DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU
JAMMU

SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

M.A. SEMESTER - III

GENDER AND SOCIETY

SUBJECT : SOCIOLOGY	**UNIT : I-IV**
COURSE NO. : SOC-C-304	**LESSON NO. : 1-19**

Course Co-ordinator
Prof. Abha Chauhan
HOD, Deptt. of Sociology
University of Jammu

Teacher Incharge
Dr. Neha Vij
PG Sociology
University of Jammu

SYLLABUS OF SOCIOLOGY M.A. IIIrd Semester for the examination to be held in the year Dec. 2019, 2020 & 2021 (NON CBCS)

Course No. SOC-C-304   **Title : Gender and Society**

Credits : 6   **Maximum Marks : 100**

Duration of examination : 2½ hrs.   **a) Semester examination (External) : 80**

                                                              b) Internal assessment (Internal) : 20

Objective: The Objective of this course is to trace the evolution of Gender as a category of social analysis and the major debates that have emerged related to it. It is hoped that exposure to the course will sensitise and familiarise the students about gender perspective and gender related problems of the society.

Unit-I   **Social Construction of Gender :**

Gender v/s Biology, Equality v/s Difference,

Gender role socialization

Patriarchy as ideology and practice.

Gender & Caste.

Gender & Media

Unit-II   **Perspectives on Gender Inequality :**

Biological, Cultural, Marxian, Feminist and Post modernist.

Gender based division of labour / work : Production v/s Reproduction, Household work, Feminization of work

Unit-III   **Women in India :**

Status of Women in Contemporary India

Women's Movement – A Historical Background

Women's Movement in Contemporary India

1

Constitutional Provisions and State initiatives.

Unit IV   **Gender Issues in India :**

Health, Education, Land Rights, Personal Laws & Uniform Civil Code, Empowerment & Development, (WID, WAD, GAD), Ecology, Violence.

NOTE FOR PAPER SETTING:

The question paper will consist of three sections A, B and C

Section A will consist of eight long answer type questions, two from each unit with internal choice. The candidate is required to answer any four questions selecting one from each unit. Each question carries 12 marks ($12 \times 4 = 48$ marks.)

Section B will consist of eight short answer type questions - two from each unit with internal choice. The candidate is required to answer any four questions selecting one from each unit. Each question carries 6 marks ($6 \times 4 = 24$ marks.)

Section C will consist of eight objective type, questions of one mark each. The candidate is required to answer the entire 8 questions. Total weightage will be $1 \times 8 = 8$ marks.

Prescribed Reading :

1. Aggrawal, Bina. 1998. A Field of One's Own, New York: Cambridge Press.

2. Aggrawal, Bina. 1999. Gender and legal rights in landed property in India, Kali for Women, New Delhi.

3. Agnes, Flavia. 2001. Law and Gender Inequality, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

4. Andal, N. 2002. Women in Indian Society, Jaipur : Rawat Publications.

5. Bhasin, Kamla 2000. What is Patriarchy, New Delhi : Kali for women.

6. Bhasin, Kamla 1999. Some Questions on Feminism, New Delhi : Kali for Women.

7. Bhattacharya, Rinki. 2004. Behind Closed Doors, New Delhi : Sage Publications.

8. Chakarvarti, Utna. 2003. Gendering Caste. Through a Feminist lens, Calcutta : Stree.

9. Chanana Karana. 1988. Socialisation, Education and Women, Exploration in Gender Identity New Delhi : Orient Longman.

10. Chanana Karana. 2001. Interrogating Women's Education. Jaipur : Rawat Publications.

11. Chaudhari, Maitrayee. 2004 Feminism in India, New Delhi : Kali for women.

12. Chauhan, A. 2009. "Women's Studies", in Yogesh Atal (ed.). Sociology and Social Anthropology in India. ICSSR Survey of Advances in Research (302-358), New Delhi: Darling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd.

13. Delamont, Sam. 1980. The Sociology of Women, London : George Allen & Unwin.

14. Desai, Neera and Maithreyi Krishnaraj 1987. Women and Society in India, New Delhi Ajanta Publications.

15. Desai, Neera and Usha Thakkar. 2003. Women in Indian society, New Delhi: NBT.

16. Dube, Leela and Rajni Parliwal. 1990. Structures and Strategies, Women, Work and Family, New Delhi : Sage Publications.

17. Evans, Judlth, 1998. Feminist Theory, New Delhi : Sage Publications.

18. Freedman, Jane, 2002. Feminism, New Delhi : Viva Books.

19. Geetha, V, 2002. Gender, Calcutta Stree

20. Geetha, V. 2007. Patriarchy, Calcutta Stree.

<u>CONTENTS</u>

GENDER VS BIOLOGY

STRUCTURE

1.1 GENDER VS BIOLOGY

When we consider how females and males differ, the first thing that usually comes to mind is sex, the biological characteristics that distinguish males and females. Primarily, sex characteristically consists of a vagina or a penis and other organs related to reproduction; secondly, sex characteristically refers to the physical distinctions between males and females that are not directly connected with reproduction. Secondary characteristics become clearly evident at puberty when males develop more muscles, a lower voice, and more hair and height; while females form more fatty tissue, broader hips and larger breasts.

Gender in contrast, is a social, not a biological characteristic. Gender which varies from one society to another refers to what a group considers proper for its males and females. In short, you inherit your sex but you learn your gender as you are socialized into specific behaviours and attitudes. The sociological significance of gender is that it serves as a primary sorting device by which society controls its members. Ultimately, gender determines the nature of people's access to their society's system of power, property, and even prestige. Gender, then, is much more than what you see when you look at people. Like social class, gender is a structural feature of society.

In this chapter, we shall discuss why men and women differ socially. Are they, perhaps, just "born that way"?

1.2 Biology or Culture? The Continuing Controversy :

Why do males and females act differently? For example, why are most males-unlike the Tamil- more aggressive than most females? Why do females tend to enter "nurturing" occupations such as nursing and child care in far greater proportions than males? To answer such questions, most people respond with some variation of, "They are just born that way".

Is this correct answer? Certainly biology plays a significant role. Each individual begins as a fertilized egg. The egg, or ovum is contributed by the mother, the sperm, that fertilizes the egg by the father. At the very moment the egg is fertilized, the individual's sex is determined. Each person receives twenty-three pairs of chromosomes from the ovum and twenty-three from the sperm. The egg has an X chromosomes. If the sperm that fertilizes the egg also has an X chromosomes, the embryo becomes female (XX). If the sperm has a Y chromosomes, it becomes male (XY).

Does this difference in biology account for differences in male and female behaviours? Does it, for example, make females more comforting and more nurturing, and males more aggressive and domineering? While almost all sociologists take the side of "nurture: "in this "nature versus nurture" controversy, a few do not, as you can see from the coming pages.

Sociologists find most compelling the argument that if biology were the principal factor in human behaviour, around the world we would find women to be one sort of

person and men another. But consider the opening vignette. Certainly the emergence of female warriors in Tamil society was due to changes in their social conditions not to changes in their biology. Sociologists who consider socialization to be the answer point to such instances as conclusive evidence. Such examples are so self-evident. In contrasts, other sociologists disagree sharply. They concede that the changed behaviour of Tamil females was due to changed conditions, but claim that the Tamils represent only a specific, momentary overcoming of basic biological predispositions. Female warriors are not unknown in the world; they are just rare. When the revolution is over, as has happened in all previous instances in the world, the Tamil women will resume behaviour more in keeping with their biological predispositions.

Although this controversy is far from resolved, the dominant sociological position is that gender differences come about because every society in the world uses sex to mark its people for special treatment (Epstein: 1988). Sorted into separate groups males and females learn contrasting expectations in life and given different access to their society's privileges. As symbolic interactionists stress, the visible differences of sex do not come with meanings built into them. Rather, society interprets those physical differences, and males and females thus take their positions in life according to the meaning that a particular society assigns them.

In every society, gender is the primary division between people. Each society possesses its own set of expectations of what is appropriate for males and females. To try to guarantee the differences that it expects, each society socializes males and females into different behaviours and attitudes. Similarly, each society set up barriers that provide unequal access on the basis of sex.

1.3   Biology Vs. Culture- Culture is the Answer :

For sociologist Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, differences between men's and women's behaviours are solely the result of social factors- socialization and social control.

Her argument is as follows :

➢ Just because an idea has been around for as long as anyone can remember does not mean that it is inevitable or based on physiology. Would any one make the argument that anti-Semitism, child abuse, or slavery are biologically determined? Yet a new group of "experts", socio-biologists, "feel comfortable believing that the subordination

of women is inevitable, programmed into human nature". This argument is simply a defense by the oppressors and is no more legitimate than the Nazis' argument that they were the master race and Jews inferior sub-humans.

➢ A re-examination of the anthropological record shows greater equality between sexes in the past then we had sought. Women in earlier societies participated in small-game hunting, devised tools for hunting and gathering, and gathered food along with men.

➢ Studies of current hunting and gathering societies also show that "both women's and men's roles have been broader and less rigid than those created by stereotypes and gathering societies exists in which women are not subordinate to men. Anthropologists who study them claim that there is a separate but equal status of women at this level of development".

➢ If gender differences were due to physiology, wouldn't societies depend on "instinct" for their division of labour? Instead, however, the "types of work that men and women perform in each society are stipulated by the society, allowing few individuals to make choices outside the prescribed range". To keep women in line and males dominant, extensive social machinery has been developed- from a raised eyebrow to laws and social customs that separate men and women into "sex-appropriate" activities.

➢ Biology does "cause" certain human behaviour, but it is limited to reproduction or body structure that allows or inhibits social access, "such as playing basketball or crawling through a small pace".

➢ The rising status of women in the western societies and in other parts of the world invalidates the idea that women's subordination is constant and universal. Female crime rates are growing closer to those of males, again indicating a change in behaviour due to social conditions, not a change in biology. Women are participating in "adversarial, assertive, and dominant behaviour" at all levels of the judicial system. Not incidentally, their "dominant behaviour" also shows up in scholarly female challenges to the biased views about human nature that have been proposed by make scholars.

In short, it has been social factors- socialization, exclusion from opportunity, disapproval, and other forms of social control- not women's incompetence or inability to read a legal brief., to perform brain surgery, (or) to predict a bull market…that has kept them from interesting and highly paid jobs." Arguments, "which indicate an evolutionary

and genetic basis of hierarchy affixed to sex status" are simplistic. They "rest on a dubious structure of inappropriate, highly selective, and poor data, oversimplification in logic and inappropriate inferences by use of analogy" (Epstein1988).

1.4   Biology vs Culture- Biology is the Answer :

Sociologist Steven Goldberg finds it astonishing that anyone should doubt that "the presence of core-deep differences between men and women, differences of temperament and emotion we call masculinity and femininity. His argument, that it is not the environment but inborn differences that "give masculine and feminine direction to the emotions and behaviour of men and women,".

➢ An examination of the original studies of societies from around the world shows that not one of the thousands of societies (past and present) for which evidence exists lacks patriarchy. Stories about past matriarchies (societies in which women dominate men) are simply myths; they do not make good history, and if you believe those you may as well believe the myths about Cyclopes.

➢ "All societies that have ever existed have associated political dominance with males and have been ruled by hierarchies overwhelmingly dominated by men."

➢ In all societies, the highest status non-maternal roles are associated with males.

➢ Just as six-feet woman does not prove the social basis of height, so exceptional individuals, such as highly achieving and dominant woman, do not refute 'the physiological roots of behaviour'.

➢ The values, songs, and proverbs in every society "associate dominance with the male in male-female relationships and encounters."

➢ Of the thousands of societies of which we have evidence, not a single one reverses male and female expectations. "Why, he asks, "does every society from that of the Pygmy to that of the Swede associate dominance and attainment with males?" The argument that males are more aggressive because they have been socialized that way is the equivalent of a claim that men can grow moustaches because boys have been socialized that way.

In other words, the world's patterns of socialization and social institutions have not

developed of "psycho-physiological tendencies." Rather, socialization and social institutions merely reflect- and sometimes exaggerate- those inborn tendencies. Societies around the world expect males to dominate because that is what their members observe. They then reflect this natural tendency in their socialization and social institutions.

In short, males "have a lower threshold for the elicitation of dominance behvaiour… a greater tendency to exhibit behaviour is necessary in any environment to attain dominance in hierarchies and male-female encounters and relationships". Males have "greater willingness to sacrifice the rewards of other motivations- the desire for affection, health, family life, safety, relaxation, vacation and the like- in order to attain dominance and status.

This principle does not apply to every male or every female but to statistical averages. All those averages, in large numbers, become determinative. Only one interpretation of the cross-cultural evidence of why these social institutions "always work in the same direction" is valid. Male dominance of society is simply "an inevitable social resolution of the psycho-physiological reality." Any interpretation other than inborn differences is "wrongheaded, ignorant, tendentious, internally illogical, discordant with the evidence, and implausible in the extreme."

While this reality does lead to discrimination against women, whether or not one approves the results is not the point. The point is that this is the way humans are regardless of how we feel about it or may wish it were different (Goldberg:1974).

1.5 An Emerging Position in Sociology :

Without losing sight of the social experience that mold feminity and masculinity or taking the extreme position that biology determines human behaviour, many sociologists acknowledge that biological factors may be involved, Alice Rossi (1984), a feminists sociologist and former president of the American Sociological Association, has suggested that women are better biologically for "mothering" than are men, that women are more sensitive to such stimuli as the infant's soft skin or their nonverbal communications. Her basic point is that it is not necessary to take either-or positions. The issue is not biology or society; it is that nature provides biological predispositions, which are then overlaid with culture.

This assumption is supported by a bizarre case, one that no ethical experimenter

would dare to have attempted. The drama began in 1963, when seven month old identical twin boys were taken to a doctor for a routine circumcision (Money and Ehrhardt: 1972). The inept physician, who was using electocautery (a heated needle, turned the electric current too high and accidentally burned off the penis of one of the boys. You can imagine the parents' reaction of disbelief- followed by horror as the truth sank in.

What can be done in a situation like this? The change was irreversible. The parents were told that the child could never have sexual relations. After months of soul-wrenching agonies and tearful consultations with experts, the parents decide that their son should have a sex-change operation. When he was seventeen months old, surgeons used the boy's own skin to construct a vagina. The parents then gave the child girl's name, dressed him in frilly clothing, let his hair grow long, and began to treat him as a girl. Later, physicians gave the child female steroids to promote female pubertal growth.

At first the results were extremely promising. When the twins were four and a half years old, the mother said (remember that the children are identical biological counterparts):

One thing that really amazes me is that she is so feminine. I have never seen a little girl so neat and tidy. ..She likes for me to wipe her face. She does not like to be dirty, and yet my son is quite different. I can not wish his for anything… She is very proud of herself, when she puts on a new dress, or I set her hair…She seems to be daintier (Money and(Ehrhardt:1972).

About a year later, the mother described how their daughter imitated her while their son copied his father.

I found that my son, he chose very masculine things like a fireman, or policeman…He wanted to do what daddy does, work where daddy does, and carry a lunch kit… And (my daughter) did not want any of those things. She wants to be a doctor or a teacher…But none of the things that she ever wanted to be were like a policeman or a fireman, and that sort of thing never appealed to her…I think it is since if your boy wants to be a policeman or a fireman or something and the girl wants to do girl things like doctor or teaching, or something like that, I have tried to show them that is very good (Money and Ehrhardt: 1972).

1.6   SUM UP:

In the matter were this clear-cut, we could use this case to conclude that gender is entirely up to nurture. Seldom are things in life so simple, however, and a twist occurs in this story. In spite of her parents' coaching and the initially encouraging results, the twin whose sex had been redesigned did not adapt well to femininity. Milton Diamond (1982), a medical researcher, reports that at age thirteen she was unhappy and having a difficult time adjusting to being a female. She walked with a masculine gait, and was called "cavewoman" by her peers.

We certainly need more evidence about this individual's life experiences to understand what we can learn from this case. At this point, we do not know to what degree biology influences male/female behaviour, but we do know that biological are not a legitimate reason for social inequality.

1.7   CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

Q1   Explain the Biology Vs. Gender debate?

Q2   Explain gender being a category of analysis?

Q3   Explain Gender as an emerging position in Sociology?

1.8   REFERENCES :

Diamond, Milton (1982), "Sexual Identity: Monozygotic Twins Reared in Discordant Sex Roles and a BBC Follow Up", Archives of Social Behaviour, 11 (2), 181-186.

Epstein, Cynthia Fuchus (1988), Deceptive Distinctions: Sex, Gender and the Social Order, New Heaven: Connecticut: Yale University Press.

Goldberg, Steven (1974), The Inevitability of Patriarchy, New York: William Morrow.

Money, John and Anke A. Ehrhardt (1972), Man and Woman, Boy and Girl, Balitmore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

****

STRUCTURE

2.1   EQUALITY V/S DIFFERENCES

Introduction :

In all societies the differences between men and women have been translated into social differentiation. Sex is used everywhere as a basis for the assignment of social

positions. Social differentiation by sex normally has implication for stratification structure. Although some societies have displayed a reasonable equality between the sexes, the most common historical experience is the dominance of males over females.

Why is social differentiation and social stratification along sex lines a constant feature of social life. There are two conflicting social explanations. Some offer a cultural argument. These people, cheered on by women's liberationists, attribute all but the most obviously physical differences between the sexes to learning. If Russian women, the argument goes, can load boxcars and become doctors, why are these considered odd occupations for women in other cultures? In this way, the most important differences between men and women in their cultural heritage. Opposing these environmentalists are those who contend that the basic sexual division of labour) women working at home, men employed outside the home) finds its origin in unavoidable biological facts.

It is difficult for females to translate their learned interests in things like dolls, fashion, and homemaking into the capacities required to succeed in business, government, or the professions. It is infinitely easier for males to make the transition into the world of works because so many of their play activities- cowboys, spacemen, and sports- prepare them for a "man's world". Consequently, many women never question their traditional social positions, some consciously choose marriage instead of employment, and others find the barriers to occupational achievement in traditionally male positions too high and the social-psychological costs too great to merit a prolonged struggle.

Yet, an increasing proportion of women in advanced industrialized countries are working outside the home. For this reason, the discrimination against women in the labour market assumes more importance. A very small percentage of women reach the upper levels in their professional life. It is true that women have made significant legal gains.

There are several reasons for this inequality between the sexes. In the first place, women may choose marriage and family because their cultural background tells them it is the right course to take, or they may go to this route because of the difficulties they must face when competing with men. Second, despite the strong current of liberation for women, it is still they who must bear the children. Moreover, they are still expected to handle their primary responsibility- the home- before pursuing a career. Attempting to balance, both puts women at a disadvantageous situation. Third, because women may stop working

15

wither for marriage or other family responsibility; employers are discouraged from placing them in responsible positions and from investing money and training time in them. Finally, it is primarily men who hire, fire, and reward women. Doubtlessly, culturally derived biases often cause men to evaluate and reward women on grounds unrelated to qualification and performance. However it must be kept in mind that these are current rules of the game; the future show that autonomy is not destiny ((Shepard: 1974)

Carol Gilligan has developed an analysis of gender differences based on the images of adult women and men have of themselves and their attainments (Gilligan: 1982). Women, she argues with Chodorow (1978), define themselves in terms of personal relationships, and judge their achievements by reference to the ability to care for others. Women's place in the lives of men is traditionally that of caretaker and helpmate. But the qualities developed in these tasks are frequently devalued by men, who see their own emphasis on individual achievement as the only form of 'success'. Concern with relationships on the part of women appears as a weakness rather than the strength it often is.

Gilligan carried out a number of intensive interviews with about two hundred American women and men of varying ages and social backgrounds. She asked all the interviewees a range of questions concerning their moral outlook and conception of self. Consistent differences emerged between the views of the women and those of the men. For instance, the interviewees were asked: 'What does it mean to say something is morally right or wrong?' Whereas the men tended to respond this question by mentioning abstract ideals of duty, justice and individual freedom, the women persistently raised the theme of helping others. The women were more tentative in their moral judgments than the men, seeing possible conflicts between following a strict moral code and avoiding harming others. Gilligan suggests that this outlook reflects the traditional situation of women. Anchored in caring relationships rather than in the 'outward-looking' attitudes of men, women have in the past deferred to the judgments of men, while being aware that they have qualities which most males lack. Their views of themselves are based on successfully fulfilling the needs of others, rather than pride in individual achievement.

This chapter analyzes social construction of gender in context to equality v/s difference and deals with the following aspects:

1.   Historicity of Sexual Difference,

16

2.   Psychoanalysis: Equality and Difference,

3.   Feminism: Equality and Difference,

4.   Contemporary Feminism and Equality-Difference,

5.   Construction of Sexual Identity: Equality and Difference:

A commitment to sexual equality does not tell us itself what shape that equality should take. Equal pay for the jobs, women do or equal shares in the job done by men? Do women have equal opportunities to compete with men or numerical equality in each sphere of life? Do women have equal responsibility for housework and children or better conditions at home? Those who describe themselves as feminists have been almost as much at odds over such issues as their opponents. We may explore the answers of these questions in this chapter.

2.2   Historicity of Sexual Difference :

Old age dilemma of equality versus difference is very complicated one. When people first hear of feminism they often assume it denies sexual differences: 'anything he can do, I can do too." Yet as long as women bear children there is at least one inescapable difference between the sexes, and many recent writings have identified women's role in reproduction as the source and the mechanism of patriarchal power. What do such arguments imply? Do they mean we should aim to obliterate all differences, and if so, how far can we go? In the course of the seventies, it became commonplace to talk of the distinction between sex and gender; to use the former when referring to an inescapable biological difference, and the latter for the construction society puts upon it. That women bear children, for example, is a biological fact. That they then have exclusive responsibility pattern of gender relations, and one that is open to change. In the eighties, this approach too has been seen as rather glib, with feminism moving much more thoroughly towards the assertion of sexual difference.

Androgyny is not fashionable in the women's movement today. Fifteen to twenty years ago the aspiration to equality might well have been expressed in the longing to be a 'person' instead of a 'woman', in a desire to escape the stereotypes and definitions of sex. Today the emphasis would be different, and partly, of course, because of the very existence of a movement that has helped women assert themselves with pride. Adrienne Rich, for

17

example, gave theoretical expression to the politics of lesbian separatism when she argued that women have a fundamental attachment to one another, and that they are only wrenched into relationships with men through a complex of power relations that imposed heterosexuality as the norm (Rich:1980). Dale Spender has rewritten the feminist project as the assertion of women's experience and values over and against the different values of men (Spender: 1982). These and other writings combine in a popular rendering that treats women as not only different from, but superior to, men, bearers of essentially 'female' qualities that sometimes replicate too closely for comfort the very stereotypes feminists once tried to avoid: emotional rather than rational; peace-loving rather than destructive; caring about people rather than things. The kind of 'women-centred culture' that is promised in such visions leaves little space for the petty politics of equal rights and opportunities.

2.3   Psychoanalysis: Equality and Difference :

Today's arguments, by contrast, do imply a more essentialist line on sexual difference. Those influenced by psychoanalysis are much more likely to come clean about sexual difference being inevitable, but the content of this difference is shifting and obscure. Elshtain (1987) tells that boys and girls learn who they are by noting that they have different bodies. A 'sexual difference', she suggests, 'is neither an affront, nor an outrage, not a narcissistic injury. A sexual division, on the other hand, one that activity is both a deep wound to the psycho-sexual identity of the human subject as well as a specific damage of an overly rigidified system of stratification and specification'.

Parallel to this assertion of women's power and women's difference- if theoretically worlds apart- are the arguments of psychoanalytic theory, which have entered into American and British debate largely through translations of French feminist writing (e.g. Marks and de Courtivron:1980). Here there is less obviously an essential woman and essential man: the emphasis… is often on the very fragile and precarious nature of woman's sexual identity. But if sexual identity is precarious and shifting, it is still grounded in difference: to be a woman is not to be a man. We are brought back to the perennial and difficult question: if the sexes are different, in what sense and how can they be equal?

Right can only mean applying an equal standard to all- but what if we are different and unequal? What if I have a child to support and you have a none? What if I am weak and you are strong? What if I need more than you? The argument has particular pertinence

18

to sexual equality, for the tension between callings for equal treatment or insisting on women's special needs is one that remains at the heart of feminist dilemmas. For women to have an 'equal right' to work for example they may actually need workplace nurseries; they need extra safety conditions when pregnant; they may need time off to menstruation. Such arguments, of course, can be a hostage to fortune, for once you admit that women are different from men, you may diminish their chances at work. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the difficulty surfaced in the question of protective legislation: should women support the laws which 'protected' them from especially arduous labour (preventing them in Britain from working in the mines, and restricting their employment at night); or should they challenge women's exclusion from certain categories of often higher-paid work? (Phillips: 1987). The dilemma proved an intractable one, with positions shifting over the years, and the general tension of equality versus difference.

2.4   Feminism: Equality and Difference :

When feminists talk of inequalities between women and men, they seem to imply that there is a unity of women: all women this, all men the other. This is most convincing when women are denied their rights under law: when, for example, they are deprived by virtue of their sex from the right to vote; when they are denied as women the right to certain kinds of employment; when regardless of their age, class, race, they all in law subordinate to their husbands. Whenever the law employs sex to deny women rights, then all women are unequal to all men. What remains of this unity once women get their rights in law?

In thinking through some of these problems we can see that they share common ground with the socialist critique of liberalism: the notion that equality is only equality under the law; the idea that formal equality legitimizes real inequalities; the idea that it abstracts from differences of race and of class. But the feminist debate on liberalism has not just divided into socialist and liberal camps. Partly of course because radical feminism…stands outside either tradition. But also because of different contexts in which arguments have developed have shaped the political concerns. Equal rights/liberal feminism had few adherents in the emergence of the women's Liberation Movement in Britain, which had little time for what it saw as a 'women into boardrooms' approach, and placed itself more definitely within a radical or socialist tradition.

It is one of the oddities in the tension between equality and difference that representatives from each end of the spectrum can make their case for being the more radical. Advocates of stricter equality have argued- with considerable force- that once feminists admit the mildest degree of sexual difference, they open up a gap through which the currents of reaction will flow. Once let slip that pre-menstrual tension interferes with concentration, that pregnancy can be exhausting, that motherhood is absorbing, and you are off down the slope to separate spheres. It was with good reason that prominent suffragists (like Millicent Garrett Fawcett) argued against emphasizing women's maternal role: the whole point of the movement was to get women out of their stereotyped domesticity, to assert their claims in the public sphere.

But those who have argued for a feminism grounded in sexual difference have their own very plausible case. The politics of equality directs energies to the spheres that are occupied by men, while the predominantly female activities around housework or child care remain obscured as always from view. Women are called on to fit themselves into slots devised for the men, and their own needs are in the process ignored. Why should equality mean women shaping themselves to a world made for men? Why shouldn't the world be made to change its future?

In the history of the women's movement there has been usually been a class dimension to equality versus difference. In the nineteenth century, for example, it was middle-class women who felt themselves most acutely victimized by the doctrine of separate spheres, for they were the ones whose feminity was most explicitly defined through denying them useful work. The feminism this generated was primarily about challenging exclusion, claiming access to public life, the right to vote and to study and to work. Those feminists who previously refused to engage with issues of maternity on the grounds that this would help push women back into the home were now identified as the voice of middle-class women. In the name of working-class mother the emphasis was then reversed.

The example typifies, for in effect neither position was satisfactory. The equality end of the feminist spectrum had tended to highlight women as workers, while the difference and has highlighted women as mothers. Since most women in practice are both, stressing either aspect to the exclusion of the other is usually a dangerous choice. Thus if the call for better contraceptive advice, more midwives, improved ante-natal care, 'family endowment'

and so on, marked an important and welcome emphasis on the problems women faced as mothers, it also ran the risk of denying women's need for paid work. When the working mother came under threat in 1940s and 1950s- with wartime nurseries shut down and women encouraged to se their place in the home- feminists by and large were ill prepared in her defence. Campaigns for paid employment had become too closely identified with the limited needs of better-off women, and feminism had temporarily lost the language in which to assert women's equal right to work (Riley: 1983). Equality and difference had become too counter-posed in the politics with, in this instance, unfortunate results.

2.5   Contemporary Feminism and Equality-Difference :

The main thrust of the debate in contemporary feminism has come from the influence of psychoanalytic theory on the one hand and the celebration of a woman-identified woman on the other. The earlier arguments were usually put in terms of which aspects of women's lives feminists should concentrate their activities: those where women were claiming an equality with men? Or those that were traditionally the woman's concern? The argument was not so much about whether men and women were in principle different, for while this continually discussed. It was not really the issue of stake.

2.6   Construction of Sexual Identity: Equality and Difference :

Sally Alexander sees subjectivity and sexual identity as 'constructed through a process of differentiation, division and splitting, and best understood as a process which is always in the making, is never finished as complete' (Alexander: 1987). The process is none the less fundamentally different for the little girl/woman and the little boy/man. Her main concern… is with how the unconscious enters politics, and in particular with the way out understanding of self and sexual identity changes our understanding of class. Thought-provoking as this is, its implications for feminism still need to be spell out: what- other than a difference- does this sexual difference imply? These things may be observed in the process of different social institutions, for example, family, education, economic etc.

2.7   Family Life and Sex Differences :

The traditional family in which the father works full time outside the home and the mother is a full-time homemaker- is no longer the most common arrangement in developed societies. These changes have created both problems and opportunities. On the problem

side, when both parents work outside the home they must find some kind of care for their children during working hours. Since few businesses have day care centers or flexible working hours, this means hiring housekeepers or baby sitters or enrolling the children in a day-care center. Another problem is that even if a husband and wife both work outside the home, the wife usually does most of the housework. Studies show that this lopsidedness is even more likely when the husband is highly paid or has a prestigious job and the wife has a job with a low salary and low prestige. When the wife is highly educated relative to her husband, however, there is a greater tendency for household tasks to be shared (Ericksen, Yancey and Ericksen: 1979). Other studies have shown that the greater the wife's income relative to her husband's, the more power she has in the family and the more she has in the family and the more she takes part in making family decisions.

On the opportunity side, paid jobs seem to give women a sense of worth and freedom that they do not gat at home. Studies indicate that despite the load of managing both home and a job, working wives are happier than homemakers. Even if their jobs are not exciting, or pay poorly, working women's self-esteem is higher than that of women who stay at home (Fierree:1976). For many this means a new sense of power and identity.

2.8   Education and Sex Differences :

Gender can affect academic performance. The differences are quite pronounced in early adolescence, when girls excel in verbal tasks and boys in visual-spatial and mathematical tasks (Maccoby and Jacklin : 1974). But whereas boys who are behind in reading are often placed in remedial classes, visual-spatial tutoring is largely unavailable for girls who might need it. The structure of the class room may also work to the disadvantage of both boys and girls. Studies suggest that girls are rewarded in the pre school years of staying near the teacher; in elementary school, they are praised for being agreeable. Boys tend to be reprimanded for breaking rules, but they are less likely than girls to be rewarded for being passive and agreeable (Ireson: 1978). Although both boys and girls are rewarded for achievement, boys are encouraged to develop their own standards while girls are pressured to conform.

2.9   Employment and Sex Differences :

In 1986 women accounted for almost 45 per cent of the labour force in the United

States. In the year, 58.5 per cent of working women were married, and 61 per cent had children under 18. (US Bureau of the Census: 1988). These figures represent a dramatic increase in women's participation in the labour force since World War II. With respect to blue-collar jobs, a disproportionate number of men hold the highest-status positions, such as foreman and craftsman. Even in industries where women constitute the largest proportion of workers, they may be excluded from crafts jobs. More recently there have been some changes- albeit not especially dramatic ones- in the technical occupations. Women who enter male-dominated professions often find their problems are far from over. Most professions have an internal stratification system. In medicine, for example, women are overrepresented in pediatrics, psychiatry and public health- again the nurturant, "feminine", less well paid specialties- and underrepresented in other areas, particular surgical specialties. Inequities of payment and prestige are not confined to the medical field. The incomes of men and women are unequal across the board. In 1986 the average weekly wage for men was $419; for women, it was only $290 (US Bureau of the Census: 1988). There are number of factors that keeps men ahead in the marketplace like the occupational lives of women are more frequently interrupted by family responsibilities, some jobs have less opportunities for the promotions etc.

2.10 SUM UP:

While it is not possible at this time to settle the cultural-biological disagreement, it is safe to say that the real answer lies between the two extremes. Whichever set of factors turns out to be the most influential, it is clear that culture reinforces the universal differentiation and stratification by sex. In America any female interest in traditionally male social positions must fight incredible odds if it is to survive the cultural assault launched by parents, peers, and lovers during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Starting in infancy with pretend tea parties and mother's purses, girls are bombarded with a sufficient cultural barrage to make their preference for traditional female activities seem 'natural', whether it is partially rooted in nature or not.

2.11 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

Q1   Explain the equality and difference in construction of sexual identify?

Q2   Employment and Education as basis of sex difference?

2.12 References:

Alexander, S. (1987), 'Women's work in nineteenth century London', in J.Mitchell and A.Oakley (eds.), The Rights and Wrongs of Women, London: Penguin.

Chodorow, N. (1978), The Reproduction of Mothering, Berkeley, C.A.: University of California Press.

Epstein, C.F. (1974), "Conflict and Contradictions in Women's Roles", in R.L.Coser (ed.) The family: Its Structure and Function, New York: St.Martins Press.

Ericksen, J.A., W. L. Yancey and E.P. Ericksen (1979), "The Division of Family Roles", Journal of Marriage and the Family, 41.

Elshtain, J.B. (1987), 'Against Androgyny", in A.Phillips (ed.) Feminism and Equality, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Firey, W. (1945), "Sentiment and Symbolism as Ecological Variables", American Sociological Review, 10.

Gilligan, Carol (1982), In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press

Ireson, C. (1978), "Girls' Socialization for Work", in A.H. Stromberg and S.Harkness (ed.), Working Women: Theories and Facts in Perspective, Mayfiled: Palo Alto, Calif.

Maccoby, W.C. and Greenley, A.M. (1972), The Psychology of Sex Differences, Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.

Marks, E. and I. De Courtivron (ed.) (1980), New French feminisms: An Anthology, Amherst, M.A.: University of Massachusetts Press.

McDowell, Linda and Rosemary Pringle (ed.) (1992), Defining Women: Social Institutions and Gender Divisions, The Open University: Polity Press.

Philips, A. (1987), Divided Loyalties: Dilemmas of Sex and Class, London: Virago.

Rich, Adrienne (1980), 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Existence', Signs, Vol.5, No.4.

Riley, D. (1983), War in the Nursery, London: Virago.

Spender, Dale (1982), Women of Ideas (And What Men Have Dome To Them), London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Shepard, Jon M. (1974), Basic Sociology: Structure, Interaction and Change, New York: Harper and Row Publisher.

<div align="center">*************</div>

STRUCTURE

3.1   Socialization and Gender Roles :

Gender socialization is a process of gender learning. Early aspects of gender learning by infants are almost certainly unconscious. They precede the stage at which a child can accurately label itself 'a boy' or 'a girl'. A range of pre-verbal clues are involved in the initial development of gender awareness. Male and female adults usually handle infants differently. The cosmetics, women use, contain different scents from those the baby might learn to associate with males. Systematic differences in dress, hairstyle, and so on provide clues

for the infant in the learning process. By the age two, children have a partial understanding of what gender is. They know whether they are 'boys' or 'girls', and can usually categorize others accurately. Not until five or six, however, does a child know that a person's gender does not change, that everyone has gender, or that differences between girls and boys are anatomically based.

The toys, picture books and television programmes with which young children come into contact all tend to emphasize differences between male and female attributes. Toy stores and mail order catalogues usually categorize their products by gender. Even some boys which seem 'neutral' in terms of gender are not so in practice. For example, toy kittens or rabbits are recommended for girls, while lions and tigers are seen as more appropriate for boys.

Vanda Lucia Zammuner studies the toy preferences of children in two different national contexts- Italy and Holland (Zammuner: 1987). Children's views of, and attitudes towards, a variety of toys were analyzed; stereotypically 'masculine' and feminine' toys as well as toys presumed not to be sex-types, were included. The children were mostly aged between seven and ten. Both the children and their parents were asked to assess which toys were 'boys' toys' and which were suitable for girls. There was close agreement between the adults and children. On average, the Italian children chose sex-differential toys to play with more other than the Dutch children- a finding which conformed to expectations, since Italian culture tends to have a more 'traditional' view of gender divisions than Dutch society. As in other studies, girls from both societies chose 'gender neutral' or 'boys' toys' to play with far more than boys wanted to play with 'girls' toys'.

Gender roles are based on behaviour expectations that determine the status of men and women in society. In the case of sex roles, biology is not destiny; women are not consigned to home and hearth in all societies because of their childbearing capacity. The belief that men and women are "naturally" suited to certain roles was dealt a severe blow by Margaret Mead (1935) in her book Sex and Temperament, an account of her observations of three trines in New Guinea. Mead began her study believing there are some basic differences between the sexes. She accepted the idea that the men and women are inherently different and that each sex is best suited to certain roles. Her findings surprised her. In the three trines she studied, the roles of men and women varied greatly and often were directly to opposite to those that are often viewed as "natural" to one sex or the other. Among the

Mbuti pygmies women not specialize in hunting (usually thought to be preserve of males) but continue this activity during pregnancy and take up again shortly after giving birth. Among the Yoruba in Nigeria, women are highly involved in the economy like trading and controls all most two third of economy. Among the African Amazons, in ancient kingdom of Dahomey, almost half of the fighting military were women. Women in other cultures have played important military roles- for examples, in Yugoslav Liberation movement of the 1940s. In Israel both men and women are expected to serve in combat duty (Oakley:1972). In sum, sex is used by society as a basis for differentiating social roles, but the content of those roles is not biologically determined by such factors as men's greater size and women's capacity to hear young. The variations seem almost infinite, and suggests that our won sex roles are a result of cultural and social forces rather than the "natural" order of things.

In the study of gender, the significance of femininity and masculinity lies in their relation to gender roles (sometimes referred to as sex roles). These are set of expectations and other ideas about how females and males are supposed to think, feel, appear, and behave in relation to other people. In western societies, for example, men who appear and behave in culturally masculine ways are seen as conforming to their gender roles.

There is some disagreement about both the existence of gender roles and their importance for understanding gender inequality. "Feminine" women for example, are expected to defer to husbands, not to brothers or sons, even though in each case the status they occupy- wife, sister, or mother- is inherently females. This suggests that there is no distinct male role or female role (just as there are no distinct race roles or class roles) but only loosely connected sets of ideas about men and women which can in invoked for various purposes, including social control and maintaining a patriarchy as a male-dominated system.

3.2   Formation of Gender Roles :

There are three main bases of socialization in the formation of gender roles. These are as follows :

1.   Family

2.   School and Peer Group

3.	Media and Communication.

These bases develop the images in the minds of the children which later reflect in their behaviour. Therefore we would discuss these bases of socialization to understand the gender roles.

## 1.	Family and Socialization :

Family plays an important role in the process of socialization. Many studies have been carried out of how gender differences develop in the family. Studies of mother-infant interaction show differences in treatment of boys and girls even when parents believe their reactions to both are the same. Adults asked to assess the personality of a baby give different answers according to whether or not they believe the child to be a girl or a boy. In one experiment, five young mothers were observed in interaction with a six-month-old called Beth. They tended to smile at her often and offer her dolls to play with. She was seen as 'sweet', having a 'soft cry'. The reaction of a second group of mothers to a child the same age, named Adam, was noticeably different. The baby was likely to be offered a train or other 'male toys' to play with. Beth and Adam were actually the same child, dressed in different clothes (Will, Self and Datan: 1976).

It is not only parents and grandparents whose perceptions of the infants differ in this way. One study analyzed the words used about new-born babies by the medical personnel attending births. New born male infants were most often described as 'sturdy', 'handsome', or 'tough'; female infants were more often talked of as 'dainty', 'sweet' or 'charming'. There were no overall size or weight differences between the infants in question (Hansen: 1980).

## 2.	School and Peer-group Influences :

By the time they start school, children have a clear consciousness of gender differences. Schools are not usually supposed to be differentiated by gender. In practice, of course, an array of factors affect girls and boys differently. In many countries, there are still differences in curricula girls and boys follow- home economics or 'domestic science' being studies by the former, for example, woodwork or metal work by the latter. Boys and girls are often encouraged to concentrate on different sports. The attitudes of teachers may subtly or more openly vary towards their female as compared to their male pupils,

reinforcing the expectation that the boys are expected to be the 'performers', or tolerating greater rowdiness among boys than girls. Peer-group socialization tends to play a major part in reinforcing and further shaping gender identity throughout a child's school career. Children's friendship circles, in and out of school, are normally either all-boy or all-girl groups.

3.   Media and Communication :

In modern times, media is influencing the behaviour of children particularly the programmes of television. Although there are some notable exceptions, analyses of television programmes designed for children conform to the findings about children's books. Studies of the most frequently watched cartoons show that virtually all the leading figures are male, and that males dominate the active pursuits depicted. Similar images are found in the commercials that appear at regular intervals throughout the programmes.

Books and Stories :

Some twenty years ago, Lenore Weitzman and her colleagues carried out an analysis of gender roles in some of the most widely used pre-school children's books (Weitzman et al.:1972), finding several clear differences in gender roles. Males played a much larger part in the stories and pictures than females, outnumbering females by a ratio of 11 to 1. Including animals with gender identities, the ratio was 95 to 1. The activities of males and females also differed. The males engaged in adventurous pursuits and outdoor activities demanding independence and strength. Where girls did appear, they were shown as passive and confined mostly to indoor activities. Girls cooked and cleaned for the males, or awaited their return.

Much of the same was true of the adult men and women represented in the story-books. Woken who were not wives and mothers were imaginary creatures like witches of fairy godmothers. There was not a single woman in all the books analyzed who had an occupation outside the home. By contrast, the men were depicted in a large range of roles, as fighters, policeman, judges, kings and so forth. More recent research suggests that things have changed somewhat, but that the large bulk of children's literature and remains much the same (Davies: 1991).

Picture-books and story-books written from a non-sexist perspective have still

made little impact in the overall market for children's literature. Fairly tales, for example, embody very traditional attitudes towards gender, and towards the sorts of aims and ambitions girls and boys are expected to have. "Some day my prince will come'- in version of fairy tales several ago, this usually implied that a girl from a poor family might dream of wealth and fortune. Today, its meaning has become more closely tied to the ideals of romantic love.

3.3   The Difficulty of Non-sexist Childbearing :

June Statham studies the experiences of a group of parents in the UK committed to non-sexist childrearing. Thirty adults in eighteen families were involved in the research, having children aged from six months to twelve years. The parents were of middle-class background, mostly involved in academic background as teachers or professors. Statham found that most of the parents did not simply try to modify traditional sex roles- by seeking to make girls more like boys- but wanted to foster new combinations of the 'feminine' and 'masculine'. They wished boys to be more sensitive to others' feelings and capable of expressing warmth while girls were encouraged to have an active orientation opportunities for learning and self-advancement.

All the parents found existing patterns of gender learning difficulty to combat, as their children were exposed to these when with friends and at school. The parents were reasonably successful at persuading the children to play with non-gender-typed toys, but even this proved more difficult than many of them had expected. Practically all the children in fact possessed, and played with, gender-typed toys, given to them by relatives. There are now story-books available with strong, independent girls as the main characters, but few boys in non-traditional roles. Clearly, gender socialization is very powerful, and challenge to it can be upsetting.

3.4   The Cultural Division of Labour :

Ann Oakley, a British sociologists and a supporter of the women's liberation movement comes down strongly on the side of culture as a determinant of gender roles. She expressed, 'Nor only is the division of labour by sex not universal but there is no reason why it should be'. Human cultures are diverse and endlessly variable and they owe their creation to human inventiveness rather than invincible biological forces. Oakley reviews the arguments made by George peter Murdock on sexual division of labour being universal

and the tasks of male-female divided as per their functional roles. She claims this aspect of Murdock's being biased and western in approach typecasting the role of women in terms of 'expressive' rather than both a combination of expressive and instrumental function.

Oakley examines a number of societies in which biology appears to have little or no influence on women's roles. The Mbuti Pygmies, a hunting and gathering society who live in the Condo rain forests, gave no specific rules of the division of labour by sex. Men and women hunt together. The role of father and mother are not differentiated, both sexes sharing the responsibility for the care of children. Amongst the Australian aborigines of Tasmania, both men and women were responsible for seal hunting, fishing and catching opossums (tree dwelling mammals).

Turning to the present day societies, Oakley notes that women form an important part of many armed forces, particularly those of China, Russia, Cuba and Israel. Hence, Oakley claims that the above examples shows that there are no exclusively female roles and that biological characteristics do not bar women from particular jobs. She regards the supposed' biological based incapacity of women to carry our heavy and demanding work' as a myth.

Oakley comments on Parsonian viewpoint as promoting a biased system of beliefs centering the life of a woman around expressive domains. She argues that expressive housewife mother role is not necessary for the functioning of the family unit. It merely exists for the convenience of men. She further claims that Parson's explanation of gender roles is simply a validating myth for the domestic oppression of women. Hence Oakley expression is a positive recourse of a sublime womanhood to an all-encompassing wider domain of talents and innate strength.

Friedl provides another explanation for the sexual division of labour and male dominance. She supports a cultural explanation noting the great variation in gender roles between societies. For example she observes that in some societies, activities such as weaving, pottery making and tailoring are thought to be 'naturally men's tasks, in other's women's. However, it is significant that in societies where men perform such tasks, these carry higher prestige than in the ones where they are performed by their female counterparts. Friedl views this as a reflection of male dominance, which she maintains, exists to some degree in all societies. She defines 'male dominance' as a situation in

which males have highly preferential access, although not always exclusive rights those activities to which society accords the greatest value and the exercise of which permits measure of control over others.' She further comments that the degree of male dominance is a consequences of the frequency with which men have greater rights than women to distribute goods outside the domestic group. This activity brings great prestige and power to the men section. She verified it by examining a few hunting and gathering societies. Hence Friedl's ideas are novel and interesting and reveal a fascinating interplay between biology and culture.

3.5   Differentiation in Socialization Process :

Educationist Krishna Kumar's (1986) experiences of "growing up male" are amply substantiated by anthropologists Leela Dube (1988) and psycho-analyst Sudhir Kakar's studies of male and female socialization in India. Thus, watching girls heading straight home in "silent cluster" from school led Kumar to believe that "girls are not Individuals". As boys, he and his peers were free to spend time on the way, experiment with the cycles and watch the world go by. Such joys were rarely available to a large section of middle class girls. For those girls in the villages who have to earn a living, or help at home and do odd jobs for fetching and carrying, restrictions on movement are not so severe. If you live in a village you will observe that a girl can, until puberty be allowed to move about quite freely on public places. You perhaps think that she could be spending that time in school. If you are an urban dweller, you will be familiar with discussions at home, or perhaps on the radio and television, of how difficult it is for parents to allow their daughters to stay back after school hours, to participate in extra-curricular activities. Parents and guardians are constantly bothered with their safety on public buses; and, in any case there is always the question of relations and friends who want to know why it is necessary for girls to play football or learn music. She is expected to be at home for household chores. Such questions, however, are less often raided in case of boys, who are most of the time late in coming home etc. A part of the stereotyping process assumed that boys, more than girls, have a right to more independence and self-expression. Expectations and obligations are more rigid in the case of girls, and their rights are accordingly fewer.

3.6   Sum Up:

3.7   Check Your Progress

Q1   What is Gender Role Socialization?

Q2   On what basis we formulate Gender Role?

Q3   Explain Cultural division of labour on the basis of Gender.

3.5   References :

Davies, Bronwyn (1991), Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tales, Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Dubey. Leela (1988), "Socialization of Hindu Girls in Patrilineal India", in Karuna Chanana (ed.), Socialization, Education and Women, New Delhi: Orient Longmans.

Hansen, I. (1980), 'Sex education for young children', quoted in J.Scanzoni and G.L.Fox, 'Sex Role, Family and Society', Journal of Marriage and the Family, 42.

Hakkar, Sudhir (1978), The Inner World, New Delhi: Oxford University Pres.

Kumar, K. 91986), "Growing up Male", Seminar; 318.

Will, J. P.Self and N.Datan (1976), 'Maternal Behaviour and Perceived Sex of Infant', American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 46.

Zammuner, Vanda Lucia (1987), 'Children's Sex-role Stereotypes: A Cross-cultural Analysis', in Phillip Shaver and Clyde Hendrick, Sex and Gender, London: Sage.

****

STRUCTURE

4.1 Patriarchy as Ideology and Practice

4.2 Sylvia Walby notes

4.3 References

4.1 Patriarchy as Ideology and Practice

Concept of Patriarchy :

The word patriarchy literally means the rule of the father or the "patriarch", and originally it was used to describe a specific type of "male-dominated family"- the large household of the patriarch which included women, junior men, children, slaves and domestic servants all under the rule of this dominant male. Now it is used more generally to refer to male domination, to the power relationships by which dominate women, and to characterize a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways.

Patriarchy is a concept which is a tool to help in understanding of the social realities. It is defined by different people in different ways. Juliet Mitchell, a feminist psychologist, uses the word patriarchy to refer to kinship systems in which men exchanges women, and to the symbolic power that fathers exercise within these systems. This power, she says, is responsible for the "inferiorized" psychology of women.

Hartmann (1981) has defined patriarchy as a set of social relations between men,

which have a material base, and which though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women.

Sylvia Walby in her book, Theorizing Patriarchy calls it "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women." She argues that it is important to understand patriarchy as a system because this helps us to reject the notion of biological determinism (which says that men and women are naturally different because of their biology or bodies and are therefore assigned different position and every woman in a subordinate one.

4.2   Sylvia Walby notes :

The concept of 'patriarchy' has come under particular criticism on the part of those worried about essentialism. Yet the generalizing relevance of patriarchy needs to be defended; there are some quite generic ways in which women's experience, in a variety of different societies, differs from that of typical of men. The concept of patriarchy is capable of general application as long as it is not treated in a monolithic way. Patriarchy, Walby argues, consists of several major structural characteristics, found in various combinations in all societies. The nature of patriarchal power has changed very substantially with the advent of modern industrial capitalism; but we cannot even analyze such changes if we do not recognize that they involve factors of a very general nature.

If patriarchy is indeed more or less universal, it probably has psychological as well as social roots. In searching for these Freud's writings have an obvious relevance. Yet as Nancy Chodorow recognizes the relations between feminism and psychoanalytic theory has changed an ambivalent one. Many feminist have found Freud's theory wanting. Although it is largely based upon clinical case histories of women, it places prime emphasis upon male psychosexual development. The idea of 'penis envy', seen by Freud to be central to women's experience, has been thought by many to be sexist in the extreme. For Chodorow, however, Freud's ideas provide fundamental insights into both male and female development- if these insights are substantially modified in certain ways. Freud's writings, in her view, certain several breakthroughs relevant to the understanding of gender difference. Freud showed that there is no biological connection between gender and sexuality; feminist and masculinity are not innate. He demonstrated that there is no specific connection between gender and heterosexuality either: all sexual activity is

36

on a continuum. In addition, Freud made clear that the degree to which gender and sexual identity are developed around early relations to parental figures. Freud's theory was certainly sexist. He treats as something entirely natural, for instance, that little girls finds their genitals inferior to those of little boys. Yet Freud's own ideas often crosscut, and in fact largely subvert, his own misogyny. Psychoanalytic theory can be used to explore how it comes about that male dominance is reproduced from generation to generation.

Some people do believe that men are born to dominate and women to be subordinate. They believe that this hierarchy has always existed and will continue, and that like other rules of nature this one too cannot be changed. There are others who challenge this beliefs and say that patriarchy is not natural, it is man-made and therefore it can be changed. It has not always existed, it had a beginning and therefore it can have an end. In fact for over a hundred years this natural and universal and those who say it is not.

Juliet Mitchel (1971) offered an interesting alternative framework in which patriarchy was treated as essentially ideological and capitalism as primarily economic. At least in this account they were part of the same social structure, functionally interconnected, even if they remained almost entirely separate. Mitchell noticed that 'Without a highly articulated, ramified ideological world, a consumer society could not exist' and went on the argue that 'in a consumer society, the role of ideology is so important that it is within the sphere of ideology that the oppressions of the whole system sometimes manifest themselves most apparently. However, she said little more about the system of consumption and left housework almost entirely out of account. This chapter explains the concept of patriarchy in its different perspectives as following:

1.   The Ideology of Patriarchy,

2.   The Traditionalist View of Patriarchy,

3.   Radical feminist and Patriarchy

4.   Socialist Feminist and Patriarchy,

1.   The Ideology of Patriarchy :

The ideology of gender- especially the assumptions that women are (or should be) primarily housewives and mothers and secondarily workers- in fact permeates most policies

of the modern State, and seen as or affects women's material situation in distinct ways- in justifying a discriminatory wage structure (including an unequal workpoint and land allotment system in present day socialist China), a double burden of work and an equal access to technology, information, credit, training and productive measures (Agarwal:1988). Indeed ideology plays a crucial role in the social construction of gender and in the process of women's subordination. The family, the community, the media, the educational, legal, cultural and religious institutions, all variously reflect, reinforce, shape and create prevailing ideological norms- norms which may well conflict with and contradict one another, and usually vary in their specification and enforcement across classes and regions. State and the ideology of gender in Asia, can be found be found of the State operating through all or some of these institutions to push forward a particular ideology for legitimizing its positions and policies, or to mediate between prevailing contradictory ideologies, or to set itself up in opposition to a prevailing ideology. What is striking, though, is that the content of this ideological two aspects- the domestication of women and control over females sexuality (Agarwal: 1988).

Srinivasan (1988) provided example that how religion, politics and state power reinforced in domesticating women and controlling their sexuality. She describes a process by which a community of women, the devadasis, were deprived of their singularly privileged social and economic position as well as ritual status in the late 19th century Tamil Nadu, in the name of community reform, as a result of organized pressure from upper case Hindu mostly male professionals- doctors, administrators, journalists and social workers. Strongly influenced by Christian morality and religion, they joined the missionaries seeking a ban on the devadasi system by launching the 'anti-nautch' movement- holding protest demonstrations, boycotting dance functions, and publicizing the system as prostitution. Paradoxically, alongside the reform movement, a 'revivalist' movement was launched, primarily by the theosophists on the grounds of preserving Indian culture and tradition but with a significant modifications- they sought to preserve (revive) the dance form without the system which gave the devadasis power and position, and projected the ancient temple dancer as a pure, holy and sexually chaste woman. The colonial state, Srinivisan argues, with a stake in encouraging regionalism and cultural divisions, sided with those pressing for a ban on temple dedication. By the time legislation was actually passed in 1947 however, the practice had already died, leaving space for the 'revival' of dance but shorn of its social

38

roots and of the privileged position accorded to the dancer.

The use of religious ideology and State power to push women into domesticity and control their sexuality is, however, revealed in its starkest form in many present-day Islamic States. Afshar (1988) describes how women projected as biologically and socially inferior, are not allowed the same access as men to law and justice- their evidence is unacceptable in court unless collaborated by a man, the diyat or blood money required to be paid to the family of a murdered woman by the murderer's relatives is half that required for a man, and women are barred from studying, teaching or practicing law.

2.   The Traditionalist View of Patriarchy :

Traditionalists everywhere accept patriarchy as biologically determined. According to Gerda Lerner (1986), "traditionalists, whether working within a religious or a 'scientific' framework, have regarded women's subordination as universal, God given, or natural, hence immutable…What has survived, survived because it was best; it follows that it should stay that way." She summarizes the traditionalist argument in the following way : it may be offered in religious terms according to which women are subordinate to men because they were so created and consequently were assigned different roles and tasks. All known societies subscribe to such a "division of labour" which has been based on a primary biological difference between the sexes: because their biological functions are distinct, they must "naturally" have different social roles and tasks. And because these differences are natural, no one can be blamed for sexual inequality or male dominance. According to traditionalist arguments, because women produce children, their chief goal in life is to become mothers, and their chief task, child bearing and child-rearing.

The corollary to this argument is that men, having greater physical strength become hunters and providers- and by extension warriors- while women, because they produce children and are engaged in nurturing and mothering, require protection by men. This biological, deterministic explanation, she says, comes down, unbroken, from the stone-age to present times and it believes that man is born superior.

Explanations which consider men biologically superior and the main providers of families have however been disapproved on the basis of research done on hunting and gathering societies. In all these societies, big hunt provided food for only some of the time; the main and regular food supply came through the gathering activities of women and

children. Moreover, in hunter-gatherer societies there is evidence of the existence of tremendous complementarily between mean and women. In South Asia today we find that in tribal societies women command a great deal of respect, and differences in the status of mean and women are much less disadvantageous to women.

Then again, if male superiority and the sexual division of labour were "natural" we would not find much vast differences in the way men and women's roles are defined in different societies. There are many traditional or primitive societies in which biological differences do not make for too much hierarchy in status and power between men and women.

Such traditionalist views were, however, not the monopoly of religious ideology. Pseudo-scientist theories have also been propagated to prove that men are superior and women inferior. Many of them argue that because women bear children and menstruate they are incapacitated and hence disabled.

Aristotle propounded similar "theories" and called males active, females passive. For him female was "mutilated male", someone who does not have a soul. In his view the biological inferiority of women makes her inferior also in her capacities, her ability to reason and therefore her ability to make decisions. Because man is superior and woman inferior, he is born to rule and she, born to be ruled. He said "the courage of man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying".

Several feminists have pointed out that modern psychology has also perpetuated similar views. It claims that women's biology determines their psychology and, therefore, their abilities and roles. Sigmund Freud, for example stated that for women "anatomy is destiny". Freud's normal human was male, the female, by is definition, a deviant human being lacking a penis, whose entire psychological structure supposedly centred around the struggle to compensate for this deficiency. Popularized Freudian doctrine then became the perspective text for educators, social workers and the general public.

Many people have challenged all these theories of male supremacy. They have proved that there is no historical or scientific evidence for such explanation. Human beings have distanced themselves from nature, they have changed. Biology is no more their destiny. There are indeed biological differences between men and women which may even lead to some differences between men and women which may even lead to

40

some differences in their roles, but they do not have to become the basis of a sexual hierarchy in which men are dominant. The dismantling of many of these theories enables us to recognize that patriarchy is man-made; historical processes have created it.

Engels' Explanation of the Origin of Patriarchy :

A very important explanation for the origin of patriarchy was given by Frederick Engels in 1884 in his book, Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State. Engels believed that women's subordination began with the development of private property, when according to him, "the world historical defeat of the female sex" took place. He says both the division of classes and the subordination of women developed historically. There was a time when there were no class-gender differences. He speaks of three phases of society- savagery, barbarism, and civilization. In savagery human beings lived almost like animals, gathered food and hunted. Ancestry was through the mother, there was no marriage and no notion of private property.

Gathering and hunting continued during the phase of barbarism and gradually agriculture and animal husbandry were developed. Men started moving further to hunt, while women stayed home both to mind the children and to look after the homestead. A sexual division of labour gradually developed, but women had power, and also had control over the gens (clans or communities with a common origin). Within the gens where were no classes but there were conflicts between one gen and another.

When men started domesticating animals, they also understood the principle of impregnation. They developed weapons for bigger hunt. Which were then also used in inter-group fights. Slavery developed. Gens started acquiring animals and slaves, especially female slaves. This led to move division among the sexes. Men acquired power over others and started accumulating wealth in the form of animals and slaves. All this led to the formation of private property. Men wanted to retain power and property, and pass it on to their own children. To ensure this inheritance, mother-right was overthrown. In order to establish the right of the father, women had to be domesticated and confined and their sexuality regulated and controlled. According to Engels it was in this period, and for these reasons, that both patriarchy and monogamy for women were established.

Because surplus was now produced in areas controlled by men, women became economically dependent. Modern civilization, according to Engels was based on restricting

women to the sphere of the home in order to produce heirs to inherit property. This, he said, was the beginning of the sexual double standard in marriage. According to him, with the development of the state, the monogamous family changed into the patriarchal family in which the wife's household labour became a "private service the wife became a head servant, excluded from all participation in social production.

Engles and other Marxists explained women's subordination only in economic terms. They argued that once private property was abolished and women joined the labour force, patriarchy would disappear. The primary contradiction for them was not between sexes but between classes. The strategy suggested for women's emancipation was their joining the labour force and joining their men in class struggle.

3.   Radical feminist and Patriarchy :

According to the radical feminists, patriarchy preceded private property. They believe that the original and basic contradiction is between the sexes and not between economic classes. Radical feminists consider all women to be a class. Unlike the traditionalists however they do not believe that patriarchy is natural or that it has always existed and will continue to do so.

According to their analysis gender differences can be explained in terms of biological or psychological differences between men and women. Shulamith Firestone says women are oppressed because of reproduction. She believes that basis of women's oppression does lie in women's reproductive capacity insofar as this has been controlled by men.

Some radical feminists say there are two systems of social classes: (i) the economic class system which is based on relations of production and (ii) the sex-class system which is based on relations of reproduction (Jeffery). It is the second system that is responsible for the subordination of women. According to them the concept of patriarchy refers to this second system of classes, to be the rule of women by men, based upon men's ownership and control of women's reproductive capacities. Because of this women have become physically and psychologically dependent on men. The precise forms of control change according to the cultural and historical periods and according to developments in the economic class system. However, it is the constancy of men's power and control over women's reproductive capacities which revolutionary feminists argue constitutes the unchanging basis of patriarchy. But these feminists also say that it is not women's biology

itself, but the value men place on it and the power they derive from their control over it that are oppressive.

There are other radical feminists who see patriarchy linked not to women's biology but to men's biology. Susan Brownmiller (1976) says women have been subordinate because of men's ability to rape them. She says man uses his ability to rape, to intimidate and control women. This she says has led to male dominance over women and to male supremacy. And Gerda Lerner, "Elizabeth Fischer ingeniously argued that the domestication of animals taught men their role in procreation and the practice of forced mating of animals led men to the idea of raping women. She claimed that the brutalization and violence connected with animal domestication led to men's sexual dominance and institutionalized aggression.

Then there are feminists who see patriarchy as connected to male psychology. Mary O'Brien believes that it is men's psychological need to compensate for their inability to bear children which made them construct institutions of dominance. Radical feminists believe that because of their biology and/or psychology men and women belong to two separate classes. Men are the ruling class and they rule through the direct use of violence, which in time, becomes institutionalized (jaggar:1993).

Radical feminists have been critiqued for accepting biological determinism as a given. If this is so them how does one change society? They have also been challenged for not exploring the connections between the sex class system and the economic class system, for treating them as autonomous. Nevertheless, they have made a considerable contribution to theorizing both violence and patriarchy and presented some penetrating insights into the nature of women's subordination.

4.   **Socialist Feminist and Patriarchy :**

Socialist feminists accept and use the basic principles of Marxism but have tried to enrich and extend it by working on areas which, they believe, were neglected by conventional Marxist theory. They try to combine the Marxist and radical feminist positions because they feel both of them have something to contribute but neither is sufficient by itself.

They do not consider patriarchy to be a universal or unchanging system because of

their commitment to a historical, materialist method as well as of their own observations of variety in the sexual division of labour; socialist feminists view the struggle between women and men as changing historically with changes in modes or production (Veronica). They take economic class and sex class as two contradictions in society and try to see the relationship between them. According to them patriarchy is related to the economic system, to the relations of production, but it is not causally related. There are many other forces which influence patriarchy; ideology for example, which has played a very important role in strengthening it. Some believe that patriarchy preceded private property, that, in fact the exploitation of women made it possible. They also believe that, just as patriarchy is not a consequence only of the development of private property so, too, it will not disappear when property is abolished. They look at both the relations of production and the relations of reproduction in their analysis. According to them the whole area of reproduction, family and domestic labour was neglected or inadequately developed by Marxists scholars, and they have directed their attention to these.

Socialist feminists avoid not only the language of "primary" or "principal" contradiction but in general are suspicious of attempts to assert that either class or gender is causally basic to the other. They see the various systems of oppression as connected inseparably with each other (Hartmann).

Zillah Eisenstein, a socialist feminist scholar, says that one concern is how to "formulate the problem of woman as both mother and worker, reproducer and producer". She argues that male supremacy and capitalism are the core relations which determine the oppression of women. She depicts society as comprising "on the one hand, the capitalist labour process in which exploitation occurs, and on the other, the patriarchal sexual hierarchy, in which the woman is mother, domestic labour and consumer and in which the oppression of women occurs. According to her patriarchy is not a direct outgrowth of biological interpretations of differentiation. This is what is meant by social relations of reproduction or sex-gender system.

4.3   REFERENCES :

Agarwal, Bina (1988) (ed.), Structures of Patriarchy: State, Community and Household in Modernizing Asia, New Delhi: Kali for Women.

Afshar, Haleh (1988), 'Behind the Veil: The Public and Private Forces of Khomeini's

Policies on Iranian Women' Structures of Patriarchy: State, Community and Household in Modernizing Asia, New Delhi: Kali for Women.

Brownmiller, Susan (1976), Against our will: Men, Women and rape, New York: Bantam.

Hartmann, Heidi (1981), "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union", In L.Sargent, Women and Revolution, London: Pluto.

Jaggar, Alison (1993), Feminist Politics and Human Nature, New Jersey: Rowman and Allanheld.

Jeffery, Sheila, "The Need for Revolutionary Feminism", quoted in Veronica Beechy, "On Patriarchy", Feminist Review, 3.

Lerner, Gerda (1986), The Creation of Patriarchy, New York: Oxford University press.

Mitchel, J. 91971), Women's Estate, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Srinivasan, Amrit (1988), 'Reform of Conformity? Temple 'Prostitution' and the Community in the Madras Presidency', Structures of Patriarchy: State, Community and Household in Modernizing Asia, New Delhi: Kali for Women.

Sylvia, Walby (1990), Theorizing Patriarchy, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

****

5.0 STRUCTURE

5.0 Introduction

5.1 Occupational continuity

5.2 Food and Rituals

5.3 Marriage and Sexuality

5.4 Conclusion

5.5 Reference

5.0 Introduction

This essay explores the relationship between caste and gender: it examines the way caste impinges on women's lives and explores the role of women in maintaining and, to some extent, changing caste. The exercise requires us to situate women as conscious acting subjects of social relationships and processes that constitute, reproduce and modify the social system characterized by the institution of caste. Equally, we need to consider the determinate ways in which women are objectified and become instruments in -even as they introduce flexibility to -the structures and processes implicated in the reproduction of caste. The discussion focuses on three interrelated, indeed overlapping, themes - occupational continuity and the reproduction of caste, food and rituals, and finally, marriage and sexuality.

The three basic characteristics of caste, typified as jati, a birth status group, are exclusion or separation (rules governing marriage and contact, which maintain distinctions of caste), hierarchy (the principle of order and rank according to status), and interdependence (the division of labour which is closely tied to hierarchy and separation). These three analytically separable principles of the caste system operate not so much through individuals as through units based on kinship. The maintenance of rules of behaviour and actions specific to one's jati and the patterns of interaction with other birth-status groups, for instance, critically centre on kinship units, particularly the family and the household. We find then that the punishment for transgression of rules and norms of caste leads to the ostracism of the domestic group of the offender unless she is disowned by the household. Women's lives are largely lived within familial parametres. The centrality of the family and the household in their lives cannot therefore be over-emphasized.

Similarly, when we turn to the material bases of caste, the most important form of inequality in the caste system, the unequal distribution of resources and exploitative relations of production, can be understood only through an enquiry into the principles of kinship governing allocation of resources, devolution of rights to property, rights to services, and entitlements. A jati or caste group then functions through its constituent familial units or large-scale kinship units. It is not the jati as a whole but the lineages or familial units which hold material resources. This has crucial implications for gender since within these units there are clear distinctions in respect of the rights and entitlements of their male and female members. Thus, if endogamy has the potential for raising one's family status through the forging of appropriate marital links, it can also initiate a tight squeeze by restricting marital choices and putting pressures for material resources for a daughter's wedding.

5.1   Occupational continuity

Women's work contributes substantially to the occupational continuity of a caste group. It is, of course, true that the growth of new professions and open recruitment to occupations have been important aspects of social change in Indian society. The picture of inalienable unchanging links between traditional occupation and caste was, in any case, vastly overdrawn. At the same time, there are significant continuities in the link between castes and occupation. Agriculture- although now open to all castes - still gives a distinct identity to a large number of castes of 'traditional' cultivators. Equally, some other occupations

47

remain the exclusive privilege of particular castes. A Brahmin, for instance, still performs the functions of the purohit (priest), for upper and middle level castes. Among artisan castes of goldsmiths, blacksmiths, potters and weavers, a few members of the group at the very least are imparted the necessary skills, and make a living by the traditional craft. Finally, most ritually polluting occupations-the curing and tanning of. hides,. the removal of dead animals, scavenging, and the activities of the barber, the washerman, and the midwife retain their association with specific castes.

In these occupations, closely tied to caste, the work of women, carried out as members of households-the basic units of production-is indispensable. It is difficult for weavers and potters to carry on the complex processes of their craft without the continuous help of the women and children of the household, who in turn have well-defined tasks. Women can also take on aspects of men's work: it is not unusual for women from a potter's family to establish contacts with clients and go to the market to assist with the selling of goods. Similarly, basket weaving is a joint activity of men and women. In horticulture, women often carry the major burden of work. In rural areas and small towns it is common for women from households of petty traders and shopkeepers to grind spices and prepare fries, fritters and preserves for sale in the family shop. Despite regional variations, these illustrations underscore the fact that occupational continuity in a large measure depends on women. It is telling that a man who runs away with another man's wife is censured for both 'breaking another man's cooking pot' and 'breaking a household'. The forsaken husband, after all, is left without help to carry out the business of living.

Jajmani relations, short term contractual affiliations between artisans and service castes and landowners, cultivators and traders, and relations of exchange among occupational castes, a feature of many rural and semi-urban areas, function once again at the level of the family. Both men and Women render services and receive remuneration in cash and kind-for their work. Among service castes such as barbers and washermen, women's work in relation to the jajman's family is, indeed, well defined. To the north of the Vindhyas a barber woman renders personal serviees to the women of the jajman's family or a family which engages the barber woman on cash payment which include the cutting of nails, the decoration of feet (with special coloured solutions), a special oil massage....and a bath for a new-born baby and its mother, the supplying of leaf cups and leaf plates for feasts, and the role of companion to the bride during the wedding ceremony. In Chhattisgarh,

48

a Raot (grazier and water-carrier) woman has an important supportive role to play during feasts and ceremonies, bringing water, washing utensils, and grinding spices and soaked pulses for preparing fries and fritters. The castes of both the barber and the water-carrier help in preparing pakka food on ceremonial occasions. In the south, a washer-woman's ritual functions are indispensable for the washing of soiled clothes during the ceremony that goes with the first menstruation. In every region there are specific 'Untouchable' castes whose women work as midwives: these women, along with the men of their caste, share the essential task of removing pollution of upper and clean castes. Finally, in many parts of the country, the bond or contract which ties labourers to their masters is understood to include the services of both the husband and the wife.

The cultural recognition of the significance of women's work in the continuity of caste-linked occupations is clear. At the same time, in order that women pursue these traditional occupations, they have to be trained in them from childhood and have to be socialized into accepting them as proper work which, within limits, is 'destiny'. It has been found that parents may restrict the education of girls to avoid a potentially uncomfortable situation in which the daughter develops a distaste for the traditional occupation of her caste. It then becomes difficult to get her married into an appropriate family. Not formal education, but the capacity and willingness to do traditional work tends to make a girl useful in the husband's family. The necessity of continuing with occupational work is an important basis for marrying within the caste. It is understandable then that a landowning cultivator family of the Kunbi caste in rural Maharashtra should be unhappy when one of its sons, after acquiring education, decides to marry an educated Brahmin girl. What use would she be in an agriculturist's family. Would she be able to call her husband's home her own? Even home-based work linked to cultivation is seen as outside the arena of her experience and below her status.

In situations of change, women often have to take on the resronsibility for continuing caste-based occupations and maintaining the household. When men give up their traditional occupation on account of its low ritual status or inadequate returns, the entire burden of occupational work often falls on the women. Many men migrate to towns leaving behind their families. Women continue their contribution in terms of services or craft, but for want of male help they face the choice of losing their crientele or coping with a doubled work burden. Middlemen intervene. Wives of migrant men often have to work under the authority

of their husband's kin who surround them within the neighbourhood and locality. Thus, women's contribution to occupational continuity is carried out within patrilineal limits and under the impositions and controls of caste.

In a study of scavenger women conducted in Delhi, Karlekar (1976) found that while men were increasingly leaving the ritually 'defiling' occupation of their caste, women remained in the same traditional field. These women had to support the males of the household who were trying to acquire skills for entering new occupations, or explore independent sources of income. The men, even when unemployed, were loath to touch their traditional work. Boys were being sent to school while girls joined their mothers at work at an early age. Similarly, the Padyachi and Nadar families from Tamil Nadu who come to Delhi in search of employment have their women take up work as domestic helps in private homes for washing clothes and utensils, and cleaning the house. It is held that in difficult times women, since they are used to doing domestic work for their own household, can do similar kind of work for others. The men, on the other hand, generally consider it below their dignity to do such jobs. In the absence of regular employment, even odd jobs are preferred to domestic work. Among these migrant groups women are often the principal supporters of the family: women's experience of multifaceted housework become the basis for maintaining the household. The controls are retained. Social arid ritual matters are discussed and decided upon by the males of the caste within the neighbourhood.

5.2   Food and rituals

A jati or caste has a distinctive culture, a certain commonality that imparts a sense of identity to its members. These cultural practices in turn are learnt largely within the family and kinship networks. Modes of worship, fasts and festivals, rules governing concerns of purity and pollution, and the organization of space, constitute interrelated and intermeshed elements which impart commonality and identity to members of a caste. While Some of these features are shared by other castes in the same region or 'caste groups of the same varna category across regions, it is, in fact, the specific configuration of these elements and features within a particular caste that serves as its mark of distinction. Practices relating to food form an important mediating relational idiom within this matrix.

Food constitutes a critical element in the ritual idiom of purity and pollution. Its centrality extends to both the attributional and transactional dimensions of caste. In other

words, both the exclusiveness of castes as bounded entities and inter-caste relationships are articulated by the idiom of food. Women, key players in the process of socialization, are also the principal protagonists in this arena. The task of safeguarding food, averting danger, and in a broad sense attending to the grammatical rules which govern the relational idiom of food, falls upon women. There is relaxation in the public arena but home is still the custody of women.

The concerns of purity and pollution centering on food begin at home. The principles of caste involve a clear distinction between the domestic space/home and the 'outside' world. Women play the key role in maintaining the sanctity and purity of the home. Notions of safety relating to both purity/pollution and the 'evil eye' entail a variety of restrictions and constraints on women in the tasks of processing, preserving, cooking and distributing food. These injunctions pertain to specific observances relating to the maintenance of the required level of purity of the body, the division of space for practices of cooking and consumption of food and the preservation of traditions in regard to caste-linked prescriptions and proscriptions about different foods. Foods are hierarchically classified in terms of intrinsic purity and impurity, vulnerability and resistance to pollution, and in terms of specific characteristics they embody passion, anger, calm, strength, spirituality. Foods then are.substances which carry the capacity to affect and transform the person who consumes them. The responsibility for who eats what, where and when, falls upon women within the domestic space. Women's practices in relation to food play a critical role in the hierarchical ordering of castes.

If food and its attendant relations of commensality are a critical element in the ranking of castes, the behaviour of men and women in this arena also present divergences and contrasts. Women tend to be more circumscribed in taking proscribed foods or accepting food from other castes. Anthropologists, for instance, have often pointed out that women are more particular about commensal restrictions. In situations away from home and their locality, men tend to be more relaxed about rules of commensality; in a similar context women are both chaperoned and watched over carefully and are expected to follow these rules more strictly. Men have the excuse that they have to move about with all kinds of people. Women, of course, are not permitted such freedom. Moreover, the prescriptions and prohibitions regarding food for women are governed by principles of kinship, marriage and sexuality. Upper caste women who are meant to believe in the

51

indissolubility of marriage, for instance, are expected to change their lifestyle drastically after they are widowed. They are required to observe strict rules of purity and pollution while preparing food, to give up the consumption of foods which are tamasik-which raise passion and desire and to forego a 'proper' meal in the evenings. Women's practices concerning the consumption of food in terms of its intrinsic qualities as well as regulations of place and time are important determinants of the ritual status of their caste. Equally, these rules are governed by the need to regulate interaction with the outside world, particularly other castes and communities. The control over food is, at once, the protection of women from the transgression of sexual norms and a safeguard against a breach of the boundaries of caste.

Along with food, domestic rituals the daily care of family deities and the propitiation of ancestors are a major responsibility of women. In many families women do not actually perform the puja of the family deity; they nonetheless, make arrangements for its performance and prepare prasad. Where men are busy in professional work and the rules more relaxed, women can perform the daily puja. At the same time, on special days of worship, either a male in the family or a Brahmin priest performs the puja. And then there are special pujas and fasts to be undertaken for the welfare of the husband and children and for the prosperity of the family. These rituals, worships, fasts and feasts are, in their detail, a part of the tradition of a caste. The key place of women in this arena along with limitations imposed on them simultaneously underscore their subordinate place in relation to the men within the family.

At the same time, the place of women as active agents and instructors in the arena of food and rituals also implies that women who command its repertoire of rules gain special respect that gives them a certain self-identity and self-esteem. For most women these practices are an important avenue. of self-expression and social recognition. They also act as a medium which helps women exercise power over other women and men within the family. Thus, the nurture of self-esteem and self-assertion on the part of individual women is inextricably tied to the maintenance of family prestige. Responsibility for the preservation of traditions, maintenance of the sanctity of bounded space, control over rituals, the distribution of food and the task of socialization give women a sense of power over people and situations. The processes within which women carve out a living space also reinforce caste and its boundaries.

52

Food is an important element in the social acceptability of inter-caste unions. Acceptance of food cooked by a woman married into a family of another caste involves complex judgements regarding the differences in the ritual quality of foods in terms of their purity and vulnerability to pollution. Thus, depending upon the caste status of a woman, she may be prevented from entering the innermost cooking arena and allowed to prepare and serve only pakka food or snacks. Similarly, specific occasions everyday cooking versus cooking on special occasions and rituals such as puja of the family deity, or shraddha of the ancestors also entail boundaries. Significantly, a woman who belongs to a caste lower than that of her husband's can often cook ordinary food for the family but is not allowed to cook for the ancestors. Caste endogamy, which, as we shall see, is relevant for the placement of the offspring, also entails that a woman coming from another caste cannot be fully incorporated into the husband's group and acquire the privilege of feeding the ancestors.

5.3 Marriage and sexuality

This brings us to the key area of marriage and sexuality. The caste system is premised upon the cultural perception of a fundamental difference in male and female sexuality. First, periodical pollution through menstruation and parturition renders women intrinsically less pure than men. There is, within a caste, a hierarchy between the sexes. At the same time, the difference in the levels of purity/ impurity between men and women is much less among the lower castes than among the high castes. Low caste women, apart from self-pollution, also deal with others' pollution through occupational activities such as midwifery, disposal of dirt, the washing of dirty clothes and many other services. But their men, too, have to undertake polluting craftwork and service for others. Among these castes women's substantial contribution to the process of earning a livelihood along with the sharing of impure tasks by both men and women makes the gender division less unequal. It is, of course, true that among these castes menstrual pollution does impose certain disabilities on women in respect of food, worship of deities and ancestors, At the same time, Brahmin and other higher caste men neither incur self-pollution of the kind their women do nor do they have to perform polluting work for other castes. Their women, on the contrary, are involved in pollution incurred through bodily processes, mainly menstruation and childbirth. They are also responsible for doing some of the polluting tasks within the family, although this, perhaps, does not render them permanently less pure than men.

There is a pervasive notion that women never attain the level of purity of men of their own caste. It is well known that traditionally women of twice-born castes have been equated with Shudras who could not be initiated into the learning of the Vedas.

The other source of impurity for women is widowhood. Widows are not supposed to perform the puja of family deities; they do not cook the pure food offered to these deities. A man, on the other hand, is not similarly affected if he becomes a widower. Such hierarchy between the sexes is more a feature of Brahmin and other 'clean' castes. While some of the disabilities imposed on widows are prevalent among all castes, it can be argued that concerns of purity/impurity along the gender divide have an inverse relationship with the ritual status of castes.

Moreover, the cultural schemes which underlie the caste system are based upon a fundamental difference between male and female bodies in respect of their vulnerability to incur impurity through sexual intercourse. Sexual involvement is a much more serious matter for a woman since the 'act affects her internally while it affects a man only externally. In the case of inter-caste sexual relations a man incurs external pollution which can be washed off easily but a woman incurs internal pollution which pollutes her permanently. The contrast is expressed culturally by likening a woman to an earthen pot which is easily and permanently defiled if used by a polluted person within the caste or by a lower caste person or one of a different religion, and a man, on the other hand, to a brass pot which is not easily polluted and, in any case, can be restored to its original state by scrubbing, washing, and if necessary, by putting it through fire, a purifier par excellence. This metaphor which distinguishes between men and women in terms of their respective vulnerability to pollution through sexual intercourse is used extensively in caste 'and village councils when cases of sexual entanglements come up for adjudication. Indeed, it dwells in popular consciousness while judging men and women. It should be clear that upper caste women are much more vulnerable to permanent pollution than lower caste women. Indeed, sexual transgressions within the caste are treated much more leniently, particularly among those castes which allow secondary unions. Equally, it is entanglements with men of castes lower than ,that of the woman which are taken very seriously. Pollution incurred through food affects both women and men internally, but pollution incurred through sexual intercourse is radically different in character for the two sexes. This is closely linked to the dictum that sanctions hypergamy although within well-defined limits: 'Superior seed can fall on an inferior field

54

but inferior seed cannot fall on a superior field.'

This brings the most crucial attribute in the cultural perception of differences between the sexuality of men and women. The other differences are, in fact, orchestrated by the culturally coded master difference between male and female bodies in respect of procreation. In contrast to the tenuous and fleeting role of man in the process of procreation, a woman's role is long drawn and entails an involvement which is beyond extrication. In the case of an unattached woman, pregnancy is a disaster not just because in patrilineal society paternity is essential for group placement but also because the issues of caste boundaries and her own purity are involved. The number of orphanages and abandoned children in our country are proof of the effects of a combination of patriliny and caste. Sexual asymmetry is critically implicated in the twin principles of separation and hierarchy that characterize the caste system.

Marriage and sexual relations constitute a central arena in which caste impinges on women's lives. In the caste system membership of discrete and distinct groups is defined exclusively and unalterably by birth this principle underlies the existence of castes as bounded groups. This characteristic entails a prevasive concern with boundary maintenance. Although in most of Hindu India, recruitment by birth follows the principle of patrilineal descent and thus the father's identity is essential for group placement, in the attribution of caste status to the child, the caste of the mother is not exactly irrelevant, and has to be taken into consideration. Irrespective of the descent system, caste, in fact, functions as a principle of bilateral affiliation.

The extent to which caste functions as a principle of bilateral affiliation varies across regions and castes. By and large we can say that smaller marriage circles with an emphasis on the purity of caste and a preference for intra-kin marriages attach a greater value to the bilateral principle of caste affiliation, This applies principally to South India where intra-kin marriages over generations have, traditionally, made for narrow connubial circles. Even today intra-kin marriages have not lost their value although the proportion has decreased. However, even in contexts which under-play the bilateral principle of caste affiliation, a woman's role in biological reproduction, makes her primarily responsible for maintaining the purity of caste and its boundaries and calls for proper control over her sexuality.

The cultural apprehension of the vulnerability of women and the emphasis on their purity and restrained behaviour which entail limited interaction with the opposite sex, are important components of management of female sexuality in a caste society. The emphasis on arranged or negotiated marriages and the proper organization of space and time for young girls after puberty derive their justification from this concern with boundary maintenance, which means the maintenance of the ritual purity of caste. All these are implicated in the mechanisms and processes of socialization and in the opportunities for education and employment open to women. Caste thus imparts a special character to the process of growing up as a female. All this does not end with marriage. Women need to be controlled, their sexuality contained, at all times. This is sought to be achieved through mechanisms of proper social control, idealization of familial roles, and an emphasis on female modesty. The importance of the purity of caste affects a woman in all life-stages.

The beliefs and practices which negotiate and contain the threat posed by female sexuality are not uniform across the caste hierarchy and are also marked by regional variations. At the same time, there does exist a shared ideological framework that informs this arena. This framework rests upon a clear demarcation of phases of life with respect to female sexuality a special ritual value accorded to virginity, the ritualization of puberty and special care accorded to pubescent girls, a glorification of the married state and motherhood, and, a clear distinction between primary and secondary marriage which in turn constitute the institutionalized mechanisms for the containment of female sexuality.

The value attached to virginity is directly linked to the concern with female purity. The pre-pubertal phase is looked upon as a stage of intrinsic purity and is celebrated in a number of ways. The custom of worshipping and feeding virgin girls on specific days such as the eighth day of Navaratri is widespread in India. Equally, pre-pubertal girls are given special recognition in life cycle rituals. A pre-pubertal girl is looked upon as a manifestation of Devi or the Mother Goddess and is believed to drive away the lurking presence of an evil spirit and an evil eye. The purity and the consequent privileged status of a girl in the pre-pubertal stage contrasts sharply with, and brings into clear relief, the next phase, the onset of puberty.

In South India, this change in a girl's status is dramatized through rituals. The rituals and special prescriptions of diet vary across castes. The core, and the underlying

message, does not change. Similarly, in Orissa and Maharashtra, several castes observe the essential features of puberty rituals although they conduct them on a modest scale. The message of these rituals is clear. The girl has become a sexual being: this calls for restrained behaviour on her part and emphasizes the need for protection and vigilance. The occasion is at once auspicious and calls for a guard against the evil eye. The regulations regarding diet and movement are directed towards future fertility: they make the process of childbearing smooth and control the girl's sexuality. Restrained and controlled sexuality is a pre-requisite for socially sanctioned motherhood. The puberty ceremony informs the people within the kin-group and the jati that the girl has come of age and her marriage is open to negotiation. The mechanisms which set limits and restraints also sacralize and sanctify sexuality. In the rest of India the first menstruation is not marked by any rituals. The event is taken care of more or less unobtrusively. At the same time, restrictions relating to pollution, food and behaviour do come into play. The onset of puberty then is a definite departure in the life of a girl. She becomes conscious of her fragile purity.

It is, in fact, this preoccupation with female purity and its fragility that helps explain certain aspects of marriage in caste society. In traditional terms it is the marriage of a virgin with full rites within the acceptable limits of connubiality which sacralizes and sanctifies the girl's sexuality. It makes her a full member of her caste, and thus a complete person. In North and Central India the matrix of an early marriage of a girl, a long waiting period when she continues to stay in her natal home, and gauna or mukhlawa, the ritual of sending off the girl to her husband's house after puberty, is very common. If the family is not in a position to bear the double expenditure, the two ceremonies may be collapsed into one: the girl is formally sent to her husband's home for two or three days after marriage and is then brought back only to be sent after the onset of puberty. Similarly, the objective of early marriage, namely, to preserve the virginity and purity of the girl until marriage, for example in some areas of Rajasthan a number of baby brides are formally married to baby grooms in a specially held marriage fair on an auspicious day. It is also customary to marry off all the girls in a family from the age of two to thirteen or fifteen together on a special auspicious day. The logic of an early marriage is clear: such child marriages ensure that a girl is married with full rites while still a virgin, and consummation of marriage can wait until she has come of age. It is significant that while castes and families who can afford to keep their girls secluded and protected tend to marry them off after puberty, other castes who

57

require that their daughters work in the fields or away from home prefer to marry them before puberty. In a village in Sikar district in Rajasthan, where the normal age of marriage of girls ranged between seven to sixteen years, most post-pubertal marriages were among the Charans and Brahmins whose daughters did not work outside the home and could be segregated and secluded. In Uttar Pradesh, once again, the poorer castes whose women and children have to work outside, away from home and without protection, find safety in pre-pubertal marriage. It is in the context of this valorization of virginity that there is a need to locate the critical cultural distinction between primary marriage and secondary unions.

A primary marriage connotes the marriage with full rites of a virgin with a man from an appropriate caste group. A woman goes through such a marriage only once in her life. Her subsequent unions may have social sanction and she may continue to use all the signs of the married state but she has permanently stepped outside the bounds of a primary marriage. These unions are not solemnized through full-blown rituals but socially declared through a symbolic act or a truncated ceremony which could include the presentation of glass bangles or a nose ring to the woman which signifies married status, the exchange of garlands, and the throwing of a white cloth coloured at the corners over the woman's head symbolic of the fact that the woman is now protected by a man. It follows that the terms used for remarriage often refer to these acts: churi pahanana or the giving of glass bangles, chadar dalna or the throwing of a sheet over the woman's head, nath pahanana or the giving of a nose ring. Alternatively, remarriage can be designated as 'coming to live in the man's house' or 'sitting' (paithu/baithna), 'getting a woman in the house' (ghar me bithana) or 'keeping a woman' in the house (kari or karewa). For a man, on the other hand, there are no restrictions on the number of times he can marry with full rites as long as the bride has not married before. Only if he marries a woman who has been already married in the past does he have to forego a marriage with full rites.

Only a properly married woman can rightfully enter secondary, socially approved, unions. This consideration extends to inter-caste secondary unions also. Traditionally, a woman cannot enter a socially approved union without the sacralization of her sexuality through a full ritual wedding conducted according to the customs of the caste. The distinction between primary and secondary marriage, once again, centres on the concern with female purity and the management of female sexuality. It is sought to be sustained by according a special value to primary marriage and a low status to a secondary union. Secondary unions

are considered a concession to human weakness: a woman's need to satisfy sexual desire without seriously undermining the boundaries of caste. The castes which permit remarriage, unlike Brahmin and other high castes, do not look upon the first marriage as indissoluble or inviobble. At the same time, it is the first marriage which has a sacramental character and is a samskara that cannot be repeated. Importantly the traditional absence of remarriage of widows and divorcees among a caste is an indicator of its high ritual status. Sexual asymmetry is inextricably bound up with the maintenance of the boundaries and hierarchies of caste.

The principles of sexual asymmetry underlie the relationship between caste endogamy and dowry, the different fates of men and women in inter-caste unions, and the sexual abuse of women. We saw that caste purity is maintained through endogamy. Marriages are effected predominantly within a jati or a jati cluster. Srinivas (1976: 90) has pointed out that in contemporary caste society cognate jatis tend to get telescoped to form a single entity for purposes of marriage, Similarly, while caste associations with political ends comprise a number of endogamous jati in a caste or varna category, specific connubial boundaries are sought to be maintained. Matrimonial columns in newspapers and magazines clearly indicate that marital boundaries have been relaxed only very narrowly. In these columns there are few entries which do not mention a prospective bride's/groom's caste (specific endogamous group, regional caste cluster, or in a few cases, varna). Even those, who specify 'caste no bar' tend to mention their own caste, perhaps for those respondents who may be prepared to ignore caste but only up to a limited extent. A matrimonial relationship with a much lower caste seems out of the question. The compulsion to marry within a well-defined caste group in a patrilineal and patrilocal kinship system is closely tied to the practice of dowry.

Caste both imposes constraints and creates the dominant ethos which underlies the practice of dowry within Hindu society. The increasing social and economic differentiation within an endogamous unit, traditional or currently acceptable, in terms of ownership of resources, income and professions has led to severe competition among parents of marriageable daughters. This has resulted in higher demands and expectations on the part of the groom's family. In a consumerist ethos, dowry becomes the easiest way of improving a family's lifestyle, and a source of ready cash. Middle class families are the worst sufferers in the marriage market. They have limited means but cannot think of violating the norms

regarding marriage within the appropriate group. The pressures of endogamy compel them to stick to arranged marriages and trap them in negotiations with a premium on dowry. Moreover, in a social context defined by notions of male superiority where the right of first choice lies with the man and his family, the path of a negotiated marriage is replete with possibilities of the humiliation of young women. Finally, the principle of endogamy and the attendant concern with the maintenance of boundaries of caste impose restraints on young women. A daughter's reputation is predicated upon the constraints which bind her movements. What is at issue is not only the fear and the horror of premarital sex; opportunities to meet and associate with young unmarried men, most parents worry, may lead their daughter to choose her own partner. And what if he is from a lower caste? Dowry cannot be reduced to endogamy; but its escalation within Hindu caste society cannot be understood without reference to it.

The principle of endogamy is, of course, subverted by sexual unions across castes. The boundaries of caste are breached, the norms transgressed. Male protagonists and female players have different fates.

Secondary unions across caste are formed by individuals on their own initiative and are then taken cognizance of by the community. Among castes whose women can customarily enter into secondary unions, inter-caste unions receive a certain measure of acceptance if the man and the woman belong to castes of more or less equal status or the man belongs to a caste higher than that of the woman. The offence has to be expiated through the payment of a fine and the giving of a feast. The man is ostracized if at all temporarily and this becomes .evident only on formal ritual and ceremonial occasions. In North and Central India the offspring of such unions are incorporated in the father's caste: his 'seed', even in an inter-caste secondary union, turns the children into members of a well-defined caste group. The temporary stigma borne by the children is not of much consequence. On the contrary the woman involved in such unions loses her caste; she is disowned by her family and kin-group. In some places this rejection is ritualized. In south-eastern Madhya Pradesh, for instance, the husband gives a mortuary feast (known as marati-jeeti bhat) announcing the symbolic death of his wife who has gone out of the caste. At the same time, the woman is never fully incorporated into her new husband's caste. She cannot participate as a full member in rituals or on ceremonial occasions including community feasts. Equally, a woman who has lost her caste has to depend on the man with whom she

has lived for the disposal of her dead body. If the man is dead and there are no sons, her corpse is carried away by members of the lowest caste and buried without rituals. In South India the offspring of inter-caste unions are said to be assigned a status-inferior to the children born of primary unions. The children bear the mother's stigma. In fact, the progeny born of the remarriage of widows and divorcees within the caste are also assigned inferior status, which is, however, higher than that of children of inter-caste unions. The gradations among children rest upon the caste and the marital status of the mother.

A strong patrilineal ideology in which male blood is the real determining element in the placement of offspring unless the mother is of a fairly low caste is more characteristic of North than of South India. In the case of the Jats of Haryana, who represent an extreme case, even the ritual distance between castes was not of much significance. The relative freedom from Brahminical injunctions and the weak hold of norms of ritual purity and pollution meant that during the colonial period Jat men freely entered into sexual unions with women belonging to very low castes such as the Chamar and the Chuhra (scavenger). The children born of these women were absorbed into the Jat community. In Jat self-perception their community is like the sea: whatever falls into it becomes Jat.

The Rajputs or Kshatriyas, once again, have been open to hypergamous unions with women of different castes, often much below them in status. The ruling classes used their privileged status to ritually sanction their marriages with virgin girls of different clean castes. The offspring born of such unions adopted the father's identity; they were known as Rajputs, but had a lower status than their father. Women of secondary unions, of course, were and are looked upon as concubines.

Men of dominant casces, including Rajputs, also have mistresses from different castes. The ritual status of these men is not questioned as long as they do not establish a household and eat food cooked by their mistresses. It is only if there is an open and long term liaison with a very low caste woman that these men run the risk of being ostracized. The power and privilege of their family can serve to cover their indiscretion. Moreover, it is always possible for men to return to the caste fold through prayaschitta (atonement) for what they have done.

Men have institutionalized mechanisms to escape the incurrence of pollution through sexual intercourse with a low caste woman. This often takes the form of a purificatory bath

and the ritual expiation of the offence. Orthodox Brahmins in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, for instance, after sleeping with a low caste woman discard the old sacred thread, have a purificatory bath and don a new sacred thread. On the other hand, if a woman from these communities goes 'astray' and the matter become public knowledge she is banished, declared dead to the family and a 'mock' shraddha (funeral rites) is performed for her. The fate of the paramour of a high caste woman, if he belongs to a low caste is severe punishment at the hands of the holders of power Jats, Rajputs, Brahmins, Kammas loss of sources of livelihood, a good beating and sometimes, even death.

Dominance predicated upon ownership of resource, is intertwined with notions of the ritual status of different castes and the associated idea of graded qualities of blood. Low caste women and sexually exploited by powerful upper caste men owning land. It is not only difficult for low caste men to protect their women against the lust and desire of their upper caste masters and superordinates in the agrarian hierarchy, but there is also a tacit acceptance of upper caste 'seed'. Only if an upper or middle level caste man is excommunicated by his own community for having a sustained relationship with a low caste woman if he identified with her caste; their children grow up in the mother's caste. But things do not often come to such a pass. Fleeting liaisons and acts of sexual aggression by upper caste men are much more familiar. The low caste opposition to these and other upper caste practices results in sexual assaults on their women which attack the dignity and honour of the male kin and the community. Rape, as elsewhere is an act of power through sexual violence. The assertion of dominance is claimed as a right by upper castes. In Uttar Pradesh, for instance, it is said that just as a she-goat may be milked at any time at one's own will, so can a Chamar woman be enjoyed at an time at one's discretion. In Vidarbha, Kunbi landowners who are on the lookout for Mahar women working in their fields say with contempt, 'Give her a few measures of grain and she will be quiet.' The control of resources and ritual status-together integrally informed by and constitutive of relations of power reinforce each other and underlie the sexual exploitation of lower caste women by upper caste men.

5.4   Conclusion

To conclude, it can be said that inexorable and inevitable processes of change, invoked by myopic mouthpieces of modernization, have led to transformations in the

relationship between caste and gender. There has certainly been a considerable loosening of the rules and norms governing commensality and a weakening of the attendant mechanisms of ostracism and excommunication: but the relational idiom of food and the play of rituals, articulated by the mutual intermeshing of caste and gender, continue to be critical for the functioning of families. Similarly, transformation in the nature and magnitude of social interaction characterized by the near-absence of commensal inhibitions, particularly in metropolitan and urban areas, the enactment of state laws which recognize inter-caste marriages, divorce and widow remarriage within the framework of the Hindu legal system, and a greater familiarity with the institution of civil marriage, have opened up possibilities of marriages outside the bounds of caste. At the same time, negotiated and arranged marriages within the recognized limits of connubiality are the dominant and overwhelming norm. Finally, the increased emphasis on caste identities in the wider context of institutionalized politics centering on the policies and practices of the state, has led to the reworking, refurbishment and reinforcement of 'caste traditions'. Caste is not dead. Gender is a live issue. The principles of caste inform the specific nature of sexual asymmetry in Hindu society; the boundaries and hierarchies of caste are articulated by gender.

5.5 References:

Rao, Anupama (ed.) (2003),Gender and Caste, New Delhi, Pauls Press.

6.0 STRUCTURE

6.0   Introduction

The relationship between gender and media culture has been the subject of considerable debate for feminists. Feminists continue to be divided for instance over the extent to which pornographic representations of women are linked to sexual violence Broadly speaking, feminist perspectives on gender, the mass media and popular culture can be divided into two distinct approaches. Whilst most would agree that the media is a powerful source of identity, some feminists have argued that the media actually dictates gender identity to us allowing women to perform or identify with only a relatively narrow range of roles. Those feminists who adopt this approach tend to emphasise what has been termed the 'symbolic annihilation of women Marshment (1993), who adopts this perspective,

argues that representation is a highly political issue and that the apparent 'naturalness' of media representations of men and women is evidence of the power of patriarchal ideology. As she puts it,

> From primary school reading schemes to Hollywood films, from advertising to opera, from game shows to art galleries, women are depicted in ways that define what it means to be a woman in this society: what women are like (naturally), what they ought to be like, what they are capable of, and incapable of, what roles they play in society, and how they differ from men.

In her book The Beauty Myth, Naomi Wolf (1990) has similarly argued that capitalism, patriarchy and compulsory heterosexuality interact to produce a crude ideology manifest in representations such as the film Pretty Woman, characterised by the message 'be pretty, get a man, be complete, escape poverty and misery'. What she calls the 'beauty myth the idea that women can find self-satisfaction in housework. It is a media ideology that perpetuates the idea that if women buy enough products they will be able to conform to patriarchal ideals of beauty and sexual attractiveness. Wolf goes on to argue that the beauty myth defines women visually in two ways. First, it defines an ideal 'look' for women. Although this varies culturally and historically, it usually involves - in Western societies at least - being tall, slim and white. So women are defined or measured against an ideal standard of beauty. Second, the beauty myth emphasises that femininity itself is an aesthetic phenomena - in other words, to be feminine is defined largely in terms of looking feminine. This means that both men and women learn to think of femininity primarily as a visual identity. Wolf argues that this is evidenced in the enormity of the beauty and cosmetics industries, in women's magazines, in film and music videos, in sport and leisure, and also in gender disparities in eating disorders. She likens the impact of the beauty myth on women's lives to the Iron Maiden, a sarcophagus-like medieval instrument of torture that enclosed women in a spiked interior while the exterior featured beautifuily painted women's (often smiling) faces. Wolf emphasises that as women have made political and economic gains, images of female beauty have become more rigid and have reinforced patriarchal ideology, disguising it (like the Iron Maiden) as something women enjoy. Magazines, she argues, now concentrate on 'beauty work' rather than housework. As she puts it.

The more legal and material hindrances women have broken through, the more

strictly and heavily and cruelly images of female beauty have come to weigh upon us.... As women released themselves from the feminine mystique of domesticity, the beauty myth took over its lost ground, expanding as it wanted to carry on its work of social control.

Wolfs' perspective echoes earlier work on media culture by feminists such as Laura Mulvey (1975), in her essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'. Writing in the 1970s, the height of the soft-focus close-up, Mulvey proposes that in classic Hollywood cinema women are constructed as passive objects to be looked at by men for voyeuristic pleasure. She argues that the 'male gaze' operates in three ways involving:

1.   The gaze of the camera on the female (often sexualised) body, which is often from the male point of view;

2   Male characters and identities, that gaze upon female bodies in the narrative; and

3.   Male spectators who gaze at the female bodies on the screen.

However, Mulvey (1981) herself has since expressed sorme reservations about the overly deterministic nature of this position, and it has been criticised more general for ignoring both how women may subvert or negotiate the male gaze, and how popular culture offers opportunities for women to gaze (at both men and women) as well. Moreover, such a deterministic approach has also been criticised for reducing all power relations to gender, and thus neglecting other aspects of power which affect patriarchal relations, such as class, race, disability and sexuality, and which other feminists have sought to integrate into their frameworks of analysis.

Other feminists have adopted a different perspective emphasising instead of the power of media culture the pleasures women derive from the escapism and identification it offers. Instead of concurring with Mulvey's 'active/looking/masculine' and 'passive/looked at/feminine' formula, such approaches have focused on women and active readers and consumers of media culture. Yet, much of this work has begun with the question: 'Why do out of date myths of femininity still continue to exert a magnetic pull over us, and why is it easier to criticize those media that target us than to explain their fascination?'

Feminists emphasising the pleasures women derive from various media cultural forms - magazines and soap operas, for instance - have tended to focus not on the media as dictating gender identity to us, but instead have highlighted its role in negotiating a range

66

of available identities. Writers such as Ros Coward, Jackie Stacey and Angela McRobbie have all emphasised that media culture provides women with a range of options from which to choose. In particular, their work has emphasized that we don't have to accept what the media offers us at face value but rather, can consume media representations selectively, ironically and cynically. In her book Star Gazing for instance, Jackie Stacey (1994) emphasises that the mass media is a site of negotiated meanings, of resistances, and of challenges to patriarchal ideologies. She argues that the media provides: escapism, identification and opportunities for consumption, which can be empowering as well as exploitative. In doing so, she rejects the universalism and textual determinism of much feminist work on mass culture. Her account emphasises that images of Hollywood stars can be role models, and that the relationship between media representations and the lived realities of gender is more complex than simply the passive reception of stereotypes.

At the heart of the distinction between these two approaches is a debate over the extent to which many of the media forms in which gender is represented are ways simply of maintaining patriarchal ideology. This argument seems to write off million of women (and men) who take pleasure in reading women's magazines, or in watching, soap operas, as cultural dupes who collude in their own oppression. Both feminist and non-feminist'women take pleasure in fashion, romance, horoscopes, soap operas, cooking programmes, magazines, and so on. An alternative position adopted by feminists such as Modleski (1982) has argued that we should not condemn these cultural forms themselves, or the men and women who engage with them (thereby dismissing their genuine pleasure), but the conditions that have made them both possible and necessary (e.g. watching soap operas or leading magazines as an 'escape'), and as the only 'choice' within a relatively narrow range of leisure options for women. As she puts it, the contradictions in women's lives are more responsible for the existence of mass cultural forms that appeal to women than the forms are for the contradictions.

Black feminists such as bell hooks (1992) have been particularly critical of the ways in which white, ethnocentric media have reproduced racist stereotypes originating in slavery and in colonial societies. In particular, hooks is critical of white women media 'stars' like Madonna for their 'appropriation of Black culture as yet another sign of their radical chic'. She goes on, 'fascinated yet envious of black style, Madonna appropriates black culture in ways that mock and undermine, making her presentation one that upstages'.

67

Black and Asian feminists have also drawn attention to the narrow ways in which racialised women are represented, even in feminist art and cultural criticism. A.S. Larkin (1988), for instance, highlights the issue of ethnocentrism in both verbal and visual forms of culture, and in anthropology (the scientific study of culture):

> In a feminist art project dealing with heroines at the Women's Building in Los Angeles, a white woman chose the prehistoric 'Lucy' as her heroine. 'Lucy' is a tiny lady three feet tall, sixty pounds light and 3.5 million years old. Lucy is the oldest, most complete skeleton of any erect -walking human ancestor ever found.

> The Public Broadcasting System screened a documentary on the discovery of 'Lucy'. The audience was introduced to the anthropologists at the site in Africa. The programme included an animated segment which brought the ancient people to life. They were not Black people; the artist had whitened them. They did not look like the Ethiopians at the site; they looked like the white anthropologist.

Many of these debates over the role and impact of media culture, and over the contested ways in which culture is constructed and represented. are also shaped by different definitions of culture. Indeed, the meaning of culture and the way in which it is used in academic studies has changed considerably over time.

6.1   Feminist studies of media culture

A range of feminist approaches have examined the ways in which gender is constructed or represented in diverse forms of media such as advertising, women's magazines, films and soap operas. Early feminist work on media representations tended to adopt a content analysis approach and examined gender stereotypes evident in the mass media. These studies involved, for instance, noting the different roles adopted by men and women in advertisements and counting the number of times these occurred in a given sample. In relation to advertising, Dyer (1982) found women to be routinely portrayed as stereotypically feminine, as sex objects, or as housewives and mothers, whereas men are shown in positions of dominance and authority over women, and in a much broader range of social roles.

Much of the impetus for early feminist critiques of media representations of men and women came from the feeling that available images of women were inadequate

generating the complaint that 'women are not really like that'. Hence, it was suggested that the media was guilty of sex-role stereotyping which was thus reinforced in wider society. In other words, in the way it represented women, the media was thought to be guilty of distorting the reality of women's lives, portraying a fantasy world rather than the one women actually live in. Although content analyses were useful in providing a static picture of how women are represented in the media, some feminists began to argue that these studies were merely descriptive, not explanatory. Content analysis does not tell us anything, for instance, about where stereotypical representations come from in the first place, or about who has the power to define the so-called 'objective reality' that the media is purported to represent. Some feminists attempted to study the role of the media itself in actively constructing 'reality'. This shift in feminist media analysis reflects what is often referred to as the 'cultural turn' in the social sciences, and humanities more generally, and is marked by a shift from the dominance of realist perspectives on the social world, to a more social constructionist approach. Hence, feminist analyses shifted away from the idea that the mass media either represents or distorts an objective reality in which 'real' women live, towards an emphasis on the belief that reality itself, including gender identities and relations, is socially constructed and that the mass media plays a central role in this.

6.2   Gender in advertising

Almost from the beginning of the feminist movement, feminists responded critically to images of women portrayed in advertising (much of it aimed at women, as the main household consumers). Based primarily on content analyses of advertisements, feminists such as Betty Friedan (1963) in her book The Feminine Mystique argued that women were routinely portrayed either as housewives and mothers, or as sex objects. Women are encouraged by adverts to view their bodies as objects. and thus as separate from and more important than their subjective selves, and in need of constant alteration and improvement. The implication is, as Naomi Wolf (1990) has pointed out in The Beauty Myth, that the required level of bodily perfection can be achieved through the purchasing and application of appropriate products. Feminists have also pointed out that advertising frequently 'symbolically dismembers' women so that their bodies are fragmented into various parts - women's faces, legs, breast, eyes, hair, and so on all become the focus of consumption. This reduction of women to their body parts, it is suggested, dehumanises and degrades women so that they are seen as less than fully human, rather than as thinking.

Speaking, acting 'whole' subjects.

In her work on advertising (which adopted a content analysis approach), Gillian Dyer (1982) argued that men are more likely to be depicted as independent; women as dependent. and men are generally shown as having expertise and authority (for example, as being objective and knowledgeable about particular products), whereas women are often shown merely as consumers. She also found that in adverts focusing on the home, the majority featured images of women but with male voice-overs. This was the case in the majority of adverts for home products, for food products and also for beauty products. Dyer concludes from this that the treatment of women in adverts amounts to what Tuchman (1981) has described as the 'symbolic annihilation' of women. In other words, adverts reflect the dominant belief that 'women are not important, except in the home, and even there, men know best', as the male voice-over Suggests.

These findings can be compared with those of a more recent study carried out by Cumberbatch (1990) for the Broadcasting Standards Council in the UK. This study found that there were twice as many men as women in adverts, by far the majority (89 per cent) of which used male voice-overs even when the advert predominantly featured a Woman. Women in adverts were younger and more physically attractive than the men. Men were twice as likely to be depicted in paid employment as women, and work was shown as being crucial to men's lives whereas relationships were shown to be more important for women, even those at work. Only 7 per cent of adverts studied showed women doing housework, but women were twice as likely as men to be shown washing up or cleaning. Men were more likely than women to be shown cooking for a special occasion or where special skills were seen to be necessary. Women were more likely than men to be shown doing 'everyday' cooking. Women were twice as likely to be depicted as married, and as receiving sexual advance (though usually not in the same advert) as men.

Drawing on Gramsci's concept of hegemony, Myra Macdonald (1995) in her book Representing Women has identified three constructions of feminine identity that she argues, dominated advertising discourse throughout the course of the twentieth century. These are: the capable household manager, the guilty mother and, more, recently, the new woman - 'playful, indulgent, sexually aware, and adventurous'. The latter, she argues, has flattered rather than coerced women into purchasing consumer goods, particularly beauty

products. In the advertising discourse of the 'New Woman', Macdonald identifies three forms of co-option of feminist ideas and ideology that, she argues, emerged in consumer discourses in the 1980s and 1990s. These are the appropriation of quasi-feminist concepts: the redrafting of caring to make a compatible with self-fulfilment, and the acknowledgement of female fantasies.

Feminist studies have suggested, then, that there has been a shift in the construction of gender in adverts in recent years, a shift that requires a more in-depth treatment than content analysis of stereotypical representations allows for. Some feminist have pointed out that the most marked transition in the representation of women has been from the portrayal of the domestically oriented woman to a woman who seeks to please herself (as in particular adverts for beauty and hair products). This has led some commentators such as Macdonald (1995) and also Goldman (1992) to argue that a 'new woman' has emerged in advertising in recent years. She is generally presented as a 'Superwoman' - a woman who manages to be successful in her career to have a clean and shiny home, to be a good mother and wife, to produce delicious home-cooked meals and, of course, to be sexually attractive, and so on. In seeking to explain the emergence of Superwomen in advertising, Goldman (and others) have focused not on the content of the adverts themselves, but on their broader social context. Goldman for instance argues that advertisers, forced to recognise the greater participation of women in the labour force, as well as changes in gender relations began to exploit this new market and target a specific type of consumer, the 'career woman'. Hence, in Goldman's view, marketing strategies sought to co-opt and commodify the very notion of women's liberation. Goldman's account emphasises, then that advertisers sought to incorporate feminist ideas and thereby remove their critical power with respect to advertising.

Drawing on semiology and also a Marxist theory of consumption, Goldman describes this co-option of feminism as 'commodity feminism' (playing on the Marxist conception of 'commodity fetishism' - the idea that commodity relations turn the relations of acting subjects into relations between objects). This means that, from the point of view of advertisers, feminism is not so much a social movement with a particular politics and ideology that might threaten to undermine the power of advertising, but rather a 'style' that can be achieved by consuming particular products. Feminism then is redefined and re-packaged so that certain objects are professed to signify a feminist lifestyle. Feminists are

therefore constructed, Goldman argus as just another consumer category amongst many others. In advertising, feminism is supposedly signified by assembling a range of signs which connote independence participation in paid work, individual freedom and self-control. In 'commodity feminist' adverts, Goldman suggests, women are depicted not as needing a man to be complete, but rather a particular product. The implication is that social change occurs not through protest, strikes or challenges to the legal system, but through individualised commodity consumption. Hence, this particular aspect of consumer culture has often been associated with post-feminism.

In sum, feminists have pointed out that content analyses of advertising have been useful to the extent that they can give us a description of the sexism inherent in much advertising, and of the extent to which the range of roles on offer to women in advertising has remained surprisingly stagnant. But content analysis cannot explain where these images come from in the first instance. Content analysis cannot account, for example, for why traditional images of women in advertising have apparently evolved into more 'liberated' or 'ironic' portrayals. Gill (1988) has argued, for instance, that an advert which used a demand raised by feminists in abortion campaigns, 'a woman's right to choose', as a slogan for a holiday for young people, would have been judged to be 'feminist' on the basis of a study merely of its content. A content analysis approach would have registered words such as 'freedom' or 'rights' or 'express herself as affirmative of feminist ideas. Hence, more recent analyses have drawn on concepts derived from Marxism and also from semiology to argue that advertisements are made to mean something as a result of the ways in which the ideologies contained within them resonate with their broader social context.

6.3　Women's magazines

Feminists who have studied women's magazines have adopted a more qualitative approach than merely counting types of images and, in short, have placed their analyses of the content of magazines within a broader critique of patriarchal society. Such magazines have a long history. Indeed Janice Winship (1987) has argued that Women's magazines provide an unparalleled popular or mass documentation of women's changing roles and lifestyles.

Historically, women's magazines have had a domestic focus. This is reflected for

72

instance in titles in the UK such as Woman and Home and Good Housekeeping. Whilst in the nineteenth century, publications such as these addressed women as an undifferentiated mass, increasingly the category 'woman' has been fractured into a more Complex collection of status categories as the market has expanded throughout particularly the latter part of the twentieth century. That is, more individual types of women are constructed by these magazine titles. Hence, several titles see the female subject as caught up in traditional arenas such as the family and marriage, as signified by the abundance of magazines on weddings and parenting, for instance. A range of specialist magazines is also devoted to particular themes such as fashion and dieting. At the same time, however, the more general category of 'lifestyle' magazines has expanded considerably, evolving for instance into a burgeoning teenage market. As Lisa Duke and Peggy Kreshel (1998) emphasise in their research on young women and magazines, these play an important role in reinforcing patriarchal standards feminity.

More recently magazines such as New Woman and She, as feminists such as Len Ang (1989) have pointed out, have tended to draw on feminist repertoires in emphasising women's independence. However, Ang argues that in doing so they have failed to take account of feminist diversity and therefore tend to exclude all but the most affluent, urban, white, middle-class women. In particular, contradictory fantasies such as being an 'independent mother' are presented; yet, she points out, rarely are issue such as how to be 'independent' with 'dependent' children addressed.

The relationship between patriarchal ideology, social change and women's magazines has been considered by Glasser (1997) in her research on women's magazine fiction in China before and after the implementation of the Four Modernisation Policies in the late 1970s. Her study focuses on the relationship between representations of women and the shifting ideological landscape, revealing an important irony. As China moves towards relative political openness and economic modernisation traditional stereotypes of women as homemakers and caregivers increasingly re- emerge. Glasser argues that such representations have to be interpreted contextually The image of the public-minded model worker in the 1960s masked a 'repression in personal aspiration in the name of the collective' so that 'the image of the family orientated homemaker, mother, or nurturer from the late 1970s onward, is a dialectical response to the re-emphasis of personal desires'.

73

6.4   Women and soap operas

As we noted above, feminist content analyses initially sought to demonstrate that media representations of women were unrealistic. In her work on women in soap operation Christine Geraghty (1996) pointed out a number of problems with this approach. First she argued, it implied that an important function of the media is to make 'realistic representations. Second, it suggested that representations should therefore more accurately reflect what women are 'really' like. Third, it implied that accurate representations are important to those being represented, because media representations affect how men and women see themselves, and how others see them. However Geraghty and others have argued that this emphasis on the need for realism fails to recognise the socially constructed nature of reality. As Macdonald (1995) has poointed out, such an approach assumes that reality is directly 'knowable' and accessibe unfiltered by our own perceptions and beliefs, and is capable of being presented in an unadulterated, unmediated form.

More social constructionist feminist studies of media and cultural forms turned their attention to programmes such as soap operas and narrative forms such as romantic fiction with a view to examining the way in which they actually constituted femininity, rather than simply represented 'real' women's lives, accurately or otherwise. Crucially, they looked at why women might enjoy them, focusing on what they offered women. To elaborate, this focus on the pleasure and the cultural forms mainly consumed by women was a clear reaction to the ideas of the Frankfurt School considered above, and, particularly, their denigration of such media forms as examples of 'mass' as opposed to 'high' culture, and therefore of no value. Feminists objected to this, arguing that it was an outcome of the masculinist bias by which men were associated with 'high' cultural forms and women with 'mass' culture; with emotion, passivity and consumption. As Tania Modleski (1982) has pointed out, it was these categorisations and the hierarchy they implied that needed to be challenged, not the pleasure women derived from engaging with particular cultural forms that were different from those associated with (and valued by) men. In her view, the terms in which such cultural forms were assessed were derived from, and refer back to, patriarchal ideology. They merely evaluate the masculine at the expense of the feminine.

Focusing specifically on the 1980s US soap opera Dallas, Len Ang (1989) suggests that despite surface glamour and its distance from the everyday life of viewers, women still

identified with the emotional problems of the main female characters. Indeed, Dallas allowed for the expression of emotions in a more direct and forceful way than the restrictions of realism allowed.

Similarly, Geraghty (1996) points out that soap operas portrayed women as wives, mothers, daughters and girlfriends and that many of the stories revolved around the emotional problems generated by these relationships. What was important, however, and what gave women viewers pleasure was the care and intensity with which the problems in these relationships were played out, and the value they gave to women's roles in maintaining them. Hence, Geraghty argues, they rendered visible women's emotional work in a way not previously acknowledged in malestream cultural forms. Soap operas therefore gave women a space in which emotional relationships could be discussed in terms of gender and power, and the subordinated position of women could be acknowledged, and discussed, by women viewers.

A similar point has been made by Modleski (1982) in her book Loving with a Vengeance. She suggests that soap operas allow for the representation of strong and transgressive women. The fact that they are often punished and/or contained within the home does not, she insists, detract from the importance of their articulation of anger, ambition and contempt for those who try to control them. Soaps therefore allow viewers to recognise not so much real (individual) women, but the reality of women's (collective) social position. This puts them potentially in a position in which they can begin to recognise and hence resist male domination, and oppressive modes of representation, Modleski argues.

Feminist work on soap operas therefore opened up sociological analysis of media presentations, by drawing attention to the otherwise neglected theme of the pleasures women derive from mass culture. It drew attention to the constructions of masculine and femininity which frame the ways in which we make sense of media representations This was assisted by developments in semiotics which challenged the notion that meanings were transparent and argued instead that we need to examine how meanings are signified; how things are made to mean. Work on soap operas also showed that media products were not simply imposed on women but were part of popular culture; feminists claimed them from below' because they could support women' resistance to male domination, or

75

at least provide women with a common ground on which to discuss their position. The meaning and importance of media products can lie with the audience, this research emphasised, not merely with the producers of representations.

6.5   Conclusion

Sociologists have emphasized that culture is a central concept of analysis; crucial to understanding the relationship between the individual and society. One of the reasons why the term is so difficult to define, however, is its intricate historical development; and also the way in which it has come to be used in several different ways by distinct and often incompatible schools of thought within sociology. In the twentieth century, culture came to refer both to high culture- to the highest expressions of human civilization in art, literature and music. Feminist approaches have drawn attention to the ways in which cultural studies has tended to exclude, marginalize women, and have highlighted the ways in which media culture misrepresents women, or constructs femininity only according to a relatively narrow range of roles and identities. Feminists have also highlighted the relative absence of women in cultural production, as well as the importance of understanding the social context within which both seek and derive pleasure from consuming a range of mass cultural forms, including advertising, film, television (especially soap operas), romantic fiction, magazines and most recently new forms of media and communication technologies.

6.6   References

Kumar, Radha (1993), "The History of Doing", New Delhi, Kali for women.

Abbot Pamela, Claire Wallace and Melissa Tylor (2005) An Introduction to Sociology- Feminist Perspective, New York, Routledge.

PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER INEQUALITY :
BIOLOGICAL, CULTURAL, MARXIAN

Gender and Society **Course No. SOC-C-304**

7.0 **STRUCTURE**

7.1 **Sociology of Gender :**

The sociology of gender considers the ways in which the physical differences between men and women are mediated by culture and social structure. These differences are culturally and socially elaborated so that (1) women are ascribed specific feminine personalities and a 'gender identity' through socialization; (2) women are often secluded from public activities in industrial societies by their relegation to the private domain of the home; (3) women are allocated to inferior and typically degrading productive activities; (4) women are subjected to stereotypical ideologies which define women as weak and emotionally dependent on men.

There have been two major debates within the sociology of gender. The first has addressed the issue of whether gender is a separate and independent dimension of social stratification and of the social division of labour. The second debate concerns the

appropriateness of general theoretical perspectives for the analysis of gender differences and divisions in society. Therefore, four themes characterize the theories of gender inequality. First, men and women are not only differently situated in society they are unequally situated. Specifically, women get less of the material resources, social status, power and opportunities for self-actualization than the men who share their social location- be it a location based on class, race, occupation, ethnicity, religion, education, nationality, or nay other social significant factor. Second, this inequality results from the organization of society, not from any significant biological or personality differences between women and men. For the third theme of all inequality theory is that although individual human beings may vary somewhat from each other in their profile of potentials and traits, no significant pattern of natural variation distinguishes the sexes. Instead, all human beings are characterized by a deep need for freedom to seek self-actualization and by a fundamental malleability that leads them to adapt to the constraints or opportunities of the situations in which they find themselves. To say that there is gender inequality, then, is to claim that women are situationally less empowered than men to realize the need they share with men for self-actualization. Fourth, inequality theories all assume that women and mean will respond fairly easily and naturally to more social structures and situations. They affirm, in other words, that it is possible to change the situation. In these theorists contrast with the theorists of gender difference who present a picture of social life in which gender differences, are whatever their cause, durable, deeply penetrative of personality, and only partially reversible. Explanation of gender inequality vary around this common core of interpretations. Two major variants of contemporary feminists theory that focus on and try to explain gender inequality are reviewed one Marxian Theory in this chapter and Feminism Theory in another chapter.

7.2   Gender Differences :

Although a focus on gender differences is a minority position in contemporary feminism, some influential contributions to modern feminists theory do take this approach (Baker Miller, 1976; Bernikow, 1980; Gilligan, 1982; Kessler and McKenna, 1978; Ruddick, 1980; Snitow, 1979). There also have been research documents (Masters and Johnson, 1966; Hite, 1976) with findings on male/female differences that have deeply affected contemporary feminist thinking. The central theme in the contemporary literature on gender differences is that women's inner psychic life is, in its overall configuration, different from that of men. In their basic values and interests (Rudick, 1980), their mode of making

78

value judgments (Gilligan, 1982), their construction of achievement motives (Kaufman and Richardson, 1982), their literary creativity (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979), their sexual fantasies (Hite, 1976; Radway, 1984; Snitow, 1983), their sense of identity (Laws and Schwartz, 1977), and in their general processes of consciousness and selfhood (Baker Miller, 1976; Kasper, 1986), women being a different vision and a different voice to the construction of social reality. A second theme is that the overall configuration of women's relationships and life experiences is distinctive. Women relate differently from men to their biological offspring (Rossi, 1977; 1983); boys and girls have distinctively style of play (Best, 1983; Lever, 1978); adult women relate to each other (Bernikow, 1980) and to the women subjects the study as scholars (Ascher et al., 1984) in unique ways. Indeed the over life experience of females from infancy to old age is fundamentally different from that of men (Bernard, 1981). In combination this literature on differences in consciousness and life experience presents one unique answer to the question, "What about the women?" Raising the second question, "Why?", identifies the key lines of variation within this overall focus on gender differences. Explanation of the psychological and relational differences between women and men are essentially of three types: biological, cultural or institutional, and broadly constructed, social psychological.

In this context, this chapter deals with the theories of gender inequality in relation to biological explanation, cultural explanation, and Marxian explanation of inequality. We would like to explain feminist and postmodernism perspective of gender inequality in the ensuing chapter.

I.   Biological Explanation of Gender Differences :

Biological perspective maintains that the sexual division of labour and inequality between the sexes is determined to some degree by some biologically or genetically based differences between men and women.

Biological explanations have been the standby of conservative thinking on gender differences. Freud traced the different personality structures of men and women to their different genitals and to cognitive and emotional processes that begin when children discover their physiological differences.

Clearly women are biologically different from men. Though there is disagreement about the exact nature and consequences of this difference, some sociologists,

anthropologists and psychologists argue that it is sufficient to explain the basic sexual division of labour in all societies. Below is the contribution for explaining gender inequality in biological perspective.

Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox- The Human Biogrammar :

Contemporary sociologists Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox (1971) write of variable "biogrammars" laid down in early hominid evolution that leads women to bond emotionally with their infants and men to bond practically with other men. The biogrammar is a genetically based programme which predisposes mankind to behave in certain ways. These predispositions are not the same as instincts since they can be considerably modified by culture, but they remains basic influences on human behaviour. In part they are inherited from man's primate ancestors, in part they have developed during man's existence in hunting and gathering bands. Tiger and Fox argue that it is reasonable to assume that, to some degree, he is genetically adapted to this way of life. Although the biogrammars of men and women are similar in many respects, there are important differences between them. Tiger and Fox argues that compared to women, men are more aggressive and dominant. These characteristics are genetically based; in particular they result from differences between male and female hormones. These differences are due partly to genetic inheritance from man's primate ancestors, partly to a genetic adaptation to a hunting way of life. Males hunt which is an aggressive activity. They are responsible for the protection of the band and for alliances or wars with other bands. Thus, men monopolize positions of power. By comparison, women are programmed by their biogrammars to reproduce and care for children. Tiger and Fox argues that the basic family unit consists of mother and child. In their words, "nature intended mother and child to be together'. It does not particularly matter how this basic unit is supported and protected. It can be in addition of a single male, as in the case of nuclear family, or by the impersonal services of a welfare state.

George peter Murdock- Biology and Practicality :

Murdock (1949) sees biological differences between men and women as the basis of the sexual division of labour in society. However, he does not suggest that men and women are directed by genetically based predispositions or characteristics to adopt their particular roles. Instead, he simply suggests that biological differences, such as the greater physical strength of men and the fact that women bear children, lead to gender

roles out of sheer practicality. Given the biological differences between men and women, a sexual division of labour is the most efficient way of organizing society. In a cross-cultural survey of 224 societies ranging from hunting and gathering bands to modern nation states, Murdock examines the activities assigned to men and women. He finds tasks such as hunting, lumbering and mining to be predominantly male roles, cooking, gathering, water carrying and making and repairing clothes to be largely female roles. Women because of her biological function of child bearing and nursing, woman is tied to the home base. Murdock finds that the sexual division of labour is present in all of the societies in his sample and concludes that, the advantages inherent in a division of labour by sex presumably account for its universality.

Talcott Parsons- Biology and the 'Expressive' Female :

Parsons (1959) sees the isolated nuclear family in modern industrial society specializing in two basic functions: the socialization of the young and the stabilization of adult personalities. For socialization to be effective, a close, warm and supportive group is essential. The family meets this requirement. Within the family, the woman is primarily responsible for socializing the young. Parsons turns to biology for his explanation of this fact. He states that fundamental explanation of the allocation of roles between the biological sexes lies in the fact that the bearing and early nursing of children establish a strong presumptive primacy of the relation of mother to the small child. Furthermore the absence of the husband-father from the home premises so much of the time means that she has to take the primary responsibility for the children. Parsons characterizes the woman's role in the family as 'expressive' which means she provides warmth, security and emotional support. This is essential for effective socialization of the young. He argues that for the family to operate efficiently as a social system, there must be a clear-cut sexual division of labour. In this sense, the instrumental and expressive roles complement each other. Like a button and buttonhole, they lock together to promote family solidarity. Although Parsons moves a long way from biology, it forms his starting point. Biological differences between the sexes provide the foundation on which the sexual division of labour is based.

John Bowlby- The Mother-child Bond :

John Bowlby (1946)examines the role of women, in particular, their role as mothers from a psychological perspective. Like Parsons, he argues that a mothers; place in his

home, caring for her children especially during their early years. Bowlby conducted a number of studies of juvenile delinquents and found that the most psychologically disturbed and experienced separation from their mothers at an early age. Many had been raised in orphanages and as a result had been deprived of maternal love. They appeared unable to give or receive love and seemed compelled to adopt a career of destructive and anti-social relationships. He concludes that it is essential for mental health the 'the infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with his mother'. Bowlby's arguments imply that there is a genetically based psychologically need for a close and intimate mother-child relationship. Thus the mother role is firmly attached to the female.

The biological argument also has been used in writings much more sympathetic to feminism. Masters and Johnsons exploration of the anatomy of female sexuality has given feminists theorists basic facts for rethinking the whole question of the social patterning of sexuality, and Lice Rossi (1979; 1983) has given serious attention to the biological foundations of gender-specific behaviour. Rossi has linked the different biological functions of males and females to different patterns of hormonally determined development over the life cycle and this, in turn, to sex-specific variation in such traits as sensitivity to light and sound and to differences in left and right brain connections. These differences, she feels, feed into the different patterns in childhood noted by Carol Gilligan (1982), Janet Lever (1978), and Raphaela Best (1983); to the well-known female "math-anxiety", and also to the apparent fact that omen are more predisposed to care for infants in nurturing way than are men. Rossi's feminism leads to compensate, through social learning, for biologically "given" disadvantages, but as a bio-sociologist she also argues for rational acknowledgement of the implications of biological research.

II.   Gender Inequality: Cultural Theory :

Cultural explanations of gender differences often also lay great stress on women's distinctive functions and caring for infants. This responsibility for mothering is seen as a major determinant of the broader sexual division of labour that links women in general to the functions of wife, mother, and household worker, to the private sphere of the home and family, and thus to a lifelong series of events and experiences very different from those of men. In this setting, women develop distinctive interpretations of achievement, distinctive interests and values, characteristics but necessary skills for openness in relationships. "caring attention to others",

82

and particular networks of support with the other women (mothers, daughters, sisters, co-wives and friends) who inhabit their separate sphere. Although, some of the institutional theorists of difference accept the sexual division of labour as social necessary (Berger and Berger, 1983), others are aware that the separate spheres for women and men may be embedded within broader patterns of gender inequality (Bernard, 1981; Kelly-Godol, 1983) or even of oppression (Ruddick, 1980).

Many sociologists begin from the assumptions that human behaviour is largely directed and determined by culture, that is the learned recipes of behaviour shared by members of a society. Thus norms, values and roles are culturally determined and socially transmitted. From this perspective, gender roles are product of culture rather than biology. Individuals learn their respective male and female roles. The sexual division of labour that gender roles are normal, natural, right and proper.

Ann Oakley- The Cultural Division of Labour :

Ann Oakley, a British sociologists and a supporter of the women's Liberation Movement, comes down strongly on the side of culture as the determinant of gender roles. Her position is summarized in the following quotation, 'Not only is the division of labour by sex not universal, but there is no reason why it should be. Human cultures are diverse and endlessly variable. They owe their creation of human inventiveness rather than invincible biological forces'. Oakley first takes Murdock to task arguing that the sexual division of labour is not universal not are certain tasks always performed by men, other by women. She maintains the Murdock's interpretations of his data is biased because he tolls at other cultures through both Western and male eyes. In particular, she claims that the pre-judges the role of women in terms of the Western housewife-mother role. Oakley examines a number of societies in which biology appears to have little or no influence on women's roles. The Mbuti Pygimes, a hunting and gathering society who live in Congo rain forests, have no specific rules for the division of labour by sex. Men and women hunt together. The role of father and mother are not sharply differentiated. Both sexes sharing responsibility for the care of children. Amongst the Australian Aborigines of Tasmania, women were responsible for seal hunting, fishing and catching opossums (free-dwelling mammals). Turning to present day societies, Oakley notes that women form an important part of many armed forces, particularly those of China, Russia, Cuba and Israel. Thus, it shows that there are no exclusive female roles and that biological characteristics do not bar women from particular jobs. She regards as a myth the supposed

83

'biologically based incapacity of women to carry out heavy and demanding work'. Oakley also attacks the arguments of parsons and Bowlby by pointing out to the kibbutz to show that systems other than the family and the female mother role can effectively socialize the group. Using the example of Alor, an island in Indonesia, Oakley shows how in this and other small-scale horticultural societies, women are not tied on their offspring, and this does not appear to have any harmful effects on the children. In traditional Alorese society, women were largely responsible for the cultivation and collection of vegetable produce. This involved them spending considerable time away from the village. Within a fortnight of the birth of their child, women returned to the fields leaving the infant in the care of sibling, the father or a grandparent. Turning to western society, Oakley dismisses Bowlby's claim that an 'intimate and continuous' relationship between mother and child is essential for the child's well-being. She notes that a large body of research shows that the employment of the other has no detrimental effects on the child's development. Some studies indicate that the children of working mothers are less likely to be delinquent than those of mothers who stay at home. Oakley is particularly scathing in her attack on Parsons's view of the family and the role of the 'expressive' female within it. She accuses him of basing his analysis on the beliefs and values of his own culture and in particular on the myths of male superiority and of the sanctity of marriage and the family. She argues that the expressive housewife-mother role is not necessary for the functioning of the family unit. It merely exists for the convenience of men. She claims that Parsons's explanation of gender roles is simply a validating myth for the 'domestic oppression of gender roles is simply a validating myth for the 'domestic oppression of women'. Finally, Oakley concludes that gender roles are culturally rather then biologically determined.

Bruno Bettelheim- Collective Childbearing :

Bruno Bettelheim is a psychiatrist specializing in child development. His study of collective childrearing in a kibbutz, indicated that a close, continuous mother-child relationship is not essential for effective socialization. There was little mental illness among kibbutz children and little evidence of jealousy, rivalry or bullying. The children appeared hardworking and responsible, there was no delinquency and no equivalent of the high school 'dropout'. Compared to western society, there is strong pressure to conform to group norms and as a result, Bettleheim found that children tend to be less individualistic. He argues that they develop a 'collective' rather than a personal sense of self. By Western standards, the children appear 'emotionally flat', they shun any show of emotion' and seem unable to establish 'really

deep, intimate and loving relationships'. Bettleheim claims that parents raised in the kibbutz 'expect little intimacy with their children, do not hope for or wish for a unique one-to-one relationship with them. Hence their relations with their children are more comfortably relaxed-neither intimate nor intense.

Ernestine Friedl-male Dominance and the Sexual Division of Labour :

In Women and Men: An Anthropological View, Friedl provides an explanation for the sexual division of labour and male dominance. Like Oakley, she supports a cultural explanation, noting the great variation in gender roles between societies. For examples, she observes that in some societies, activities such as weaving, pottery making and tailoring are thought to be 'naturally' men's task, in others, women's. However, it is significant that in societies where such tasks are defined as male roles, they generally carry higher prestige than in societies where they are assigned to women. Friedl sees this as a reflection of male dominance which she maintains exists to some degree in all societies. She defines male dominance as a 'situation in which men have highly preferential access, although not always exclusive rights, to those activities to which society accords the greatest value and the exercise of which permits a measure of control over others'. She argues that the degree of male dominance is a 'consequence of the frequency with which men have greater rights than women to distribute goods outside the domestic group'. Thus men are domain because they control the exchange of valued goods beyond the family group. This activity brings prestige and power. The greater their control over the exchange of valued goods outside the family, the greater their dominance. Friedl tests this hypothesis by examining hunting and gathering bands and small-scale horticultural societies. In hunting and gathering bands, men hunt and women gather vegetable produce, nut and berries. To explain this sexual division of labour, Friedl turns to biological arguments. Childbearing, nursing and carrying are not compatible with the demands of hunting, whilst they do not seriously inconvenience gathering. Yet this does not explain why hunting carriers greater prestige than gathering. The explanation lies in the fact that meat is a scarce resource and as such it is more highly values then vegetable produce. The latter is usually readily available, can be gathered with ease and is therefore not exchanged. The successful outcome of a hunt cannot be guaranteed. Some men return empty-handed. For the whole band to enjoy a regular protein diet., which meant provides, it is necessary for the successful hunters to distribute their kill to other members of the band. Friedl argues that the 'distribution of scarce or irregularly

available resources is a source of power. Those who distribute such resources gain prestige, those who receive them are indebted and obligated. Since hunting is largely a male monopoly, men, by exchanging meat, are thus plugged in to a major power structure. Friedl's ideas are novel and interesting and reveal a fascinating interplay between biology and culture. Although she claims that her work shows that male dominance and gender roles are culturally determined. She fails to completely dismiss biological arguments. The fact that women bear children forms an important part of her explanation for the sexual division of labour, and, through less directly, for her explanation of male dominance. However, her arguments reveal the importance of culture and avoid simplistic claims of the biological arguments outlined.

Sherry B.Ortner- The Devaluation of Women :

A somewhat different, though equally interesting, explanation for the subordinate status of women is presented by Sherry B.Ortner. She attempts to provide a general explanation for the 'universal devaluation of women'. Ortner claims that it is not biology as such that ascribes women to their status in society but the way in which every culture defines and evaluates female biology. Thus, if this universal evaluation change, then the basis for female subordination would be removed. Ortner argues that in every society, a higher value is placed on culture than on nature. Culture is the means by which man controls and regulates nature. By inventing weapons and hunting techniques, man can capture and kills animals. By inventing religion and rituals, man can call upon supernatural forces to produce a successful hunt or a bountiful harvest. By the use of culture, man does not have to passively submit to nature, he can regulate and control it. Thus, man's ideas and technology, that is his culture, have power over nature and are therefore seen as superior to nature. The universal evaluation of culture as superior to nature is the basic reason for the devaluation of women. Women are seen as closer to nature than men and therefore as inferior to men. Ortner argues that women are universally defined as closer to nature because their bodies and physiological functions are more concerned with 'the natural processes surrounding the reproduction of the species'. These natural processes include menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and lactation, processes for which the female body is 'naturally equipped. Women's social role as mothers is also seen as closer to nature. They are primarily responsible for the socialization of the young. Infants and young children are seen as 'barely human', as one step away from nature because their cultural repertoire is small

compared to adults. Women's close relationships with young children further associate them with nature. Since the mother role is linked to the family, the family itself is regarded as closer to nature compared to activities and institutions outside the family. Thus activities such as politics, warfare and religion are seen as more removed from nature, as superior to domestic tasks and therefore as the province of men. Finally, Ortner argues that 'woman's psyche', her psychological makeup is defined as closer to nature. Because women are concerned with child care and primary socialization, they develop more personal, intimate and particular relationships with others, especially their children. By comparison, men, by engaging in politics, warfare and religion have a wider tange of contacts and less personal and particular relationships. Thus men are seen as being more objective and less emotional. Ortner argues that culture is, in one sense, the transcendence, by means of systems of thought and technology, of the natural givens of existence. Thus men are seen as closer to culture since those of women. Since culture is seen as superior to nature, 'woman's psyche' is devalued and once again, men come out on top. Ortner concludes that in terms of her biology, physiological processes, social roles and psychology, woman 'appears as something intermediate between culture and nature'. Ortner fails to show conclusively that in all societies culture is evaluated highly than nature. Although many societies have rituals which attempt to control nature, it is not clear that nature is necessarily devalued in comparison to culture. Indeed it could be argued that the very existence of such rituals points to the superior power of nature. However, Ortner's argument does not have one important virtue. It provides a universal explanation for a universal phenomenon, the second-class status of women. If Ortner's view is correct, the subordination of women owes nothing to biology as such, but rather to the cultural evaluation of their biological makeup. A change in this evaluation will remove the basis for female subordination.

III.   Gender Inequality and Marxian Explanation :

Marxism presents one of the best-known and intellectually most elaborate theories of social oppression. This theory not only explains oppression but rather a more muted statement of gender-inequality. The foundation of this theory was laid by Marx and Engels. The major concern of Marx and Engels was social class oppression, but they frequently turned their attention to gender oppression. Their most famous exploration of this issue is presented in The Origins of the family, Private property and the State (1884). The major

argument of this book are :

- Women's subordination results nor from her biology, which is presumably immutable, built from social arrangements that have a clear and traceable history, arrangements that presumably may be changed.

- The relational basis for women's subordination lies in the family, an institution aptly named from the Latin word for servant, because the family as it exists in complex societies is overwhelmingly a system of dominant and subordinated roles. Key features of the family in Western societies are that it centres on a mating pair and their offspring typically located within a single household; it is patrilineal, with descent and property passing through the male line, patriarchal, with authority invested in the male household head, and monogamous at least in the enforcement of the rule that the wife have sexual relations with her husband. The double standard allows men far greater sexual freedom. Within such an institution, particularly when, as in the middle-class family, the women has no job outside the house and no economic independence, women are in fact the chattels or possessions of their husbands.

- Society legitimizes this family system by claiming that such a structure is the fundamental institution in all societies. This is in fact a false claim, as much anthropological and archaeological evidence shows. For much of human prehistory there were no family structures of this type. Instead people were linked in extensive kin networks- the gens, large-scale associations among people sharing blood ties. Moreover these ties were traced through the female line because one's direct link to one's mother was far more easily demonstrable than one's ties to one's father the genes was in other word matrilineal. It was also matriarchal, with a significant power resting in the hands of women who in those primitive hunting and gathering economies has an independent and crucial economic function as the gathers, crafters, storers, and distributors of essential materials. This power was exercised in collective and cooperative communal living arrangements. Commodity use, child rearing and decision making, and through the free and unencumbered choice of love and sexual partners by both women and men. This type of society, which Marx and Engels describe elsewhere as primitive communism, is associated in The Origin with a free and empowered social status of women.

- The factors that destroyed this type of social system, producing what Engels calls "the

world historic defeat of the female sex" (Engels and Marx:1884). Are economic and specifically the replacement of hunting-gathering by herding,, horticulture, and farming economies. With this change emerged property, the idea and reality of some group members claiming as their own the essential resources of economic production. It was men who asserted this clam, as their mobility, strength, and monopoly over certain tools gave them economic ascendancy. With these changes men also, as property owners, developed both enforceable needs for a compliant labour force, be they slaves, captives, women-wives, or children and for heirs who would serve as a means of preserving and passing on property. Thus emerged the first familia, a master and his slave-servants, wife-servants, children-servants, a unit in which the master fiercely defended his claim to sole sexual access to his wives and thus to certainty about his heirs. And the sons too would support this system of sexual control, because on it would rest their property claim.

➢ Since then the exploitation of labour has developed into increasingly complex structures of domination, most particularly class relations; the political order was created to safeguard all these systems of domination; and the family itself has evolved along with the historic transformations of economic and property systems into an embedded and dependent institutions, reflecting all the more massive injustices of the political economy and consistently enforcing the subordination of women. Only with the destruction of property rights in the coming communist revolution will women attain freedom of social, political, economic, and personal action.

The Origins, has been challenged by anthropologists and archeologists on questions of evidence by feminists for failing in various ways to grasp the full complexity of women's oppression. But in making the claim at all that women are oppressed, in analyzing how this oppression is sustained by the family, an institutions regarded as almost sacred by powerful sectors of society, and in tracing the ramification of this subordination for women's economic and sexual status. The Origin presents a powerful sociological theory of gender inequality, one that contrasts dramatically with Parsons's mainstream sociological theory.

7.3   Contemporary Marxian Feminism :

Contemporary Marxian feminists embed class system and particularly within the structure of the contemporary capitalist class system. From this theoretical vantage point, the

quality of each individual's life experiences is a reflection first of his or her class position and only second of his or her gender. Women of markedly class backgrounds have fewer life experiences in common than women of any particular class have with the men of their class. For example, in both their class-determined experiences and interests, upper-class, wealthy women are antagonistic to blue collar or poor, welfare women, but share many experiences and interests with upper-class, wealthy-men. Given this starting point, Marxian feminists acknowledge that within any class, women are less advantaged that men in their access to material goods, powers, status, and possibilities or self-actualization. The cause of this inequality lie in the organization of capitalism itself.

The embedded ness of gender inequality within the class system is most simply and starkly visible within the dominant class of contemporary capitalism, the bourgeoisie. Bourgeois men own the productive and organizational resources of industrial production, commercialized agriculture, and of national and international trade. Women of the bourgeois class are not propertied, but are themselves property, the wives and possession of bourgeois women are attractive and distinctive commodities in an ongoing process of exchange between men (Rubin:1975) and often are means of sealing property alliances among men. Bourgeois women produce and train sons who will inherit their father's socio-economic resources. Bourgeois women also provide emotional, social and sexual services for the men in their class. For all of this they are rewarded with an appropriately luxurious life style. Gender inequality in the wage-earning classes also is functional for capitalism, and therefore perpetuated by capitalist. Women as wage earners are, because of their lower social status, more poorly paid and because of their sense of wage-sector marginality, difficult to unionize. Thus they serve as an unresisting source of profit for the ruling classes. Moreover, women's marginality to the wage sector make them an important part of the reserve labour force that, as a pool of alternative workers, acts as a threat to and brake on unionized male wage demands. As housewives profit making as consumers of goods and services for the household and as unpaid caregivers who subsidize and disguise the real costs of reproducing and maintaining the work force (Gardiner:1975). Finally, but for Marxians least significantly, the wage earner's wife provides her spouse with a miniscule experience of personal, power, compensation for his actual powerlessness in society. She is, in other words, "the slave of the a slave" (MacKimon:1982).

Women, then, are unequal to men not because of any basic and direct conflict of

interests between the genders, but because of the working out of class oppression, with its attendant factors of property inequality, exploited labour, and alienation. The fact that within any class women are less advantaged than men, rather than vice-versa., seems in Marxian feminism to have no immediate structural cause. Rather as in liberal feminism, this fact results from a historic carry-over from the collapse of primitive communism that Engles described. Consequently, the solution for gender inequality is the destruction of class oppression. This destruction will come through revolutionary action by a united wage-earning class, including both women and men. Any direct mobilization of women against men is counterrevolutionary, because it divides the potentially revolutionary working class. A working class revolution that destroys the class system by making all economic assets eh assets of the entire community also will free society from the by-product of class exploitation, gender inequality.

7.4   REFERENCES :

The Polity Reader in Social Theory (1994), Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre and Loic J.D.Wacquant (1992), An Invitation of Reflexive Sociology, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Boyne, Roy and Ali Rattansi (1990), Postmodernism and Society, London: Macmillan.

Bowlby, J. (1946), Forty-Four Juvenile Thieves, London : Tindall and Cox.

Butler, Judith (1990), Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. London: Routledge.

Butler, Judith (1991), "Imitation and Gender Insubordination", from Diana Fuss (ed.) Inside/Out : Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories, New York: Routledge.

Chodorow, Nancy (1978), The reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender, Berkeley : University of California Press.

Foucault, Michel (1978), The History of Sexuality, tr. R.Hurley, Penguin, Harmondsworth.

Hartsock, Nancy (1990), "Foucault on Power : A Theory for Women?" in Linda Nicholson (ed.), Feminism/Postmodernism, New York: Routledge.

Haraway, Donna (1985), "Cyborg Manifesto and Fractured Identities" from Socialist Review, 80, Duke University Press.

Lemert, Charles (eds.) (1993), Social Theory : The Multicultural and Classic Readings, Oxford : West view Press.

Murdock, Peter (1949), Social Structure, New York: Macmillan.

Oakley, A. (1974), Housewife, London: Allen Lane.

Parsons, Talcott (1959), 'The Social Structure of the Family', in the R.N.Anshen Family: Its Functions and Destiny, New York : Harper and Wow.

Ritzer, George (1988), Contemporary Sociological Theory, New York : McGraw-Hill Publishing Company.

Tiger, L. and R. Fox (1972), The Imperial Animal, London: Sacker and Warbug.

****

EXPLANATION OF GENDER INEQUALITY :

FEMINIST AND POST-MODERNIST

8.0   STRUCTURE

8.1   Explanation of Feminist Theory

8.2   Gender Inequality and Feminists Perspective

8.3   Gender Inequality and Postmodernists Perspective

8.4   Psychoanalytic Theory of Feminism

8.5   References

8.1   Feminist Theory :

Contemporary feminists scholars have produced a rapidly growing, extraordinarily rich, and highly diverse collection of theoretical writings. The typology of feminists theory is based on the two basic questions that unite all these theories: The descriptive question is: What about the women? And the explanatory question is: Why is this situation as it is? The pattern of response to the descriptive question generates the main categories four classifications. Essentially thee are there answers to the question, "what about the women?" The first answer is that women's location in, and experience of, most situations is different from that of the men in that situation. Investigation then focuses on the details of that difference. A second answer is that women's location in most situations is not only different from that of less privileges than or unequal to that of men. The focus of the ensuing

description is then on the nature of that inequality. A third answer is that women's situation also has to be understood in terms of a direct power relationship between men and women. Women are oppressed, that is, restrained, subordinated, molded, and used and abused by men. Descriptions then focus on the quality of the oppression. Each of the various types of feminist theory can be classified as theory of difference, or of inequality, or of oppression. In the preceding chapter we have discussed theories of gender inequality in context to biological explanation, cultural explanation, and Marxian explanation of inequality. In this chapter, we would explain feminist and postmodernism perspective of gender inequality

8.2   Gender Inequality and Feminists Perspective :

Feminist ideas can be traced back to the eighteenth century. The first significant feminist movements developed in the mid-nineteenth century, concentrating their attention particularly on attaining the vote for women. Although falling into decline after the 1920s, in the 1960s feminism again burst into prominence, and has had an impact in many spheres of social life and intellectual activity. Sexual practices vary widely between and within cultures. In the west, repressive attitudes to sexuality gave way to a more permissive outlook in the 1960s, the effects of which are still obvious today.

Feminist thought has made a major impact upon social theory, and the social sciences more generally, over the past quarter of a century or so. Feminist theory is in an important sense a subject matter in its own right, concerned with addressing the 'invisibility' of women in social theoretical thinking and with theorizing gender. Yet it also has implications for some of the most basic problems of social theory as such.

Liberal feminism :

Liberal feminism' explanation of gender inequality begins where theories of gender differences leave off; with an identification of the sexual division of labour, the existence of separate public and private spheres of social activity, men's primary location in the former and women's in the latter, and the systematic socialization of children so that they move into the adult roles and spheres appropriate to their gender. In contrast to theories of difference, however, liberal feminists see nothing of particular value about the private sphere consists of the endless round of demanding, mindless, unpaid, and undervalued tasks associated with housework, child care, and the emotional, practical and sexual servicing

94

of adult men. The true rewards of social life- found in public sphere. The systems that restricts women's access to that sphere, burdens them with private-sphere responsibilities, isolates them in individual households, and excuse their males from any sharing of private-sphere drudgeries is the system that produces gender inequality.

When asked to identify the key forces in this system, liberal feminists point to sexism, an ideology similar to racism, hitch consists partly of prejudices and discriminatory practices against omen, partly of taken-for-granted beliefs about the "natural" differences between women and men that suit them to their different social destinies. Because of sexism, females are, from childhood on, limited and maimed, so that they can move into their adults roles and in those roles "dwindle" from full humanness into the mindless, dependent, subconsciously depressed beings created by the constraints and requirements of their gender-specified roles.

Bernard (1982) in The Future of Marriage presents marriage as a cultural system of beliefs and ideals, an institutional arrangements of roles and norms, and a complex of interactional experiences for individual women and men. Institutionally, marriage empowers the role of husband with authority and with the freedom, indeed, the obligations, to move beyond the domestic setting; it meshes the idea of male authority with sexual prowess and male power; and it mandates that wives be complaint, dependent, self-emptying, and essentially centred on the activities and chores of the isolated domestic household. Experientially then there are two marriages in any institutional marriage: the man's marriage, in which he holds the belief of being constrained and burdened, while experiencing what the norms dictate- authority, independence, and a right to domestic, emotional and sexual service by the wife; and the wife's marriage, in which she affirms the cultural belief of fulfillment while experiencing normatively mandated powerlessness and dependence, an obligation to provide domestic, emotional, and sexual services, and a gradual "dwindling away" of the independent young persons he was before marriage. The results of all this are to be found in the data that measure human stress: married women, whatever their claims to fulfillment, and unmarried men, whatever their claims to freedom, rank high on all stress indicators, including heart palpitations, dizziness, headaches, fainting, nightmares, insomnia, and fear of nervous breakdown; unmarried women, whatever their sense of social stigma and married rank low on all the stress indicators. Marriage then is good for men and bad for women and will only cease to be unequal in its impact when couples feel free enough from the prevailing institutional constraints to negotiate the kind of marriage that

95

best suits their individual needs and personalities.

Liberal feminists propose the following strategies for eliminating gender inequality mobilization to use existing political and legal channels for change, equal economic opportunities; change in family, school and mass media messages so that people no longer are socialized into rigidly compartmentalized sex roles; and attempts by all individuals to challenge sexism where they encounter it in daily life. For liberal feminists, the ideal gender arrangement is one in which each individual chooses the life style most suitable to her or him and has that choice accepted and respected, be it for house-wife or house-husband, unmarried careerist or part of a dual income family, childless or with children, heterosexual or homosexual. Liberal feminists see this ideal as one that enhances the practice of freedom and equality.

Gender and Postmodernism :

Over the past forty years feminist theorists have advanced critical social theory along path breaking lines. Challenges to liberal feminist theory, in particular have stimulated noteworthy developments during this period. These challenges have taken most visible shape around postmodernism as an anti-enlightenment perspective, yet the most consequential resistance comes from multicultural and post-colonial theorists demanding attention (postmodernist or not) to racial/ethnic and other hierarchies.

Two other varieties of feminist theorizing have also challenged liberal feminist theory, namely, lesbian and psychoanalytic perspectives. Adrienne Rich's (1980) Lesbian Continuum, ranging from sexual to emotional bonds between women that exert priority in women's lives, raises issues that liberal feminist theory largely ignores or resists. Similarly, feminist psychoanalytic perspectives such as Nancy Chodorow's (1978) or Jessica Benjamin's (1988, 1995) introduce conceptual and political baggage that liberal feminists often found problematic, if not repugnant.

8.3   Gender Inequality and Postmodernists Perspective :

If women have on occasion turned modernism to critical ends, feminist authors today have sought widely to make use of conceptions of 'postmodernism' in their interpretations of the experience of women and gender. Theories of 'postmodernism' or 'post modernity' (sometimes these terms are treated as equivalent, sometimes authors

differentiate between them) have tended to follow the views set out by Lyotard, noted previously. Feminist influenced by conceptions of postmodernism have argued that there can be no universalizing theories of male domination, patriarchy or sexual difference. They have distanced themselves from what they see as a misplaced 'essentialism': the view that there are some characteristics or experiences, which differentiate virtually all women from virtually all men. Gender categories, like other social categories, are fragmented are contextual.

Thus, it is asserted, for example, that the life of a poor black woman living in inner city ghetto may differ more from that of an affluent suburban white woman than it does from the experience of a poor black male. There is no intrinsic unity to being a 'woman' apart from the anatomical similarity of sex. This sort of standpoint has a substantive as well as theoretical thrust. In postmodern conditions, it is viewed that social life itself has become fragmented and decent red. In this context, we shall discuss post modernist perspective of Feminism.

Postmodernism opposes liberalism as a modernist myopia, a failed experiment, an array of false hopes, and a colonialist rationale. As with liberalism itself, postmodernism presents in multiple guises. Whatever the version, postmodernism presupposes that some time during the twentieth century modernist values and dreams began losing their grip on people's consciousness. In their wake came an appetite for ambiguity, irony and paradox and a feel for how localized and situated our knowledge is in the end and for all practical purposes. As post-modernism gained ground, many feminist theorists developed love-hate or ambivalent relationship with it. Often fearful that postmodernist skepticism toward modern values such as equality might feed resistance to feminism, for example, some theorists (Hartsock: 1990; Minnich: 1990) advocated skepticism toward postmodernist stances. Other embrace postmodernism, while still other feminist theorists carve out more nuance reactions such as making their 'political project... one of discursive destabilization' (Gibson-Graham: 1996:241).

Prominent among postmodernist feminist theorists are: Judith Butler, Donna Haraway and Laurel Richardson. Some of the Butler's (1990) most important work centres on showing how cultures make only certain identities 'intelligible' so that other enactments of identity get siphoned off the mainstream heap as abnormal, perverse, unsuccessful or weird. In Butler's hands identity is a performative phenomenon that is

97

heavily regulated. Institutionalized regimes render some enactments of identity 'real'- that is, recognizable- versions of X, Y or Z and other enactments something other than versions of X, Y or Z. For example, only culturally approved ways of enacting womanhood get seen as expressions of feminity; other ways of enacting it get seen as selfishness, man-hating, feminist stridency, or bitchiness rather than as more ways of enacting womanhood and expressing 'feminity'. As Butler (1992) sees it, 'part of the project of postmodernism… is to call into question the ways in which such 'examples 'and 'paradigms' serve to subordinate and erase that which they seek to explain' More generally, for Butler, 'Identity categories are never merely descriptive, but always normative, and as such, exclusionary'.

For Haraway (1993) feminist postmodernism or postmodernist feminism revolves around 'politics and epistemologies of location, positioning and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims'. Her feminism favours 'the sciences and politics of interpretation, translation, stuttering, and the partially understood'. Haraway adopts irony both as a 'rhetorical strategy' and as a 'political method', and she puts the cyborg- a machine/organism hybrid- 'at the centre of (her) ironic faith'. Yet that centre also has modernist ingredients. Haraway stresses, for instance, that 'valid witness depends not only on modesty but also on nurturing and acknowledging alliances with a lively array of others'.

Richardson's (1997) theoretical projects revolve around 'reframing sociological discourse as a feminist-postmodernist practice'. While interrogating narratives, Richardson looks at 'issues of representation', particularly at which hierarchies they reproduce. More than any other contemporary social theorist. Richardson has probed writing practices for their political baggage and transformative promise and experimented with diverse genres in her won theoretical endeavors. In constructing her 'feminist speaking position' Richardson thus cultivates a 'postmodernist sensibility that celebrates multiplicity of method and multiple sites of contestation'. Richardson's bold explanations of non-traditional genres for writing social theory puts her in the camp of feminist theorists committed to bursting representational boundaries as well as discipline-based ones. Some feminist theorists (Alfonoso and Trigilio: 1997) have for example, published their work in dialogical form as electronic-mail exchanges. Others (for example Rinehart: 1998) talk about feminist theorizing as a 'conversation'. At least two feminist social theorists- Katherine Gibson and Julie Graham- have done their

collaborative theorizing using a combined-name pseudonym (J.K.Gibson-Graham) to designate the authorship of their texts. They then write substantially in the first-person singular! What Richardson and others are theorizing, in effect, are profound connections and what can be said, who can credibly say it and who can hear it in meaningful, practical ways?

Feminist thinkers have extensively drawn upon Foucault's writings, albeit normally in a partial or selective way. Foucault's work on the body, and more specifically on sexuality, has been especially important. In his work on the rise of asylum and the prison, Foucault shows that the body was the focus of new disciplinary procedures integral to the establishing of the modern state. In the 'disciplinary society' of modernity, the body is rigorously controlled and ordered through the imposition, or direct supervision, to co-ordinate the activities of individuals within the regularized settings of modern organizations.

The body here appears as relatively positive: indeed, in his study of the rise of the prison, Discipline and Punish, Foucault speaks of the new administrative orders as producing 'docile bodies'. In his later writings, particularly when he moved to consider the nature of sexuality, Foucault came to place more emphasis upon the body as a medium of action and a source of pleasure. His multi-volume work on The History of Sexuality attempts to demonstrate that the body in modern societies becomes a site of 'bipower': it is disciplined on the one hand, but on the other becomes a focus of a search for fulfillment and self-understanding.

As Lois McNay points out, many feminists have objected to Foucault's treatment of the body as non-gendered. His discussion of prisons, for example, concentrates almost wholly upon an implicit model of male experience, rather than considering the specific ways in which the disciplining of women differed from those affecting men. Yet the force of this criticism, as McNay points out, can also be exaggerated. Foucault's writings provide insights into how the body is 'worked upon' by gender constructions, because in some key ways the 'inscription' of social influences upon the body is actually the means of the very production of gender differences. The rendering 'visible' of women's history should not lead us to infer that it is a separate and insulated experience, which bears no relation to other aspects of social organization and change.

In McNay's view, rather than criticizing Foucault for neglecting gender, we should

99

look to produce a critical appraisal of Foucault's conception of the relation between power and the body. Foucault correctly sees power not just as negative, 'the ability to say no', but also as a generative phenomenon. The idea that Foucault's studies of the 'disciplinary society' provide no basis for analyzing resistance to power. McNay argues, is wrong. Foucault's theory, in fact, probelmatizes resistance and sees that it takes as many different forms as there are contexts in which power is wielded. Nevertheless, Foucault fails adequately to see that 'biopower' is a contradictory and tensionful force. Biopower can under some circumstances provide a means of liberation and is not just to be connected processes of administrative regulation.

Nancy Fraser concentrates her attention on Habermas like Foucault, although he quite often refers to the struggles of women's movements, Habermas rarely discusses issues of gender in a systematic fashion. In his most detailed statement of his social theory, The Theory of Communicative Action, Habermas distinguishes between the symbolic material reproductions of societies. To survive over time, a society must provide for economic interchange with the material environment, and it must also create and sustain symbolic values and norms that provide a framework for communication between its members. In Habermas's view, in modern societies paid employment is part of the system of material reproduction, while unpaid activities carried on by women in the domestic sphere, including childbearing and childrearing, belong to the domain of symbolic reproduction. Fraser finds this view inadequate. The bearing and rearing of children is a material as well as a symbolic phenomenon; after all, it is the very means of the physical survival of the species.

Yet so is the sphere of paid work: work is never just a series of economic transactions, but involves symbolic meanings and norms. Fraser also questions Habermas's thesis that the domestic sphere belongs to the realm of 'social integration'- the integration of large-scale institutions. Habermas's conceptual distinctions, because they are not informed by a satisfactory interpreatation of gender, in fact easily serve to reinforce ideological distinction, which they are supposed precisely to uncover and criticize. Habermas's theory of the 'colonization' of the 'life world' is flawed for similar reasons. In the conclusion of her discussion Fraser indicates how Habermas's ideas might be modified if they are connected, as they have to be, with an account of gender.

Janet Wolff considers the implications of taking gender seriously for the analysis of

modernism as a cultural phenomenon. She begins with a brief discussion of some of the views of her namesake. Virginia Wolff was a champion of modernism and a defender of the break with tradition which modernity installs. Wolff was sympathetic to feminism and saw the new movements in literature of her time as a means of breaking with what she called 'the sentence made by men'- heavy, long-winded contorted writing styles. Women might be able to make use of new models of linguistic expression to give voice to their won specific experiences in a world dominated by men. Wolff's views about the relation between modernism and feminism have since been echoed by a variety of other feminist authors.

Modernism, Janet Wolff points out (like postmodernism), is difficult to define. It is usually located at the period from 1890 to 1930, but covers a variety of different literary and artistic forms. Following Eugene Lunn, Wolff defines modernism as a revolt against realism and romanticism, characterized by aesthetic self-consciousness, simultaneity, ambiguity and the disappearance of the 'integrated personality'. She notes, nevertheless, that these traits are actually remarkably parallel to those often associated with postmodernism.

Understood in this way at any rate, modernism appears as a history of male achievement. The usual accounts of the development of modernism here is more than a failure to recognize the role of women writers and artists. Modernism is in fact primarily a masculine phenomenon. Looking specifically at the work of women writers, it is possible to see that modernism, as Virginia Woolf suggests, quite often depicted the mechanisms of a patriarchal society.

Pierre Bourdieu accounts for the fact that women are, throughout most known societies, consigned to inferior social positions, it is necessary to take into account the asymmetry of status ascribed to each gender in the economics of symbolic exchanges. Whereas men are the subjects of matrimonial strategies through which they work to maintain or to increase their symbolic capital, women are always treated as objects of these exchanges in which they circulate as symbols fit for striking alliances. Being thus invested with a symbolic function, women are forced continually to work to preserve their symbolic value by conforming to the male ideal of feminine virtue defined as chastity and candor, and by endowing themselves with all the bodily and cosmetic attributes liable to increase their physical value and attractiveness. This object status granted to women is best seen in the place that the Kabyle-mythico-ritual system gives to their contribution to reproduction. This system paradoxically

101

negates the properly female labour of gestation (as it negates the corresponding labours of the soil in the agrarian cycle) to the benefit of the male intervention in the sexual act. Likewise in European societies, the privileged role that women play in properly symbolic production, within the household as well as outside of it, is always devalued if not dismissed. Male domination is thus founded upon the logic of the economic of symbolic exchanges, that is, upon the fundamental asymmetry between men and women instituted in the social construction of kinship ands marriage: that between subject and object, agent and instrument. And it is the relative autonomy of the economy of symbolic capital that explains how male domination can perpetuate itself despite transformations of the mode of production. It follows that the liberation of women can come only from a collective action aimed at symbolic struggle capable of challenging, practically the immediate agreement of embodied and objective structures, that is, from a symbolic revolution that questions the very foundations of the production and reproduction of symbolic capital and, in particular, the dialectic of pretension and distinction which is at the root of the production and consumption of cultural goods as signs of distinction.

8.4 Psychoanalytic Theory of Feminism :

Psychoanalytic theory shows that the human individual ore 'subject' is socially constructed. It is partly because of the very influence of psychoanalysis that so many authors, both within the domain of feminist thought and outside, have spoken of the 'end of the subject' in modern social theory. Agnes Heller takes up this issue. She does not discuss it specifically in relation to feminism, or even gender, but the alert reader will easily be able to apply her arguments back to points raised by previous selections within this part.

The 'death of the subject' is particularly associated with postmodernism, but, as she shows, has a prior ancestry in social theory and philosophy. Yet who precisely is it that is supposed to have died? Those critical of essentialism would say that it is the category of a 'unitary person' that today has no relevance in social analysis. Yet such a category was from the beginning a constructed one and in some part such critics are attacking a position that few, if any, have ever held.

We can see that this is so by taking the concrete example of autobiography. A person who writes an autobiography is both the author of the text and the author as a subject and at the same time authorizes a 'world' in which that subject exists. The subject

102

(the human individual) and the worked (the natural and social environment) are never in fact separate entities, which simply 'act upon' one another; they are mutually constructed in the course of history. Individuals have existed in all societies; 'the subject' is a creation of modernity. In conditions of modern social life in which, as has been stressed before, tradition is largely stripped away; the individual inherits no pre-given map for her or his self-understanding. Women and men in modern societies have contingent identities and are aware of this contingency; it is precisely this which makes for the constitution of 'the subject' Rather than speaking of the death of the subject, therefore, we should see that the 'openness' of experience associated with socially constructed identity has been bound up with modernity since its inception.

The term 'sex' is ambiguous. As commonly used it denotes physical and cultural differences between males and females (as in the male sex', 'the female sex') as well as the sexual act. It is useful to distinguish between sex, in the physiological or biological sense, and gender, which is a cultural construct (a set of learned behaviour patterns).

Some people argue that differences in behaviour between the sexes are genetically determined, but there is no conclusive evidence to this. Gender socialization begins as soon as an infant is born. Even parents who believe they treat children equally tend to react differently to boys and girls. These differences are reinforced by many other cultural influences.

Gender identity and modes of expressing sexuality develop together. It has been argued that masculinity depends on denial of intimate emotional attachment to the mother, thus producing 'male' inexpressiveness'. Sylvia Walby accepts the importance of these points but rejects the basic position underlying them. She explains through the concept of patriarchy.

8.5   REFERENCES :

The Polity Reader in Social Theory (1994), Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre and Loic J.D.Wacquant (1992), An Invitation of Reflexive Sociology, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Boyne, Roy and Ali Rattansi (1990), Postmodernism and Society, London: Macmillan.

Bowlby, J. (1946), Forty-Four Juvenile Thieves, London: Tindall and Cox.

Butler, Judith (1990), Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. London: Routledge.

Butler, Judith (1991), "Imitation and Gender Insubordination", from Diana Fuss (ed.) Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories, New York: Routledge.

Chodorow, Nancy (1978), The reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Foucault, Michel (1978), The History of Sexuality, tr. R.Hurley, Penguin, Harmondsworth.

Hartsock, Nancy (1990), "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?" in Linda Nicholson (ed.), Feminism/Postmodernism, New York : Routledge.

Haraway, Donna (1985), "Cyborg Manifesto and Fractured Identities" from Socialist Review, 80, Duke University Press.

Lemert, Charles (eds.) (1993), Social Theory : The Multicultural and Classic Readings, Oxford : West view Press.

Murdock, Peter (1949), Social Structure, New York : Macmillan.

Oakley, A. (1974), Housewife, London : Allen Lane.

Parsons, Talcott (1959), 'The Social Structure of the Family', in the R.N.Anshen Family: Its Functions and Destiny, New York: Harper and Wow.

Ritzer, George (1988), Contemporary Sociological Theory, New York : McGraw-Hill Publishing Company.

Tiger, L. and R. Fox (1972), The Imperial Animal, London : Sacker and Warbug.

****

GENDER BASED DIVISION OF LABOUR/WORK: PRODUCTION V/S REPRODUCTION; HOUSEHOLD WORK & FERMINIZATION OF WORK

We would like to discuss in this chapter the gender inequality in context to gender based division of labour which deals following things:

I. Division of labour,

II. Work

III. Production vs. Reproduction,

IV. Household work and Invisible work.

I

9.1. Gender Based Division of Labour:

Early feminist writings stressed that women had a right to work and attempted to debunk the prevailing attitudes which presumed that women's work was marginal both to the economy and to individual households. A number of strikes for equal pay and improved working conditions occurred in the late 1960s and 1970s, including the strike of sewing machinists at Ford's Dagenham factory, the London night cleaners campaign for unionization, the occupation at the Fakenham shoe factory in Norfolk and the strike by Asian women at Imperial Typewriters in Leicester. The Working Women's Charter campaign was established nationally in 1974, demanding action by employers, unions and the state to ensure women's greater equality in the labour market. Waged work has continued to be the focus of campaigns by feminists. In the 1980s and 1990s issues about the value of women's work compared with men's were important.

Women's work has also generated a large body of case studies of women's position in the labour market. These academic analyses of women's participation have identified three broad areas of concern.

- There has been a focus on women's exclusion frown the paid workforce- even when there, they have been treated as invisible, as invaders, whose 'proper' and primary place is at home.

- The question of occupational segregation and wage differentials has been analyzed. Women and men still work in very different types of jobs, with women clustered in a narrow range of occupations, particularly in the service sector. There are

106

also differences between women, on race and class grounds.

- Feminists scholars, as well as activists, have turned their attention to remedies, to notions of equality, equal pay, equal value or comparable worth and equal opportunities in the labour market.

9.2 Alternative Explanations of the Gender Division of Labour:

The main contribution of orthodox economics to explaining wage differentials between men and women has been human capital theory. This suggests that an individual makes an investment in him- or herself by devoting time to studying, gaining additional qualifications or by acquiring skills and work experience. The higher the initial investment in human capital, the higher future earnings are likely to be. Evidence of earning distributions broadly backs this up. However, the earnings differentials, particularly between women and men, are usually far larger than the theory would lead us to expect, so human capital theories at best offer only a partial explanation. They are also essentially sexist, since they only count as production those skills which the market rewards, and many skills which women possess go unrewarded and unrecognized. To explain these things, we would discuss main theories of division of labour. These are as follows:

Theories of Division of Labour :

Labour economists have developed theories of discrimination which either supplement or replace human capital theory. Two types of theories have been developed to explain gender divisions in the workforce: dual and segmental labour market theories which are also derived from economics, and labour process theories building on the work of Marxist social theory.

(i) Dual Market Theory:

The initial and simplest dual labour market model, as its name indicates, distinguishes two labour markets, a primary and secondary sector. The former offer high wages, good working conditions, security of employment and opportunities of promotion. Jobs in the secondary sector, by contrast, tend to be low paid, heavily supervised, with poor working conditions and little chance of advancement. The majority of women are located in the secondary sector workforce and this is seen as, in large part, the explanation for their lower pay. However, this

model does not offer much precision, since obviously there are large numbers of men on the periphery, while there are also many women- nurses, teachers and other professionals, for example- in the primary labour markets.

(ii)   Segmented Labour Market Theory :

Radical economists have given a more dynamic account, emphasizing the process, which create a segmented labour market, suggesting that different labour markets arise as employers seek to divide, and rule, workers from one another. To counter working-class militancy, they suggest, employers turned to strategies designed to retain control. They achieve this by dividing the workforce into distinct segments, so that the actual experiences of workers would be different and the basis of their common opposition to capitalism would be undermined. Hence, labour markets are segmented by sex, age, race and ethnic origin. This account creates space for treating gender as central to the structuring of labour markets, and not simply as a reflection of men's and women's different relations to the family.

9.3   II Work

Defining Work :

Work of the various forms, but especially wage labour, constitutes a large part of most people's sense of self. Conventionally, work is regarded as an area that is clearly demarcated from domestic or social lives, as something people are paid to do, usually for set hours each week. Work is often experienced as the opposite of home; it constitutes the 'public' side of our everyday life, as distinct from the more 'private; or intimate side shared with family and friends. Work is associated with production, with the manufacturer of some sort of goods or services for exchange in a market, in presumed opposition to consumption, which is defined as 'non-work', or leisure-time activity. While at work we exchange out time and labour power for a monetary reward- at least, in advanced industrial societies. In consumption activities or leisure, the monetary exchange is either revered or the cash nexus is irrelevant. And, of course, work is represented as a masculine domain, both as the area in which men are dominant, numerically and in terms of power, and as the arena in which masculinity is constructed. The feminine domain is the household and family. This does not mean that women are absent from the workplace of men from the home; rather, it stipulates that work is

primary to masculine identity and home and family are primary to the construction of femininity. Men thus relate to their families as 'breadwinners', while women's paid work is often interpreted as an extension of their roles as wives and mothers, as a secondary activity in their lives.

In the 1970s and 1980s feminists broadened the definition of work to include housework, sexual and emotional servicing of men, the caring for children, the elderly and the sick. They stressed that women's activities in the home constitute work, albeit financially unrewarded, and criticized definitions that are narrowly based on employment or productivity. Alongside the production of goods and services for exchange in a market, we must consider the tasks of reproduction, as part of work. These include the reproduction of children, the reproduction of human beings in the sense of their daily physical and emotional welfare, and the reproduction of existing social relations, including class and gender relations. This type of work is essential in producing socialized individuals and current and future wage labourers is exchanged for a share in the financial remuneration received by other members of the household who go 'out to work'- usually a male breadwinner.

In nineteenth century that work has become synonymous with paid employment. Feminist sociologists and historians have also been active in questioning the meaning of work. They have pointed to the ways in which it seems to privilege men's experience over women's; to the ways in which women have been denied access on equal terms to paid work, and the ways in which definitions of work exclude women's contribution. Historically, home and work have not always been separated. It was only with the emergence of industrial capitalist production that they became spatially separated and even now the separation is not complete. Women have always been part of the informal cash economy that co-existed with the development of formal production in factories and other specialized workplaces. Women have always worked- - taking in lodgers, doing washing, and ironing, running small shops, producing clothes and food for sale. Their gradual appearance in the UK, and so their appearance in the official statistics of employees, has it part been through the movement of many productive activities whether or not for financial reward, into the factory. The significant shift was not from leisure to work but from intra-familial to employer-employee working relations.

109

Related literature on work :

Feminists scholars interested in work began from the mid 1960s onwards, by pointing to the absence of women from most studies. The first step was to fill this gap by making female workers more visible. Researchers initially concentrated on working-class women particularly in manufacturing. Clerical work was looked at only in so far as it seemed to be becoming more like factory work, as a result of new technology and the imposition of new work disciplines. Ironically, this has the effect of reiterating the heroic myth of the 'real' worker as a factory worker. In so far as it kept to the existing contours for the study of work, fundamentally shaped by the labour/capital relation, this could be described as 'add women and stir' approach.

As feminists began to accumulate detailed case studies, they moved away from the idea that the nature of the labour process is determined purely by the struggles between labour and capital. Rather than simply making women "visible", there has been a concern with gender as an organizing principle of work relations. Gender should not be seen as constructed at home and then taken out to work. It was becoming clear that gender is constructed in a number of sites and that work is crucial one. Accounts of the construction and manipulation of masculinity and sexuality in the workplace were published in the 1980s (Cockburn: 1983, 1985; Hearn and Parkin: 1987). Cockburn:1983, 1985) and Game and Pringle (1984), among others, looked at the ways in which a segregated workforce was defended not only by managers but also by the male workers. While new technology was constantly changing the content of men's and women's work, and threatening to break down the existing division of labour, in one way or another jobs were continually redefined in order to retain a distinction. Thus, while the sexual division of labour was always changing, what did not seem to change was a distinction between men's work and women's work, and power differentials between them.

Braverman (1974) argues that new technology was degrading the dignity of work, taking away old craft skills and drawing more and more workers into the ranks of an enlarged proletariat. He also says that proletarization of clerical work is dominated by women. Changes in the organization of work should not be treated simply as technological innovations based on capital's search for higher profits. They are, rather, the outcome of struggles for control between capitalists and workers. Feminists added a gender dimensions to this, arguing that labour processes are also shaped by struggles between men and women.

It was women's position in the family that allowed them to be treated by employers as a reserve army of labour. But he did provide a springboard for feminist exploration of the labour process, and for sustained work investigating why women's jobs tend to be defined as unskilled regardless of the content of the job.

Game and Pringle (1984), argue that work is centrally organized around gender differences, and that gender is not just about differences but about power. The power relation is maintained by the distinction between male and female jobs. Male workers have a vested interest in maintaining the sexual division of labour, in maintaining a sense of themselves as superior to women. They have traditionally done this by defining their work as skilled and women's as unskilled, thus setting up an association between masculinity and skill. Game and Pringle consider the relationship between gender identities and technological change, and ask, what happens when mechanization takes place? They argue that men's skills are seen to be built into the machines, that there is a conscious association between machinery, especially big machinery, is thought of as appropriate for men. There are some ironies in this. Their writing on white goods manufacturing (washing machines, stoves and refrigerators) looks at a whole set of polarities that define the difference between men's work and women's. These include: skilled/unskilled, heavy/light, dirty/ clean, dangerous/boring, mobile/sedentary. While new technology is making all the work more like 'women's work', new distinctions) technical/non-technical) are merging to justify an ongoing sexual division of labour.

Linda McDowell (1992) returns to the impact of recent changes in the two areas of 'women's work'- the labour market and the home or community- and argues that women, although still depicted as 'secondary' workers, are an increasingly important part of the labour market in the United Kingdom. This increased centrality, however runs counter to the greater demands being imposed on them as 'caring and servicing' workers in the home as the welfare state is restructured, and seems to be having the effect of increasing the overall workload for many women in the United Kingdom in the 1990s. Whether or not this will lead to wider changes in the structure of gender relations remains an open question.

Since 1970s, numerous accounts of women's domestic activities have been produced from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Some writers, like Selma James and Mariarosa della Costa (1972), attacked the left for focusing narrowly on the

111

factory, and argued for wages for housework, while others argued that this would only confirm women's employment in the domestic spheres. Socialist feminists were more interested than radical feminists in women and employment' which is perhaps not surprising given the traditional socialist emphasis on the emancipation of women through their incorporation into socialized production. Feminists of all shades, liberal, socialist and radical, supported anti-discrimination legislation and equal opportunity programmes.

The separation of men's work and women's work between the labour market and the home, but also within wage labour, has evolved historically. Chris Middleton (1988) has demonstrated that patriarchal forms of divisions of labour long pre-date industrial capitalism, findings which he suggests 'will no doubt be received as meat and drink by those who believe in the existence of an autonomous system of patriarchy and wish to assert its independence of the mode of production and class structure'. Middleton himself rejects the idea that patriarchy is an autonomous structure and emphasizes the ways in which both gender and class relations are historically constituted and interrelated in particular places at certain times. It is clear that the construction of the category 'women's work' in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is linked with the categorization of women as dependants, and the obscuring of their contribution to family enterprises. For example, behind the ideology of separate spheres for men and women in Victorian England, a great deal of work continued to be carried out by women in the home. And, of course, large numbers of working-class women were in various types of paid employment.

9.4 III Production vs. Reproduction

Women's Work :

Investigations of the role in production and reproduction of the western housewife clarified women's work elsewhere. In the third world and in some parts of the advanced capitalist societies, women were shown to be directly engaged in productive labour in the course of their domestic work. This has been shown particularly clearly in the case of African women but there is also overwhelming evidence from all other parts of the world to show women's contribution to food production, processing and distribution, care of livestock, craftwork, and community development (Slocum:1975; Rogers:1980; Bujra:1986, Roberts:1984). Once women were identified as workers, rather than as

wives and mothers, the extent and variation of male dominance around the world became much easier to recognize. Social distinctions between men's work and women's work concealed divisions in access to land, knowledge skills, and other resources, the control of labour, and rights to dispose of what was produced. By making women's labour (and in particular, women's unpaid labour) visible, feminists could show how this work had become devalued in relation to that of men, although not in any uniform or harmonious way.

A distinction between arguments which apply to all capitalist societies everywhere and those which are specific to particular capitalist societies at particular historical periods has not, however, always been carefully drawn. Marxists feminists also tended to treat women in capitalist society as if they are either full-time housewives or workers. This ignored the extent to which women juggle these contradictory areas of work throughout their working lives. Work on production and reproduction in the third world as brought home the need for much more careful qualification of generalization (Redclift:1985). In the 1980s, more historically specific knowledge has been produced of the complexes relationships women experiences in the processes of production and reproduction, and in the relationship of these processes to the activities of the state (Elson and Pearson: 1981; Balbo: 1987).

The gendered structuring of capitalist labour markets ensured a sexual division of labour at work. Women became less valued as workers than men, had access to a more limited range of work. Men benefited from this situation and played a part in maintaining it (Cockburn: 1983). Some Marxists femininists agued that women were reserve army of labour, available for work outside the household where insufficient men were available. The problem with this view is that women in advances capitalist societies are a pool of child labour rather than a reserve army of labour in the sense intended by Marx (Bruegel:1979). Marx (1976) argued that it was an essential mechanism of the capitalist system that the industrial reserve army could be brought in when extra labour was needed, to prevent wage rise eating into profits. This labour could be dispatched again when the demand for labour fell. Women in advanced capitalist societies remain a contradictory form of cheap labour, since when they are in paid work they still have to be maintained, and have rights to housing, health care, education, pensions, etc. Even though these rights are being rapidly eroded by Thatcherism in Britain in the 1980s. Women's cheap or part-time labour rarely directly replaces men's more

expensive or full-time labour because of the extent of gender segregation in the labour market. This argument also needs specific qualification in different parts of the world depending on the structure of labour markets, and women's rights to maintenance from the state.

Women's work is oppressive with respect to their levels of pay and conditions of work. There is a limited choice of work available for women. They lack access to skills, and male activities in the home and the workplace ensure that women do not leave the domestic sphere without the struggle (Burman: 1979; Cockburn: 1983; Westwood: 1984). Work, status and rewards became linked to the relative power of men and women in the home, and women's responsibility for children. The impact of technology on domestic labour then occurred in ways which have reinforced rather than relieved women's responsibility for domestic labour (Ravets: 1987).

Making women's oppression through work visible made the connections between production and reproduction plain, but left a number of problems in explanations of how and why these connections had come about, and how and why they vary. Nicholson(1987) suggests not as a characteristics of all societies, but as an historical (987) development' which led liberals to differentiate the family and the state and Marxists to differentiate production and reproduction'. The inability of the Marxists concept of production to take account of gender leaves feminism with the problem of explaining the different ways in which women's work is oppressive.

9.5   Production and Reproduction :

What mothers actually do with their time has been one of the most dramatic revelations of feminism. Once feminists turned their attention to what women actually do both inside and outside the domestic sphere, it became very clear that most women live lives of more or less unremitting toil. Although ridiculed at first (Mainardi: 1980). Feminists established housework in capitalist societies as an area of unpaid labour to be given serious consideration. At first in empirical and historical studies (Oakley: 1974) and then in the much more abstract domestic labour debate taken up the Marxists feminists. Women's work in the domestic sphere was shown to be much more than private housework. It was revealed as work of social and economic importance, and shown to have a place in the systematic oppression of women (Kaluzynska: 1980).

Feminists were then faced with yet another situation in which knowledge of the familiar, everyday world of women was in inadequate because of the lack of concepts with which to comprehend it. Feminists used the Marxists concepts of production and reproduction in an effort to include women's work in producing babies, hot dinners, clean shirts and emotional support, as well as their paid labour. While the conceptual separation of women's work into production and reproduction encouraged knowledge of women's work in both spheres, this dualism also created problems (Edholm et al,:1977).

The 1970s conception of reproduction was one of the more abstract and contentious areas of Marxists feminism (influenced by the work of Althusser) as it was very difficult to specify in general how the ideology of sexual subordination interacted with the organization of production and reproduction. While Marxists analysis should be applicable to any mode of production, and some feminists have taken up this point, Marxists feminism has tended to concentrate particularly on common features of women's oppression in western capitalism. This has led to considerable problems with generalizations.

Clearly there cannot be one universal answer as to why women's work tends to be valued as less than men are that will always be valid in every historical situation, but Marxists feminists did look for a general framework of explanation, and they did this sometimes at a very abstract level. Women were not only workers inside and outside the home; they also physically reproduced and reared the labour force of the future as mothers within families. Women helped to reproduce and sustain the social structure of capitalism. Marxists feminists then located women's oppression in the family, homosexuality, and marriage, as did radical feminists, but also in production system and with reference to the activities of the state.

The concepts of production and reproduction established women as workers on very different terms for men. Studies of work exposed the unequal sexual division of labour, both inside and outside the household, not as having its own history and ideology. Questioning the dualism of the private and public domains led directly to the need to reconceptualize women's work, both at home and in the public sphere. The nature of the work allocated to women could not be separated from their general subordination to men. Feminists began to reassess concepts of work, and in particular of the idea that 'real work' took place outside the home in organized productive activity. Women's work at home in servicing the needs of the household and reproducing the labour required for production became visible.

115

**9.6	The Changing Relationship between Production and Reproduction :**

Women's large-scale and permanent entry into the labour market poses a …challenge to orthodox arguments, whether from a feminist perspective. The circumstances of the 1980 have cast doubt on the necessity of domestic labour, whether for capital or for individual men. The disappearances of the family wage in the economic transformation of recent years means that fewer and fewer men can afford to support the services of a full-time homemaker. And capital has discovered that the exploitation of women's cheap labour maintains profit levels. Overall, amounts of domestic labour in the economy can be reduced without disaster. Male workers seem able to still to perform their tasks without a cooked breakfast and ironed clothes. Although it is women who continue to perform the vast majority of the tasks of domestic labour… the total number of hours majority has declined. By definition, women who work for wages have less time for other tasks. But a larger scale change has also increased capital's indifference to what goes on in the home. The significance of labour power produced in *Situ has* declined.

The state, unlike capital, is increasingly reliant on women's unpaid labour in the sphere of reproduction. This is seen most clearly in the movement towards 'community care', rather than institutional provision, for the elderly, disabled and terminally ill. In the debates about community care there has been the familiar juxtaposition of moral responsibility and personal achievement vis-à-vis collective provision that saps initiative.

The welfare state and the benefit system in Britain continue to depend on idealized gender divisions in a nuclear family that no longer exists. This dependence of women on men in the welfare sector has been strengthened in a decade when changes in the economy increasingly have challenged it. This contradiction between restructuring in the spheres of reproduction and production has, so far, been contained by greater inputs of female labour to both spheres. But the consequent 'social speed up', is not infinitely extendable.

The seeds of a crisis, but also of struggle and renegotiation, lie in this contradiction. The association between industrial organization and the institutions of social regulation is being recast in the post-Fordist era in a contradictory way that places gender relations at the centre. Women's labour power is an increasingly important element in both the arenas of production and reproduction. Capital has resolved the contradiction between the short-

term needs of the economy for cheap female labour and the long-term needs for social reproduction, In favour of the former requirement. At the same time the state is also withdrawing from the later area. The resolution of this contradiction so far has been at the individual level, by the purchase of goods and services for reproduction in the market by an affluent minority and by an increased reliance on the labour of individual women in almost all households.

The competing and contradictory needs and interests regarding women's role in the home and in the labour market create new cleavages and scope for new alliances. Any 'economic' analysis that ignores the centrality of the gender division of labour, and issues of housework, child care and the support of the expanding dependent population, is an inadequate explanation of the nature of contemporary industrial restructuring. Nor can such an analysis point the way to a political understanding of how such restructuring may be challenged.

9.7   IV Household work

Women's Work in the Home :

Feminists interested in work have been concerned with what they refer to as the sexual division of labour, the allocation of tasks on the basis of sex. This structures women's and men's work both at home and in the paid workforce, as well as situating 'home' as subordinate to 'work'. The sexual division of labour cannot be understood in purely economic terms. It has sexual and symbolic dimensions as well. It is not just imposed on people but comes as part of a social package in which it is presented as right, natural and desirable. Our identities as masculine or feminine beings are bound up with it.

Domestic labour can have a timeless quality about it, as a work that women have always done. But obviously it has changed dramatically. The concept of 'the housewife; who stays at home and cares for house, husband and children is essentially a modern one- few women before the twentieth century has that option, other than the affluent who has domestic servants. The arrival of running water, gas, electricity, refrigerators and washing machines, dishwashers and microwave ovens, and the decline of domestic service, have obviously affected the nature of housework, which like much factory work, is now lighter than it used to be. But whether it is less time consuming, or has become widely shared, is debatable. The

117

one thing is that seems not to change is that women do most of it, even if the contributions of other members of the household have changed. Even that most biological function of childbirth has been affected by technology' while shifts in decisions about the number, timing and spacing of children have affected child care responsibilities. Women have fewer children now than they used to, but it can be argued that they are expected to give more attention to the child's mental and emotional welfare than they did in the past. While the technology is now there to do away with much domestic labour, expectations of home as dimension of personal fulfillment have given it a new set of meanings. Instead of being just 'hard work', it has a set of sexual, emotional and symbolic significances. Nevertheless, there are indicators that the time spent on housework by women in the paid workforce is falling; husbands and children do not seem to be picking up more, but women are doing less (Hartmann:1981).

Feminists strategies attempted to analyze the interrelations of the family and production in capitalist societies. It was clear that inequalities at work were related to inequalities at home. Women's waged work was constructed as secondary, their wages seen as pin money; often their paid work was regarded as an extension of what they did at home- office wives, service and caring work. But equally obviously, inequality at home was linked to their employment options. Without equal access to jobs and child care provision, a woman has little choice but to locate themselves primarily as wives and mothers. Recent changes in the economy and in the welfare sector also raised the question of the extent to which contemporary capitalist societies are still based on the old model of an accommodation between capital and patriarchy. Socialist feminists tended to see the world as a bargain between men and capital, based on support for the traditional nuclear family in which a wage-earning male is serviced by the domestic labour of a home-based woman, and the institutions of the welfare state buttressed the bargain. But it now seems as if the model male workers of earlier eras, who worked solidly in a single job throughout his life, is no longer needed, and that capitalists can make greater profits from women's labour without society crumbling if the beds do not get made on time men do not have hot dimmers every day. Socialist feminists may have to re-evaluate theories about the links between the family and the welfare state, between capitalism and domestic labour.

One of the most marked features of changes in the nature of domestic labour has been the decline of clearly productive work in the home (for example, making clothes for bottling fruit and making jam) and its replacement by a range of goods, commodities and services purchased in the market. Home cooking, for example, as Ehrenreich mentioned,

is being displaced by meals purchased at fast food outlets or other types of restaurants, most clothes are now purchased off-the-peg rather than made by women at home, and other activities, such as cleaning and child care may also be purchased. This 'commoditization' of domestic labour has been accelerated by women's entry into the labour market. Paradoxically, at the same time, other types of goods are being purchased and used at home to replace previously market-based commodities. Here music system and video recorders are good examples, as are DIY prerequisites. Rosemary Pringle suggests that these home-based activities are regarded increasingly as 'leisure' rather than 'work and whereas 'production' is perceived as a worthy activity. Consumption tends to be trivialized. She suggests that we should break this identification of work with production and consider the labour processes of consumption. Nevertheless, it is clear that the home is still the focus of work for women and that an increasing part of this is so-called community care.

9.8   Feminization of work

Sociologists tend to divide people's lives into 'work' (paid employment), 'leisure' (the time when people choose what they want to do) and 'obligation time' (periods of sleep, eating and other necessary activities). Feminists have pointed out that this model reflects a male view of the world and does not necessarily fit the experiences of the majority of women. This is partly because unremunerated domestic labour is not recognised as work - it is 'hidden' labour - and partly because many women participate in few leisure activties outside of the home. It is not only the organisation of work that is gendered but also the cultural values with which paid work and domestic labour are associated; paid work and the workplace are largely seen as men's domain, the household as women's. Rosemary Pringle sums up some of these issues when she points out that:

Though home and private life may be romanticized, they are generally held to represent the 'feminine' world of the personal and the emotional, the concrete and the' particular, of the domestic and the sexual. The public world of work sets itself up as the opposite of all these things: it is rational, 'abstract, ordered, concerned with general principles, and of course, masculine.... For men, home and work are both oppqsite and complementary.... [For women] home is not a respite from work but another workplace. For some women work is actually a respite from home!

119

Most of the classical sociological studies of paid work were of men-of coal miners, affluent assembly line workers, male clerks, or salesmen for instance - and, until relatively recently, the findings of these studies formed' the empirical data on which sociological theories about all workers' attitudes and experiences were based. Even when women were included in samples, it was (and sametimes still is) assumed that their attitudes and behaviours differed little from men's, or married women were seen as working for pin money'; paid employment being seen as 'relatively secondary to their domestic roles.

A growing body of feminist and pro-feminist research has challenged these assumptions, however, and has provided sociologists with a more detailed understanding of the relationship between gender, work and organisation, and particularly of how men's and women's experiences of work differ. Feminists have argued that domestic labour is work and should be regarded as such. They have also maintained that the majority of women do not undertake paid employment for 'pin money' but out of necessity, and that paid work is seen as meeting important emotional and identity needs by many women. This does not mean that women's experiences of paid employment are the same as men's, however, and feminists have highlighted a range of ways in which work is gendered.

In the UK, far instance, 46 percent of people in the labour market are women. However, 44 percent of women and only 10 percent of men in employment work part time. Average hourly earnings for women working full-time are 18 percent lower, and for women working part-time are 40 per cent lower, than for men working full-time. Of mothers of under fives, 52 percent are in employment, campared with 91 percent of fathers of under fives. There are 4.5 children aged under 8 for each registered place with a childminder, in full day care or in out of school clubs. Modern apprentices in hairdressing and in early years care and education are mainly women, while those in construction, engineering and plumbing are mainly men. Women are by far the majority in administrative and secretarial (80 percent) and personal service jobs (84 percent), while men hold most skilled trades (92 percent) and process, plant and machine operative jobs (85 percent). Feminist sociologists have sought to explain these patterns with reference to a range of concepts, particularly the sexual division of labour.

9.8.1 Caring and support work

Many women are expected to care not only for their husbands and Children but also for other dependents, and in a voluntary capacity for people generally in the community. Women

are also frequently seen as necessary to their husbands' work role. As Janet Finch (1983) has demonstrated, this extends beyond the wives of managers and businessmen who are expected to entertain on behalf of their husbands.. Men in many occupations 'need' a wife, and the employer benefits from this labour. Finch also notes that in many professional occupations, women often "support' or substitute for their husbands in the more peripheral aspects of their work (in the case of clergymen, politicians, and so on). Goffee and Scase (1985) have suggested that wives play a vital role in helping self-employed husbands, who are often heavily dependent on the (unpaid) clerical and administrative work undertaken by their wives. Wives are often forced to abandon their own careers to underwrite the efforts of the 'self-made' man. Furthermore, given the long hours' self-employed men often work, many wives are left to cope single-handedly with the children and domestic responsibilities. Sallie Westwood and Parminder Bhachu (1988) have pointed to the importance of the labour (unpaid) of female relations in Black and Asian business 'communities in the UK, although they also emphasise that setting up a business may be a joint strategy of husband and wife.

Women are also expected to care for elderly or dependent relatives. However some feminists have developed a critique of the concept of 'care' arguing that it detracts' from the reciprocal nature of many caring relationships. Other feminists have noted that policies of 'community care' (as opposed to care in institutions) that have been advocated by successive governments since the 1950s have a hidden agenda for women. Such policies, which often involve closing down or not providing large"-scale residential care, have frequently assumed that women are prepared to take on the responsibility of caring. Moreover, research suggests that by far the majority of those people providing care for elderly or dependent relatives, particularly those committed to providing care on a long-term basis are women. While it is generally suggested that 'the family' should care where possible, in practice this has often meant that it is the women in families who provide care. It is generally assumed that caring is part of a woman's role and that women are natural carers.

Sally Baldwin and Julie Twigg (1991) summarise the key findings of feminist research on caring work and indicate that the work on 'informal' care demonstrates

- that care of non-spousal dependent people falls primarily to Women;

- that it is unshared to a significant extent by relatives, statutory or voluntary agencies;

- that it creates burdens and material costs which are a source of significant inequalities

between, men and women;

- that many women nevertheless accept the role of informal carer and indeed· derive satisfaction from doing so;

- that the reasons for this state of affairs. are deeply bound up with the construction of male and female identity, and possibly' also with culturally defined rules about gender appropriate behaviours,

When women (or men) are responsible for the performance of domestic labour or are providers of care on an unpaid (and often unrecognised) basis, this has serious consequences for their role in the labour market. What is at stake is not just the loss of potential earnings or social status, or even the amount of labour required (although the hours and commitment involved in some caring roles are considerably more than those of a full-time job), but the fact that many women are 'trapped' in the domestic sphere. Janet Finch and Dulcie Groves (1980) have argued that ideologies' of domesticity and policies of community, care are incompatible with equal opportunities for women because domestic and caring roles are in themselves full-time commitments, Processes of labour market segmentation mean that many women cannot earn as much as their husbands, making it economically unviahle for men to give up work, or for many women to earn enough to pay for childcare, and domiciliary or respite care: Feminists have emphasised then that women's role in the domestic sphere has serious consequences for gender relations in the labour market.

Feminists have also drawn attention to another aspect of domestic labour; one which is regarded as work and which is remunerated, albeit often at a relatively low rate, and which involves middle-class men and women employing other (usually) domestic work. Research suggests that cleaning and other domestic work in private households is often performed by working-class women, by older women, or by Black or Asian-women. Bridget Anderson (2000) in her study of migrant domestic workers in five European cities found that such work not only brought low pay and long hours, but could amount to a form of 'slavery'. Women from poor countries would 'often be asked to complete an impossible list of tasks; they were expected to care for children and families, to have very little time away from the home where they worked, and were treated in a range of subservient ways. Often; they found it difficult to break away from the middle class family that 'bought' them and to enter the mainstream labour market.

9.8.2   Women's orientations to work

Whereas most feminists argue that the major factors explaining women's position in the labour market .and gendered patterns of work are structurally determined, Catherine Hakim (1995, 1996) has argued that insufficient attention has been given to women's orientation to paid employment, and to their work commitment. In exploring gendered patterns of labour market participation, she argues that there are three groups of women:

1.   *Home-centred women* (accounting for between 15 and 30 percent of women) who prefer not to work and whose main priority is children and family.

2.   *Adaptive women* (accounting for between 40 and 80 percent) who are a diverse group -including women who want to combine work and family, and those who want to have paid employment but are not committed to a career.

3.   Work-centred women (accounting for between 10 and 30 percent of women) who are mainly childless, and whose main priority is their career.

She develops what she calls 'preference theory', arguing that women can now choose whether to have a career or not. She argues that the majority of women who combine domesticity with employment (the 'uncommitted') seek part-time work even knowing that it is concentrated in the lower grades and is less well remunerated than other work. In Contrast to feminist sociologists who have argued that women's employment patterns are the outcome of structural factors that limit women's choices, the exclusionary tactics used by men, or gendered ideologies, Hakim argues that women positively choose low-paid, low-status part-time work that fits in with their domestic and familial roles, which they themselves see as a priority.

However, Crompton and Le Feuvre (1996) argue that there is little empirical evidence to support the view that there are such clear categories' of women as far as work commitment is concerned. They conclude this from their study of women in banking and pharmacy employment in Britain and France and suggest that there is no evidence, even when these professional women work part-time, to suggest that they are not committed to their paid employment. Martin and Roberts (1984) in an earlier study reported that although many women found it difficult to cope with the often conflicting demands of work and home, this didn't mean that they were any less committed to either. More central, in their study, was the relationship between type of work, employment conditions and orientation to work. A further

critique of Hakim's account is provided by Walsh (1999), in a study of part-time female workers in Australia. Walsh argues that women who work part-time, are not homogenous in terms of their characteristics or orientations to work, and that there are a variety of reasons for women seeking part-time work. Whilst a majority of women in her sample were content with their work circumstances, a substantial proportion wanted to return to full-time work as soon as it was practical. She questions Hakim's view that the majority of female employees are not committed to a career and suggests that commitment to the labour market varies between groups and over the life course. Rosemary Crompton (1986) emphasised this latter point, in her earlier discussion of service work, which highlighted the role of the life course in shaping women's orientation to work.

Finally it is essential to remember that when women 'choose' to combine their commitments to unremunerated work with paid employment, the choices they make and their orientation to both are the outcome of a relatively narrow range of choices and the socially constructed expectations of women's roles and responsibilities. They are also shaped by material factors such as social class inequalities, and racial and ethnic power relations, as well as issues such as disability. For example, highly qualified women in managerial and professional occupations can often earn enough to pay for high-quality childcare and domestic help, and avoid the criticisms often directed at working wives and mothers, while other women cannot; their orientation to work is only part of the explanation for why this latter group of women may work part time or not at all. More sociological explanations for women's working patterns and orientations to work have emphasised, then, the importance of exploring the ways in which 'structure and agency interrelate in order to understand the social construction (and restriction) of 'choice'.

9.8.3   Gender and unemployment

According to the Labour Force Survey (cited in EOC. 2004), 4 percent of economically active women (women who are aged 16 and over and available for work), and 6 percent of economically active men in the UK are unemployed Traditionally in sociology, unemployment has not been thought to pose a problem for women, or at least for the majority of married women. This is because it is argued that women's wages are marginal not essential to the family, that women's main identity and status is derived from their role as wives and mothers, and that women can 'return' to their primary domestic role. Women's unemployment is also 'hidden' in

124

so far as a high proportion· of women seeking employment are not registered as unemployed.

However, feminist research has challenged this view and has argued that work and work identities are central to many women's lives and that the money women earn is essential. Angela Coyle (1984), in a study of 76 women who were made redundant, found that only three (two of whom were pregnant and one near retirement age), took the opportunity to stop work. All the others sought alternative employment - and found work that was less skilled, had poor working conditions and was less well paid than their previous posts. The women said that they worked because a male wage was inadequate for the needs of their household, and because they valued the independence they gained from paid employment and having their own income. She concludes that paid work was seen as central to the lives of these women, and that redundancy was viewed as an unwelcome interruption to their working lives.

Reasons for non-employment vary considerably by gender. In the UK, the main reason given in the 2001 Census for women not being economically active was that they were engaged in non-remunerated work (looking after a family or home). The main reason for men was that they had been made redundant, were in fulltime education or training, or that a temporary job had come to an end. Only 4 percent of men were looking after a family or home. Non-employment is also, of course, connected to other factors such as level of qualification, disability and ethnicity.

At the same time as the participation rate for women has been going up in many societies, it has been declining for men. This is partly a result of high male unemployment rates, especially in Europe, and also because of an increase in the number of men, especially in their fifties and sixties, on long-term sick leave, taking early retirement on being made redundant. It is predicted that the gender gap in employment activity (with more women's jobs being created than men's) will continue to grow.

There are also gender differences in the activities that men and women undertake whilst unemployed, as, well as the ways in which they seek new jobs. Surveys from several European countries, for instance, indicate that women find it more difficult than men to find a new job after being upemployed, and that they are more likely to rely on government services while men use more efficient methods such as personal contacts and networks. The informal aspects of work seem to disadvantage women, then, both when they are in work and when they are unemployed, as many feminist studies of the workplace have revealed.

125

9.8.4   Feminist studies of the workplace

Many of the 'classic' feminist studies of work focused on factory workers (attempting to redress the neglect of women in male stream sociological studies of work), but have subsequently tended to focus more on sectors of the labour market in which women are over-represented, principally 'care work and work in the service sector. These studies have highlighted a range of ways in which gender shapes men's and women's experiences of paid work.

9.8.5   Feminist studies of factory work

Studies by Anna Pollert (1981) and Sallie Westwood (1984) show women and men working in separate occupations, with men employed in jobs classified as skilled and women doing work Classified as semi- or unskilled, and earning substantially less than men. They all agree that 'skill' is socially constructed in such a way that it is seen as a characterstic of men's work and not of the work that women do. Ruth Cavendish (1982), describing a London factory, notes that the complex' skills expected of women on the assembly line actually took longer to acquire than those of the male skilled workers. She provides a graphic account of what it is like to do unskilled factory work. The factory in which she worked employed around 1,800 people, of whom 800 worked on the factory floor. Virtually all the women were migrant workers- 70 per cent were Irish, 20 per cent African-Caribbean and 10 per cent Asian (mostly from Gujarat in India). She notes that the men enjoyed significantly better working conditions than the women-their jobs enabled them to stop for an occasional cigarette, to move around and to slow down without financial penalty, while the women were tied to the line. Male-dominated trade unions and management worked together to protect the interests of male workers. Men and men's interests effectively controlled the women, who were frequently supervised by men.

All the women were semi-skilled assemblers with very few exceptions. Men, on the other hand, were spread throughout the grades and were divided, from each other by differences of skill and pay. Even in the machine shop where men and women worked together on the same job the men were paid at a higher rate than the women on the grounds that they could lift the heavy coils of metal and the women could not. While young men were trained as charge hands, the young women were not; the latter lacked the possibilities for promotion that were open to

126

the former.

The women were controlled by the assembly line and the bonus system The views of the women workers were not sought when new designs and new machinery were introduced. The women had no chance to move or think while they were working and no time for a quick break, and if they could not keep up with the line they were dismissed. At work, the women were controlled and patronised by the men, but other women were generally supportive and friendly. The most important things in the women's lives appeared to be their family and home: the single women looked forward to marriage and domesticity. All the women shared a general interest in a 'cult of domesticity'.

Anna Pollert (1981), in her study of a tobacco factory in Bristol found similarly that' women's work in the factory' was routine, repetitive, low-grade work that would not be done by men. The women thought that they should be paid less than the men because they were committed to marriage and having children, whereas the men had families to support. The women also thought that their work was inferior to the men's - less skilled and, less important to the production process. Also, the women thought that if they were paid the same as men they would price themselves out of paid work. The women accepted their relatively low pay therefore, partly because they compared it with the wages of other female jobs. While they rejected the idea that their place was in the home, they thought of themselves as dependent on men and conceived of their pay as secondary to a man's even though two-thirds of the workforce were young, single women. They saw marriage and a family as their 'career' and thought of themselves as at the bottom of the labour market both in class and gender terms.

9.8.6   Feminist studies of care work

Personal care work, such as that of care assistants and, 'home helps', is predominantly performed by women; indeed, these jobs have genenally been created as women's jobs and are assumed to require the 'natural' abilities of women. Women working as home helps, nursing auxiliaries, care assistants, and so on are employed in the female 'peripheral' labour market - low-status jobs with poor and insecure conditions of employment. They are often supervised and controlled by other female workers who have more secure employment in the 'core' labour market.

Their Client group is mainly elderly people (of which there are increasing numbers in most Western societies). Care workers often work across intimate bodily boundaries, and their

work can be repetitive and emotionally draining, as well as physically demanding. While many of the women undertaking this kind of work are positive about it, feminists have tended to see it as exploitative and therefore to see the women who do it as exploited victims of capitalist, patriarchal social structures. Yet, Hilary Graham (1991), has pointed out that feminists have tended, unintentionally, to take on policy-makers' definitions of care and to equate it with work carried out in the domestic home, for relatives and family, involving obligations of love and kinship. This, as she points out, has meant that they have ignored class and racial factors that impact on care and care work and the ways in which paid domestic labour in the private home results in a blurring of the boundaries between the domestic and the public spheres. Feminists have also tended to ignore paid care work in residential settings and the ways in which the structuring of work in these settings and the meanings given to it also blurs the public/private distinction in ways that merely transpose assumptions about women's caring role in the home to their employment in the public sphere.

Care work in both the private and the public sphere is principally women's work. It is not just that it is mainly women who undertake it, but that it is seen as naturally women's work (the skills involved are those that are culturally associated with women and hence are often not recognised). Drawing on Bourdieu's idea that certain forms of 'cultural capital' are needed for certain occupations, Beverley Skeggs (1997) has argued that for those women who want to work in occupations that involve caring, femininity can be an asset in the labour market. However, this means that caring work is often not remunerated as skilled work. It is also seen as work that is 'fit' only for women to carry out, largely because it involves both physical and emotional labour, as well as a concern with hygiene and health; in other words, it often involves intimate contact with other people's bodies. This designation of caring work as 'women's work applies to much of the work that women do, both in the home and in the labour market and, feminists have argued, is central to understanding the relationship between the work that women do in both spheres. This applies particularly to women's work in the service sector and in clerical work.

In clerical work, women are often found in relatively low-paid jobs, with few career prospects and benefits. Women are frequently recruited on the basis that they will not be promoted, while men are recruited on the assumption that they will. Once in employment, women are less likely than men to be offered structured work experiences and the opportunity to study that would enable them to seek promotion and to be seen as promotable. A study by

128

Kate Boyer (2004) has found for instance that the financial services sector works to create what she describes as 'a system in which men flow through and Women function at fixed points. As clerical work has declined in status and the tasks it involves have become standardised, fragmented and rationalised, so increasingly women have been recruited to office work. The deskilling of office work is mediated for men by the possibility of promotion. While women are recruited to the lowest grades, paid at lower rates and replaced by other young women when they leave to have children, men, it is assumed, will be mobile out of clerical work.

One of the major debates on social class in malestream sociology since the Second World War has been whether or not clerical workers have been proletarianised - that is, whether the pay, conditions of employment and nature of clerical work have become comparable to manual workers. British sociologists, following a Weberian analysis of class, have looked at the market situation, working conditions and status of male clerical workers and argued that they are middle class because they enjoy superior working conditions, are socially accepted as middle class and do not identify themselves as working class. Braverman (1974) however, argued that clerical workers have been proletarianised and that the feminisation of clerical work is part of this process. Reviving the debate, Crompton and-Jones (1984) argued that while female clerical work is proletarian men's is not - primarily, they suggest, because male clerical workers have the possibility of upward mobility out of clerical work. They suggest that this situation may change as more women seek and are seen as potential candidates for promotion. However, the view that female clerical workers are proletarian holds only if they are compared with male manual workers. Martin and Roberts (1984) and Heath and Britten (1984) argued that female clerical workers enjoy pay and conditions of work more comparable to women in professional and managerial-work than to women employed in manual work, where few are in work defined as skilled.

One of the most important sociological studies of clerical work is Rosemary Pringle's (1989) Secretaries Talk, based on interviews with almost five hundred office workers from a range of workplaces in Australia. Her analysis focused on the boss-secretary relationship, and highlights the ways in which this relationship is shaped by gender power relations. Adopting a largely Foucaldian perspective, Pringle examines the ways in which secretaries negotiate these power structures, shapoed by gender and class, charting the changing roles and identities available to secretaries - from 'office wife' to 'sexy secretary' and 'career woman', and also the way these roles reflect technological change. She concludes that althogh a variety of strategies

129

of power and resistance are open to them, 'gender'' and sexuality continue to be extremely significant in the construction of secretaries'.

9.8.7   Feminist studies of service work

Gendered patterns of occupational segmentation, at least in Western societies, mean that by far the majority of women who engage in paid work are employed in the service sector, largely in routine, non-manual interactive service work or 'women's work'. Feminist studies of service work have identified a range of occupations in which the skills, attributes and aesthetics associated with women are commodified - in nursing, in waitressing and bar work, in the airline industry and in the betting and gaming industry for instance. Elaine Hall's ((993) study of waitressing, for example, highlights the performance of gendered service styles and that 'waiting on tables is defined as typical "women's work" because women perform it and because the work activities are considered as feminine'. Her study found that men are expected to adopt a 'formal' style when they wait on tables, whereas women are expected to be more 'familial', and that these differences in expectations can be attributed to the gendered construction of the jobs themselves. What she describes as positional gender stratification within the occupation itself was shaped largely by three factors: the gendered meanings of waiting, the gendering of job titles, and the gendering of uniforms. Combined, these factors meant that being feminine was conflated with 'giving good service'.

Mike Filby's (1992) ethnographic study of three betting shops also highlighted the relationship between gender and sexuality in shaping the work experiences of women in service occupations, and particularly the ways in which this relationship is shaped by employer and customer expectations. Filby argues that perceptions of good service were shaped largely by whether or not customers were satisfied with the figures, the personality and the bums' of female workers. He also highlights that both management and customers expected female workers to engage in sexual banter with customers as part of their work role so that 'the line between selling the service and selling sexuality in such activity is very thin'. In this respect, he concludes that: 'This study... indicates how much the operation of workplaces and the production of goods and services depend on tacit skills and .assumed capacities of sexualized, gendered individuals'.

A more explicit focus on the relationship between masculinity and femininity underpinned Gareth Morgan and David Knights's (1991) study of 'selling as a gendered occupation' in a medium-sized insurance company. Their research highlights that women were largely excluded

from the job of field sales representative partly because of 'protective paternalism' (sales reps have to travel around by themselves, and visit prospective clients), partly because women were thought not to be suited to the 'loneliness of selling', and partly because they were thought to be less resilient than men: 'too sympathetic' and 'not' hungry enough' as some of the men in their research put it. Also, managers were conscious of an 'esprit de corps' amongst the sales force based on shared gender identity and thought that women might disrupt this. The role of sales rep, they found, was constructed largely according to a particular vocabulary associated with masculine characteristics; a masculine discourse that emphasised aggression and high performance as the defining features of the job, qualities that the (male) managers and (male) sales reps and (they assumed) potential customers, would not associate with women. Hence, 'for all these reasons, the task of selling itself became bound up with the masculinity of the sellers. This meant that internal sales (in banks and building societies) became feminised, whereas the external sales' force was predominantly male dominated. A similar finding emerged from research by Kate Boyer (2004) on the financial services industry in Canada.

These gender differences in the nature of service work, and in the ways in which particular roles are constructed according to gender ideologies, have also been studied in police work Susan Martin: (1999), in her study of police officers in the USA found that police work involves high levels of emotional interaction, and that officers must control their own emotional displays and also the emotions of members of the public' with whom they come into contact who may be injured, upset, angry or under suspicion. She argues that public work is often viewed as masculine work involving fighting crime, but that it also involves a more caring aspect, which officers often disdain as 'the feminine side of the job'. Her analysis emphasises the ways in which gender is in part constructed through work and through the cultures of particular occupations and work organisations.

Robin Leidner (1993) reaches a similar conclusion in her neo-Weberian study of the routinisation of service work in Combined Insurance and McDonald's, Fast Food, Fast Talk. She argues that with regard to gender and interactive service work, one of the most striking aspects, of gender construction is that its accomplishment creates the impression that gender differences in 'personality, interests, character, appearance, manner and competence' are somehow natural. Hence, 'gender segregation of work reinforces the appearance of naturalness'. Rather, she maintains, gender is constructed in part through work, yet.

For the public, as well as for workers, gender segregation in service jobs contributes to the 'general perception that-differences in men's and women's social positions are straight forward reflections of differences in their natures and capabilities.

Many female jobs in the service sector are clearly regarded, as using the abilities women are thought to deploy in the private sphere: caring, preparing and serving food, nursing, anticipating and responding to the needs of others, and so on. In short, much of this work is thought to involve what US sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild (1983) described in her book The Managed Heart as 'emotional labour' - work involving the commodification of emotion, and associated largely with women's capacity to provide service and care.

9.9   REFERENCES:

I.   Gender Based Division of Labour

Braverman (1974), *Labour and Monopoly Capital: The degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century,* New York: Monthly Review Press.

Cockburn, C. (1983), *Brothers: Male Dominance and Technological Change,* London: Pluto.

Cockburn, C. (1985), *Machinery of Dominance: Women, Men and technical Know-how,* London: Pluto.

Game, A. and R. Pringle (1984), *Gender at Work,* London: Pluto.

Hearn, J. and W. Parkin (1987), *'Sex' at 'Work': The Power and the Paradox of organization Sexuality,* Brighton: Wheatsheaf.

McDowell, Linda and Rosemary Pringle (1992), *Defining Women: social Institutions and Gender Divisions,* Polity Press.

II.   Work

Balbo, L. (1987), 'Crazy Quits: Rethinking the welfare state debate from a woman's point of view' in Sasson (1987).

Bruegel, I. (1979), 'Women as a reserve army of labour: A note on recent British experience', *Feminist Review,* 3:12-23.

Bujra, J. (1986), 'Urging women to redouble their efforts', in C.Robertson and

I.Bergger, ***Women and Class in Africa: Class, Gender and Capitalist Transformation in Africa,*** New York: African Publishing House.

Burman, S. (ed.) (1979), ***Fil Work for Women,*** London: Croom Helm.

Cockburn,C. (1983), ***Brothers: Male Dominance and technological Change,*** London: Pluto

Elson, D. and R.Pearson (1981), 'Nimble Fingers make cheap worker: an analysis of women's employment in their world export manufacturing', ***Feminist Review,*** 7:87-107.

Hartmann, H. (1981), 'The Unhappy marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a more progressive Union', in L. Sargent (ed.), ***Women and Revolution,*** London: Pluto.

James, S. and Mariarosa della Costa (1972), T***he Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community,*** Bristol: Falling Wall Press.

Marx, K. (1976), ***Capital,*** Vol.I, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Nicholoson,L. (1987), 'Feminism and Marx: integrating kinship with the economic', in Benhabib and Cronell (1987).

Redclift, N. (1985), 'The contested domain: gender, accumulation and the labour process' in N.Redclift and E.Mingione (eds.), ***Beyond Employment: Household, Gender and Subsistence,*** Oxford: Blackwell.

Reverts, A. (1987), 'Housework and Domestic Technologies', in McNeil.

Rogers, B. (1980), ***The Domestication of Women: Discrimination in Developing Societies,*** London: Tavistock.

Roberts, P. (1984), 'Feminism in Africa- Feminism and Africa', ***Review of African Political Economy,*** 27/28:175-84.

Slocum, S. (1975), 'Woman the gatherer: male bias in anthropology', in R.R.Reiter (ed.), ***Toward an Anthropology of Women,*** New York: Monthly Review press.

Westwood, S. (1984), ***All Day Every day: Factory and family in the making of Women's Lives,*** London: Pluto Press.

Waring, Marilyn (1989), *If Women Counted,* London: Macmillan.

III.   Production vs. Reproduction

Edholm, F. et al, (1977), 'Conceptualizing Women', *Critique of Anthropology,* 9 and 10.

Mainardi, P. (1980), 'The Politics of Housework', in Malos.

Oakley, A. (1974), *The Sociology of Housework,* London: Martin Robertson.

IV.   Household work and Invisible work

Afshar, H. (ed.) (1985), *Women, Work and Ideology in the Third World,* London: Tavistock.

Benston, M. (1970), 'The Political Economy of Women's Liberation', in L.B.Tanner (ed.), *Voices from Women's Liberation,* New York: Signet.

Edmond, W. and Felming S. (1975), All Work and No Pay: Women Housework and the Wages Due, Bristol: Falling Wall Press.

Fedrici, S. (1975), *Wages Against Housework,* Bristol: Falling Wall Press.

Gardiner, J. (1976)., 'Political economy of domestic labour in capitalist society', in D.Barker and S.Allen (eds.), *Dependence and Exploitation in Work and Marriage,* London: Longman.

Landes, J. (1980), 'teaching Feminists Politics', in T.M.Norton and B.Ollman (eds.) *Studies in Socialist Pedagogy,* New York: Monthly Review Press.

Mies, M. (1986), *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale,* London: Zed press.

Phillips, A. (1987), Divided Loyalties: *Dilemmas of Sex and Class,* London: Virago.

****

STATUS OF WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

10.0 STRUCTURE

10.1 Introduction:

With the achievement of independence in 1947, the women leaders were confronted with the opportunity to safeguard the rights and position of women in the new political system. The leaders relied heavily on the strategy of attaining equality through legal reform in areas of personal laws so as to address inequalities in the family, marriage and property relations. Addressing the issues of inequalities in personal laws meant addressing the issue of male domination in their family, based on two separate roles for men and women. Throughout the social reform and national movements, upliftment in the position of women and increasing participation of women in economic, social and political life of the nation was advocated but without altering the separate roles of men and women in family and society. Asking for equal rights within these structures thus meant a threat to 'stable' family and male dominated society, fears regarding which amply reflected during debates on fundamental rights and reform in personal laws.

10.2   Constituent Assembly and Women's Question :

The promotion of a stable family life based on two different roles for men and women remained the focal point around which social reforms and national liberation movement revolved. It was within this ideological framework that the Constituent Assembly of India acted with regard to the woman's question. The debates in Constituent Assembly reveal its eagerness to guarantee equality of sexes in the political and to a certain extent, in the economic field, but strong opposition to gender equality in the spheres of marriage and family, which were governed by religious laws. There seemed to be a broad commitment to social reform, as was evidenced by the insertion of Directive Principles in the Constitution, but total unwillingness to offend religious sensibilities. This led to the inclusion of right to religious freedom in the chapter of Fundamental Rights and the promise to secure Uniform Civil Code in the chapter on Directive Principles. A conflict between freedom of religion and women's rights was anticipated by Amrit Kaur and Hansa Mehta who objected to the guarantee of freedom of religious propagation and practice. They rightly believed that the term 'propagation' and 'practice' might invalidate future legislation prohibiting child-marriage, polygamy, unequal inheritance laws etc. as, these customs could be constructed as part of religious practice. They wanted that religious freedom be limited to religious worship. It was suggested that the words "freedom of religious worship, freedom of conscience and free profession of religion should really give to the individual and community all he or it

needs". There is an indication that at one time the suggestion was accepted but the decision was reversed when a majority in the Minorities Committee voted to reinsert the terms 'propagation' and 'practice'. A compromise was reached by retaining both the terms along with the provision that the above clause did not preclude social reform.

10.3   The Constitution and Issue of Women's Equality :

The Constitution of India accepted the principle of equality of sexes. Its preamble spoke of equality of status and opportunity and of social, economic and political justice. Article 14 assured equality before the law and equal protection of the laws as a fundamental right. Article 15 and 16 forbid any type of discrimination on the ground of sex in access to public places and public employment. Article 15 also provides that the state may make special provisions for women and children and that such provisions may not be unconstitutional violation of right to equality.

Similarly, the retention of personal laws which are premised on the principles of gender inequality and subordination of women to male members of family and the decision to postpone the enactment of a civil code based on equal rights for men and women, also negated the principles of justice and equality enshrined in the Preamble and Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution. The Right to freedom of religion embodied in Articles 25 to 28, as interpreted and legislated in the form of Personal Laws denies equality to women in personal, economic. Sexual, social, educational and cultural level. The Constitution has nothing to say on women's labour at home, A.R.Desai (1984) spells out economic assumptions of the Constitution, enshrined in Articles 23, 24, and Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, which according to him, exclude all labour which produces use values (not produced for market) as non-productive and non remunerable. This assumption excludes women's labour at home, generating use values and not commodities, as having any economic value. Nor does it treat the work women do day and night for the family as economic exploitation, more especially in the absence of equal rights over property and productive resources of the family. This decision left a large population of women from the purview of justice and also diluted the right to equality.

Oppression of the women in the male dominated society and social injustices inflicted on the lower castes because of the perpetuation of caste system were not viewed

as wider issues of social exploitation inherent in the patriarchal system and hierarchically ordered caste system. Rather the low status of women as well as of other backward castes and classes was perceived as resulting from social disabilities arising our of a situation of backwardness and weakness. That is why the Constitution envisages 'special provisions' clause to help these classes and castes to remedy the disadvantageous, disabilities or weaknesses being suffered by them. The problem of deprivation and inequalities suffered by women, thus, was not perceived in a manner that viewed it as entrenched in the social, economic and political structures of society and polity. Its abolition required social efforts both at the material and ideological level so that principles of equality and justice could be made a reality for women.

10.4   Women and Five Year Plans :

Though there was no specific focus on women's issues in state policies and plans, consideration for women was not totally non-existent. Concern for women was reflected in women's sections in five year plan, in the policies and programmes of Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) and the Community Development Programme (CDP). For planners three major areas for women's development are: education, health and women's welfare. The focus of the programmes and activities that were designed for women and under these heads was basically to provide welfare services and opportunities such as education, health, maternity and child-welfare, family planning, nutrition and training in arts and crafts. The emphasis in planning was to ensure women's legitimate role in family and community and the provision of adequate services to fulfill that role. Both the nature of activities and content of training and education were to emphasize separate spheres of work for men and women. For example, female education as a major strategy was focused on providing courses on home-science, child-care, nutrition, health-care, home economics, music, dance, nursing etc., for girls. Welfare extension projects included provision of maternity child-care services, craft classes, social education for women and care for children through Balwadis.

An analysis of the First Five Year Plan reveals that the Indian planners were mainly concerned with helping women fulfill their domestic roles in a more efficient way. In this regard activities that were identified were recreation, education, arts and crafts and co-operative participation in social and economic activities of the whole country. The planners

were convinced of preparing women for their legitimate role was reflected in their educational project also. In a similar vein, it was maintained that imparting of health education to woman was important because, "educating a woman is educating the whole family" (Government of India: 1951).

The Second Five Year Plan emphasized the need for special attention to the problems of women workers who suffered from certain handicaps. e.g., unequal pay and lack of adequate training facilities to enable them to compete for higher jobs. It was suggested that possibilities for part-time employment for women should be explored. Both Second and Third Plan stressed female education as a major welfare strategy. The courses suggested for girls during both the plans, were Home Science, Music drawing, Painting, Nursing etc. (Government of India: 1961). Under the labour Policy, physically handicapped, old persons, women and children were to be provided relief and assistance.

The Third Five Year Plan also advocated the recruitment of women to family planning programmes. It called for trained workers to take up welfare projects attracting a sufficient number of women for taking up vocations like Gram Sevikas (Village level Social Workers). In order to achieve this, provision for residential accommodation, facilities for transport and opportunities for work with voluntary organizations like Mahila Mandals was stipulated.

No new proposals were made in the Fourth Plan. It merely reiterated assistance to be given to voluntary organizations to implement programmes for women, and child welfare. In the field of education, it was observed that the gap between enrolment of girls and boys was still considerable. The only thing that was mentioned in order to encourage girls' education was that "stress will be laid on providing sanitary facilities for girls (Government of India: 1969). The Labour and Employment section of the Plan did not mention women even once.

The Fifth Five Year Plan once again emphasized the functions of housewife for women both in the need for training and educational programmes. While giving priority to training to needy women from low-income families and needy women with dependent children and working women, it was suggested to launch a programme of functional literacy. The purpose of this programme was to endow women with necessary knowledge and

skills to perform functions of housewife, such as child care, nutrition, health care, home economics, etc. Further, it stated that the socio-economic programmes of the Central Social welfare Board, which aimed at providing opportunities for work and a wage to needy women such as widows, destitute and physically handicapped were to be adequately expanded. Expansion of education for women required two things according to the Fifth Plan. One was the availability of more women teachers and other was, "the orientation of the curriculum to meet their special needs as housewives and career-seekers (Government of India: 1974).

The underlying realization of the Sixth Five Year Plan document, which included a separate chapter on 'Women and development', was that the non-recognition of development and economic issues as women's issues had led to marginalization of women in society. The plan recognized women's lack of access to productive resources and education as the critical factors impending their development and stressed on the need for employment generation for women. Further, it identified core development issues of women has health, education and employment. The decision to give joint titles to husband and wife in all developmental activities involving transfer of assets was a radical one. This objective was reiterated in the seventh Five Year Plan also. One of the important drawbacks in women's development was identified as women's pre-occupation with repeated pregnancies. In this context, special emphasis was placed on providing minimum health facilities with family welfare and nutrition of women and children. Both the Sixth and Seventh Plan viewed women's health needs mainly in terms of maternal needs. Family welfare Programme was to be given high priority. The Seventh Plan brought out for the first time the significance and value of household non-monetized work by women as an economic variable but did not go so far as to suggest its incorporation into GDP accounting. The main thrust of both the plans in the field of welfare of women was their economic upliftment through greater opportunities for salaried, self-employment and wage-employment. The Seventh Five Year Plan mooted the idea of women's Development Corporation to help women become economically independent and self-reliant. The plan recognized that the lack of infrastructural facilities and access to credit, poor marketing facilities and the changing production relations adverse to women have been major handicaps to women's employment especially in the case of self-employed women.

140

Eighth Five Year Plan deviated from the practice of including separate chapter on 'Women and Development'. Women's issues were covered under the 'Social welfare' chapter. The change apparently has no reason behind it, but can be seen as indicative of treating women as recipients of state social welfare despite loud pronouncements about shift of state approach from 'welfare' to 'development', since more than a decade.

In the Report of the Working Group on Women's Development for Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2001), also pointed out that the directional paper on objectives, thrusts and macro-dimensions of the Eighth Plan brought out in December 1991 was completely silent on the intended approach towards women's development. The plan did make two notable and new observations. Firstly, it took note of the fact of under-reporting of women's contribution to economy and of conceptual, methodological and perceptual problems, reflecting gender bias, which did not assign any economic value to household work and various kinds of subsistence activities. Secondly, it recognized the need to change social attitudes and perceptions with regard to the role of women in different spheres of life. The plan document acknowledged rise in violence against women. It said that women continue to suffer because of ignorance of their legal rights, strong social resistance to giving women their due share, lack of legal aid facilities and near absence of strong women's groups in rural India. According to the Plan, changes in this regard could be facilitated by empowerment of women and would imply adjustments in traditional gender specific performance of tasks. The plan also took note of the existence of large number of women headed-households and suggested that woman's control over economic assets and services are increased.

10.5   Social Welfare and Women :

Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) was established as the Central official agency to implement the welfare programmes of the state as stated in the various Five Year Plans. As a consequence, both the policy direction and structure of CSWB have been riddled with a number of problems right from the beginning. At the very outset there was no clarity as to what constitutes 'social welfare'. In the absence of clarity of objectives, no direction could be set towards which the programmes were to move. This was very damaging from the point of view of women as these programmes ended up in giving some financial assistance or training in traditional crafts. While many welfare programmes

attempted to improve earning power of women, this did not have the desired impact. This was because while women were granted training in production skills, organization and marketing were not given any attention. The result was that these schemes could not achieve the objective of giving employment and making women economically independent. At the ideological level, training in traditional and domestic crafts tended to reinforce traditional areas of women's work. It also emphasized societal notions about women's main sphere of activity being home. The presumption was that these activities could very well be carried from home where women can conveniently combine both housework and income-generation. In short, the programmes were neither equipped nor intended to acquaint women with new technological developments and the modernization process.

10.6   Women in the Community Development Programme :

One of the earlier efforts to improve the situation of women in rural India began with Community Development Programme. The programme was launched in 1952 with a view to bring socio-economic transformation of village community by mobilizing both governmental and community resources. The programme was aimed at all-sided development of the village community with three basic objectives of economic growth, social transformation and self-reliance, to be attained with the help of local people. Despite this, both the people and bureaucrats did not have any clarity of its objectives and how they were to be achieved.

As for women, the programme had nothing special to offer. There are two versions on this omission. According to one, planners in their preoccupation with agricultural growth forgot about this aspect. It is not possible to strike roots with any programme unless women come into the picture. This was a late realization. According to another version, the policy-makers deliberately avoided committing themselves to women's work, because of the social resistance put up by the village community as well as because of the biases of the planners and implementers. Within a few years, government decided to integrate Central Social Welfare Board and Community Development Programme, which added welfare services component to the Mahila Mandal programme. The programmes did not have any plans for schemes, which could augment the income of women. In the absence of this, it required considerable effort to find an interested group of women to participate in the programme and then to sustain their interests. As a result, many women dropped

out and the officials without understanding the real reasons of drop out went on making efforts to being them back.

10.7 Agricultural Policy, land Reforms and Women :

Two major objectives that dominated the agricultural policy in India immediately after independence were reduction in social inequalities in the ownership of land and increase in agricultural production. Land reforms and modernization of agriculture were two important policy measures adopted by Indian planners to achieve these objectives. It was believed that increase in agricultural growth would lead to decline in poverty and land reforms would provide for greater social justice through a reduction in disparities between rich and poor by abolishing intermediary interests between state and tillers of the land, by conferring on the tenants security of tenure and eventually ownership rights and by imposing ceiling on land holdings and distributing surplus land among the landless. The two aims- greater social justice and greater output- were seen as mutually supporting.

The above enumeration of objectives of land reforms policy makes it clear that land reforms were undertaken with the objective to correct class-inequalities and not gender-inequalities. There is a general acceptance of the fact that the policy of land reforms as pursued by the state was one of the biggest blows to women's access to productive resources (Sharma:1985).

Women's position with regard to land rights in the context of land reforms in India was influenced by various factors. Firstly, land was kept as a state subject in the federal scheme of Indian Constitution and states were given considerable legislative powers with regard to agricultural land. Secondly, agricultural land was exempted from purview of personal laws, which governed matters of succession in other property. Though inclusion of agricultural land in personal law by itself would not have tackled the discriminatory aspects of these laws but the women were deprived of whatever little succession rights they had under their respective personal laws. Thirdly, since the land reforms policy has been guided by the twin objectives of social justice and improving agricultural production, the arguments for land to the tiller or farmer, fixation of land ceilings, prevention of fragmentation of land redistribution of surplus land, etc. dominated the land reforms process. But the goals of social justice and land to the tiller did not include gender justice in granting

143

equal land ownership rights to women and women ere not viewed as farmers or tillers by planners, law-makers and administrators, while distributing land. In this context, state policies with regard to the tenancy laws, land ceiling laws, assessment of surplus land, the definition of family for the purpose of land ceiling and recognition of only man as the head of the household for the propose of declaring surplus land have all contributed to both sustaining gender inequality (e.g. exclusion of daughters and sisters from the purview of tenancy laws) and creating new ones (e.g. in declaring land owned by women as surplus).

The subordinate position of women in the agricultural economy is inextricably linked with state's decision to devolve agricultural land according to local customs or state legislations, which protect the rights of men against women or even according to personal laws of each community. This not only led to multiple systems of tenancy laws but also state support to predominant patrilineal culture in both tribal and non-tribal communities. The two major personal laws of the country, The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 and Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, excluded the agricultural land from its preview, ostensibly to keep female heirs away from sharing landed property. The 1937 Shariat Act was passed with a view to make the Shariat as the basis of Muslim Personal Law. But given the recognition accorded to female inheritance rights in the Shariat, such a Law would have had positive effect on the rights of women in agricultural land. Such a move was viewed as a threat to patriarchal interests on land. The move was strongly opposed by male landlords, with the result that land was kept out of the purview of the Act.

Since the legal system recognized only male rights in agricultural land, even the customary and usufructory rights of women in land were adversely affected. Thus, when land reforms were undertaken, they often reduced women's control over land by ignoring their traditional users' rights and giving land titles solely to male heads of households. Though it was nowhere stated that land titles would not be given to women, but the very fact that gender inequalities were not recognized and were not seen as a problem in a similar way as class inequalities, official biases led to land titles being invariably given away to males in the family. In addition to the tenancy provisions, land reform enactments relating to fixation of ceilings have also contributed to widening gender inequalities. Fixation of ceiling is directly related to the definition of family, which varies widely across the states.

144

10.8   Public Policy on Women in Post-1975 Period :

It is no doubt to the credit of women's movement and women's studies and research since 1970s that gender has come to be accepted as a relevant political category and a crucial factor in determining policies at various levels. It is no longer only movement's that is addressing the women's issues but academics, state functionaries, development agencies and activists, all are engaged in profound debates over status of women and how it is related to their share of work and the needs and strategies to improve their status. Expressions like gender bias, gender discrimination, gender panning, gender sensitization, and gender training are dominating the development thought and policy-making. During this period, many issues were raised related to nature and accountability of the state. Raising the issues like wife-beating, violence against women in the family and discriminatory and oppressive conditions of work in the informal sectors, expressed the anti-patriarchal sentiments of women during this period. But it was only in the late seventies that wide media coverage, the western women's movement, the International Women's year and the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1974) provided a kind of focus for activities centering on women. The institution of patriarchy became critically important in both analyzing the women's position and for understanding the movement, especially amongst the left and autonomous women's groups, the state continued to be the major site of contestation for the women's movement.

Another major assumption that was attacked was the gender-neutrality of development. The exclusion of vast majority of women from the premise of progress, modernization and development became a decisive focus of women's studies in India. The "Towards Equality" Report shattered the myth that with the constitutional guarantee for equality between sexes, the development process would equally benefit all sections of society irrespective of gender. It revealed that the process of development has affected men and women unequally because of women's initial unfavourable position. It also noticed that despite formal guarantee for equality of sexes in the Constitution, women were not only far from getting equal rights but there still remained areas where women do not equal rights. Later unconventional questions like nature of women's employment, impact of technology on women, female headed households, conditions of work and female poverty became the basis of the on-going work.

An important issue that was focused mainly by launching various campaigns was the issue of violence against women. Other areas that the campaigns covered were the sexual harassment of women on streets and at place of work, degrading portrayal of women in the media and still later, i.e., in mid-eighties the issue of sex-determination tests, killing of female fetuses, Sati (widow immolation) and violence committed on women during communal riots.

10.9   Social Transformation of women :

Contemporary Indian society has been introduced to the broad processes of social transformations, agricultural modernization and economic development, urbanization and rapid industrialization. However, these processes have generated regional imbalances, sharpened class inequalities and augmented the gender disparities. All these have affected adversely the various aspects of women's status in the contemporary Indian society.

Most families in India, irrespective of their caste and religion are patrilineal. The exceptions are the matrilineal Nairs of Kerala and tribes like the Khasis of Meghalaya. Simply put, patrilineality implies descent and inheritance through the male line. It also implies patrilocality or living of the husband in the father's home quite often with is father, brother, or brothers and their wives and children In the family the child acquires the role of the family. Man exercise greater influence in decision-making process and far more visible and audible than their wives. Most of the household tasks in the family are done by mother, grand-mother, sisters and so on. At meal times, women carry food to the fields for the men. All these tasks which consume time and energy are not counted as work or employment and there is no payment involved. But non-payment should also not mean non-recognition. In fact women are expected to perform all these tasks as a part of their conventional roles and no special merit is awarded to them for these tiring and tiresome jobs. According to latest figures, 14 per cent of Indian women are recorded as paid workers, of whom over 87 per cent are in the unorganized informal sector of the economy. Without women's paid or unpaid labour the Indian agricultural economy would not be able to function. In the informal sector, there is no legal redress for problem, no maternity or to other benefits and little security of service. Working long hours as domestic servants, stitching clothes for the garment export industry, working on the assembly line of small electronics manufacturing units or the beedi, tobacco, cashewnut factories, women live in

fear of retrenchment, exploitation (often of a sexual nature) and inadequate wages. Irrespective of social class there is, at the level of belief, widespread commitment to the notion that a woman's job must not interfere or compete with her primary role of wife and mother. There is also concern with her physical safety and the respectability of the occupation. Clearly, working class families are far less able to ensure these conditions, and often their women work under very difficult circumstances. Highly rated occupations for middle class women are teaching jobs at various levels, librarianship, medicine, particularly with specialization in gynaecology and pediatrics, health visitorships and so on. However, as the availability of jobs is dependent on the market situation, as well as on access to higher education.

As women work long hours and tedious hours, often under difficult and unhygienic conditions. A number of studies have also documented how in a scarcity situation, women and girls suffer as a result of food discrimination. Men and boys eat first, and are given the larger and more nutritious portions. Traditionally, women eat after men in Indian society, and when there is limited food to be distributed, they automatically get less. What is important here is that food discrimination is not only a function of poverty and scarcity, but also of perceptions and expectations. It is assumed that men need better and more food because they work hard and are the bread winners. The fact that women may work as hard and earn as much is rarely taken into consideration. Certainly the labour and energy they expend in household-related tasks are rarely taken into consideration. These perceptions are part of a system where little values is attached to female life.

Granting fundamental rights and passing progressive laws have not paved the way for an egalitarian society. Even now, after so many years of Independence, women suffer inequality, domination and exploitation. While the Constitution of India lays down the norm of family as equalitarian, the conjugal and nuclear family of husband and wife who have entered into wedlock of their choice; the numerous acts, particularly dealing with personal laws, give legal validity to various, diverse and contradictory patterns of family types to various religious communities. These enactments pertaining to personal permits patriarchal, monogamous, bigamous families which do not only shape different structures of families by also provide diversity and contradictions in the rights and obligations of various members within the family. As well as differentiation with regard to succession,

147

descent, inheritance, and other aspects of family (Desai:1980). Reviewing the position of women under the Indian Constitution, it is argued that women have not been perceived by the Founding Mothers as a specially deprived and disadvantaged community like the scheduled castes and Tribes and Other Backward Classes. Women of even these scheduled groups- who are double depressed, first as women and second as women within the scheduled group- have also not been seen as special constituencies within the scheduled groups. The Constitution does not see patriarchy as problematic; it perceives it as natural (Bax:1984). It is not easy to align the legal machinery to the pace of social change. The Directive Principles of State Policy remain ideals; and archaic acts remain operative. There is an enactment like the Special Marriage Act, 1954, but progressive legislation is still inadequate. The perspective on women's issues has not changed radically changed. The woman is still viewed more as an embodiment of virtue and sacrifice than as a citizen, equal to man, and a partner in the process of development. Such evils as bigamy, dowry, sex determination test and prostitution (including child prostitution) have not ended. The Family Courts Act, 1984, has also not provided relief to women. Crimes against women are not decreasing. Moreover, the legal process is cumbersome and expensive.

There are some specific legislations for women workers. Still the fact remains that the provisions of such laws do not reach them all. The discrimination against women in economic arena remains an issue causing concern, in spite of some positive court decisions. Ambivalent formulations, varied interpretations, half-hearted implementation of the laws, and delays and expenses involved in the judicial process make helpless women more helpless. Dr. Ambedkar had foreseen during the debate in the Constituent Assembly a contradiction between sanctified by tradition and customs. Women with little control on resources and their own lives are pushed by the social forces to accept their subordinate position.

Legal theorists, and especially feminist scholars have debated the concept of sameness and difference. Women are said to be equal to men, and consequently to be judged by the same standards. At the same time, they are also said to be different from men, and hence deserving different treatment. The issue becomes more complex in the Indian situation, where the legal system has evolved from a colonial system to independent

rule, resulting in a curious mix of traditions, religious practices, and principles of equality and rights.

The formal model of equality equates equality with sameness, and only those who are the same are to be treated equally. In contrast, the substantive model of equality begins with the recognition that equality sometimes requires that individuals be treated differently. Here the focus is not simply on equal treatment under the law, but rather on the actual impact of the law. The explicit objective of this model is the elimination of the substantive inequality of disadvantaged groups in society. The formal model of equality continued its hold over the judiciary's approach, though some inroads have been made towards a substantive model of equality (Kapur and Cosman:1993). Feminists need to direct their attention to developing the substantive model which holds greater promise for women's struggles (Kapur and Cossman:1966). It has to be recognized that law by itself cannot bring about social change. What is required is constant challenging, of the premises, the ideology and strategies which reinforce the subordination of women, alongwith the conscious formulation of a positive ideology and practices for the reconstruction of equality (Desai and Thakkar:2001).

10.10 CONCLUSION :

Today both sexes have the right to a civil marriage. The age without parents' consent has been increased to 18 for girls and 21 for boys. Thus, monogamy, judicial separation, nullity and divorce are some of the salient features of the post-independence era which put man and woman on an equal platform. Inheritance, adoption and divorce (even consent) have enhanced women's status in India. These reforms have along history, and are outcome of the efforts of several reformists through various movements which they launched in the pre-Independence period. However, there is no uniform civil code in India. Muslims continue to have their personal marriage laws.

10.11 REFERENCES :

Baxi, Upendra (1984), Patriarchy, law and State: Some Preliminary Notes, a paper presented at second national Conference on Women's Studies, April 9-12, Thiruvananthapuram.

Desai, A.R. (1980), Urban family and Family Planning in India, Mumbai: Popular Prakashan.

Desai, A.R. (1984), 'Crucial unexplored aspects of Women's studies in India', in Teaching Politics, Special Number on Women's Development, Vo.X, Annual, pp.97-98.

Desai, Neera and Usha Thakkar (2001), Women in Indian Society, New Delhi: National Book Trust, India.

Government of India (1951), First Five Year Plan (1951-56), Planning Commission.

Government of India (1956), Second Five Year Plan (1951-56), Planning Commission.

Government of India (1961), Third Five Year Plan (1951-56), Planning Commission.

Government of India (1969), Fourth Five Year Plan (1951-56), Planning Commission.

Government of India (1974), Fifth Five Year Plan (1951-56), Planning Commission.

Kapur, Ratna and Brenda Cossman (1993), 'Women, Equality and the Constitution: Through the Looking Glass of feminism', Feminism and Law, Special Issue, National Law School Journal.

Kapur, Ratna and Brenda Cossman (1996), Subversive Sites: Feminist Engagements with Law in India, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Sharma, K.L. (1990), Indian Society, New Delhi: NCERT Publications.

Sharma, Kumud (1985), "Interaction Between Policy Assumption and Rural Women's Work", Occasional Paper No.1, New Delhi: Centre for Women's Development Studies.

****

WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

11.0   Structure

11.1   Women's movements

11.2   Women's movements in India

11.3   The social reform movement and women

11.4   Women in the Indian National Movement

11.5   Post-independence women's movements

11.6   References

11.1 WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

The term "women's movement" does not refer to anyone single, unified movement, or entity. It is made of several movements based on a wide range of issues. It involves using of different approaches at various points of time. It is a term used in recognition of the "feel that all these movements" are working in some way or the other towards the emancipation of women. These movements aim at reformulation of public life, the educational sphere, the workplace, and the home, in short, they aim at total transformation of society. Women's movements can be termed as conscious and collective movements that try to deal with a set of problems and needs specific to women. These needs or problems are, in turn, created by a socio-cultural system that categorically puts them at a disadvantage in comparison to men. According to Urvashi Butalia (quoted in Shubha Chaco, p. I).

Thousands of years ago, in 800 BC, legend has it that Gargi, a woman philosopher led a philosophical tournament in the court of the Hindu king Janaka. She challenged a newly arrived competitor, Yajnavalkya, a man. She is reported to have said: "Just as an expert archer attacks his enemy with piercing arrows, held at hand, so I assail you with two test questions. Answer them if you can". Defeated by the questions, Yajnavalkya took recourse to the same answer men have used for thousands of years: He told Gargi to-simply shut up. Thousands of years later, the number of challenges thrown up by women to men who have for long held the reigns of power, has multiplied many times over. There is no longer one Gargi, standing alone in an assembly of men and posing two questions. Instead, Gargi's descendents run into thousands. They have thousands of questions, and they no longer stand-alone. Nor are they any longer willing to be shut up.

According to Rajendra Singh,any theoretical perspective for studying women's movements and their strategy should include the following propositions:

In general, resistance and protests against unjust structures of power and the institutions of patriarchy and patriarchal oppression of women begins with the oppressions themselves. These oppressions are ever-present and ubiquitous (widespread).

Conscious rejection of injustice and resistance to the practices of oppression generally pass through phases of open manifestation of resistance and latent phases (when overt resistance is not visible). These phases depend upon the historical experiences of societies.

These forms of resistance-manifest and latent-determine the methods, strategies, and techniques adopted by women to fight for their identity, dignity, self-defence, and social justice. Sometimes, women's movements contain a "zone of silent war" waged by women to gain control over men in everyday life.

Women have put up resistance because of generally silent and unorganized disenchantments, suppressed feelings of rejection, and of gender injustice in the patriarchal societies. These factors have led women to oppose erosion of identity at an individual level, and can result in an organized outburst taking the form of

manifest women's movements. They may remain dormant in terms of organized movements, but active at the individual level, and make a conscious use of a whole range of methods such as arts, ruses and moves against men. These methods are generally practised by women on men for coping with the day-to-day situations of oppression.

For any individual resistance to become an organized open movement, it has to pass through different stages of maturation. This process involves sharing of individual experiences of resistance with other individuals who are placed in similar life situations. This also includes a phase where the resistance is made obvious or becomes an exterior issue, and a collective group emerges. An ideology that rejects the negatively defined authority, leadership, mobilization, and communication emerges. The progress from an unorganized and silent individual resistance to an open and organized women's movement is uneven and difficult. It is also difficult for an individual resistor to become a part of an organized movement.

In the everyday life situations of women in the male-dominated world of most contemporary societies, the art of resistance at the individual level, as well as organized collective movements coexist and even work simultaneously, though they may be conflicting practices and processes.

The women's studies of the 1970s and 1980s shifted focus from the perspective of family, marriage, socialization, or social status to treating them as autonomous human beings. The emphasis today is on women's identity, consciousness, their subjectivity, and . the bio-psychological foundations of their personality.

11.2   WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

The women's movement in India began as a social reform movement in the nineteenth century. The Western ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity were being imbibed by the educated elite through the study of English. Western liberalism was to extend to the women's question and translite into awareness on the status of women.

In India, the tradition of women's struggles and movements against patriarchal

153

institutions of gender injustice have been weak when compared to the women's movements in the Western and European societies. In fact, women's fight against the oppression of patriarchy has been rather slow in emerging. Most of the women's writings of the eighteenth century reveal disenchantment with the prevalence of patriarchy and gender injustices rather than any kind of active resistance or revolt against them. Women did try to go against the male-dominated world (for example, by joining the Bhakti Movement). The nineteenth century women found themselves totally suppressed and subjugated by the male patriarchal ideologies and attitudes of those times, though there was a feminist identity consciousness and awareness of their plight. However, this awareness did not get translated into an open and organized struggle for selfhood and survival. Though there were feelings of deprivation and anger against the injustices women were facing, these remained mostly latent, and at the most. sometimes mildly open. In to day's world, feminist movements have gained expression due to similar factors.

The women's movement in India can be seen as forming three "waves". The first wave can be seen during the national movement, when there was mass mobilization of women for participation in the nationalist movement. Thereafter, for over a decade, there was a lull in political activities by women. The late 1960s saw resurgence in women's political activity and can be called the second wave. In the late 1970s, the third wave of the women's movement emerged, which focused on women's empowerment.

Pre-independence Women's Movements in India

(The First Wave of Women's Movement)

Readings of texts, religious, political, cultural, social ---- oral stories, mythology. folklore, fables, songs, jokes, proverbs, and sayings reveal that women's subordination has existed in different forms since time immemorial. Of course, there have been acts of resistance at different times throughout the Indian history, though these have been sporadic. There are numerous stories of how women questioned and went against the establishment, personified in the deeds of Razia Sultana, Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi, Ahilyabai Holkar, Muktabai, and so on. Women throughout

154

history made efforts to break free from the bonds of oppression they had to face by virtue of their birth. Many women belonging to the various castes joined the Bhakti Movement. The saints stood up for equal rights of men and women. It resulted in some amount of social freedom for women. Women joined in Kathas and Kirtans organized by various saints of the Bhakti Movement. This helped in freeing women from the drudgery and restrictions of domestic life.

The Bhakti Movement was an egalitarian movement that cut across gender and caste discriminations. Some women such as Mira Bai, Akkamahadevi, and Janaki became leading poetesses. The saints of the Bhakti Movement produced considerable literature in the vernacular language, or the language of the people. Indian culture became accessible to women also: Saints also encouraged the worship of the feminine counterparts of male Gods (Narayan-Lakshmi, Krishna-Radha, Vishnu-Lakshmi), which indirectly helped to elevate the status of women.

11.3   THE SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENT AND WOMEN

There are two distinct groups of progressive movements aimed at emancipation of Indian women. Both groups recognized the restrictive and coercive nature of the social customs and institutions. One group opposed these customs and institutions as they contradicted the democratic principles of liberty and freedom. This group was called the Reformers. The other group demanded the democratization of social relations and removal of harmful practices on the basis of revival of the Vedic society in modern India, which according to them, was democratic. This group came to be known as the Revivalists.

The social reformers believed in the principle of individual liberty, freedom, and equality of all human beings irrespective of sex, color, race, caste, or religion. They attacked a number of traditional, authoritarian, and hierarchical social institutions and launched social reform movements to liberate the Indian women from their shackles. Though many of the reformers were mainly men, the reform movement aimed at improving the status of Indian women.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was one of the greatest social reformers of India.

155

He was concerned about a number of evil customs planning the Indian society. These included "saha marana" or Sati, female infanticide, polygamy, infant marriages, purdah, absence of education among women, and the Devadasi system. Raja Ram Mohan Roy led a crusade against the evil and inhuman practice of Sati, in which a widow was forced to immolate herself on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband. Sati was in practice in many parts of India. It was accepted and condoned on the grounds that it would secure "Moksha" for widows. It was also felt that a woman could be led astray if she continued to live after the death of her husband. This feeling was disproved by Raja, who felt that a woman could be led astray even during her husband's lifetime. In fact, after the death of her husband, a woman is under the protection of her family, so she can be watched over with greater vigilance. Raja strongly refuted the contention that Sati was a free, voluntary act of the widow, and called it a monstrous lie. Raja's arguments and anti-Sati activities led Lord William Bentinck to legislate for the prohibition of Sati, which resulted in the passing of the Prohibition of Sati Act in 1829.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was another great social reformer who sought to improve the condition of widows by legalizing widow remarriages. Since he felt that his own life should set an example for others to follow, he took a pledge that he would allow his daughters to study, and married all his daughters after they were 16 years of age. He also pledged that if any of his daughters were widowed and they wanted to get remarried, he would allow them to do so. He was also against the prevalent custom of polygamy.

Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade was instrumental in laying down the foundation of an all Indian organization to carry on the struggle for social reform-the Indian National Social Conference. This organization was the first national institution to carry on collectively, in an organized way, and on a national scale the social reform movement. He took up the problems of widow remarriages and was an active member of a society, which worked for widow remarriages. In fact, the Shankaracharya had excommunicated him for attending the first widow remarriage in 1869. Ranade worked toward educating women. He and his wife started a school for girls in 1884.

Maharishi Karve showed great concern for the plight of widows and the problem of widow remarriages. He revived the Widow Remarriage Association and started the Hindu Widow's Home. Karve also made efforts to improve the education levels of girls as well as widows. He created the Kane Women's University. His efforts in the movement to liberate the Indian women are of great significance, and the extensive and successful work brought about a change in the attitudes of people towards widows. In order to set an example for others, he married a widow after the death of his first wife.

As a result of the social reform movement, a number of institutions and organizations were established. The institutions started by the reformers covered the whole country with their activities. The institutions established during this period are as follows:

The Gujarat Vernacular Society: This social institute was established in 1848. The aim of this institute was to decrease the large-scale illiteracy and superstitious beliefs that were a feature of the Gujarati society. It was associated with all social reform activities concerning women in Gujarat. The society worked for the cause of women through education. It started a number of co-educational schools. It published literature on women's issues in the vernacular press. It tried to organize elocution competitions and provide a platform for women to talk about their issues and problems.

The Deccan Education Society: This society was formed in 1884. The society started girls' schools and encouraged education of women in Maharashtra.

The Ramakrishna Mission: The Ramakrishna Mission was established in 1897. It set up homes for widows and schools for girls. It also gave refuge to invalid and destitute women, ante- and post-natal care for women, and provided training for women to become midwives.

The Arya Samaj: Though started as a revivalist organization, the Arya Samaj emphasized women's education. Girls received instructions in home science and domestic affairs. Fine arts were also included in the curriculum for girls. It also

included instructions in religion and religious ceremonies for women. It provided shelter to distressed women in times of difficulty.

The Hingne Women's Education Institute: This institute was started in 1896 to meet the demand of women, whether married, unmarried or widowed. By imparting training to young unmarried girls in various fields, it tried to prevent early marriages. It tried to impart skills and education to married women to enable them to carry on domestic life efficiently and economically. It also gave training to widows to make them economically independent.

S.N.D.T. Women's University: This university was established to meet the needs for higher education for women in such a manner that women's requirements were satisfied. It provided education in the mother tongue. It was established exclusively for the education of women.

The Seva Sadan: Seva Sadan was started in 1908, with a view to bringing together enlightened women of different communities who desired to work for the upliftment of backward women. Its main activity was to provide social and medical aid to women and children of the poor classes, irrespective of their caste or creed. It also established a home for destitute and distressed women and children. It also provided training to poor women in domestic crafts to enable them to earn a livelihood. The Seva Sadan in Poona was established to educate women in religious, literary, medical, and industrial subjects. It also emphasized on all-round development of a woman's personality. It stressed on economic self-sufficiency of women.

The Indian National Social Conference: Some of the activities taken up by this organization were-to deal with disabilities of child marriages, sale of young girls, the practice of polygamy, and the issue of widow remarriages. It also took up the problem of access to education for women.

All India Women's Conference: The primary focus of this organization was women's education as well as social reforms. Its aim was to work actively for the general progress and welfare of women and children. It passed various resolutions in different sessions in order to elevate the status of women. It also dealt with the

158

evils of early marriages, polygamy, and prohibition of divorce. It advocated complete equality for women in property matters. It sought to improve working conditions for women. It also agitated against immoral traffic in women and children, and against the inhuman custom of Devadas.

11.4   WOMEN IN THE INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

One of the forerunners of India's struggle for freedom was Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi, who became a legendary figure in the history of Indian nationalism. Before, Mahatma Gandhi became the indisputable leader of the national movement; there were two prominent women who encouraged women to participate in the movement. One of them was Annie Besant, the leader of the Theosophical Movement in India. She advocated emancipation of Indian women. In fact, many Indian women joined her Home Rule Movement. According to her, the Home Rule Movement was rendered tenfold more effective by the involvement of a large number of women, who brought to it the uncalculating heroism, the endurance, and the self-sacrifice of the feminine nature (Neera Desai, p. 135). She considered child marriage to be a social evil and wanted its removal from the Indian society. For this, she suggested that boys should not marry at an immature age. She also supported the remarriage of child and young widows. She wholeheartedly supported the drive to educate women and believed that this would assist in successfully solving the vital problems of national life.

Sarojini Naidu was one of the forerunners of women's participation in the National Movement. Gopal Krishna Gokhale told her to use her poetry and her beautiful words to rejuvenate the spirit of independence in the hearts of villagers. He asked her to use her talent to free Mother India. In August 1914, she met Mahatma Gandhi, and from then onwards devoted her energy to the freedom movement Sarojini Naidu worked as an active politician and freedom fighter. In 1917, she led the delegation to meet Mr Montagu for women's suffrage. In 1918, she had a resolution passed at the special congress session in Bombay, supporting women's franchise. In 1919, she went to England as a member of the Home Rule League deputation to give evidence before the Joint Parliamentary Committee.

There, she put forward the case for women's suffrage. In 1919, she became a campaigner for women's satyagraha, traveling all over India to propagate the cause. She appealed, in particular, to women to agitate against the Rowlett Act.

In 1920, Sarojini joined the non-cooperation movement. In 1921, during the riots in Bombay following the protest against the visit of the Prince of Wales to the city, Sarojini Naidu visited the riot-torn areas, with the aim of persuading people for Hindu-Muslim unity. Similarly, she went to Moplah during the rebellion to deal with a volatile situation, and criticized the government action. During the 1920s and 1930s, she supported the Akalis and protested against the ban imposed on them. In 1924, she went to South Africa, presided at a session of the East African Congress, and criticized the Anti- Historic Bill. She went to prison a number of times and worked on various committees set up for the cause of freedom. In September 1931, representatives of various women's organizations in India met in Bombay with Mrs Sarojini Naidu as their president, and drafted a memorandum demanding "the immediate acceptance of adult franchise without any sex distinction:' The memorandum went on to be accepted and women were granted equal rights as with men. This was a time, when many other Western countries were still fighting for equality between the sexes.

In 1930 when Mahatma Gandhi launched the Civil Disobedience Movement, Sarojini led from the front along with many other Congress leaders. However, the British responded by arresting most of them. At this time Sarojini took over and continued the campaign. Jawaharlal Nehru in his book "The Discovery of India" writes, "It was not only the display of courage and daring, but what was even more surprising was the organizational power she showed."

Sarojini was a great orator. Everyone who met her was impressed by her ability to speak. She had an integrated personality and could mesmerize the audiences with pure honesty and patriotism. Although a Congress woman and personally close to Mahatma Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu's nationalist vision was far more militant than Gandhi's. As a feminist, Sarojini Naidu would appear to have spoken in two voices, one through her poetry and the other as a public figure. It is this dual

feminist consciousness that is seen in her portrayal of the Indian woman, in which Sarojini Naidu shows the world-weary sensations, the stasis, the unmistakable agony of Indian women who have nowhere in the world to go. As Sarojini Naidu's political exposure grew in 1925 she became the first Indian woman to become President of the Indian National Congress a new portrayal of Indian womanhood enters her poetry. She also portrayed India as the slumbering Mother who must be awakened by her daughter. In 1908, she laid the foundation of her great contribution to the women's movement at a conference on Widow Marriage in Madras.

After the Jalianwalla Bagh incident in which hundreds of men, women, and children were ruthlessly gunned down, political consciousness among women increased. This resulted in more and more women joining the national movement. Many women stood up to the colonial patriarchy, such as Pandita Ramabai, Anandi Gopal and Savithribai Phule. Gandhiji was also instrumental in bringing women into the fold of the national movement. Gandhiji believed that marriages should take place only when there is a desire for progeny. His overpowering presence in the freedom struggle and his views on women considerably influenced their positioning in the Indian society. He believed that child marriage was a brutal social custom that has a very negative impact upon the physical and mental well-being of the child. Enforced widowhood, especially for child widows, was sinful and irrational, and the parents of a child widow should themselves make efforts to get their daughter remarried. Gandhiji was shocked at the widespread practice of the social evil of Devadasi (religious prostitution of women), and believed that a majority of Devadasis took to religious prostitution, as they were economically poor. He also condemned the practice of Purdah as it was detrimental to the mental and physical well-being of a woman. Gandhiji believed that women had a right to education, and that this education should not be restricted to the three R's. Education should help a man or woman in performing their duties effectively.

One of the greatest contributions of Gandhiji to the emancipation of women is his insistence on their participation in politics. Gandhiji felt that women should have as much a share in winning swaraj for India as men. In fact, large number

of women participated in India's struggle for independence. Women could take part in the movement, and were in fact encouraged to do so, since the methods for struggle were mainly non-cooperation and non-violence. They were active in participating in the Swadeshi movement, or the boycott of foreign goods, non-payment of taxes, picketing of liquor shops, and so on.

There was mass participation of women in the non -cooperation movement of 1921 and the civil disobedience movement of 1930. As a result of being associated with, and participating in the freedom struggle, Indian women realized the importance of living life as conscious human beings. A number of women activists also gained prominence were Kamaladevi Ghattopadhyaya, Kalpana Dutt, and Madame Bikaji Cama.

11.5   POST-INDEPENDENCE WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN INDIA I (THE SECOND WAVE OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENT)

There is a distinction between pre-independence and post-Independence women's movements in India. The pre-independence movements were essentially about social reforms and initiated by men. In comparison, the post-independence movement demanded gender equality, questioned gender-based division of labor and highlighted the oppressive nature of the existing patriarchal structure. In the euphoria of post-independence, it was believed that women's status would dramatically improve along with other marginalized groups because they were now the masters of their destiny. However, when this was not achieved there was an upsurge of various movements which raised a number of issues around diverse subjects such as land rights, wages, security of employment, equality, etc. Some of the issues on which women got together were work, population policies, atrocities on women, including rape and liquor.

After India gained independence from British rule in 1947, it was the Congress party that came to power and formed the Government. The government made certain attempts to fulfill the promises it had made to women during the pre-independence period, and also in the initial period after independence. While framing the Constitution of India, it included the very important aspect of equality

162

of men and women in all spheres of life.

Article 14 of the Constitution of India states that "The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India". Article 15 states that "The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, sex, place of birth or any of them:' Article 15(3) states that "Nothing in this aliicle shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children". Article 16 states that "There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State". According to Veena Majumdar, "The Constitution's radical departure from inherited social values represented to women of that generation its greatest intrinsic quality. For the women with definite memories of pre-independence society and of the freedom struggle, the acceptance of gender equality in the constitution was the fulfillment of a dream of women's entitlement to an independent identity." A number of administrative bodies were set up for the creation of opportunities for women. A number of women were inducted into the government.

In the two decades that followed, 1950s and 1960s, there was a lull in the activities of feminists and in the women's movements in India. Women, however, started realizing that the constitutional promise of equality did not by itself resolve the equality questions, especially in a country as diverse as India, which comprises different religions and cultures. The challenge of addressing inequality within women remains till this day. The women's movement has not been able to "decommunalise" the issue. "Women's organizations and feminists did not know how to deal with the problems of women belonging to different religious groups. By the time the feminist movement stepped into the 1970s, minority identities had begun to harden. This divisive environment affected Muslim women. Religious fundamentalists tried to place the onus of preserving religio-cultural identity on women. This identity syndrome, with women in the center, diverted attention away from Muslim women's grim realities and the deviations from the actual Islamic position.

Having been a secular movement, the women's movement found itself facing a difficult challenge that it did not know how to handle. On the conceptual level,

Indian feminists were in a dilemma: how to assimilate Muslim women's issues into broader feminist issues and, at the same time, safeguard their religious and cultural identity. This has been most obvious in the case of Muslim Personal Law.

Placing Muslim women's issues within the confines of religion has further marginalized them, and created hesitancy among the secular feminists in addressing their problems for fear of hurting religious sentiments.

The 1970s also witnessed the split of the Indian Left Front. This led to a number of doubts regarding their earlier analysis of revolution. New leftist movements and ideas emerged. A few streams of feminist movements also developed. such as the Shahada movement, which was a Bhil tribal landless laborer's movement against the exploitation of the tribal landless laborers by non-tribal landowners. It began as a folk protest, and became militant with the involvement of the New Left party. It has been said that women were more active in the movement, and as their militancy increased, they demanded direct action on issues specific to them as women, such as physical violence and abuse as a result of alcoholism. Groups of women would go from village to village, enter liquor dens and destroy liquor pots and containers. If any woman reported physical abuse by her husband, all other women would surround him, beat him up and force him to apologize to his wife in public.

The formation of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) was probably the first attempt made to form a ·Trade Union attached to the Textile Labor Union in Ahmedabad. It was formed in 1972 at the initiative of Ela Bhatt, and was an organization of women who were involved in different trades, but shared a number of common features and work experiences low earnings, extremely poor working conditions (some worked at home, and others toiled on streets as vendors or hawkers), harassment from those in authority (contractors, police, and so on), and lack of recognition of their efforts as socially useful work. SEWA aimed at improving the working conditions of women through a process of training, technical aid, legal literacy, collective bargaining, and to teach values of honesty, dignity and simplicity, the Gandhian goals to which SEWA subscribes.

The anti-price rise agitations in Maharashtra were the direct result of the drought and famine conditions that affected rural Maharashtra in the early 1970s. These led to a sharp price rise in urban Maharashtra. In 1973, the United Women's Anti-Price Rise Front was formed to mobilize women against inflation. Within no time, it fireballed into "a mass women's movement for consumer protection and the demand was for the government to fix minimum prices and to distribute essential commodities. Huge groups of women, between 10,000 and 20,000, would hold demonstrations at government offices, houses of Members of Parliament and merchants, and those who could not get out of their homes would express their support by beating thalis (metal plates) with lathis or belans (rolling pins). This movement spread to Gujarat, where it was called the Nav Nirman movement. In Gujarat, the movement started as a student's movement against spiraling costs, corruption and black marketeering. Soon, it became a massive middleclass movement and thousands of women joined it. The methods included mock courts where judgments were passed on corrupt state officials and politicians, mock funeral processions, and processions to greet the dawn of a new era.

Women started participating in increasing numbers in the Naxalbari movement in West Bengal and the Naxalite movement in Andhra Pradesh, the Navnirman youth movement in Gujarat, and the Chipko Movement. The Shramik Mahila Sangathan (Working Women's Organization), the Progressive Organization of Women, and the Mahila Samata Sainik Dal (League of Women Soldiers for Equality) were some of the organizations that emerged during this period.

11.6   References:

Mukhopadhya, Amites (2012), Social Movements in India, Pearson Publications.

****

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

Structure

12.1   Contemporary women's movements in India

12.2   The movement against dowry

12.3   The movement against rape

12.4   Anti-arrack movements

12.5   Eco-feminism-women and environment

12.6   Summary

12.7   References

12.1 Contemporary women's movements in India

There are different strands of thought and activism that have come together to create the contemporary women's movement in India. These movements were initiated by the Declaration of the UN Year of Women in 1975. This year also witnessed the release of the Status of Women Committee Report. The report was a voluminous one of compiled data on the various indices indicating the status of women in India. This report directly attacked the myth that women in post-Independence India were "progressing': It revealed that a majority of Indian women suffered from poverty, illiteracy and ill-health, as well as discrimination in both the domestic and public spheres. This resulted in agitations and campaigns against the worst manifestations of sexism and patriarchy by middle-class women.

The report of the Committee on the status of women proved to be a turning point in the path of contemporary women's movements in India. The report made the following recommendations:

• Equality not merely for justice but for development;

• Focus should be on economic empowerment of women;

• Child bearing should be shared as a social responsibility;

• Recognition of household work as national productivity;

• Marriage and motherhood should not be a disability;

• Emancipation of women should be linked to social emancipation; and

• Special temporary measures for de facto equality.

The year 1975 saw the development of a number of feminist activities in various parts of the country, especially in Maharashtra. This is seen as an indirect result of the United Nation's declaration of 1975 as the International Women's Year. An intensifying of interest in women's issues and problems had been taking place in Maharashtra from the early 1970s. Inspired by the formation of the Progressive Organization of Women (POW) in Hyderabad, Maoist women formed the Purogami Stree Sangathana (Progressive Women's Organization) in Pune, and the Stree Mukti Sangathana (Women's Liberation Organization) in Bombay. On 8 March 1975, the International Women's day was celebrated for the first time by both party-based and autonomous organizations in Maharashtra. In September', a conference of Devadasis was organized. In October, a United Women's Liberation Struggle conference was held in Pune. A connection was established between the anti-caste Dalit movement and feminism. The Dalits were classified as untouchables because of the activities they undertook, such as curing leather or clearing excreta. The Dalits had been agitating for social acceptance, and for women's rights to education, widow remarriage and against Purdah. Women from the Dalit movement formed the Mahila Sarnta Sainik Dalam (League of Women Soldiers for Equality). It stressed on equality, and highlighted women's oppression, especially the oppressive character of religion and the caste system. .

167

In 1975, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of Emergency throughout the country. This interrupted the development of the women's movement. Many political organizations were forced to go underground. Many activists were persecuted and arrested. During this period, the focus of the activists shifted to civil rights such as freedom of speech and association, the rights of political prisoners, the right to freedom and liberty and so on. In 1977, Emergency was lifted. This led to the revival of some of the women's movement that had been brought to a standstill by the declaration of Emergency. Women's groups were formed in most parts of the country.

The 1980s witnessed a transformation of the women's movement. Organizations increased their focus from one or two issues to deal with holistic issues. There were three different streams of feminist orientations:

i.   The Liberal Stream focuses on demanding reforms in those aspects of the polity which specifically affect women.

ii.   The Leftist Stream situates oppression of women within a holistic analysis of the general structure of oppression and calls for a coming together of specific movements for social change in order to effect the revolutionary transformation of society.

iii.   The Radical Feminists concentrate on defining the development of feminity and masculinity in society as fundamental polarities, and experimented with reclaiming traditional sources of women's strength, creativity, and so on.

Since the pre-independence time, freedom struggle and thereafter, women's organizations were linked to political parties. What have come to be known as "autonomous" groups or organizations have emerged in the 1980s, which were not linked to political parties. The new women's groups that were formed in the late 1970s had a number of members who believed in the Leftist ideology. They declared themselves to be autonomous, even though they had affiliations with various political parties. They rapidly built networks among themselves despite ideological differences. The fact that most of the members of these groups had leftist affiliations and belonged to the urban educated middle class influenced the feminist movement of the late 1970s and the 1980s. The groups of the 1970s were loosely organized and without formal structure or funds. Many groups opted

for autonomy and wanted to be separate, women-only groups without any party affiliations or links, as these were hierarchical, competitive and wallowed in self-interest. Feminists criticized party politics, but recognized their importance. They felt that parties could help in the enactment of reforms and in fulfilling feminist aims.

Even though many of the feminist movements and campaigns of the late 1970s and the early 1980s were city-based movements and dominated by urban groups, feminist consciousness was entering rural movements too. In Andra Pradesh, the 1950s sharecropper's movement in Telangana was renewed in the late 1970s. In Karimnagar District of Telangana, women had been very active in the movement of the landless laborers from the 1960s onwards. The kidnapping of a woman, Devamma and the murder of her husband by a local landlord sparked a new wave of agitation. The Stri Shakti Sanghatana was formed in Hyderabad in the late 1970s, because of a demand for an independent women's organization from the women themselves. In Bihar, the Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini (Young Students' Struggle Organization) was formed, and women of the organization raised feminist issues. This organization was involved in an agricultural laborers' movement for land reclamation from the temple priest who owned most of the land. Women were actively involved in this movement, and it was decided that there would be a demand to register reclaimed plots of land in the names of men and women.

12.2   THE MOVEMENT AGAINST DOWRY

Death of young married women within the family had long been treated as "accidental" and recorded as "suicides". The women's movement drew the link between demands for dowry and the deaths. They demanded recategorizations of such deaths as "murder" and not "suicide".

The first campaign of the contemporary feminist movement was against dowry. Dowry is the sum of all the money as well as other items such as jewellery, car, furniture, and house, etc., given by the bride's family to the groom and his fanlily. It was in Hyderabad in 1975 that the Progressive Organization of Women organized formal protests against dowry. These protests were not allowed to grow into full-fledged campaigns because of the imposition of the Emergency in 1975. After the Emergency was lifted in 1977, a new movement against dowry started in Delhi. This movement focused upon the violence inflicted upon women for dowry, including bride burning and abetment to suicide. Delhi has remained

the place for sustained agitation against dowry and related issues. This may be because Delhi has witnessed a high number of dowry deaths and dowry harassment cases. There have been protests and movements against dowry demand and dowry deaths in many states across India.

The Mahila Dakshata Samiti was the first women's organization in Delhi's contemporary feminist movement to take up the issue of dowry harassment and dowry deaths. In June 1979, another women's organization, Stri Sangharsh drew public attention to the problem of dowry and dowry-related crimes by organizing a demonstration against the death of Tarvinder Kaur, who had given a dying statement blaming her in-laws for killing her, as her parents could not fulfill their ever-increasing demands for dowry. This demonstration gained wide, publicity, and resulted, in a number of demonstrations against dowry deaths, including a large demonstration led by the Nari Raksha Samiti (Women's Rescue Committee). These demonstrations sparked off public debates on dowry and dowry-related crimes.

Death of women by fire (doused in kerosene and set on fire) was termed suicide, and many of these cases were not reported. Even suicides were not considered to be the result of harassment for dowry. These deaths were neither investigated nor categorized by the authorities. They were considered to be private family affairs, and authorities did not interfere in such family matters. But as a result of the demonstrations and agitations in Delhi and other parts of the country, this problem was brought to the attention of the authorities as well as the public. This made the public realize that many official female suicides were, in fact, deaths due to dowry harassment. There was an increase in the number of complaints with the police against dowry harassment. Feminist organizations tried to help by recording the dying declaration of women, testimonies of family members, and encouraged friends and neighbors to come forward with their testimonies and evidence.

Feminist groups devised strategies to increase public awareness regarding the problem of dowry, dowry harassment, and dowry deaths. This included organizing debates, public demonstrations and enacting street plays. Manushi, a Delhi-based feminist magazine, organized a number of public meetings. People, both women and men, were encouraged to make a pledge that they would neither take nor give dowry.

The government passed a law against dowry and related crimes in 1980. This law

declared/treated abetment to suicide arising from of dowry demands as a special crime. It made a police investigation into the death of any woman within five years of marriage mandatory. However, though the law recognized that dowry harassment could be construed as abetment, it did not specify the kinds of evidence that could be used to prove harassment, nor did it make abetment a cognizable (liable to be judicially examined or tried) offence. In 1982, the first positive judgment of this law took place. A Delhi Sessions Court magistrate found two people guilty of dowry murder and sentenced them to death. In 1983, the Delhi High Court reversed this judgment. There were widespread protests and demonstrations against this judgment. In 1985, the Supreme Court upheld the verdict, but converted the verdict from death sentence to life imprisonment. In the same year, the Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act was passed. This made cruelty to a wife a cognizable, non-bailable offence, punishable by upto three years imprisonment and fine. The Act also redefined cruelty to include mental as well as physical harassment. Section 113-A of the Evidence Act was also amended to enable the court to draw an inference of abetment to suicide. Technically, this shifted the burden of proof and thus lessened the burden upon the complainant. The Act also amended Section 174 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which makes a postmortem of the body of a woman who dies within seven years of marriage compulsory.

In spite of these laws being passed, it has been difficult to secure convictions for dowry deaths. Heresay evidence is not enough to be accepted as evidence for conviction. Women themselves hesitate to bring charges against their husbands and in-laws. Moreover, postmortem reports need not necessarily show evidence of murder. It is difficult to prove that kerosene burns are the result of intention to murder. Moreover, there are still many loopholes in the laws regarding dowry, and most culprits manage to get away without detection. Feminists discovered that though they could muster massive public support for campaigns against certain crimes against women, it was very difficult to get the support of the legal system for their efforts.

12.3   THE MOVEMENT AGAINST RAPE

There was a movement against rape of women by the police, government officials, and landlords in rural and urban areas. This issue gained prominence because of the incident of Rameeza Bee in Hyderabad. Rameeza Bee was raped by several policemen. Her

171

husband, a rickshaw puller was murdered when he protested against his wife's rape. As a reaction, thousands of people went to the police station, laid the man's dead body in the station veranda, set up roadblocks, stoned the building and set fire to some of the vehicles. The army was called in, and the demonstrations and protests were quietened only after the state government was dismissed and a commission of enquiry was appointed to look into the rape and murder.

There were a number of demonstrations against police and landlord/employer rapes in -different parts of the country. In 1980, local policemen in Maharashtra raped a 16-year-old girl, Mathura. A case was registered against the policemen, who were acquitted at the Sessions Court as well as by the Supreme Court, on the basis of the argument that Mathura had a boyfriend, and was a loose woman who by definition could not be raped. An open letter by four senior lawyers against this judgment by the Supreme Court led to a campaign by feminist groups. The Bombay-based feminist group Forum Against Rape (now called the Forum Against Oppression of Women) decided to campaign for the reopening of the case. Feminist groups across the country were contacted, and retrial of the case was demanded during demonstrations held on International Women's Day on 8th March. There was also a demand for the implementation of relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code, and changes in the rape law. Joint action committees were formed, comprising socialist and communist party members to coordinate the campaign. This was, in fact, the first time that feminist groups coordinated a nation-wide campaign.

In another incident in 1980, policemen arrested Maya Tyagi in Baghpat in Haryana, stripped her naked, raped and paraded her through the streets. This resulted in widespread protests from political parties and women's organizations across the country. A judicial enquiry was ordered into the incident, and there was a parliamentary debate on the largescale increase in incidents of rape and atrocities against women. The government introduced a bill defining the categories of custodial rape and a mandatory punishment often years imprisonment, and a shift of onus of proof onto the accused. This clause of shifting burden of proof onto the accused raised a lot of controversies, since it stated that if the woman could prove forced intercourse with the accused at the time and place alleged, then the accused would be presumed to be guilty unless he could prove otherwise. However, the issue was politicized, and different political.parties sought to get political leverage out of it.

172

However, another judgment brought to light certain factors associated with rape-the social sanction accorded to it, and the difficulties of acquiring medical evidence to prove that a woman had been raped. In 1988, in the case of Suman Rani, the sentence against the rapists was reduced because of the conduct of the victim-she had been having a sexual relationship with a man. This judgment led to a renewed debate on the definition of rape. Feminists stated that the technical definition of rape did not give importance to the fact that it was an act of violence against a woman's privacy.

12.4   ANTI-ARRACK MOVEMENTS

Women have been in the forefront of movements against liquor-related social evils. Women in Patad village in Uttar Pradesh launched an anti-liquor movement. Liquor shops situated near bus stops, a temple and a mosque were spoiling the social environment of the area. Drunken brawls were common and an environment of intoxication prevailed. Women were finding it difficult to board buses, wash clothes in the pond, and move around freely in the village. With the support of a voluntary organization, Disha, the women of the village launched a three-month long agitation, which ultimately forced the administration to order the closure of the liquor shop. In 1996, the Haryana government banned sale and purchase of liquor in Haryana.

Arrack is rectified spirit, which is obtained by distilling fermented molasses. As a result of the Green Revolution, sugar cane cultivation increased in India leading to an increase in sugar production and its byproduct, molasses. The molasses is diverted to making arrack. The people of Andhra Pradesh had been struggling against the sale of arrack or local liquor, which was being backed by a number of governments over a period of time. The income generated from the production and sale of arrack in the state was too large for the governments to take any steps to stop its production or sale. Many liquor contractors were closely linked with politicians and there was a close nexus between crime and politics.

The anti-arrack movement started in Nellore district in 1992, and quickly spread to other parts of the state. The poor rural women of the district initiated the movement. The fight against liquor soon turned into a full-fledged women's movement. The rural women of Andhra Pradesh had been marginalized from every sphere of life for centuries. They were illiterate, exploited by landlords, and targets of domestic and social violence. They

suddenly arose in revolt against police officials, government officials, the Home Minister, and, in fact, the Chief Minister himself. They had a simple demand of no selling and drinking of liquor in the village. This simple demand brought forth an agitation involving thousands of women and spread into the urban areas and turned into a movement.

The contractors spend the money earned from liquor sales in maintaining hired gangs of muscle men to maintain their monopoly in liquor trade, to pay bribes to police and excise officials and to invest in real estate, building construction, finance, films, and politics. In fact, many of the liquor contractors are present day politicians and there is a close nexus between crime and politics.

Arrack shops in the village were at a distance from the village. People had to go to the sara or liquor compound to have a drink. This was usually done in the evenings after they finished their daily labor. The Varun Vahini Program ensured that the arrack was packaged into sachets and brought into the village, at the very door step of the villager. A person could drink throughout the day in the confines of his house. As time passed, this drinking increased in quantity, and men started drinking more and more. This affected the family as well as the economy. Women had to face the brunt of violence emerging from being inebriated.

In many districts, women decided enough was enough. Women spoke to other women who faced the torment of drunken abuse, and with the support of the District Collector and the sarpanch, started an anti-arrack movement. Another factor that motivated women to start the movement was the death of a number of villagers due to imbibing illicit brews. Women began their clean-up campaign by destroying articles used for distilling arrack in several houses. The police helped them by arresting some of the hooch makers and seizing the ration cards of others. The cards were returned only when they promised to quit the profession. The women on the "rampage" also had the support of the village Panchayat officials.

The women of Medepalli could shut down the liquor shops in the village but those in Mudigonda village, a kilometre away, remained open. Men from Medepalli would sneak into watering holes in Mudigonda and return inebriated. Undeterred, the women would wait at the entrance, force them to sit down and give them an earful. Soon the men stopped going to Mudigonda, and gradually even stopped imbibing arrack. Women thus succeeded

in their efforts to make the men give up drinking arrack.

The anti-arrack movement had its basis in a number of factors. The Akshara Deepam (Literary Lamp) program was a Government - initiated program, which aimed at eradicating illiteracy. Women were enthusiastic participants in the program. One of the sources used for educating people was through neo-literary books and these included narratives of women's achievements. These probably inspired women to fight for their rights. The government-imposed a ban on sale of liquor in the state, and prohibition was imposed. However, due to financial constraints, the government had to revise its policy of total ban and allowed sale/purchase of Indian made foreign liquor, though arrack continued to be banned. In 1996, Kerala also imposed ban on liquor within the state.

12.5   ECO-FEMINISM-WOMEN AND ENVIRONMENT

As a theory, eco- feminism is fairly a new theory and is still trying to find its voice. Hence, there is no single definition of eco-feminism. French feminist Francoise D Eaubonne is credited with coining the word eco-feminism in 1974. She sought to describe the epic violence inflicted on women and nature as a result of male domination. Eco-feminism is the theory, which seeks to end all forms of oppression. It does so by highlighting the interconnections between the domination of humans by race, gender, and class, on the one hand, and the domination of earth on the other. Eco-feminism is the social movement that regards the oppression of women and nature as interconnected. Consequently, it is now better understood as a movement working against the interconnected oppressions of gender, race, class, and. nature. Patsey Hallen does not hold the view that:

i. Gender is most important.

ii. Men are to blame for everything, especially environmental destruction.

iii. Women are more nurturing than men.

iv. Women have no power.

v. Eco-feminism seeks to drive a wedge between the sexes.

vi. Men are the sole benefactors of environmental destruction.

According to Indian mythology, the nature comprises of five basic elements, i.e.,

175

fire, air, water, earth, and sky. It is our duty to maintain ecological balance between these elements, which if disturbed would lead to the destruction of nature itself. In India, womenfolk all over the country, from ancient times to the present day, worship plants, trees, rivers, mountains, and animals. It is believed that cutting a tree is a sin and planting a tree is considered sacred. A careful study of our traditional customs reveals that Indian women worship the elements of nature as part of their culture and sacrament.

Women nowadays are participating equally with men in all fields. They are ahead of men particularly in the matter of prevention of pollution and protection, preservation, and conservation of environment. This can be proved by the participation of women in various environmental movements starting from "Chipko Movement" to the "Narmada Bachao Andolan". Amrita Bai gave a start for the Chipko Movement in a small village of Khejrili, a movement later revived by Bachni Devi and Gaura Devi of Uttar Pradesh, who snatched the axe from the wood cutters, restricted them from cutting the trees. Medha Patkar is a graduate in social sciences who moved to live among the tribals of the Narmada Valley in the mid-1980s. She played an important role in the formation of the Narmada Bachao Andolan, of which she is one of the principal spokespersons. In a great confrontation between Narmada Bachao Andolan supporters and pro-dam forces in 1991, her 21-day fast brought her close to death. These are very few examples of many, in which women have struggled for the conservation of environment.

Though women are actively taking part in the protection of environment, their participation in the formulation, planning, and execution of environmental policies still remains low. No environmental program can achieve success without the involvement of women. Without their full participation, sustainable development cannot be achieved.

According to Rani Sahu, all the household activities start with women. They play a key role in dealing with air, water, soil, living creatures, and above all the environment as a whole, and are very sensitive to the various forms of environmental pollutions. And these pollutions invite several kinds of diseases like food poisoning, bacterial, fungal, and viral attacks and several carcinogenic problems. "'Women involved in the movements are Amita Devi, Maneka Gandhi, Medha Patekar, Arundhati Roy, Rachel Carson, and many more.

There is a growing recognition of the need to strengthen women's capabilities to participate in environmental decision-making, by increasing their access to information

and education, particularly in the areas of science, technology, and economics. Women's lack of access to development planning and policy formulation has also had a negative effect on long-term management and protection of the natural environment and the promotion of sustainable development.

Science and Technology interventions for sustainable development recognize women's environmental needs and involve the promotion of sustainable livelihoods, the protection of the natural environment, and women's equitable participation and conceptual authority in environmental decision-making. Any failure to meet these needs and interests is likely to have a negative impact on women's ability to provide food, household needs and income for themselves and their families, on their ability to use and manage the natural environment in a sustainable manner, and on their equitable participation as environmental decision-makers in their own communities.

12.6 SUMMARY

- Movements that work toward the emancipation of women in some way or the other are known as women's movements. These are conscious and collective movements that try to deal with the specific needs of women, and aim at reformulating their public life, the educational sphere, the workplace, and the home.

- The women's movement in India can be divided into three phases or waves-the first wave can be seen in the pre-independence reform movements, the second wave in the post-independence women's movements and the third wave in the contemporary feminist movement.

- The women's movement in India has its roots in the pre-independence era in the social reform movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, this period witnessed the efforts of reformers and revivalists to better the lives of Indian women and brought about improvements in their status. Reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Mahadev Govind Ranade, and Maharishi Ranade, and revivalists such as Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, and others made efforts to improve the status of women in India.

- Women were active participants in the National Movement, mainly due to the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi and Sarojini Naidu.

- There was a lull in women's movements during the 1950s and 1960s. This can be called a period of latency or stagnation in the history of the women's movement in India.

- In the mid-1970s, there was a renewed interest in the status of women. In December 1974, the Committee on the Status of Women in India submitted its report to the Government of India preceding the International Women's Year in 1975. The Status Report brought out almost the entire range of issues and contexts as they affected women and revealed that the status of women in India had not changed significantly since independence.

- The post-independence women's movement has been among the most articulate, and heard in the public arena. Dowry, domestic violence, liquor, rape, and custodial violence became the basis for various women's movements.

- The 1990s witnessed the emphasis on women's rights as human rights. The focus of women's movements shifted from dealing with purely "gender" issues to the broder issued of national integration, environmental issues, issues of natural calamities, and peace. Different issues are being dealt with by women, and new methods of resistance and mobilization for change are taken up with emphasis on sustainable development, regional peace, and improving human life on earth.

- Despite the fact that women's involvement in many social movements is not being given due recognition, women continue to be active participants in these movements.

12.7 References:

Mukhopadhya, Amites (2012), Social Movements in India, Pearson Publications.

****

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS AND STATE INITIATIVES

13.1   Introduction

If the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution, then why are Indian women treated as second citizens in their own country' The Constitution officially grants eq'uality to women and also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. However, the varied forms of discrimination that women in India are subject to are far from positive.

It is claimed that from the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards, there has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. Where is the development? Yes, the status of the urban woman has shown some improvel1lent but the changes in their lifestyle were not coupled by changes in the general mindset of the people in our patriarchal society. Thus, some laws should have been framed for the protection of the newly emancipated and urbanized Indian women. What is the percentage of urban women in India, anyway' What about the rest? These privileged few would have prospered with or without the laws. Has there been any significant change in the status of rural women after the Fifth Five Year Plan?

The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. "The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local levels." These reserved seats often go unoccupied

or are taken up by male candidates because women rarely contest for such seats. Why? The mere existence of laws cannot automatically bring about a revolutionary change in the society. In a country where women have no control over their own lives and do not even have the decision-making power in their own household, do you think they will be encouraged to join local governing bodies?

In India gender disparity is found everywhere. The declining ratio of the female population, in the last few decades is a proof of-this. The stereotypical image of a woman haunts her everywhere. Domestic violence is commonplace. The underlying causes of gender inequality are related to the socio-economic framework of India. As a result, the women belonging to the weaker sections of the society i.e. the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes/ Other backward Classes and minorities, do not have easy access to education, health and other productive resources. Therefore, they remain largely marginalized, poor and socially isolated.

13.2 Constitutional Provisions

The following are some of the provisions made in favour of women, in our constitution:

Article 14 in the Indian Constitution ensures equality in political, economic and social spheres. Article 16 provides for equality of opportunities in matters of public appointment for all citizens. However, the ratio of women in Politics is far less as compared to men. How many women hold positions of power in government run institutions? Single women do not get jobs easily because the employers fear that they might get married and quit. They also find it hard to get rented accommodation whereas that is not the case with single men. Cricket is a religion in India. Is the government promoting cricket for women or any other form of team sport for women for that matter?

Article 15 prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex etc. There are certain places of worship in South India where women are not allowed entry. Advertisements of 'Fairness' creams are aired on television without any restrictions. It is shown in these ad-films that the 'brown' Indian woman can't get a job, can't find a man and is generally looked down upon by everyone but when she becomes fairer, the story changes.

Article 15 (3) of the Indian Constitution allows the State to make any special provision for women and children. Wife bashing is a favorite sport in India. Women are subject to physical and mental torture by their husbands and their families. Women and children are always under the control of the 'Male' head of the family. A child is identified by his father's name in this country. Whereas in western countries, the mother's name forms, the middle name, of a child.

Article 39(a) mentions that the State will direct its policies towards securing all citizens, men and women, the right to means of livelihood while Article 39 (c) ensures equal pay for equal work. When a male government employee is transferred from one place to another, is his wife given a new job in the new place' Her career goals are of little importance to anyone. She can be displaced and uprooted anytime! The daily wages of women labourers in India are lesser than that of male menial workers. Bollywood Actresses also get less money as compared to their male counterparts.

Article 42 directs the State to ensure just and humane working conditions. More often than not, women are exploited by their bosses. It is believed that women who keep their bosses happy get promotions very easily in the Corporate world' What about the others? Male colleagues never fail to make passes at women.

The constitution imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen through Article 15 (A) (e) to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. What is the government doing about eve-teasing' Can a woman spend an entire day on the streets of the National capital without getting a series of comments, derogatory to her dignity? Another law that protects women against a seemingly milder crime is Section 509 of the IPC. This law punishes individuals who have insulted the modesty of a woman. Offensive language, sounds, gestures and intrusion of a woman's privacy are punishable under this law. Outraging the modesty of a woman is also punishable under Section 354 of the IPC. Under this law, an individual who has assaulted a woman, used criminal force on her or outraged h.er modesty in any other way can be punished with imprisonment of up to 2 years. In fact the people who are employed by the State to ensure that people don't flout any rules, the policemen, are the ones who have given consequence to many crimes against women. Policemen are often found mouthing obscenities, glaring and passing bawdy remarks on women, not only on the roads, but also inside the police station. Many of our honourable politicians are also

181

involved in all manner of crimes against women.

Laws such as the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, Sati Prevention Act, Dowry Prohibition Act and Indecent Representation of Women (Prevention) Act protect women from the more "traditional" crimes such as rape, abduction, dowry, torture, molestation, sexual harassment and selling of girls into slavery. However trafficking of women is still very common in this poverty-stricken country. Women from economically backward families are kidnapped and forced into prostitution. Incidents of women being charred to death after their husbands' death, have been reported recently. Giving and taking dowry is officially, a crime but the practice goes on. In fact, it is taken for granted that if you want to get your daughter married you should arrange for her dowry first, even when your daughter is educated and financially independent.

Female foeticide and infanticide are common practices in this country. If at all the girl is allowed to live, she is subject to all forms of torture in her own house. She is not allowed to go to school, instead she is forced to take up menial jobs and married off almost as soon as she enters teenage. People in rural areas fear that their daughters might be raped so it is better to get them married. Ironically, The Child Marriage Restraint Act specifies the cut-off age for marriage as 18 years, protecting women from child marriage. Women, be it urban or rural, face all forms of sexual harassment -throughout their lives. So what is the use of these laws?

There are many women in India, who are caught in violent marriages. Owing to the social stigma attached to divorce, not many women have the courage to break free.

Housewives account for 52% of the total female suicide cases in India. Section 306 of the IPC can punish the suicide victim's husband with up to 10 years imprisonment if found guilty. How many such men have been punished till now?

Thus, there are a number of laws to protect women, but what is the use of having these laws when no one follows them? In fact, the people whose business it is, to enforce these laws are the ones who publicly flout them. Besides, not many women are conversant with law and few are aware of the rights and privileges accorded to them by the constitution. So they suffer all forms of discrimination, passively.

13.3 IMPORTANT CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL PROVISIONS FOR WOMEN IN INDIA

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles.. The Constitution not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Within the framework of a democratic polity our laws, development policies, Plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1993.

1.   CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio economic, education and political disadvantages faced by them. Fundamental Rights, among others, ensure equality before the law and equal protection of law,' prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment. Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c) and 42 of the Constitution are of specific importance in this regard.

Constitutional Privileges

(i)   Equality before law for **women (Article 14)**

(ii)   The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion race/ caste/ **sex**, place of birth or any of them **(Article 15 (i))**

(iii)   The State to make any special provision in favour of **women** and children **(Article 15 (3))**

(iv)   Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State **(Article 16)**

(v)   The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and **women** equally the

183

right to an adequate means of livelihood **(Article 39(a));** and equal pay for equal work for both men and women **(Article 39(d))**

(vi)   To promote justice/ on a basis of equal opportunity and to provIde free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities *(Article 39 A)*

(vii)   The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief **(Article 42)**

(viii)   The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation **(Article 46)**

(ix)   The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people **(Article 47)**

(x)   To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of **women (Article 51(A) (e))**

(xi)   Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for **women** belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every **Panchayat** to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a **Panchayat (Article 243 D(3))**

(xii)   Not less than one- third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the **Panchayats** at each level to be reserved for **women (Article 243 D (4))**

(ix)   Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for **women** belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every **Municipality** to be reserved for **women** and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality **(Article 243 T(3))**

(x)   Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in **Municipalities** for the Scheduled Castes/ the Scheduled Tribes and **women** in such manner as. the legislature of a State may by law provide **(Article 243 T (4))**

2.   LEGAL PROVISIONS

To uphold the Constitutional mandate/ the State has enacted various legislative measures intended to ensure equal rights/ to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support services especially to working women.

Although women may be victims of any of the crimes such as 'Murder', 'Robbery', 'Cheating' etc, the crimes/ which are directed specifically against, women/ are characterized as 'Crime against Women'. These are broadly classified under two categories.

(1)   The Crimes Identified Under the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

    (i)   Rape (See. 376 IPC)

    (ii)   Kidnapping & Abduction for different purposes (See. 363-373)

    (iii)   Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (See. 302/304-8 IPC)

    (iv)   Torture/ both mental and physical (See. 498-A IPC)

    (v)   Molestation (See. 354 IPC)

    (vi)   Sexual Harassment (See. 509 IPC)

    (vii)   Importation of girls (up to 21 years of age)

    (2)   The Crimes identified under the Special Laws (SLL)

Although all laws are not gender specifi~ the provIsions of law affecting vyomen significantly have been reviewed periodically and amendments carried out to keep pace with the emerging requirements. Some . acts which have special provisions to safeguard women and their interests are:

    (i)   The Employees State Insurance Act, 1948

    (ii)   The Plantation Labour Act, 1951

    (iii)   The Family Courts Act, 1954

HEALTH AND EDUCATION

14.0 STRUCTURE

14.1   Health and Education

Any assessment of the status of women has to start from the social framework. Social structure, cultural norms and clues systems influences social expectations regarding the behaviour of both men and women, and determine a woman's roles and her position in society to a great extent. The most important of these institutions are the systems of descent, family, kinship, marriage and religious traditions. They provide the ideology and moral basis, for men's and women's notions about their rights and duties. The normative standards do not change at the same pace as changes in other forms of social organization brought about by such factors as technological and educational advance, urbanization, increasing population, and changing costs and standards of living. This gap explains the frequent failure of law and educational policy to produce the desired impact on social attitudes. The social status of women in India is a typical example of this gap between the position and roles accorded to them by the Constitution and the laws, and those imposed on them by social traditions. What is possible for women in theory, is seldom within their reach in fact.

The present chapter on Social Issues of Women deals with the status of women in terms of her health and education and the next chapters on social issues of women would deal issues related to land rights, personal laws and civil code.

14.2   I.   Women and Health

One of the major gender issues taken up for equality is woman's health. Various groups along with grass root activists and NGOs, have been responsible for focusing the attention of the Government and the community on the crucial aspect of women's life. Many of the dimensions of women's health have been highlighted through empirical research. They have been drawing attention on varied issues concerning health status and state policies.

In the pre-1947 period, studies on maternal and infant mortality rates and causes were the primary concern for women's health in India. Various committees were appointed in 1946 and 1948, among the most comprehensive being the Bhore committee which referred to the high percentage of deaths among women and the dire need for state intervention. After Independence, health programmes concentrated on maternal and child health. It was thought that pre-natal and post-natal care, attention to hygienic conditions,

187

adequate diet during pregnancy, a safe delivery system and information on birth control will promote healthy motherhood. Immunization and nutrition for the child were also included in the programmes. Various Five Year Plans included the training of 'dais' and the provision of public health centres. However, seriousness of health issues was first articulated when the findings of Committee on Status of Women in India (1947) revealed the declining sex ratio since 1901, indicating a state of declining health status of women for more than seven decades. Not only the decline of sex-ratio, but aspects such as maternal health, life expectancy, access to health services and nutritional status have all drawn attention to the gender dimensions of the woman's health as well as broad North and South differences in the demographic picture.

The researchers as well as activists have been concerned with the issue of health for women from various vantage points. They ask, how can the problem of women's health exists separately from the health problems of women's health exists separately from the health problems of the overall population and poorer sections of society? How are the variations of regions, class, caste, community influencing the health status of women? How do social stratification and gender influence the health of women? What role do medical care, health services, and overall socio-economic development of the region play in building up the health of people? Another dimension of health concerns relates to health hazards resulting out of violence against women, invasive contraceptives technologies, selective abortion of the female fetus and the population control policies. All these concerns indicate that a healthy population does not mean merely physical well being by includes the concern for mental and emotional aspects, the patriarchal structure and the nature of governance.

The status of women is a complex issue. It is not amenable to any simplistic explanation of social reality. Literature on the status of women has been varied and all of them have been addressing the key issues affecting the women in various areas of development. Though the areas of development are manifold, such as, education, employment, political, social, legal, health etc. The constitution of India provided equality to women. The introduction of adult franchise along with the removal of all discrimination on sex ground, provided towards the complete emancipation of women. But the inequalities inherent in traditional structures have a significant bearing on women in different spheres of life.

The International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 placed Reproductive Health at the Centre Stage of demographic objective instead of fertility reduction. The Cairo Conference recognized women's rights as individual reproductive rights. Gender equity and equality was accepted as a goal for sustained and substantial development. Gender equity and equality; infant, child and maternal mortality reduction; and the provision of universal access to reproductive health services, including family planning services are some of the areas for achieving the gender equity which are necessary to reduce the threat to women's reproductive health.

Impressive achievements and intolerable shortcomings characterize India's health programme over the past fifty years. On one hand, there has been a decline in mortality rates; life expectancy and infant survival conditions have improved over a period of time. It is very high when we compare the infant mortality rate with other countries. The World Bank Report notes that public health financing in India is characterized by an emphasis on hospital, rather than primary care; urban rather than rural population; medical offices rather than paramedics; services that have larger private rather than social returns; and family planning and child health exclusion of wider aspects of female health. In fact, gender differences in health and mortality have not only perpetuated but have been accentuated. Below we will analyze health status of women in terms of: (a) demographic indicators of women's health status; (b) nutritional pattern among women; (c) unequal access to health care, and (d) family planning programmes.

14.3   Demographic Indicators :

Although there has been overall improvement in the health condition of both males and females, but women still get differentiated from men when it comes to providing medical care to them which implies comparative low status of women in our society. According to UNICEF, 12 million girls are born in India every year, out of which 25 per cent do not survive the 15th year. The fact is that as the mortality rate of 0-5 years age group is about 20 times greater than any other five years age group. Female mortality rate up to the age of 40 years is higher then the rate for mortality. Although an increase in the life expectancy for women has been recorded in absolute numbers; in comparison to the life expectancy of males; it is still lower. Strikingly, maternal mortality rates are particularly high (Padmanabha: 1982).

189

The most populations in the world the sex-ratio at birth tends to be favourable to females even though the males outnumber females at younger ages due to slightly more males being born than females (the sex-ratio at birth varies between 102 to 107 boys per 100 girls for biological reasons), but this advantage of males get neutralized by about the age of 20 due to higher mortality among boys than girls (Premi: 2001). At the national level the 'Child sex Ratio'(CSR) (in population aged 0-6 years) decline from 962 in 1981 to 945 in 1991. In the 2001 census Child Sex-Ratio had declined further by 18 points from a 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001 (Census of India: 2001).

Mitra (1979), for the first time in 1974, gave a warning that the continuous decline in sex-ratio of female to male would threaten the very survival of the female sex in India. He described Indian women as a 'declining sex'. The increased sex-ratio of the population during the 1980s was concentrated heavily amongst children. The data suggest that over a million additional girls went missing" between 1981-91 that is over and above the numbers already implied missing by the skewed sex-ratios of 1981 (Gupta and Bhat:1999). Mean while, the sex ratio of child mortality have remained constant, suggesting that most of this may be attributable to the practice of sex-selective abortion or unreported infanticide. Excess female child mortality after birth continues to be the dominant practice in remaining female children in India. The sex ratio is adverse for women among all religious groups, and in both rural and urban areas. The only region where the sex ratio is favourable for women is Kerala where the literacy for women is also the highest in India.

Lack of widespread availability of safe abortion services also have adverse impact on women's health. According to some estimates that roughly 5 million abortions are performed annually in India, the large majority (about 4.5 million illegally (Khan et al :1993; UNICEF:1990, cited in Jejeebhoy:1994). As a result, abortion related mortality and morbidity continues to be high with at least 10 per cent of all maternal deaths resulting from abortion.

Ageing is often perceived as a deterioration in health. Most research and services tend to concentrated on women of reproductive age ignoring those beyond these years. While the process of growing old may bring some improvements and benefits to a woman in the post middle age period, these may diminish as she advances into old age or when she is widowed (Rao and Townsend: 1999). A woman often derives power from authority from her association with the male head of family. If this association suffers an erosion, her access to resources for

care and sustenance is reduced, making her vulnerable. The risk increases for women who have no assets for survival such as education, possessions or social status. This vulnerability may be compounded by failing health and disability. Thus, an indigent and physically frail, elderly widow is the most defenceless in the Indian context (Chen and Dreze: 1995). It is important to note that the elderly women suffer not only from ailments specific to ageing, but also from ill-health accumulated over the life-cycle which may manifest in old age in an aggravated form. The proportion of women reporting 'problem of joints' is higher than that of men. This is expected, as after menopause women are particularly prone to the development of osteoarthritis, a painful degenerative joint disease (Tinker et al.: 1994). Disability also affects the health of elderly people. It is well known that the prevalence of blindness in India varies not only by geographical location and degree of urbanization, but also by gender (World Bank: 1940).

14.4   Nutritional Pattern :

Poor nutrition is not only food and poverty problem but also socio-cultural problem of women in Indian society. It can not be denied that poverty is a major cause of malnutrition and undernourishment of women. Moreover, it is more unfavourable socio-cultural values operating against women in distribution of food.

Generally the poor nutritional status of Indian girls and women is part of a vicious cycle that has particularly devastating consequences for pregnant and lactating women and their infants. Malnourished women are more likely to give birth to low-birth weight babies, and if the underweight baby is a female who survives, she in turn is likely to continue to be undernourished throughout her childhood, adolescence, and adult life. This lack of nourishment has detrimental effects on her reproductive and lactating capacities.

All nutritional programmes are directed towards the needs of pregnant and lactating mothers. However, in spite of these programmes, there is nutritional deficiency in women starting from infancy to pregnancy and than again after crossing the childbearing age. It can not be denied that poverty is a major cause of malnutrition and undernourishment. But its more unfavourable impact on women's nutritional standards shows the connivance of poverty and socio-cultural values operative among them. Poor nutrition of girls, especially in childhood and adolescence, has serious consequences (Jejeebhoy: 1994). Anemia is a major health problem among Indian women. Studies carried out by the Indian Council of Medical Research found that over 65 per cent of girls ages 1-14 surveyed in the cities of

Hyderabad, New Delhi, and Calcutta were Anemic (ICMR:1982). Anemia is particularly widespread among women during pregnancy, when iron requirements increases nearly fivefold (Hallberg: 1988).

Poor nutrition becomes evident among females during infancy, persists through childhood, and tends to increase with age. Among many Indian families, the largest share of food is usually given to the bread earner, the next to boys, to the old or sick and the last, to young girls and women in the household (Nagla: 1999). Girls are often neglected in matters of feeding and health care. Discrimination in feeding may begin soon after birth as girls are breast fed less frequently as for shorter duration than boys. In recent years, increasing attention has been given to differentials in the allocation of food within households. However, rates of malnutrition among children and women are high. Ethnographic literature suggests that females are not fed as well, as males in northern India (Harriss: 1966; Miller: 1981). Marked differences exist between what is fed to boys and girls. The discrepancy increases with age. The malnutrition prevalent in a significant proportion of adult Indian women can be attributed primarily to inadequate food intake. The households that have theoretically enough food, but the way it is distributed may leave women inadequately nourished. Typically, adult men and male children are fed first. Women eat only after the men have finished, and a young wife must allow her mother-in-law to eat first. Whatever is left is divided among the young mother and her female children. This disparity in the distribution of food may be as much a matter of poor communication as of deliberate practice, since men are normally unaware of how much women eat. Whatever the reason, and given the nutritional demands of child bearing and lactation, the lack of nourishment puts women at particular risk during their childbearing years. Indian women may be malnourished because of the poor nutritive quality of what is available even when they food.

14.5   Unequal Access to Health Care :

Medical and health services too are not evenly available to men and women. For every three men who avail facilities of medical institution, only one woman does so. This is not because of greater 'healthiness' in women but due to low importance accorded to women's ailments women are not only neglected by others, but they also neglect themselves. Fewer women declare themselves ill as compared to men. Access to health care is determined by "need", "permission", "ability", and "availability" (Chatterjee: 1990). Use of health system is determined

by perceived need and often "need' is limited to the child bearing years. Even in the child bearing years use tend to be limited. For example, the NFHS reported hat of the births which occurred in the previous four years, 62 per cent of mothers had received anti-natal care while 26 per cent had delivered in medical institutions and 34 per cent were delivered by trained medical persons (IIPS:1995). The reason for such low levels of use is that, often women perceive the services to be unnecessary. Social and economic norms determine 'permission' and 'ability'. Often women need permission to seek health care. When there is dependence, either physical or financial on care givers, access is determined by the willingness and ability of the care givers to provide treatment. For example, women who needed treatment for visual disability if they had no sons or could not find alternative escorts (World Bank:1994). Availability depend upon the geographical proximity, ones purchasing capacity. In addition, our health system is institution based rather than domiciliary. This generates inhibitions among the rural population about the alien environment of the hospital. Moreover, women are burdened with greater disabilities than men are. They have paucity of time; monetary resources and child care facilities. Mobility of women is far more restricted than that of men. Thus, they are deprived of utilization of facilities rendered by the health system.

Government has been giving a low priority to health sector, which is evident from its various plan outlays. Moreover, inadequate coverage of rural health through primary health centres and non-utilization of the existing Primary health centres also contribute a lot. Only 50 per cent pregnant women receive antenatal care. Tetanus immunization is made only to 20 per cent pregnant women and still many deliveries are performed through untrained and unskilled midwives. Health care should be a right of every individual and not a privilege. India spends relatively heavily on health both as a percentage of gross domestic products as well as in absolute US dollars terms, when compared to some other countries of the Asian region (Jefferey:1989), yet women remain deprived and marginalized from its ambit.

14.6   Women and Family Planning :

Increasing population is the country's most urgent and pressing problem today, and root of all social and economic ills. The population control programme is, therefore, seen as the panacea for all ills, which will bring down the birth rate through adoption of the small family norm. However, the family planning programmes are overwhelmingly aimed at women. When the policies are framed for control of population, the mention of women

appeared. This concern for a reduction in the birth rate flows directly from the theory that population growth is a hindrance to development- a conviction that is maintained despite lack of evidence that such a cause and effect connection exists at all (Krishnaraj:1999). This has consequences for women. A conceptualization that regards the control of population as a primary objective will not regard women's interests as important. A perception of development as economic growth will forget that development is meant for people and that women are also people. They are simultaneously the means and the ends. As women bear children, fertility reduction implies that women must give birth to fewer babies. The problem is, therefore, seen as one of women's reproductive capacity, and not of social organizations. How is fertility to be curtailed? It can be achieved by curtailing the reproductive capacity of women's bodies directly or by men taking care to prevent impregnation.

Birth control is an important instrument of emancipation for women, but there is a perceptible difference in consequences for women when birth control is imposed, or when the means to do so are unavailable, or the means made are hazardous to life and health. In all such cases, women's power is limited. Fertility control can be liberating only when it consists in not just control of it, but when it implies self-regulation done freely by women.

Since 1970, the use of modern contraceptive methods has risen from about 10 percent to 40 percent. Again, the figures vary widely by state, from 53 percent in Maharashtra to 20 percent in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The practice of family planning is heavily dominated by sterilization, with over 75 per cent users of modern contraception being sterilized. However, male sterilization accounts for only 10 per cent of all sterilization while only 7 per cent of couples use condoms (NFHS: 1992-93). Ironically, several medical technologies for family planning have resulted in opposite effect. The burden and responsibility of birth control has been placed on women and specifically on poor women. The family planning technologies like IUDs, tubule legation, indictable contraceptives; laparoscopic tubectomies require professional to install them and needs follow-up also. But they hardly get time for follow-up. Moreover, these devices have to be applied by highly trained and experienced hands and within an environment where sterile conditions and adequate aftercare are scrupulously maintained. Most of the times, these technologies have side effects as in the case with injectable and intra-uterine devices. The women suffer from excessive bleeding, cramps, backaches, headaches, dizziness and swelling etc. (Shramshakati: 1988). Abortion

is often denied unless the women coming to family planning centres are made guinea pigs are forced to participate in trials of experimental contraceptives. Sterilization is being adopted en mass as a quick and method without acknowledging the adverse effects on women who have to resume heavy manual labour soon after. Thus, the inadequacies of health care system at the operational level have rendered unscrupulous many existing methods, which could otherwise be safely promoted.

The most striking aspect of contraceptive use in India is the predominance of sterilization, which accounts for more than 85 percent of total modern contraceptive use. Female sterilization accounts for 90 percent of sterilization (World Bank: 1996). The lack of knowledge about and access to other contraceptive methods reflects the Family Welfare program's historical emphasis on sterilization. Increasing contraceptive choice, particularly temporary methods for delaying and spacing pregnancies, is now seen as a high priority. Should the onus of birth control be entirely on women, when men are equally responsible for reproduction? Many organizations are demanding this particularly in the context of AIDS (ARROW: 1996). While the dominant ideology of gender relations that regards men as economic providers and women as child bearers and rearers persists in society, this is also reflected among the predominantly male policy-makers and health personnel. The State becomes an additional agent for control over women's bodies (Krishnaraj:1999).

14.7   II. Women and Education

The entry of women into the formal education system began in the mid-19th century, but it got wider acceptance only in the mid-20th century. The government was slow to push policies promoting education, but social reformers and women's organization realized the significance of women's education at all levels. The efforts of Maharshi Karve, Mahatma Gandhi, Tagore, as well as organizations such as the All India Women's Conference not only pleaded for giving women access to education, but declared that education helped women perform their roles and become useful citizen. The Constitution of the Indian Republic introduced in 1950 included a number of important provisions which had a direct or indirect bearing on education. Article 45 imposed direct responsibility for education on the states. The state shall endeavor to provide, within a period of 10 years from commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years) that this has still not been achieved after more than five decades). Article 16 imposed non-discrimination on grounds of sex in public employment, and Article 15(3) empowered the State to make special provisions for the welfare and development of women

and children, the provision which was involved to justify special allocations and relaxation of procedures/conditions to expand a girl's access to education at different levels.

After Independence, the first major step taken by leaders in the Nehruvian era was establishing a University Education Commission headed by Dr.Radhakrishnan. It is very significant that the Commission devoted a full chapter to women's education discussing various dimensions. However, the views of the all male commission on women's roles appeared to have advanced little beyond the views held a few decades ago. "The Commission believes that a well-ordered home helps to make well-ordered men. The mother who is inquiring and alert, well informed and familiar with subjects such as history and literature, and who lives and works with her children in the home, will be the best teacher in the world of both character and intelligence."

The commission mentions that there cannot be educated people without educated women, and therefore opportunities should be given to women to get an education. In spite of the conviction that the greatest profession of woman is that of a proficient homemaker, the Commission had to mention that a woman's world should not be limited to one relationship. It was forced to take note that women were entering the world of work. Therefore, it needed the section on women's education by remarking, "The educational system at all levels should prepare men and women for such varied callings."

The different commissions like Secondary Education Commission (1952-53), National Committee on Women's education (1958-59), The Committee on Differentiation of Curricula for Boys and Girls (1962), The Kothari Commission (1964-66), failed to articulate the relationship between women's equality, their participation in national development and the pattern and thrust of education itself. No thought was given to the possibly adverse aspect of the educational process on social values, the construction of gender, and how women's equality as a value could, or needed to, affect the educational process. Status of Women in India was constituted in 1971 and the report was prepared entitled Towards Equality. The Report is an eye opener to the stark inequalities between men and women, "summarized by chilling statistics of imbalanced child and adult sex ratios that indicated significant differential in male-female mortality. The Report was to significantly affect government policy n the context of promoting women's welfare and empowerment. On the other hand, the findings crucially influenced a section of Indian academia in their research and teaching, pushing them away from the old

approach to seeing women's role as related to family well-being to looking at women's condition as an input in the process of development and a critical issue. A National Policy on Education was adopted in 1985. The policy set to target date for universalization of elementary education for children 6-14 years old and the eradication of illiteracy in the 15-35 age group by AD 2000. It also mentions that removal of women's illiteracy and obstacles initiating their access to any retention in elementary education will receive overriding priority through provision of social support services, setting of time targets, and effective monitoring. The policy of non-discrimination will be pursued vigorously to eliminate stereotyping in vocational and professional courses and to promote women's participation in non-traditional occupations, as well as in existing and emergent technologies.

14.8   Women's Education at Various levels :

Since Independence there is undoubtedly an overall increase in the female literacy rates in the country. In 1951 the percentage of female literates was barely 9 per cent, while in 1991 it has gone to about 40 per cent, though compared to males the picture is not very bright. In 1951, 27.16 per cent men were literate, while in 1991 the percentage was 64.13 per cent. Another crucial issue is that of regional variation along with gender differences. Whereas Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Maharashtra show better results, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa have made very little progress in education at all stages. In rural India, with less than Rs.120 per capita income, 54 per cent boys are in school while only 31 per cent girls attend school. In urban areas, in the same income bracket 64 per cent boys are in schools while 51 per cent girls attended classes. With the rise of income, attendance by girls in the age group 15-19 is just 37.4 per cent, which may indicate that the remaining 63 per cent girls have been married or are helping their mothers, hence they find it difficult to attend classes. Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable.

14.9   Women in Higher Education :

Whereas literacy and elementary education fulfill social and human development needs and become instruments of better health and for income generation, the higher education of women promotes social and occupational mobility and leads to intellectual and personal development, quite often resulting in generating elitist culture. Thus, higher education is seen as a crucial step in personal, familial and societal mobility. One of the paradoxes of

197

women's education has been that whereas literacy and elementary education which touches the mass of women presents as gloomy scenario, the picture of women in higher education is not so depressing. Karuna Chanana mentions that the while proportion of women to total enrollment was 10.9 per cent in 1950-51, it increased to 27.2 per cent in 1980-81 and 52 per cent in 1996-97 (Chanana:2000). The immediate decades after independence were full of developmental and technical activities, in which women's education was an important requirement. Thus, the national agenda helped women of the upper middle class and the upper castes to enter the portals of higher education. Chanana points at slow growth after the Eighties as a consequences of the lack of specific policies and measures to encourage women's education. The higher proportion of women at the research level indicates the growing employability of women in the higher echelons of power. The women students who are career oriented have sifted from Arts faculties and especially science faculties to commerce and law. In commerce, there is the attraction to jobs in banks and other commercial firms. Law, which was considered a man's domain, has opened its gates to women not merely by providing opportunities to practice law or to join the judiciary, but also because of the substantial desk and research work in the legal field where women can be accommodated. Further, with the rise of litigation and assertion, the feminists believe that women lawyers can better represent the case of women. The entry of women into job-oriented courses, such as commerce, law, engineering and technical fields, suggests that, thought the liberal stance of education may prevail for a majority of students, the trend of the employment orientation of women is also visible. Another significant factor is growing number of girls in short-term courses such as polytechnics, computer courses and information technology. The opening up of job opportunities, possibilities of self-employment as well as the need to combine both familial and occupational roles is clearly visible in women's opting for non-traditional courses. Karuna Chanana observes that these students (joining the new disciplines) belong to urban middle and upper strata of professional and salaried class in the metropolitan cities. They are also the ones who belong to small families where the norm of two children has meant that they may be only daughters. These daughters are given the best of education by their parents. It has also be found that the fathers of engineering students have been engineers. Thus parental aspirations have been very crucial in the new orientations of women students in higher education (Chanana: 2000).

The enlargement of choices and the advent of careerism in urban middle class women can be linked with the forces generated during last four decades, which have accelerated in

198

the post-liberalization phase. Better skills, wider information and knowledge and professionalisation are considered essential for administration, improvement in productivity and market orientation. Today the technically trained, management-trained, and computer savvy have better marketability. These requirements, on the one side emphasize efficiency and a professional approach to work, and on the other side, they generate keen competition among aspirants. Many women in urban areas opt for some of these courses, and those who are enterprising of have the backing of parents or husbands may venture into self employment by starting small or medium business. An important fall out of the changed situation is that whereas the first-generation professional women had quite often to make a choice between marriage and career, the present generation can have both but have to struggle hard to maintain the balance.

14.10   Regional Variations :

Besides shifts noticed in the various disciplines, regional variations are also an important factor in the spread of higher education among women. The general pattern of distribution is thus: the four southern states register better enrolment than the Northern Hindi-speaking states. As recently as the mid-nineties, Goa, Kerala and Punjab registered enrolment between 50-52 per cent while Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have very low enrolments, between 18 per cent to 26 per cent. There are a number of reasons for variations: the comparatively lower status of women in these regions, a delay in opening the doors for education for women, the slow development of technical education and economy, and the political climate.

14.11   Role of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) :

Though the significance of universal elementary education) five years of schooling for children) has been accepted as a non negotiable issue, the advance is not striking. A number of programmes have been initiated by the Government of various funding agencies, but the problem of education of girls after attaining primary education becomes serious. The discontinuation rate after primary school is higher in rural India, more so among girls, children from socially and economically disadvantaged communities and those living in remote areas. It is now widely recognized that these sections of Indian society have not been able to access educational facilities, or even if they do enroll they drop out due to a

wide range of demand side and supply related factors (Ramchandran:1999). In rural India only 30.6 per cent girls in the 15-19 age group have gone beyond middle school, while the percentage for boys is 49.6 per cent. Similarly, 63.8 per cent of girls in urban areas are in secondary school. When this data is looked at in relation with the income level, it becomes clear that many families in the lower income group are constrained not to educate their daughters. The gender difference is quite notable. Where resources are limited, the first casualty is a girl's education. In the age-group 6-14 years, nearly 52 per cent of girls are out of school. Thus, there is a skepticism about the utility of education as its potential for employability. It is in this context of certain inherent problems with the delivery of education system and its relevance that the role of NGOs become crucial. We will briefly assess their role in basic education.

Indian Constitution guaranteed compulsory education to all up to 2000 A.D. But no such realization is in sight. Thus a space was created for the collaboration of NGOs in this programme. Arak Movement in Andhra Pradesh was quite successful for literacy classes. Similarly, Puddukottal district in Tamil Nadu in 1992 district witnessed unprecedented mobilization of women through the literacy movement. It is interesting to note that women here adopted the cycle as a symbol of their power. Learning the alphabet and acquiring means of mobility opened new hope in the programme. Kishor Bahrati and Eklavya in Madhya Pradesh, PROPEL in Maharashtra, and Research Centre at Tilonia in Rajasthan are among the early NGOs which tool on the educational needs of women both in terms of skills as well as an innovative approach to learning. They have also been working as a resource base for grassroot women's organization.

14.12 Privatization and Woman's Education :

In a general society in which the education of a girl is a low priority; the cost of education works as a deterrent. School attendance rates by age group and household monthly per capita expenditure class, in rural households with a per capita income of less than Rs.120-140, in the age group of 10-14 years, 65.4 per cent of boys attend school compared with 31.1 per cent of girls. The data is indicative of the relationship between income and enrolment, as well as rural-urban difference in the context of gendered value system. In such a scenario, if the state withdraws its support to education, the worst sufferers are the poor girls. As a welfare state with development as one of its primary

goals, the state had initially taken the responsibility of providing free education. Some states, for instance Maharashtra and Gujarat, had adopted a policy of providing free education to girls up to college level. Looking at some data on percentage allocation of expenditure on education over a period of five decades, we see significant shifts. For instance, whereas the centre was spending about 28 per cent on technical education in the seventies, in nineties the amount fell to 19 per cent. Though there has not been much change in the expenditure on elementary reduction in the centre's share in the nineties. The onset of the period of structural adjustment, was followed by a decline in public expenditure in various sectors, including education. In higher education, the decline is quite marked. In short the privatization of education is likely to especially affect girls and women from economically weaker strata.

14.13 REFERENCES :

Women and Health :

ARROW (1996), Men's Roles and Responsibilities in Reproduction, May, Vol.2, No.1.

Barbara, Rogers, (1980), The Domestication of Women: Discrimination in Developing Societies, London: Tavistock Publications.

Census of India (2001), SRS Bulletin, Vo.35, No.1, New Delhi: Registrar General.

Chatterjee, Meera (1990), Indian Women: Their Health and Economic Productivity, World Bank Discussion Papers No.109, Washington D.C: The World Bank.

Chen, Martha Alter and Jean Dreze (1995), "Widowhood and Well-being in Rural North-India," in Monica Das Gupta, Lincoln C.Chen and T.N.Krishnan (eds), Women's Health in India: Risk and Vulnerability, Bombay: Oxford university press.

Hallberg, L (1988), Iron Balance in Pregnancy, Nestle Nutrition Workshop Series 16, and New York: Raven Press.

Harriss, Barbara (1986), and the intra-family Distribution of Hunger in South Asia, London: School of Hygiene and Tropical medicine.

ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) (1982), "Report of ICMR Working Group", American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 35:1442.

IIPS (International Institute for population Sciences) (1995), National Family Health Survey: India, 1992-93.Bombay.

Jejeebhoy, Shireen J.(1995), Women's Education, Autonomy, and Reproductive: Experience from Developing Countries, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Jeffery, Patricia, Roger Jeffery, and Andrew Lyon, (1989), Labour Pains and labour Power: Women and Child bearing in India, New Delhi: Manohar Publications.

Khan, M.E., Richard Anker, S.K. Ghosh Dastidar, and S.Bairathi (1989), "Inequalities between Men and Women in Nutrition and Family Welfare Services: And In-Depth Enquiry in an Indian Village", In J.Caldwell and G.Santow, (eds.), Canberra: Australian National University, Health Transition Venter.

Khan, M.E. et al. (1993), "Abortion Acceptors in India: Observations from a Prospective Study", in Proceedings of the International Population Conference, Montreal, International Union for scientific Study of the Population, Belgium.

Krishnaraj, Maithreyi, Ratna M.Sudarshan and Abusaleh Shariff (1999), Gender, Population and Development, New Delhi: Oxford university Press.

Millett, K. (1977), Sexual Politics, London: Virago.

Magla, Madhu(1999), Sociology of Medical Profession, Jaipur: Rawat Publications.

NIPS (National Institute of Population Studies)(1992-93), National Family Health Survey, Bombay: NIPS.

NNMB (National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau) (1980), Report for the Year 1980, Hyderabad.

NSSO (National Sample Survey organisation) (1991), Sarvekshana, Vol.15, nos.2 (October-December). Department of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Government of India.

Padmanabha, P (1982), "Mortality in India: A Note on Trends and Implications", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XVII, No.32.

Premi, M.K. (2001), "The Missing Girl Child", Economic and Political Weekly, May 26, Vol.XXXVI, No.21.

Tinker, Anne, Patricia Daly, Cynthia green, Helen Saxenian, Rama Laxminaryanan and Kirrin Gill (1994), "Women's Health and Nutrition: Making a Difference", World Bank Discussion Papers No.256, Washington D.C.:The World Bank.

United Nations (1975), Report of the World Conference of the International women's year, Mexico City, June 19, July 2, p.9.

202

UNICEF (1990), Children and Women in India: A Situation Analysis, New Delhi: UNICEF.

World Bank (1944), Cataract Blindness Control Project: India, Report No. 12246-IN, South Asia Country Department II (India), Population and Human Resources Operation Division.

World Bank (1996), Improving Women's Health in India, Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

REFERENCES :

Women and Education

Chanana, Karuna (1988), Socialization, education and Women: Exploration in Gender Identity, New Delhi: Orient Longmans.

Chanana, Karuna (2000), 'Treading the Hallowed halls, Women in Higher Education in India', Economic and Political Weekly, XXXV, No.12, March 18.

Desai, Neera and Usha Thakkar (2001), Women In Indian Society, New Delhi: National Book Trust India.

Ramchandran, Vimla (1999), Visible but Unreached; Seminar, Continuing Centres, No.474. February.

Wazir, Rekha (2000) (ed.), The gender gap in Basic education: NGOs as Change Agents, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

****

GENDER ISSUES IN INDIA

WOMEN AND LAND RIGHTS

15.0   STRUCTURE

15.1   Women and Land Rights

15.2   Gender, Property and Land: Some Conceptual Links

15.3   Why do Women Need Independent Rights in Land?

15.4   References

15.1   Women and Land Rights

Economic analysis and policies concerning women have long been preoccupied with employment to the neglect of a crucial determinants of women's situation, namely, the gender gap in command over property. It is argued that the gender gap in the ownership and control of property is the single most critical contributor to the gender gap in economic well-being, social status and empowerment (Agarwal:1994).

The assumption that the household is a unit of congruent interests and preferences, among whose members the benefits of available resources are shared equitably, irrespective of gender, has been long standing issue in the development policy. In India, women's land rights have recently been taken into account in Sixth Five year Plan (1980-85). The first limited recognition by the government for women's need for land (and only in the context of poverty): the plan stated that the government would endeavour to give joint titles to spouses in programmes involving the distribution of land and homesites to the landless. In the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) the directive on joint titles was not restarted, while

the Eighth Plan (1992-97) makes only two specific points in relation to women and agricultural land: one, it recognizes that "one of the basic requirements for improving the status of women" is to change inheritance laws so that women get an equal share in parental property, but it lays down no directives to ensure that this is implemented. Two, it asks state governments to allot 40 per cent of surplus land (i.e. land acquired by the government from households owing more than a specified maximum) to women alone, and to allot the rest jointly in the names of both spouses (GOI:1992).

15.2   Gender, Property and Land: Some Conceptual Links :

The relationship between gender and property is important to see the place of women in the society. For this the five interrelated issues have been discussed below:

1.   Household Property and Women's Property :

The links between gender subordination and property need to be sought in not only the distribution of property between households but also in its distribution men and women; in not only who owns the private property but who controls it; and in relation not only to private property but also to communal property. Further gender equality in legal rights to own property does not guarantee gender equality in actual ownership, nor does ownership guarantee control. The distinctions between law and practice, and between ownership and control are especially critical: most Indian women face significant barriers to realizing their legal claims in landed property, as well as to exercising control over any land they do get.

Indeed in most societies today it is men as a gender (even if not all men as individuals) who largely controls wealth generating property, whether or not it is privately owned, including as managers in large operations. Even property that is under State, community, or clan ownership remains effectively under the managerial control of selected men through their dominance in both traditional and modern institutions: caste, clan councils, village elected bodies, State bureaucracies at all levels and so on. How do we define a women's class? Marxists analysis, for instance, implicitly assumes that women belong to the class of their husbands or fathers. Hence women belong to the class of their husbands or fathers. Hence women of propertied "bourgeois" households are part of the bourgeoisie and those of proletarian households are counted as proletarian. However, as is now

205

well-recognized, there are at least two problems with this characterization: (a) a woman's class position defined through that of a man is more open to change than that of a man; a well-placed marriage can raise it, divorce or widowhood can lower it. (b) To the extent that women, it is difficult to characterize their class position; (Bourdieu:1984) some have even argued that women constitute a class in themselves (Millet:1970). In fact, neither deriving women's class from the property status of men, not deriving it from their propertyless status appears adequate, although both positions reflects a dimension of reality. Women of rich households do gain economically and socially from their husbands' class positions. But women also share common concerns which cut across derived class privilege (or deprivation), such a vulnerability to domestic violence; responsibility for housework and childcare (even if not all women perform such labour themselves- the more affluent ones can hire helpers); gender inequalities in legal rights and the risk or property with marital breakdown. This ambiguity in women's class position impinges with critical force on the possibilities of collective action among women. On the other hand, the noted commonalities between women's situations and the relatively vicarious character of their class privilege make class distinctions between them less sharp than those between men, and could provide the basis for collective action on several counts.

The link between gender and property is also related with gender ideology and property. Gender ideologies can obstruct women from getting property rights. Assumptions about women's needs, roles, capabilities, and so on, impinges on the framing and implementation of public policies and property laws. Again, ideas about gender underlie practices such as female seclusion, which restrict women's ability both to exercise their existing property claims and to successfully challenge persisting gender inequalities in law, policy and practice in relation to such claims. Hence ideological struggles are integrally linked to women's struggles over property rights. Those who own and/ or control wealth-generating property can directly or indirectly control the principal institutions that shape ideology, such as educational and religious establishments and the media. These can shape vies in wither gender-progressive or gender-retrogressive directions. The impact of gender ideologies can vary by a household's property status (given the household's religion, caste etc.). For instance, both propertied and propertyless households may espouse the ideology of female seclusion, but the former group would be in a better economic position to enforce its practice, and in so doing reinforce its emulation by

unpropertied households as a mark of social status. At the same time, gender ideologies and associated practices are not derived from property differences alone, nor can they be seen in purely economic-functional terms. Rather they would tend to shift and change in interaction with economic shifts.

Another link in relation to women and property is the possible links of women's property rights with control over women's sexuality, marriage practices, and kinship structures. For instance, would women with independent property rights to be subject to greater or lesser familiar control over their sexual freedom than those without them? It would also be important to examine whether societies which historically recognized women's inheritance rights in immovable property, in order to keep the property intact and within their purview tended to control women's choice of marriage partners and post-marital residence.

2.   The Significance of Land as Property:

Land has been the status of political power and social status. For many, it provides a sense of identity and rootedness within the village; and often in people's minds, land has a durability and permanence which no other asset possesses (Selvaduri: 1976). Although other forms of property such as cash, jewellery, cattle, and even domestic goods could in principle be converted into land, in practice rural land markets are often constrained, and land is not always readily available for sale (Wallace et al: 1988). In any case, ancestral land often has a symbolic meaning (Selvaduri: 1976) or ritual importance (Krause: 1982) which purchased land does not. Hence, in land disputes people may end up spending more to retain a disputed ancestral plot than its market value would justify. Thus, both the form that property takes and its origin are important in defining its significance and the associated possibility of conflict over it.

Land Rights :

Rights are defined as claims that are legally and socially recognized and enforceable by an external legitimized authority, be it a village-level institution or some higher-level judicial or executive body of the State (Brombley: 1991). Rights in land can be in the form of ownership or of usufruct (that is right of use), associated with differing degrees of freedom to lease out, mortgage, bequeath or sell. Land rights can stem from inheritance on an individual

or joint family basis, from community membership (e.g., where a clan or village community owns or controls land and members have use rights to it), from transfers by the State, or from tenancy arrangements, purchase, and so on. Rights in land also have a temporal and sometimes locational dimensions; they may be hereditary, or accrue only for a person's lifetime, or for a lesser period; and they may be conditional on the person residing where the land is located, e.g., in the village.

Here we need to distinguish between the legal recognition of a claim and its social recognition, and between recognition and enforcement. A woman may have the legal right to inherit the property but this may remain merely a right on paper if law is not enforced, or if claim is not socially recognized as legitimate and family members erect pressure on the woman to forfeit her share in favour, say, of her brothers. The second important thing is that the ability to decide how land is to be used, how its produce is disposed of, whether it can be leased out, mortgaged, bequeathed, and sold and so on. It is sometimes assumed incorrectly that legal ownership carries with it the right of control in all these sense. In fact legal ownership may be accompanied by legal restriction on disposal.

In legal terms women's property rights are governed by personal laws (Agarwal: 1994). Most of the legal system give women considerable inheritance rights; and in traditionally patrilineal groups much greater rights than they enjoyed by customs, as a result of legal forms, especially after 1950. For instance, the Hindu Succession of 1956 gave the daughters, widow and mother of a Hindu man, dying in the state, equal inheritance rights to sons in his property. These were rights of absolute ownership and not just a limited interest for life.

15.3   Why Do Women Need Independent Rights in Land? :

The importance of women having independent rights in arable land rests on several interconnected arguments which can be grouped into four broad categories: welfare efficiency, equality and empowerment.

The Welfare Argument :

To begin with, especially among poor households, rights in land could reduce women's own and, more generally, the household's risk of property and destitution. The reasons for this stem partly from the general positive effect of giving women access to economic resources independently of men; and partly from the specific advantages associated with rights in land

resources. In other words, the risk of poverty and the physical well-being of a woman and her children could depend significantly on whether or not she has direct access to income and productive assets such as land, and not just mediated through her husband or other family members. In India, in 1982, an estimated 89 per cent of rural households owned some land, and an estimated 74 per cent operated some (GOI: 1987). When male workers migrate from rural areas to urban areas (Bardhan: 1977), women's dependence on the rural/agricultural sector remains greater than men's. Although the rural non-farm sector hold potential, its record in providing viable livelihoods has been mixed: there are some regions and segments of high returns/high wages (such as Punjab), but many others that are characterized by low returns and low wages. In particular, women's non-farm earnings appear characteristically low and uncertain. Hence, although there is clearly a need to strengthen women's earning opportunities in the non-farm sector, especially by ensuring their entry into its more productive segments, for most women non-farm livelihoods cannot substitute for land-based livelihoods, although they could supplement them. It is also noteworthy that those who do well in the rural non-farm sector through self-employment are usually those who have land as an asset base (Chadha: 1992). Effectively, therefore, land will continue to occupy a place of primacy in livelihoods in general, and female livelihood systems in particular, for quite sometime.

Efficiency Argument :

Tracing the likely efficiency effects of women having land rights is much more difficult than tracing the potential welfare effects. In several contexts, women are operating as household heads with the primary and sometimes sole responsibility for organizing cultivation and ensuring gamily subsistence, but without titles to the land they are cultivating. For instance, due to long-term male out-migration many women are serving as de facto household heads. Or widows are cultivating plots given to them from joint family estates (as a part of their inheritance claims to their deceased husband's lands), but the plots are still in their in-laws' names. Again tribal women cultivating communal land rarely hold titles to their fields, which are typically given out by the State only to male farmers. Titling women in these circumstances and providing them infrastructural support could increase output by increasing their access to credit, and to technology and information on productivity-increasing agricultural practices and inputs. Land titles could both motivate and enable women to adopt improved agricultural technology and practices and hence increase over production. This is not dissimilar to the argument made in land reform discourse favouring

209

in land by increasing the tenants' incentive and capacity to invest. The provision of land to women could have other indirect benefits as well, such as reducing migration to cities, both by women themselves and by family members dependent on them; and increasing farm incomes in women's hands, which in turn could generate a higher demand for non-farm goods that are produced locally and labour-intensively, thus creating more rural jobs.

The Equality and Empowerment Arguments :

Equality and empowerment are also concerns. Unlike welfare and efficiency considerations, stem less from the implications of land access or deprivation in absolute terms, and more from the implications of men's and women's relative access to land, and they affect particularly women's ability to challenge male dominance within the home and in society. The equality argument for land rights can be approached in several different ways. The larger issue of gender equality as a measure of a just society in which equality of rights over productive resources would be an important part. There is the specific aspect of equality in land rights as an indicator of women's economic empowerment and as a facilitator in challenging gender inequities in other (e.g., social and political) spheres. Land rights can also improve the treatment a woman receives from other family members, by strengthening her bargaining power. Although employment and other means of earning could help in similar ways, in the rural context land usually offers greater security than other income resources- at the very least, a space of one's own. Outside the household as well, land ownership can empower women by improving the social treatment they receive from other villagers (Mies et al: 1986), and by enabling them to bargain with employers from a stronger fall-back position. Land ownership is also widely linked to rural political power. Off course there can still be social barriers to individual women's participation in public decision making bodies, even for women endowed with land, but land rights could facilitate such participation. Group solidarity among women would also help. For instance, an individual woman with landed property may find it difficult to assert herself politically or socially in the village, especially where social norms dictate seclusion, but a group of women acting in unity could do so (Chen:1983).

Practical v. Strategic Gender Needs :

Practical gender needs are the needs of basic subsistence (such as food, health carte, water supply etc.): to satisfy them does not challenge women's position within the gender division of labour, or a given distribution of property or political power. By contrast, strategic needs, are those that would help overcome women's subordination, including transforming the gender division of labour, removing institutionalized forms of discrimination, such as rights to own and control property, and to establishing political equality (Moser: 1989; Molyneus:1985). In these terms, land rights would fall under strategic gender needs.

However, the apparent analytical neatness of this distinction is confounded when examined from the perspective of the practice, on several counts. First certain strategic gender needs, such as for land rights, are also, in specific contexts, necessary for fulfilling practical gender needs, as evidenced from the welfare and efficiency point of view.

Obstacles to Achieving Effective Land Rights :

Today, most arable land is in private hands. Access to which is mainly through inheritance. Although women enjoy considerable legal right in landed property, gender inequalities and anomalies in land-related laws remain. Moreover, there is vast gender gap between law and practice. Most women do not land, and few among those who do are able to exercise control over it. A range of factors- social, administrative and ideological- severely restricts the effective implementation of inheritance laws. These obstacles have been mentioned by (Agarwal: 1994) as follows:

➢ In most traditional patrilineal communities, there is strong male resistance to endowing women, especially daughters, with land. This resistance was clearly apparent when progressive legislation in the 1950s gave women in partilineal communities the right to inherit land. Quite apart from the reluctance to admit more contenders to the most valuable form of rural property, one of the important factors underlying such resistance is a structural mismatch between contemporary inheritance laws and the traditional marriage practices. Among the matrilineal and bilateral communities, families sought to keep the land within the purview of the extended kin either by strict rules against land alienation by individuals, or, where such alienation was possible (as among the bilateral communities), by other means; these included post-marital residence in the

village, and often an emphasis on marriage with close-kin, especially cross-cousins. In fact, proximity of the post-marital residence to natal home appears to have been virtually a necessary condition for recognizing a daughter's share in landed property. However, contemporary laws as framed by the modern state give inheritance rights to daughters as individuals among most communities, including traditionally patrilineal, patrilocal ones, but marriage customs are still under the purview of the local kin group and on the relevant counts, have remained largely unchanged.

➢ Second, women tend to forego their shares in parental land for the sake of potential economic and social support from brothers. A visit by brother is often the only regular link a woman has with her natal home when she is married into distant village, and especially where there are social taboos against parents accepting the hospitality of a married daughter. And after the parent's deaths, the brother's home often offers the only possibility of temporary or long-term refuge in case of marital break-up or widowhood. A woman's dependence on this support is directly related to her economic and social vulnerability. Economically, limited access to personal property, illiteracy, limited training in income-earning skills, restricted earning opportunities, and low wages for available work, can all constrain women's access to earnings and potential for independent economic survival. Socially, women's vulnerability is associated with partly with the strength of female seclusion practices and partly with the extent of social factors varies in strength by community; region and circumstances. But typically, in anticipation of such support, women give up their claims in parental land.

➢ Dependence on brothers is part of a larger social context which many aspects of rural women's relationship with the world outside the family is typically mediated through male relatives: fathers, brothers, husbands and extended male kin. Such mediation is necessitated by a variety of factors (the nature and strength of which vary according to region, class and caste), but particularly by the physical and social restrictions on women's mobility and behaviour. In many communities these restrictions are explicit in the norms and ideology of purdah or female seclusion; in many others, they are implicit and subtle, but nevertheless effectively confine women. These restrictions are manifest not just in the veiling of women, but more commonly in the gender segregation of space and gendered specification of behaviour.

- Male relative often take pre-emptive steps to prevent women from getting their inheritance: for instance, fathers have been found to leave will favouring sons and disinheriting daughters; and brothers have been known to forge wills or manipulate statements before the revenue authorities to make it appear that the woman has relinquished her right. Natal in are especially hostile to the idea of daughters and sisters inheriting land, since the property can pass outside the patrilineal descent group. A widow's claims are often with less antagonism, since with a widow there is a greater chance of the land remaining with agnates: she can be persuaded to adopt the son of the deceased husband's brother it she is sonless, or to enter into a leviratic union with the husband's (usually younger) brother, or made to forfeit the property if she remarries outside the family.

- The logistics of dealing with legal, economic and bureaucratic institutions are often formidable and work against women staking their claims; and they may only decide to do so if they have male relatives who can mediate. Village women's typically low level of education, and the noted restrictions on women's interactions with the extra-domestic sphere and with institutions constituted principally to men, the complicated procedures and red tape involved in dealing with judicial and administrative bodies, and so on. All work to women's disadvantage, as does women's relative lack of financial resources.

- Local level (largely male) government functionaries, responsible for overseeing the recording of inheritance shares, often obstruct the implementation of laws in women's favour. Social and official prejudice tends to be particularly acute against inheritance by daughters; widow's claims are somewhat better accepted in principle, although often violated in practice. There is a vast gap between legal ownership and actual ownership. There is also a gap between ownership and effective control, especially managerial control, attributable to a mix of factors like purdah system, gender segregation of public space, social interaction, high rate of female illiteracy.

15.4 REFERENCES :

Agarwal, Bina (1994), Gender and Command over Property: An Economic Analysis of South Asia. New Delhi: Kali for Women.

Bardhan, P (1993), "Analytics of the Institutions of Informal Cooperation in Rural Development", World development, Vol.21, No.4.

Bourdieu, P. (1984), Distinctions, Cambridge: Harvard University press.

Bromley, D.W. (1991), "Property, Authority Systems, and the Artful State", paper presented at a conference on Common Property, Collective Action and Ecology, held at the centre for Ecological Sciences, Banglore: Indian Institute of Science.

Chadha, G.K. (1992), "Non-Farm Sector in India's Rural Economy: Policy, Performance and Growth Prospects", Mimeo, Centre for Regional Development, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Government of India (GOI) (1982), "A Note on Some Aspects of Household Ownership Holding: NSS 37th Round, New Delhi: Ministry of Planning.

Government of India (GOI) (1992), The Eighth Five Year Plan: 1992-97, II, Delhi: Planning Commission of India.

Krause, I.B. (1982), Kinship and Economics in North-West Nepal, Ph.D. Dissertation in Social Anthropology, London School of Economics, University of London.

Mies, M. K.Lalita and K.Kumari (1986), Indian Women in Subsistence and Agricultural Labour, Geneva: International Labour Organization.

Minturn, L. and J.T.Hitchock (1966), The Rajputs of Khalapur, New York: John Wiley.

Molyneux, M. (1985), "Mobilization without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State and Revolution in Nicaragua", Feminists Studies, Vol.11, No.2.

Moser, C.O.N. (1989), "Gender Planning in the Third World: Meeting Practical and Strategic Gender Needs", World Development, Vol.17, No.11.

Wallace, B.J., R.V.Kempler and M.Wilson_Moore (1988), "Land Acquisition and inheritance in Rural Bangladesh", South Asian Anthropologist, Vol.9, No.2.

****

GENDER ISSUES IN INDIA

WOMEN AND PERSONAL LAWS AND CIVIL CODE

16.0 STRUCTURE

16.1 Women and Personal Laws and Civil Code

I. Women and Personal Laws

The disparities in our hierarchical Indian society are endemic, and they become

more complex as the hierarchies of gender intersect with hierarchies of class, caste and ethnicity, in addition to regional variations. Women and men too find themselves placed in different hierarchies which grant them power and status based on their birth and relation to the main male members of the family.

The discrimination felt by the women in India is sanctified by tradition and seldom challenged by the law. In fact, women have very feeble voice in the formation, implementation and interpretation of laws. The Fundamental Rights as guaranteed by the Indian Constitution have not been able to ensure equality for women in all spheres, and the Directive Principles of the State Policy have remained mere pious words. Personal Laws based on religion and at present continuing under the cover of freedom of religion hold women's lives in their octopus like grip, controlling issues of marriage, divorce, guardianship, adoption, maintenance and property. It seems rather paradoxical in this context to state that in spite of the shortcomings of the legal system in India, it is the law which has been and is still expected to effective as an instrument of social change, a strategy to free women from shackles of inequality and subjugation

16.2   Historical Background :

The woman's question was high on the agenda of the social reformers in the 19th century. The potential of law to improve the status of women was recognized by the merging Indian intelligentsia keen to bring about social reforms, as well as by the colonial rulers eager to establish a modern legal system and a positive British image. The former has their own dilemmas; the latter has their own problems. The colonial rulers overwhelmed by the plethora of unfamiliar practices and traditions, local customs and usages in addition the prevalent legal texts, codes and institutions. They turned to the written religious codes and their commentaries in search of the certainty desired by them in laws pertaining to civil and criminal liability and property contract. They were helped in their efforts by the Pundits and the Maulvis. This approach resulted in their noncognizance of usages and practices, overemphasis on written religious texts, and establishment of "law and order" by the British as they deemed fit. The Hindu law became Brahminised, and the Muslim law also became very limited rights took roots in the system.

The colonial rulers had in their own way made a distinction between personal and public spheres of life of the ruled, and had decided not to interfere as far as possible in the personal sphere, as it might ignite unrest. Laws governing such issues as marriage, divorce,

216

inheritance, succession and adoption came to be called personal laws, having their origin in religions to different communities. With the passage of time, there remained little pace for customs and usages as the political expediency became the guiding principle for the colonial rulers. By the time India gained independence from English rule, the personal laws of different communities were labeled religious laws, but in some cases they were actually state enactment while in others the contents of the rules had undergone substantial changes (Parashar: 1992).

Secularization of law has been always been a formidable struggle in India because of the pluralities and diversities found among various communities and the effectiveness of the rulers in dealing with them. Most of the laws enacted before independence indicate this reality (the situation after independence has its own problems). The Special marriage Act of 1872 provided an opportunity for Indians to contract a civil marriage. But the parties marrying under the Act had to declare that they had ceased to practices their religion. An amendment in 1923, however, removed this clause. The Indian Succession Act of 1925 can be seen as a secular and pro-woman legislation. Unfortunately, these two important legislations were not further developed to evolve into a uniform civil code (Agnes: 1992).

Along with nationalist fervor, the Thirties brought important enactments: The Hindu Women's Right to Property Act of 1937' The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, and the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939. These Acts granted limited right to women but did not question the fundamental gender inequality experienced by both Hindu and Muslim women.

Leaders of the Indian women such as Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and Sarojini Naidu realized need for a comprehensive code regulating marriage, divorce and inheritance. But the political atmosphere was changing rapidly due to the accelerated agitation for independence, coupled with the two-nation theory. The struggle for women's liberation was merged in the struggle for the nation's liberation. Political expediency resulted in a limited demand in the form of Hindu Law reform.

16.3   The Hindu Laws :

Hindu law has its origin in ancient Sanskrit texts and old customs. Since Hindu law has come from sources in which the religious mingled with the social, it regarded marriage

as a religious and sacred bond, with special roles assigned to husband and wife. The sacrosanct character of a Hindu marriage was challenged for the first time in 1885 in the case of Rukhmabai, who was married to Dadaji when she was 11 years old. Brought up in a liberal environment, she refused to live with Dadaji when the latter made a legal move years after the marriage to claim the company of his wife. The court did not grant the plaintiff the relief he sought. This caused an upheaval in traditional Hindu society. Dadaji, supported by Hindu orthodoxy, appealed against the decision. The appellate courts set aside the earlier judgment, but Rakhmabai stood firm on her decision. Ultimately an out-of-court settlement was arrived at.

The case brought to the surface the acute tension pertaining to social change and gender justice. The liberals and the elite, influenced by Western ideology and education, were pitted against the staunch Hindu traditionalists and the strong nationalists who did not mind social change but did not want it through the agency of alien rulers. The sharply divided views have contributed to surface whenever any step for reform is contemplated, as can be seen from the controversy on The Hindu Code Bill. The bill created a furor in Indian society to such an extent that it had to be taken up later by piecemeal legislation: The Hindu marriage Act, 1955; The Hindu Adoption and maintenance Act, 1956; The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956; and Hindu Succession Act, 1956.

The law proclaims all Hindu marriages monogamous and grants the aggrieved party- the wife and the family members- the right to initiate criminal proceedings against the husband if he takes another wife. But it is extremely difficult for a wife in a traditional Hindu society to go to court against her husband of her financial dependence, lack of education and information and social pressure. In reality, such progressive provisions do not go a long way to help the woman whose husband has taken another wife, because by and large courts take the stand that a marriage, to be declared void, has to be solemnized, which means all required ceremonies have to be performed. This provides a big window for offenders to make an easy escape as it is not easy to prove a marriage has been solemnized with proper ceremonies.

Another vexing issue concerning, marriage is that of age. There is an age condition (now, as amended in 1978, the minimum is 18 years for a girl and 21 for the boys), with other conditions such as no bigamy and no marriage within the prohibited degree of relationship. Now, marriage, below the prescribed age-limit but itself does not nullify the

marriage, though the party/parties to marriage may be subject to imprisonment and/ or fine for having violated the law. How can a minor, boy or girl, marrying below the prescribed age-limit be punished for violating the law? This is an issue which demands careful consideration. Very often the violation of the provision regarding the age of marriage is carried out on a large scale.

Hindu women have been given the right to divorce under the specified conditions: importance of the husband, desertion or cruelty. There is provision for divorce by mutual consent also. Liberal judgments go for a long way to alleviate suffering arising from irreconcilable differences in the marriage. Still, divorce is not easily acceptable, and a divorced woman has to face social and financial problems. So far as maintenance is concerned, it does not come in time or in adequate amount to her. Provisions pertaining to maintenance and custody of children also remain unsatisfactory.

Prior to the Hindu Succession Act, the property rights of women were limited. Now equal rights of inheritance are granted to sons and daughters, and the widow's limited estate is converted into absolute ownership. Remarriage of a widow does not divest her of her husband's property (as was the situation under the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act).

The Hindu Woman's right maintenance is recognized as a tangible right against property and the husband has a personal obligation to maintain his wife, and if her or his family has property, the female has a legal right to be maintained from that property.

Some liberal provisions and judgments, however, cannot erase the male-bias of the law. The Hindu Succession Act has retained the co-parcenary under the Mitakshara joint family system, which excludes women from the right to inherit and control joint family property. The property is owned by the father, his sons and their male descendants. On the death of any one of them, the remaining members continue to own the property. This provision had evoked strong arguments in favour and against this male bias, and is still being debated progressive elements. Five states have taken steps to make a dent in the situation. Kerala has totally abolished the Kerala joint family. Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Karnataka have also taken legislative steps to remove the discriminatory feature of the Mitakshara joint family.

16.4   The Muslim Personal law :

Two main schools of Muslim Law prevail in India: the Hanafi School governing Sunni Muslims, and the Ithna Ashar Shiite School governing Shia Muslims. The majority of Muslims in India belong to the Sunni Act, governed by the Hanafi school.

Marriage for Muslims is not a sacrament but a civil contract signed by a man and a woman. The consent of both parties is essential. The Muslim wife gets dower or Mehr, which is a sum payable to the wife by the husband in consideration of the marriage. The parties to the marriage can stipulate the terms and conditions of the marriage in the Nikahanama. In reality such Nikhanamas are one-sided, and the woman rarely knows its contents.

Muslim is discriminatory against women in matters of polygamy, divorce and a share in ancestral property. A Muslim man in India can marry up to four wives, though it is not so in many other Islamic countries. The most prevalent mode of divorce is three pronouncements by the husband of the words: "I divorce you".

The provision for maintenance to the Muslim divorced woman has been a concern for progressive elements not only among Muslims but among all segments of society. Provisions of maintenance to the divorced wife are limited to the period of iddat, which is usually three months, and if the wife is pregnant it continues until delivery. By and large, though, the courts have recognized the right of Muslim women, with other women, to claim maintenance under section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code for herself and her children.

The Shah Bano case, in this context, deserves a mention. The judgment in Mohd. Khan vs. Shah Bano and others (AIR 85 SC 945) attracted the attention of the nation and had an impact on national politics. It was held here that a divorced Muslim woman, so long as she has not remarried can claim maintenance under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code. There have been previous judgments along this line, still this judgment is a landmark. The judgment recognized the right of the divorced woman for maintenance and pointed out the need for a common civil code. This stirred the conservative elements among the Muslim society.

The then government bowed down to the pressure and the Muslim Women

(Protection of Rights of Divorce) Act was passed in 1986. This law has provided for maintenance of the wife during the iddat period. It further provides that if a divorced woman is nor remarried and is not able to maintain herself after the period of iddat, she can claim maintenance from such relatives who would be entitled to inherit her property on her death (first from her children then from her parents, then from other relatives)-and if no relative is able to pay such maintenance, then from the Wakf Board. This legislation was a rude shock to the progressive elements. The courts have, however, taken progressive stand in a few cases pertaining to maintenance even after this Act was passed.

Some inroads are being made by some progressive judgments so far as maintenance to the divorced wife and the welfare of her children are concerned. But the Supreme Court has, by and large, not taken up any step which may disturb the status quo in Muslim society. It had opportunities to strike down discriminatory provisions in Muslims in some cases.

Other Minorities' Personal law :

Women from minorities groups continue to suffer from discrimination: the Indian Christian marriage Act of 1872, which is more than a century old, remains operative even today. The changed atmosphere after the Government of India Act of 1935 did not bring forth initiatives to reform Christian Personal law. The Government in India also did not take any effective step in the direction in spite of the Reports of the Law Commission of India of 1960 and 1983.

Any attempt to make changes brings deeper issues to the surface. In the case of Mary Roy vs. State of Kerala and others (AIR 1986 SC 1011), it was declared that the Indian Succession Act, 1925, supersedes the Travancore Christian Succession Act, 1916./ Syrian Christian women now have equal share with their brothers in the property of their fathers while under the Travancore Christian Succession Act the daughter could take only one quarter of the share of the son, subject to a maximum of Rs. 5,000. The judgment removed the discrimination, but it could not raise the issue of inherent inequality.

Parsi also is not egalitarian for Parsi women. The rules under the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act (of 1865, amended in 1936) and the Indian Succession Act of 1925 applicable to the Paris do not claim to be based on Zoroastrianism. There were, however,

some efforts to bring about legal changes in matters regarding marriage and divorce.

The situation today is that such personal laws of the minorities continue to be operative, and the state does not want to touch them lest such efforts invoke unrest and upset the political balance. In the case of Hindu Women, the State has managed to get increased rights for Hindu women, but in the case of the personal laws of Muslims, Parsi and Christian women, the state has not intervened. This issue demands attention: women of the minorities face inequalities and this issue is tied up with the rights of the minorities, where most of the spokespersons remain men. The reluctance of the State to modify the religious personal laws of any community expect those of Hindu community exemplifies the conflict between the rights of minorities and rights of women of minority communities (Parashar: 1992).

16.5   II. WOMEN AND CIVIL CODE

Women and Law :

The disparities in our hierarchical Indian society are endemic, and they become more complex in the gender context. Women and men are paced in different hierarchies which grant them power and status based on their birth and relation to male members of the family. The discrimination felt by the women in India is sanctified by tradition and seldom challenged by the law. In fact, women have very feeble voice in the formation, implementation and interpretation of laws. The fundamental Rights as guaranteed by the Indian Constitution have not been able to ensure equality for women in all spheres, and the Directive Principles of State Policy have remained mere pious words. Personal laws based on religion and at present continuing under the cover of freedom of religion hold women's lives in their octopus like grip, controlling issues of marriage, divorce, guardianship, adoption, maintenance and property. It seems rather paradoxical in this context to state that in spite of the shortcomings of the legal system in India, it is the law which has been and is still expected to be effective as an instrument of social change, a strategy to be free women from shackles of inequality and subjugation. Our experience shows that the women's movement has been a vigilant critic of the patriarchal dimensions of the legal system, and yet it never hesitates to demand from the state legal interventions for the betterment of women's lives.

16.6   Gender Inequality in Law :

During the British periods, the general policy of non-intervention in social and religious matters perpetuated multiple systems and, by preventing normal adjustments to socio-economic changes, led to stagnation and hardening of differences between the various religious communities and within the male -females. The nineteenth century social reforms attempted some marginal adjustments arising from humanitarian considerations and social demands, their most significant achievement being the law against the practice of Sati. Such legislation however was not attempted 1857. With the strengthening of the National movement and the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi, a demand began to be put forward for bringing about major changes in law and for removing the legal inferiority of women and ending the discrimination against them in matters like marriages, divorce, inheritance, or guardianship of children which affected their life and personality. Reform of Hindu Law was thus initiated even before independence although, because of conservative resistance, it could not be given effect to during the 1950s in a piece-meal fashion.

The colonial rulers had in their own way made a distinction between personal and public spheres of life of the rules, and decided not to interfere as far as possible in the personal spheres, as it might ignite unrest. Laws governing such issues personal laws, having their origin in religions of different communities. With the passage of time, there remained little space for customs and usages, as the political expediency became the guiding principle for the colonial rulers. By the time India gained independence from English rule, the personal laws of different communities were labeled religious laws, but in some cases they were actually state enactments while in others the contents of the rules had undergone substantial changes.

16.7   Laws related to Marriage :

Secularization of law has always been a formidable struggle in India because of the pluralities and diversities found among various communities and the ineffectiveness of the rulers in dealing with them. Most of the laws enacted before independence indicates this reality. The Special marriage Act of 1872 provided an opportunity for Indians to contract a civil marriage. But the parties marrying under the Act had to declare that they had ceased to practice their religion. The Indian Succession of 1925 can be seen as a secular and pro-woman legislation was not further developed to evolve into a uniform civil

code (Agnes: 1992).

In 1930, many important enactments have been done. The Hindu Women's Right to Property Act of 1937; The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, and the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939. These Acts granted limited rights to women but did not question the fundamental gender inequality experienced by both Hindu and Muslim women.

The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, proclaims that all-Hindu marriages monogamous and grants the aggrieved party- the wife and the family members- the right to initiate criminal proceedings against the husband if he takes another wife. But it is extremely difficult for a wife in a traditional Hindu society to go to court against her husband because of her financial dependence, lack of education and information and social pressure, In reality, such progressive provisions do not go a long way to help the woman whose husbands has taken another wife, because by and large courts take the stand that a marriage, to be declared void, has to be solemnized, which means all required ceremonies have to be performed. Muslim law is discriminatory against women in matters of polygamy. Muslim in India can marry up to four wives, though it is not so in many other Islamic countries

The disastrous effects of child marriages persuaded social reformers to restrain them by legislation. The Child Marriage Act, 1978, fixed up the minimum age at marriage is 18 years for girls and 21 years for the boy. While penalizing the performance of child marriages is necessary, the benefit of such legislation is greatly offset by the fact that the marriage itself is held valid. It should be along term objective to amend this aspect of the law and to declare child marriages as legally void. Marriage below the prescribed age-limit by itself does not nullify the marriage, though the party to marriage may be subject to imprisonment and /or fine for having violated the law. How can a minor, boy or girl, marrying below the prescribed age-limit by punished for violating the law? This is an issue, which demands careful consideration. Very often the violation of the provision regarding the age of marriage is carried out on a large scale.

Compulsory registration of marriages as recommended by the U.N. will be an effective check on child and bigamous marriage, offer reliable proof of marriages and ensure legitimacy and inheritance of rights of children. Registration of marriages is

compulsory among Parsees and Christians and for all marriages performed under the Special marriage Act, 1954, Section 16 of this Act which permits registration of marriages celebrated under other laws has failed to evoke much response. It is therefore, necessary to introduce a system of compulsory registration for all marriages.

16.8   Dowry :

The custom of giving and receiving dowry is a deep-rooted, and often leads to the neglect of the girl's education, the impoverishment of her parents, and even the suicide of the girl. Condemned by social reformers and progressive elements, the system has continued to percolate to all levels, even to sections where it did not earlier prevail. Parliament had enacted the Dowry Prohibition Act in 1961, which was amended in 1984 and 1986. Now the offence of dowry is treated as cognizable and non-bailable, giving and taking dowry is prohibited, cruelty of others to the woman driving her to suicide is punished.

Unfortunately social conscience is still asleep as is evidenced by many cases of ill treatment of the girl by her in laws or her husband for failure to bring adequate dowry, which were reported to the police. The legal technicalities and loopholes in the laws, which delay the process, the reluctance of the woman and her parents/relatives in taking legal action and social prejudices, mar the very purpose of the progressive legislation. The parents often do not want their married daughters to return to parental homes. So they fulfill the dowry demands instead of devising strategies for dignified life of the daughter. Helpless and humiliated, women either resort to suicide or get burn in their homes. Although the court condemns the practice of dowry, its approach merely accepts the patrilocal assumptions of dominant familial ideology whereby brides are seen to be transferred from their natal families to their marital families (Kapur and Cossman: 1993).

16.9   Divorce :

Hindu women have been given the right to divorce under the specified conditions: importance of the husband; desertion or cruelty. There is a provision for divorce by mutual consent also. Liberal judgments go a long way to alleviate suffering arising from irreconcilable differences in the marriage. Still, divorce is not easily acceptable, and a divorced woman has to face social and financial problems. So far as maintenance is

225

concerned, it does not come in time or inadequate amount to her. Provisions pertaining to maintenance and custody of children also remain unsatisfactory.

16.10 Adoption and Guardianship of Children :

The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956, upholds the superior right of the father and makes him the first (the mother being the second) natural guardian for boys and unmarried girls. The father has however, lost his previous right to deprive the mother by appointing a testamentary guardian. The prior right of the mother is 'ordinarily' recognized only to custody of children below five years of age. She has also a better claim than the father in the case of illegitimate children does. The Act also directs that, in deciding guardianship, courts must take the 'welfare of the child' as a paramount consideration.

16.11 Inheritance :

Pre-Independence India had several systems of succession among Hindus, in most of which the position of women was one of dependence with barely any proprietary rights. Even where they enjoyed some rights, they had only a life interest and full ownership. The Hindus succession Act, 1956 has given equal right of succession between and female heirs in the same category (brother and sister, son and daughter). But this act has remained a notional one only as they are so conditioned that they do not oppose the only share of their brothers. But in the absence of social security, and adequate opportunities for employment, right of inheritance in property financial security and prevent destitution to women. While it is true that property is benefiting only limited women, therefore gender inequality is persisting. Some liberal provisions however cannot erase the male-bias of the law. The Hindu Succession Act has retained the co-parcenary under the Mitakshara joint family system, which excludes women from the right to inherit and control joint family property. The property is owned by the father, his sons and their male descendants. On the death of any one of them, the remaining members continue to own the property. This provision had evoked strong arguments in favour and against this male bias, and is still being debated by progressive elements. Five states have taken steps to make a dent in the situation. Kerala has totally abolished the Kerala joint family. Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharshtra and Karnataka have also taken legislative steps to remove the discriminatory feature of the Mitakshara joint family.

Furthermore, Woman's Right to maintenance is recognized as a tangible right against

property and the husband has a personal obligation to maintain his wife, and if he or his family has property, the female has a legal right to be maintained from that property.

Finally, it may be viewed that granting fundamental rights and passing progressive laws have not paved the way for an egalitarian society. Even now, after so many years of independence, women suffer inequality, domination and exploitation. While the constitution of India lays down the norm of the family as equalitarian, the conjugal and nuclear family of husband and wife who have entered into wedlock of their choice; the numerous acts, particularly dealing with personal laws, given legal validity to various, diverse and contradictory patterns of family types to various religious communities. These pertaining to personal laws permit patriarchal, monogamous, bigamous families which not only shape different structures of families but also provide diversity and contradictions in the rights and obligations of various members within the family, as well as differentiation with regard to succession, descent, inheritance, and other aspects of family.

It is not easy to align the legal machinery to the pace of social change. The Directive Principles of the State Policy remain ideals; and archaic acts remain operative. The woman is still viewed more as an embodiment of virtue and sacrifice than as a citizen, equal to man, and a partner in the process of development. Such evils as bigamy, dowry, etc. have not ended yet. Crimes against women are not decreasing. Moreover, the legal process is cumbersome and expensive.

16.12 REFERENCES :

Women and Personal Laws

Agnes, Flavia (1992), "Protecting women against violence? Review of a decade of Legislation, 1980-89", Economic and Political Weekly, XXVII, No.17, 25 April.

Parashar, Archana (1992), Women and family Law Reform in India, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Desai, Neera and Usha Thakkar (2001), Women in Indian Society, New Delhi: national Book Trust India.

Women and Civil Code

Ahuja, Ram (1992), Rights of Women: A Feminist Perspective, New Delhi: Rawat Publications.

Batliwala, Sarita (1993), Empowerment of Women in South Asia: Concepts and Practices, sponsored by Asian-South Pacific Bureau of Adult education and FAO's Freedom From Hunger Campaign, Action for Development, New Delhi.

Country Report (1955), Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, New Delhi: Government of India.

Forum for democratic Reforms (2000), "Enhancing Women's representations in Legislatures", Manushi, No.116, January-February.

Kaushik, Sushila (2000), Women and Political Participation, a paper written for Sarla Goplan and Mira Shiva eds. National Profile on Women, Health and Development: Country Profile- India. Voluntary health Association of India and World Health Organization, New Delhi.

Listen to Women's Vote an Indo-British Interaction (1988), jointly presented by the National Commission for Women and the British Council, New Delhi.

Stephen, Cynthia (1998), "Women in Governance- Trends and Challenges", Integral Liberation, Vol.2, No.4, December, Banglore Social Action Trust, Banglore.

Towards Equality (1974), The Report of the Committee on Status of Women, New Delhi: Government of India.

Desai, Neera and Usha Thakkar (2000), Women in Indian Society, India: National Book Trust.

Status of Women in India (1988), A Synopsis of the Report of the National Committee on the Status of Women (1971-74), New Delhi: ICSSR.

Agnes, Flavia (1995), State, Gender and the Rhetoric of Law Reform, Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University, Mumbai.

Deasi, A.R. (1980), Urban family and Family Planning in India, Bombay: Popular Prakashan.

228

Kapur, Ratna and Brenda Cossman (1993), "On Women, Equality and the Constitution: Through the Looking Glass of Feminism", National Law School Journal.

Parashar, Archana (1992), Women and Family Law Reform in India, New Delhi: Sage Publication.

Sathe, S.P. (1993), Towards Gender Justice, Research Centre for Women's Studies, Mumbai: SNDT Women's University.

****

EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

17.0   STRUCTURE

17.1   Empowerment and Development

17.2   Concept of Development

17.3   Defining Empowerment

17.4   Philosophy and Structure of the Empowerment and Development Programmes

17.5   Women Development and Empowerment

17.6   Approaches of Development

17.7   Need for Women Empowerment

17.8   Women and Development

17.9   Family Planning and Birth Control

17.10   References

17.1   Empowerment and Development

Context of Development :

    The right to development is a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights. The human person, thus, naturally becomes the central subjects of development. The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet the

population, development and environment. This is a need of present and future generations.

All human beings are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. They have the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing, housing, water and sanitation. Countries should ensure that all individuals are given the right to opportunity to make the most of their potential. UNDP's Human Development Reports (HDRs) released since 1990 have repeatedly pointed out that people are the real wealth of a nation. Human progress is not about income expansion and accelerating commodity production, but about expanding human capabilities.

17.2   Concept of Development :

Development is defined by the HDRs as a process of enlarging people's choices. Such choices tend to be very wide-ranging with some very basic one like the option to stay healthy, acquire knowledge and so on, to greater social, economic and political freedom, including the opportunities to be creative and productive and enjoy personal self-respect and be assured of human rights. At all levels of development, however, especially from a viewpoint of poverty and inequality, three of the most essential choices are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. The Human Development Index (HDI) which the HRDs present annually reflects the levels of achievements of different countries on these three important dimensions of human development. By ranking countries of the world, the HDI shows how far a country has to travel in order to provide these three essential choices to its entire people. It implies that neglecting half the population can in no way lead to human development and development of any country as a whole.

17.3   Defining Empowerment :

Oppression of women, among other things, is located in age-old power-based gender relations in family, community and society. Empowering women actually meant strengthening them to confront family, community, caste, religious and traditional forces, against patriarchal forces and biases working within governmental departments and powerful patriarchal interests which get support from Governmental structures and agencies. The process of such a change required struggling against inefficiencies, insensitivity, corruption and centralization at various

government levels too. Attitudinal changes which the programme aimed at required confronting Government officials and departments, exposing inadequacies of state laws, their weak implementation and asking for new laws and rights in areas where they did not exist. For achieving of the objectives for empowerment of women, decentralization of structures, flexibility of agenda, participation of women at grass root level and importantly voluntarism are stressed.

Education and training interventions are considered to be one of the most appropriate and potentially effective tools for the empowerment of rural women combined with effective linkages with other support services and activities. The principle aim is to empower women through communication of information, education and training and to enable them to recognize and improve their social and economic status. The Indo-Dutch Mission, which came out with a background paper on Mahila Samakhya Programme, observed that "empowerment in the Indian context meant the development of women's capacity to make informed choices and expansion of their capacity to manage their domestic and economic empowerment.

However, the very process of 'empowerment' was bound to create conflicts- conflicts with family members, community, caste and religious interests groups, entrenched patriarchal interests due to challenge to oppressive customs and practices on issues of development and rights, with class interests. But what is even more important is that fundamental question relating to women's needs and requirements are not asked while planning development interventions for women. Various programmes and projects are not intended to bring any structural changes in society and economy to the benefits of women. The tendency is to view development as a merely economic process, disregarding social aspects. The problem is that planners are reluctant to recognize the diversity of women's experiences and the conflicting and sometimes contradictory nature of the interests of the women they are planning for. There is a need to understand that in addition to gender, class, caste, age, etc. are other important factors that influence their lives. Interests based on these diverse aspects may contradict each other or may strengthen or alleviate the relations of oppression in which they live... Their impact may be felt differently at different times of phases of life. This means that there is not one way of understanding women's needs and beyond the basic physical requirements of food, clothing and housing, there is a need to objectively and empirically assess the women's interests.

232

The empowerment approach related to three things: exposing the oppressive nature of gender-relations, critically challenging them and creatively trying to shape different social relations with the active participation of women (Arya: 2000). Thus, the new approach extended the meaning of concept of development to include, among other tangible benefits, bringing changes in social attitudes which obstruct the realization of empowerment of deprived sections of women, through their own active participation. Women could be empowered through education, information sharing and training so that they realize their collective strength. Thus, two concepts that are involved in this approach are: participation and empowerment. Participation is empowering became an accepted notion by 1985. This meant that empowerment of women necessitated a strong element of participation, which would enable them to acquire social, economic and political equality.

17.4 Philosophy and Structure of the Empowerment and Development Programmes :

The philosophy and assumptions behind the programmes and the new approach of development and empowerment were based on a newer understanding of women's situation. The earlier programmes had emphasized on the economic upliftment of women by providing training, skills and loans, so that they could be economically independent, which did not take onto account other aspects of their lives which keep them subordinate and oppressed.

Thus, The Women's development Project proposal noted, "It does not require much sensitivity to realize the apathy and injustice to which women are subjected. They have to learn the harsh facts of life without opportunity for schooling. They work without being recognized as workers and throughout life they are expected to follow the commands of men- the father, the husband and the son" (WDP:1985). Similarly, the Awareness Generation Programme recognized that women's participation in the various processes of development has not been forthcoming on account of the social biases, cultural strains and the exploitative and oppressive attitudes towards them, which confine them to their little world.

Mahila Samakhya's analysis of women's situation stated, "women are caught in a vicious circle, where not being able to educate themselves. This creates the feeling that education is irrelevant to them. Daily struggles for food, fuel, water, fodder , childbirth and child rearing saps all the energy. Their social interactions are determined by cultural traditions, taboos and superstitions. Their social and family roles are well defined and they are

233

socially and physically oppressed. They do not have access to information. They are alienated from the decision-making process. This relates to the Government programmes as passive recipients. Since they do not have information about their rights, they view their environment with suspicion and fear. All these factors reinforce a low self-image, so that women are ultimately trapped in their week perception of themselves and in the way society perceives them (Mahila Samakhya Report: 1990). This programme was to change the basic conditions of women's loves. This, it was suggested, would come only when a change in women's perspectives about themselves and their perception of society in regard to women's traditional roles is brought about. The realization that 'development is a notion that demands a qualitative shift in the attitudes of the people involved, meant that the programme has to emphasize on generating experiences which facilitate alternate perception of the self-image as well as social image of women. It was, therefore, emphasized that there is a need to shift the focus from hygiene, nutrition, child development', to training programmes that were expected to create a climate of questioning, reflecting, sharing, choosing, seeking and discovering- through listening and talking.

17.5   Women Development and Empowerment :

Future of development and society lies in the future of women, equally with men. Never has it been more apparent that women's issues cannot be compartmentalized and isolated as secondary issues in development. One more stark reality is that women not only form a major section of the society but also hold greater responsibilities than men towards many facets of life. Moreover, they directly related with those factors of population change which affect the quality of life. Age at marriage, child-bearing, gender-discrimination, health and nutrition, fertility and mortality (infant and female), economic profile, housing, education, religion, sexual-behaviour, migration, employment, politics, social and cultural life, environmental consciousness and several other facets of life directly involve women. Therefore, it is the women who matter because if one woman is empowered through education, health and information, then whole family benefits and these benefits are spread over the whole society automatically. In this way, the overall process of development is eased out and accelerated. Thus, empowerment of women is a part of Human Resourced development (HRD) and cannot be treated independently and the two must necessarily go in tandem for the achievement of sustainable development. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of their political, social, economic and health

status is a highly important end, in itself, particularly in the developing nations. Instead, the issue of women had to be given priority to bring them at par with men as they have been exploited and ignored for long time.

The HDR 1995 draws attention to the persistence of severe gender disparities in human development. The central message of the report is that human development is not engendered, is endangered. The HRD, 1995 shows that the GDI for India is 0.401 and it ranks 99 out of 130 countries in the world for which the GDI has been calculated. Such low levels of human development and gender inequalities for such large population are indeed a sad reflection of the poor state of social progress in the country.

17.6   Approaches of Development :

There can be two major approaches to women's development:

1.   Governmental
2.   Non-governmental

The voluntary organization approach can further have involvement of voluntary organization and local people. In India, both the approaches are being used in the development of women.

1.   Government Programmes for Women :

Government programmes for women's development began as early as 1954 in India. Although the beginning was made in 1954, the actual participation of women in the mainstream economic activities began only in 1974 with the report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India. In the seventies, the government dealt with women's issues as part of the wider category of poverty alleviation. In the eighties, the realization came that women are not just a segment but the core of India's poor. This brought to the forefront the need for special programmes for women as a top priority. Such initiatives include:

• National Commission of Self-Employed Women and Women in the Informal sector.

• Formulation of National perspective Plan for Women (NAPPW).

• Support to Employment Programmed for Women (STEP).

- Pilot Mahila Samakhya Programme: Women's access to information and participation in development in ten districts of Gujarat, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh.

- Network of State Level Women's Development Corporations.

- Women's credit Fund.

Besides, the Government of India has several schemes for women of which some are women specific. In 1985, the Government of India constituted a separate department in the Ministry of Human resource development for the development of women and children. During the Sixth and Seventh Plan periods, a number of programmes were envisaged to provide employment and income generation, education, training, support services, general awareness and legal support. They are:

- Women's Development Corporation (WDCs).

- Support to Training and Employment Programme (STE).

- Training-cum-production centres for Women.

- Awareness generation camps for rural and Poor Women.

- Women's training Centres or Institutes for rehabilitation of Women's in distress.

- Voluntary Action Bureau and family Counseling Centres.

- Short stay Homes for Women and Girls.

- Free legal and Para-Legal training.

- Working Women's Hostel.

In the same line, the state governments too resorted to several women development programmes. The Haryana government started "our Daughter Our Wealth Scheme" for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe girls from 1994, "Kalpvriksha Yojna" in Madhya Pradesh etc.

2. **Non-Governmental Organizations for Women :**

In the eighties, an increasing role was played by the non-governmental organizations in women's development programme. They helped in forming grass roots women's organizations like *mahila mandals* and Development of Women and Children in Rural

236

Areas (DWACRA). The DWACRA was started on 1st September 1982. This programme aimed at providing employment opportunities to the women of rural families living below poverty line. Later on, a National Women's Fund was established in 1992-93 to enable women to raise loans. Along with this, Women Prosperity Plan was started on 2nd October, 1993 to provide economic security to women and develop habit of saving in them. However, despite these rigorous efforts, Indian women are still facing severe developmental problems.

17.7 Need For Women Empowerment :

To evaluate the status of women, we have to take an overall view of the development process. But to make it more pin-pointed, the women's development must be viewed in different sectors such as health, family planning, nutrition, education, employment etc.

Demographic Profile :

Gender Imbalances (Sex Ratio) :

The sex-ratio in India is not favorable to women and it is continuously falling down. In 1951, it was 946 and in 1991 it has come down to 927. It is because sex-ratio at birth is becoming more favourable to males than what it was in the past. Lot of female feticide has resulted in the imbalance of sex-ratio. The female child is also neglected after birth therefore; the differential is also there in female infant mortality rate.

Maternal Mortality :

Notwithstanding the sizable expansion in health facilitates in the country, particularly in the post-independence period, the maternal mortality rate continued to him high due to lack of proper care, lack of clean and scientific delivery methods. Only one quarter of deliveries in India take place in the medical institutions and two-thirds unattended by a trained medical professional. Utilization of antenatal care and delivery services are low.

Marital Status :

Marital status should be seen from the point of view of fertility trends in the proportion of persons (especially females) who marry at a young age. Marriage at very young ages has been declining, but still it is very high.

Educational level :

The high incidence of illiteracy among females constitutes one of the greatest barriers to their development. It limits their scope of employment, training, utilization of health facilities and exercise of legal and constitutional rights. The all India female literacy rate according to the 1991 Census is 39.3 per cent against 64.1 per cent for males.

Migration :

Women's plight is further affected by migration which it often thrust upon them by a host of social and cultural factors. The incidence of migration among the females within the country is far greater than among the males. According to the 1981 Census, out of the total of 201.8 million migrants in India, the number of female migrants was as high as 141.8 million.

Economic Profile :

Poor women are invariably involved in economic activities, but they are invisible workers. On the basis of their employment status, these are main group of workers: (a) self-employed; (b) wage earners (agricultural workers, construction workers, contract and sub-contract workers etc.); and (c) unpaid family helpers.

The women's personal contribution gets merged with the family and becomes invisible. Even where she gets wages which are generally low, she is at best seen as providing supplementary income to the family. The reality is that the quantitative contribution of poor females is not highly significant, but the qualitative contribution is also of immense value to their families. Unlike the males, who spend a portion of their earning on themselves? The poor female workers hardly spend anything on themselves. Their entire earnings are spent on the upbringing and the betterment of their family members. Despite the fact that much of the female labour remains uncounted, it cannot be denied that by and large, majority of the female workers belong to the unprotected, self-employed and unorganized sector, where earnings are extremely low. It is therefore, no wonder that in India, the contribution of females, in the national income works out to be barely 10 to 15 per cent.

Health Care and Nutrition :

The heavy manual labour performed by women, the shocking working and living

conditions, malnutrition, repeated pregnancies, the poor quality of health services and even more poor accessibility of women to them, lack of maternity benefits in the unorganized sector take a heavy toll of the health of the women. Women also suffer from occupational hazard. Besides, reproductive health problems create specific health problems for women. Children suffer from lack of primary health care, malnutrition, overcrowding, unhygienic conditions of living, lack of opportunities for education, neglect and lack of attention, especially in poor families. An often invisible victim is the young girl in the family, who assist her mother in housework, in economic activities and in the care for younger children. Ignorance of mothers about immunization, treatments of acute respiratory infection, fever, and diarrohea, etc. are the main cause behind child mortality and morbidity.

Women are responsible for kitchen work and lack of knowledge about nutritious value of food and cleanliness is responsible for malnutrition and ill health of the family. Including of food products with minimal nutritious food value in the diet and improper ways of cooking are the result of ignorance amongst women. Under-nutrition is considerably higher among women.

Political Profile :

For a very long time, women hardly have a representation in the village panchayats, or cooperatives etc. But now women have 33 per cent reservation in panchyat bodies. Still women, even those in powers have miles to go, Not only are women rarely found on the political scene, their awareness about political parties and political rights, etc., too is very depressing.

17.8 Women and Development :

One vision of those different paths sees women having a key role in development. Scholars and development organizations now see improving the status of women both as an end in itself and also as one of the most significant means of reducing rapid population growth and improving the life chances of poor children.

The first two decades of development efforts, 1950 to 1970, gave scarcely any consider to gender issues. Women were largely invisible, both as actors in and potential beneficiaries (or victims) of the development process. Ester Boserup's path breaking 1970 book, ***Women Role in Economic Development,*** was the first work on the

development to highlight women, and it came as something of an academic bolt of lightening. Boserup pointed out those women in less-developed countries make vital contributions not only in the domestic sphere of reproduction but also in economic production.

In retrospect, Boserup's findings seems obvious, but at the time the official economic statistics of countries around the world consistently under-estimated women's non-domestic work. For example, Egypt's national statistics for 1970 listed only 3.6 per cent of the agricultural work force as female. In-depth studies revealed quite a different picture. Half of women participated in plowing and leveling land, and three-quarters participated in dairy and poultry production. A 1972 Census in Peru registered only 2.6 per cent of the agricultural work force as female, whereas an interview study found 86 per cent of women participating in field work.

Bosreup's survey found that, although there is substantial variations by region and by level of agricultural intensity, women do as much work in agriculture as men, if not more. The kinds of agricultural work women and men perform do differ. However, men tend to be more involved in the mechanized and animal-assisted aspects of production, as ploughing, and women tend to be more involved with hand operations, such as sowing seed and hoeing weeds. Contrary to stereotypes about the greater physical capabilities of men, women in fact do the bulk of the world's physical work.

Development efforts, however, were ignoring the implications of developmental policies for the kind of work women do and for women's status. In many rural regions in less-developed countries, particularly in Africa women collect the bulk of fuel wood essential for cooking food- another activity dominated by women. Development policies stressing exports encouraged poor countries to convert forest lands to timber and crop production, taking little notice of their importance as a source of fuel wood. Women soon found themselves walking miles and miles each day to gather projects emphasized men's work, underestimated the agricultural contributions of women and almost completely ignored domestic work, seeing it as outside the money economy and therefore not really an economic activity at all.

The status of women in households and communities, as well as in politics and the economy, was not seen as a development issue at the time Boserup wrote. In the years afterward, however, issues of women's status and gender relations came closer to the

center of the development debate. Scholars came to recognize that women were disproportionately represented in the ranks of the poor. Moreover, while women tended to live longer than men in the developed worked, their longevity lagged considerably men's in the less-developed countries. The United Nations proclaimed 1976 to 1985 the Decade for Women, and now few development projects go ahead without some explicit attention to women, albeit often cursory.

One reason why "Women in Development" (or WID, as it is often called by development specialists) has captured so much interest in increasing recognition of the importance of women in population issues. Demographic studies find that the status of women, measured through their education and participation in the paid economy, is the most consistent factor in fertility reduction. Women frequently want to reduce fertility rates, sometimes in contrast to their male sexual partners. When men come to see women as economic equals, they tend to see them more as social equals as well, and women gain more say in family planning and other family decisions. Education gives women, as well as men. A broader understanding of possibilities needs to erode fatalism and building a sense of empowerment. The greater economic standing of women in paid work in an increasingly monetized world as means that childbirth and child care become more of an economic burden than an economic opportunity for families. As opposed to general economic development of the structural adjustment and modernization variety, improving women's standing may be one of the principal paths to a demographic transition for less-developed countries.

Some feminist critics are suspicious of this approach to development, which seems to view improving women's status as a means to the end of population stabilization, not as a moral end in itself. The emphasis should be on ending patriarchy, not on furthering women's economic development, argues Sylvia Walby. Patriarchy is a system of social organization in which women consistently receive lower status and less social power than men - a system which, most scholars agree, still characterizes virtually all human societies. Emphasizing women's economic development may be putting the cart before the horse.

Part of the reason for this doubt about women's economic development is the tendency to relegate women to lower-paid work. As less-developed countries have tried to build their exports in order to reduce debt and comply with structural adjustment plans, they

241

have promoted cheap factory work' generally performed by women. As Valentine Moghadam has put it, women are the 'new proletariat worldwide'.

There is considerable controversy among feminist scholars about this phenomenon, often termed the *feminization of labour.* Does it represent the continued subordination of women in a new form, or does it represent an opportunity for poor women to gain a better life for themselves and their families through one of the few means available to them? Is it empowerment or continued disempowerment?.

The improving women's status is not simply a means to population stabilization and increased exports. However, it may be seen by the governments and development agencies involved, improved status is good for both women and their families. If nothing else, reproduction should be seen as a women's health issue. Half a million women die each year from pregnancy-related causes- some 200,000 through unsafe and illegal abortions and others through childbirth, post-birth infections and other illnesses; 90 per cent of these deaths occur in less-developed countries. Better women's health also means better health for their children.

The persistence of patriarchy, despite improvements in women's health and economic and social status, seems undeniable. Eliminating patriarchal social relations is ultimately the only way to achieve equal status for women. But the fact that attention is finally being given to women in development (although perhaps not yet with sufficient sensitivity and commitment) should not been seen merely as a patriarchal ploy. Rather, it may be a sign that the world is beginning to acknowledge that improving the status of women is good not only for women. It is good for every one.

17.9 Family Planning and Birth Control :

Another controversial aspect of population is the use of birth control in family planning. The controversy stems partly from the coercive way that birth control has been applied in some instances, partly from moral judgments concerning some forms of birth control, and partly from questions about the significance of birth control technologies in reducing fertility.

India's National Population Policy of 1976 emphasized sterilization- as well as health care, nutrition, and education for girls. Sterilization plans went quickly ahead, but the other aspects of the policy were more long-term and were basically ignored. Most Indian states set bureaucratic quotas to monitor the 'performance' as it was called, of the policy. The

242

way it was implemented in coercive manner, that was not appreciated.

Instances such as this, or such as the sterilization of Native Americans that was carried out on some US reservations, are intolerable. They can also lead people, in anger and suspicion, to associate all advocacy for population control with oppression. A number of critics have been the concern about population as part of, to quote one another, a "racist eugenic and patriarchal tradition"- the fears of the rich and white about a rising darker-skinned horde, as well as an effort to control women's bodies. Critics have had particular concern about the single-minded attention that some Malthusians have given to birth control as a means for reducing population growth, given that most contemporary population growth is outside the West.

Paul and Anne Ehrlich's 1990 book, *The Population Explosion,* may be a case in point. They predicted that, "the population explosion will come to an end before very long. The only remaining question is whether it will be halted through the human method of birth control, or by nature wiping out the surplus". There is nothing explicitly, and perhaps not even implicitly, racist about such a statement. Nevertheless, critics have argued that placing all the emphasis on birth control as a solution to population growth leaves intact the social inequality that is primarily cause of growth. Whenever the intent of the Ehrlich's position (and believe the Ehrlich's are in fact strongly committed to social equality), critics suggest that the effect would be the continuance of social inequality of race, class, and gender.

But just because racism, classism, and sexism have been a dimension of some birth control policies, and possibly some theories, this does not mean that birth control is necessarily racist, or sexist. Indeed, preventing people from controlling births can be just as racist, classiest, and sexist as any ill-conceived birth control policy. Reproduction is a basic human right. But so too is the right not to reproduce. Most couples around the world voluntarily seek to control and regulate- to plan- their reproduction. Limiting their ability to do so can be coercive too.

One example of a policy of coerced reproduction took place in the late 1960s in Romania under the regime of Nicolae Ceausescu, one of the most iron-fisted dictators of the twentieth century. In 1966, Ceausescu suddenly declared any form of birth control, as well as abortion, illegal. Women had to undergo gynecological examinations carry three months to determine if they were complying with the new law. As a result, birth rates

243

doubled, at least initially.

Maternal mortality doubled too, with about 85 per cent of these deaths due to botched abortions, illegally performed. Women across Romania also began avoiding gynecologists as much as possible, skipping appointments and failing to sign up for them, even for routine gynecological check-ups. The result is that Romania now suffers from Europe's highest rate of death due to cervical cancer. Infant mortality also went up considerably (by one third) as parents neglected, abused, and even abandoned unwanted babies.

Granting a right to control and plan births is not the same as approving of all forms of birth control and all national birth control policies. There is certainly extensive disagreement on the mortality of some forms of birth control, particularly abortion. But one can disapprove of abortion and still support other means of controlling births.

The question remains, though, whether modern birth control technologies are effective means of reducing population growth. In detailed historical studies scholars have noted that, at least in the European demographic transition, fertility decline generally began before modern birth control technologies were widely available. Indeed, in some places fertility declined even before industrialization began.

The point is, there is nothing new about family planning. People have been using, and continue to use, many family planning techniques other than the Pill, the diaphragm, the condom, the sponge, and other modern birth control technologies. Practices such as late marriage, extended nursing, abstinence, rhythm, withdrawal and polyandry, among others, can be and have been effective forms of family planning.

But no doubt modern methods can be more effective, which is one of the main reasons why so many couples across the world choose them, when they are available. The commitment to plan births is absolutely essential to the success of any family planning practice, however. If social conditions are such that people are unable to unwillingly to make such a commitment, no technique can be effective. In other words, birth control and greater social equality can be complementary, rather than contradictory, social policies.

17.10 REFERENCES :

Arya, Sadhna (2000), *Women, Gender Equality and the State,* New Delhi:

Deep and Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd.

Banerjee, N.K. (1985), "Grassroots Empowerment (1975-90): A Discussion Paper", *Centre for Women's Development Studies,* New Delhi.

Jain, Sharda (1986), *Exploring Possibilities,*

Government of Rajasthan (1984),*Women's Development Project,* Department of Rural Development of the Education for Women's Equality Programme.

Mahila Samakhya- Education for Women's Equality, Karnataka Progress Report, 1989-90

Government of India (1993), *Mahila Samakhya,* National Evaluation Report, New Delhi: Ministry of Human Resource Development.

The promotion of birth control has come serious black marks on its records. One of the worst was India's National Population Policy of 1976 India's National Population Policy of 1976, initiated during the eighteenth-month period between June 1975 and January 1977, when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ruled as a dictator. Prime Minister Gandhi had been found guilty of election fraud, and in order to hold on to power she declared a national state of emergency. The press was censored, dissidents jailed, civil liberties curtailed. In this climate of extreme state control, the government put forth the National Population Policy under the direction of Mrs. Gandhi's son, Sanjay Gandhi.

Although people were paid for being sterilized there was much coercive abuse as governmental officials in this strikingly undemocratic period in India's history struggled to meet their quotas. Near the capital, Delhi, the government set up vasectomy booths. People were harassed, threatened, and bribed. In about six months, some 8 million sterilizations were performed, mainly on the poor, who were often targeted by the programme as well. Hundreds died in the riots that broke out in protest, as well as through infections caused by the sterilization procedures. When Mrs. Gandhi finally lifted the national state of emergency, the programme was quickly dropped.

****

WOMEN AND ECOLOGY

18.0   STRUCTURE

18.1   Women and Ecology

Ecology :

Ecology is the study of interrelation between organisms and their environment. It is viewed as an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary field of science, which systematically draws knowledge from many disciplines like genetics, anthropology, sociology etc. As sociologists we are interested in the inter-relationship between human beings and their environment. By environment, here we mean the natural environment including forests, rivers, lakes, seas, mountain, plants etc.

Human being has always had a dynamic interaction with the environment. As sociologists, we are interested in the interrelationship between human beings and their environment. By environment, here we mean the natural environment, including forests, rivers, seas, mountains, plants etc. The interaction between human being and environment has been reciprocal. Four factors in the environment have been crucial in the process of interaction. The factors are: climate, land and soil configuration, specific location i.e. in a desert, wooded or water logged area and natural resources including forests mining deposits and so on. These four factors have had a deep effect on human societies. The culture of a society, to a great extent reflects the profound impact on environment, human thought and behaviour, occupation, food, clothing, shelter, religion, arts, morals, ideas etc. At the same time, human beings have also made a deep impact on their natural environment. The culture of a society, specially the quantity and a quality of technology, has affected many elements in the environment?

In the process of industrialization technology is advanced which have been affecting the interaction between human beings and their environment. All the elements of nature like air, water, forests, rivers, plants etc. have been affected by the quantity of technology used. Consequently, it created problems for human beings by creating pollution in the environment. The new governmental Plans and policies have destroyed the equilibrium between nature and society. Common people have started feelings of totally uprooted and alienated when their source of economic, social, moral, physical and mental well being is altered by the introduction of new technology and development.

The environment in general is "Mother Nature". We speak of abuse of the environment as "raping the land", and we speak of civilization as the "conquest of nature".

The sex of the environment in these examples, sometimes implied, sometimes overtly stated, is female. In the light of the violence of some of the imagery- the "breaking", "cleaning", "rape", and "conquest" of female nature- these are disturbing metaphors. They suggest, along with a range of other evidence, that there is an ideological link between the domination of nature and the domination of women. If patriarchal ideas pervade our thinking about society, then they likely influence our thinking about the environment as well as for we use the same mind, the same culture, to understand both.

18.2   Women and Environment :

Women in India are an integral and intimate part of nature, in tradition and in practice in rural life. As Vandana Shiva states, "At one level nature is symbolized as the embodiment of the feminine principle and at another, she is nurtured by the feminine to produce life and provide substance." Nature (prakriti) is an expression of energy (Shakti) which is the feminine expression of creative principle of cosmos. Prakriti is a popular symbol and through it the ordinary woman in rural India relates herself to nature.

A familiar and homely illustration may be given here, Basil (Tulsi)- the small sacred plant- is daily worshipped in rural household (and to some extent, in the backyard or in earthen pots in the houses in urban areas), which is a daily chore within Indian culture. Tulsi is sacred as a plant with beneficial and medicinal property and is considered as Vrindavan- the symbol of cosmos. With her daily watering and lighting a lamp before it for worship, a woman reflects the relationship of her home with the cosmos and the nature. The West views nature in the framework of the dichotomy between man and woman, and person and nature. In Indian cosmological view, the concept of purusha and prakriti, person and nature are a duality in unity. There is a conceptual continuum between man, woman and nature. As perceived stated by Shiva:" the rupture within nature and between man and nature, and as associated transformation from a life force that sustains to an exploitable resource characterizes the Cartesian (western technicist) view, which displaced more ecological worldviews and created a development paradigm, which cripples nature and women simultaneously." Such a worldview has facilitated the humanization of nature, and naturalization of the society. Woman has traditionally substantively contributed to the agricultural operations like sowing, weeding and harvesting and looking after the domestic animals and milching of cows. Women are is also a sort of silviculturalist and manager of water resources. Their ecological knowledge has been age-old, and a traditional storehouse

248

of general experience. Such a role has made them appreciative of the generosity of Mother Nature and the diversity of natural ecosystem. When such a nature is plundered and the Mother Earth is raped, it is no wonder that the Indian women rise to lead ecological struggles expressing their concern about hardship being caused to them by scarcity of water, fuel wood, fodder, and fibbers which the caring nature, otherwise bestows on their family. Politics of scarcity is thus the function of ecological scarcity.

Women are partners with men in the traditional agriculture. Such a role has put them in contact with nature. Women use water for human survival without causing disturbances to the water cycle. They assure the retention of water and fertility of soil by using organic matter like cow-dung; women and peasants traditionally used such organic matter. But during the last three decades, chemicals and "masculine science" and industry increasingly replace such a work. Women's work is conserving water is in the process diminished.

In regions like Gujarat and Karnataka, commercial plantations, bandied about as success story of afforestation programs, have actually become symbol of depletion of soil moisture and aridization of land. These are also regions, which have been exposed to frequent, and wide ranging water scarcity and even famine. Such an experience has led to a movement against Nilgiries eucalyptus cultivation for water conservation. Clearly women and peasants of the affected villages see the link between vegetation and water. It may be those Cartesian, reductionist policy maker see trees as producing only commercial wood, not water. But women and peasants in the ecology movements view trees and wells as producing water. It is women who daily participate in the water cycle and provide water to their families, and play a crucial role in the detention of the encroachers in the forests like the contractors who, in league with the forest officials, flout the denude the forests. Women have been the eyes and ears of the village and forest communities and hands and hearts of the Eco-struggles. Women and tribal by the very nature of their work have intimate knowledge of nature.

Women are in better conditions where vulnerability on the three counts- gender, poverty and environment- taken together is relatively low, as in parts of southern and northeastern India. Their vulnerability is highest on three counts in parts of eastern India and so also they are worst off in this area. Involving women in the protection, promotion and regeneration of natural resources is critical for women's empowerment, family well beings as

249

well for schemes such as community-based afforestation and its involvement in regeneration and monitoring of local natural resources. Given their primary role in collection and storage of such resources and village commons, say through Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) where they have significant presence becomes crucial.

Environmental degradation, along with its causal factors, militates against sustained and sustainable development. Its worst victims are the poor and the women as they have to labour more to gather basic necessities, spend more energy and more hours to do the same. The poor living in degraded forests, urban slums or resettlements in industrially polluted surroundings cannot commute away or keep away from their service-condition of pollution. Their poor health condition makes them all the more vulnerable. Many slums came up in low-lying areas, which during heavy rains, get inundated with uncleared garbage and sewage. The poor there have practically no access to covered toilets. Even in major cities, where municipalities have provided them community toilets, majority of them remains blocked and unusable because of water shortage and carelessness in maintenance. This is also noticed in the developed nations where the black, the coloured and the poor people have to stay close to the polluted areas or the places close to toxic dumps. Invariably, therefore, a strategy of attack on poverty has to include environmental protection, restoration and promotion.

18.3   Gender Differences in the Experience of Nature :

The dualism of patriarchal reasoning also affect the way women and men experience the environment. Although, on the whole western women and men experience the environment quite similarly, some significant differences suggest that we have indeed some of the patriarchal stereotypes.

An ethnographic study of the experience of nature was conducted by Bell in 1980 in an English exurban village. Although similarities far outweighs differences. Village men described their nature experiences to him using significantly more aggressive, militaristic, and violent imagery. Village women emphasized a more domestic environmental vision based on their experience of nurturing in nature. For example, men spoke of the pleasures of releasing their pent-up aggressive feelings through clearing burs and engaging in visceral rural sports such as "skirmish", a mock war game played in the woods with guns that shoot paint balls.

No village women described such pleasures. Nor did any village men relate stories of nurturing in nature such as those told to him by several village women. One village women, for example, told a story about a family cat that helped raise two duckling, extending nurturing feelings even across the divide of predator and prey. This is an incredible story, one that even got the family's picture in the paper, along with the cat and the ducklings. But significantly, this was a story that a woman told him. Her husband, whom he knew well, never mentioned it. This was her story, nor his. Rather, he told Bell stories about rough weather and other hard environmental conditions and his feats of physical prowess and mental toughness in the face of these conditions. Perhaps village men and women told these different types of stories to conform their expectations of what a male researcher should be told and not to express their true feelings. Even so, it is significant that their expectations ran along such gendered lines.

Bell emphasized once again that the similarities between men's and women's stories far outweighed the differences, however, he must also emphasize that it is not helpful to blame men for experiencing nature in ways that he suspects most readers- bole and female- would regard as less laudable.

18.4   The Ecology of Patriarchy :

It is said that the women as being closer to nature than men. Not only is nature female, but females are more natural, our traditions often suggest. We tend to associate women with reproduction, with the natural necessities of giving birth, raising children, preparing food- wand with the domestic sphere, the realm of social life where we attend to reproduction and bodily and emotional needs. In contrast, we have conventionally associated men with production- with transforming nature so that it does what we want it to- and with the public sphere, the realm of rationality, civilization, government, and business.

These gendered associations imply a clear hierarchy, with men on top. Western thinkers have often considered women inferior because of their alleged closeness to nature and men as superior because of their allegedly greater skills in the allegedly higher aspects of human life. For example, the ancient Christian philosopher Thomas Aquinas thought of women as "a necessary object… who is needed to preserve the species or to provide food and drink". Edmund Burke, the late eighteenth-century English philosopher, wrote that " a woman is an animal

251

and an animal not of the highest order". Hegel felt that "women are certainly capable of learning, but they are not made for the higher forms of science, such as philosophy and certain types of creative activities". Sigmund Freud mused that "women represent the interests of the family and sexual life; the work of civilization has become more and more men's business".

The social implications of such a patriarchal hierarchy are quite troubling, many writers now argue, and so too are the environmental implications. By demeaning women for their stereotypical association with reproduction and with nature we encourage both the domination of women and the domination of the environment. We can understand the relationship of women and ecology through different theoretical approaches ecology and development in context to women.

18.5   Theoretical Approaches on Ecology and Development :

Theoretical paradigm on ecology and development has been presented, where the origin and consequences of ecological degradation, dual role of culture and politics in controlling this process, the conditions under which this type of politics is mobilized and the causal role of ideals and interests that mobilization has been is covered. The theoretical paradigms provide answer to the limitations for their continuing relevance to environmental question.

Ecofeminism :

Ecofeminism is a perspective within environmentalism, influenced by the general development of feminism. One kind of feminism which does not fit into ecofeminism is the 'liberal variety. This requires no dissolution of patriarchal society, being androgynous. That is, it wants women to play equal and similar roles to those of men; this in a society still dominated by values of aggression, competition and materialism. As Plumwood (1992) remind us, liberal feminism's view to nature is unacceptable to ecocentrics, for its follows Mary Wollstonecraft's (vindication of the Rights of Women, 1792) doctrine that humans, because of this reason, are superior to and different from the inferior sphere of brute creation (which lacks reason). Hence it would put women together with men in a project of dominating nature.

By contrast, ecofeminists unite in a central belief in the essential convergence between women and nature. This is, first, because their biological makeup inevitably

associates women, more than men, with the natural functions of reproductions and nurturing. Second, women and nature have in common that they are exploited by men, both economically and in being objectified and politically marginalized. Some consider that this common oppression developed intensively during the Enlightenment into a 'logic domination' (Warren: 1990), geared to hierarchical, dualistic thinking.

That 'logic' says, first men/human is different from women/nature, second that they are superior to them, and therefore they are justified in dominating them. However, ecofeminism, says Warren, denies that differences imply superiority of justify domination. During and since the 1970s, debates within ecofeminism have focused on two leading schools of thoughts: Cultural/Radical Ecofeminism and Social Ecofeminism (Plumwood calls the latter 'socialist/anarchist' ecofeminism).

Patriarchal Dualism :

A key tenet of ecofeminism is that our cultural climate of domination has been built on dualism- morally charged, oppositional categories with little gray area in between- that deny for dependency of each upon the other. Thus, man is man, and woman is woman. Nature is nature, and culture is culture. Our dualism interlock into a larger cultural systems of domination, ecofeminists such as Plumwood argue. Culture versus nature, reason versus nature, male versus female, mind versus body. Machine versus body, master versus slave, reason versus emotion, public versus private, self versus other, in each dichotomy, the first member of each pair dominates over the second. The core dichotomy, Plumwood writes, "is the ideology of the control of reason over nature".

The tendency to separate the world antagonistic pairs, ecofeminists suggest, is a legacy of a Western versus the logic of domination. Ecofeminists advocate a different form of logic, one that recognizes gray areas and interdependence, and one that recognizes difference without making hierarchies. They want us to be able to make categorical distinctions that respect the diversity and interactiveness of the world and that do not rely on absolutist, mechanical and hierarchical boundaries.

But patriarchy also leads to the environmental oppression of men, even those from favoured social groups. The patriarchal vision of masculinity leads men to take foolish risks with machines, chemicals, weather, and the land. Men often die as a result or become

maimed and diseased. Thus, all of us have an interest in changing the current social order.

Cultural/Radical Ecofeminism :

Cultural/radical ecofeminism is typified by Pietila (1990:232), writing of the problems of 'our mother, Gaia'. They could be solved by a 'women's culture', providing 'practical and philosophical guidelines to sustainable development'. This culture would draw on ancient myths combining women and nature, mother and earth, in a cooperative relationship: caring, nurturing, mutually giving and receiving. Since menstrual cycles follow phases of the moon, and fertility follows the rhythm of the season, then 'women feel themselves as part of the eternal cycle of birth, growth, maturation and death, which flows through them, not outside them'. Daly's (1987) similar ecofeminism celebrates feminine 'closeness' to nature. Collard (1988) advocates going back to the Earth goddess-worshipping, non-hierarchical matriarchies that supposedly characterized some 'traditional', 'primitive' societies.

This ecofeminism says, then, that 'female culture' is concerned with the body, the flesh, the material, natural processes, emotions and subjective feelings and private life. By contrast, 'male culture' emphasizes the mind, intellect, reason, culture, objectivity, economics and public life. It constantly seeks to transcend natural constraints on what humans can do: men constantly fight to conquer, exploit and mould nature, leaving their mark behind and thus achieving a form of immorality and transcendence. Merchant (1982) describes how Francis Bacon and the Royal Society pledged to reveal 'the secretes still locked in her bosom' and to 'conquer' and 'subdue' her (the earth). New female reproductive technologies, developed by men, are said to constitute a continuation of this dual domination, as its most high technology (Shiva: 1992).

Cultural ecofeminism means liberating nature from the repressive male ethos so that it will be respected as a sustainer of life (Capra: 1982) plea for a balance of 'yin' and 'yang' characteristics in people and society. This may be achieved in several ways. Women, individually and in groups, can discover their authentic natures and celebrate and affirm them. Such consciousness-raising may need to exclude men, on the ground that they could have a negative impact on it while it is still nascent and before it is strong enough to resist male domination. Then there can also be celebration of pagan myths and rituals, and associated pastimes like tarot cards and astrology, which affirm respect for Mother Nature and the essential interconnectedness of humans and nature.

This latter leans towards New Age thinking and some greens and feminists (particularly of the social variety) reject it. As Plumwood argues, the whole idea of 'connecting with nature' could be regressive and insulting, portraying women as passive reproductive animals immersed in the body and in unthinking experience of life. Biehl (1991), from a 'social ecology' perspective, attacked cultural feminism as a political (since it rejects conventional politics because of its hierarchical power relationships), antirational and home- and nature-worshipping.

Some Problems of Cultural Ecofeminism :

Eckersley (1992) outlines some problems of cultural ecofeminism. First, if it claims that women have a 'special relationship' with nature by virtue of their biological role (birth, nurturing) then men might stand permanently condemned because of their biology to an 'inferior sort of relationship with nature'. In fact, men increasingly involve themselves in nurturing the young, thus departing from the Western male cultural stereotype.

Second, if the 'special relationship' is claimed on the grounds of common oppression by men, this is also problematic, for women are not the only oppressed group in the Western society. Indeed, it could be argued that men are oppressed in capitalism. Patriarchy may not, either, explain racism or class oppression.

Third, it is difficult to prove that patriarchy is responsible for exploiting both women and nature. As Levin (1994) observes, it is a 'vague and loose argument' to suggest that merely because both women and nature are dominated they are so far the same reason. As Eckersley puts it, there may be parallels in the logic or symbolic structure of different kinds of dominance but does not provide that both come from the one source. Indeed, many, 'traditional' societies in harmony with nature are in fact patriarchal (Young: 1990). Emancipating women may not, therefore, automatically emancipate nature, and vice-versa.

Fourth, any cultural/radical feminism that wishes to elevate a female stereotype rather than a male stereotype is problematic because both stereotypes are deficient. If one is over-rational/analytical, the other is under-rational/analytical and so on.

The Controversy over Ecofeminsim :

Ecofeminism remains a controversial viewpoint. Much of the debate has surrounded the attempt by some ecofeminist writers to subvert western patriarchy by reserving its moral

255

polarity. These writers propose that women and their association with nature should be celebrated. Reproduction, nurturing, sensitivity to emotions, closeness to nature and the body- all these things are inherently good, the argument goes. Women should embrace these qualities, not reject them. It's the other side of patriarchy's dualism- reason, civilization, machines- that has made such a mess of things.

Critics both inside and outside of ecofeminism object that such a position reifies the very social order that needs to be changed. It perpetuates the dichotomy between men and women as well as the negative stereotypes of women as irrational, as controlled by their bodies, and as best suited for the domestic realm. Critics too argue that this reification is alienated and fatalistic because it implies that biological differences between men and women are at the root of patriarchy. Such a position suggests Deborah Slicer, is the best termed ecofeminine and not "ecofeminist".

Another criticism of ecofeminist arguments is that they may exaggerate the distinctiveness of features of western ideology such as the logic of domination. The evidence suggests not. Also, Eastern cultures have shown themselves to be quite capable of dominating nature. Either the "logic of domination" that infuses both our social and our environmental actions must not be exclusively Western, or the East must have its own logic of domination.

Consider the cultural association of women with nature and men with culture. In fact, the dualism often goes the other way, aligning women with culture and men with nature. Since Victorian times, one common stereotype of women has been that they are the bearers of culture and refinement and that they have responsibility for inculcating "civilization" in the next generation- and in men. One common current stereotype of men is that they are wild beasts driven by lusty and violent passion, which women must tame for their own sake and for the sake of their children. Also many of the spirits that various Western (and non-Western) traditions have sensed in the physical environment arte characterized as male: Father, sky, the Greek Sun god Apollo and ocean god Poseidon, the notion of "fatherland".

Ecofeminists themselves point out; quite rightly, we need to recognize the gray areas and the interactiveness and interdependence of our categories. Unless we continually remind ourselves of the dialogue of categories, of the dialogue of difference and sameness,

256

we easily slip into one-sided, deterministic, and hierarchical arguments. And as ecofeminists have also observed, when one surveys the world with a ones-sided, deterministic and hierarchical frame of mind to begin with, one is even more likely to slip in this way.

However, our complaint with dualism should not be that it is wrong to create categories and draw distinctions. We need categories to recognize difference and thereby to build our theoretical and moral understanding of the world. But we also need better categories than the hierarchical, socially unjust, and environmentally destructive ones of patriarchy.

18.6   The Problem of Essentialism :

Essentialism is the belief that abstract entities or universals exist as well as the instances and examples we meet and time. Essentialism, whether expressed implicitly or explicitly, is ecofeminism's 'core problem' according to Holland-Cunz (Kuletz: 1992). Essentialism might argue that throughout different historical periods, economic modes of production and cultures, there have always been power hierarchies, patriarchy and exploitation of women and nature. And, it would assert, the reason lies in a universal, determining abstract principal, such as hierarchy- an; essentialsim characteristic of all societies which keeps reappearing regardless of different cultural, economic and social formations and arrangements. Alternatively that human are powerless to rid themselves of patriarchy; however much they changed their society it would reappear.

Mellor (1992), from a Marxist feminist perspective, condemns any fatalistic talk of historic universals of biological sex or essential human nature. Marxism's historical materialism, by contrast, argues that apparent constraints on human development and creativity ('human nature', 'men's nature', 'women's nature', nature's limits', the ' nature of the environment') are in most cases really socially, rather than biologically constructed. Thus, in different historical periods, cultures and economic modes of production imagined constraints will either take different forms, or they may not appear to be relevant at all. And, most important, since they are socially constructed they can be socially changed- they are not therefore 'essential'. This essentialism versus social construction debate is another version of older arguments- those of nature versus nurture/culture, or determinism versus free will.

It follows that ecofeminism, if it is not to peach the impossibility of doing anything, or simplistically that hierarchical patriarchy should be replaced by hierarchical matriarchy,

257

must not fall into the essentialist trap. Using tarot cards, baying the moon, looking to pre-historical societies to see if they were matriarchal and nature-worshipping- these are all part of this trap, because they suggest an unchanging, inherent feminineness in opposition to an equally unchanging masculinity.

It is sometimes difficult to avoid trap. Warrant (1990), for instance, appears to reject essentialism by emphasizing how the context of patriarchy differs culturally and historically, but she then seems to fall back on it when she says that domination of all kinds is still 'located in an oppressive patriarchal framework', implying that a universal- patriarchy- is the root problem. Similarly, King (1989) and Plumwood (1990) apparently want to deny essentialism and the idea of a 'gender self' by focusing on socially produced (and therefore socially changeable) gender roles and stereotypes. Yet neither abandons completely the idea of a specific feminine-nature link. As Evans (1993:184) says, "it is hard to see how the link between women (rather than persons) and nature could be made without invoking biological reproduction as the key'.

18.7   Materialist Social Ecofeminism :

Holland-Cunz considers that social (socialist anarchist) ecofeminism picks up many traditions in non-mainstream European utopian socialism, classical anarchism, early Marx, Engles' Dialectics of Nature, Morris' News from Nowhere, and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School of the neo-Marxism. They all insist that exploitation of nature relates to exploitation in society, emphasizing social and political rather than personal aspects of the domination of women and nature. Social ecofeminism resists essentialism in general and biological determination in particular. Men's and women's 'nature' is held to be a political/ideological category. And women's oppression is interwoven with class, race and species oppression (Warren: 1990). But social ecofeminism also rejects the crude economic class reductionism of some Marxism; it does not accept that women's oppression is merely a special case of exploitation of the 'proletariat', or that to establish socialism would mean automatically ending women's nature's oppression.

But while it rejects and biological determination it should not, according to Mellor, ignore what she calls 'the reality of the biological and ecological' which includes the reality that motherhood is something that starts with an exclusively female role (and an exclusively male role). The fact, like the physical limits and constraints of ecological systems, cannot

be entirely subsumed within the social.

Mellor wants to modify or 'reconstruct' Marxist theory, to make a socialist ecofeminism. If she argues, the way we organize ourselves to get material subsistence (relation of production) plays a key role in shaping society (see Pepper: 1993:67-70), so also must the way we organize ourselves materially to continue as a species (i.e. the relations of reproduction). "if the means of survival produced definite social relations and particular forms of consciousness, why not the means of procreation?'. Hence, she goes on to argue, the material world of motherhood, not merely the (still largely male) material world of industrial production, should provide ideas and values for shaping an alternative (socialist) society. These ideas and values are altruistic: they include taking immediate responsibility for meeting the needs of others.

Mellor is using the notion of 'standpoint' here, which relates ideas and values to their social material context. It concedes that there is no one 'objective, true' reality. Our approach to knowledge- to history, politics, economics, or our relationship with nature- differs from different material standpoints. Men's perception is coloured by their lives in capitalism, where they mainly produce goods and services to be ex-hanged as commodities in a market, for profit. Women's perceptions and values will be very different. Their immediate lived experience, in domesticity, values usefulness (in the broadest sense_ of work and sensuous activity, not profitability (Harstock: 1987). The dominance of capitalist relations in Western society ensures that the male standpoint mediates all knowledge. Its view of nature as a commodity will prevail over the female view of unity with nature.

To modify Marx is important, says Mellor. For Marx's original theory held that labour is one of the forces of production, along with nature. That labour is predominantly male labour. But concealed within it is female labour. Many men can work the hours they do only because women are there to run the home and family, thus freeing men's time. Socialist relations of reproduction, by contrast, would equalize men and women's time in various roles. In summary, Mellor argues that "An ecological feminism that does not embrace socialism would be as theoretically and politically as an ecosocialism that does not embrace feminism".

18.8 Idealist Social Ecofeminism :

Others calls to construct a social ecofeminism often introduce more idealism than

Mellor's strictly materialist analysis) for the distinction between idealism and materialism). Ruether (1975), for instance, considers that there can be no liberation for women in a society whose fundamental model of relationships is hierarchical, so women must unite with the environmental movement to reshape the 'underlying values of this society', that is, its prevailing ideas, from which hierarchical organization and domination are held to stem.

According to Plumwood, one of the principal wrong ideas in our clutter is the tendency to dualise in our thinking, so, for instance, imaging that there is a fundamental distinction between society and nature suggests that they are separated, making it easier for the former to exploit the latter. Eckersley (1992:69) considers that- patriarchy is a subset of this 'more general problem of philosophical dualism that has pervaded Western thought'. Both are arguing that it is a particular approach to knowledge- a set of ideas rather than economic and social arrangements- that is responsible for actions detrimental to nature.

Eckersley is at pains to point out how ecofeminism strongly links with deep ecology. For both emphasize the need for understanding ourselves and realizing our connectedness with a larger whole. Both seek personal contact and familiarity with the natural world. And both have strong cross-links with anarchism.

Holland-Cunz (Kuletz: 1992) describes how 1970s feminist utopian literature (e.g. Ursula LeGuin: 1975; Marge Piercy: 1979) came inexorably to the conclusion that the only society where there is no patriarchy must be a decentralized, ecological one. The ecofeminist utopia is also non-hierarchical and directly democratic, practicing rural subsistence through small scale technology.

18.9 Women and Development :

Ecofeminsm shares with socialism an internationalist mentality opposing women's oppression world-wide. It recognizes that in the Third World women, not men, constitute the backbone of 'production' as well as 'reproduction'. In rural societies, before full 'development' (modernization and mass urbanization), women bring up families, run households, grow the crops and have many more babies then they want to ecofeminism, applied to this station, has meant, first pushing for women to be involved in decision making about how land is used and who controls it. Women have resisted land appropriation by government and (western) commercial firms. So far instance, they are the backbone of

the Chipko movement. It is, whoever, the men who own the land, and who have given into to the seductions being the modernization model.

However, many Third World women have been co-opted by modernization. They help to provide the cheap labour which builds wholly inappropriate dams and nuclear power stations. They assemble hi-fis, CDs and TVs for western consumers, and (unwittingly and often unwillingly) cooperate in producing mass unemployment in the West because they work for such a pittance. Ecofeminism opposes the modernization model, and resists, Women in Development' -style movement (Simmons: 1992). This last was a 1970s liberal feminism initiative waiting women to join the world market by increasing their access to paid employment. In the 12980s, however, many Third World women instead adopted the 'by-pass' strategy: setting up enterprise and movements that attempted to exclude international capital (e.g. Chipko, South African cooperatives, 'green zones' in Mozambique, cooperatives in India). They supported, therefore, a localized development. In India, most ecological wisdom lies in the hands and brains of women, so their struggle for development which is alternative to that of Western modernization is also a struggle for ecological sustainable development (Shiva:1988).

18.10 Women and Environmental Leadership :

Some of the most important leaders of the modern environmental movement have been women. In a perfect world this would be no cause for particular notice, but in the world we have, men still generally dominate the leadership of government, business, and social movements. Thus, it is important to underline the prominence of women in modern environmentalism, women like writer and biologist Rachel Carson in the United States, former Green Party leader Petra Kelly in Germany, the writer and social critic Vandana Shiva in India, and sustainable development advocate the former Prime Minister Gros Bruntland in Norway. Indeed, women have been among the environmental movement's most influential advocates.

But the global roles of these women should not overshadow the equally important roles women have played in local environment leadership. Perhaps the best-known example of a woman leading a local environment movement in the development world is Lois Gibbs, founder of the Love Canal Homeowners Committee.

In India, the ten-year long struggle against the Narmada River Dam projects has

been led by a forty-year old women, Medha Patkar. Hundreds of thousands of people would be displaced by the dams, including some 320,000 by the project's largest dam, the Sardar Sarovar. Also the Narmada is the holiest river in the Hindu tradition. But World Bank funding was available to a national government sundry for the power to industrialize, and the project was ahead despite vigorous opposition from local people, and indeed from much of the world. Medha Patkar has led the movement Narmada Bachao Andolan, the Save the Narmda movement. She has testified, gone on hunger strikes, defied police orders, and been arrested numerous times. In one particularly dramatic incident, she and several other Narmada Bachao Andolan leaders threatened jal samparpan, suicide by drowning, in the waters already impounded by the still-under-construction Sardar Sarovar Dam. At the last moment, the Indian government conceded to most of the group's demands, and the jal samparpan was called off. Finally, the Indian Supreme Court suspended work on the dam in 1995, pending review. The work of the Narmada Bachao Andolan is not over, nor is that of the Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste. But the strength and determination of Lois Gibbs, Medha Patkar, and thousands of women and men like them have already achieved much that millions can be thankful for.

18.11 REFERENCES :

Boserup, E. (1970) Women's Role in Economic Development, Earthscan.

Collard, A. (1988), Rape of the Wild, London: The Women's Press.

Daly, M (1987), Gynecology/Ecology, London: The Women's Press.

Eckersley, R. (1992), Environmentalism and Political Theory: Towards an Ecocentric Approach, London: University College London Press.

Evans, J. (1`983), 'Ecofeminism and the politics of the gendered self' in Dobson, A. and Lucardie, P. (eds.), The Politics of nature Explanation in Green Political Theory, London: Routledge, 177-189.

King, Y. (1989), 'The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology', in Plant, J. (ed.), Healing the Wounds, London: Green Print.

Mellor, M. (1992), 'Dilemmas of Essentialism and Materialsim, Capitalism, Nature, Socialism, 3(2), 43-62.

Merchant, C. (1982), The Death of nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution, London: Wildwood House.

Pepper, D.M. (1993), Eco-Socialism: From Deep Ecology to Social Justices, London: Routledge.

Pietila, H. (1990), 'The Daughters of Earth: Women's culture as a basis for Sustainable Development', In Engel, J.R. and Engle, J.G. (eds.), Ethics of Environment and Development: Global Challenge and the International Response, London: Belhaven.

Plumwood, V. (1990), 'Women, Humanity and Nature', in Sayers, S. and Osborne, P. (eds.), Socialism, Feminism and Philosophy: A Radical Philosophy Reader, London: Routledge.

Plumwod, V. (1992), Feminsim and Mastery of Nature, London: Routledge.

Ruether, R. (1975), New Women, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation, New York: Seabury Press.

Shiva, Vandana (1988), Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India, London: Zed Books.

Shiva, Vandana (1992), 'The Seed and the Earth: Women, Ecology and Biotechnology', The Ecologist, 22(1), 4-7.

Simmons, P. (1992), 'Women in Development: A Threat to Liberation', The Ecologist, 22(1), 16-21.

UN, World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future, The Brundtland Report, Oxford: Oxford University Pres.

Warren, K. (1990), 'The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism', Environmental Ethics, 12, 125-146.

Young, J. (1990), Post-Environmentalism, London: Belhaven.

M.A. Sociology   **UNIT-IV**   **Chapter- 19**
GENDER ISSUES IN INDIA
Gender and Society   **Course No. SOC-C-304**

WOMEN AND VIOLENCE

19.0   STRUCTURE

19.1   Concept of Violence

19.2   Nature, Extent and Characteristics of Violence against Women

19.3   Criminal Violence

19.4   Reference

The problem of violence against women is not new. Women in Indian society have been victims of humiliations, torture and exploitation for as long we have had written records of social organization and family life. There are many records of episodes like abduction, rape, murder, and so forth of women. But significantly, female victims of violence have not been given much attention in the literature of social problems or in the literature on criminal violence. Nor has nay attempt been made to explain why both the public and the scientific communities alike ignored for so long the varied evidence that women were being greatly exploited in our society.

The attitude of indifference and negligence can be attributed to three factors:

➢   A lack of awareness of the seriousness of the problem.

➢   The general acceptance of man's superiority over woman because of which violent acts against women were not viewed as violent or deviant.

➢   Denial of violence by women themselves due to their religious values and social attitudes.

As the cases of wife-battering, rapes, kidnappings and abductions, intra-familial murders, and dowry-deaths, and so on, are being more and more reported since the late 1960s onwards. The issue of violence toward women has been transformed from a private issue to a public problem.

19.1   Concept of Violence :

The term violence is used for the more extreme forms of aggressive behaviour that are likely to cause significant injuries to victims. Although violence typically refers to physical aggression it can also be applied to psychological stress that causes suffering or trauma. Broadly, the term "violence" has been applied to the narrow issue of physically striking individuals (Kempe, et al. :1982) and causing injuries (Gil:1970), to the act of striking a person with the intent of causing harm or injury but not actually causing it (Gelles and Strauss :1979), to acts where there is the high potential of causing injury (Strauss et al.: 1980). And to acts where there is no actual hitting at all-such as verbal abuse or psychological and emotional violence. Megargee has defined violence as the "overtly threatened or overtly accomplished application of force which results in the injury or destruction of persons or property or reputations."

The question is: where does one draw the line between aggression and violence? The rapist, for example, uses coercion to obtain sexual relations from a non-consenting victim. When that coercion involves the overt or threatened use of physical force, it clearly constitutes violence. But what of psychological coercion? A husband may use his authority to coerce his wife to submit to sexual relations. This will be sexual harassment. A few, however, feel that sexual harassment is not an act of violence. Some writers attempt to resolve the issue by making a distinction between force and violence. Hofstadter (1970) defined acts of force as "those which inhibit the normal free action of movement of other persons, or which inhibit them through the threat of violence." Luckenbill and Sanders (1977), have maintained that some actions, for instance rape are considered violent yet any involve only force. This would exclude acts like kidnapping and robbery from the roster of violent crimes, unless the victim is injured. Ahuja(1987) have taken a comprehensive view of the term violence. According to Ahuja the term violence" to denote an observable reality, violence must be reported as a specifically human phenomenon in as much as it consists of the freedom of one person to encroach

upon the freedom of another, e.g., rape , kidnapping and abduction, wife battering, dowry deaths and murder. Rape is a sexual violence whereas beating, murder and dowry-death are examples of physical violence and abduction is both social and economic violence. The Police Research Bureau, Delhi (1994) has referred to "crime against women" under two categories: (1) Crimes under the Penal Code and (2) Crimes under the local and special laws. The Bureau has identified seven crimes in the first category and four crimes in the second category of crimes. The seven crimes under the IPC are: rape, kidnapping and abduction, homicide for dowry, torture (physical and mental), molestation, eve teasing; and importation of girls upto 21 years of age, while the four crimes under the local and special laws are: commission of sati, dowry prohibition, immoral traffic, and indecent representation of women.

19.2   Nature, Extent and Characteristics of Violence against Women:

Violence against women may be categorized as:

1. Criminal Violence- Rape, abduction, murder.

2. Domestic violence- dowry deaths, wife battering, sexual abuse, maltreatment of widows and/or elderly women.

3. Social violence- forcing the wife/daughter-in-law to go for female feticide, eve teasing, refusing to give a share to women in property, forcing a young widow to commit sati, harassing the daughter-in-law to bring more dowry.

19.3   CRIMINAL VIOLENCE

Rape :

Virginity is valued by men, yet it is men who violate it and commit rapes. The important factors in rape are: "age", "consent", (including implied consent and obtaining consent under fraudulent pretext of marriage), "duress", "state of mind" and "resistance". Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code describes rape as sex with a woman against her will, or without her consent, or with her consent obtained by putting her in fear or death or hurt, or with her consent when the man knows that he is not her husband but she believes him as her husband, or with or without her consent when she is under sixteen years of age.

Age wise the percentage of victims of rape is highest in the group of 16 to 30 years (64 per cent) while victims below 10 years account for 3 per cent, victims between 10 and 16 years account for about 20 per cent, and victims above 30 years account for 13 per cent (Crime in India: 1992). It is not only the poor girls who become the victims of rape by even the employees belonging to the middle classes are sexually humiliated by their employers. Women inmates in jails are also raped by the superintendents, women crimes suspects by the police officers, women patients by hospital personnel, maid servants by their masters, and women daily wage-earners by contractors and middle men. Study by Ahuja (2001) revealed that important characteristics in the crimes committed against women: (1) rape does not always occur between total strangers; in about half of he cases the rape victim is known by her assailant; (2) nine out of every ten rapes are situations; (3) about three-fourth rapes are single rapes, one fifth are pair rapes means a woman is raped by two men, and one fifth are group rapes; (4) nine out of every ten rapes do not involve physical violence or brutality, that is, in a large number of cases, only temptation violence of brutality, that is, in a large number of cases, only temptation and/ or verbal coercion are used to subdue the victim; (5) little less than three-fourth rapes occur in the victims or victimizers' homes and (6) the age-group of 15-20 years has highest rate among victims, while the offenders are mostly in the age group of 23-30.

Abduction and Kidnapping :

Kidnapping is taking away or enticing of a minor (female of less than 18 years and a male of less than 16 years of age) without the consent of the lawful guardian. Abduction if forcibly, fraudulently or deceitfully taking away of a woman with intent of seducing her to illicit sex or compelling her to marry a person against her will. In kidnapping, the victim's consent is immaterial but in abduction, the victim's voluntary consent condones the crime.

Taking an average of five years 1990-94), it could be said that in our country, about 33 per cent girls/women are kidnapped/abducted in a day. Of the total victims abducted/kidnapped every year, 87 per cent are females and 13 per cent are males. (Crime in India: 1993).

The important characteristics of kidnapping/abduction as reveled by Ahuja's study are: (1) unmarried girls are more likely to be victims of abduction than married women; (2)

abductors are victims are acquainted with each other in a large number of cases; (3) most often, only one person is involved in abduction, (5) the most important motives of abduction are sex and marriage, and (6) the absence of parental control and disaffectionate relations in the family are crucial factors in contacts between the abductor and the victim and girl's running away from the home with some acquainted person.

Murder :

Homicide is mainly a masculine crime. Though the all-India figures pertaining to murders and their victims on the basis of sex are not available, it is well known that number of female victims of homicides in comparison to male victims is low. In India of about 38,000 murders committed every year, a woman comprises about 10 per cent of the total victims. Of the total person arrested every year for committing murders, 97 per cent are males and 3 per cent are females (Crime In India: 1994).

2. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Dowry Deaths :

Dowry deaths either by way of suicide by a harassed wife or murder by the greedy husband and in-laws have indeed becomes a cause of great concern for parents, legislators, police, courts and society as whole. Though the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 has banned the practice of dowry but in reality all that the law does is to recognize that the problems exists. The dowry demands have increased over a period of time. As modest estimate, the figure of deaths in India due to non-payment or partial payment of dowry could be placed around 5,000 for one year. The increase in the incidence of dowry offences is evident from the fact that against cases of dowry deaths in 1987, there were 4,215 cases in 1989 and it has increase to 4,935 in 1994. The number of cases of cruelty by the husband and in-laws was reported to be 25,946 in 1994. Most dowry-deaths occur in privacy of husband's house with the collusion of the family members. Courts therefore admit their inability to convict any one for lack of evidence. Sometimes, the police are so callous in conducting investigations that even the courts question the efficiency and integrity of the police authorities. The important characteristics of dowry deaths are more found among middle class and upper caste phenomenon. Before dowry-murder several types of harassment/humiliation are used against the women. The composition of family plays a

crucial role in bride burning cases.

Wife Battering :

Violence towards women in the context of marriage becomes more significant when a husband who is supposed to love and protect his wife beats her. For a woman, being battered by a man whom she trusted most becomes a shattering experience. The violence can range from slaps and kicks to broken bones, torture, and attempted murder and even murder itself. Sometimes, the violence may be related to drunkenness but not always. Bred in Indian culture, a wife rarely thinks in terms of reporting a case of battering to the police. She suffers humiliation in silence and takes it as her destiny. Even if she wants to revolt, she cannot do it because of the fear that her own parents would refuse to keep her in their house permanently after the marital break-down.

Violence against Widows :

All widows do not face similar problems. A widow may be one who has no issue and who has been widowed one or two years after her marriage, or she may be one who becomes a widow after a period of 5 to 10 years and has one or two small children to support, or she may be one who is above fifty years of age. Though all three categories of widows have to face the problems of social, economic and emotional adjustment, the first and the third categories of widows have no liabilities while the second type of widows have to perform the role of a father for their children. The first two categories of widows have to face the problem of biological adjustment. These two types are not as welcome in their husband's family as the third type. In fact, while the family members try to get rid of the first two types of widows, the third type of widow becomes a key person in the son's family as she is made responsible for caring for her son's children and cooking food in the absence of her working daughter-in-law. The self-image and self-esteem of the three categories of widows also vary. A widow's economic dependencies a severe threat to her self-esteem and her sense of identity. The low status accorded to them by their in-laws and others in the family roles lowers their self-esteem. The stigma of widowhood itself negatively affects a woman and she falls in her own esteem. If we take all types of widows together, we could say that violence against widows includes physical battering, emotional neglect/torture, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, deprivation of legitimate share in property, and abuse of their children.

3. SOCIAL VIOLENCE

Female Feticide :

Now-a-days new problem of female feticide in determining pre-birth sex of the fetus has crept up and during the last 20 years, abortions of female feticide are rapidly carried out to get rid of the birth of female child which ultimately is bound to topple the balance and the ratio of males and females. All though many states have banned the test for knowing the pre-birth sex, but still number of clinics are engaged in the task of pre determining pre-birth sex of fetus. This is all done with the sole purpose of making their business lucrative, unmindful of its far reaching and disastrous consequences for the society as a whole. A number of NGOs all over the India have raised their voice against this practice, turning it as unethical, but tall this goes on unabated.

Sati :

The Act to provide for the more effective prevention of the commission of Sati and its glorification and for matters connected herewith or incidental there to. The practice of Sati, which is the burning or burying alive of widow or women on the funeral pyre of her husband is, revolting to the feelings of human nature and is no where enjoined by any of the religions of India as an imperative duty. Lord William Bentick outlawed this practice in 1829 to dissociate religious beliefs and practices from blood and murder. With the enactment of the Indian Panel Code in 1860, Sati was not defined a separate offence. Those who instigate and participate in the crime are tried under Section 306 of the Code i.e. Abetment of suicide. Being a special law, the Sati Prevention Act, 1987 deals with offences connected with the practice of Sati.

Eve-Teasing :

When a man by words either spoken or signs and or by visible representation or by gesture does not act in public place, or signs, recites or utters any indecent words or song or ballad in any public place to the annoyance of any woman . In all India Survey on harassment of women it was found that eve-teasing was rampant in all metropolitan cities. To eradicate this evil the Delhi Administration formulated and the Eve-Teasing Bill in 1984. The offences of eve-teasing in different wordings is included in Indian Panel Code sections 294,

350 and 509. Section 29 punishes any "who to annoyance of others does not obscene son, ballads or words in or near any public place.

Motivation in Violence :

Violence against women can be explained in term of four causes:

➢ Victim's provocation
➢ Intoxication
➢ Hostility Towards Women
➢ Situational Urge.

Victim's Provocation :

Sometimes the victim of violence by her behaviour, which is often unconscious, creates the situation of her own victimization. The victim either generates or triggers off the violent behaviour of the offender. Her actions transform him into an assaulter/aggressor making him direct his criminal intentions against her.

Intoxication :

Some cases of violence occur when the aggressor are intoxicated and in a widely excited and belligerent state of mind, scarcely comprehending the likely fallout of their actions. For example, in few cases of rape, the offenders assaulted the victims when they had taken so much alcohol that they were in a state of inebriation and emotional excitement. Their normal restraints had disappeared and their aggressive fantasies were intimately intermingled with sexual lust which then took the shape of irresponsible actions. Alcohol related sex crimes illustrate a reckless disregard of time, space and circumstances. It is not clear whether alcohol induces violent behaviour directly or whether it acts primarily as a disinhibitor of pre-existing aggressive tendencies. The latter hypothesis is perhaps supported by the notion (Blumer: 1973) that some perpetrators of violence drink for courage prior to using violence against person.

Hostility towards Women :

Some of the reported cases of violence against women are of a nature that

no amount of rationalization could convert the aggressors into doing any thing other than hostile acts of cruel kind. SA few of them deeply entrenched feelings of hate and hostility of women that their violent act could be said to be primarily directed towards the humiliation of the victim. If the mere situation had been the motivating factor, it is hard to se why a violent act should have been necessary considering the fact that most of the 'offenders' are described as 'normal' persons. Perhaps a desire to gloat over the victim's humiliation was far stronger.

Situational Urge :

In this category, those cases may be included where the crime is committed neither because of the victim's behaviour not because of the offender's psychopathological personality but rather because of chance factors which create such situations which lead to violence. For example in a wife-battering case, it may be that conflict over money matters or on the ill-treatment of husband's parents may provoke the husband to assault his wife; or in a rape case, a man accidentally meets a female acquaintance from his neighbouring village in a field and begins a conversation, ultimately attempting to have his way with her; or the male employer taking advantage of his young female employee finding her alone in his office/factory in the late hours of the evening; or a young girl runs away from her father's house and accepts lift in a truck and the truck driver takes advantage of the situation and criminally assaults her. In all these cases, the 'offenders' had not planned the violent acts but when they found the situation conducive or provocative, they used violence. Apart from these violent acts, these offenders had not been living a life of deviant behaviour.

19.4 REFERENCES:

Ahuja, Ram (1987), Crime Against Women. Jaipur: Rawat Publications.

Blumer, D. (1973), Neuro-psychiatric Aspect of Violent Behaviour, Canada: University of Toronto.

Kempe, et al.(1982), "The Battered Child Syndrome", quoted by Richard Gelles in Wolfgang and Weiner, Criminal Violence, California: Sage Publications.

Gil, D. (1975), Violence Against Children, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Gelles and Strauss (1979), "Determinants of Violence in the Family", in Hill Burr (eds.), Contemporary Theories about the Family, New York: Free Press.

Hofstadter, R. (1970), "Reflections on Violence in US", in Hofstadter and Wallace (eds.) American Violence: A Documentary History, New York: Random House.

Luckenbill and sanders (1977), "Criminal Violence" in Sagarin and Montanino (eds.), Deviants: Voluntary Actors in a Hostile World, Morristown, N.J.: General Learning Press.

Strauss, et al., (1980), Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American family, New York: Doubleday.

****

GENDER AND SOCIETY

Committee of Experts

➢ Prof. J.R Panda

➢ Prof. Gurpreet Bal

➢ Prof. Abha Chauhan

➢ Prof. Neeru Sharma

➢ Prof. Vishav Raksha

➢ Dr. Nisha Sharma

Edited and Reveiwed By

➢ **Prof. Vishav Raksha**

(Department of Sociology)

University of Jammu