

**MASTER OF ARTS
SOCIOLOGY
CENTRE FOR OPEN AND
DISTANCE LEARNING
(CODL)**



**MSO 302: GENDER AND SOCIETY
BLOCK II**

**CENTRE FOR OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING
TEZPUR UNIVERSITY (A CENTRAL UNIVERSITY)
TEZPUR, ASSAM - 784028
INDIA**

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MSO 302: GENDER AND SOCIETY



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MSO-302: GENDER AND SOCIETY

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Dr Rabin Deka	Associate Professor and Head, Dept. of Sociology, Tezpur University
Prof. Chandan Kumar Sharma	Professor, Dept. of Sociology, Tezpur University
Prof. Kedilezo Kikhi	Professor, Dept. of Sociology, Tezpur University
Dr Amiya Kumar Das	Assistant Professor, Dept. of Sociology, Tezpur University
Ms Ankita Bhattacharyya	Assistant Professor, Centre for Open and Distance Learning, Tezpur University

CONTRIBUTOR

Module III & IV	Dr Prafulla Kr. Nath	Assistant Professor, Centre for Tribal Studies, Assam University, Diphu Campus
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EDITOR

Dr Soibam Haripriya	Fellow at Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Rashtrapati Niwas, Shimla
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BLOCK II

MODULE III: FEMINISM IN THIRD WORLD CONTEXT

UNIT 9: THIRD WORLD WOMEN AND THE POLITICS OF FEMINISM

UNIT 10: COLONIALISM, NATIONALISM AND WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

UNIT 11: GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT: ECOFEMINISM

MODULE IV: GENDER ISSUES IN INDIAN CONTEXT

UNIT 12: GENDER, RELIGION AND POLITICS: DALIT FEMINISM

UNIT 13: CONTEMPORARY ISSUE: PROPERTY RIGHTS AND DEBATE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

UNIT 14: CONTEMPORARY ISSUE: EDUCATION AND HEALTH

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

This Block comprises of Module **III** and **IV** of MSO 302: Gender and Society. **Module III** discusses feminism in the context of the Third World. **Unit 9** explores Third World women and the politics of feminism. **Unit 10** deals with colonialism, nationalism and women's movement in the Third World countries. **Unit 11** explores the concept of gender and development. This unit presents a detailed discussion on eco-feminism.

Module IV is dedicated to gender issues in the context of India. **Unit 12** will familiarise the learners with the intersectionality of gender, religion and politics in the Indian context. The major thrust will be Dalit Feminism. **Unit 13** deals with the contemporary issue of property rights and the debate on domestic violence. Another contemporary issue, i.e. education and health will be covered in **Unit 14**.

MODULE III: FEMINISM IN THIRD WORLD CONTEXT

UNIT 9: THIRD WORLD WOMEN AND THE POLITICS OF FEMINISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Objectives
- 9.3 Feminism and the Third World
 - 9.3.1 Idea of the Third World
 - 9.3.2 Feminism in the Third World
- 9.4 Major Criticism of Western Feminism
- 9.5 Third World Feminism: Major Features
- 9.6 Summing up
- 9.7 Questions
- 9.8 Recommended Readings and References

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The feminist scholarship which started in the Western countries propagated homogeneous theory for liberating women or to address the women question. However, once feminism reached in the third world countries it was seen that the theories and approaches are many a time alien to the societies of this world. As a result, the feminists of the third world countries started criticizing the approach of the Western feminist discourse on various grounds. It questioned the ideas of ‘universal sisterhood’, the politics of universalism, homogenization of the canon (theory) etc. The third world feminism rejects the universal idea of patriarchy that affects the same way across society. It also argues that western feminist movement focused only on the experiences of the white middle-class women and neglected the experiences of the third world women. It thus leads to the hegemony of the Eurocentric ideas and non-recognition of the differences. Third world feminist discourse criticizes such approaches and offers

powerful critic of the western feminism. The distinctions such as ethnicity, religion, nationality etc. are realities of the third world and are bases of various hierarchies which intersect with gender and create inequalities in those societies. The third world feminists argue that ignoring of such aspects and imposing Eurocentric ideas produces a colonial mode of representations. We will discuss various criticism of the western feminist discourse in the third world as well as will elaborate how the third world has looked into the feminist discourse and adopting alternative aspects to narrate the women question and liberating women in the third world.

9.2 OBJECTIVES

This Unit will discuss feminist movement in the third world countries i.e. how the third world countries perceived the feminist movement and scholarship in its local context. As we know feminist movement and scholarship started in the western world and mostly addressed the concerns of Western women. The western feminism looked women question across the globe with the existing theories that were developed in the west. The third world feminism criticized such approaches which held that the women of the third world and the west are quite different. Hence, to understand the women oppression in the third world it needs to look women in its context and what and how they face various oppressions. The third world feminism in a sense is a critique of the western feminist movement, as Western feminist scholarship ignored the issues and problems of the third world women. After going through this Unit you will be able to:

- Analyse the limitations of the Western feminist discourse in relation to the third world;
- Critically analyse the Western feminism;
- Discuss the feminist movement in third world countries;
- Explain the major features of the third world feminism.

9.3 FEMINISM AND THE THIRD WORLD

9.3.1 Idea of the Third World

The concept of the third world and feminism are important in the post-colonial studies. The postcolonial feminist theories look into the politics of representation. The postcolonial theories attempt to critique the colonial discourses which, it argues is misrepresented by colonial discourses. The term third world was coined by Alfred Sauvy in 1952, a French demographer and economist to denote some countries those were earlier colonies of the European powers having some common features such as they are poor, deprived, political weakness, social marginalization etc. However, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak looks the very idea of the third world in a critical way. She says,

“The initial attempt in the Bandung Conference (1955) to establish a third way — neither with the Eastern nor within the Western bloc — in the world system, in response to the seemingly new world order established after the Second World War, was not accompanied by a commensurate intellectual effort. The only idioms deployed for the nurturing of this nascent Third World in the cultural field belonged then to positions emerging from resistance within the supposedly ‘old’ world order — anti-imperialism, and/or nationalism ” (Spivak 1996:270).

Scholars like Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Kumkum Sangari have also looked into the concept of the third world critically. Sangari argues that the term third world is imaginary geography which unites vast and vastly differentiated geographies of the world into a single word of underdeveloped terrain.

“Third world refers to colonized, neo-colonized or decolonized countries (of Asia, Africa and Latin America) whose economic and political structures have been deformed within the colonial process, and to black, Asian, Latino, and indigenous people of North America, Europe and Australia. Thus, the term does not merely indicate a hierarchical culture and economic relationship between “first” and “third” world countries; it

intentionally foregrounds a history of colonization and contemporary relationship of structural dominance between first and third world people” (Mohanty 1991: ix-x).

Hence, the idea of the third world itself brings lots of debate and opens up to theorize from its own perspective. Many of the postcolonial theories have rejected the Eurocentric ideas and have various social, cultural, political, historical and other phenomena from its own perspective.

9.3.2 Feminism in the Third World

The third world feminism emerged and became popular with Chandra Talpade Mohanty's critique of the white feminists understanding and misrepresentation of the third world women in their texts. The aim of this discourse was to create a feminist analysis of the gender oppression by the third world women themselves. With the publication of the *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (1991), the agenda of the third world feminism was set. Mohanty and other scholars looked into the activism of the third world women in the local and national context to understand the feminist discourse in the third world by rejecting the Eurocentric model of feminism.

Third world feminism is born out of the criticism of the Western feminist discourse, especially of the liberal and radical feminism considering it as Eurocentric in one hand and universalizing the idea on the other. Moreover, western feminism was more concerned about white women only. For example, the liberal feminists of the first world talked about equality in terms of accessing education, jobs etc. But in the third world, women suffer from basic needs like food, shelter and so on. Similarly, the radical feminist stance on women probably not very much applicable in the third world because the third world women's oppression in terms of gender intersects with other identities. Hence, to address of the concerns of the third world women a slew of other aspects need to be addressed given the fact that history and society of the third world are very different from the first world

due to colonialism, exploitation, intersectionality, etc. As a result of the third world feminists various intersectional aspects such as gender, class, ethnicity, nationality, are brought into analysis as matrixes of oppression.

The third world feminism criticizes the western feminism on a variety of issues pertaining to portraying of third world women. The use of the term third world women by the Western feminists is also widely criticized by many scholars. In many western texts Asia, Latin America or Africa are clubbed as third world as well as women are also considered as a homogenous category. Mohanty (1988) holds that the Western feminist texts many a time considers third world women “as a singular monolithic subject” (333). Hence, a misrepresentation of the third world women is always there in the Western feminist discourse.

The third world feminists have criticized the western feminist movement on the ground that it focuses only on the experiences of the white middle-class women and neglected the concerns of the third world women. Mohanty, further says that Western feminism has portrayed “Third World’ women as a coherent group with identical interests, experiences, and goals prior to their entry in the socio-political and historical field” (ibid). The coming of the black feminist discourse and the third world feminism, it started celebrating the differences of women in different regions which were often ignored by the first and second wave feminism.

The third world feminism offers a critique of the Eurocentric model of western feminism and argues that Eurocentrism reproduces the colonial mode of representation. The women are different cutting across the religion, ethnicity and region. Such differences produced various hierarchies in terms of intersectionality and create gender inequality.

In case of representation of the third world women, as we have already mentioned above, Mohanty (1989) argues that the Western feminist discourse portrays the third world women as “powerless”, “exploited”, “sexually harassed”, etc. Such labelling of the third world women or

considering the women of the third world as a homogenous category, Mohanty says that is similar to the sexist notions as western feminists claim to label women as weak, emotional, having math anxiety etc. (Mohanty, 1988: 65-66). The third world women have diverse histories, struggles pertaining to colonial, political, ethnic, and religious and so on. What Mohanty argues that the western feminists fell in the same trap of sexist ideas in defining the third world women what they have been opposing.

The Second wave feminists (liberal, radical, marxist, socialist) of West considered women as a homogeneous category. It also assumed that women across the globe face similar kind of oppression. However, in the late 1970s and early 1980s criticism came from various corners especially from the feminists of colour considering such an approach as implicit racism and imperialism. The central focus on gender led the white feminists to think that third world women also face a similar problem. In a sense, the white feminists talked about the universal patriarchy. However, they failed to see intersectional aspects of women oppression in terms of ethnicity, religion, nationality and so on. Mohanty negates the idea of universalizing the women and making all women as homogenous and oppressions are similar everywhere. Mohanty shows the danger of the universalizing of third world women considering them as a coherent group. She argues that justifying third world women as homogenous necessarily negates the various experiences of the women according to the context of history, class, or other attributes. Hence, the third world feminists look feminists discourses of the third world into various intersectional aspects such as anti-racism, anti-colonialism, political struggle and so forth. Mohanty writes that the black, white and other third world women have a very different history than the women of the West. It thus, white feminism is a process of reductionist approach in terms of historicization as well as homogenization of the women across the globe whom they thought suffer from similar kinds of oppression as well as having similar interests. Moreover, the white feminists consider the third world women's oppression is worse than white women. Thus, construction of the third

world women as a monolithic subject as argued by the third world feminists is a “colonialist move” that negates the historical and political agency of the third world women.

Gayatri Spivak, in *Feminism and Critical Theory*, says that “My own definition of a woman is very simple: It rests on the word ‘man’ as used in texts that provide the foundation for the corner of the literary criticism establishment that I inhabit. You might say that this is a reactionary position. Should I not carve out an independent definition for myself as a woman?” (Spivak, 1987: 77).

Such an argument necessarily negates the western construction of the third world women as a coherent or a monolithic group. More seemingly, it also asserts the politics of the misrepresentation. The third world feminist discourse stands on such grounds which initially reject the western hegemony of constructing the third world women and the issue of liberating them. The specificity of history, struggle and colonialism in the third world presents the third world women differently from that of the Western white women which need to be addressed in third world feminist discourse.

Stop and Read

- a) Western feminists discourse universalized women, failed to recognize the intersectionality aspects in relation to the third world.
- b) Third World Feminists criticizes the misrepresentation of the third world women in the western feminist text.
- c) The idea of Universal patriarchy - men as oppressor and women as oppressed - the homogenization of the canon was criticized by the third world feminists. It argues that as third world women have

different kinds of oppression and experiences hence such model does not help to liberate the women of the third world.

Considering the limitations of the white feminism in context to the third world feminism in the grounds such as i) universalization of women ii) homogeneity of the canon iii) misrepresentation etc. led the third world feminists to understand the feminism in its context away from the white feminist discourse. The struggle and the oppression faced by the third world women are quite different from the white middle-class women of the west. Mohanty in terms of the third world women says,

“particular inheritance of post-fifteenth-century Euro-American hegemony: the inheritance of slavery, enforced migration, plantation and indentured labour, colonialism, imperial conquest and genocide. Thus, third world feminists have argued for the rewriting of history based on the specific locations and histories of struggle of people of colour and postcolonial peoples, and on the day-to-day strategies of survival utilized by such peoples” (Mohanty 1991: 10).

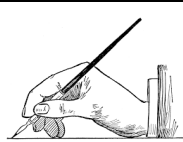
Mohanty’s argument theorizes third world feminism discourse to understand the oppression of the third world women. It talks about the historical specificity of women and the intersectional aspects that need to be examined as per their locations.

Uma Narayan(1997) also argues that the presentation of the third world women by the Western feminist representation is ahistorical and apolitical. She has discussed the colonialism as a phenomenon that connected and divided the west and the third world subjects in a much complicated and created unequal subjects.

In *Recasting Women* (2010) Sangari and Vaid assert “If Feminism is to be different, it must acknowledge the ideological and problematic significance of its own past. Instead of creating yet another grand tradition or a cumulative history of emancipation, neither of which can deal with our

present problems, we need to be attentive to how the past enters differently into the consciousness of other historical periods and is further subdivided by a host of other factors including gender, caste, and class”.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. What is meant by Third World?

2. What are the grounds on which third world feminists have criticized the western feminist movement?

3. Who wrote *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*?

9.4 MAJOR CRITICISM OF WESTERN FEMINISM

- a) Western feminism is considered as ethnocentric by the third world feminists.
- b) Western feminist discourse categorized third world women as a coherent group. It considered women of the third world having similar interest and experiences.
- c) It evaluated third world women from the Western gaze. It constructed the third world women with monolithic ideas and classifications to label women as “ignorant, poor, uneducated,

tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.” (Mohanty, 1984). It overlooked various diversities, complexities and multiplicity of women such as ethnic, religious and others.

- d) The third world feminists like Mohanty (1984, 1991) argues that the oversimplification of women necessarily damages the solidarity and unity among women. Placing of western women as sexually liberated, superior, educated etc. and categorization of the third world women as uneducated, victimized etc. creates a hierarchy among women where western women are superior and third world women are oppressed victims.
- e) The Universal idea of patriarchy men as oppressor and women as oppressed is also problematic in understanding the third world women. Such a notion does not take into account various historical and political aspects. As such, it robs the political and historical agency of women.
- f) The third world feminists also negate the idea of universal sisterhood in terms of goals, oppression and experiences. It converts the third world women as a monolithic subject. They give more emphasis on the lived experiences of various women as per the locations instead of making the entire third world women as homogeneous.
- g) Third world women are represented differently in art, literature, media etc. The western feminism finds commonality among all the women “a global sisterhood” as women but failed to recognize the various differences in terms of intersectionality as well as in terms of representation.
- h) Third world feminism also criticizes the idea of third world women as a homogeneous category.


9.5 THIRD WORLD FEMINISM: MAJOR FEATURES

From the above discussions and criticism of the western feminism the third world feminism can be looked into with some basic ideas:

- i) The third world feminists identify the concerns of the third world women in relations to the historical specificities by paying attention to the intersectional aspects of the caste, gender, race, ethnicity, religion etc. They carefully examine these aspects to theorize as well as to identify the oppression of women.
- ii) Moreover, the third world feminism gives importance to the fact that; historical and political agency of women should be duly recognized. It accepts that the third world women are not naïve subjects of oppression rather active agents of change.

Thus, in defining the third world feminism what we can say that “Third World feminism encompasses feminist perspectives on Third World women that (1) generate more reliable analyses of and recommendations for addressing Third World women’s multidimensional and complex oppression through careful examinations of their local conditions in their historical specificity; and (2) respect the agency and voices of Third World women engaged in diverse forms of local activism” (Herr, 2014: 6)

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

	<p>1. What are the major features of third world feminism?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
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9.6 SUMMING UP

In this Unit, we have learned how the third world feminists have criticized the Western feminist discourse on various grounds. The third world

feminists argue that the western feminism has projected the third world women as a monolithic subject having no agency. As the historical, economic, social as well as political aspects are quite different from that of the western world hence the idea of universal patriarchy and liberating women through a similar model is not possible. The third world feminists hence, give emphasis on the historical specificities depending upon the locations and context to understand the concerns of the third world women. They also criticize the tendency of the western feminism projecting third world women as homogenous. It has given importance on the intersectional aspects of the women in terms of religion, ethnicity, nationality etc. and how these intersect with gender.

9.7 QUESTIONS

1. What is third world feminism? What are the major arguments of the third world feminist thought?
2. What are the shortcomings of the western feminism in relation to the third world women?
3. Write short notes:
 - a. Homogenization of canon
 - b. Universalization of women.

9.8 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 10: COLONIALISM, NATIONALISM AND WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Objectives
- 10.3 Social Reform Movements in India
- 10.4 Women and National Culture
- 10.5 Summing Up
- 10.6 Questions
- 10.7 Recommended Readings and References

10.1 INTRODUCTION

In the third world historiography, the scholars and historians gave more attention to the research and writings on the rise of national consciousness, the anti-colonial movement against colonial exploitation. However, at the same time class and caste dimensions were also to some extent taken into consideration. In the Subaltern studies project class became an analytical tool to understand the anti-colonial struggle in India. Gender, was many a time a marginal issue in the analysis of the colonialism and nationalism. In the indigenous histories of the anti-colonial movement, women stories are marginalized or did not appear in the historiography of nationalist history in the post-colonial societies. However, with the development of the feminist scholarship as well as the rise of feminism in the third world women's participation in the freedom struggle, various issues centring to the women in relation to the colonialism and nationalism got emphasis. It started looking at the role of women in the freedom struggle, social reform, nature of patriarchy as well as various women movements those fought against patriarchy. The women's role in agitation, contribution to the nation-building, fight against injustice, women

education etc. marginalized issues started getting importance. Kumari Jayawardhana in the preface of her book *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (2016) writes, “Many people in the Third World are not aware that their countries have a history of active feminism or of early movements for women’s emancipation, that was supported both by women and men reformers. Moreover, as a result of a colonial-type education, many are not even familiar with the history of other Third World countries” (Jayawardhana: 2016). Hence, the politics of feminism, the role of women in the political struggle against colonialism, their participation, etc. get a new space in the post-colonial discourse of feminism and politics.

Though the feminist discourse was a European phenomenon and entered in Asia or to the third world countries lately, many a time it is also argued that feminism is an imposition of the West to the other part of the world. But a historical investigation shows that feminism is not an imposition rather various progressive women movement occurred in various non-western countries too. There were debates on women right and education in China in the 18th century, in the 19th-century movement for the social emancipation of women held in India. Similarly, in many Asian countries, women struggle movement originated (ibid).

In this Unit, we will locate those issues and discuss how various women movement occurred in India and helped women to participate in the public spaces and their participation in the freedom struggle. It can be argued that the women’s participation in a sense worked as catalysis in the anti-colonial movement in India.

10.2 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we will discuss the women’s movement in India in general and in the third world in particular. We will elaborate the anti-colonial and nationalist movement, social reform movement in India to understand the early women’s question India. We will also look into how the women

movement in the third world had its own specificities and how new form of patriarchy worked. Further, we will see the contribution of the women in the anti-colonial nationalist movement, social reform etc. in India. After going through this Unit you will be able to:

- Discuss the women movements in India during the colonial time;
- Discuss various social reform movements and emancipation of women;
- Analyse the role of various individuals in the social reform movement.

10.3 SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

The project of colonialism in India or elsewhere in the globe was primarily for the exploitation of resources by the colonial power. However, along with it, the colonialist enacted various laws and acts. The British rule in India, was also an approach or to justify the colonial rule. It was to “degenerate the barbaric” social customs of the people of India, sanctioned, or so it was believed, by their religious tradition (Chatterjee, 1989: 662). Hence, through a rationalized form of governance colonialism saw itself performing “civilizing mission.” During the 19th century, the reformist agendas and movement by the colonial power were not about women’s position in a specific social situation rather, a political encounter between the colonial state and the tradition of the conquered people. Widow remarriage, the abolition of *sati*, child marriage etc. were some major social activities those the colonial government tried to carry out. Hence, the social reform movement during the 19th century shows that gender had been an important issue for the newly emerged elites of India as well as for the colonialist in the Indian context. With the rise of anti-colonial movement and nationalism from the 19th century and formation of the nation-state in the 20th century the Indian society witnessed massive changes in terms of economy, manufacture, business, law, education, social reform and so and so forth. Within these changes, women played a pivotal

role in the entire discourse of nationalist movement and social reform by actively participating or supporting them though they were essentialised in the process. For instance, Gandhi stated that women can play an important role in the entire movement as women have the ability to endure suffering; with that notion he had great faith in women in relation to the *Ahimsa* (non-violent) movement. Essentialising women as by nature non-violent he believed that *Ahimsa* suits the women. Gandhi says, “I do believe that woman is more fitted than man to make *ahimsa*. For the courage of self-sacrifice, a woman is any way superior to man” (Jayawardhana, 2016). In public lectures, Gandhi urged Indian women to boycott foreign goods and to adhere to *swadeshi* goods as well requested them to spare some time for spinning.

In context to Indian women movement and the issue of women emancipation, it was closely related to important movements of the 19th and 20th century. As we have mentioned about the mission of ‘civilizing the savage’ of the colonial power along with the emerging elites of the country, the period also witnessed the anti-colonial and nationalist movement in India.

Jayawardhana analysing the colonial situation in the third world argues that the third world countries had some common facets in terms of the resistance movement. Initially, to carry out internal reforms to modernize the society; secondly, dismantling the pre-capitalist structures and finally assertion of the national identity to mobilize the masses to fight against the colonial power (Jayawardhana, 2016: 19).

The social reform movement which mostly started from Bengal, figures like Raja Rammohan Roy actively advocated women’s rights during the 19th century. The reform movements were accelerated by the rise of western education, missionary activities as well as the promotion of the liberal activities adopted from the west. Brahmo Samaj in eastern India, Prarthana Samaj in western India, Arya Samaj in northern India,

Theosophical Society in western India etc. organizations were set up those favoured for legislative intervention by the colonial state in terms of social reforms like banning of *sati*, widow remarriage, women education etc. The benefit of the modern education and others were received by a small section of women those were mostly daughters and wives of the handful urban elites. By the end of the 19th century, a good number of women got higher education, employment as well as political participation of them were also seen in the later period.

Rammohan Roy's vocal approach against polygamy, *sati*, as well as fight for women's education and property rights, places him in Indian history as one of the early male feminists. With the formation of the *Brahmo Samaj* the organization actively engaged in various issues pertaining to the reformation of the Hindu religion in terms of treatment given to women. Later, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and others fought for widow re-marriage and women education. In 1829, the British Government made *sati* as a criminal offence. The support from the British, missionaries as well as from the press led the enactment of the Widow Remarriage Act in 1856.

Apart from the social reforms in the Hindu religion, the subordination of women in the Indian context also greatly lies in the caste structure. The Brahminical patriarchy has been a major site where women are marginalized and oppressed. In the 19th century, revolutionary and social reformer like Jyotirao Phule (1827-90) fought against the Brahminical patriarchy. In 1850, he established a school and propagated education for the lower caste girls. He also advocated for widow remarriage, women education and so on. In 1873 he formed Satyashodhak Samaj to fight against the Brahminical domination. He was vocal against the tradition of *Sati* too. Gail Omvedt evaluating Phule says, over the issue of *sati*.

“Phule was capable of becoming emotionally involved over the issue—one of his polemical articles involved a scathing attack on one of his own colleagues for sexist behaviour and showed an awareness of the issue of language-embedded sexism that has only become more general today. In

his final book, *Sarvajanik Satyadharma*, an effort to create a secular ethics, he strives throughout to use non-sexist phraseology; instead of the Marathi equivalent of a phrase such as ‘all men are equal’ he used instead and very consistently, the term *sarve ekander stri-purush*, ‘each and every woman and man’ (Omvedt 1975: 46).

Similarly, Pandita Ramabai, a Sanskrit scholar in the late 19th century, became popular in the reformist circle of Calcutta, for her critique of Hinduism. Her knowledge of the Sanskrit scriptures, as well as her experiences in living and moving various places of India, gave her the opportunity to use her knowledge against various social injustices.

Though most of the social reformers and advocates of women education were male, however, with the rise of education among the women by late 19th century many women activists also came forward for the cause of the women. It eventually helped in the nationalist movement against the colonial power also. With the formation of the Indian National Congress, it also allowed women to become members of the organization. Bengal was at the forefront in terms of women activism as it was first exposed to colonialism and western education and values. By the early 20th century women started participating in the anti-colonial movement as well in the Swadeshi movement. Women like Swarnakumari Devi, Sarala Devi actively engaged in the social reform movement along with men as well as were also involved in the freedom movement. Swarnakumari Devi, started women craft fair in 1880, for fundraising for women. By 1917, Sarojini Naidu was part of a delegation along with Margaret E. Cousins those who made a representation to the then Viceroy, centring various issues pertaining to women. In 1919, Naidu was part of a deputation of the Home Rule League to Britain to advocate for women franchise. Sarala Devi, made representation on behalf of the Bharat Stree Mahamandal, for women education etc.

Gandhian movement and also rise of left-wing politics in India gave scope to the women to come out from the traditional gender role and enter in the

public spheres. The women question from social reform to the political action in terms of anti-colonial movement got importance. They were more active in politics. Boycott of foreign goods, agitation along with militancy also erupted in the freedom struggle. Many foreign theosophists also joined in the struggle. Annie Besant came to India and was active in the campaigning of women's education. She became the President of Indian National Congress in 1917. In 1917, The Indian Women's Association was formed by Besant, Margaret Cousins, Dorothy Jinarajadsa, etc. women suffrage, education and social reforms.

From 1920 onwards, Indian women actively participated in the *Swadeshi* movement as well as anti-colonial struggle. The social space provided by Gandhi's movement, the women could explore the outside world. Women donated jewellery and money for the national movement, as well as organized *satyagraha* boycotted the foreign goods and participated in the movement.

Stop and Read

From the early 19th century social reform in India started. The newly educated elites of India advocated for women's rights, the abolition of *sati*, widow remarriage etc. The colonial state also wanted to ban various inhumane tradition of Indian society. By the mid-19th century, most of the social reforms were carried out and legislation was enacted. Women started getting higher education and many of them got employment, as well as these women, also carried out movement for social reforms such as women education, property right etc. Moreover, they also participated in the freedom struggle of India.

10.4 WOMEN AND NATIONAL CULTURE

In analysing the anti-colonial movement in India, Partha Chatterjee (1993) describes two domains where women's position and their role can be ascertained. These two domains of culture were – material and spiritual. In the material sphere, Western civilization was more powerful with science, technology, modern bureaucracy, state, economic organizations etc. The West dominated its colonies through such instruments. Chatterjee (1989) argues that to overcome these dominations the colonized people had to learn these techniques and to apply them in the local cultures. It gave the scope to reform and to rationalize the local societies. But at the same time though in the Indian context the material domain was adopted from the West, in the spiritual domain it practised the local cultures. In the spiritual domain, the Indian society was superior. The early nationalists were not ready to give the burden to reform or to legislate the traditional society. For Chatterjee, he looks family as an inner domain where traditional cultures were preserved by the women. The home or the family is the principal site where the national culture may be preserved and women must take the responsibility to protect the national culture. Chatterjee bringing in examples from the colonial Bengal asserts,

“No matter what the changes in the external conditions of life for women, they must not lose their essentially spiritual (that is, feminine) virtues; they must not, in other words, become essentially Westernized. It followed, as a simple criterion for judging the desirability of reform, that the essential distinction between the social roles of men and women in terms of material and spiritual virtues must at all times be maintained. There would have to be a marked difference in the degree and manner of Westernization of women, as distinct from men, in the modern world of the nation” (ibid:627).

The nation itself has the right to reform the traditional cultures but not the outsiders. He further writes, “As it happened, the domain of the family and the position of women underwent considerable change in the world of the

nationalist middle class. It was undoubtedly new patriarchy that was brought into existence, different from the 'traditional' order but also explicitly claiming to be different from the 'Western family'. The 'new women' was to be modern, but she should also have to display the signs of national tradition and therefore would be essentially different from the 'Western' women" (Chatterjee, 1993: 220).

What Chatterjee is arguing here that middle-class women became a symbol of the inner domain – the identity of the east that colonial rule failed to colonize. The inner, the essential identity of the east which carried distinctive spiritual culture was failed to be reformed by the colonial power. It protected the inner domain – the culture – national culture – the spiritual essence.

The family became the site where the inner domain was preserved that helped in enriching the cultural domain of the nationalist upsurge. In such rhetoric though in the material domain west was rich but in the spiritual sphere, the east was superior. Adopting the material domain from modern western civilization, it strengthens the distinctive spiritual essence of the local cultures (Chatterjee, 1989).

10.5 SUMMING UP

In this Unit, we have learned the women activism in the third world in general and India in particular during the colonial period. We have seen unlike the Western societies, the third world countries had a different kind of issues pertaining to women those were addressed during the 19th and 20th century. In the Indian context, we know the society widely practised *sati*, child marriage, depriving women of the public spaces and so forth till the 19th century. However, with the coming of the colonial power to India, and change in the administration and governance as well as the introduction of the modern western education, the Indian people could familiarize themselves with the modern values. From the early 19th century, social reform movement started happening in Bengal where legislation came into

existence for banning of *sati*, widow remarriage, female infanticide etc. As a result, women also started getting a modern education. In the later period, most of them actively participated in the freedom struggle as well as mobilized the masses. Not only the handful of educated women, rather, women across caste and class actively participated in the freedom struggle especially in the Swadeshi movement led by Gandhi.

We have also learnt that though, social reform was an important move of the colonial state, but at the same time, there were important domains in the anti-colonial struggle: the material and the spiritual. The Indian elite took help from the colonial power to enrich themselves in material aspects but it didn't allow the outsider to intervene in the inner or the spiritual domain. Formulating this idea from his study on colonial Bengal Partha Chatterjee sees family as the unit that kept alive the inner domain which helped in articulating the national identity. The tradition and the culture which were preserved in the inner domain was preserved by the women. Thus in effect the burden of preserving culture in the domestic and the realm of the spiritual fell on women whereas men could become modern citizens and actively be a part of the public domain.

Glossary

- **Subaltern Studies:** A school of thought, emerged in the 1980s in India which looked history from below. The term subaltern is brought from the Italian new-Marxist Antonio Gramsci. In common parlance, subaltern means people of inferior rank. The subaltern history or the subaltern studies looked into those mobilizations which were coming out from the people themselves, against the colonial rule, but not given due attention in the mainstream historiography practices of India. It initially studied the peasant uprisings during the colonial period.

- **Women's Indian Association:** Women's Indian Association was one of the first feminist organization in India established in the year 1917. The organization was formed by Annie Besant, Margaret Cousins, and Dorothy Jinarajadasa. The aim of the organization was to serve the poor, universal primary education, abolish child marriage, suffrage for women etc.

10.6 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the role of women in the anti-colonial movement in India.
2. Discuss various social reform movements as well as anti-caste movements in colonial India.
3. Discuss Partha Chatterjee's argument on women and preserving of national culture in relation to the colonial India.
4. Write Short notes:
 - a) Subaltern studies
 - b) Inner Domain

10.7 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 11: GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT: ECOFEMINISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Introduction

11.2 Objectives

11.3 Understanding the Relationship between Gender and Development

11.3.1 Women in Development

11.3.2 Women and Development

11.3.3 Gender and Development

11.4 Eco Feminism

11.5 Summing Up

11.6 Questions

11.7 Recommended Readings and References

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Gender and development seek to look into how the development practices can be made more holistic or can incorporate the women as a whole in the discourse of development. Initially, with the process of modernization (or the modernization theory) argued for rapid industrialization for economic growth which was later challenged by the dependency and other alternative development theories. The modernization theory believed that industrialization leads to economic development. It believed that economic growth is the development. It also accepted that modernization further helps in getting various opportunities for women such as education, employment etc. thereby enhancing the status of women. Moreover, it was also assumed that such type of development approach affects the men and women in the same way. However, with the rise of feminist scholarship and critique of the modernization theory (as modernization could not bring

equality among people), the development practitioners started looking into how it can be made more inclusive.

In the discourse of development, after the modernization theory, many other approaches came into existence. The idea of development also got severe criticism from various quarters and as a result, alternative approaches were developed. The rise of the feminist movement in Western societies also compelled the development practitioners to incorporate the women into the discourse. We will discuss the various ideas related to gender and development as well as the idea of ecofeminism in this Unit.

11.2 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we will briefly discuss the gender perspective of development. We will discuss how the development paradigm affected the women in particular and gender in general. Further, we will discuss how women were left out from the development models and with the development of feminist discourse, the development practitioners started incorporating women in the development discourse. As a result, various approaches such as Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), Gender and Development (GAD) etc. developed. In the latter part of this Unit, we will discuss the idea of ecofeminism is short to understand the relationship between the ecological movement and gender. After going through this Unit you will be able to:

- Discuss the relationship between gender and development;
- Analyse the various approaches to gender and development;
- Discuss ecofeminism and the relationship between ecology and women.

11.3 UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

The term development has many meanings and centring to the term as well as practice lots of debates is seen. In the discourse of development, it is seen that it is a 19th-century term and concept, now widely used by the policymakers. Earlier development was equated with economic development or economic growth, i.e. more growth means more development. However, with the development of concepts like postmodernism, poststructuralism, feminism the idea of development is seen more critically nowadays. Amartya Sen defines development as freedom. The UN declaration on the right to development defines it as Recognizing that development is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting therefrom.

(<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/RightToDevelopment.aspx>)

With the rise of feminism, the women question, issue of women liberation etc. dominated the discourse of rights of the women. At the same time, various questions were also raised centring to the development practices which were essentially androcentric. Women did not get the benefit of/from the development practices, programs and schemes as compared to men. Various approaches of development such as modernization, urbanization, industrialization etc. are criticized by the feminist scholars arguing that such development practices do not include women and marginalize them.

11.3.1 Women in Development (WID)

By 1970 it was clear that the women were not getting the fruit of development. It was seen that women were invisible from the development process. After the publication of Ester Boserup's *Women's Role in Economic Development* the discourse of women in the process of

development got attention. It can be said as a watershed moment in developing the idea of gendered development. Interestingly, prior to Boserup, the development literature hardly talked about women's role in the economic contribution. Boserup analysed the changes after the societies are modernized from traditional agricultural practices. She showed through her book that the women had always a vital role in the agricultural economy. But after the modernization happened the role of women in the formal economy became excluded thereby deteriorating their position. In the agricultural economy women participated in the production process but in the formal economy men only participated and women became confined to the households. Boserup's work showed that the women were not benefiting from the development rather it made their position worse in the society. The 'trickle down' argument of the modernization theory was challenged and argued that the modernization actually impacting men and women differently. Such a model rather than improving the condition of women further deteriorated the position of women. As a result, the idea of Women in Development emerged. Women in development was coined by a Washington based network of female development professionals in the early 1970s.

The Women in Development paradigm sees the exclusion of women from the development programmes. Hence the approach argued for the integration of women in the development paradigm. Instead of considering women a passive receiver of the development benefit the WID advocates women's productive role in the formal economy. It further argues that with the inclusion of the women in the production sector it would help contribute to the economy by the women in one hand and the other hand it would help in improving the status of women in the society. It saw the exclusion of women from the production resulting in lacking the access of resources by the women which further deteriorate the position of women in the society.

Though the WID approach got criticisms, it was successful in placing the women question in the development discourse. The UNO declared 1975-1985 as the Decade for Women. However, the WID approach was not revolutionary in the sense that its premises were on the modernization theory of the development and liberal feminist ideas on equality. It also considered economic change as a process of empowerment.

However, criticism also arose centring to WID. Though women were included in the development agenda it failed to address the social and cultural discrimination those faced by the women. It did not call for a social change also. It failed to tackle the unequal gender relations. Moreover, the WID approach neglected the women role and contribution in household productions as well as in their contribution to the informal economy.

11.3.2 Women and Development (WAD)

The Women and Development approach was developed in late 1970 as a criticism of the WID. The WAD held that women were already part of the development and suddenly did not appear with the WID. It argued that women participation in the development process would not free them from patriarchal domination. The approach was influenced by the Marxist feminist approach. As we have mentioned that unlike the WID, WAD accepted that women are always part of the development process both inside and outside of the household. The WAD emphasized more on capitalism and patriarchy. Hence, it argued that integrating women in the development process as per the WID approach does not necessarily an approach which is helpful for the development of women.

WAD was influenced by the Marxist feminist approach so it argued that both capitalism and patriarchy have narrowed down the possibilities of women. It also held that women always had a role in the production as well as reproduction which is not acknowledged by the modernization theory. In the development discourse, the modernization theory was criticized by the

dependency theory, wherein the gender discourse the WID was criticized from the theoretical foundation of Marxist feminism. In the Marxist paradigm in the capitalist mode of production both the sexes are in a disadvantaged position. Given that, women position is further marginalized as their role in household production is not taken into consideration. Simply integrating the women in the so-called development process would make their position worse. WAD argued that rather integrate them the contribution of the women in the development process must be acknowledged and need to address the question of patriarchy that is working in capitalist production.

The WAD perspective considered women as a class ignoring the differences among the various women. Women are different cutting across their various identities (intersectionality) which WAD failed to address. It again failed to look into various aspects of patriarchy which led women marginalization.

11.3.3 Gender and Development (GAD):

Perceiving failure to address the women and development the Gender and development approach was developed in the late 1980s to address the issue. The WID could not bring the qualitative and long-lasting changes to the lives of women in terms of women status in the society, the GAD seeks to address the shortcomings of WID. Criticizing the limitations of WID and WAD and incorporating many feminist ideas the GAD sought to look into the impact of development on both men and women. The GAD instead of considering women as a category like the other two approaches, the gender and development approach focused the gender relations and roles. Again it also rejected the idea that economic growth as empowerment. It emphasized on social, economic, political, cultural etc. aspects that determine how men and women participate in the development process. It also sees how these two different genders benefit from as well as control the resources and activities differently. Hence, gender relations and gender

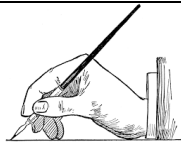
roles are important aspects of this approach. The gender roles create gender identity where social relations express power relations.

The GAD focuses as mentioned, social relations on gender and identifying the social construction of production and reproduction as the basis of women oppression. It emphasized more on gender relations rather than women per se. The GAD accepted that the development is a complex process having socio-political, economic etc. dimensions. It looks into the men-women relation in both workplaces as well as in the domestic spaces. Hence, the approach gives the scope to see women oppression in the private spheres of women live such as in the family too. As a result, the issue of domestic violence can be addressed through GAD perspective.

“It is, therefore, necessary to analyse how these other forces (political, religious, racial and economic) intersect with and dynamize gender relations, provoking in some instances structural rather than individual responses to produce rational configurations which may be reinforcements of old forms or may be quite new ones. Alternately, individual responses may take on a momentum and massification which leads to structural change” (Young, 1993).

Unlike the WID the GAD considers women as active rather than a passive agent of development. The GAD in practice holds that “the GAD approach does not easily lend itself to integration into ongoing development strategies and programs. It demands a degree of commitment to structural change and power shifts that is unlikely to be found either in national or international agencies” (Rathgeber, 1990: 495).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. What is WID?

2. How is GAD different from WID?

3. Who wrote *Women's Role in Economic Development*?

11.4 ECOFEMINISM

The term ecofeminism first appeared in 1974 in her book Françoise d'Eaubonne's *Le Féminisme ou la mort (Feminism or Death)*. She argued in her book that there is a direct linkage between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature. She urged women to lead an ecological revolution to save the earth. The term itself suggests that ecology and feminism are intersected in this discourse. Ecological movement looks into the complex aspects of the degradation of the environment be it water, air, soil or forests, etc.

The issue of environmental concern was raised first in the book *Silent Spring* (1962) by Rachel Carson. The book sowed the seeds of the modern ecology movement. In her book, she warned about pollution and environment degradation. She urged to take care of the environment for the future. She anticipated a greater vulnerability of women and children due to pollution. Slowly the concern of environment grew in all over the world on

the behest that human must respect nature and should protect it. The radical critic of Carson of science which perceives nature only as a resource and her love for nature set the agenda for ecofeminist thought in the later years that such approach destroys the nature at all.

On the other hand, feminism looks into the women liberation from the oppression and patriarchy. Ecofeminism is thus a combination of both – the environmentalism and the feminism. It seeks to accept the fact of interdependence between nature and human lives.

The ecofeminists theorists hold that women are close or culturally tied to nature. Ecofeminism connects the exploitation of women as well as domination over women with that of the environment. It suggests that there is a deep connection between women and nature. Hence, the liberation of one cannot happen without the other. As devaluation of nature and women go hand in hand hence ecofeminism is an approach that talks about both ecology and women. Ecofeminism addresses the issues concerning gender equality, environment preservation and tries to analyse that oppression is a structural process. It holds that society is constructed in a way where it priorities the patriarchal values for the oppression of both the environment and the women. The ecofeminism talks about the patriarchal violence over women and nature. It also relates the environmental damage and degradation to women's exploitation. Ecofeminism, thus, challenges both.

The four basic assumptions put forth by Karen J. Warren which says that feminism and ecology are deeply intrinsic phenomena. These four assumptions are:

- a) There are important connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature
- b) understanding the nature of these connections is necessary to an adequate understanding of the oppression of women and the oppression of nature

- c) feminist theory and practice must include an ecological perspective; and
- d) solutions to ecological problems must include a feminist perspective

(Karen 1987, quoted in Tong, 2009: 255).

Stop and Read

- There is a significant connection between the oppression of women and nature.
- Ecofeminism sees the critical connections between the domination of nature and exploitation of women,
- In a patriarchal society, women are naturalized and nature is feminized.
- Ecofeminism seeks to strive out the domination and exploitation of women and nature by creating a healthy environment for the human world as well as for nature.

Mary Mellor, in *Feminism & Ecology* (1997) wrote, "Ecofeminism is a movement that sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women. It emerged in the mid-1970s alongside second-wave feminism and the green movement. Ecofeminism brings together elements of the feminist and green movements, while at the same time offering a challenge to both. It takes from the green movement a concern about the impact of human activities on the non-human world and from feminism the view of humanity as gendered in ways that subordinate, exploit and oppress women" (1).

Women and Nature

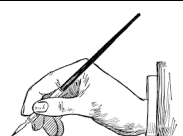
In Western societies, women are considered inferior to men and similarly, nature is also considered as inferior to culture. Human is thought as separated from nature as well as superior to nature. At the same time nature is always feminized (e.g. earth as mother earth, nature as woman etc.) and women are naturalized. Women are considered close to nature for their physical and psychological association with childbirth, monthly cycle, child care and so forth. As a result, the ecofeminism looks into these popular connections and holds that the patriarchy devalues the women as well as nature by oppressing both. It looks at a common thread of oppression towards nature and women. In a patriarchal society, women are viewed as to serve the men; similarly, nature is also seen as to serve the patriarchal world. The powerful people exploit both nature and women for their gains. The ecofeminists argue that there is a relationship between women oppression and degradation of nature. It seeks to explore the intersectionality between sexism, racism, the domination of nature, class exploitation and all forms of social discrimination and inequality.

The ecofeminists see that the way men exploit or oppress the women similarly it exploits nature. For their own gain and profit, men exploit nature. At the same time for its pleasure and profit, the powerful men exploit the women. In the process of domination women and nature are the same. They are both passive. As a result, the ecofeminists argue that to repair the damage women must work together for a healthy environment to stop environmental degradation and women liberation.

Ecofeminism, thus, applies the feminist ideas and principles in ecological issues. It is a movement that talks about the elimination of all kinds of discriminations by acknowledging the interdependence of human life and the natural world. They also hold that the battle for ecological survival is deeply associated with the struggle for the rights of the women. Thus ecofeminism is a movement where it seeks to strive out the domination and

exploitation of women and nature and want to create a healthy environment of living together with mutual coexistence of man, nature and woman.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. What is ecofeminism?

2. Who wrote *Silent Spring*?

3. What are the four basic assumptions put forth by Karen J. Warren which says that feminism and ecology are deeply intrinsic phenomena?

11.5 SUMMING UP

In this Unit, we have discussed various aspects of gender and development. We have learnt how the idea of development got changed in due course of time as well as the inclusion of women in the development practices got its momentum in the early 1970s. The idea of gender and development is a multidisciplinary aspect where the issue of development, economic growth, issues of gender studies and feminism such as patriarchy, liberation, empowerment etc. are incorporated. We have read that initially the idea of WID was developed where it was advocated that women should be included in the formal economy. The

approach was influenced by the liberal feminist discourse. Later WAD criticizes this by stating that women are already part of the development process. It tried to address the question of patriarchy. The WAD was influenced by the Marxist feminist approach. Finally, gender and development (GAD) look into various specificities relating to various women.

We have also discussed the idea of ecofeminism. It sees the links between women oppression and ecological destruction. The ecofeminists argue that both are exploited by the patriarchal world. The ecofeminists consider women are closer to nature. Hence the women should take up the issue of ecology for a healthy environment as well as for women liberation.

Glossary

- **Modernization theory:** The modernization theory of development was developed after WWII under the aegis of the USA to explain why the third world countries are poor. It also had the influence of the ideological conflict between communism and capitalism. Through the modernization theory, Western capitalist ideas and values were propagated such as industrialization, urbanization etc.
- **Trickle down:** The term is widely used in economics which implies that something starts in the above of a system and later spread to the down or the whole system. In Economics, it is argued that for long term benefit taxes on businesses and wealth should be reduced to expand it which would help in the long run.

11.6 QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on Gender and Development.
2. What is meant by Women in Development (WID) and Women and Development?
3. Write a brief note on ecofeminism.
4. Write a note on the relationship between women and ecology.
5. How does patriarchy exploit women and the environment? Discuss.

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MODULE IV: GENDER ISSUES IN INDIAN CONTEXT

UNIT 12: GENDER, RELIGION AND POLITICS: DALIT FEMINISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Objectives
- 12.3 Religion and Gender
- 12.4 Caste and Gender
- 12.5 Brahminical Patriarchy
- 12.6 Dalit Feminism
- 12.7 Summing Up
- 12.8 Questions
- 12.9 Recommended Readings and References

12.1 INTRODUCTION

The early feminist movement and scholarship in India was mostly dominated by the upper caste, urban, middle-class women who considered women as a separate and homogenous category. As Indian society is diverse in nature in terms of caste, class, religion, ethnicity and so on, in the post-colonial times, numerous studies on caste, religion, ethnicity have compelled scholars to look gender discourse from an intersectional perspective. Indian society especially the Hindu society is highly dominated by the institution/ideology of caste. If we see the social stratification in Indian society, caste is in the centre of the stratification. As we all understand that in the caste system some castes are considered as superior and some castes, inferior. This is maintained through the idea of purity and pollution. The upper castes are considered as pure and lower caste especially the Sudras or ex-untouchables (Dalits) as impure. The

caste ideology also bars exogamous marriage among various caste groups. In such a juncture, when we look into gender in relation to caste the upper caste women enjoy more privileges than the lower caste women. Lower caste women face more sexual violence and other oppressions than the upper caste women. Hence, to understand the women oppression and gender question in India, it is necessary to see the intersectional aspects rather considering women as a homogenous category. We will discuss how caste ideology and patriarchy is interrelated to understand the oppression of women in India. Moreover, we will also discuss the idea of Brahminical patriarchy and Dalit feminism to understand the oppression of women in Indian society.

12.2 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we will discuss mainly the gender issues pertaining to India. As we all know India is a vast country having more than 1.3 billion of population. This population is not homogenous in nature. It is marked by various communities, religions, castes, ethnicities, tribe and so and so forth. Hence, the gender issues and the oppression towards women are varied in nature based on caste, community or religion. However, there is also a common thread running across communities, religion or caste in the form of various kinds of discrimination faced by women in the society. We will discuss the gender issues in the Indian context in terms of religion and caste in India in this Unit.

After going through this Unit you will able to:

- Explain Brahminism and Brahminical Patriarchy;
- Analyse gender issues in India;
- Explain caste and gender;
- Explain religion and gender;
- Discuss Dalit Feminism.

12.3 RELIGION AND GENDER

Religion is one of the important aspects to understand gender inequality across societies. As religion dominates our societies, women are mostly treated as per the religious norms of the particular religion. It comes through the interpretation of the religious texts of the concerned religion that govern the religion. It is to be mentioned here that different religions have different kinds of religious norms and attitude towards women. Hence, gender oppression in terms of religions is also different. It is to be mentioned here that almost all the religions essentially have a gender bias and are dominated by males. In the Hindu religion, in one hand women are considered as goddess or mother but at the same time, in many religious places, women are not allowed to enter the temple. During the menstrual cycle (though it is biological) women are considered as impure and are kept away from the religious rituals. Almost all the religions give due respect to women in terms of their kin and affinal relationship i.e., as mother and wives and not as women in their own rights therefore it is practically impossible to find religion talking about women's equal right or the emancipation of women. It is further reinforced in society as patriarchy or as a part of the culture. Similarly, in Islam or in Christianity too, women are considered as the second sex. In the Bible in verse 27 it is said, "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them". What it implies is that God is imagined as male. In almost all the dominant religions of the world, God is considered as a man. We hardly imagine God as a female figure except in some non-institutionalised religions. Thus, religion is used in societies to maintain patriarchy and also to dominate women.

12.4 CASTE AND GENDER

As students of Social Science in general and Sociology in particular, we all know the idea of caste and how it operates in Indian society. Caste as a

system is hierarchically arranged and based on the idea of purity and pollution. Through this idea, some castes are superior and some are thought to be inferior. Ambedkar coined the term called graded inequality to elaborate on the caste system in India. Graded inequality is different from inequality in general. Inequality is found in different forms in society. For example, in the Western context, skin colour is one of the attributes of inequality. But, in India, the caste system is based not merely on inequality but graded inequality. The caste system is based on the four Varna system model viz. Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. Here, Brahmin is the most superior group below which, the rest of the three categories are arranged in hierarchical order in the caste ladder. For Ambedkar, the graded inequality is the key point for which it resists the equality in Indian society. Though Kshatriyas are inferior to the Brahmins, they are superior to the other two groups. Similarly, Vaishyas are though inferior to Kshatriyas, are superior to the Sudras. Hence, they enjoy some more privileges vis-a-vis the Sudras. The organization of the castes in hierarchical order creates the graded inequality in the caste system.

In the discourse of Indian feminism, various intersections such as castes and religion were not taken into consideration by the early feminists. Most of the time, those feminists were urban upper-caste middle-class women who looked gender or the oppression of women in a linear way. However, from the colonial period itself, we see activists and social reformers like Jotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule, E.V. Ramaswami Periyar who worked for caste and women liberation. However, in the post-colonial times, many scholars looked at the oppression of women in Indian society through various aspects such as caste, religion, etc. Scholars and activists like Uma Chakravarti, Kamla Bhasin, Sharmila Rege, etc. have extensively worked on the relationship between caste and women in Indian society. Various scholars argue that Dalit women are doubly oppressed in the caste hierarchical societies like India. Initially, they are oppressed by the caste system and secondly as women they face discrimination through the

institution of patriarchy in their caste group. Some authors have looked into the class angle too in the oppression of women especially in the context of Dalit women. Kumar (2009) for example says, “Dalit women in Indian society are triply exploited based on caste, class and gender”. Such kinds of approaches give us the scope to look at gender politics and women’s oppression in a more intersectional way in India. Especially the Dalit women are different from the upper caste women in terms of structural location, occupation and treatment they receive from others” (ibid). Chakravorti (1993) argues, “Caste hierarchy and gender hierarchy are the organising principles of the Brahmanical social order and despite their close interconnections, neither scholars of the caste system nor feminist scholars have attempted to analyse the relationship between the two” (579).

Thus, the intersectional perspective of gender opens up the discourse of women’s oppression in a variety of ways, replacing the concept of considering women as a homogenous category, especially in the Indian context. The caste hierarchy in Indian societies leads to women’s oppression in numbers of ways where patriarchy also works. In this context gender Historian, Uma Chakravorti talks about Brahminical patriarchy. Let us discuss the idea of Brahminical patriarchy to understand the interrelationship of caste, gender, religion, etc.

Stop and Read

Caste is a stratified and hierarchical institution prevalent in Indian society, especially in the Hindu religion basing upon the ancient classical texts. Purity and pollution are some of the major ideas related to caste ideology. Moreover, to maintain purity, endogamy is also widely practised in caste ideology. To maintain the pure blood, women’s sexuality is strictly controlled so that they cannot marry outside the caste. Hence, a hierarchy of caste is maintained through

gender manifested as control of the sexuality of women. Caste and gender, in this sense, are interlinked and interrelated.

12.5 BRAHMINICAL PATRIARCHY

The idea of Brahminical patriarchy does not imply patriarchy in the Brahmin caste. It is a particular kind of patriarchy that is organized based on caste. Purity and pollution, as well as endogamous marriage, maintain the caste purity through the practice of patriarchy. Uma Chakravorti says that caste and gender in India are interrelated and interconnected. For her, Brahminical patriarchy is:

“a set of rules and institutions in which caste and gender are linked, each shaping the other and where women are crucial in maintaining the boundaries between castes. Patriarchal code in this structure ensures that the caste system can be reproduced without violating the hierarchical order of closed endogamous circles, each distinct from higher and lower than others” (ibid: 34).

What Chakravorti means here is that Brahminical patriarchy is the oppressive social order in India which is built on caste. This is maintained through endogamous marriage as well as by controlling women’s sexuality. Ambedkar defines Brahminism as:

“By Brahminism, I do not mean the power, privileges and interests of the Brahmins as a community. By Brahminism I mean the negation of the spirit of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. In that sense it is rampant in all classes and is not confined to the Brahmins alone, though they have been originators of it” (cited in Omvedt, 2007: 305).

Thus, Brahminism or Brahminical implies the state of mind or accepting the ideology of the caste through which exploitation is exercised by the upper caste groups. The Brahminical codes especially for women differ

from castes to caste and sexuality is strictly controlled by the patriarchal order. Bringing in the study of Nur Yulman (1962) on the castes of Ceylon and Malabar, Chakravorti narrates that the fundamental principle of Hindu social organization is to construct a closed structure to preserve land, women and the ritual quality. “The three are structurally linked and it is impossible to maintain all three without stringently organising female sexuality. Indeed neither land nor ritual quality, i.e., the purity of caste can be ensured without closely guarding women who form the pivot for the entire structure” (1993). Hence, the purity of women is a central issue in the ideology of Brahminical patriarchy. It is ensured through the ideas of chaste wives, sacrificial mothers or *pativatra* women who are valorised. Women’s sexuality is, thus, controlled with the patriarchal as well as with the caste ideology through which marriage within the caste group is maintained to ensure the purity of the caste.

The ideology and the idea of caste in Hindu society are based on the Brahminical religious texts. The various social organizations and institutions are constructed and reconstructed through the ideology of the caste and by controlling women’s sexuality and mobility, patriarchy is maintained.

Stop and Read

Brahminical patriarchy does not mean patriarchy in the Brahmin caste. Brahminism is the ideology through which one accepts the idea that someone is superior or inferior to others by dint of birth. In this sense, a Dalit may be also Brahminical. Likewise, a Brahmin may not be Brahminical. Women as the bearer of tradition through whom caste purity can be maintained, the entire caste ideology runs to oppress and discriminate them through the Brahminical patriarchy. The acceptance of the Brahminical patriarchy is thus a process through which caste

ideology is maintained. To understand gender in the Indian context, it is important to understand the interrelations of caste and gender.

12.6 DALIT FEMINISM

A significant shift in the feminist discourse in India is seen from the decade of the 1990s when Dalit women started asserting against the hegemonic feminist discourse where issues of the Dalit women were not taken into consideration. Dalit feminism can be said to be a discourse of discontent, a politics of difference from the mainstream feminist movement in India. The Dalit feminism, thus, criticizes the hegemonic mainstream feminist discourse for not including the caste angle in the feminist agenda and at the same time, it is also critical towards the dominance inside its society.

The debate of caste hierarchy, untouchability was prevalent in the colonial time. Ambedkar fought strongly against the injustice of society to the lower castes people. However, in the post-colonial India, though the Constitution of India offers equal rights to all sections irrespective of caste, class, gender or any other way that hierarchy comes, the caste-based hierarchy could not be eradicated and various caste-based atrocities, violence occurred. As a result, Dalit assertion started in various parts of the country from the sixties and seventies. However, the root of the Dalit assertion or later Dalit feminism was based on the activities of various activists and scholars like Jyotirao Phule, Savitribai Phule, Ambedkar and so on.

We have already discussed above that the lower caste women face discrimination as oppose to the upper caste women in various ways viz. such as they are oppressed by upper castes, class oppression and finally patriarchal oppression. The mainstream feminist discourse failed to incorporate the class and caste issues in the feminist movement for which Dalit feminism arose. The Dalit feminism also has the view that like Rege (2006) says that the upper caste women movement has erased the struggle of the Dalit women from the story of the nation.

Dalit Mahila Samiti (DMS) was an initial organization set up in Uttar Pradesh launched by the Government for the socio-economic development of Dalit women. With the rising caste atrocities and violence, from the 1990s onwards, various Dalit women groups were formed who raised their voices against the atrocities especially faced by the Dalit women. However, an autonomous and independent voice of the Dalit women in terms of their identity was first crystallized after the formation of the National Federation of Dalit Women (NFDW) in 1993 by Ruth Manorama. Rege opines that the upper caste women are more vulnerable in terms of domestic violence, whereas Dalit women face the threat of rape and other forms of violence in the public sphere. They also face similar kinds of violence inside the household too. So, what an upper-caste woman face as a woman is quite different from a Dalit woman. The Dalit feminism, thus, looks Dalit women politics more holistically. It argues that Dalit women face multiple types of discrimination in society. Thus the Dalit feminism has the potentiality to address such core issues mostly ignored by the mainstream feminism.

However, the crystallization and consolidation of Dalit identity and Dalit feminism were debated. Guru (1995) in an article argues that Dalit women talk differently based on external factors (non-Dalit forces homogenizing the issue of Dalit women) and internal factors (the patriarchal domination within the Dalits). One's experience of her/his social location determines the social reality. He argues that the issues raised by non-Dalit women about Dalit women make the issue less authentic. Guru further says that there is a need for a separate Dalit women identity who would talk exclusively for themselves for the external and internal reasons. Similarly, Guru asserts that Dalit men also give less importance to Dalit women. He says, "(1) It is not only caste and class identity but also one's gender positioning that decides the validity of an event; (2) Dalit men are reproducing the same mechanisms against their women which their high caste adversaries had used to dominate them; (3) the experience of Dalit women shows that local resistance within the Dalits is important. The

whole situation compels us to defend the claim of Dalit women to talk differently” (ibid). For him, Dalit women identity is important to explain the lived experiences of Dalit women in terms of women’s oppression.

Rege (1998) however, criticized Guru in her path-breaking essay “Dalit Women Talk Differently-A Critique of Difference and Towards a Dalit Feminist Standpoint Position” to re-assess the gender politics from a Dalit feminist perspective. Guru said that Dalit women should talk on behalf of the Dalit women as they have lived experiences and could create authentic knowledge. Problematizing, Guru’s point she says,

“A Dalit Feminist standpoint is seen as emancipatory since the subject of its knowledge is embodied and visible (i.e., the thought begins from the lives of Dalit women and these lives are present and visible in the results of the thought). This position argues that it is more emancipatory than other existing positions and counters pluralism and relativism by which all knowledge based on political claims are thought to be valid” (Rege 1998:45). According to Rege, Brahminism has multiple forms of patriarchy. The Dalit women cannot be conceived as homogenous. Moreover, she also argues that lived or authentic experience can lead to narrow identity politics which may harm the emancipatory potential of the Dalit women. Hence, she further says,

“Dalit feminist standpoint which emerges from the practices and struggles of Dalit woman, we recognise, may originate in the works of Dalit feminist intellectuals but it cannot flourish if isolated from the experiences and ideas of other groups who must educate themselves about the histories, the preferred social relations and utopias and the struggles of the marginalised. A transformation from ‘their cause’ to ‘our cause’ is possible for subjectivities can be transformed. By this, we do not argue that non-Dalit feminists can ‘speak as’ or ‘for the’ Dalit women but they can ‘reinvent themselves as Dalit feminists’. Such a position, therefore, avoids the narrow alley of direct experience based ‘authenticity’ and narrow ‘identity

politics” (ibid). What Rege appeal here is that the non-Dalit feminists should also reinvent themselves as a Dalit feminist.

12.7 SUMMING UP

In this Unit, we have learned the interconnections and interrelations of caste, religion and gender. We have described in detail why it is necessary to look into various other realities such as caste, religion to understand or to address the question of women in India. We have also discussed the idea of Brahminical patriarchy which does not mean patriarchy in the Brahmin caste, rather it is a concept that explains how the mindset of Brahminical patriarchy negates the rights of women in the society. Finally, we have discussed the Dalit feminist movement in India, why it is important for women's emancipation especially in the context of the women belonging to the category of Dalit, who are exploited and face discrimination in various ways, in the line of caste, class and gender.

Glossary
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graded Inequality: It is the hierarchical order of various groups. Here, one group is superior to the other but inferior to another/other group(s) who is/are above it in the ladder. Ambedkar conceptualized graded inequality to understand the caste system in India. In the caste system, Shudras are considered as the most inferior group in the caste ladder and Brahmins occupy the topmost position. The other two varnas, Vaishyas and Kshatriyas are in between the Brahmins and Sudras. Both the groups are superior to the Sudras but inferior to the Brahmins.

- **Endogamy:** In simpler terms, endogamy implies marriage inside the group. Caste endogamy implies marriage within the caste group.

12.8 QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on caste and gender.
2. What is Dalit feminism? Why is Dalit feminism important in the Indian context?
3. “Dalit women are triply exploited” – elucidate the statement.
4. What is Brahminical patriarchy? Explain
5. Write short notes:
 - a) National Federation of Dalit Women
 - b) Graded Inequality

12.9 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 13: CONTEMPORARY ISSUE: PROPERTY RIGHTS AND DEBATE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Introduction

13.2 Objectives

13.3 Property Rights and Women

13.3.1 Hindu Succession Act, 2005

13.4 Domestic Violence

13.4.1 Domestic Violence in India

13.4.2 Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

13.5 Summing up

13.6 Questions

13.7 Recommended Readings and References

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Every single day, we read media reports like wife-beating, killing of the bride for dowry, property dispute, etc. It is also a known fact that many such incidents also go unreported in the media. Such kinds of social evils such as domestic violence against women, sexual violence, conflict over property, etc. have sociological meanings and need to be understood with related aspects like patriarchy, gender relation, caste and so on. We know that daughters are generally not given any property right of her father's property. In this sense, we can see Engels' idea of how the rise of the family in the human civilization curtailed the rights of the women. He said that the rise of the institution of monogamous family was the "historical defeat of the female sex". Engels argues that the creation of the private property led to the formation of the family as private property needed to be passed on and women's power and right to property curtailed to ensure that property must go through the male line. Such arrangements pushed women to the margin, where their rights in the household as well as in the public

spaces started decreasing. It further leads to domestic violence, sexual violence, marital rape, etc. Though such arrangements are prevalent in every society, after the rise of the feminist discourse and scholarship, women are also demanding their rights in terms of property as well as cases of domestic violence are also taken seriously both by the feminist activists and by the state. As a result, various laws have been enacted to ensure women's right as well as to ensure that due respect is given to women legally. These have been discussed in details in this Unit.

13.2 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we will discuss two important aspects, viz. property rights of women and domestic violence in the Indian context. After going through this Unit you will be able to:

- Explain how women are systematically kept away from the right of property;
- Analyse various forms of violence against women;
- Analyse how male dominance and patriarchy are continued by rejecting property rights to women and through domestic violence;
- Discuss the legal Provisions for women in India against domestic violence and property rights.

13.3 PROPERTY RIGHTS AND WOMEN

The property right is one of the aspects through which the empowerment and liberation of women can be realised. Women's property rights imply property and inheritance rights enjoyed by women in society. Property rights vary from society to society. Property rights give women economic independence that can facilitate women empowerment. However, the control of the property, productive and non-productive resources by women in India is very limited. Moreover, the issue of women's share in property was not considered as a major issue. It was mostly a neglected issue for

quite some time. Though the Indian law and Constitution give equal rights to the property to women, in reality, women hardly have any right on the property. In the Indian context, mostly land is considered as one of the major properties in rural India. However, women are hardly the owner of the land, rather in many instances, the land is registered in the name of the husband or the father. Married women often do not claim right over parental property or sometimes widows are also not given due recognition of the husband's property.

Property can be acquired by three means, viz. through earning, through inheritance or gift (Mukund, 1999). However, for women to acquire property all of the above-mentioned categories are guided by the social patriarchal norms. Women's rights to inherit or to own or to control property are largely dependent on the various values and norms of the society. Even if some women get the property, inequality is observed both in terms of quantity and quality when compared with their male counterparts. In earlier times, married women hardly have had any right over the parental property. Instances are there where widows were discriminated and right to property of her husband's share was not acknowledged. However, in the present times, such notions are diminishing but women are yet to receive all rights equal to men.

As India is a diverse country with multiple religions, ethnicity and castes, the customary laws for dividing property between male and female are also diverse. Apart from the customary laws, especially among the tribal people, most of the time the property law is also guided by the personal laws of various religions. In 1956, property right law was codified through which, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains are governed for property matters. Christians and Parsis are governed by the Indian Succession Act, 1925. For Muslims, property right is under the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat). However, the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, was the first law to provide a comprehensive system of inheritance among Hindus and Jains, Sikhs and

Buddhists and addressed gender inequalities in the area of inheritance. However, the 1956 Hindu Succession Act was amended in 2005. The property right to sons and daughters were different until 2005. Sons had the complete right to father's property. Daughters could enjoy it before their marriage. Once married, a daughter is considered as a member of the husband's family.

13.3.1 Hindu Succession Act, 2005

As mentioned above, the Hindu Succession Act 1956 was amended in 2005. The Act recognizes the concept of HUF (Hindu Undivided Family) that means a family of persons who are all lineal descendants of a common ancestor and related to each other by birth or by marriage. Before the amendment of the Act of 1956, the family male members of a HUF were considered as coparceners and the female members were only members. The coparceners had the right to ask for the right of the property and share of it. After marriage, female members would no longer ask for the share of the property. Thus, the Act of 1956 discriminated women in acquiring the parental property. The Amendment of 2005 recognizes women's rights over the parental property. Here, daughters are considered as equal to the sons as far as the coparcener rights in Hindu Undivided Family is concerned. The Act says that even after marriage, female members would be a part of the coparcener and can ask for their share in the property. According to the new amendment of the Hindu Succession Amendment Act, 2005, every daughter (married or unmarried), is considered as a member of her father's Hindu Undivided Family and she can even be appointed as 'Karta' (who manages) of his HUF property. The amendment, thus, grants daughters the same rights, duties, liabilities and disabilities that were earlier limited to sons only.

The property right for women as mentioned above is guided by various personal laws. Acquiring property, especially the parental property by a Muslim is guided by the Muslim Personal Law. Muslim law has not been

codified yet, and broadly governed by two schools of Muslim personal law – the Hanafi and the Shia. The Hanafi school gives a share of the property to the relatives who are heirs. It is defined by the relations to the deceased through a male. Here, son's daughter, father's mother, son's son are considered as heirs. On the other hand, the Shia school does not make any discrimination and both males and females who are related to the deceased are considered as heirs.

Apart from the ancestral property, economic activities of women through which economic independence and property can be achieved are also limited. Employment opportunities for women are guided most of the time by the patriarchal values, where women labourers get less wage than their male counterparts. In the unorganized sector, women job security is more vulnerable than men. Exploitation in the workplace, sexual harassment, etc. are common stories for working-class women.

Stop and Read

Property can be acquired by three means viz. through earning, through inheritance or gift. But among these three spheres, women hardly get their share of the ancestral property. Though the law is in force through which women can claim parental property but the patriarchal values of the society resist women to get the parental property. Similarly, in the case of productive and non-productive economic sectors, women's labour is taken for granted and paid less wage with less job security, especially in the unorganized sector.

13.4 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Women face various kinds of violence such as sexual violence, discrimination in the workplace, gender-based violence like female foeticide, infanticide, molestation, rape and so on. Among these, domestic

violence, in its various forms, constitutes the least reported area where women face physical and mental torture from the male members of their own family. Freeman says,

"From the cradle to the grave, women are objects of violence from those nearest and dearest to them. And it is a never-ending cycle for there is considerable evidence of intergenerational transmission of domestic violence" (Freeman, 1979: 239).

Stop and Read

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

Definition of domestic violence.—For the purposes of this Act, any act, omission or commission or conduct of the respondent shall constitute domestic violence in case it— (a) harms or injures or endangers the health, safety, life, limb or well-being, whether mental or physical, of the aggrieved person or tends to do so and includes causing physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse;

or (b) harasses, harms, injures or endangers the aggrieved person with a view to coerce her or any other person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any dowry or other property or valuable security;

or (c) has the effect of threatening the aggrieved person or any person related to her by any conduct mentioned in clause (a) or clause (b); or

(d) otherwise injures or causes harm, whether physical or mental, to the aggrieved person.

Domestic violence is a common problem in almost all the societies, which have far-reaching consequences on the psyche of children, women, etc. It is one of the most common forms of violence against women. The World Health Organization Report (1997) reveals that one out of three woman faces violence in an intimate relationship at some point in her life. Violence at home is universal across class, caste, race, religion, etc. Unfortunately,

such cases of violence and crime often go invisible and are hardly acknowledged by society. Though the second wave feminist movement had a popular slogan called “personal is political”, there is a deep divide between the personal and public spaces in terms of women’s discrimination that hides the domestic violence against women. Most of the time domestic violence cases are not reported and is considered as a deeply personal issue. Domestic violence is not only physical abuse rather it is a power relation where one applies his/her physical and other forms of power to the others. It is a pattern of assaultive behaviour which is also coercive. Domestic violence includes physical, sexual or any form of psychological attack on individuals by their intimate partners. Economic coercion and emotional abuse can also be added as a form of domestic violence.

Domestic violence occurs in all socio-cultural and economic settings of society. It is a way of establishing power and control over the intimate partner. It can happen in all kinds of intimate relationship such as married couple, live-in relationship, same-sex partners, etc. Domestic violence is the most important cause of injury against women in almost all societies, where most of the cases are not reported. Most of the times, the victim’s family is also not supportive to report against the domestic violence out of shame or guilt. It is to be noted that women, men, children all may be a victim of domestic violence, however, in most of the cases especially in India, women are the worst sufferers of domestic violence. Child sex abuse happens mostly in the family. Marital rape is also common yet hardly considered a crime. Domestic violence is different from other forms of violence in the sense that it happens within the family in a narrow framework or limited space where intimate relationships are there. As most of the time, it is considered as a purely personal issue so legal aid is not sought by the victim or by the family members and it is thought that it can be resolved within the four walls of the house. Such a notion maintains the dominance of the male members over the household which further helps in continuing patriarchy in a violent form.

The United Nation Organization (UNO) defines violence against women and domestic violence (intimate partner violence) and sexual violence in the following way:

Violence against Women: "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."

Intimate partner violence refers to behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours.

Stop and Read

Forms of Intimate Partner Violence (2)

IPV refers to any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship. Examples of types of behaviour are listed below.

Acts of physical violence, such as slapping, hitting, kicking and beating.

Sexual violence, including forced sexual intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion.

Emotional (psychological) abuse, such as insults, belittling, constant humiliation, intimidation (e.g. destroying things), threats of harm, threats to take away children.

Controlling behaviours, including isolating a person from family and friends; monitoring their movements; and restricting access to financial resources, employment, education or medical care.

Source: World Health Organisation

Sexual violence is "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting. It includes rape, defined as the physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration of the vulva or anus with a penis, other body part or object."

(<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>).

Domestic violence is also known as domestic abuse, spouse abuse, wife-beating, intimate violence, family violence, partner abuse, etc. In the Indian case however Domestic violence can be distinguished from Intimate Partner Violence in that in the former other family members and relatives of the spouse, husband, partner may be involved in the violence committed whereas in the latter only the intimate partner is involved. As we have said earlier, domestic violence may have various forms. Let us elaborate on the various forms of domestic violence:

- a) **Physical Abuse:** Various acts such as beating, slapping, hitting, kicking, etc.
- b) **Sexual abuse:** Forced sexual intercourse, any other form of sexual coercion such as treating the victim as a sex object or criticizing the sexuality, sexual torture, compelling the victim to have sexual intercourse with others and so on.
- c) **Psychological/emotional:** Insult, making jokes about the victim, insulting victims in front of others, yelling, demoralizing, blaming victims for all kinds of problem, belittling, constant humiliation, threat to harm, etc.
- d) **Economic coercion:** Economic coercion may include preventing the victim from attending a job, curtailing employment opportunities, controlling, monitoring of victim expenses, forcing the victim to hand over cash, cheque book, ATM card, etc.

Domestic violence is the serious violation of the basic rights of women that they face inside the structure of family from their relatives. It further may cause death (murder or suicide), serious injury, mental trauma to the victim as well as of the children.

There are various reasons why women who undergo such kind of violent atmosphere at the domestic level do not leave the relationship or stay most of the time in that relationship. The reasons may be:

- fear of retaliation
- lack of alternative means of economic support
- concern for their children
- lack of support from family and friends
- stigma or fear of losing custody of children associated with divorce; and
- love and the hope that the partner will change.

(https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/WHO_RHR_12.36_eng.pdf;jsessionid=0F2D76AE286CB7122C36A68008B45E68?sequence=1) (p 3)

13.4.1 Domestic Violence in India:

Domestic violence is a serious problem in India. The data published by the National Crimes Record Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India on domestic violence is very shocking. “The records of the bureau reveal a shocking 71.5 per cent increase in cases of torture and dowry deaths during the period from 1991 to 1995 and may reflect increased reporting of violence. In 1995, torture of women constituted 29.2 per cent of all reported crimes against women” (Visaria and Mitra, 1999). The 2016 NCRB (National Crime Record Bureau) data says that crime against women has recorded 83% increase in the decade 2007-16. The listed crimes were rape, dowry deaths, acid attack, kidnapping and abduction, cruelty by husband or his relatives, and assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty, among others. However, apart from the reported

cases, the conviction rate is very depressing. Domestic violence has serious economic, social and health consequences in India. It affects the women, children as well as the family. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data in India shows that more than 30% of Indian women face domestic violence in various forms viz. physical, sexual or emotional and are abused by their husbands at some points of time in their lives.

Dowry in the Indian context is one of the major causes of domestic violence against women. Millions of Indian women face severe harassment from the husband or the family due to unfulfilled dowry demand. Though in India, the dowry prohibition act is in force known as Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, that criminalizes the giving and taking of dowry, dowry-related crimes are widely reported in now and then.

Marital Rape

Marital rape is unwanted sexual intercourse by a man with his wife obtained through force or threat or physical violence. Marital rape is a non-consensual act of sexual intercourse where the wife is physically and sexually abused. Unwilling sexual contact between husband and wife is considered as criminal activity in most of the countries of the world, but in India, it is not criminalized yet. In India, most of the times it is thought that criminalizing marital rape would destabilize the very institution of marriage. It is also thought that criminalizing it would be an easy tool to harass the husband by the wife. However, a feminist reading against such argument is that solely relying on the institution of marriage or marital relation, it gives complete impunity to the husband, giving rights to the husband that wife is solely the property of the husband. The Indian legal system, however, does not consider marital rape as a crime nor does it recognize the very existence of marital rape if the woman is more than 15 years of age.

Types of marital rape:¹

- **Battering rape** – battering rape occurs when physical and sexual violence occur together. Victims may experience the physical and sexual violence at the same time or one may occur after another. The rape may occur after physical violence as an attempt to "make up."
- **Force-only rape** – this type of rape happens when physical violence is not present. As with all rape, this type of spousal rape is spurred by a desire to exert power and control over another person. This desire manifests in acting as if sex is an entitlement to one party from another.
- **Obsessive/Sadistic rape** – obsessive or sadistic rape is rape that involves torture or perverse sexual acts. This type of marital rape tends to be very violent and result in physical injuries.

(<https://www.healthyplace.com/abuse/rape/marital-rape-spousal-rape#ref>)

13.4.2. Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 was enacted by the Parliament of India to protect women from domestic violence. The Act has defined domestic violence as that which:

- i) harms or injures or endangers the health, safety, life, limb or well-being, whether mental or physical, of the aggrieved person or tends to do so and includes causing physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse; or
- ii) harasses, harms, injures or endangers the aggrieved person to coerce her or any other person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any dowry or other property or valuable security or
- iii) has the effect of threatening the aggrieved person or any person related to her by any conduct, or
- iv) otherwise injures or causes harm, whether physical or mental, to the aggrieved person.

The Act recognizes that domestic violence is an act of violating human rights and ensures women to live in a violence-free home without fear. It further gives women safety and security in the household.

13.5 SUMMING UP

In this Unit, we have discussed various aspects of property rights and the issue of domestic violence. Though the Indian Constitution and law give equal rights to men and women in terms of property rights, the majority of the women do not claim or society does not encourage them to claim the parental property. Moreover, the Right to Property Act is not uniform in India, where various religions are guided by their respective personal laws. Similarly, domestic violence is also an important site where women are physically, mentally or economically tortured by the husband or by the family members. Various data show that more than 30% of Indian women face domestic violence in different forms at some point in her life. At the same time, domestic violence is the least reported crime in India, and it is thought that family can itself solve the domestic issues instead of going to court or the police. Indian constitution has enacted a law to stop crime against women in the household by which women can live a happy life without fear in a violence-free atmosphere.

Glossary

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|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coparcener: A person who shares ancestral property equally with other members of the family. Here a person assumes a legal right to share the ancestral property.• Marital Rape: Any sexual intercourse between husband and wife without the consent of the wife is called marital rape. |
|---|

13.6 QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on the property rights of women.
2. What is domestic violence? What are the various forms of domestic violence?
3. Write briefly on domestic violence against women in India.
4. What is marital rape? Can it be considered a crime?
5. Write short notes:
 - i) Hindu Succession Act, 2005
 - ii) Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

13.7 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 14: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES: EDUCATION AND HEALTH

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Objective

14.2 Introduction

14.3 Education and Gender

14.3.1 National Education Policy (NPE)

14.3.2 Gender Parity Index (GPI)

14.4 Health and Gender

14.4.1. National Family Health Survey (NFHS)

14.5 Summing Up

14.6 Questions

14.7 Recommended Readings and References

14.1 INTRODUCTION

Health and Education are two of the important indices to look at gender inequality in society. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Millennium Development Goal 3 shows concern about gender inequality. It has been providing the impetus for governments to eliminate gender inequality in primary and secondary education by 2005 and in all levels by 2015. When we see these two indices, i.e. health and education in Indian context we see that women are lagging far behind the men, thus gender equity is yet to be achieved. However, towards this end, the Government has taken various measures by adopting different schemes for compulsory education, health care for all sections of all the sexes, to remove the gender disparity so that each section can get the quality education and health care services. Unfortunately, it is yet to get the full achievement. Education and literacy especially of women are basic

indicators of development of a society. It further helps in economic and cultural development. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) also trying to address the gender disparity in terms of health and education. which all the nations of the world have implemented to achieve gender equality.

14.2 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we will learn various aspects of health and education in India and the gender disparity in these two areas. A malnourished and illiterate society cannot be called a developed society. If quality education and good health care facilities are not available to all sections of people irrespective of sex, caste, religion, class etc. gender disparities cannot be removed. Quality education and health care liberate every section of the society, which further helps in socio-economic as well as cultural development. Here we will discuss the Indian context in terms of health and education to see the gender disparity. We will also discuss various programmes adopted by the Government to remove the disparity of gender. After going through this Unit you will be able to:

- Discuss education and gender;
- Discuss health and gender;
- Analyse gender disparity in terms of health and education in India.

14.3 EDUCATION AND GENDER

Education is a means of empowerment. It gives better scope to understand the society in one hand, and on the other opens up various employment opportunities for all sections of the people. We all know the position of women in society where they are discriminated from their rights and considered as second citizens. Thus, education has the potentiality to bring them to the mainstream for living a better life in society. It is one of the vehicles of social change.

However, the educational status of women in comparison to men is not very encouraging all over the world. We see gender disparity in various areas such as political participation, decision-making, education, health etc. in all aspects of social life. Education is an indicator through which gender disparity can be reduced. Through education, other gender disparities and access to resources also can be reduced. True liberation of women can be done through education, which is an active agent of social change and development of society. As American anthropologist, Margaret Mead said, “every time we liberate a woman we liberate a man”.

In earlier times women education was never an issue in the Indian context. Women were best considered as mothers and housewives who needed to perform their household duties. With the coming of the British, and introduction of modern education, a handful of urban, upper middle class women got the opportunity to get primary as well as higher education. Christian Missionaries also played an important role to educate people including the girls in the rural or interior areas. The social reform movement in India also was a catalyst for women empowerment and education in 19th and early 20th century.

After independence, India has been trying to push women education. Many policies and initiatives were taken by the state for the democratization of education and education for all.

However, gender inequality in education is a persistent problem in India. India consists almost 30% of the world illiterate population where out of this in India almost 70% women are illiterate. There are several factors that women do not get primary education or those who achieved primary education cannot afford for higher education. However, such discrimination begins at the primary level itself. Various social dogmas, patriarchy, early age marriage, cultural taboos, caste, class etc. are some of the factors that women do not get quality and proper education for which gender disparity is seen in education.

It is to be mentioned here that the dropout rates among the girls, especially those who belong to the marginalized sections and from the rural areas are much higher. The latest Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), suggest an improvement in the statistics - the number of out-of-school girls in India has gone down from 10.3 per cent in 2006 to 4.1 per cent in 2019. However according to the latest Child Rights and You (CRY) report, only one in every three school-going children in the country pass class 12 at an appropriate age.

14.3.1 National Education Policy (NPE)

In 1968, the National Policy of Education was adopted to improve the education scenario of the country. The major aim of the policy was to give full access to education to all section of the people. It was considered a radical restructuration of education for cultural and economic development. It was also mandated that every five year its progress would be reviewed. In 1986, the second NEP was again adopted after the reviews and discussion took place in the budget session of the Indian Parliament in 1985. A committee was set up in 1990 to review the NPE under the chairmanship of A. Rammurti for recommendations and modifications. In 1991, the Reddy Committee was set up known as the Central Advisory Board of Education. The report was subsequently submitted in 1992 that is known as the National Programme of Action. The major goal of the NPE 1986 was to impart quality education to all students irrespective of caste, sex, religion. It also emphasized on education, especially for women. The Policy states, “Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralize accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women. The National Educational system will play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women.”

But, despite various initiatives of the Government, as we have mentioned above the scenario of gender equality in terms of education is not very encouraging especially in the rural and among the marginalized sections. The dropout rate among the girls from the upper primary level is very high. In comparison to boys, it is double in rural areas. Various NSSO (National Sample Survey Office) reports say that:

- Out of every 10 girls ever enrolled in school could not complete schooling.
 - Only 1 out of every 100 girls enrolled in Class I reaches Class XII in rural areas and 14 out of every 100 girls enrolled in Class I reach Class XII in urban areas
- (Position Paper National Focus Group on Gender Issues in Education, 2006)

14.3.2 Gender Parity Index (GPI)

Gender Parity Index is the socioeconomic indicator that measures the relative access to education by male and female. The purpose of the GPI to measure the gender parity in education – participation by male and female, various opportunities available for girls in comparison to boys in accessing education in various levels (such as primary education, higher education etc). GPI is thus a significant indicator for women empowerment. It is calculated by dividing the female gross enrolment ratio by the male gross enrolment ratio for a given level of education (i.e. primary, secondary or tertiary). If the GPI is 1, it shows the parity between the sexes. A GPI varies between 0 and 1 shows the meaning disparity in favour of males and GPI greater than 1 indicates the disparity towards female.

Thus, it measures progress towards gender parity in education participation and/or learning opportunities available for girls in comparison to those available to boys (<http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/gender-parity-index-gpi>).

Various indices have been used to examine gender disparity in terms of life expectancy, education income, etc. Gender Development Index (GDI), Gender Empowerment Measures were introduced by UNDP in 1995. Similarly, Social Watch introduced the Gender Equity Index, World Economic Forum introduced the Global Gender Gap Index, to see the gender disparity in various issues.

The Gender-related Equality Index (GEI) was developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for monitoring of gender disparity in terms of education. It was first developed in 2006 annually published its report until 2016. GEI can be said as the average of three GPIs viz. for primary, secondary and higher education. In India, GPI is also calculated and gender disparity in terms of education is seen.

14.4 HEALTH AND GENDER

To achieve the goal of equality between men and women equal access to the resources and services required for personal as well as societal development is necessary. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” In the preambles of the WHO, it states that

- The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.
- The health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent on the fullest co-operation of individuals and States.
- The achievement of any State in the promotion and protection of health is of value to all
(<https://www.who.int/about/who-we-are/constitution>).

Though there are criticisms of the definition of health given by WHO e.g. medicalization of the society, still what we can sum up health is an important factor that contributes well-being of human as well as important for social, economic and other development.

It is important to understand that when we talk about health as a whole, women and men have health issues such as lifestyle diseases which are common to both and other health issues especially around reproduction health and secondary sexual characteristics which can be different. However, access to healthcare impacts health concerns in such a manner that the mortality and morbidity rates of men and women are significantly different. Hence, gender is a key issue in understanding the health situation of society. It talks about the right to health, health-seeking behaviour, poor health access to health facilities and so forth. It also gives us understanding what kinds of health risk is taken by various genders or what kind of attention is given or required in terms of better health. As such, analysing gender and health gives us an understanding of how social, cultural, economic factors contribute to the health inequalities.

However, Indian populations face a variety of problems in accessing health facilities. Though gender and health issues, most of the times are considered as the health of women but an inclusive approach is necessary to understand various necessities of men, women and other gender identities as well as sexual orientation. To attain or to achieve quality kind of health care as per the necessity, gender equality in health is important. Gender equality comes through gender equity in health and gender empowerment. A gendered perspective of health thus implies the various health needs to different genders. Moreover, various genders and sexual identities face issues in terms of accessing health facilities in various ages e.g. in childhood during the adolescent period, in the old age and so on. Lack of sensitivity of medical practitioners and health institutions towards the need of other genders can impact health-seeking behaviour. The stigma

attached to a certain kind of health issues that are psychological and or sexual in nature likewise impact an inclusive idea of health and access to services.

Various factors such as social, biological, economic or psychological factors affect the gender and health inequalities. It is widely accepted that “women get sicker, but men die quicker”. This implies that the morbidity rate is higher among women where the mortality rate is higher among the men. Moreover, various reports and surveys hold that in India, women health is a major concern as 70% of the women suffer from anaemia and gynaecological problem. Various factors affect the women health. Some of such causes are lower status or value of women in the household (patriarchy in the household), different cultural factors such as lack of female health provider, exclusion of women from decision making on health, poor literacy rates, lack of opportunity and so forth.

Understanding women health is a complex issue and it needs more attention, as women have to take additional burdens such as pregnancy, childbirth and child-rearing. Hence, we need to put the idea of women’s health with specific social, cultural, historical contexts. It cannot be seen without the idea of patriarchy as patriarchy also influences how women’s health can be treated or what kind of attention to be given in regard to women health. World Health Organization (WHO) also says that “because of social (gender) and biological (sex) differences women and men face different health risks experience different responses from health system, and their health-seeking behaviour and health outcome differ”. As such, various taboos, cultural limitations also affects the women’s health as a whole for which “complete physical, mental and social well-being cannot be achieved.” The health risk is always associated with the reproductive health of women. Reproductive health is not merely the reproduction rather it also incorporates the universal rights, women’s empowerment and health service provisions for women. Intervention for women’s health seems to be

lopsided in that most health schemes for women is targeted towards maternal health to the cost of her other health concerns.

14.4.1. National Family Health Survey (NFHS)

The NFHS is a large scale multi-round survey conducted across the states of India. The survey provides information on population, health, nutrition in each state of the country. The first NFHS was conducted in 1992-93, conducted by the International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai for the ministry of Health and Family Welfare. It collected extensive information on population, nutrition, health, giving emphasis on children and women. A nationally representative sample of more than 88000 household and more than 89000 ever-married women of the age group 13-49 from 24 states using uniform questionnaire, sample design and field procedures. The major objective of the survey was “to collect reliable and up-to-date information on fertility, family planning, mortality and maternal and child health” (<http://rchiips.org/nfhs/nfhs1.shtml>).

In the report, it was said that the percentage of the illiterate female is 57% of the age 6 and above of the surveyed household where 9% have the education of high school and higher. Urban women get more access to education than rural women. 39% of women get married in the age of 15-19 wherein the age group 25-29, 95% of women got married. Fertility is lower than any other South Asian country except Bangladesh. During the time of the NFHS 1, use of contraceptive was quite minimal. The maternal mortality rate was 437 per 100000 live births. Almost 100000 died every year from causes of pregnancy and childbirth.

NFHS 2 was conducted during 1998-99 that provides information on fertility, mortality, family planning, and important aspects of nutrition, health, and health care. The International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) coordinated the study. In this survey also it was found that the

fertility of women was decreasing. The fertility found more among the rural, poor, illiterate women and also among the Muslim women.

The subsequent NFHS reports (3, 4 & 5) also give a detailed picture of India. The NFHS 3 (2005-06) report says that the average age of marriage of girls was 17.2 and for men 23.4 years. 46% of women get married before 18 and 27% of men get married before the age of 21. “Fertility decreased by 0.5 children between NFHS-1 and NFHS-2; it decreased less rapidly—by 0.2 children—between NFHS-2 and NFHS-3”. The reports give a clear picture of various aspects related to health, education, family planning, use of contraceptive, childbirth, mortality rate and so forth. It also discusses the use of public health facilities. It is seen that in the subsequent reports the progress is seen in terms of different indicators.

The Government of India has introduced various health-related schemes and programs focusing on women health. The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) is an important program through which health services are provided to needy, poor and rural masses. Pregnancy, childbirth, and other diseases of women are closely monitored along with the new-born child for better health. Through timely vaccination, various diseases such as Polio, leprosy etc are almost removed from India.

Though we get a holistic picture through the reports of various Government organization on health issue special attention is also given to remove the gender disparity in terms of health. However, various social-cultural or economic factors as well as due to patriarchy gender equality in health matters is yet to be achieved.

Conclusion

It is to be kept in mind that marginalization in terms of health is also influenced by various intersections such as gender, social status, employment etc. Various vulnerable populations such as Dalits, tribals, religious minorities, sexual minorities, transgendered population face

various kinds of discrimination in health matters. High level of gender inequality impacts the health and educational scenario, especially of women. Maternal mortality rate, adolescent fertility rate etc. determine the health status of women. Women's health, unfortunately, seems to be understood only in the parameters of adolescent fertility and childbearing years and there is no comprehensive understanding of the health of women beyond childbearing years. This itself can be understood as a patriarchal understanding of women's health.

In time to time, the public health sector assesses the health services outcome. However, gender disparity is widely seen which is not again uniform rather various intersections and different kinds of patriarchy work differently in receiving the health services. In many societies, female feticide is common which implies the right to birth is denied, the right to live a respectable life is denied by neglecting girl child. Mortality and morbidity rate of women are not in favour of women in India. Maternal mortality is high in India. The female mortality rate is higher before 5 years of age as they are totally dependent and also neglected. However, the mortality rate among men is higher.

14.5 SUMMING UP

In this Unit, we have learned gender disparity in terms of health and education. The various organizations of the United Nations Organization (UNO) have set the agenda of Millennium Development Goals and education and health are taken seriously. It sees quality education and quality health services for all giving special emphasis on child and women. The Government of India has also taken various initiatives in terms of education and health services through which irrespective of class, caste, gender or religion can take the facilities of these initiatives and schemes. However, gender disparity is still prevalent in Indian society concerning these two indices for various socioeconomic and cultural reasons. A society cannot progress until and unless all the sections get quality education and

health services. The various NFHS reports show the gender disparity in terms of mortality, morbidity

Glossary

- **Morbidity:** Morbidity refers to the unhealthy state of an individual
- **Gender Equality in Health:** It implies that all genders have the right to live a healthy life that can lead to physical mental and cultural development.
- **Gender Equity in Health:** Gender equity in health means the fairness to address various health needs as per the necessity of the particular gender. As gender differentiation is prevalent hence there is a disparity among the genders and they need a different kind of health attention as such resources to be allocated separately as per the necessity.

14.6 QUESTIONS

1. Write briefly on gender and women's health.
 2. Why gender parity is required in terms of health and education? Discuss.
 3. Write a note on various factors affecting in accessing health and education by women.
 4. Write briefly on health and educational scenario in terms of gender in India.
1. Write Short Notes:
 - a) Gender Parity Index (GPI)
 - b) NFHS
 - c) National Education Policy (NPE)

14.7 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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<https://indianexpress.com/article/education/girls-enrolment-in-schools-on-the-rise-their-dropout-remains-high-heres-why-5615552/>

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MA in English	Bachelor's Degree in any discipline	Dr. Suchibrata Goswami suchitu@tezu.ernet.in 03712-275358 Dr. Pallavi Jha pjefl@tezu.ernet.in 03712-275215
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PG Diploma in Renewable Energy and Energy Management	BE/B.Tech or M.Sc in Physics or Chemistry	Dr. S. Mahapatra sadhan@tezu.ernet.in 03712-275306
PG Diploma in Child Rights and Governance**	Bachelor's Degree in any discipline	Dr. Subhrangshu Dhar sdhar@tezu.ernet.in



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