to the emergence of queer theory in 1990. Similarly to Rubin, she made theoretical discoveries and intellectual investments that predicted future developments. Indeed, both theorists had an influence on Judith Butler's performativity work; Butler is frequently recognised as an early and prominent figure in the development of queer theory.

The term performativity is first used in Judith Butler's 1990 book *Gender Trouble* to imply that gender identity is not inherent and does not derive from a fundamental truth that can be found on or in the body. Butler believes that gender is solidified by repeated performance as a unified and consistent entity. Butler highlights the significance of gender being continuously reinterpreted, which implies that gender can be deliberately or inadvertently disrupted, exposing it as a continuous process without a starting point. This is comparable to Newton's observations about drag, especially the part where she says that gender is revealed through performance in drag.

The fact that Gender Trouble disregarded the materiality of the body and actual sex differences drew criticism. Butler makes the case in a later work that sex is a regulatory ideal that pushes many bodies into a binary system. This reminds me probably of Fausto-Sterling's challenge that there are five distinct sexes. In response to criticism, Butler stated that while speech does not create actual sex differences, it does organise, interpret, and make these disparities comprehensible.

Jack Halberstam continues the process of separating gender from genitalia in *Female Masculinity* by offering a number of critical readings of literary, cinematic, and historical depictions. According to Halberstam, "we can actually see how masculinity is constructed as masculinity" when it comes to feminine masculinity. Put another way, just as drag queen performances expose femininity as a fiction, so do women, and particularly lesbians who identify as masculine, reveal masculinity as a construct. "Masculinity must not and cannot and should not reduce down to the male body and its effects," asserts Halberstam with great persuasiveness. Halberstam, like many other queer theorists addressing gender, places more emphasis on gender manifestations than genitalia. Put another way, anyone can dress in a gender expression, much like Newton notes regarding drag performances of femininity.

Scholars from a variety of fields have been impacted by queer theories of gender, which have fundamentally changed the way we think about gender. Butler argues that queers do not naturally depart from any natural or essential gender or sexuality. Newton believes that femininity is not a woman's domain, in the same way that Halberstam believes that men do not own masculinity. Rather, we are all quoting, sometimes disputing, sometimes adhering to, preexisting notions around gender and sexuality. Furthermore, the only thing that keeps these concepts and the value systems that support them alive is their replication.

3.12 QUEER POLITICS, TRANSFORMATIVE POLITICS

Queer theorists like Duggan and Puar critique assimilationist politics, but neither of them offers specific suggestions for what a world that is both socially just and queer-inclusive would look like. The work being done by other queer theorists, particularly those of colour, to radically rethink politics and society is crucial. Their study offers insights into how a queerly transformed world can manifest itself.

3.13 CONCLUSION

Therefore, it can be said that the lived experiences of different LGBTQ+ people led to the development of queer theory over time and across academic disciplines. Both philosophy and activism are historically and geographically distinctive, constrained by time, place, and the material body. The flexibility of queer theory allows it to account for differences in nationality, gender, race, and class. But despite all of its trials and tribulations, it has always been dedicated to bringing about radical social

change, based on the belief that social discourse and institutions are essential to the reproduction and control of gender, sexuality, and other social hierarchies, and that these institutions can and ought to be strengthened.

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DOING FEMINIST RESEARCH

Unit Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Feminist epistemologies
- 4.3 Feminist standpoint epistemology
- 4.4 Feminist constructivism
- 4.5 Epistemic communities
- 4.6 Conclusions
- 4.7 Summery

4.0 OBJECTIVES

- Recognizing the value of feminist research: Discovering the significance of feminist research and its applications in the study of society
- Critical comprehension: Gaining a knowledge of feminist research technique and its application
- Acknowledging subjectivity and firsthand knowledge: Acknowledging subjectivity and firsthand knowledge in research
- Hearing women's voices: Acquiring the ability to hear women's voices and understand how to impact or transform their lives

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Theories are worldviews that assist us in understanding the world. They help us make sense of what is going on and provide direction on what is important and important to ask about. However, study and data collection are equally important for comprehending the world. Sociologists use research techniques to gather data about society. Participant observation, in-depth interviews, and qualitative analysis of secondary data sources are examples of "qualitative" or "ethnographic" research methods, while surveys and statistical analysis of secondary data sources are examples of "quantitative" methods.

It could be argued that no research methodology is overtly feminist or antifeminist; rather, the methods used and the theoretical framework used to interpret the findings define whether or not research is feminist. However, many feminists have disapproved of quantitative approaches to data collection and analysis because they treat people as objects, much like

natural scientists treat rocks or chemicals, rather than as human subjects, and because they presume a scientific status that sociology cannot and should not aim to achieve.

Moving away from the positivistic perspective of sociology as a science and arguing that study should involve a commitment to women's emancipation have been the main concerns of feminist research. While some feminists have argued that feminist research should be conducted by, for, and with women, others have countered that it should explicitly acknowledge and examine the sex-gender system in the society being studied, involving both men and women in its "subject-matter." According to Harding (1987), the main distinction between feminist and mainstream research is not the research methodology but:

- i. the alternate source of difficulties, which brings up issues and problems that affect women more than men;
- ii. the alternative explanatory theories and supporting data that are produced;
- iii. the investigation's goal, which is to contribute to women's emancipation and help comprehend women's perspectives on the world; and
- iv. How the researcher and the "subjects" of her investigation relate to one another.

She emphasizes the importance of differentiating between methods, methodologies, and epistemologies. Techniques for obtaining evidence are called methods. Methodologies, which are typically qualitative or quantitative, are theories about how research should be conducted.

Research findings can be evaluated according to epistemologies, which specify what constitutes an adequate theory and what makes one study's conclusions superior to those of other studies in the same field. The questions of epistemology include what class of things can be known, who the knower (researcher) can be, and what standards of belief something must meet to be considered valid knowledge. What is distinctive about feminist research is the methodology and epistemology that underpins it. However, feminists are not in total agreement; there are competing theories and arguments about the ways in which feminists should undertake research. There is, however, some measure of agreement about the reasons for rejecting malestream research:

On the grounds that malestream research should be rejected, there is, nevertheless, considerable consensus:

1. Malestream sociologists have contributed to the perpetuation of an ideology that upholds women's ongoing subjugation in the guise of science.
2. The research effort has not considered women or women's concerns to be a significant component. Women are frequently regarded as

peripheral and observed from a male point of view when they are included in studies. Additionally, there has been an increased tendency to portray men and masculinity as the standard and to portray women as abnormal when they do not fit this mould.

3. Research subjects have been viewed as something to be worked on. Additionally, rather than using people they have studied to fulfil their own wants and goals, academics have utilised them to further their own agendas. This has been called the "research as rape" model by feminists. This critique is aptly expressed by Shulamit Reinharz (1983), who used a rape model in their study. They violate the privacy of their subjects, alter their perceptions, use deceptive pretences, control the relationships, and provide little to nothing in exchange. The researchers cut off interaction with the participants once their needs are met. (Page 80 of Reinharz, 1983)

Stage 1

Feminists are interested in creating research methods that include women and do not treat the subjects of the study as tools for the researcher. Different feminists have different ideas on how this should be done, including what feminist research is and how to approach it. At first, a lot of feminist study and scholarship involved a sort of deconstruction, which aimed to highlight how male-centered current sociological research was and how it disregarded women's experiences and viewpoints.

Stage 2

Research by women on women was a second stage. This study aimed to present information from a female perspective and posed novel questions. It was acknowledged that theories needed to be developed in order to explain women's experiences. For many feminists, particularly radical feminists, this is the primary goal of feminist study. The idea that feminists can only create a feminist sociology if they study both men and women, but only if they do it from a feminist perspective, which offers more comprehensive and appropriate knowledge, has evolved into a third stage.

The reasoning behind the feminist research position appears to call for non-individual co-research, in which the researcher assists the women conducting their own research so that the researcher and the researched jointly determine the research's purpose, methodology, and intended application. Few feminists have actually used this approach. This is partially because it is not possible for the researcher to share her knowledge and experience, and to indicate that she is doing so conceals a power relationship rather than overcoming one. Furthermore, many of the people being studied do not come from a privileged background, and the majority of researchers are middle-class women with university degrees. However, the majority of feminists have maintained that (academic) feminist researchers should use their relatively privileged background and position to benefit women collectively, not just their individual careers, rather than hiding, abusing, or feigning to overcome this power relationship.

In order for the women (and men) who are the subjects of the research to be "heard" and for it to be feasible to see and comprehend the world from their point of view, many feminists have argued that feminist sociologists must use a qualitative methodology, as we mentioned above. Because they are active in the research, they have also rejected the idea that feminist researchers may be impartial in the sense of being disinterested. Because the researcher must and does identify with the women she is studying, involvement is viewed as both necessary and inevitable. She is involved because she is a part of the subject matter. This means that what sociologists refer to as "reflexivity" is crucial; the researcher needs to be continuously conscious of how her values, attitudes, and perceptions impact every step of the research process, from formulating the research questions to gathering data to analysing, explaining, and disseminating the data.

Finding a balance between representation and reflexivity is undoubtedly a challenge for feminist scholars. In her account of studying the social, emotional, and medical experiences of women who are "infertile" or "involuntarily childless," Gayle Letherby (2002) makes the case that feminist research must seek to both represent and interpret respondents' experiences while also theorising and making sense of those experiences within a larger totality of knowledge and understanding. This is due in part to the fact that, unlike individual respondents, researchers have access to both their intellectual knowledge base and the experiences and reflections of all respondents involved in the research. Based on this, she makes a distinction between "descriptive reflexivity," which involves respondents, and "analytical reflexivity," which is the researcher's job.

Feminist sociologists have encountered challenges in doing research that meets the requirements of the above-mentioned approach. This is due to a number of factors, including the sheer difficulty of conducting research in the first place, the fact that the majority of female researchers have been trained (and funded) under malestream assumptions, the fact that power dynamics are unavoidable in research, the fact that funders of research hold particular opinions about what makes for "good" research practice, and the fact that feminist sociologists must defend their methods and conclusions to a larger academic community. However, one of the most common errors they fall into is adopting a neutral position. This means that even though the research is about women, asks questions that women find interesting, and employs qualitative methods, the researcher tries to distance herself from the situation rather than participating in it and explicitly stating her involvement as a woman. When Ann Oakley (1982) interviewed women on the events of maternity and labour, a topic of great interest to both the women being studied and to Oakley herself as a woman and mother, she frequently seemed to be aware of how dangerous this was. Because her interviews with women were more conversational than interrogations or "scientific" observations, she characterises them as a "contradiction in terms."

Although the publication of research findings can, of course, influence policy-makers and social perceptions more generally, as well as potentially lead to changes in women's lives that meet their needs, feminist sociologists

also often use the research findings for publications that are as much for their professional advancement as they are to help the women (and men) who were the subjects of the research. The risk in this situation is that the researcher has little control over how the research findings are interpreted and applied by others.

The majority of feminists would contest the idea that the scientist or researcher has no say in how the results of their work are applied, yet once a study is published, the researcher essentially loses control. It implies that we must always be mindful of the risks of projecting an image of objectivity as scientists and the ways in which an anti-feminist interpretation can affect study outcomes.

4.2 FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGIES

For feminists in sociology, getting their research findings taken seriously is one of the biggest challenges. Truth claims in the social sciences are typically based on the research being scientific, which means the researcher was impartial, value-free, and adhered to established protocols for conducting the study, known as the Scientific Method.

One significant issue is that feminist research may be criticized for being "subjective" and, as a result, useless. Feminist research findings are superior to mainstream research findings and should be taken seriously, but it is impossible to demonstrate how feminist conclusions are superior to those of other researchers if it is viewed as subjective.

There are a number of feminist epistemological stances which have been adopted to provide the basis for feminist truth claims.

They continue by arguing that feminists usually incorporate aspects of many epistemological positions into their real practice. They offer the following five general guidelines for thinking about feminist epistemologies:

1. Although there are many different feminist epistemologies, in actuality, these overlap in people's research.
2. Various feminist epistemological stances occasionally clash regarding the sources, producers, and circumstances of knowledge.
3. Feminist sociologists frequently incorporate elements of several epistemological positions into their work, which shows not only that we can work within contradictions but also that either we do not carefully consider the basis of what we do and what we claim for it, or alternatively, we do think it through but choose to work with "contradictory" elements because this is how social reality is.
4. There is no "true" feminist epistemology; rather, each can be seen as reasonable and tenable given the goals and project of those who hold it.

5. Although we should respect one another's feminisms and acknowledge the importance of diversity, we can question and confront other viewpoints. Empiricism that is feminist Feminist empiricism, a stance taken by many liberal feminists, criticizes mainstream research for being male-centered. Because feminists consider women and women's experiences as core and normal in their study, rather than as peripheral and abnormal, feminist empiricists contend that feminists are more likely to generate sufficient knowledge.

Feminist empiricists are primarily concerned with correcting bias in our understanding of men and women (and sexual difference relations) in terms of the accumulation of knowledge. They primarily accomplish this by working to make sure that our understanding of the world is more scientific and, therefore, more accurately reflects what is thought to be the reality of men's and women's lives. Therefore, realist ontology—the conviction that there is an external, objective reality—and the idea that the purpose of inquiry is to provide precise, scientific understanding of that reality serve as the foundation for this method.

4.3 FEMINIST STANDPOINT EPISTEMOLOGY

In her introduction to *The Standpoint Theory Reader*, Sandra Harding states that "over the three decades of its recent history, point of view theory has continued to attract both enthusiasts and critics." It has been the subject of continuous discussions within academic feminism since its introduction in the 1970s and has impacted several feminist theorists. With its realist stance, standpoint epistemology is most strongly linked to materialist viewpoints and holds that the social world is structured by an underlying material reality.

The idea of a "standpoint" is predicated on the idea that our actions (our social standing, which is largely established by the sexual division of labour for Marxist feminists) influence our perceptions of the social environment. Therefore, a standpoint is a perspective or point of view that is based on our social position. The idea of a standpoint epistemology comes from the Marxist claim that there is a recognisable "standpoint of the proletariat," which is primarily linked to Georg Lukacs' writings.

A realist ontology and the belief that skilled or educated professionals possess a higher level of knowledge and comprehension regarding how to access and explain that reality than others are shared by positivism and this viewpoint.

But unlike positivists, viewpoint epistemologists also highlight that knowledge formation is a politically active process. According to standpoint theorists, human knowledge is never fully comprehensive. Not only can the oppressed see more, but their knowledge also comes from fighting against oppression; for example, women's knowledge comes from fighting against men and trying to replace the skewed knowledge that men create in order to control and subjugate women with feminist knowledge. Compared to

mainstream feminists, standpoint feminists contend that their explanations of the social world are less biased and incomplete. The distorted and misleading narratives created by mainstream sociology can be replaced by feminist science, which is better suited to reflect the world as it is and so enhance sociological knowledge.

Criticism

However, standpoint feminists have come under critique for assuming an unproblematic commonality and neglecting the distinctions among women. Standpoint epistemology frequently makes the assumption that women identify more as women than as members of other privileged or oppressed groups in society, or that oppression is somehow unitary. By assuming that middle-class white feminist theory can be used to theorize the experience of all women, the "adding on" of differences—race, age, sexual orientation, etc.—is done in an unproblematic manner. The inclusion of women as a category in male stream study is likely subject to the same criticism: it fails to consider disparities resulting from processes of racism, ageism, and heterosexism that lead to subordination and superordination.

4.4 FEMINIST CONSTRUCTIVISM

Feminist constructivism challenges the foundationalism of positivistic and standpoint epistemologies and advocates for a social constructionist approach to knowledge.

Constructivism argues that the social world is constructed and shaped by society members, rejecting the claim of a 'true' knowledge that certifies some feminist knowledge as superior to others. Feminists argue for a fractured foundationalism, acknowledging that judgments about truth are relative to the context in which knowledge is produced. They criticize male stream research for its objectivity and the researcher's lack of involvement in the research process.

Feminists believe that the experiences and feelings of the subject should be at the center of all social knowledge production. They reject the idea of feminist grand theory but acknowledge the multiple fragmentations of women's experiences of oppression based on age, sexuality, race, and disability.

Postmodern feminist epistemologies

Postmodern perspectives on knowledge range from extreme positions that maintain all knowledge is relative to a more moderated version that emphasizes plurality, the contextual basis of knowledge, and the contingent nature of reality. This approach is largely based on Foucault's idea that power and knowledge are inseparable. Postmodern feminists argue that reality is socially constructed and shaped by multiple truths that cannot be explained with reference to any single metanarrative. They believe that competing epistemological or 'truth' claims merely add layer upon layer to these discursive constructions of reality.

Postmodernist or poststructuralist approaches share the conviction that there are multiple truths and that all knowledge is relative to the social context and position of the knowing subject. However, this can be both valuable and problematic for feminists. Postmodernists reject the 'will to truth' associated with Enlightenment thought and the view that there can be true knowledge. They argue that standpoint feminism cannot handle the concept of multiple realities or deconstructionist ideas.

Anna Yeatman (1994) sums this up when she argues that a postmodernist epistemology involves:

- i. a deconstructive approach to understanding the discursive nature of the social world;
- ii. a critique of metanarratives, and of claims to universal knowledge of the social world as an objective reality;
- iii. a relational, contextual theory of knowledge and truth as plural;
- iv. an emphasis on the embodied nature of knowledge; and
- v. a conception of language as a material, active, productive system.

Postmodernists therefore reject the 'will to truth' that they associate with Enlightenment thought, and the view that there can be true knowledge – that feminist knowledge is better than, truer than malestream knowledge. For this reason they argue that standpoint feminism, which does not challenge the idea of a valid or universal truth, cannot handle the concept of multiple realities or deconstructionist ideas.

Despite its significant contributions to feminist ideas, postmodernism has been subject to several criticisms. These include its self-defeating philosophical position, its potential to abolish both sociology and feminism as academic modes of research, its suggestion that the subject is fragmented, and its negation of ethics. However, postmodernist insights can be used to continually reflect on the role of feminist research and the gendered aspects of malestream research.

4.5 EPISTEMIC COMMUNITIES

Bringing together elements of both standpoint epistemology and postmodernist feminism, some feminists, such as Alison Assiter (1996), have developed the idea that there is not one standpoint, but many. Drawing on critical theorist Jurgen Habermas, Assiter develops the idea that what locates feminist women in a shared epistemological standpoint is not a homogenous social identity or position, but a shared political interest (in emancipation). She describes not a woman's standpoint, then, but a feminist one, as an 'epistemic community'. As she puts it,

An epistemic community ...will be a group of individuals who share certain fundamental interests, values and beliefs in common, for example, that sexism is wrong, that racism is wrong, and who work on consequences of

these presuppositions. Thus, feminists world-wide, despite our numerous disagreements, share a commitment to modifying and helping to eliminate power differentials based on gender. . . . Feminists may argue about what 'gender' means and what 'power' means, and how these differentials have come about. Yet there is a broad commitment to a set of values, and it is this commitment, I am suggesting that makes feminists as a group, world-wide, an epistemic community.

This leads her to develop the idea of epistemic communities defined not according to universal experience or homogenous identity (in the more traditional Marxist sense), but as contextually specific. Unlike the concept of a standpoint, therefore, an epistemic community is believed to be contingent and contextual, yet bound together by shared political interests. As Assiter puts it, 'its boundaries are constantly shifting, and it may go in and out of existence'.

Although realist in its orientation, the concept of an epistemic community does not assume an Enlightenment 'view from nowhere' from which the truth is revealed. Rather, it is 'historically located, its beliefs and its experiences are inflected by the values it holds'. However the nature of the values upheld by any one community are such as to undermine the claims to 'truth' made by other communities. The claims of any one community are not true for all times and in all places; rather they are open to constant revision by other communities. In a sense, the idea of an epistemic community vindicates both realism and relativism, albeit in a mediated, situated form.

4.6 CONCLUSIONS

This unit discusses the inadequacies of mainstream sociology, arguing that it is inadequate due to its inability to fully incorporate women and its partial knowledge. Feminism seeks to understand reality from women's perspectives and uncover systematic biases and distortions in malestream knowledge. To produce adequate sociological knowledge, it is necessary to reformulate concepts and questions to make women central to the discipline's concerns.

The key question is whether feminists have epistemological privilege, providing more adequate and better theoretical understanding than malestream theorists. Standpoint feminists argue that feminist epistemology is privileged, while Liz Stanley and Sue Wise argue that feminist epistemologies provide a different view on reality and may be a preferable view. They reject the hierarchical relationship and argue that there are moral and political grounds for finding one of them preferable.

Feminist theory aims to make sense of women's lives and the ways in which society is shaped by sexual difference, something that malestream theories did not. However, feminist theories have been partial and inadequate, constructed largely from the point of view of white, Western, middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual women. Despite this, all women share the experience of being exploited and subordinated because of sexual

difference, providing the basis for commonality. The construction of theory is dynamic, developing in response to critique and explaining changing realities.

4.7 SUMMERY

One of the main points of contention has been that women and femininity have been marginalized, ignored, or distorted by sociology. We have also proposed that this is not merely the consequence of women being excluded from empirical study, but also a function of the systematic biases and deficiencies in malestream ideas. Women have often been left out of samples and, when they have been included, have often been analyzed through the lens of a perspective that views men and masculinity as the standard. Sociology has a tendency to not ask questions or conduct research in areas that are relevant to women.

The idea that the biological distinctions between men and women are adequate to explain and justify social divisions and inequities has been accepted for granted rather than questioned by mainstream sociological theories like functionalism and marxism. This helps to explain, for example, one feminist writer's shocked reaction upon learning from a young Sudanese student that she had authored a structural functionalist dissertation on clitoridectomy (Spivak, 1987).

Rather than un problematically adopting malestream theories and 'adding gender on', feminist sociologists have argued that it is necessary to develop feminist theories: theories that explain the world from the position of women, and that enable us to conceptualise reality in a way that reflects women's interests and values, drawing on women's own interpretations of their own experiences. In recent decades (and primarily as a result of these efforts), sociology has begun to take the feminist challenge seriously and to acknowledge women both as the subjects of sociological research, and as the bearers of knowledge. Feminist sociologists have argued that developing feminist theories—which explain the world from the perspective of women and allow us to conceptualize reality in a way that reflects women's interests and values by drawing on women's own interpretations of their own experiences—is necessary instead of unproblematically adopting malestream theories and "adding gender on." Sociology has started to take the feminist challenge seriously in recent decades (and mostly as a result of these efforts), acknowledging women as the subjects of sociological inquiry and as the knowledge carriers. Feminist theories, therefore, critique the male-generated categories' abstraction and excessive inclusivity, which hide the oppression of women. Feminists contend that theories should help us make sense of our lives. They should also make it possible for us to connect our experiences to the organizational principles of the society in which we inhabit. Although individual men may act as oppressors, patriarchal ties can also be seen in societal norms and institutions.

Feminist theories must also help us comprehend how we come to see ourselves as individuals—how we accept, for example, that women belong

in the home, that they can only do particular jobs, that girls perform worse in math and science than boys, that women are only fully developed when they have had children and taken care of them, and so on. They have to make it possible for us to comprehend how we become subjects (housewives, mothers, nurses, secretaries, etc.) as well as subjects to the belief that it is normal for women to fill these roles. It's crucial to acknowledge that women perceive reality differently and that there are differences in the ways in which they are subjugated.

Higher education institutions have historically employed white, middle-class women to construct feminist thought. Although women may hold a subordinate position, their experiences vary. Theories created by white, middle-class, Western women have been rightfully criticized for ignoring the experiences of working-class and racialized women, as well as women who are subject to global power relations, disabled, elderly, and other marginalized groups. Feminist theory needs to incorporate a range of women's experiences in order to accurately portray reality from the perspectives of women. Finding opportunities for different groups of women to contribute to the theory-building process is essential to ensuring that feminist theories fairly represent the experiences of all women. Political in nature, feminist theories aim to change society as well as describe it. Feminist theories aim to examine how women might break free from subjugation by revealing the ways in which patriarchal relationships limit and control them.

Therefore, the usefulness of feminist theories—that is, the degree to which they offer practical and applicable information for women—tests their suitability, at least in part. Therefore, feminist sociology aims to create what Dorothy Smith (1987) referred to as a sociology for women: a sociology that speaks to women, with which they can identify, in which they acknowledge that they are the subject of what is being said, and that aids in our understanding of both the structures and practices that govern our daily lives in a society that is dominated by men. Since knowledge is power, as feminists have long since pointed out, sociology for women will empower women.

Women have lived in a world that has been defined by culture, politics, and academia; a society from which they have been excluded and frequently regarded as having only passing relevance. Sociology is one of the mainstream scientific disciplines that has been used to support the exclusion of women from positions of authority and influence in political, cultural, and intellectual organizations. Sociology is one area of information that feminist theory criticizes for its objectivity and truthfulness (it is portrayed as gender neutral) and aims to replace it with knowledge that is more appropriate because it comes from the perspective of the oppressed and aims to comprehend that oppression.

Some radical feminists contend that since the theoretical approach is fundamentally a masculine way of doing things, we shouldn't try to create new, feminist ideas. It is believed that theorizing is a function of an elite that minimizes or even disregards the experiences of women who are not

part of that elite. They contend that feminist sociologists are attempting to substitute one "truth" for another, failing to acknowledge the reality of any woman's experience in the process. They argue that the feminist's job is to resist injustice and make meaning of women's lives by drawing on the experiences of all women.

Nonetheless, regardless of how explicit or tacit the theory is, we would argue that all explanation and inquiry are fundamentally theoretical endeavors. Our experiences and observations, or "facts," need explanation, or theorization, in order to make sense of them. Making sense of their lives and the intellectual, political, and cultural environments they live in has been made possible for women by feminist theories. The experience itself is a result of our theories, which we then analyze and rationalize.

ORGANIZING GENDER: SHIFTS IN STRATEGIES AND FORMS

WOMEN IN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT, NEW WOMEN'S MOVEMENT POST-1970s

Unit Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Women in the Nationalist Movement
- 5.3 New Women's Movement Post 1970s
- 5.4 Summary
- 5.5 Questions
- 5.6 Reference

5.0 OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the Women in nationalist women
2. To learn about the Women's movement post-1970.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, you will learn about the women in nationalist movements and women in post

1970s too. Women's role and contribution to the nationalist movements are very important and multi-faceted. Women have contributed to the independence nation-building movement in different political, social, and cultural aspects. These women actively challenged the colonial rulers, authorities, and patriarchal norms of that period.

5.2 WOMEN IN THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

Prior to independence, Women's status in the nation was in a depreciated state. The main cause of this was the domination of men. The Women's responsibilities included taking care of the home, and they were not allowed to engage in any other activities or jobs where they had a space to express their opinions. A variety of systems that had negative impacts on women were implemented during this time. These include child marriages and restrictions placed on Widows' ability to remarry female feticide, female infanticide, the purdah system, sati and polygamy.

Many women took part in the Indian anti-imperialist movement. The list of women leaders in our national movement is quite lengthy if we were to

recall their names. Leading figures at the provincial level include Annie Mascarene and A.V. Kuttimaluamma in Kerala, Durgabai Deshmukh in Madras Presidency, Rameshwari Nehru and Bi Amman in U.P., Satyawati Devi and Subhadra Joshi in Delhi, Hansa Mehta and Usha Mehta in Bombay, and others, starting with Sarojini Naidu, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, and Mridula Sarabhai at the national level to name a few. Because of the nature of our nationalist movement, it is quite hard to include all the leader's names at the regional and national levels here.

Alongside all of these Indian women, some Irish women, such as Annie Besant and Margaret Cousins, had firsthand experience of British exploitation; this was the period when ladies' organizations and girls' schools flourished throughout the nation. At this time, the Indraprastha Girls' School was established in Delhi in the haveli of Rai Balkrishan Das, a businessman from Chandni Chowk, on the boundaries of the Jama Masjid. Sayyid Karamat Husain created a school too. There is a close relationship between women's increased access to education and their nationalist consciousness.

Rabindranath Tagore's nieces, Hironmoyee Devi and Sarla Devi, founded women's organizations such as the Mahila Shilpa Samiti and the Lakshmir Bhandar in response to the Swadeshi agitation. When the Hitashini Sabha, a women's organization, organized a Swadeshi goods show in 1907, women's newspapers like the Bharat Mahila were also gaining much traction. In one of the issues, Kumudini Mitra stated that the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, would be forced to annul Partition if the Indians rejected British goods in significant numbers since it would cause great turmoil in England. In her autobiography *Inner Recesses, Outer Spaces*, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya details how her mother, Girijabai, established a Mahila Sabha in her hometown of Mangalore—around 1911 to bring women together to discuss their problems and seek ways to decide them.

She used to visit women's houses and read newspapers to them much earlier. Women were encouraged to study books, periodicals, and newspapers from Girijabai's collection as the Mahila Sabha's activities gradually grew. Kamaladevi continues, "Music, whether instrumental or vocal, later lightened the discussions." Later, badminton and other outdoor games were added. Rameshwari Nehru, the wife of Jawaharlal Nehru's cousin, was establishing a similar organization in Allahabad two years before Girijabai's Mahila Sabha in Mangalore. The Prayag Mahila Samiti was an organization that attempted to get Allahabad women out of their houses to discuss politics. Jawaharlal Nehru's sister, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, has provided a vivid account of one of the Samiti meetings.

During this period, Rameshwari Nehru also established the Stree Darpan, a women's periodical that was very well-liked by Hindi readers. It featured diverse prose works, poetry, short stories, and political coverage of domestic and global concerns. Several more Hindi publications, including *Madhuri*, emerged by the 1930s.

Issues in the Nationalist Movement

The Age of Consent Bill, introduced in the Legislative Council in 1891, aimed to raise the age of consent for sexual intercourse for Indian girls from ten to twelve years. This marked one of the earliest social issues to spark a nationwide debate on women and sexuality. While the Bill did not address child marriage, often linked to widowhood, the discussion revolved around controlling and regulating female sexuality, which was traditionally managed through community norms.

The **practice of Sati**, though limited to certain regions, became a prominent issue in colonial and social reform debates. Colonial officials initiated the discourse on Sati, reflecting concerns about women's status during the 19th century. Colonialism led to a reassessment of Indian traditions in light of "modern" societal and economic ideals, influenced by India's integration into the global capitalist system. This reassessment included criticism and reform of practices like *Sati*. The debate on whether the practice had religious justification resulted in the colonial government enacting laws distinguishing between "voluntary" and "enforced" *Sati*, with only the former being permitted.

A prominent figure in the movement against *Sati* was Raja Ram Mohan Roy. In 1817, Mrityunjay Vidyalamkara, the chief pundit of the Supreme Court, declared that *Sati* lacked support in the Shastras. In 1818, William Bentinck, then the provincial governor of Bengal, banned *Sati* in Bengal. However, it was not until 1829, during Bentinck's tenure as Governor-General of India, that the ***Sati Abolition Act 1829*** was passed, extending the ban across the country.

Widowhood

The practice of Kulinism (restriction on marriage to higher ranking castes), characterized by child marriage and polygamy, led to young girls marrying older adults, often resulting in early widowhood. According to Lucy Carroll, the issue of widows primarily affected upper-caste Hindus, where child marriage was common and widow remarriage was forbidden. In contrast, the majority of Hindus, belonging to lower castes, neither practiced child marriage nor prohibited widow remarriage. The Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act permitted widow remarriage but included a provision that forfeited the widow's inheritance rights in favor of the deceased husband's relatives.

Carroll highlights how this legislation was used to strip widows of property rights traditionally held under customary law. The British imposition of judicial authority in India replaced customary practices with a rigid Hindu law derived from religious texts. While there was growing social awareness of widows' hardships, the Act failed to address the economic challenges that deterred widow remarriage.

Social reform efforts, limited by the constraints of a patriarchal society, often fell short of achieving gender justice. However, certain initiatives,

such as promoting women's education and forming women's associations, proved empowering for some women over time.

Girl's Education

An essential aspect of social reform movements in India was the emphasis on women's education, which gained attention from reformers in the early 19th century. At the time, educating girls was discouraged due to a prevailing myth that literacy would lead to widowhood shortly after marriage. Additionally, keeping women illiterate ensured their ignorance of the limited rights they held under customary or community laws.

English and British missionaries established the first schools for girls in 1810, predominantly attracting lower-caste girls, often tempted with gifts and clothing. While colonial authorities provided moral and financial support for female education, they did not guarantee schools for girls. Indian social reformers saw women's education as vital for achieving broader social and religious reforms. According to Radha Kumar, the Atmiya Sabha, founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1815, was among the first to publicly discuss the importance of educating women. This movement was largely driven by the emerging middle class, which sought to align women with Western cultural norms. Gandhi also advocated for women's education, emphasizing its scope beyond domestic skills. Reformers believed that meaningful social reform required the education of both men and women.

The reform movement aimed to create a "New Woman," a counterpart to the newly educated male elite, who would share their values and fulfill emerging class roles. Formal education was regarded as the key to achieving this goal. By the mid-19th century, women's education had become a prominent issue, with significant progress marked by establishment of government-supported schools. These institutions received backing from reformist organizations like the Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj, and the Theosophical Society. While initially led by men, these associations provided women with education and public work opportunities, though they also reinforced traditional gender norms. Over time, women began questioning and redefining their positions, advancing gender justice and shaping the Indian women's movement.

Most advocates of women's education focused on functionalist goals, emphasizing household skills that would benefit husbands and children. A less common but growing perspective highlighted the role of mothers in shaping their children's consciousness, advocating for women's education to empower them to educate their offspring. Women's reform was thus justified not only for addressing their hardships but also for the welfare of their families.

The women's movement began to acknowledge class differences among women, albeit to a limited extent. The All India Women's Conference for Educational Reform, established in 1926, addressed these differences by advocating both for education that prepared women for domestic roles and vocational training for poorer women.

Radha Kumar notes a shift in the Indian women's movement from emphasizing women's roles as mothers to recognizing their identities as daughters, moving the focus from sacrifice to empowerment and rights. In the 20th century, Gandhi extended the principles of "feminine" protest methods to the nationalist movement, allowing women to redefine gender roles within its moral framework. Female activists facilitated future generations' access to formal education, professional opportunities, and politics. However, the movement was primarily led by upper- and middle-class Hindu women.

By the late 19th century, women actively participated in reform movements. Pioneers of women's education, such as Ramabai Saraswati, Mahadev Govind and Ramabai Ranade, Jyotiba Phule, and Maharshi Karve, made significant contributions to advancing women's education and empowerment in India.

Debates on Women's Political Rights in the Colonial Era

With the intensification of the nationalist movement, the "women's question" evolved from a social reform issue to a political one. Women's movements began aligning with discourses on equality, and some women saw the necessity of struggling against men to achieve true freedom. Radha Kumar highlights that from around 1910, women groups got involved in extreme nationalism and also engaged more deeply with women's rights issues. The 1920s and 1930s marked the peak of the first wave of Indian feminism, with women organizing around social reform and political rights.

During this time, the Indian National Congress fostered connections with women's organizations to garner mass support, legitimizing women's political participation. Although women had participated in Congress meetings since 1889, their roles were often symbolic. From 1920 to 1970, Indian feminists sought equality through associations and political activism. Resistance to women's suffrage was also rooted in patriarchal beliefs, arguing that political rights would distract women from domestic responsibilities. However, women's organizations such as the Women's Indian Association (WIA), National Council of Indian Women (NCWI), and All-India Women's Conference (AIWC) played key roles in securing voting rights, though their membership remained largely middle-class, and they rarely challenged the patriarchal structure of society.

While leaders like Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu supported women's rights, many nationalist leaders prioritized independence over gender reforms. Gandhi's advocacy for women's participation emphasized nonviolence and passive resistance, creating a distinct, albeit constrained, space for women in nationalist politics.

Most nationalist women adhered to cultural norms of "Indianness," aligning their activism with traditional roles. However, figures like Saraladevi, Muthulakshmi Reddy, and Amrit Kaur pursued both nationalist goals and civil rights. In 1931, Saraladevi called for a separate women's Congress, criticizing the limited role women were assigned within the mainstream Congress. Despite increased political participation, traditional domestic

roles remained the norm for women. While the women's movement made significant strides, patriarchy continued to shape political and social institutions in India, constraining gender equality and maintaining unequal opportunities for men and women. However, several women who were not literate also took part in the movement. They interacted with literate nationalists during their activities and had access to knowledge in various unusual methods. It would frequently take place within the jail barracks. By the early twentieth century, many women began to understand the connection between empowerment and education.

Indian women were also active members of the nationalist movement both at home and in the public sphere. While most women in the movement continued to play traditional roles, they nevertheless made important contributions from within the home. Women's contributions were essential to the movement's success, and the nationalist movement profited from women's nationalist endeavors. Thus, middle-class women and the nationalist movement had a mutually beneficial connection. Women's participation in the movement was significantly aided by the leaders' nationalist symbols and portrayals of women. The activities women participated in contributed to the politicization of women's consciousness.

Sociological Analysis of the Nationalist Movement

1. **The Intersection of Nationalism and Gender Dual Oppression:** Both colonial governments and patriarchal social systems frequently subjected women in nationalist movements to dual oppression. Intersectionality: The intersections of gender, caste, class, and religion influenced their experiences. For instance, working-class women contributed through grassroots action, whereas elite women could assume leadership roles due to greater access to resources and knowledge.
2. **Getting rid of Gender Practices Private vs. Public Sphere:** Women were historically restricted to the private sphere (house and family) in patriarchal countries. These lines were blurred by nationalist movements, which made it possible for women to enter the public sphere.
Symbolic Roles: Women were frequently seen as the "mothers of the nation" (Bharat Mata, for example, in India), which perpetuated gender stereotypes and encouraged their involvement in a socially acceptable way.
3. **Women as Change Agents Mobilization and unity:** Women's involvement promoted group unity by defying social norms. Women gained confidence and a voice in public conversation, resulting in a personal and political revolution.

Leadership: Female empowerment icons such as Sarojini Naidu, Aruna Asaf Ali, and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay encouraged other women to participate in politics.

4. **Gender Ideologies and Nationalism** Women were frequently portrayed in nationalist ideology as both agents of resistance and symbols of purity. The conflict between maintaining conventional gender roles and empowering women was mirrored in this dualism. Nationalist feelings were bolstered by portraying women as selfless nurturers and mothers.
5. **Cultural Capital and Collective Identity Creating a National Identity:** By bringing back indigenous customs, languages, and artistic expressions, women helped to strengthen the cultural facets of nationalism. Their involvement represented a denial of colonial cultural dominance. Cultural Capital: The development of a shared national identity was greatly aided by women's contributions to khadi spinning, protest leadership, and the dissemination of nationalist ideologies.
6. **Dimensions of Caste and Class** Women from various socioeconomic backgrounds participated uniquely in the movement. For example, Elite Women Participated in legislative discussions, wrote books, and led organizations. Working class Participated in boycotts, protests, and grassroots activism.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's and other movements' intersections with nationalist movements underscored the necessity of addressing both gender inequality and caste-based oppression.

The subaltern studies have discussed the movement, stating that the agenda and interest of the powerful have influenced it: the poor were ignored, and their issues were not addressed.

Check Your Progress

1. Discuss Sati Prohibition Act

2. Explain the intersection of nationalism and Gender.

Symbolic and Cultural Functions of Motherhood and Sacrifice Icons:

Women were frequently depicted as representations of Bharat Mata (Mother India); women evoked feelings of devotion and patriotism. In nationalist discourse, their actual and symbolic sacrifices were exalted. Women like Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and Sarojini Naidu promoted women's involvement in the movement and encouraged patriotism via their writings.

5.4 NEW WOMEN'S MOVEMENT POST 1970s

Post-independence communities frequently kept women to traditional duties despite gaining political experience and prominence during nationalist struggles. Due to women's involvement, several recently independent countries' constitutions guarantee gender equality. When many women entered the political sphere, they encountered resistance from their families and society. In historical narratives, women's accomplishments were frequently eclipsed by those of male leaders.

Indian women were granted the right to vote and constitutional equality by the independent state. Therefore, it was thought that women and others would benefit from modernization and development. By claiming that Indian women's status has deteriorated since 1911, the Indian government put the issue of women on the national agenda in its 1975 report, *Towards Equality* (CSWI 1975). Development and advancement consequently turned into gender-related concerns. The middle of the 1970s was a turbulent decade in Indian politics, marked by fierce opposition from many societal groups through marches, rallies, gheraos, strikes, and demonstrations, and brutal repression by the Indian government. Popular women's voices originally gained a platform in significant social movements. Among the significant occasions was the Shahada movement initiated by Bhil, landless laborers in Maharashtra in 1972.

The contemporary or autonomous feminist movement in India is widely acknowledged to have gained momentum in the 1970s, emphasizing its independence from nationalist politics and other social movements. Feminist movements in India have since addressed diverse concerns, including the environment, sexuality, representation, health, and civil rights. Scholars often divide the Indian feminist movement into three waves: the first wave involved women in the anti-colonial nationalist movement, the second saw the emergence of women as political activists in the late 1960s, and the third wave in the 1970s marked the autonomous phase.

The period post-1975 witnessed the rise of "autonomous" women's organizations across urban and rural India. These groups were often criticized by mainstream society for being "anti-male" and viewed by leftist political parties as separatist. This phase marked the resurgence of the women's movement, characterized by campaigns and agitations that posed critical questions to the state on issues such as land rights, gender-insensitive development policies, and legal reforms related to dowry, rape, and divorce. The 1970s also saw the development of radical leftist and socialist ideas that influenced these movements.

During the early years of this phase, significant focus was placed on highlighting the gendered application of laws and advocating for legal reforms, particularly in addressing violence against women. The campaigns on women's health and dowry in the post-independence era became pivotal, with gender-based issues like domestic violence gaining prominence due to heightened awareness among women.

Establishing the National Committee on the Status of Women marked a key moment in examining women's status and the effects of constitutional and legal provisions on their lives. Its landmark *Towards Equality* report in 1974 highlighted oppressive practices such as dowry, polygamy, child marriage, and the need for legal reform on inheritance, divorce, maintenance, and adoption. This report inspired nationwide efforts to combat these practices and advocate for gender equality in education, employment, and marriage.

By the 1980s, women's groups such as Saheli emerged to protest against dowry deaths and other forms of violence against women. These groups, often led by women marginalized within leftist and socialist parties, emphasized collective, non-hierarchical structures and provided alternative support systems like legal aid, counseling, and short-stay homes. Dowry-related issues were addressed through laws like the Dowry Prohibition Act (DPA) of 1961, which criminalized the demand for dowry. However, societal attitudes persisted in treating dowry-related gifts as family property, denying women control over these assets.

In the domain of health, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act 1971 legalized abortion in India, safeguarding women's reproductive rights under constitutional provisions like Article 21. This law aimed to protect women from unsafe, illegal abortions and was framed to address socio-religious opposition to abortion by presenting it as a health and population control measure. Women in India achieved this right comparatively early compared to their counterparts in many other countries.

In the fight against sexual violence, the late 1970s and 1980s saw nationwide campaigns against rape sparked by the Supreme Court's judgment in the Mathura case. These campaigns unified isolated protests under a collective voice, leading to the establishment of organizations like the Forum Against Rape and the Forum Against Oppression of Women (FAOW). The focus of these movements was on raising awareness and advocating for changes in rape laws to protect women better.

Several organizations emerged post-independence, like Formation of Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), 1972 ∪ Formation of United Women's Anti-Price Rise Front, 1973 Nav-Nirman – a student movement against price rises in Gujarat, 1974 ∪ Formation of Progressive Organisation of Women (1973-74) Chipko movement was a precursor of eco-feminism, 1973 Bodhgaya movement for radical demand of women's land rights, 1978. Women's questions were internationalized through United Nations, which resulted in the following events: Celebration of International Women's Day for the first time – 8 March 1975 International Year of Women – 1975 ∪ International Decade of Women – 1975 to 1985 International Conferences on Women – Mexico (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), Beijing (1995). These conferences on women enabled a global circulation of feminist ideas and strengthened national women's movements; they became a rich source of resources and campaigns.

Check Your Progress

1. List out some of the organizations that emerged post-1970s

2. Discuss female education in the independence period.

5.5 QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on the Women's Nationalist movement
2. Discuss the New Women's Movement post-1970s
3. Write a note on sociological analysis of the nationalist movement

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CONTEMPORARY WOMEN'S MOVEMENT POST-1990S TO PRESENT, GLOBAL FEMINIST MOVEMENT

Unit Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Contemporary Women's Movement post 1990 to present
- 6.3 Global Feminist Movement
- 6.4 Summary
- 6.5 Questions
- 6.6 Reference

6.0 OBJECTIVES

- To understand the different contemporary movement in India post 1990
- To learn about the global feminist movement like abortion rights US, Technology driven movements, climate related movements.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Post 1990, there have been large campaign movements in every field. Women's welfare and health, reproductive rights, political rights, job opportunities and safe working conditions, and helping to grow financial literacy through loans and bank accounts have all been the focus. This has helped, to some extent, improve the status of women in India. While the Global feminist movement has been many – the fourth wave feminism and the Me-too movement and using social media as a tool of expression has been a highlight.

6.2 CONTEMPORARY WOMEN'S MOVEMENT POST 1990 TO PRESENT

The contemporary women's movement in India from the 1990s to the present has been shaped by a number of factors like globalization, neoliberal reforms, technological advancements, and changing socio-political forces. This period has witnessed significant challenges, transformations, and victories for women's rights. Below is an overview of key aspects:

Legislative Reforms

Vishaka Guidelines – Prevention of Sexual

With reference to the Bhanwari Devi (Vishaka & Ors. V/S State of Rajasthan, AIR 1997 Sc 3011) Case. The court recognized that incidents of sexual harassment violate fundamental rights to gender equality and life with dignity, as given in Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Constitution. To address this issue, the court issued a writ of mandamus outlining preventive and remedial measures like:

1. Employers and workplace authorities must take responsibility for preventing sexual harassment and establishing mechanisms for resolving complaints.

The court defined what constitutes sexual harassment. For this purpose, sexual harassment includes such unwelcome sexually determined behavior (whether directly or by implication) as:

- a) physical contact and advances;
- b) a demand or request for sexual favors;
- c) sexually colored remarks;
- d) showing pornography;
- e) any other unwelcome physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature.

2. Employers must take preventive measures, including explicitly prohibiting sexual harassment, incorporating it into disciplinary rules, and ensuring workplace conditions that prevent hostility towards women.
3. Employers are obligated to file or assist victims in filing complaints under the Indian Penal Code and ensure the safety of complainants and witnesses from retaliation.
4. Disciplinary action should be initiated for misconduct as defined by workplace service rules.
5. Organizations must create complaint mechanisms for addressing grievances effectively and promptly.
6. A Complaints Committee, headed by a woman and with at least half of its women members, should be established, including a third-party representative, to prevent bias. The committee must maintain confidentiality and submit annual compliance reports.
7. Employees should be encouraged to discuss sexual harassment in workplace meetings and other forums.

8. Through notifications and training, employers must raise awareness about women's rights and the guidelines.
9. If harassment involves a third party, employers must provide necessary support and take preventive action.
10. Governments were urged to consider legislation to ensure private sector compliance with these guidelines.

POSH ACT 2013

By providing details and elaborating on several aspects of the Vishaka Guidelines, such as qualifications and disqualifications for members of the ICC and LCC, (Internal complaint committee and local complaint committee, the time-bound procedure for handling complaints, the definition of an aggrieved woman and an employee, who can file a complaint on behalf of an aggrieved woman, the definition of the workplace, the concept of an extended workplace, the consequences of non-compliance, etc., POSH goes one step ahead of the guidelines.

2013 Criminal Law Amendment:

Through a Government of India Notification dated December 23, 2012, the Justice Verma Committee was established to investigate potential changes to the Criminal Law that would allow for a speedier trial and more severe punishment for those who conduct extreme forms of sexual assault against women. New offenses like acid attacks, sexual harassment, voyeurism, and stalking have been incorporated into the IPC. It expands the definition of rape to include oral sex as well as the insertion of an object or any other body part into a woman's vagina, urethra, or anus. Laws post-2012 Nirbhaya gang rape case were modified.

Reproductive Rights

Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique (Regulation) Act (PCPNDT) 1994-

The tradition of male preference. The great urge to have boys, coupled with a high cost of living, has led to a rise in sex-selective abortions. Unfortunately, provisions of the MTP Act are frequently abused in that many families invoke the Act to help them carry out abortions of female fetuses after conducting tests to determine the sex of the child using modern technology such as sonography. The age-old preference to have sons received a new boost due to this and gradually resulted in a skewed sex ratio. This Act was amended in 2002, and even pre-conception techniques used/advertised to select the sex of the fetus even before conception were banned. In order to curb this trend, in 1994, the Government passed a new law known as the Pre Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 (PCPNDT Act)

Since these tests are important for detecting fetal abnormalities and genetic defects, they cannot be banned, and they can only be regulated. Now, the

tests can be done only under very strict conditions and they cannot be used to identify and disclose the sex of the unborn fetus. In order to curb the practice, it has now become necessary to register all sonography machines and also to display very clearly that the hospital or the clinic does not disclose the sex of the unborn fetus. Performing such tests is punishable by up to 3 years of imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs.10,000/- for the first offense and up to five years of imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs.50,000/- for the subsequent offense. Any doctor doing such a test must have his medical practice license suspended for two years for the first offense and permanently after the second offense. (S.23).

Surrogacy Bill 2024

Surrogacy is a method of assisted reproduction whereby a woman agrees to become pregnant to give birth to a child for others to raise. She may be the child's genetic mother (the more traditional form of surrogacy), or she may be implanted with an unrelated embryo. The surrogacy bill banned Commercial surrogacy. The commercialization of surrogacy creates several social conflicts. Given the extreme vulnerability, one-third of Indian women due to poverty, exclusion from and marginalization in labor and job markets, patriarchal social and family structures and low educational levels, the financial gain through surrogacy was exploited by some.

There is also Global *Menstrual Hygiene* Day. This campaign, commemorated on May 28 every year, promotes legislation that guarantees access to menstruation goods and education, fights stigma, and increases awareness about period health. Goonj's "Not Just a Piece of Cloth" Initiative (India) is one example that aims to educate rural women about period hygiene and break the taboo around menstruation by giving them reusable cloth pads.

Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) - The Hon'ble Prime Minister introduced the program on April 12, 2005, and it is currently being implemented in all states and Union Territories (UTs), with a particular emphasis on Low Performing States (LPS). JSY is a centrally supported program that combines postpartum care with economic aid.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana

The following objectives are the focus of the:

- Boost the ratio of children to adults.
- Assure women's empowerment and gender equality.
- Avoid sex-selective, gender-biased exclusion.
- Assure the girl child's survival and safety.
- Encourage girls' engagement and education.

Economic Participation

The devaluation of the rupee, an increase in interest rates, a reduction in public investment and expenditure, a reduction in public sector food and fertilizer subsidies, a boost in imports and foreign investment in capital-intensive and high-tech operations, and the elimination of cash

compensatory support for exports were all elements of the New Economic Policy of 1991. Many women employed in the unorganized sector. Informally employed women work as unpaid laborers in family businesses, freelancers, or homemakers (Lund 2006). Women in informal employment have worse social standing and conditions than men in the same socioeconomic group (Jhabwala & Sinha 2002, Chen 2005, Lund 2006).

Even though women have achieved important social and economic advancements, such as reduced maternal mortality, improved education, and lower fertility rates, the percentage of women in the labor force has decreased rather than increased since economic liberalization in 1991 and with rising GDP per capita (Rajagopalan, S., & Shah, K. 2024). We can conclude that after 1991, many women got jobs in the formal sector while many ended up in the informal sector. After 1991, various movement groups also began at the grassroots level.

Self Help Group and Microfinance

According to Ghosh (2012), Deininger & Liu (2013), and Unni et al. (2021), microfinance and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) enable marginalized people to break free from the cycle of poverty, establish sustainable livelihoods, and actively engage in economic and social development, thereby promoting greater gender equality and inclusive growth. The purpose of the SHG system is to empower rural women who live below the poverty line. These retail loans help women become strong and financially independent by enabling them to invest in revenue-generating ventures. By granting these micro-loans, MFIs give women more financial autonomy, empowering them to manage their families and serve as role models for others.

Approximately 142 million families are served by the more than 12 million Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in India, of which women lead 88%. These groups support the development of leadership skills and economic resilience.

Political Representation

Women's Reservation Bill:

The Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023, allocates one-third of all seats for women in Lok Sabha, State legislative assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi. There is also reservation for SCs and STs women. The reservation will last for 15 years, with a possible extension decided by parliamentary action, and take effect following the release of the census after the Act's start. Following each delimitation procedure, legislative law will control the rotation of seats allotted to women. In the 17th Lok Sabha (2019–2024), women currently make up 15% of the total members, although in state legislative legislatures, they typically make up 9%.

As per provisions in Article 243 D of the Constitution, 1/3rd of the Seats of Panchayati Raj Institutions and 1/3rd of the Chairperson's offices at all Panchayati Raj Institutions covered by Part IX are reserved for women.

Dalit feminism

Dalit feminism opposes being grouped under the general category of women, which often are only women from higher castes. It advocates for the identification and representation of Dalit women. The internal patriarchy of Dalit families and the methods used to impose upper caste standards of control over women and education are also criticized by Dalit feminists. Dalit feminism also criticizes the pervasiveness of upper-caste standards of "virtue," "beauty," and "morality" in the modern world. Gail Omvedt argues that "The violence on Dalit women in public spaces and at the workplace is a product of social violence. Thus, in social patriarchy, the men from laboring Dalit families are sometimes unable to protect Dalit women at the workplace and in public from the violence of upper caste men, which is called social violence or social patriarchy." The goal of Dalit feminist literature is to highlight the dual-level experiences of symbolic and physical violence. Dalit women endure patriarchal brutality both inside and beyond the caste, as well as atrocities committed against them by the upper caste. To comprehend caste violence, it is crucial to comprehend the gender dynamics and caste dynamics of violence in society.

In addition to trying to establish community-based movements with particular structures in place to successfully confront, address, and resolve caste-based violence and discrimination as well as the culture of impunity, AIDMAM (All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch) hopes to have established a critical mass movement led by Dalit women leaders.

Cultural Representation

There are movies where the protagonist questions the existing patriarchy, Such as Monsoon Wedding, Lipstick Under My Burkha, and Highway. In a way, questioning debated, giving a perspective on gender violence, marginalization

Check Your Progress

1. Discuss Women reservation bill.

2. Discuss PNDT Act

6.3 GLOBAL FEMINISM

Contemporary Women's
Movement post-1990s to
present, Global feminist
movement

In the twenty-first century, themes like gender equality, gender justice, women's empowerment, participation, and many more have become catchphrases. A century in which the political-economic systems of the least developed, undeveloped, and developing nations have been infiltrated by the weapons of the industrialized world—liberalization, privatization, and globalization. Because they are still not the most resilient, the weaker and more vulnerable segments of society are the most powerful victims of growing marginalization in this neo-political economic era. Women are disproportionately affected by the loss of jobs brought about by globalization. The concept of poverty has been feminized. In many respects, women have been disadvantaged. Most women employed in the unorganized sector as maid services, in agriculture, weaving, and other occupations are illiterate and undernourished. On the other hand, women's work in the organized sector is not acknowledged.

History

The earliest feminist organizations started in ancient Rome when women organized large-scale demonstrations against the Oppian law that denied them access to wealth and property. The prohibition was overturned, which was seen as one of the first successes of feminism. Marcus Porcius Cato even went so far as to suggest that women would suppress men the day they were granted the same status as men. Plato also thought women would be more effective and had innate leadership skills like men.

Protests against the legitimacy of global rule by supranational entities gave rise to the global justice movement in the 1990s. The social movements of the 1970s heavily influenced its theoretical stance and militant forces, and it included feminist activists in its ranks. Feminists have criticized the global justice movement's lack of a cross-cutting feminist approach in its programs and the partial implementation of gender equality in its decision-making bodies, despite the woman question being present in the movement's working groups, guiding principles and activist agenda.

Networked feminism (also known as fourth-wave feminism) and cyberfeminism

The work of feminists interested in theorizing, analyzing, and utilizing the Internet, cyberspace, and new media technologies in general is called cyberfeminism. 'Third-wave' feminism gave rise to the phrase and movement. Some people are still unsure of the precise definition, though participants struggled to define the term even at the first cyberfeminists' conference, The First Cyberfeminist International (FCI), in Kassel, Germany. As a result of their discussions, they came up with 100 anti-theses⁵² (referring to Martin Luther's theses) on what cyberfeminism is not. Among these were the statements that it is not an institution, an ideology, or a -ism. Movements like #MeToo, #TimesUp, and #HeForShe use social media to amplify feminist causes, build communities, and challenge power structures.

Cyberfeminism is seen as the forerunner of "networked feminism," which broadly refers to online feminism, such as encouraging individuals to take action against misogyny, sexism, or gender-based violence against women. As an example, consider the 2017 #metoo online movement, which was a reaction on social media by women worldwide to the allegations of sexual harassment against female employees in the film business by Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein.

Feminism 4.0

Feminism 4.0 is the fusion of feminism and the developments of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which is marked by digital platforms, big data, robotics, artificial intelligence, and ubiquitous connection. This feminist movement uses technology to solve both new issues brought forth by the digital age and long-standing gender disparities.

In the current era of feminist campaigning known as "feminism 4.0," internet platforms and technology are critical in tackling gender inequality. This integration is influencing feminist tactics in the following ways:

AI and Big Data for Gender Equality: Tools to monitor gender biases are being created, such as AI algorithms that examine workplace equality reports or gender representation in the media.

Digital Safety: With the creation of channels for reporting abuse and resources for secure online communication, addressing online harassment and cyberbullying—especially against women—is a top priority.

AI for Social Change: Apps and chatbots like Callisto or Hollie Guard, which are made to report and stop abuse, are being used to support harassment victims, monitor gender representation in the media, and fight gender biases in hiring.

Digital Literacy for Empowerment: These days, feminist campaigns give women the digital skills they need to access information, pursue STEM careers, and express their thoughts online—for example, groups like SheCodes and Girls Who Code empower women in technology.

Online Activism: Social media has shown its revolutionary potential in amplifying voices and holding offenders accountable through movements like #MeToo and #TimesUp.

Problems with Bias: Because algorithms frequently reproduce gender inequality in society, feminists also criticize AI's prejudices. One of the main tenets of Feminism 4.0 is promoting moral AI design and representation in technological advancement.

Resolving Ethical Issues and AI Bias

Algorithmic Bias: The biases in AI systems that perpetuate stereotypes, such as facial recognition systems' poor performance on women or hiring

algorithms that favor men, have been brought to light by the feminist movement.

Contemporary Women's
Movement post-1990s to
present, Global feminist
movement

Inclusive AI Design: To guarantee various viewpoints in algorithm design and implementation, Feminism 4.0 advocates for increased female representation in tech development.

Feminist 4.0 strongly emphasizes appreciating unpaid work that frequently goes unacknowledged, including caregiving and content production made possible by digital tools. Feminism 4.0 uses the internet's democratizing power to promote diverse voices, especially from the Global South, LGBTQ+ communities, and people with disabilities.

Climate Feminism: Climate feminism highlights the relationship between gender equality and environmental sustainability. Because women work in caregiving, agriculture, and water collection, women are disproportionately impacted by climate change, especially in marginalized areas. Important elements consist of:

Environmental Movement Leadership: Women leading the charge for climate justice, such as Greta Thunberg (climate activism) and Vandana Shiva (ecological sustainability), oppose patriarchal structures that fuel environmental deterioration.

Policy Advocacy: Gender-sensitive policies, like clean energy access, women farmers' land rights, and women's participation in environmental decision-making, are advocated by climate feminism. These concerns are addressed by programs such as the UN Women's Gender Action Plan for Climate Change.

Abortion Campaign United States

As a reflection of the larger fight for gender equality and bodily autonomy, abortion rights have been a major topic in American feminist movements. Feminists have long argued that women's empowerment depends on their ability to make reproductive decisions, which is why they support accessible, safe, and legal abortion. Significant victories for the feminist movement were highlighted by landmark occasions such as the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling, which acknowledged abortion as a fundamental right. However, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*'s 2022 reverse of *Roe* sparked intense discussions once again, and feminist organizations mobilized to defend reproductive rights at the state and federal levels. These initiatives highlight the ongoing significance of abortion rights in the feminist agenda by highlighting how they relate to economic justice, healthcare access, and liberation from patriarchal control. Finally, after several protests, the *Roe V. Wade* ruling has been implemented. In addition, abortion laws are left to be decided by the state itself. This shows how the most advanced countries of the world also tend to marginalize/regulate women's rights over their own bodies.

Check Your Progress

1. What is Algorithmic Bias?

2. Discuss AI for social change

6.4 SUMMARY

Once the crime has taken place, movements across the country began as candle marching, people coming together raising their voice, injustice. Often the issue began and thereafter witnessing the problem the amendment has been made in the existing law or new law has been created. The social movements have helped to reduce the gender inequality in a way. The chapter discusses several such reforms like Vishaka Guidelines, **PCPNDT** Act, Criminal Law Amendment Act, Posh Act 2013. There is discussion on Political Representation like Reservation at both Panchayat and Lok Sabha. In addition, the chapter also discusses the women's movement globally like Me too movement, movement related to Climate change. Movement emerging due to the growth of technology.

6.5 QUESTIONS

1. What is Feminist 4.0
2. Discuss the law against Sexual harassment at Workplace.
3. Write a note on Global feminism
4. Explain in brief the Reproduction related Acts

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NEGOTIATING GENDER IN EVERYDAY LIFE

WORK AND LABOUR, EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Unit Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Background
- 7.2 Work and Labour, Education and Health
 - 7.2.1 Work and labour: Accounting for work (production /reproduction) in the household
 - 7.2.2 Concept of ‘production’ and ‘reproduction’ within the Feminist discourse.
 - 7.2.3 The Interlink age between Production and Reproduction
 - 7.2.4 Indian Scenario
 - 7.2.5 Health & Education- Issues of Access & Content
 - 7.2.6 Education -*issues of access and experience*
 - 7.2.7 Health and Nutrition
- 7.3 Conclusion
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- 7.5 Questions
- 7.6 References

7.0 OBJECTIVES

- To study the nature of work and labour in gender studies
- To examine the disparities existing in health and education.

7.1 BACKGROUND

Women form an integral part of the Indian workforce. According to the information provided by the office of Registrar General & Census Commissioner of India, as per Census 2011, the total number of female workers in India is 149.8 million and female workers in rural and urban areas are 121.8 and 28.0 million respectively. Out of total 149.8 million female workers, 35.9 million females are working as cultivators and another 61.5 million are agricultural labourers. Of the remaining females’ workers, 8.5 million are in household Industry and 43.7 million are classified as other workers.

As per Census 2011, the work participation rate for women is 25.51 percent as compared to 25.63 per cent in 2001. The Work Participation Rate of Women has reduced marginally in 2011 but there is an improvement from 22.27 per cent in 1991 and 19.67 per cent in 1981. The work participation rate for women in rural areas is 30.02 per cent as compared to 15.44 per cent in the urban areas.

In so far as the organised sector is concerned, in March, 2011 women workers constituted 20.5 percent of total employment in organised sector in the country which is higher by 0.1 percent as compared to the preceding year. As per the last Employment Review by Directorate General of Employment & Training (DGE&T), on 31st March, 2011, about 59.54 lakh women workers were employed in the organised sector (Public and Private Sector). Of this, nearly 32.14 lakh women were employed in community, social and personal service sector.

This topic is divided into three units:

1. The first unit deals with Work and Labour: Accounting for work (production /reproduction) in the household; and health and education -issues of access and content
2. The second unit deals with Politics and Representation
3. The third unit deals with Environment and livelihoods

7.2 WORK AND LABOUR, EDUCATION AND HEALTH

7.2.1 Work and labour: Accounting for work (production /reproduction) in the household

It is important to examine the concept of ‘production’ and ‘reproduction’ within the feminist discourse, especially issues which have emerged in the debates concerning sexual division of labour and the organization of gender relations prevailing within the family and in a larger social structure. The study of women’s role has been and continues to be of crucial importance to feminists, because they are concerned not only with the identification of the processes and structures, which generate gender inequalities and gender segregation, but also devising appropriate strategies in equalizing the position of women and men in the productive and reproductive spheres.

The interest in this area also provides opportunities to understand better how gender divisions intersect with class and caste inequalities. However, women’s oppression is inexplicable without an understanding of the connections between the division of labour at work and in the home. Position of women as wage labourers, Role in the family structure and the ideology of domestic responsibility play an important part in understanding the concept of ‘production’ and ‘reproduction’. The traditional sociological definition of work has restricted its meaning to activity for the acquisition of financial resources. But women’s work is mainly concentrated in the unpaid household sphere. The exact nature of women’s work varies from culture to culture, however women all over the world are engaged in work

which contributes significantly to societal needs. It is generally observed that women who are defined as housewives are actually involved in unorganized work, like in the field of agricultural and small-scale market production, in addition to their domestic responsibility and childcare. These women make a significant contribution to household income, both indirectly in terms of their unpaid agricultural and household labour and directly through the money they earn through market trading and petty commodity production.

7.2.2 Concept of ‘production’ (the creation of exchange values) and ‘reproduction’ (the creation of use values / consumption unit) within the Feminist discourse.

All domestic activities, contribute income to the household unit in the form of saving, budgeting or the provision of unpaid services. In an advanced capitalist economy like the United States (US), the household sector consumes roughly the same number of work hours as the market sector, which produces an income estimated somewhere between 25 per cent and 50 per cent of the gross national product (GNP). The domestic mode of production is basically patriarchal by nature. It includes that system of household labour in which the household members produce use values for direct consumption on accumulation within the household.

It is an exploitative mode of production, because the labour is almost wholly produced by the female dependents within the household and because the male head of household is expropriating surplus labour when he consumes the use values produced by his dependents. He benefits from this relation of exploitation, both in the use values he appropriates and, on the leisure, time resulting from the necessary labour time he relinquishes.

Those in the working class of the domestic mode of production are interpreted as ‘dependents’ and those in the leisure class as ‘heads of households’. But it does not mean that household subordinates are really or normatively dependent on their household heads. In a sense, of course, the relations of dependency are actually the reverse, since leisure classes are always more dependent for their survival on the support of producing classes than vice versa.

7.2.3 The Interlink age between Production and Reproduction

Marxist economists define labour as the ultimate resource, and labour is seen to create either use value or exchange value. For them, production refers to labour used to create exchange value in the market and reproduction refers to labour used to create use value in the home. Here, the term reproduction refers to biological reproduction as well as the reproduction of maintenance of the labour force and includes household ‘production’ of use value, that is, goods and services for immediate consumption in the home. So, home is considered as both a unit of consumption and reproduction.

Neo-classical economists have tried to resolve the controversies pertaining to production and reproduction by introducing two important dimensions

into this debate: First, that the ultimate resource is time and second, that household investments of time, money and other resources on nutrition, sanitation, health care, education, etc., of its members are investment in human capital and should not be characterized as consumption (women are not merely consumers they are producers).

- a) **Relationship between Market and the Family:** The gradual penetration of the market into economic life generates a shift of production from the domestic to market sphere. In industrialized societies where subsistence depends predominantly on the wage, the function of domestic work is to transform family income into consumable goods and services, only a small part of which is produced within the household.

The burden of subsistence therefore falls on the wage, whereas parts of production are gradually removed from the household and domestic labour tends to concentrate on the transformation of market goods for household consumption.

But, in reality, domestic labour, especially in agricultural societies, contains a higher degree of production. It is a fact that all stages of food transformation are often carried out in the household. Even if it is not agricultural societies, women's work around the household consists of a great variety of subsistence activities.

In many cases, the burden of subsistence falls on women's domestic activities together with agricultural work. In both these cases, women's participation is high. In fact, agricultural and household-related tasks are highly integrated; also, productive and reproductive activities are highly interlinked, time and again.

Thus, there seems to be a universal tendency to dismiss the unpaid household labour of women and to devalue their role as household managers and producers and to ascribe greater worth to exchange values compared to use values. A woman who specializes in the creation of use values through household production, rather than exchange values through paid employment, is counted as 'not working' or 'unemployed' even though her household work includes production of subsistence crops. Her activities provide the basic foundation for labour needed in the so-called 'productive' sectors of the economy. The most obvious outcome of the invisibility of household production is that neither the value of labour input nor the value of output is taken into account in the national accounting system.

- b) **Relationship between Patriarchy and Capitalism:** Marxist theorists are more concerned with analysing production, but are unable to explain the specific situation of women within capitalist structure of labour process. Industrial capitalist societies consist of not one structure, that is, capitalism, but of two: patriarchy and capitalism.

Patriarchy was established before the development of capitalism and was carried over into capitalist forms of labour process because men wanted to secure a privileged position for themselves.

As a consequence, sexual hierarchy was established within the wage labour system. It is not just capitalists who are held responsible for women's positioning in the labour market but also men. Capitalism and patriarchy interact with each other, creating a subordinate position.

- c) **Relationship between 'Production of Things' and 'Production of People':** Production of people can be interpreted as biological reproduction which includes both physical and social processes, that is, the social and cultural mechanisms by which gender relations, women's sexuality and procreation are structured and controlled.

Although the only compelling connection between female sex and reproductive activity is in the sphere of biological reproduction, it is a fact that women are also quite uniformly allocated to many other tasks.

These are directly connected to the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force, such as cooking, cleaning, childcare and care of the sick and the aged.

Especially in the case of rural women, the distinction between productive and reproductive work often seems to be somewhat artificial in terms of women's concrete burden. It is easy to recognize, for instance, that the process of reproduction includes a large number of productive tasks geared to the household's own consumption, such as animal care, agricultural work, weaving and petty trade, along with food preparation, carrying water, collecting firewood and so on.

It is undesirable that, especially in agrarian societies, women are primarily valued for their procreative ability and that fertility is central component of female status. It is also true that those who control their reproductive capacity are generally able to have command over their labour.

It is now widely recognized that women's position within family's needs to be explained in terms of wider social processes and structures. There is direct and intimate link between the mechanisms through which female sexuality is controlled and the system of production. Women's child-bearing capacity and labour are manipulated and used through social structures which are patriarchal by nature. The health and mortality of women are severely affected as they do not have control over child bearing. Population control and women's access to contraception and abortion have complex interaction, which may not have any positive linkage with the status. Women have very little role to play in the social and private control over fertility. The number and spacing of children is also determined by the husband or male head of the family, as a consequence men have

control over children for purposes of inheritance of labour and property.

Ideologies are strengthened in such a way which devalues the status of women who do not have children or sons. Absence of son in a family is considered inauspicious as certain rituals, religious functions cannot be performed. This also can have effect on attaining moksha.

Women's mobility from the family is also conditioned by various factors as there is fear that sexuality may be affected. This has an adverse consequence, which hinders women's ability to participate in the paid employment or industrial sector.

Thus, the process of subordination takes place through the social structures, specifically family/kinship structures, and this interconnects with the system of production.

7.2.4. Indian Scenario

The subordination of women through lack of control over land, property and sexuality has been strengthened through various mechanisms in Indian society, such as caste endogamy, dowry and so on. Though sociologists and social anthropologists have tried to highlight the system of dowry and bride price, they have not contributed to an analysis of the status of women. The feminist perspective in this context contributes on critical analysis of women's subordination.

Apart from caste and dowry, the sexual division of labour in the Indian situation does not imply mere complementarities, but perpetuates occupational segregation, labour market segmentation and unequal wage structure. In agriculture, for instance, women engage in water regulation, transplanting, weeding and harvesting, but not ploughing.

Studies indicate that the sex-wise allocation of tasks also exist in the industrial set-up and in the informal sector. More than half of the Indian women's activities are unrecorded in census data, as they do not have independent land to cultivate, even though they actively assist in family production units. Women's work participation rates fluctuate with changes in the census definition of work and worker.

Task-specific work of women is, therefore, one of the important indicators of her lower status. Apart from that, she has unequal agricultural wages, which is taken away by men. In subsistence farming with high female participation, women work on a complementary basis with men, but their control over resources is not necessarily assured. In the unorganized non-agricultural sector, the position of women is equally miserable. Their entering into traditional unorganized units, which are not covered by the factory laws, and their entry into new type of occupations in organized sectors where role specification takes place hinders the choice of work. This happens because of the special problems that women face, such as lack of education, low technical skill, lack of choice because of family pressure and so on.

Check your progress:

What is exchange values and use values?

7.2.5 Health & Education- Issues of Access & Content

There are great health and education disparities in the world today, both between countries and within them. This problem might be seen as related to the access to various kinds of capabilities. Women's access to education is limited because of the gendered nature of work. Patriarchal structures have ensured that women's access to resources, health, education, and political representation among other things, have remained heavily unequal.

In January 2020, the United Nations Children's Fund published a report revealing that, globally, one in three "adolescent girls from the poorest households has never been to school." The report noted a trend where more resources allocated for public education were spent on students from high-income households rather than on students from low-income households.

7.2.6 Education -issues of access and experience:

- a) **Schooling Preferences and Environment:** In 2002, Vacha Women's Resource Centre conducted research to learn more about the educational outcomes of girl students in municipal schools in Mumbai. They found that schools at the time were shutting down because of low enrolment caused by the rapid movement of people across rural and urban areas and by a preference for private schools. They learned that parents tended to enroll their sons in private schools, especially the ones that taught in English, and their daughters in public schools. Within the schooling environment, researchers noticed a harmful and pervasive pattern of sexual harassment, impunity, and discrediting of girl students.
- b) **Unaccounted and Unequal Domestic Labour :** Articles on female education consistently note that girls' access to schools is severely curtailed due to patriarchal beliefs that girls and women must be the ones doing household labour. Such labour is not considered and measured as labour, even though it shares the characteristics of formal employment. Parents are reluctant to send their girls to school because they need to work at home and help mothers with domestic tasks, the options of non-formal education immediately spring up, adjusting schooling to fit into the girl's work schedule. The question of challenging mind-sets and trying to change ideological perspectives is simply not seen as an option ... Distance from the village becomes a common excuse and parents fear sexual abuse if children have to leave their village to go to another village for schooling. The fact that

girls are routinely sent out to work on cotton fields, to fetch fuel and water for the household, which often requires them to go beyond the village boundaries, is never an issue....

- c) **Marriage and Education:** Kalpana Kannabiran, Sujit Kumar Mishra, and S Surapa Raju recognize that girls' access to education has long been curtailed because of an insistence on marriage, primarily before they turn 18. They cite statistics from the National Family Health Survey (2005–06) to show that almost half of all women aged 20–24 in India were married prior to the age of 18 (30% in urban areas and 53% in rural areas). To investigate the relationship between marriage and education, they conducted a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative study in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. One key finding is that girls who stayed in school for a longer period of time were likely to marry at a later age. They also found that education improved their knowledge about laws, including those on marriage and rights.

Involvement in the paid work to support the family was cited as one of the reasons for dropping out of school (40.6% of cases in Telangana and 38.8% in Andhra Pradesh). The second largest reason was marriage (33.9% in Telangana and 33.3% in Andhra Pradesh). The third reason, particularly important since participating in family labour through care work remains invisible and unaccounted, was taking care of younger siblings— 14.3% of women took care of their younger siblings by not going to school in Telangana, whereas the same is 7.7% in Andhra Pradesh. Apart from this, migration was another reason for discontinuation of education among women.

- d) **Educational Curriculum :** Nandini Manjrekar questions the use of educational curriculums in propagating false conceptions of gender and caste harmony in India by focusing on the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) released in 2000. NCF, displaying its ideological position on women, includes education of girls in a section titled “Education for a Cohesive Society.” Here, we get a glimpse of how girls can be educated the “Right” way. Patriarchal oppression and the struggle for equality and justice are non-issues in a social order in which caste and gender hierarchies are non-conflictual, harmonious elements in the seamless fabric of the great Indian tradition. Manjrekar also recognizes that vocational courses under the NCF that were conceptualized as an alternative to a college education have severe limitations.

Vocational courses for girls are highly gendered – typing, tailoring, etc., which only allow them entry, if at all, into low-paying jobs in the unorganized sector ... This will only serve to heighten inequalities by caste, class and gender, by further restricting the access of poor girls, Dalits and other marginal groups to higher education, and decreasing their representation at this level.

- e) **Barriers to Employment:** Neetha N writes that education levels influence the ability of women to be employed. Given that education levels amongst women as well vary considerably, policy and implementation reforms must consider and address inequalities between women.

Given the advantageous position of women from the upper castes in terms of education and accessibility to job markets, such a trend may suggest the continuation and strengthening of structural inequalities in tandem with economic changes. These differential patterns clearly highlight the need to evolve differentiated policy formulations and interventions to address the issue of employment for different segments of the female population.

7.2.7 Health and Nutrition

In India, women's health is generally neglected, with rampant malnutrition and anaemia. According to the National Family Health Survey, 2015-16, 53%–54% of Indian women in the age group of 15–49 years are anaemic. The dietary intake of most women in India lacks essential nutrients, due to a social norm of women eating after feeding others in the household. In poorer households, deficient food intake becomes even more severe. Food items containing essential nutrients like protein and calcium are often consumed first by other members of the family, before the younger woman whose responsibility is to care for members of the household. Practices of women eating at the end, eating leftover food, or not getting a share of protein-rich items like milk and egg are common. Moreover, women are dependent on the public health system due to their inability to afford private facilities especially during pregnancy and for maternity-related facilities.

The public health system in India has failed to provide postnatal care to most women in India who cannot afford expensive care and treatment. With the collapse of official infrastructure, women can only rely on community-level support for survival.

Patriarchal structures have ensured that women's access to resources, health, education, and political representation among other things, have remained heavily unequal. Patriarchy decides who has access to what, because it defines the relationship between men and women. Therefore, “small” inequalities, such as women setting aside the better part of the available food for men, can have a domino effect and precipitate into other forms of inequality. The differential levels of access that men and women have to material and social resources are the result of these patriarchal social norms which are conventionally thought of as normal and customary.

Generally, in India, policies have failed to adopt a gendered consideration that takes into account the differential needs of men and women when it comes to how they use resources. Attempts to reduce inequality have remained quantitative, which places men and women on the same platform and assumes that they will benefit from the policy equitably.

This, therefore, disregards the inherent social inequality that exists between the two genders. Most policies take the household as a basic unit of measurement, because of which, these policies tend to subsume women, their identity, and their needs, under that of men. However, because the kind of work expected of men and of women is different, their resource needs are also different. Yet, policies that are formulated to improve access fail to take this into consideration.

Check your progress:

Which is the inherent social inequality that exist between the two genders?

7.3 CONCLUSION

Sexual division of labour is connected to power hierarchy and domestic labour. Theories of social reproduction can be based on two major classifications. In the first instance, in terms of control over the women's labour and fertility, that is, in materialist terms and in second instance, as ideological relations, which are centrally involved in the transformation of sex into gender. In each case, of course, priority is given to the social relations of reproduction in defining women's oppression. There are Feminist discourses on women's and men's division of labour between paid work and unpaid care work and its effects on gender equality with respect to decent work outcomes, and one's ability and power to make and act on choices.

7.4 SUMMARY

There is a universal tendency to dismiss the unpaid household labour of women and to devalue their role as household managers and producers and to ascribe greater worth to exchange values compared to use values. A woman who specializes in the creation of use values through household production, rather than exchange values through paid employment, is counted as 'not working' or 'unemployed' even though her household work includes production of subsistence crops. Her activities provide the basic foundation for labour needed in the so-called 'productive' sectors of the economy. The most obvious outcome of the invisibility of household production is that neither the value of labour input nor the value of output is taken into account in the national accounting system. It is not just capitalists who are held responsible for women's positioning in the labour market but also men. Capitalism and patriarchy interact with each other, creating a subordinate position. This process of subordination takes place through the social structures, specifically family/kinship structures, and this interconnects with the system of production.

Moreover, this happens because of the special problems that women face, such as lack of education, low technical skill, lack of choice because of family pressure and so on. Women's access to education and health is limited because of the gendered nature of work. The differential levels of access that men and women have to material and social resources are the result of these patriarchal social norms which are conventionally thought of as normal and customary.

7.5 QUESTIONS

1. Critically examine the concept of 'production' and 'reproduction' within the feminist discourse?
2. Briefly discuss the interlink age between production and reproduction in context to the Indian society?
3. Briefly discuss women's limited access to education, because of the gendered nature of work?
4. Write a note on the issues of *access and experience concerning to women's* health and education prevailing in India?

7.6 REFERENCES

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POLITICS AND REPRESENTATION, ENVIRONMENT

8.1 Politics and Representation

8.2 Environment and Livelihoods

8.1 POLITICS AND REPRESENTATION

Unit Structure

8.1.0 Objectives

8.1.1 Introduction

8.1.2 Politics and Representation

8.1.2a) Women in Indian Politics

8.1.2b) Representation and Participation

8.1.2c) Local Self-governance and Women Representation

8.1.2d) Participation of Elected Women Representatives in
LSG (Local Self-governance): Maharashtra

8.1.2e) Barriers and Obstacles in Women's Active Participation

8.1.2f) Challenges to Elected Women Representatives

8.1.3 Conclusion

8.1.4 Summary

8.1.5 Questions

8.1.6 References

8.1.0 OBJECTIVES

- To study to participation and representation of women in local self-governance
 - To highlight the barriers, obstacles and challenges faced by elected women representatives.
-

8.1.1 INTRODUCTION

Politics involves representation, policy, power and position with Government as its area. Political participation refers to the participation of individuals in the political process. It ensures that individuals are able to take part in deciding the common goals of the society and the best ways of achieving it. Political participation means not merely exercising the right to vote, but also power sharing, decision making, policy making at all levels

of governance of the State. Political participation refers to actual participation in these voluntary activities by which the members of the society share in selection of rules and formulation of public policy directly or indirectly.

- The participation of women and their involvement in electoral process is an important marker of the maturity of democracy in any country. It can be defined as equality and freedom with which women share political power with men. Despite various provisions in the constitution, women in the Indian subcontinent continue to be under-represented in the legislatures, both at the national and the state levels. The number of female representatives in legislative bodies in the Centre and in most of the states of India is below 20%, reflecting a pan Indian gender exclusion from electoral participation and quality representation. The Indian female participants in the electoral politics are mainly less because of political party competition, as national political parties and the regional political parties in the states discriminate not only in terms of seat allotments, but also in the party rank and file and chain of command. This is a major contributor to the party competition structure in the Indian politics that is ruled by inherent male dominance and a patriarchal mindset that excludes women from the electoral process.

At the same time, even though India is considered to be a country which follows equality, the lawmakers or the people in the politics are to a certain extent influenced by the old-time rules and customs of male dominance and patriarchy especially when it comes to matters of making laws for the society and governing the people. This poses a problem when it comes to devising efficient solutions and also creates a dilemma as to what is more important; preserving something that has been practiced for long or making a change and trying methods which shall bring equality in the society. This can be addressed by going back to the origin.

8.1.2 POLITICS AND REPRESENTATION

Women's political participation is regarded as an essential element in all forms of development; however, the gender equality policies of India remain under scrutiny. After independence in 1947, there have been many initiatives to increase the political representation of women by the decentralization of power in various local self-government institutions of India. The act of Panchayati Raj Institutions has increased the engagement of marginalized segments of society, including women, into the decision-making role in political institutions.

UN proclaimed women's empowerment as the fifth of its Millennium Development Goals implemented during 2000-2015. According to Alexander et al. (2016), women's political empowerment is understood as the improvement of women's resources, capacities and accomplishments to obtain equality in influencing and practicing political power. Political

empowerment is a method that allows females to boost their mobility and crack their isolation, create self-confidence and self-image, create their government presence by taking part in decision-making in an increasing context of consciousness and critical assessment to monitor and impact growth progress. Thus, in most instances, the national government arises as a significant player in promoting women's involvement in the political sphere by attempting to modify the mindset of society and establishing more platforms for women as part of political decision-making (World Bank, 2001; Oxaal 1997). Therefore, it is essential to encourage the decentralization of authority and power to provide support for the voiceless segment in the cultural fields. Consequently, it is essential to promote the marginalized section's involvement in decision making for empowerment. Inequality not only reduces women's capacity to enhance but also inhibits their personal growth and ability.

There are various studies on female empowerment. Scholars such as Kabeer (2001), Devika & Thampi (2007), KB (2005), and Menon (2009) noted that there is always a structural inequality between women and men in the political arena, particularly in the aspects of reduced organizational and decision-making influence. The concepts of power and gender are central to understand the empowerment of women in political leadership. Power explains how female oppression and patriarchy perpetuate, and gender highlights the hierarchical social order that privileges men and considers women as a disadvantageous section of the society. Sharma (2010) views women's empowerment on a cultural basis and criticizes that women's empowerment cannot be interpreted as the same in every part of the world, especially since the Western country's ethnographic condition is much distinct from Asian subcontinents such as India. Nevertheless, there is a lack of sufficient research on the decision-making capacity (mainly the challenges they face for policy implementation) of elected women leaders in their institutional structure.

8.1.2a) Women in Indian Politics

Irrespective of the fact that women's political empowerment is perceived as the core for all other advancements in any society, it experiences many obstacles, notably in developing nations, including India. While in developed countries, females have more possibilities and liberty to engage actively in political lives, however, in the developing world, owing to deeply integrated cultural, religious and social beliefs about the position of females in a culture, it generates many constraints for females to be a component of decision-making in developing nations. Therefore, women's participation in the power structure and their political empowerment is still not adequate enough to analyze women's position in a political system. In order to improve their involvement at the political stage, it is essential to empower females through multiple programs and through the action scheme at the local, national, and societal levels.

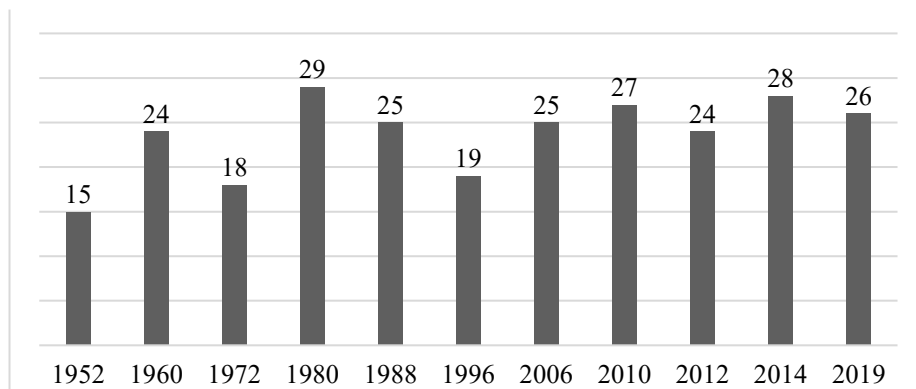


Fig.1. Number of women members in Rajya Sabha (Council of States)

Source: Women Members in Rajya Sabha

Fig.1 shows the percentage of women in the Indian Parliament. However, the introduction and implementation of the Panchayat Raj institutions act did not bring significant improvement and political participation at the national level. This is mainly due to the patriarchal mindset and the hindrance towards women in the northern part of India, which leads to the overall percentage decline of women in Parliament, which is the main reason for not showing a significant statistical difference in the pre- and post-implementation of the Panchayat Raj institutions. By the 1980s, researchers and social activists started to highlight the issue of women empowerment, and by the 20th-century research and debates on women's freedoms and gender equality began to be discussed in the Indian political arena. Political participation involves the right to vote, the right to compete, the right to stand for candidacy, and their position as campaigners and the members of the legislature.

8.1.2 b) Representation and Participation

The representation of women in different tiers of Indian governance has been a mixed narrative, reflecting both progress and persistent gaps. At the local level, the reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) through the 73rd Amendment Act increased their participation substantially. As of 2015, women accounted for nearly 42% of elected representatives in PRIs, reflecting a significant leap from previous decades (Election Commission of India, 2015). However, this trend doesn't translate uniformly across all states and regions. Disparities persist, with some states showcasing higher women's participation rates in local governance, while others lag behind significantly (Kudaisya, 2013). Factors such as socio-economic conditions, cultural norms, and political will contribute to these disparities. In contrast, at the national level, the representation of women remains disproportionately low. The 16th Lok Sabha in 2014 saw a slight increase in female Members of Parliament, yet women accounted for only 17.8% of the total seats (Kumar, 2014). This underrepresentation at the national level highlights the need for more comprehensive strategies to bridge this gap effectively. Additionally, women's participation in decision-making processes within political parties remains a concern. Despite their growing numbers in elected positions, they often encounter challenges

accessing key decision-making roles within party hierarchies, limiting their influence and ability to shape party agendas (Chhibber & Verma, 2014).

8.1.2c) Local Self-governance and Women Representation:

Local Self-governance includes Municipalities in urban areas and Panchayats in rural areas. Panchayat is the centre of administration and the custodian of social harmony. There can be no genuine people's participation and no real democracy without equal participation of men and women in decision-making. Various factors are responsible for women's low participation and empowerment in Panchayats. The most important ones are literacy, traditionalism, prejudices, dependency and the unfavourable political structure, with its high rate of male superiority and slow turnover.

Today's great need is to remove these barriers between women's formal political equality and their significant power of political exercise. Thus, reservation is necessary to bring women into the mainstream of society and make part of decision-making in governance. Without reservation, women will be reluctant to the political participation and empowerment remains only in the hands of male members of society.

Article 15(3) empowers the state to make any special provision for women and children. Article 243D (2) There shall be reserved seats for women belonging to scheduled castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes, at least one-third of the total number of seats reserved for that category. Clause 3 one-third of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women, including women belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Clause (4) of Article 243D-offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at the village level or any other level shall be reserved for women.

Apart from the constitutional requirement of 33% of women's reservation in local self-governance, some states increase this up to 50%. The States of Bihar, Odisha, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tripura, and Uttarakhand have provided 50% reservation for women in Panchayat bodies. Though decentralization is recognized as a positive means to gender equality and political empowerment, obstacles still exist in the social system to achieve them.

8.1.2d) Participation of Elected Women Representatives in LSG (Local Self-governance): Maharashtra

In Maharashtra, most women representatives were occasionally participating in convincing door-to-door activities. The study conducted in Maharashtra further found that 44 percent of studied women participated in addressing public meetings most of the time, 38 percent of women attended meetings rarely in convincing outside the village, 36 percent of respondents attended political party meetings the majority of the time, 31 percent of women members accompanied most of the time by a family member while coming to a meeting. Only half of elected women representatives expressed their opinion and ideas during meetings

The participation of elected women representatives is more in social activities such as maintaining drinking water facilities, and village sanitation activities and supervision of distribution of nutrition for children and women.

- The elected women representatives occasionally participated in social activities such as organizing beneficiaries for construction, supervising housing projects, and fuel and fodder distribution.
- Women members participated in the execution of rural unemployment schemes occasionally; on the contrary, they were participating most of the time in the execution of poverty alleviation schemes and irrigation schemes.
- Women members were participating more in activities of leprosy, polio eradication and malaria control in comparison to the plantation, farm forestry, and social forestry etc. Other activities where participation is less included of welfare weaker section, promotion of rural cottage industry, promotion of dairy farming, poultry, and piggery; sometimes in activities of creation of employment and productive assets, implementation of women and child welfare activities; and rarely in activities of agricultural and horticultural promotion.
- Women members were participating, most of the time, in activities of identification of landless families for land distribution, selection of village artisans, the youth of training and *anganwadi* worker deployment within the gram panchayat, preparation of scheme from gram panchayat share; sometimes in activities of distribution of seed, fertilizers and pesticides, group formation, beneficiary's selection, mini-kit distribution, identification of families without house site for housing under rural housing scheme; rarely in activities of workers list preparation. In Maharashtra, women members accepted that their family members always interfered in decision making and merely 34 percent had an interest in panchayat work.
- Most women representatives participate in different activities of local self-governance, including preparing an annual plan and annual budget, providing relief during natural disasters and organizing volunteer labor and contribution for community works and removing encroachment on public property. However, their participation in budget preparation is not satisfactory.

The study indicated a higher number of elected women representatives participated in providing views about the activities of the panchayat, but their views ignored being women members were also in a higher proportion. Despite their participation in the budget, fund allocation and justice activities, their proposal acceptance was not significant.

Check your progress:

1. Local self-governance include

2. What is Political Participation?

8.1.2e) Barriers and Obstacles in Women's Active Participation

The Constitution of India gives universal adult franchise to both men and women with equal rights to participate in electoral competition, but the existing societal value system, the private-public divide in terms of domain identification in political institutions restrict women from exercising their electoral rights and a fair participation in electoral competition as it is dominated by men. These factors also act as key barriers and obstacles in women's active participation in the Indian electoral system and in the larger issue of women's advancement as a whole.

- One of the main barriers to participation of women in politics in this country is illiteracy. India has one of the largest illiterate populations. Illiteracy limits the ability of the women to understand the political system and issues. Due to illiteracy, many women are sometimes left of the voters list and, as a result, they are not able to exercise their political right. Women who are into active politics and are not educated are not able to handle the office efficiently as the women who are educated have access to all sources of communication like memos and newspaper which helps them to be updated with all the latest news which helps them to make wise political decision.
- Poverty is another barrier which has led to low political participation of women in India. Often poor people have no direct voting stance. It is often influenced by rich and well-off people. Just before elections the poor people are given resources such as blankets, television, food, alcohol by various political party workers so that these people vote in favour of them. There are various political parties who work for the poor people and there are some political groups and parties who only work for these groups. These political parties don't win easily as they are low in their funds if compared to other political parties who get their funding from rich business tycoons. Rich business tycoons invest in the parties from which they will get adequate returns. But

from these poor people, they shall get no returns as they do not pay that much tax which the other citizens of the country pay who are better off than these poor people.

- The institution of marriage is another barrier which leads to less political participation of women in India. After a woman gets married, all her political decisions are controlled by the family she is married into if she comes from an uneducated family. Even if she comes from an educated family, to an extent she is influenced by the family she is married to and often there is a clash in ideology. After getting married, the woman has hardly any time to contest elections or go for campaigns as she has new responsibility added to her shoulders. She needs to look after her family, she needs to look after the kids, needs to do all the household work, even go to work.

8.1.2f) Challenges to Elected Women Representatives (EWRs)

Socio-cultural and Economic Challenges : EWRs faced many gender stereotypes while participating in local self-governance, such as gender discrimination by male panchayat members and government officials of local self-governance.

- Due to the conservative outlook of families and society, elected women representatives found it difficult to get involved in carrying out their responsibilities. Women members hesitate to freely express their opinions owing to gender inequality. In most cases, they are unwilling to offer their viewpoints in front of the male members of Panchayati Raj Institutions. They lacked interest in attending meetings due to their inability to motivate colleagues, the frustration of not getting an opportunity to speak in the meeting, and the lack of cooperation from male members. Generally, male family members of elected women representatives were asked to the gathering and meetings instead of Elected women representatives.
- Due to the existence of patriarchy, women had less access to higher positions in party meetings and decision-making and the fact that lack of cooperation of male colleagues' prevented women leaders from implementing different development methods. It was also found that the majority of ministers were from upper-class society and they did not encourage and cooperate to elected women representatives particularly lower caste women sarpanch and members, in administration matters. Moreover, in rural India, women from lower caste communities could not work independently as khap panchayats function parallel to pressurize elected women representatives in local self-governance.
- Women and dalit representatives had difficulties getting money from the bureaucracy because it is staffed primarily by people from high castes and is rife with patriarchal values, which hindered the implementation of welfare programs and development plans for women and Dalits. Apart from that, female Sarpanches could not perform effective roles owing to a lower profile, poor orientation, lack

of enthusiasm, lack of political background, socially conservative attitude, domestic responsibility and lack of cooperation at all levels.

- Moreover, elected women representatives from backward communities depended on land owners and the dominant caste for their livelihood, owing to their own poor economic condition that affected the working efficiency of women Sarpanch. Conclusively, the higher class's close relationship with officials made it difficult for them to work in local self-governance. Elected women representatives faced problems in performing their duties owing to personal motives of panchayat members, interference by male counterparts in all works, lack of support from male members, and abusive language by male members.
- Economic status was shown to be more significant for women than for men since women were deprived of it, owing to patriarchy that coexisted in the family and panchayati raj institutions at the same time. Moreover, entry into politics was significantly more difficult for women who did not come from wealthy families, mainly if they intended to run for office or take part in an election.

According to research conducted in Assam, relatively few women Panchayat members received remuneration for their duties, but they nevertheless worked tirelessly for the welfare and advancement of their community. Lack of financial certainty was one of the biggest obstacles to starting a political career and drove them to look for other employment. Apart from that, EWRs got insufficient pay and benefits from the government and incurred travel expenses to attend meetings.

Administrative Challenges: Regarding administrative challenges, lack of cooperation from government employees, political bias in fund allocation and pressure from political parties are the major obstacles that elected women representatives to face while performing assigned duties.

- In Gujarat, tribal women Sarpanches faced a challenge like delays in sanctions and permission for development work from the upper level, lack of administrative and financial power in the hands of sarpanches, lack of communication, lack of special protection for women sarpanches, lack of freedom in decision making due to the interference of male family members, lack of discipline of male members at panchayat office, groupism in Gram Sabha and lack of staff in village and panchayat office.
- Administrative obstacles faced by Elected women representatives in Haryana are a lack of employees, commission in percentage, and too much bureaucratic supervision. Apart from that, other administrative constraints faced by women representatives were a lack of cooperation from officials, as well as widespread corruption, which resulted in frustration and demotivation among elected women representatives.

- The major challenge to elected women representatives in Gram Panchayats was inadequate, irregular fund supply and complex procedure for sanctioning loans, uncounted delays in approval from the state and center and non-cooperation from the state government on financial matters are the most serious financial constraints. Such challenges are more serious where panchayat does not have a resource for revenue generation.

Socio-Political Challenges: Though women's participation in the political process has been significantly crucial from equity and development consideration and reservation has increased women's participation in the local self-governance dramatically, women's leadership faced enormous pressure as a result of the criminalization of Panchayat elections.

Female panchayat members found political interference as one of the significant socio-political constraints

- In Haryana, female Gram Panchayat members also realized interference by antisocial elements and politicians as the most serious socio-political constraint.
- In PRIs political party interest, dominant castes and land-owner's involvement in panchayat decision-making result in quarrels, and conflict and raise an issue regarding the security of women Sarpanch and her family.
- In Punjab, lower participation of women in decision-making was owing to psychological, social-cultural and political hindrances such as gender stereotypes, low education level, poor resources, proxy candidates and gender disparities by political parties.
- In West Bengal, a study found that a majority of female Gram Panchayat members were politically affiliated, but contrary, Zila Parishad and Panchayat Samiti members had a lower proportion of political affiliation.

Challenges regarding Awareness and inadequate training: Inadequate knowledge is recognized as one of the major constraints that have affected the performance of elected women representatives in local self-governance. Female panchayat members lacked the timely and inadequate guidance required to perform their role as a member of local self-governance.

- In Maharashtra, the study found women representatives lack knowledge about different schemes of local self-governance (Satpute, 2012).
- In Gujarat, a majority of tribal women Sarpanches had lack awareness about the working of Panchayati Raj Institutions, development programmes, and various rural development initiatives by the government.

- In Haryana, female respondents felt a lack of proper awareness about their power and responsibility as serious constraints confronted by women in performing gram panchayat duties (Singh, 2013).
- Further studies revealed that lack of experience, lack of political information, inadequate knowledge about the Panchayat Act, rules, and regulations, lack of orientation in rural development issues and panchayat administration, and lack of technical inputs knowledge related to rural service delivery system were among the factors that women participants believe that these factors contribute to ineffective participation.
- Lack of training was ranked first among the technical restrictions faced by tribal women Sarpanches in Gujarat.

8.2 ENVIRONMENT AND LIVELIHOOD

- 8.2.1 Gender and Environment
- 8.2.2 Configurations of Eco-Feminism
- 8.2.3 Critiques of Eco-Feminism
- 8.2.4 Conclusion
- 8.2.5 Summary
- 8.2.6 Questions
- 8.2.7 References

8.2.1 GENDER AND ENVIRONMENT

Linkage has strongly featured at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, it also figures at the conference on women in Beijing in 1995. On the years the claim that women's relationship with environment as distinct from that of men, has resulted in a –spectrum of perspectives. All these perspectives therefore argue for a separate policy for women in environment and sustainable development approach. However, gender environment relations are conceived in different ways. Majority of the perspectives project women's approach as users and managers of the environment in their everyday interactions on being special. In the West women's role as homemakers and care givers within the family is seen as important contributor to the eco feminist perspective. It focuses on 'quality of life issues' rather than 'subsistence issues'. Awareness of health impact of toxic chemicals and the action that can be taken up by the citizens, came to the forefront in the 1979-80 struggle put up by housewives of the Love canal community. Here 900 families fought and won relocation, after they discovered that their neighbourhood was built next to 21000 tons of toxic waste. The toxic waste buried had caused high incidence of cancer and morbidity in the community. Since house makers had to bear the major burden of care giving, they became mobilised and organised a successful struggle. The movement quickly spread within US and Europe and led to the setting up of superfund of USD. 1.6 billion to clean up toxic waste sites in 1980 by United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and international efforts by the United Nations Centre for Urgent Environmental Assistance. It has identified chemical hazardous waste as an area in need of urgent attention in developing countries. The Women in Environment and Development approach, an extension of women in development approach combines environmental policies with development. As users and managers, women collect fuel, wood, water, produce food and guard genetic resources, to meet their daily subsistence needs. This subsistence perspective gives them a unique knowledge about and an interest in Protecting the environment. Thus, there is a complementarity in the interest of women and environment. Women in 1980's are seen as Victims' of environmental degradation. 1988 PORTRAYS them as victims not only of environmental degradation and natural disasters, but also of manmade scientific development, as their resources bases for staying alive' have been undermined and eroded. Finally

in the late 1980's the shift is towards looking at women as agents of change and as sufficient managers. Grass root movements like chipko are used as example to substantiate this perspective. The experience of women in the developed world is like with the quality of life and the experience of women in the developing world is linked within the 'subsistence' issues.

12.3 ECO-FEMINISM

The term eco-feminism was coined by Francoise d'eaubonue, a French writer in 1974. This concept basically can be divided into two words namely 'eco' and 'feminism'. The term eco is related to 'nature or 'environment' whereas the term 'feminism' is related to women. Eco-feminism puts forward the idea that nature and women are significantly related to each other in terms of the similarities that they displays.

The fundamental features of eco-feminism are as follows –

- 1) Women and nature share a special relationship. Hence women have an important stake in ending the domination of nature and conserving the environment.
- 2) There are important connections between the domination of women and the exploitation of nature. These connections can be traced ideologically to patriarchal thought which sees nature as inferior to culture. Since women are identified with nature, they are considered inferior and men identified with culture, are considered superior. Given this relation, women have a special stake in ending the domination of nature and hence their own subordination. This change can be brought about through a reconceptualization of the relations between women, men and nature in non-hierarchical ways. Since the feminist movement and the environment movement stand for egalitarian non-hierarchical system, they work together and develop a common perspective, theory and practice. For eco-feminist the domination of women and nature is seen to be embedded in ideological terms, it is based on a system of beliefs, ideas and values and that place women and nature hierarchically below men. Economists urge women and men to reconceptualise their relations with the another and to nature in non-hierarchical ways. Eco-feminist draw connections between the oppression of women and the destruction of nature and trace both historically, to the emergence of western patriarchal sciences in the 7th century. However, the different configurations of eco-feminism differ on the nature of the connections between women and nature. There are certain important similarities between women on one hand and nature on the other hand. According to the eco-feminist they believe that both women and nature possess a reproductive or a regenerative capacity. In other words, a co-relation is taken into consideration between the life support system of nature and women's innate inborn life support systems. Another important similarity between nature and women is nurture that they provide, women are largely responsible for the upbringing of children by providing them with love and care. In the same manner nature is also responsible for providing maintenance and survival to its different components. Apart from these two similarities a third important source of the similarity between nature and women lies in the

exploitation of both at the hands of men. It is human being and especially the men who have been responsible for the degradation and exploitation of nature or environment. They have placed nature on an inferior level. Similarly, women have also been dominated and exploited by the men and are given inferior status in the society. It is this similarity between the nature and women which lead to the emergence of the concept of eco-feminism. Eco-feminism predominantly has western roots and it emerged out of the peace feminist and ecological movements of 1970's and 1980's. Eco feminism was coined by Eubanks but it was further developed by Ynestra King in 1976. It became a movement in 1980 with the organisation of the first eco-feminist conference. It was a movement of European women in a significant number in the initial stages. During this period the focus was to take into consideration a spiritual relationship between women and nature or earth. In other words, the early period of eco-feminism concentrated on women's emotional connection with the nature or earth. The eco-feminist felt that the men inherently were practical, reason dominated and hungry for power. On the other hand the women were characterised by an emotional nature which was distinctly separate from that of men. It was this emotional nature inherent to women which led to the foundation of a special relationship with nature. In the later period of eco-feminism the issue of exploitation of women and exploitation of nature were concentrated upon.

There are certain important fundamentals of eco-feminism.

- 1) There is an important connection between the domination of women and exploitation of nature. The central insight of eco feminism is that a historical, Symbolic and political relationship exist between the degradation of nature and women.
- 2) Because women are identified with nature, women and nature have special relationship. Hence women have an important role in ending the domination of nature and conserving the environment.
- 3) The subjugation of women and nature can be understood in terms of the patriarchal ideology. According to it nature is considered an inferior to culture. Women are identified with nature and hence are considered an inferior. On the other hand men are identified with culture and therefore are considered as superior even this relation women have special role in ending the domination of nature and hence their own subordination.
- 4) The feminist movements and the environmental movement then become co-related because both stand for egalitarian principles non-hierarchical principles they work together and develop a common perspective, theory and practices a change, can be brought about in the relationship of men with both nature and women. Since women and nature are placed below men, it is necessary to bring about a change. According to eco-feminist it is necessary for women and men

to re-conceptualise their relations with one another and to nature in non-hierarchical ways.

- 5) Eco-feminism represents the combination of a radical ecology movement known as the deep ecology on one hand and feminism on the otherhand. It accepts the facts that have been primarily responsible for environmental degradation. deep ecology focuses on the destructive human patterns related to nature and replace it with a affirming culture. Similarly feminism also concentrates on eliminating the destructive human patterns related to nature and replacing them with a life affirming culture. Similarly feminism also concentrates on eliminating the destructive cultural norms and practices, norms related to women and replacing them with freedom, individualism and democratic right for women. It is necessary to create consciousness regarding male monopolisation of resources and power and replacing it with egalitarian approach. Thus feminism and deep ecology show inter-connectedness. Infact some consider feminism as a primary expression of deep ecology.
- 6) The males are associated with aspects such as rationality, assertiveness, culture autonomy etc. On the otherhand the females are associated with aspects such as emotions, connectedness, nature, respectively all these assumptions are result of a patriarchal mentality where by the aspects associated with men are considered an superior and those associated with women are considered as inferior. The patriarchal tendency also believes that nature and women to be controlled by the males.

8.2.2 CONFIGURATIONS OF ECO-FEMINISM

- 1) Liberal eco-feminist argue that environmental problems are a result of the rapid exploitation of natural resources accompanied by the lack of regulation. This can be ' overcome by a social introduction that is environmentally sound. Thus, they propose to change human relations with nature through the passage of new laws and regulations. Radical cultural eco-feminists, on the otherhand analyse environmental problems from within a ...critique of patriarchy. They argue that the exploitation of women and nature is a consequences of male domination. They celebrate the relationship between women and nature through the popularisation of rituals centred around the mother goddess, the moon, animals and the female reproductive system. Women's and nature are seen as sources of female power to be celebrated.
- 2) Social eco-feminist, however looks upon nature and human nature as socially construct and rioted in an analysis of race, class and gender, argues that the exploitation of women and nature is due to the structure of capitalist patriarchy. Thus for some eco-feminist, the women nature link is biological given. They point to the similarities in the experiences of the women's body and that of nature which is different from men's bodily experiences. The power to reproduce,

links women with each other and other life forms and then gives them a different consciousness. This link is related to the idea of an essential female nature that is irreducible and unchangeable. For other eco feminist, who do not believe in biological determinism, women's essential nature is considered to be a cultural construct that is universal, based on specificities of female biology but which cannot be reduced to it. Women's reproductive functions, the social roles and the psychic structure that is consequently acquired, all make them seem to be closer to nature. Men on the other hand are forced to create through cultural and technological means, this associates them with culture. The connection between women and nature is rooted in biology although men and women also mediate between nature and culture. Since the linkage between women and nature is inevitable, these scholars for see a more environmentally sustainable future. For still other eco-feminist, such as Ynestra King (1990) and Carolyn Merchant (1980) the dichotomy between women and nature is false, patriarchal, ideological construct through which gender hierarchy is maintained. The women nature connections are 92 seen as ideological constructs which have come up historically in certain societies. This view is supported by well known third world eco-feminist. Vandana Shiva (1988) whose work has gained an international presence. Vandana Shiva powerfully argues that the violence against women and nature is intrinsic to the dominant, patriarchal model of development which is a colonial imposition on indigenous societies in Asia & Africa. This has very often replaced traditional non hierarchical ideas which supported more balanced relations between women, men and their environment. Therefore, one needs to recover them, build on them and change the nature of development. However, though this strand of eco-feminist though has the potential to raise questions regarding the social and historical construction and conceptualisation of gender and environment, if doesn't achieve its objective.

8.2.3 CRITIQUES OF ECO-FEMINISM

There are many other problems with eco-feminist concepts and categories. It is argued that it is ethnocentric, essentialist, blind to class, ethnicity and other distinguishing cleavages, a historical and neglects the material sphere. Eco-feminist literature portray, the historical exploitation and domination of nature and women as going hand in hand. Both are seen on victims of development. Eco-feminist literature fails to establish the woman nature linkages through concrete evidence as strong argument. Eco-friendly management practices by women, like not cutting living trees but using dead wood and SO ON are interpreted to show women as naturally caring nurturing and selfless, with a commitment to both the future generations and the environment itself. However, the fact that deadwood is lighter and hence easier to carry is not seen as a significant reason for women not cutting living trees. Eco-feminist, which related women and nature to biology, is characterised by essentialism and romanticism. Just because women have not been in fore front of cutting trees, mining and so on,

women are seen as more caring about the environment. It probably only reflects the gender division of labour and distribution of opportunity than a special relationship between women and nature. Eco-feminist argument that the domination of women and nature mainly on ideology thereby neglecting the inter-related material sources of domination based on economic advantage and political power. The eco-feminist images of women retain the Patriarchal Stereotypes of what men expect women to be - freeze women as merely caring and nurturing beings instead of expanding the full 93 range of women's human potentialities and abilities. They only reinforce gender stereotypes. By emphasising the special relationship of women to nature they ignore the fact that men too can develop an ethic of caring for nature. It ignores the specific context of environmental practices and overlooks the facts that the concept of nature, culture and gender are 'historically and socially constructed and vary across and within cultures and time periods. It presents women as a homogeneous category both within countries and across nations. It fails to differentiate among women by class, race, ethnicity and so on. A commonly held notion is that since women are more severely affected by environment degradation, they are naturally drawn towards conservation activities. However, there are examples of women being the agents of environmental degradation, rather than conservation, due to pressure of gender class relations and poverty. By romanticising the question of women's agency, the eco feminist discourse ignores the possibility of a gap between women's interests in environmental protection and their ability to actually take action. Women may still be victims of the larger processes and structures of dominance. Thus eco-feminist have given lot of importance to the concept of patriarchy. According to them the domination or subjugation of nature and women is due to the anti-life tendency of the patriarchal system. Eco-feminist such as King and Vandana Shiva argue that the violence against women and nature is intrinsic to the dominant patriarchal model of development. However this view is not supported by all the eco-feminist, as exploitation of women and nature is also due to the capitalist structure on hierarchy. Thus the internal conflict among the eco-feminist made it difficult for them to achieve their objective of bringing about egalitarian non-hierarchical relations between men, women and nature.

Check your progress:

List the challenges faced by EWRs

8.2.4 CONCLUSION

India has been gradually emerging as a powerful nation since women are playing notable roles in the development of the country. Women are now considered to be capable of making a stride between their household and professional lives. The concept of gender equality has been recognized by

the United Nations through its Sustainable Development Goal-5. Almost all the sectors are dominated by male public representatives and executives in both developed and developing nations and hence women face numerous difficulties in participating in the decision-making process at all levels of governance. With the legislative intervention, women are placed as part of local self-governance as some state reserve fifty percent of seats for women in local self-governance. Despite all these efforts towards gender equality and women empowerment, participation in the decision-making process and fulfilling statutory responsibilities, women elected as people's representatives face several challenges.

8.2.5 SUMMARY

Lack of sufficient financial stability inhibits women leaders from focusing on establishing their space in politics. Patriarchy and gender segregation for higher political powers, even after working for party activities for many years, is an essential catalyst for hindering women from maintaining their compliance in politics. Various developmental projects require expert opinion and self-reliant practices; hence women need to be competent in managing governance with ease. Various forms of gender-based violence against women in politics in the form of verbal harassment, challenges in personal dignity, and sexism restrain women from progressing in political participation.

8.2.6 QUESTIONS

- Q1. Briefly discuss Women participation in Politics with examples
- Q2. Discuss the role of women in local self -governance
- Q3. Enumerate the barriers, obstacles and challenges faced by Elected Women Representatives.
- Q4. Explain Women's struggle for saving environment and livelihood
- Q5. Write a short note on Ecofeminism.

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- 9.1 Gender and Environment
- 9.2 Configurations of Eco-Feminism
- 9.3 Critiques of Eco-Feminism
- 9.4 Conclusion
- 9.5 Summary
- 9.6 Questions
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9.1 GENDER AND ENVIRONMENT

Linkage has strongly featured at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, it also figures at the conference on women in Beijing in 1995. On the years the claim that women's relationship with environment as distinct from that of men, has resulted in a –spectrum of perspectives. All these perspectives therefore argue for a separate policy for women in environment and sustainable development approach. However, gender environment relations are conceived in different ways. Majority of the perspectives project women's approach as users and managers of the environment in their everyday interactions on being special. In the West women's role as homemakers and care givers within the family is seen as important contributor to the eco feminist perspective. It focuses on 'quality of life issues' rather than 'subsistence issues'. Awareness of health impact of toxic chemicals and the action that can be taken up by the citizens, came to the forefront in the 1979-80 struggle put up by housewives of the Love canal community. Here 900 families fought and won relocation, after they discovered that their neighbourhood was built next to 21000 tons of toxic waste. The toxic waste buried had caused high incidence of cancer and morbidity in the community. Since house makers had to bear the major burden of care giving, they became mobilised and organised a successful struggle. The movement quickly spread within US and Europe and led to the setting up of superfund of USD. 1.6 billion to clean up toxic waste sites in 1980 by United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and international efforts by the United Nations Centre for Urgent Environmental Assistance. It has identified chemical hazardous waste as an area in need of urgent attention in developing countries. The Women in Environment and Development approach, an extension of women in development approach combines environmental policies with development. As users and managers, women collect fuel, wood, water, produce food and guard genetic resources, to meet their daily subsistence needs. This subsistence perspective gives them a unique knowledge about and an interest in Protecting the environment. Thus, there is a complementarity in the interest of women and environment. Women in 1980's are seen as Victims' of environmental degradation. 1988

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9.4 CONCLUSION

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considered to be capable of making a stride between their household and professional lives. The concept of gender equality has been recognized by the United Nations through its Sustainable Development Goal-5. Almost all the sectors are dominated by male public representatives and executives in both developed and developing nations and hence women face numerous difficulties in participating in the decision-making process at all levels of governance. With the legislative intervention, women are placed as part of local self-governance as some state reserve fifty percent of seats for women in local self-governance. Despite all these efforts towards gender equality and women empowerment, participation in the decision-making process and fulfilling statutory responsibilities, women elected as people's representatives face several challenges.

9.5 SUMMARY

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9.6 QUESTIONS

- Q1. Briefly discuss Women participation in Politics with examples
- Q2. Discuss the role of women in local self -governance
- Q3. Enumerate the barriers, obstacles and challenges faced by Elected Women Representatives.
- Q4. Explain Women's struggle for saving environment and livelihood
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