

## DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC ELECTIVE CORE 01

### Gender and Society in India - 6B16 HIS-A

#### UNIT I: Understanding Concepts

#### Sex and Gender

Sex denotes biological difference that one is born either as male or female. It is natural and it is a fact. Gender is a social construction. It gives meaning to the fact of sex. Sex difference becomes pertinent only after meanings came to be attached.

WHO said, gender refers to the characteristics of men, women girl and boy that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviors, and roles associated with being a women, man, boy or girl, as well as relationship with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time. Gender based discriminations are rampant and the socio-culturally defined characteristics, aptitudes, abilities, desires, personality traits, roles, responsibilities and behavioral patterns of men and women contribute to the inequalities and hierarchies in society. Gender differences are man-made and they get legitimized in a patriarchal society. The difference is constructed historically and has legitimized by several ideologies, social practices and institutions such as family, religion, caste, education, media, law, state and society. "Male" and "female" are sex categories, while "masculine" and "feminine" are gender categories. Aspects of sex will not vary substantially between different human societies, while aspects of gender may vary greatly. It is a not a fixed category. Its meaning depends on the location, time, cultural frameworks within which it is performed. Simone de Beauvoir opines that society perpetuates gender inequality. Men and women are constantly engaged in subject-other relation where the man is the subject and the woman the other.

It is based on this myth of the woman as inferior other that gender inequality perpetuated in society. Simone de Beauvoir states that 'One is not born a woman but becomes one'. In her opinion there is not 'essence' of a woman, a woman is constructed as such by men and society. Patriarchy makes use of sexual difference by arguing that biologically speaking women are unequal to men- an argument that naturalizes inequality as a preordained condition of biology

itself. She espouses thus: While sexual difference is real and unalterable, it cannot be the grounds for injustice and inequality.

**Some examples of sex characteristics:** • Women menstruate while men do not • Men have testicles while women do not • Women have developed breasts that are usually capable of lactating, while men have not • Men generally have more massive bones than women Women are biologically capable of bearing children.

This is not a disputable statement. But the following values associated with are social:

- a. Motherhood becomes a symbol of the true female
- b. No woman is complete unless she bears children
- c. Nurturing a child is the woman's natural job Biological determinism moots gender discrimination.

It views:- a. A woman is made to be a mother. b. The lower wages are justified because woman is weaker and less efficient c. Women's writing is rejected because it deals with less important issues like home.

Feminists argue that gender is an ideology because a. It naturalizes what is a social performance (the women's role) b. It naturalizes inequality between the sexes by proposing that the biological differences are the determining factors rather than economic, social or educational ones. c. It reinforces the difference in social performance (men's role, women's role) as natural, pre-ordained and unalterable.

## **Sex/Gender**

**Sex:** It refers to a person's biological and physiological characteristics.

**Gender:** It refers to the cultural and social distinctions between women and men. These include the attributes, statuses, roles, responsibilities, opportunities and privileges accorded to women and men - as well as their access to and control over resources and benefits. All these distinctions can change according to time, place and the development climate.

**Sex roles:** therefore, differ from gender roles in as much as they refer to biological functions that are limited to one particular sex. For example, pregnancy is a female sex role because only women can bear children.

**Gender roles:** are roles classified by sex, in which the classification is social and not biological. Child-rearing may be classified as a female role, but it is a female gender role rather than a female sex role, as child-rearing can be done by men or women.

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Gender</b>
Biological characteristics (including genetics, anatomy and physiology) that generally define Humans as female or male. Note that these biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive; however, there are individuals who possess both male and female characteristics	Socially constructed set of roles and responsibilities associated with being girl and boy or women and men, and in some cultures at other gender.
Born with	Not born with.
Natural	Learned.
Universal, A historical, no variation from culture to culture or time to time.	Universal, A historical, no variation from culture to culture or time to time.
Cannot be changed, except with the medical treatment.	Although deeply rooted, gender roles can be changed over time, since social values and norms are not static.
Example: Only women can give birth. Only women can breastfeed.	Example: The expectation of men to be economic providers of the family and for women to be caregivers is a gender norm in many cultural contexts. However, women prove able to do traditionally male jobs as well as men (e.g. men and women can do housework; men and women can be leaders and managers)

## **Patriarchy, Patriline**

Anthropological evidence suggests that most pre-historic hunter-gatherer societies were relatively egalitarian, and that patriarchal social structures did not develop until many years after the end of the Pleistocene era, following social and technological innovations such as agriculture and domestication. However, research has not yet found a specific event. Patriarchy manifests itself in various forms of discriminations, inequalities, hierarchies, inferior status and position of women in society. Patriarchy literally means rule of the father in a male-dominated family. It is a social and ideological construct which considers men (who are the patriarchs) as superior to women. Sylvia Walby views that it is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Patriarchy is based on a system of power relations which are hierarchical and unequal where men control women's production, reproduction and sexuality. It imposes masculinity and femininity character stereotypes in society which strengthens the unequal power relations between men and women.

Patriarchy is not a constant as gender relations which are dynamic and complex have changed over the periods of history. The nature of control and subjugation of women varies from one society to the other as it differs due to the differences in class, caste, religion, region, ethnicity and the socio-cultural practices. Thus in the context of India, Brahmanical patriarchy, tribal patriarchy and Dalit patriarchy are different from each other. Patriarchy within a particular caste or class also differs in terms of their religious and regional variations. Gerda Lerner in *The Creation of Patriarchy* (1986) has opined that any single cause cannot explain the historical moment when patriarchy was established. Patriarchy has been conceptualized and analyzed by several feminist scholars in different ways. Feminists have challenged patriarchal knowledge, ideology, values and its practice. Despite a range of common themes within feminism, disagreements exist amongst the feminists in understanding patriarchy.

All feminists do not like the term patriarchy for various reasons and prefer the term gender and gender oppression. Patriarchy has remained a relatively undefined concept and some feminist scholars are at unease with the use of the concept of patriarchy when it involves the notion of a general system of inequality. Michele Barrett argues that the use of the term patriarchy assumes that the relation between men and women is unchanging and universalistic. The use of the term often involves confusion between patriarchy as rule of the father and patriarchy as men's

domination of women. The term patriarchy necessarily implies a conception of women's oppression that is universalistic historic and essentially biologicistic and that it incorrectly leads to a search for a single cause of women's oppression. Patriarchy is not assumed as male oppression on women in India because of the role that men have played in the emergence and growth of women question in India. In a hierarchical society often gender oppression is linked with oppressions based on caste, class, community, tribe and religion, and in such multiple patriarchies men as the principal oppressors is not easily accepted. Feminist historiography made radical breakthroughs in redefining patriarchies in the context of hierarchies of caste, class, community and ethnicity. Feminism is an awareness of women's oppression and patriarchy is a dominant means by which this oppression is executed.

Despite the ideological differences between the feminist groups on many factors for women subordination Marxist feminist views that the subordination of women developed historically with the development of private property. Frederick Engels in *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) stated that with the emergence of private property, women's housework sank into insignificance in comparison to man in productive labour. The world historical defeat of the female sex with the establishment of capitalism based on private property ownership by men did away with inheritance of property and social position through female line. Thus maternal authority gave place to paternal authority and property was to be inherited from father to son and not from woman to her clan.

The bourgeois families which owned private property emerged as patriarchal families where women were subjugated. Such patriarchal families became oppressive as men ensured that their property passed on only to their sons. They argue that it is not women's biology alone but, private property and monogamous marriage, economic and political dominance by men and their control over female sexuality which led to patriarchy. Socialist feminists argue that women's subordination is rooted in the social and economic structure itself. Socialist feminists look at both relations of production as well as relations of reproduction to understand patriarchy. Gerda Lerner (1986) explains how control over female sexuality is central to women subordination. She argues that it is important to understand how production as well as reproduction was organized. The appropriation and commodification of women's sexual and reproductive capacity by men lies at the foundation of private property, institutionalization of slavery, women's sexual subordination

and economic dependency on male. Juliet Mitchell believes that gender relations are a part of the super structure and patriarchy is located in the ideological level while capitalism in the economical level. She argues that patriarchal law is that of the rule of the father, which operates through the kinship system rather than domination of men.

Mitchell stated that women fulfill four social functions (i) They are members of workforce and are active in production, (ii) they bear children and thus reproduce human species (iii) they are responsible for socializing children and (iv) they are sex objects. Therefore women can achieve emancipation only when they liberate from each of these areas. Eisenstein defines patriarchy as a sexual system of power in which the male possesses superior power and economic privilege. Patriarchy is not the direct result of biological differentiation but ideological and political interpretations of these differentiations.

The first lessons of patriarchy are learnt in the family where the head of the family is a man/father. Man is considered the head of the family and controls women's sexuality, labour or production, reproduction and mobility. In a patriarchal family the birth of male child is preferred to that of a female. The former is considered as the inheritor of the family. The Indian joint family is the "patriarchal family and it was constituted by a group of persons related in the male line and subject to absolute power of the senior most male member. According to Gerda Lerner, family plays an important role in creating a hierarchical system as it not only mirrors the order in the state and educates its children but also creates and constantly reinforces that order. Family is therefore important for socializing the next generation in patriarchal values. The boys learn to be dominating and aggressive and girls learn to be caring, loving and submissive. These stereotypes of masculinity and femininity are not only social constructs but also have been internalized by both men and women. While the pressure to earn and look after the family is more on the man, the women are supposed to do the menial jobs and take care of their children and even other members of the family. It is because of these gender stereotypes that women are at a disadvantage and are vulnerable to violence and other kinds of discriminations and injustices. Systemic deprivation and violence against women: rape, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, female feticide, infanticide, witch-killing, sati, dowry deaths, wife-beating, high level of female illiteracy, malnutrition, undernourishment and continued sense of insecurity keeps women bound to home, economically exploited, socially suppressed and politically passive. Patriarchal constructions of knowledge

perpetuate patriarchal ideology and this is reflected in educational institutions, knowledge system and media which reinforce male dominance. More subtle expressions of patriarchy was through symbolism giving messages of inferiority of women through legends highlighting the self-sacrificing, self-effacing pure image of women and through ritual practice which emphasized the dominant role of women as a faithful wife and devout mother. Laws of Manu insist that since women by their very nature are disloyal they should be made dependent on men. The husband should be constantly worshiped as a god, which symbolized that man is a lord, master, owner, or provider and the shudras and women were the subordinates.

It legitimized that a woman should never be made independent, as a daughter she should be under the surveillance of her father, as a wife of her husband and as a widow of her son. While in ancient India (Vedic and Epic periods), women were by and large treated as equal to men, the restrictions on women and patriarchal values regulating women's sexuality and mobility got strengthened in the post-Vedic periods (Brahmanical and Medieval periods) with the rise of private property and establishment of class society. Patriarchal constructions of social practices are legitimized by religion and religious institution as most religious practices regard male authority as superior and the laws and norms regarding family, marriage, divorce and inheritance are linked to patriarchal control over property biased against women. A person's legal identity with regard to marriage, divorce and inheritance are determined by his or her religion, which laid down duties for men and women and their relationship. Most religions endorse patriarchal values and all major religions have been interpreted and controlled by men of upper caste and class. The imposition of parda, restrictions on leaving the domestic space, separation between public and private are all gender specific and men are not subject to similar constraints. Thus the mobility of women is controlled. They have no right to decide whether they want to be mothers, when they want to be, the number of children they want to have, whether they can use contraception or terminate a pregnancy and so on and so forth. Male dominated institutions like church and state also lay down rules regarding women's reproductive capacity.

### **Matriarchy and Matriliny**

Matriarchy can be described as a kind of social system where the mother figure and women have authority. The word matriarchy is coined as the opposite of patriarchy; from Greek mater "mother" and arche in "to rule". Gynecocracy is sometimes used synonymously to represent

matriarchy. Matriarchy can be also defined as a form of social organization where women are the dominant gender, a female is the family head and title is traced through the female line. This system is also called as androcracy. It can be also called a system of government by females and another technical description attributed to matriarchy refers it as a gynocentric form of society. Matriliney is a system in which descent is reckoned in the female line.

The children in matriliney belong to the mother's clan. Johann Jakob Bachofen and Lewis Henry Morgan argued that early societies were matriarchal. Some contemporary feminist theory has also suggested that a primitive matriarchy did indeed exist at one time. Morgan did research in the indigenous society of the Iroquois of his time. Claims for the existence of matriarchy rest on three types of data: societies in which women make the major contribution to subsistence, societies in which descent is traced through women (i.e., matrilineal), and myths of ancient rule by women. But myths of ancient female dominance invariably highlight women's failure as rulers and end with men assuming power. Anthropologists believe that these myths function as a rationalization of contemporary male dominance. Women may have greater political power in matrilineal societies than in other societies, but this does not imply matriarchy. Thus, while Iroquois women could nominate and depose members of their ruling council, the members were male and enjoyed a veto over women. Crow women could take ritual offices, but their power was severely limited by menstrual taboos.

Women may also have indirect influence through their involvement in material production. In many horticultural societies women produce the bulk of the group's dietary staples. Even so, men often devalue this vital contribution, and usually have the power to expropriate it. The universality of male dominance is not, however, natural or biological, because the form of, and reasons given for, patriarchy differ in most cultures. Through studying the various ways that male dominance is organized and justified, anthropologists have concluded that it is culturally constructed.

### **Matriliney**

It denotes kinship with mother or female line (property rights). It is more common but matriarchy is rare. Children carry on the name of mothers clan in matriliney. Eg. Kerala Nair, Marumakkathaya system, Khasi tribe of Meghalaya



## Characteristics

- Sexual freedom
- Family affairs by women
- Child education by uncle
- Womens body is deeply respected
- Property rights from mother to daughter

Eg. Umoja village of Keniya, Mosueo people of China, and Wayuu society of Colombia

## **Gender identity**

Gender identity is an individual's self-conception as a man or woman or as a boy or girl or as some combination of man/boy and woman/girl or as someone fluctuating between man/boy and woman/girl or as someone outside those categories altogether. It is distinguished from actual biological sex. Gender identity is our internal experience and naming of our gender. There are many different gender identities, including male, female, transgender, gender neutral, non- binary, agender, pan-gender, gender-queer, two-spirit, third gender, and all, none or a combination of these. All societies have a set of gender categories that can serve as the basis of a person's self – identity in relation to other members of society. Gender identity is not the same as one's gender role, which concerns the set of behaviors and attitudes generally considered appropriate for a particular sex. The term gender identity was originally coined by Robert. J.Stoller in 1964.The term gender identity and core identity were first used with their current meaning-One's personal experience of one's own gender-sometimes in the 1960s.To this day they are usually used in that sense ,though a few scholars additionally use the term to refer to the sexual orientation and sexual identity categories gay, lesbian and bisexual.

## **LGBTQI**

LGBT or GLBT, is an initialism that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. In use since the 1990s, the term is an adaptation of the initialism LGB, which began to replace the term gay in reference to the broader LGBT community beginning in the midto-late 1980s.The initialism, as well as some of its common variants, functions as an umbrella term for sexuality and gender

identity. A six-band rainbow flag representing LGBT people. It may refer to anyone who is non-heterosexual or non-cisgender, instead of exclusively to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. To recognize this inclusion, a popular variant, LGBTQ, adds the letter Q for those who identify as queer or are questioning their sexual identity. Those who add intersex people to LGBT groups or organizing may use the extended initialism LGBTI. These two initialisms are sometimes combined to form the terms LGBTIQ or LGBT+ to encompass spectrums of sexuality and gender. Other, less common variants also exist, with some being rather extreme in length, resulting in an initialism over twice as long. These expansions have prompted criticisms that have the suggestion that the term or its expansions necessarily imply a community.

## **Definitions:**

LGBTQIA+

**LESBIAN:** Usually refers to a woman who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation toward women. Some non-binary people also identify with this term.

**GAY:** Used in some cultural settings to represent men who are attracted to men in a romantic, erotic and/or emotional sense. Not all men who engage in same-gender sexual behavior identify as gay, and as such this label should be used with caution.

**BISEXUAL** or **BI:** A person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction to more than one gender, not necessarily at the same time, in the same way, or to the same degree.

**TRANSGENDER:** A person whose sense of personal identity or gender does not correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth, or does not conform to gender stereotypes. Sexual orientation varies and is not dependent on gender identity.

**QUEER:** a multi-faceted word that is used in different ways and means different things to different people. 1) Attraction to people of many genders. 2) Don't conform to cultural norms around gender and/or sexuality. 3) A general term referring to all non-heterosexual people. Some within the community, however, may feel the word has been hatefully used against them for too long and are reluctant to embrace it.

**QUESTIONING:** An individual who is unsure of and/or exploring their gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

**INTERSEX:** An umbrella term that describes people born with any of 30 different variations in sex characteristics including chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, or genitals.

**ASEXUAL:** A person who experiences little or no sexual attraction to others and/or a lack of interest in sexual relationships/behavior. They may or may not experience emotional, physical, or romantic attraction. Asexuality differs from celibacy in that it is a sexual orientation, not a choice. People who are asexual may call themselves ace.

## **Caste system and Women**

Caste, as we know, caste is an important institution of the Indian society. The varna principle of categorisation of society into four groups, viz., Brahman, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras existed in Vedic society. The four varnas are listed in order of hierarchy. The varna schema were empirically expressed through various caste groups. Caste are groups with a well defined lifestyle of their own, the membership is determined not by selection or merit but by birth. Caste is, thus, an ascribed category.

Women are regarded as gateways, literally points of entrance into the caste system. Thus, the purity of the caste can be ensured through closely guarding women who form the pivot for the whole structure. Caste blood is always bilateral i.e. its ritual quality is received from both parents. Thus, ideally both parents must be of the same caste. At this juncture, the concepts of anuloma and pratiloma are worth discussing. A union where a boy of upper caste marries a girl of lower caste was approved and called anuloma while marriage of woman of ritually pure group with man of lower ritual status was strongly disapproved and called pratiloma. In fact children born out of the latter form of marriage were considered as untouchables.

The chastity of women is strongly related to caste status. Brahman brides should be virgin, faithful to one husband, and celibate in widowhood. By contrast, a sweeper bride may or may not be a virgin, extramarital affairs may be tolerated, and, if widowed or divorced, the woman is encouraged to remarry. For the higher castes, such control of female sexuality helps ensure purity of lineage-of crucial importance to maintenance of high status.

Women in upper caste societies live their lives largely within the familial parameters. Their mobility is severely restricted and they are not permitted to go out for work. Women play the key role in maintaining the sanctity and purity of the home. . It is well known that traditionally women of twice-born castes have been equated with Shudras who could not be initiated into the learning of the Vedas

When a woman from upper caste enters into a relationship or falls in love with a man from lower caste, the couple is subjected to collective power of the upper castes who will stop at nothing to punish the transgression. Many such couples have been subjected to brutal killings. Women's sexuality is under patriarchal and caste control. Thus, while the lower caste man is killed, even the woman of upper caste household is regarded as someone who must die for her sin of violating the pratilomic codes of marriage.

Women of low caste constitute the most vulnerable section of Indian society. Lower caste women too have codes to uphold. Their marriages are too negotiated by their male kinsmen. Women in low caste society generally go out to work and contribute to family income. In this context it is imperative to mention that in the upper caste manual labour is looked down upon and women are not allowed to go out and work. Women of low caste are thus not confined to domestic domain. They lead a less restricted life compared to the women of upper caste society. It is important to remember that the very idea women of low caste go out for work does not hint to their better status but it is an economic necessity.

Lower caste women are victims of both caste discrimination and gender discrimination. Lower caste women are sexually exploited by powerful upper caste men owning land.

### **Status of women in society and family**

As we have seen in the previous unit, in the modern period the distinction based on feminine and masculine gender is very prominent. There are distinctions in terms of access to education, work opportunities, health, leisure etc. The patriarchal system that prevails in almost all world societies gives women a subordinate position in all walks of life. However, due to various factors that worked in consonance, for more than last one century there had been a marked increase in the status of women compared to earlier periods. Compared to pre-industrial society are more visible row.

The phenomenon of discrimination and marginalisation against women exist in all societies cutting across the geographical borders and levels of development, though it varies in degree and areas of operation. Women around the world irrespective of the state of economic development of the countries had little say in the domestic or in the matters relating to the society, spent unending hours in the hard domestic work, which hardly found any recognition, and were generally subservient to men.

Constitutional provisions give stress on the equality of men and women. Art-14 stresses on men and women to have equal rights and opportunities in political, economic and social spheres. Art – 15 also prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex etc. Constitution gives equal importance to women's position and accorded equality to them. It is seen that where all citizens irrespective of sex are equal, women are clearly less equal than men. There exists high gender inequality in our country.

- **Women's position in ancient India.**

Towards the end of Vedic period (Post Vedic period) women were deprived of social and religious rights. There were not allowed to participate in social and religious functions. Gradually the position of women fell down to the extent that the birth of a girl was regarded as a curse in the family. During Buddhist period Lord Buddha regarded women a source of all evils. Therefore women were allowed low status compared to males. Macaulay's Minute 1835, was responsible to bring renaissance in Indian history by giving stress on English as medium of instruction but forgot the issue of women's education, which was responsible for upliftment of women.

- **Women in Indian Tradition**

The role and behaviour of women in the society is determined by our social structure, cultural norms, value system and social expectations etc. to a great extent. Norms and standards of our society do not change at the same pace as changes take place due to technological advancement, urbanization, cost and standard of living, growth in population, industrialization and globalization. Social and educational policies fail to cope with desired changes in various fields. Particularly, social status of women in India is a typical example of the gap between position and role accorded to them by Constitution and the restrictions imposed on them by social traditions. What is practicable and possible by women and useful for them, in fact, is not within their reach. They

have to exist within the framework of social norms and standards, which in turn cause infinite harm.

In tradition, practices like giving away daughters in marriage and sending them to their in laws' house after marriage and importance attached to sons for maintaining continuity in the line have strengthened male dominated social structure. Women are debarred from joining religious ceremonies during the period of menstruation and child birth makes the women inferior in status than men.

In the views of Manu, "Woman is viewed solely as the mother and the wife and those roles are idealised. The ideal wife is faithful and service to husband and his family members without any complain is virtuous". A Hindu widow is cursed with misfortune and is neglected in many aspects. She is debarred from participating in any socio – religious functions like marriages, pujas, birthday celebration etc. which may bring misfortune to them as well as to others. The mere sight of widow is believed to be a barrier to success while attending any function or start of journey. But a widower is not subject to such restrictions.

Male like female never wear any distinctive marks to indicate that he is married. Male widow do not observe fasting for his wife and suffers no restrictions on remarriage. But married woman observe many vratas for the wellbeing of her husband and children and even her dresses change after marriage and more particularly after her husband dies.

- **Women and social role / position.**

Sense of femininity develops in the girl child before she is old enough to realize that there are two sexes. Although they possess all capabilities and potentialities but they are generally ignorant about that .Shyness, politeness, nobleness and modesty are approved qualities for girls. They are trained to speak with soft words and avoid harsh and hard language. Girl child plays motherly roles in the family by shouldering responsibilities of household work such as looking after siblings, fetching water, collecting firewood, cleaning the house, cooking etc. The majority of children who have never attended school or who have dropped out at an early stage of education come from poor families or their parents are illiterate or semiliterate or do not in a position to visualize the importance of educating their daughters. Parents are not well enough to afford for education of their daughters. In rural areas, daughters of agricultural labourers, small farmers and artisans and

in urban areas, daughters of slum dwellers working in low level occupations are most likely to be withdrawn from school early. (World Bank, 1991). Sometimes the economic condition of family pushes children to become child labour. Daughters in their childhood and adolescence are neglected and more labour is extracted from them parents because of net flow of wealth from daughters to their parents

- **Educational Statistics**

According to census 2011, there exists 16.68% gender gap in literacy rate. Despite increase in enrolment ratio, women remain unrepresented at all levels of education relative to men. Fewer females than males enter educational programmes be they formal, or non formal. Fewer females than males receive technical and vocational training and women account for a very small proportion of enrolment in Post Secondary Education. (Gail P. Kelly and Carolyn Elliott, 1982). Homemaking is the sole vocation for women. In spite of development of human civilization new forms of vocations and professions have come up. But majority of women seem to contribute their time in unpaid activities like household and agricultural work like sowing, weeding, transplantation, manuring, harvesting, winnowing, shelling and storing harvested crops and seeds along with activities within family such as cooking, cleaning utensils, washing clothes, taking care of children and aged persons etc.

- **Women and nutrition**

Generally women suffer from malnutrition. (Waldron,1987) views that higher mortality rate in childhood may be either because of certain specific causes, which affect the fairer sex more or due to gender discrimination in nutrition and health care. Excess female mortality is a part of family building strategy, where girls are considered as burden and boys as resources. (Das Gupta, 1987) Although practice of breast feeding is universal in India, some studies have pointed out gender differences in duration of breast feeding of children (World Bank, 1991). Sometimes female infants are breastfed less frequently and for shorter durations than male infants, their weaning all start earlier and they are given low quality food. Status of immunization is also far from satisfactory

- **Female foeticide**

In Indian social scenario a girl child is a burden on the family. We accept birth of male child gladly but we (some people) express unhappiness and anguish when listen the birth of girl child. In the marriage of girls parents are bound to give dowry which disturbs economic condition of family. So parents adopt different means to avoid the birth of girl child. Parents regard bringing up girl child is a wasteful expenditure and a financial burden in future. Most of the parents go for abortion when the foetus in prenatal period is detected as female foetus. If it takes birth somehow, then parents leave it in the hospital or in any place (unprotected) at the mercy of others .Even parents throw the girl child mercilessly.

- **Women and workforce**

Due to either no earning or low earning activities of women their contributions to the society go unnoticed. Many women are working in domestic sector in India. About 10% of the female population over the age of 12 are employed in domestic service. It is second largest employment of women after agricultural labour. The women working as fulltime servants are harassed physically, psychologically and sometimes, sexually. Some women also serve as part time servants. After sexual harassment they are killed by supari killers. In some cases they are underpaid. When the part time domestic woman worker comes to her own house after a day's work, her dirty home with hazardous environment waits her which damage her own children's life who do not attend school.

- **Women and their position in the family**

Children cannot inherit their caste or surname of their mother. In spite of education of women, they occupy an inferior position in family. Important decisions like pregnancy, size of family, purchase and ownership of property, vehicles and cell phone etc .are mostly taken by male members. Economically independent women are also helpless. They begin their day at the crack of dawn. They take care of entire family, send children to school, pack their husbands' lunch and go to the vehicle stand to catch overcrowded vehicle for reaching at work places. They have to perform their duties equivalent to their male counterparts. On returning home they have to complete all their household works and have to manage the same routine of the next day. The works they do at home are uncountable. Their works are not considered as productive work by



family. The household work and childcare are not considered “work”. This invisibilisation of women’s labour fails to get them their due weight age in the family. Wife is the possession of husband. He has full right of her. According to Manu. “In childhood a woman must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband and when her lord is dead, to her sons. A woman must never be independent”.

In most of the times women are the convenient and easy prey of men because of their economic and social dependence. It is not only case of illiterate and economically dependent women but also the case of educated / uneducated employed women. Severe incidents of wife – beating cases are seen in our society which is mostly in connection with dowry. It is a medium to extract money or property from the relatives of married women even in excess of what was already negotiated. This sometimes leads to death of victimized women. Here the oppression of girl child does not end. When the girl child goes to school she faces the problem of sexual harassment. Even the child of 3 years is sexually tortured.

Presently news papers bring out news concerning sexual assaults given by teachers, tuition masters, distant relatives, passerby bus conductors, auto drivers etc. Sometimes girls commit suicide after being raped or getting sexual offence. In some cases girls and even married women are raped and put to death mercilessly and thrown into the river or roadside bare bodied. Our civilized society hind itself and go away without giving any help to those dying and dead follows. Women in the name of religious and socio-cultural practices have been denied opportunities of growth. To think equality of sexes is an illusion. Women historically have never been given the required importance in India be it in the field of agriculture, production, construction, politics and education, History is full of stories of exploitation, humiliation and suppression.

Indian woman has a multifaceted personality. She is the centre around which the whole world revolves. She is hard working and works with dedication. She shares most of the duties and responsibilities of her family .She strongly influence the moral, social and creative development of her children .She is dutiful and housekeeping, childrearing, assisting in agriculture and in industry. But we are treating them as second class citizens. Oppression, rape, humiliation, disrespect are rewards for women. We are torturing women from cradle to grave. To quote Dillip kaur, Tiwana, 2012 in this context, “when she takes birth, you become gloomy, when sits back home, you call her crazy, when she marries you, you burn her; but can you live without her? Your

daughter, your mother? Your sister? Your wife?" Gender inequality is a far reaching social impairment. (Amartiya Sen). Law is becoming lawless where women versus men are involved. (Justice Krishna Iyer).

Time has ripen to analyse the causes of gender disparity, which give a low status to women. Efforts should be taken for empowering women which may help them to move out from a weak position and to exercise their power like men. They should be given free and compulsory education so that they can claim their rights. They should be educated enough to exercise their opinion in taking decision in the matters of marriage, family size, household developmental activities, work situations and even community activities, national and international debates and discussions. Autonomy and power to maintain strong functioning position and to control their lives must be given to them. They should be made agents of their own development and be able to set their own aims and be strengthened to challenge and change their inferior position in the society. Then they will be made free from exploitation, social injustice and inequality.

Women empowerment is not an automatic and spontaneous process. It requires efforts deliberately and consistently from all human beings in all walks of life.

## **UNIT II: Gender Studies**

### **Gender Studies as a Discipline**

Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary branch of knowledge and had link with wide range of disciplines in social sciences including media studies; and literature. It includes women studies, masculine and queer studies. It incorporates the approaches and methods of these disciplines. But each discipline differs in its approach to how and why gender is studied. Gender studies basically looks at how the historical, cultural, and social events shape the role of gender in different societies. Gender Studies is developed from the Women Studies which came into being in late 1960's. Women's Studies developed as a discipline at the universities in 1970s and 80s. Following the strong second wave of feminist mobilization in this period, the pressure for the development of scientific teaching and research about women's position in society was growing. As late as the 1960s, university students in the social sciences did not receive any teaching about women's position and gender relations in society as part of their studies. The basis of this negligence was no doubt that 'women' or 'the family' were mostly seen as 'natural' phenomena without any interest for the (male dominated) universities. In the beginning, the opposition to Women's Studies as a university subject was severe.

Women's Studies were accused of being 'political' and 'un-scientific'. Feminist scholars answered that male dominated science was itself biased and gender-blind. In the beginning, Women's Studies were accused of being 'political'. Feminist scholars answered, that traditional gender-blind research in itself is biased and unable to understand the complexity of society. The Women's Studies Quarterly and Feminist Studies Journals are founded as interdisciplinary forums for the exchange of emerging perspectives on women, gender, and sexuality in 1972. 1980s: Women's studies undergoes an intensely self-reflective period in 1980s as it grappled with the issues of how to identify the concept of "women," which had largely been defined as white, middle-class, heterosexual, Christian, education women of privilege

#### **Key areas on which women studies relied on –**

a. Critique of knowledge-Knowledge is seen as generated and controlled by men and which excludes women's knowledge.

b. Recovery of women's texts, modes of knowing and experiences

c. Shift from liberal feminist views to more socialist and radical views of gender roles and culture.

Of late, Women's Studies is engaged in the move to eliminate the term women and replace it with gender. The change to gender studies suggests that the field needs to be paying attention to the relationships between men and women rather than focusing predominantly on women's experiences and knowledge itself. The main argument against the change to Gender Studies is the claim that this shift will undo the past forty years in bringing women and women's standpoints to the forefront in research, knowledge, and cultural production. But there are also many arguments for the change to Gender Studies. One is that it is a more appropriate title as it also includes gay, lesbian, and transgendered individuals. The title change would also make it possible to include Men. Gender Studies is today well established as an interdisciplinary field of study which draws on knowledge from both the humanities, the social sciences, medicine, and natural science. The basis for the academic field of Gender Studies was in many countries laid in the 1970s, when women in Academia protested against the ways in which academic knowledge production made women invisible and ignored gendered power

The aim of the academic project of Gender Studies was to generate a new field of knowledge production which could gain impact on science and scholarly practices and theories. Against this background, a critical and innovative approach to existing science and academic scholarship is one of the characteristics of the subject area. The relationship between knowledge, power and gender in interaction with other social divisions such as ethnicity, class, sexuality, nationality, age, disability, etc. is critically scrutinized in gender research. From the beginning, there has been a lively debate among those who identify with the field about its contents, conceptual frameworks and theories: What is Gender Studies? What is the "object" of study? Is a delimited "object" of study needed? Is it more interesting to ask critical questions about the role of the subject of scholarly knowledge production? What about the impact on research of the ways in which the subject "behind" the research is embedded in gendered, sexualized, class-defined, ethnically and nationally located power relations? Questions such as: Who is doing science? For which purposes? And who benefits? has been key issues in the unfolding of the academic project of Gender Studies. Since the start in the 1970s, gender research has been inspired by and embedded in many different and sometimes partly overlapping scholarly traditions, such as empiricism,

marxism, psychoanalysis, post structuralism, critical studies of men and masculinities, critical race theory, critical studies of whiteness, intersectionality and postcolonial theory, queer studies, lesbian, gay, bi and trans studies (so-called lgbt studies), critical studies of sexualities, body theory, sexual difference feminisms, black feminisms, ecological feminisms, animal studies, cyborg theory, feminist techno science studies, materialist feminisms. The field of study has grown and expanded rapidly on a worldwide basis, and given rise to a diversity of specific national and regional developments.

### **Gerda Hedwig Lerner (1920-2013) – The creation of patriarchy**

was one of the pioneers in the establishment of the branch of history called women's history, forerunner of Gender history. She developed it into an academic discipline by introducing degree programmes in women's history and developing curricula for it. The concrete works she did in Sarah Lawrence college in US where she taught from 1968 to 1979, included the publication of books and anthologies about women. It gave a strong foundation for women's history and rendered direction how to look at history from women's point of view. Her works at this time included anthologies *Black Women in White America* (1972) and *The Female Experience* (1976), which she edited, along with her essay collection, *The Majority Finds Its Past* (1979). Her article 'The lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson' (1969) discussed how women were placed in the society at a particular period of time.

She was instrumental in conducting a 15 day seminar on women at the Sarah Lawrence College and it turned out to be a big success and inspired others to organize similar platforms of discussion. She initiated the first Ph.D programme in women's history in the University of Wisconsin in 1980s. Being the educational director of the Organization of American historians she made women's history accessible to teachers and activists alike. She brought in the contributions of black women to the purview of the study of history through her edited work *Black women in White America: Adocumentary History* (1972) Her seminal work *The Creation of Patriarchy*(1986) , volume I of *Women and History* provided the theoretical framework to the discipline called women's history and helped women historians to dig out women's role from his/story. Uma Chakravarti, one of the prominent historians in the field of gender history in India is influenced by the views of Gerda Lerner and applied the same in reclaiming Indian women's role from the past. Lerner explains in detail the historical evolution of patriarchy, the male

dominated social structure, in the context of Mesopotamian civilization, Egypt and Assyria. It was an ancient system existed and operational from 2nd millennium BC itself. She unequivocally establishes patriarchy is a cultural construct. Women were objects of exchange in the society due to their sexuality and reproductive capacity.

Men acquired women by abduction or through a system of sexual slavery in ancient societies. Control on women's sexuality leads to the possession of their off- springs too. Men's desire to safeguard the possession must have led to the rise of private property. The emergence of agriculture and subsequent formation of kingdoms along with the construction of legal structures perpetuated the interests of men and contributed to a male dominated/centred society. Possession and control of women led men to extend his sway over slavery and other modes of production. Women who had no accessibility to modes of production depended men based on their sexual ties. They were venerated in the ancient societies for their fertility or capacity to reproduce the human species though they had no control on modes of production. To make it more clearly, women became economically and sexually under the control of men, still they were continued to be worshipped because of their reproductive capacity. Therefore, one could come across women as priests, oracles and shamans in ancient society.

Lerner observes that women cannot be seen as victims alone or chattels devoid of any role in power. Her mediation with power was through sexual ties however limited was her accessibility towards it. Her role in religion also indicates that her role in the society was complex and simple to be ignored by historians. Women were not able to come out of the world of restriction or limited possibilities as patriarchy tightened its control by systematically excluding them from acquiring all kinds of knowledge. Lerner raises certain pertinent questions in the context of her study about women's biological power of procreation. It is a fact that women's biology that is her reproductive capacity, worked against her in the ancient societies as they were abducted by men for producing children, there is no need to consider it as a mark of vulnerability of women. Their reproductive capacity is always valued irrespective of time, culture or geography.

Lerner presumably states her opinion that sometimes both men and women in ancient societies must have considered the reproductive role of women integral to the existence of mankind. The system must have run with the consent of women too. Cultural values assigned to the biological traits are the prime factor behind the degraded position of women in society- a point

which scholars of gender history took up as a revelation to delve deep into reclaiming women from oblivion. 'Motherhood as the symbol of true female', 'no woman is complete unless she bears children' and 'child nurturing is woman's natural duty' –these cultural make-shifts on women's biological/natural gift of reproduction undermines her into second sex. Gender history started its toddling to establish itself in the academia. The brilliant explanation of the historical evolution of patriarchy left the implication that all those constructed can be demolished. Thus patriarchy is proved to be a social construction evolved over years and centuries. It is not natural and can be subverted or changed. Since it did not give space to female species and inherently discriminatory and exploitative, there is a need to retrieve women's experiences, role and emotions from the past. Lerner asserts that it is important to bring women back to the stage of history, by making their lives and experiences, their submerged histories relevant and central to civilization.

## **Simon de Bouver - Second Sex**

It is a work written by French feminist theoretician Simone de Beauvoir and brought out in 1949. It is considered as a major work on feminist philosophy and influenced women and women's movement world wide. It was criticized as pornography and Church included it in the list of forbidden books. The views expressed in the book were unheard of the time it got published. There were hardly any books on women from feminist perspective at the time. The profound insights on women's oppression were first of its kind and the book left ripples on society's attitude and treatment to women. It discusses how women are treated historically and explained how women were oppressed in the society and continued to be the second sex. She examines the structures, attitudes and presuppositions which maintain the inequality between sexes. Woman all through history is defined as the 'other' of man who takes the privilege of being the 'self'. Woman "is the incidental, the inessential, as opposed to the essential.

He is the Subject; he is the Absolute-she is the Other." Woman is treated as the other of man and the 'other' is defined by man himself. The 'other' is treated as inferior. Based on this myth of the woman as 'inferior other' that gender inequality perpetuated in society. Beauvoir argues that women must become 'subjects' in their own right. They need not be restricted to the roles imposed on them by the male dominated society. The concept of the 'Eternal feminine' constructed on the mythical image of the mother, the virgin, the motherland and nature were portrayed as traps to tie women to impossible ideals and thereby to deny their individuality.

Beavour pointed out that history disclosed many of these fantastic roles consist of contradictory ideals. For example, women as mothers are depicted as respected guardians of life and there are as many representations of mothers in history as harbingers of death. Thus woman as mother is both respected and despised. She connects subordination of women with reproduction and explained that physiology should not be basis of values. Women are biologically capable of bearing children. This is an indisputable statement. Economical and social factors attribute to biology and for that reason reproduction cannot be seen from purely biological point of view.

The following values are associated with are social-

- a. Motherhood becomes a symbol of the true female
- b. No woman is complete unless she bears children
- c. Nurturing a child is the woman's natural job.

To make it clearer, while sexual difference is real and unalterable, it cannot be the grounds for inequality. Social and economic factors attribute to biological reality act as ground for injustice. Reproduction made her an object to be possessed in the eyes of man and motherhood made women to be dominated by men. They oppress women to perpetuate the family and keep the inheritance in tact. She observed women had a subordinated status in Ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. Christianity also perceived women as menial creatures. Apostles like Paul commented on women thus 'of all the wild animals, none can be found as harmful as women'. Though Beavour found some changes in the position of women in the nineteenth century their legal status remained unchanged. Industrial revolution brought her from the seclusion of home to the public; but they were paid very little. She also critically looked at the birth control on Egyptian women. Beauvoir's assertion, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" destroyed the myth that women are born "feminine" and distinguishes between sex and gender.

Femininity is constructed and not natural. Woman is trained to fit into feminine roles. Woman is trained to think, talk and act in particular ways that suit the role. The roles like 'daughter' or 'mother' are not natural but social. Beauvoir traces the education of woman from her childhood and adolescence and illustrates how women are forced to relinquish their claims to transcendence and authentic subjectivity by a progressively more stringent acceptance of the "passive" and "alienated" role to man's "active" and "subjective" demands. Beauvoir studies the roles of wife,



mother, and prostitute to show how women, instead of transcending through work and creativity, are forced into monotonous existences of having children, tending house and being the sexual receptacles of the male libido. She suggested ways and means to reclaim woman's self. Women should think, act, work and create on the same terms as men. Woman should declare herself as equal instead of despising her. Beauvoir wanted changes in social structures to ensure women's equality. She advocated universal childcare, equal education, contraception, legal abortion and economic freedom for women's emancipation. The Second Sex always maintains that each individual, regardless of sex, class or age, should be encouraged to define him or herself and to take on the individual responsibility that comes with freedom.

### **A.S.Altekar**

Anand Sadasiv Altekar – historian, archaeologist and numismatist from Maharashtra. A.S.Altekar's work, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization* published in 1956 influenced the Indian writing on women for decades. His formulation on women was inspired by nationalism and to a great extent the work was an answer to the criticisms raised by James Mill against Indian culture. Uma Chakravarti, who for the first time made a critique of the paradigm propounded by Altekar said that the Altekarian paradigm, though limiting and biased, continued to influence and even dominated historical writing. He constructed a picture of the idyllic condition of women in the Vedic age. It is a picture which pervaded the collective consciousness of the upper castes in India and has virtually crippled the emergence of a more analytically rigorous study of gender relations in ancient India. Uma Chakravarti raised the need to move forward and rewrite history, a history that does justice to women by examining social processes, and the structures thus crucially shaping and conditioning the relations between women.

The best known and most internally coherent nationalist woman is Altekar's study on the position of women civilization. His work is based primarily on Brahmanical sources outlines the position of women from earliest times right up to the 20th century when the Hindu Code Bill was in consideration. Altekar's work represented the best by way of women's studies in history but it also showed sharply the limitations of the traditional approach. Although work unravels in detail the entire body of opinion of the law such areas as the education of women, marriage and divorce, position of the widow, women in public life, proprietary women, and the general position of women in society, it is the nationalist understanding of the women's question. Further

overwhelming concern is with women in the context of the one almost gets the feeling that the status of women needs to in order to ensure the healthy development of the future race. In this he was reflecting the opinion of nationalist writers' second half of the nineteenth century who placed tremendous importance on the physical regeneration of the Hindus. A survey of Altekar's work indicates the limitations inherent in his approach.

According to him: One of the best ways to understand the spirit of a civilization to appreciate its excellence and realize its limitations is the history of the position and status of women in it . . marriage laws and customs enable us to realize whether regarded women as market commodities or war prizes or whether they realized that the wife is after all her husband's valued partner whose co-operation was indispensable for happiness success in family life. Altekar's own genuine commitment to reforming women's status sometimes made him making quaint statements which he intended positive and progressive. Thus he suggested that although Women have low fighting value they have potential military value. By giving birth to sons they contribute indirectly to fighting strength and efficiency of their community.

Further, Altekar's programme for women, despite his apparent apparent liberality and sympathy for them, was to view women primarily stock-breeders of a strong race. This view is particularly noticeable his suggestions about women's education. In Altekar's programme reformwomen were to be educated enough but in doing so one had ensure that no undue strain was placed upon them. He expressed fears thus: As things stand today girls have to pass the same examinations as boys and to learn house-keeping at home as well, all the while having less physical strength than their brothers. This certainly puts too much strain upon them and is injurious to the future well-being of the race. Establishing the high status of women was the means by which 'Hindu' civilization could be vindicated. This was the finished version of the nationalist answer to James Mill's denigration of civilization published a century ago; the locus of the barbarity Hindu civilization in James Mill's work (A History of British) had lain in the abject condition of Hindu women.. But easier to provide a general picture than to deal with a variety customs oppressing women that still obtained in the early twentieth century.

Altekar was thus forced to provide explanations for biases against women. For example he attempts to explain the preference for a son over a daughter by advancing a psychological argument as in the passage below: If a cruel fate inflicted widowhood upon the daughter, calamity would

break the parent's heart. Remarriage being longer possible parents had to see the heart-rending pain of their daughter wasting herself in interminable widowhood. Parents had often to pass through the terrible ordeal their daughters burning themselves alive on the funeral their husbands. To become a daughter's parent thus became of endless worry and misery. ... As a natural consequence... passages about the undesirability of the birth of daughter more numerous. Altekari is particularly weak in his attempts at relating the women at a given point of time with social organization Thus early Vedic society which did not as yet have concentration of power, or a well developed institution of the context for Altekari's unnecessary explanation for the queens. Since Altekari is convinced about the high status the Vedic period he feels he has to account for why we do women as queens.

### **Brahminical patriarchy- Uma Chakravarti**

Uma Chakravarti- Indian Historian, film maker. Her writings are based on caste, class and gender. Works: social dimensions of early Buddhism, Gendering caste, Conceptualizing Brahmanical patriarchy in early india.

Her father from kerala (Palakkad). Educated at Delhi, Bangalore and Banaras

Subordination of women is a common feature of all stages of history and it is prevalent in almost all parts of world. The form of that subordination is conditioned by the environment (social, cultural and economic) in which women have been placed. The subordination of Indian women seemed more severe by its legal sanction. Caste and gender, according to Uma chakravarti, are the organizing principles of the Brhmanical social order. The sexuality of women is the subject of social concern. Brhmanical social organization constructed a closed structure to preserve land, women and ritual quality (caste) within it. These three are linked and applied to organize and control female sexuality. The honour and respectability of men is protected and preserved through their women. The appearance of puberty thus marks a profoundly 'dangerous' situation and the ritual related to the onset of puberty indicates the important relationship between female purity and purity of castes. The anxiety about polluting the caste and the quality of the blood through women is best demonstrated in the horror of miscegeny (varnasamkara). Most polluting are those castes which are the product of reprehensible unions between women of a higher and men of a lower caste. The ideologues of the caste system had a particular horror of hypogamy (pratiloma)

and reserved highest punishment for it. The safeguarding of the caste structure is achieved through female seclusion. Women are regarded as the entrance into the caste system.

The lower caste male whose sexuality is a threat to upper caste purity is prevented from having sexual access to women of the higher castes so women must be carefully guarded. When the structure to prevent miscegeny breaks down the Brahmanical texts consider that the whole elaborate edifice of social order that they built up has collapsed. Brahmanical texts viewed all women have the power to non-conform, to break the entire structure of Brahmanical social order. For when women are corrupted all is lost. To prevent such a contingency women's sexual subordination was institutionalized in the Brahmanical lawcodes and enforced by the power of the State. Women's co-operation in the system was secured by various means- ideology, economic dependency on the male head of the family, class privileges and veneration bestowed upon conforming and dependent women of the upper classes and finally the use of force when required. The process of caste, class and gender stratifications is the three elements in the formation of Brhamanical patriarchy.

Many of the myths of Rigveda reflect clear relationship of women with sexuality. Excluding the demoniac women and apsaras, the Aryan patriarchal families had established a certain degree of control over women. Their position in a pastoral economy with the household playing an important part in production requires them in the performance of rituals. But the custom of Niyoga which was the privilege of affinal male kinsmen indicates that control over female sexuality was firmly established. Post Vedic period witnessed two developments. Aryan women's roles in the sacrifice as well as in production were marginalized. Their labour was restricted to household. The need for monitoring women's sexuality is viewed as a threat, particularly in relation to the sacrifice. The earliest references to the need to specially guard wives are also evident during this period. The Satapatha Brahmana expresses the fear that the wife might go to other men. It also states that Divine raja Varuna seizes the woman who has adulterous intercourse with men other than her husband. Women's 'essential nature' came to be identified with their sexuality in the post- Vedic period.

The innate nature of women was represented as sinful. Satapatha Brhamana states that a woman, a sudra, a dog, and a crow are the embodiments of untruth, sin, and darkness. The sage Agastya states that it has been a woman's nature ever since creation began to cling to a man only

when he prospers, and desert him in difficulty; their fickle natures are modeled on the flashes of lightning. Anasuya complains that normally women do not know right wrong, and even though they are dependent on their husbands for protection they wander about with their hearts subject only to their own desires. Tryambaka, the author of *Stridharmapaddhati* says that women are innately promiscuous, fickle minded, lacking in love, and unfaithful to their husbands even when closely guarded. It is difficult to deal with the innately overflowing and uncontrollable sexuality of women.

Manu, the ancient lawgiver and the prominent ideologue of Brahmanical system dealt explicitly the notion of the essential nature of women that is sexuality. According to him women must be closely guarded day and night regardless of their age. By carefully guarding the wife a man preserves the purity of his offspring, his family, himself, and his means of acquiring merit. After conception by his wife, the husband becomes an embryo and is born again of her that is the wifehood of a wife. Husband should carefully guard his wife to keep his offspring pure and ensure his future. Women should be thoroughly restrained. The essential nature of women drives them into seeking satisfaction anywhere, anytime and with anyone. In the opinion of Uma Chakravarti women's uncontrolled sexuality was perceived as posing a threat and the narrative and normative literature of ancient India is thus full of references to the wickedness of women and of their 'insatiable' lust.

One of the devices by which the mechanism of controlling women is operated through the ideology called **stridharma/pativratadharma**. It is the main instrument through which the patriarchal Brahmanical society subordinated women. They were given schooling in stridharma. This wifely codes/pativratadharma were internalized by women. Therefore women attempted to live up to the idealized notions of pativrata. Chastity and widely fidelity are some of the constituents of pativrata. They accepted stridharma and considered it as the highest expressions of their selfhood. In the opinion of Uma Chakravarti pativrata can be considered as the most successful ideologies constructed by any patriarchal system. Women themselves controlled their own sexuality and believed that they gained power and respect through the codes they adopted. Women as biological creatures are representatives of a wild or untamed nature. Through the Stridharma the biological woman can be tamed and converted into woman as a social entity. The wicked and untamed nature of woman can be subordinated and conquered by

the virtue of the ideal wife. Once the tension between nature and culture is resolved women can emerge as paragons of virtue.

Uma Chakravati opines ‘pativrata may be regarded as the ideological purdha of the Hindu woman.’”There are many instances of pativrata ideals in Hindu mythologies. Ramayana created the role models for men and women. There are idealized brothers and sons; but the most powerful and long lasting of these deals is that of Sita, the long suffering, patient, loving and faithful wife of Rama. Arundhati could stay the motion of the Sun. Savitiri could win back her dead husband from Yama. Anasuya could transform evil men with lustful desires into babies. Force by knismen is prescribed to keep woman firmly within the stridharma. If they are not guarded, stated Manu, they bring sorrow to two families, the one into which a woman is born and the one into which she is given. Special responsibility in guarding women is laid upon the husband who is represented as most vulnerable to the loss of his progeny through the infidelity of women. Law and custom must ensure that women are kept under the control of patriarchy. The king was vested with the authority to punish errant wives. It shows that the scriptures advise the use of violence to punish women particularly wives, to make them conform to the requirements of wifely fidelity

## **Leela Dube**

was an anthropologist and feminist scholar. She was one of the pioneers of feminist scholarship in India. She broadened the discipline of anthropology by introducing the insights of women’s studies and enriched women’s studies as a discipline by bringing in the technical expertise of an anthropologist. being a member of the Indian Sociological Society in the 70s, Leela Dube was responsible for introducing women’s studies concerns in mainstream sociology. She played a crucial role in the 1984 World Sociological Congress in which women activists and women’s studies scholars played a dominant role through the Research Committee of women in Society gave a historical overview of deficit of women in India throughout history of Census of India. s”. In a debate on sex selective abortions carried out in EPW during 1982-1986, her predictions about direct relationship of deficit of women and increased violence against women has proved to be true in the subsequent years.

Her work on Lakshadweep island’s matrilineal Muslim community- Matriliny and Islam: Religion and society in the Laccadives (1969)- was an eye-opener so was her deconstruction of

polyandry in Himalayan tribes in the context of women's workload of collection of fuel, fodder, water, looking after livestock and kitchen gardening in mountainous terrain, resulting into high maternal mortality and adverse sex ratio. She showed interconnections between factors responsible for social construction of women's sexuality, fertility and labour, rooted in the political economy. Her book *Anthropological Explorations in Gender: Intersecting Fields* (2001) is a landmark contribution in feminist anthropology in India. It examines gender, kinship and culture by sourcing a variety of distinct and unconventional materials such as folk tales, folk songs, proverbs, legends, myths to construct ethnographic profile of feminist thoughts.

She provides a nuanced understanding on socialization of girl child in a patriarchal family, "seed and soil" theory propagated by Hindu scriptures and epics symbolizing domination-subordination power relationship between men and women. Her meticulously researched piece *Construction of Gender: Hindu Girls in Patrilineal India* in the *Economic and Political Weekly* (1988), was used by women's groups for study circles and training programmes. The volume *Women, Work, and Family* (1990) in the series on *Women and Households, Structures and Strategies*, co-edited by Leela Dube and Rajni Palriwala was extremely useful in teaching women's studies in Economics, Sociology, Geography, Social Work and Governance courses. Her book, *Women and Kinship: Comparative Perspectives on Gender in South and South- East Asia* (1997) argued that kinship systems provide an important context in which gender relations are located in personal and public arena.

The co-edited volume *Visibility and Power: Essays on Women in Society and Development* by Leela Dube, Eleanor Leacock and Shirley Ardener (OUP 1986) provided international perspective on the anthropology of women in the context of socio-political setting of India, Iran, Malaysia, Brazil, and Yugoslavia. Presents cross sectional analysis on gender and socialisation in India. She talked about detailed ethnographic studies of patriarchal, patrilineal, matriarchal and matrilineal societies across India. He studied the gender dimensions presented in the tribal, urban and rural societies of India. Further she gives detailed account of social institutions like marriage, family, divorce, inheritance of property in various traditional societies and how women are placed in them. Works are important because she presents the cross sectional data on how women were socialized and situated in the social matrix. For example Khasi tribe of Meghalaya the youngest daughter inherits the property. Mothers and grandmothers stay with the youngest

daughters. Practices like bride price, dowry, ceremonial gift exchanges are vividly present in Dube's ethnographic works. Kinship systems, how women takes important place in kinship system are discussed.

## **Ecofeminism or ecological feminism**

is a branch of feminism explores women's association with nature. It examines how patriarchal society looks at and deals with women and nature. Men dominate both women and nature. This dominance was observed as unjust by the ecofeminists. Male dominated society associate women and nature with attributes like chaotic, irrational and in need of control. These characteristics which constitute the identities of women and nature are opposite to what men are constituted. Ordered, rational and capable to give directions are attributes of men. Men with such characteristics are supposed to control the chaotic and irrational women and nature. It creates a hierarchy in which men are placed in the peak of the hierarchy and; women and nature occupies the bottom. Ecofeminists question this hierarchy which is formed of long term historical processes. Social norms intimidate both women and nature.

These social norms are the creation of the patriarchal/male centred society. Ecofeminism advocates equality among genders and questions the patriarchal structure which gives an unjust view of the world and nature. Ecofeminists on the other hand, value the organic process of nature, projects the holistic vision of the nature and uphold collaboration among all. They venerate the earth and consider every being in the nature is connected to or depended on each other. Human beings are not exceptions. They are depended on nature. Its commitment to environment and women's association with Nature provides its uniqueness among feminists' movements. Since women and nature are looked as identical, the efforts to liberate one would ensure the liberation of other. Ecofeminists wanted to unpack the long historical processes by which the patriarchal society brought both women and nature under subordination. Conferences of feminist scholars of academic and professional fields met and discussed these issues in 1970s and 1980s brought in the birth of eco feminism in the United States.

Ecofeminists focused their effort first on unpacking the historical connection between women and nature. They traced how women and nature are depicted in past societies and how both developed identical characteristics. Attention shifted to sever the connection of subordination



shared by women and nature once the contexts under which both were connected had proved. Rosemary Ruether one of the early ecofeminists upheld the need to end the mankind's (male dominated) domination on nature and, women should work for it as it leads to their own liberation. It needs the collaboration between women and environmentalists against the patriarchal structure which produced and propelled the subordination of women and nature for its interests. It led to the rereading of ecological theories which overlooked the unequal relationship between man and nature/woman. It also led to the critiquing of feminist theories which ignored the relationship between patriarchal structure and nature/woman. Ynestra King in her article 'what is Ecofeminism?' posits the concept of subordination of nature in the religious belief of people. Belief systems ask for the exploitation of nature by men and women alike.

Ecofeminism acquired popularity by the late 1980s and grew out of the hands of the academicians to the activists. By the late 1980s ecofeminism had begun to branch out into two distinct schools of thought: radical ecofeminism and cultural ecofeminism. Radical ecofeminists contend that the dominant patriarchal society equates nature and women in order to degrade both. To that end, radical ecofeminism builds on the assertion of early ecofeminists that one must study patriarchal domination with an eye toward ending the associations between women and nature. Of particular interest to those theorists is the ways in which both women and nature have been associated with negative or commodifiable attributes while men have been seen as capable of establishing order. That division of characteristics encourages the exploitation of women and nature for cheap labour and resources.

Cultural ecofeminists, on the other hand, encourage an association between women and the environment. They contend that women have a more intimate relationship with nature because of their gender roles (e.g., family nurturer and provider of food) and their biology (e.g. menstruation, pregnancy and lactation). As a result, cultural ecofeminists believe that such associations allow women to be more sensitive to the sanctity and degradation of the environment. They suggest that this sensitivity ought to be prized by society insofar as it establishes a more direct connection to the natural world with which humans must coexist. Cultural ecofeminism also has roots in nature-based religions and goddess and nature worship) as a way of redeeming both the spirituality of nature and women's instrumental role in that spirituality. Not all feminists favoured the bifurcation of ecofeminism. Some women, for instance, worried that cultural ecofeminism merely enforces

gender stereotypes and could lead to further exploitation. Others wanted a greater emphasis on nature-based religion, while still others insisted that a celebration of Western organized religions could accommodate nature-based worship. Those same groups also differed with regard to the romanticization of nature and the roles that various practices (such as vegetarianism or organic farming) ought to play in the application of ecofeminist principles.

As a result, the movement continued to grow and expand in order to accommodate those variations, and most self-identified ecofeminists celebrate the myriad definitions and applications available under the general rubric of ecofeminism. Many women remained unsatisfied with the limits of the movement. Of particular concern was the failure of women in developed countries to acknowledge the ways in which their own lifestyles were leading to further degradation of their counterparts in less-developed countries and of the Earth as a whole. Women from developing countries pointed to the effects of commercial food production, sweatshop labour, and poverty on their families and their landscapes. They accused white ecofeminists of promoting that exploitation by purchasing goods created as a result of inequity. They also took issue with the appropriation of indigenous cultures and religions for the purpose of advancing a philosophical position.

Thus, contemporary ecofeminism must be developed to acknowledge the very real effects of race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality on a woman's social position. Women involved in environmental justice and women representing minority cultures have worked to establish their own sense of ecofeminism to include local cultures and spirituality, a celebration of their roles as mothers and caretakers, and a recognition of the ways in which Western colonization compromised those beliefs. Many ecofeminists were also concerned with what they saw as a heterosexual bias in the movement insofar as ecofeminism appeared to privilege the experience of heterosexual women over homosexual women. To correct that problem, an emerging school of ecofeminism emphasized the need to incorporate the tenets of queer theory into the precepts of ecofeminism. They contended that if ecofeminism is indeed committed to fighting against systems of oppression and domination, then the movement must also acknowledge the ways in which sexuality—and, more specifically, responses to that sexuality—also figure as oppressive mechanisms. Thus, the redemption of women's roles and opportunities must also include a valuing of sexual differences as well as differences in race, class, and gender. Ecofeminist scholars often contend that the great plurality of beliefs within eco feminism is one of the movement's greatest strengths. They note

that the myriad definitions and applications, which sometimes complement and sometimes conflict with one another, demonstrate the liberating and inclusive aspects of the movement. They also point to the important commonalities shared within the various schools of eco feminism. All eco feminists, they say, work toward the development of theory and action that acknowledge the problems inhering patriarchal and hierarchical systems. They advocate the revaluing of science to acknowledge the role of subjectivity and intuition. They also support the creation of a new worldview that celebrates all biological systems as inherently valuable. Finally, they insist on solving those problems through affirming and nonviolent means.

### **Vandana Shiva(1952- )**

She is an Indian scholar and activist of environmentalism. Born in Dehradun, she had her phd from the university of western Ontario in philosophy of physics. She later shifted her focus to the interdisciplinary study of science, technology and environmental policy. In the face of the spread of globalization in the field of agriculture and food, she wrote extensively on the need to retain biodiversity. She argued for the wisdom and advantage of traditional agricultural practices existed in countries. Each region and country has its own common heritage of agriculture and it contains rare knowledge passed over to generations. The book Vedic Ecology explains her stance unequivocally about the need to sustain traditional agricultural practices and seed varieties. Introduction of seeds produced by the technology of genetic engineering poses threats to the indigenous agricultural practices. She is associated with the global solidarity movement known as alter – globalization movement.

Her campaigns against advances in agriculture through genetic engineering spread across countries and continents like Africa, Asia, Latin America, Ireland, Switzerland and Austria. She founded the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology in 1982. She challenged the bio-piracy of Neem, Basmati and Wheat on the ground of intellectual property rights and biodiversity. This led to a national movement called Navdanya in 1991, a national movement to protect the diversity and integrity of living resources, especially native seed, the promotion of organic farming and fair trade.[12] In 2004 Shiva started Bija Vidyapeeth, an international college for sustainable living in Doon Valley in 2004. What did she do for biodiversity? How does it benefit to the farmers? How does she connect nature and women, agriculture and women? She

explained the close bond between women and agriculture in her work *Staying Alive* (1988). She observed that most farmers in India are women.

She is critical of the impact of Green Revolution on Indian women. The chemical fertilizers depleted fertility of the soil, destroyed living ecosystems and had adversely affected peoples' health. She explained in her work, *The Violence of the Green Revolution* that the use of pesticides lead to kidney failure, cancer and heart diseases. She firmly stands against the corporate patents on seeds and for that reason opposed the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights sponsored by WTO. She called it as bio-piracy. She won legal battle against the bio-piracy of Neem and Basmati Rice. Basically she stood for Seed Freedom. She opposed the introduction and spread of genetically engineered agricultural products.

Her opposition against the introduction of Golden rice, a genetically engineered rice variety was such an example of her stance against genetically engineered agricultural products. The creation of seed monopolies, the destruction of alternatives, the collection of super profits in the form of royalties, and the increasing vulnerability of monocultures has created a context for debt, suicides, and agrarian distress. 'Vandana Shiva plays a major role in the global eco feminist movement at global level. She suggests that a more sustainable and productive approach to agriculture can be achieved through reinstating the system of farming in India that is more centered on engaging women. She advocates against the prevalent "patriarchal logic of exclusion," claiming that a woman-focused system would change the current system in an extremely positive manner. She believes that ecological destruction and industrial catastrophes threaten daily life, and the maintenance of these problems have become the responsibility of women.

## UNIT III: Gender Issues

### Domestic violence

We define domestic violence as a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone.

**Physical Abuse:** Hitting, slapping, shoving, grabbing, pinching, biting, hair pulling, etc are types of physical abuse. This type of abuse also includes denying a partner medical care or forcing alcohol and/or drug use upon him or her.

**Sexual Abuse:** Coercing or attempting to coerce any sexual contact or behavior without consent. Sexual abuse includes, but is certainly not limited to, marital rape, attacks on sexual parts of the body, forcing sex after physical violence has occurred, or treating one in a sexually demeaning manner.

**Emotional Abuse:** Undermining an individual's sense of self-worth and/or self-esteem is abusive. This may include, but is not limited to constant criticism, diminishing one's abilities, name-calling, or damaging one's relationship with his or her children.

**Economic Abuse:** Is defined as making or attempting to make an individual financially dependent by maintaining total control over financial resources, withholding one's access to money, or forbidding one's attendance at school or employment.

**Psychological Abuse:** Elements of psychological abuse include - but are not limited to - causing fear by intimidation; threatening physical harm to self, partner, children, or partner's family or friends; destruction of pets and property; and forcing isolation from family, friends, or school and/or work.

Domestic violence can happen to anyone regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender. Domestic violence affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels.

Domestic violence occurs in both opposite-sex and same-sex relationships and can happen to intimate partners who are married, living together, or dating. Domestic violence not only affects those who are abused, but also has a substantial effect on family members, friends, co-workers, other witnesses, and the community at large. Children, who grow up witnessing domestic violence, are among those seriously affected by this crime. Frequent exposure to violence in the home not only predisposes children to numerous social and physical problems, but also teaches them that violence is a normal way of life - therefore, increasing their risk of becoming society's next generation of victims and abusers.

## **Rape**

Rape is generally understood to involve sexual penetration of a person by force and/or without that person's consent. Rape is committed overwhelmingly by men and boys, usually against women and girls, and sometimes against other men and boys. (For the most part, this entry will assume male perpetrators and female victims.)

Rape is a type of sexual assault usually involving sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual penetration carried out against a person without that person's consent. The act may be carried out by physical force, coercion, abuse of authority, or against a person who is incapable of giving valid consent, such as one who is unconscious, incapacitated, has an intellectual disability, or is below the legal age of consent.<sup>[1][2]</sup> The term rape is sometimes used interchangeably with the term sexual assault.

Rape, sometimes also called sexual assault, can happen to both men and women of any age. Widespread and systematic rape (e.g., war rape) and sexual slavery can occur during international conflict. These practices are crimes against humanity and war crimes. Rape is also recognized as an element of the crime of genocide when committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a targeted ethnic group.

People who have been raped can be traumatized and develop post-traumatic stress disorder. Serious injuries can result along with the risk of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. A person may face violence or threats from the rapist, and, sometimes, from the victim's family and relatives.

## **Effects of rape**

- Gynecological disorders
- Reproductive disorders
- Sexual disorders
- Pregnancy complications
- Acquiring sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS
- Increased risk of suicide
- Depression
- Psychosomatic disorders
- Unsafe abortion
- Unwanted pregnancy

## **Statistics**

India – Delhi is first in rape statistics. In 2020, 1497 cases reported in the city. 46% by relatives, family or friends.

2019 National Crime records Bureau - 32033 cases reported in the country

In 2019 – Rajasthan is highest in rape rate and Nagaland lowest state in rape rate.

## **Trafficking**

Women and girls are usually trafficked for the purpose of sexual and economic exploitation, particularly prostitution and pornography, forced labour, including for work in commercial agriculture and domestic work, arranged marriages or to be 'sold' as brides, recruitment for participation in hostilities and such related purposes as sexual services, portage and domestic functions in conflict situations.

Women's and girls' experience of trafficking is different to that of men and boys. Women and girls tend to suffer a disproportionately heavy impact, whereas trafficked men find it difficult to access existing programmes for victim assistance. This requires the inclusion of gender equality

principles in the formulation and implementation of legislation and programmes aiming at the prevention of trafficking in human beings. Human trafficking can occur within a country or trans-nationally. Human trafficking is a crime against the person because of the violation of the victim's rights of movement through coercion and because of their commercial exploitation. Human trafficking is the trade in people, especially women and children, and does not necessarily involve the movement of the person from one place to another

As a complex organized criminal activity, human trafficking is comparable to the trafficking of drugs and weapons, but it is more profitable and less risky because many forms of the trade appear legitimate. Within the global practice of human trafficking, 70 percent of the victims are women and 50 percent are children under age eighteen. Estimates of the number of women and children trafficked each year range from 700,000 to four million, and annual profits are estimated at \$7 billion. Demand for human trafficking is driven by a need for cheap labor in factories, households, agricultural industries, and the sex industry. Globalization has facilitated business between traders in and consumers of trafficked humans.

Trafficked women come from less wealthy countries in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Caribbean. In some of those areas, such as the Philippines and Thailand, the sex tourism industry has increased demand for women and thus the amount of trafficking to meet the needs of men who travel from Europe, North America, and Australia. In the United States an estimated 50,000 women are trafficked in each year, coming mostly from the former Soviet Union and southeast Asia

After Narcotics and armed sale, trafficking is the third largest organized crime. It leads to physical issues, diseases, mental trauma, suicidal thought and unwanted pregnancy.

## **Prostitution**

Prostitution is sex engaged in for commercial reasons rather than for its own sake; it is commercial or mercenary sex – sex as work. Prostitutes may be female or male or transgender, and prostitution may entail heterosexual or homosexual activity, but historically most prostitutes have been women and most clients men.



Perceptions of prostitution are based on culturally determined values that differ between societies. In some societies, prostitutes have been viewed as members of a recognized profession; in others they have been shunned, reviled, and punished with stoning, imprisonment, and death. It was a part of daily life in Greece. In Armenia, the noble families dedicated their daughters to the service of goddesses Anaities in her temple.

Devadasi system existed in India. They were dancing girls used in temple ceremonies and they entertained members of royal families. Upper caste men used them for prostitution. Such girls are known as jogini. They are forbidden to enter into real marriage. In medieval India they were known as Tawaif and Mujra.

### **Causes of prostitution**

- Ill treatment by parents
- Lack of sex education
- Bad company
- Family prostitutes
- Social custom
- Poverty and economic issues
- Psychological causes
- Unhappy marital relations
- Rape
- Restriction on widow remarriage

In India, there are around 2.8 million prostitutes and the number is increasing. Major red light areas in India: Kamathipura in Mumbai, Sonagachi in Kolkata, GB Road Delhi. Many young girls from Bangladesh and Nepal trafficked and used for prostitution in India.

**Types of Prostitutes** - Street Prostitutes, Bar dancers, Child Prostitutes, Call girls, Male prostitutes...etc.

It leads to many health issues like Cervical Cancer, HIV, STD, Psychological disorder, Traumatic brain injury.

## **Gender Discrimination**

Discrimination on the basis of his/her gender in academia or extracurricular activities, academic Gender discrimination is unequal or disadvantageous treatment of an individual or group of individuals based on gender. The person is treated only on the basis of sex or gender rather than their skill or ability. Sexual harassment is a form of illegal gender discrimination. Gender discrimination can be treating an individual differently based upon programs, discipline, class assignments given in a classroom, class enrollment, physical education, grading, and/or athletics.

## **Gender Discrimination in India**

The most deep-rooted forms of gender inequality had been built into the structure of traditional Indian Society. Through gender inequality exists a large measure in the society under different dimensions for long time, its importance has grown in the recent times only. In the traditional society the inequality between males and females existed to a large extent. Women were looked down socially, economically and politically.

Women became scape goats of many traditions and customs. She was brutally killed in the name of Sathi. The practice of child marriage, Kanyasulkam, Prostitution was taken it granted by society and women has no voice what so ever for centuries together. Women's role was restricted to domestic life especially kitchen work and bearing and rearing of children. She has no place in economic and political activities. Girl children were discriminated in terms of basic necessities of life such as food, clothing and shelter. Woman is the last person in the family to eat. She is the person who does all types of menial jobs.

There is no respect for her work. Most of the women's work outside the domestic front is restricted to agricultural labour activity (in agriculture) and unorganized activities in urban sector. The Census did not consider their work while counting the number of economically active persons in the country for quite a long time. The Government of India has taken several measures and also making endeavor to hoist the status of women in the society in order to promote equality of men and women. The different plans, programs, and policies have laid

emphasis on women empowerment and raising the economic, educational, health and political participation of women to match with that of men.

Article 15 of the constitution prohibits any discrimination on grounds of sex. The directive principles of State policy also urge that the State shall direct this policy towards securing an adequate means of livelihood for women and ensuring equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Since seventy's the objectives of raising the status of women and also been included in different five years plans. In the sixth five-year plan emphasis was laid on raising the employment status of women.

The seventh plan emphasized the need for human resource development in women. The eighth plan aims at enabling women to function as equal partners and implement social legislation for women effectively. The ninth plan has identified empowerment of women as an objective. The tenth plan also emphasis on women development by Constitutional safeguards like Property Rights, Hindu Succession Act etc.

The formulation of the National Commission for Women (N.C.M.) and the idea of setting of a national council for empowerment of women are encouraging steps in this direction. Also, different state governments are also implementing several development measures for women's health in general and re-productive health in particular. The lack of sex education among adult girls and re-productive health education among the married women are also cause of many preventable diseases.

Empowering women regarding the own re-productive health care and effecting accountability of men towards women's re-productive health are important for promoting women health status in the society. Now with the efforts of national and international organizations several laws were passed and some laws were changed. But still women continue to suffer from many social and economic and political disadvantages, since the attitudes did not change as fast as the change in laws. Gender issues are ideologically motivated and need a change in mindset in terms of attitudes and behavior of both men and women of all dimensions.

The women discrimination can be visualized on various angles. In a male dominated society like ours one has to accept that women are at the receiving end. The sex ratio is unfavorable to

women and it has declined overtime. The expectation of life is low for women in India up to the recent times. The opportunities and access to decision-making institutions are not equal to both men and women. There is clear division of labour among men and women, designating certain tasks exclusively to each and another. Mostly activities, which have low market value, are attached to women. Women mostly spend their time in household maintenance. There were also gender differences access and control over resources, which were important elements to consider in development, programs especially where interventions may change the value of resource and reduce women's access. The following are the major areas of discrimination:

1. Gender Ratio

2. Maternal Mortality Rate

3. Age at Marriage

4. Early Child Bearing and Other Social Factors

● Feticide ● Abortion ● Female Infanticide ● Infant Mortality ● Child Mortality ● Son preference ● Family Planning Acceptance ● Undercounting of women ● Social inequalities ● Literacy

The sex ratio is very low in India (1070 males per 1000 females) as compared to many developing countries and most of the advanced countries. The high maternal mortality, infant mortality, child mortality feticide, infanticide, abortion, low age of marriage social stigma associated with marriage and son preference are responsible for low sex ratio in India. Also, under counting of women associated with many social factors is one of the main reasons for low sex ratio in the country. But Kerala scenario is different (1084 females/1000 males).

The Social factors, such as, illiteracy, ignorance, the economic factors such as low wage, unemployment under employment and political factors such as, low participation of women in the elections and other elected bodies are also equally responsible for gender inequality in the country. So, there is every need to bring about changes in social, economic, and political structure in order to reduce gender inequality . The term empowerment of women is an

important popular concept among political spectrum. Empowerment through the expansion of the civil, political and social rights of citizenship is a laborious and unexciting process. Empowerment is only effective answer to oppression, exploitation, injustice, and other melodies of society.

## **Gendered Division of Labor/Segmented labor market**

The division of labour can be said as organization of work into specialized roles, which means the division of work process into a number of parts, each part undertaken by a separate person or group of persons (Mitchell 1968). The Division of Labour or work process may be based on age, sex, class, race etc. and it exists in almost all societies. The most basic division of labour appears to be founded on sex or gender (Haralambos 1980). The gender division of labour means the organization/allocation of work between men and women. It can be said as a social perception about what is 'natural' for a particular sex to do as an occupation. The division of labour as it operates in the contemporary society gives women a subordinate position in the family and society. It expresses, embodies, and perpetuates female subordination.

There are different perspectives about the origin of male favored gender division of labour in the society. Traditionalists argue that gender division of labour as natural, God-given, complementary and theologically even essential for the continuance of human race. For them it is originated due to the biological differences between male and female and its roots are in the pre historic cultures. Women's biological weakness is said to have been at the base of the social institutionalization of harder jobs for men and simpler household chores for women.

But the heterogeneity of the sexual division of labour across time and space, cultures, regions and classes within the same society proves the case for biological determinism (Vina Mazumdar and Kunmud Sharma). Another view is that the subordination of women by men is the basis on which early civilization has formed and that the sexual division of labor has maintained a reciprocal state of dependency between the sexes. Marxist argument is that women's subordination and division of labour by sex originated in lines with the emergence of social differentiation and patriarchy caused by the historical changes in the modes of production and related economic structure.

This sexual division of labour and the dichotomy in terms of hard and soft jobs has led to the subsequent devaluation of women's work and it has maintained the myth that women do not and cannot engage in work that requires physical labour. This myth negates the actual life experience of majority of women who do back-breaking jobs besides routine domestic chores and productive labour in the fields or factories, activities such as collection of water and fuel carrying heavy head loads over long distances.

Thus, the institutionalized hierarchy in the relations between men and women leads to asymmetry in gendered roles and expectations and gendered division of labour in the family and the labour market. Due to this women's tasks of household and child care are seen as extensions of their physiology and women's work is conceptualized as domestic and private and personal work and goes unrecognized and unpaid

In Indian society division of labour based on sex is very explicit. Ideologically males are viewed as producers who provide the material needs of women and children; and women are treated as consumers whose place is in the household and perform socially defined roles of cooking of food and caring of children. The division of work is socially defined rather than arbitrary. Women are expected to perform household dominated activities, which are supplementary and supportive to men folk (Jha 1998). In the present day society, it is found that the normative framework altered in practice and women are involved in a variety of activities complementary to the productive activities even within the household. In fact, women's engagement in the productive and income generating tasks is not distinct and isolated from those of cooking of food, caring of children etc. nor such engagement on the part of women frees them from their obligation of normal household obligations.

India has a lower share of women's contribution to GDP than the global average of 37 percent, and the lowest among all regions in the world. India's economy would have the highest relative boost among all regions of the world if its women participated in paid work in the market economy on a similar basis to men, erasing the current gaps in labourforce participation rates, hours work, and representation within each sector (which affects their productivity).

About 75 percent of female employment in rural areas is in agriculture, compared with 59 percent for men. In the unorganized sector also, men are more likely to be employers, women are more likely to be wage workers or unpaid family workers. Men are more likely to own large enterprises, women, if at all, they own an enterprise, they own small ones. Women's work is generally manual and unskilled. A majority of self-employed women are homebased workers that is, producing for the market in their own homes.

Workplace or occupational violence in the form of threats, physical or verbal nonverbal abuse is also a concern for many workers. Sexual harassment can be perpetrated by a range of people including employers, employees, contractors, and clients. It can be subtle or overt and could be deliberate or unintended. The type of harassment vary from the abuse of authority or position to relations among coworkers and affiliated personnel to inappropriate behavior towards consultants, clients and members of public. In situations where there are a large number of young women and limited job opportunities, sexual harassment can be common during hiring and recruitment processes.

Gender segregation is highly complex and is reflected at all levels-horizontal, vertical and internal.

### **1 Internal Gender Segregation**

Internal gender segregation is when women and men are employed in the same occupation but carry out different level of work functions. For example, in school teaching primary classes ( classes 1st -5th ) are preferred to be taught by female teachers, while secondary classes ( Classes 9th - 12th ) are taught by male teachers too.

### **2. Horizontal Gender Segregation**

Horizontal segregation is when women work in certain occupations and industries and men in others. For example, a large number of women work in services, especially the personal and caring services, while women's participation in the industrial sector (like heavy machine industries) is generally much lower than that of men. This also matches with the gender roles assigned to men and women by society.

### **3 Vertical Gender Segregation**

Vertical Segregation: Within the same occupation, men tend to occupy the higher managerial positions and women comparatively lower positions; this hierarchical division is referred to as vertical segregation. Even where an occupation is to some extent mixed, women are usually in the less responsible, less secure and less wellpaid jobs. On the other hand, even in occupation numerically dominated by women, men are still often found in the management positions; for example, the Manager of a primary school.

Women form an important part of the informal economy in almost all countries, both in terms of the number of women engaged and in terms of their contribution to the output of the informal economy. Given the nature of activities (home-based, street vending and other self employment ventures), women's contribution in informal sector may get underestimated.

Teaching has always been a favoured profession for women because it is one of the most compatible professions with women's traditional roles in society. Also, shorter work hours and vacations along with their own children also work in favour of women's domestic responsibilities.

Post liberalization period, increasing number of women is found in tertiary sector (service sector) in the professions like Information Technology and Information Technology Enabled Services (ITeS). A major proportion of women labour force is employed in the allied activities of agriculture followed by service and manufacturing industries.

Manufacturing has also been another major source of employment for women. Industries like fertilizers and pesticides, manufacturing paints, chemical products, dyeing, bleaching of cotton textiles, electric and electronic equipments, garment manufacturing have higher concentration of women workers.

The number of women employees in professional and technical categories has also been increasing both in public and private sectors. In public sector, we find better representation of women employees especially at the entry level as the selection is based on merit in competitive exams.



## **Disparity in education**

Women of certain classes and social groups have not been able to gain knowledge and skills due to lack of educational opportunities. They lack personal development. They are not able to get the work of their choice.

Education is offered through various medium. Formal education is given through schools. The definition for learning different ways is given below:

Formal learning takes place in education and training institutions, leading to recognized diplomas and qualifications. Non-formal learning takes place alongside the mainstream system of education and training and does not typically lead to formalized certificates.

Non-formal learning may be provided in the workplace and through the activities of civil society organizations and groups (such as youth organizations, trade unions and political parties). It can also be provided through organizations and services which have been set up to complement formal systems (such as arts, music and sports classes or private tutoring to prepare for examinations).

Informal learning is a natural accompaniment to everyday life. Unlike formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is not necessarily the intentional learning, and so even the individuals may not recognize it as a substantial contributor to their knowledge and skills.

After realizing the significance of women's education and their contribution to the economic activities, government of India has come up with various schemes and programmes to draw in girls and women to pursue education at all levels namely, school, college and technical education. Surveys at national level have shown direct relationship between women's education and reduction of maternal, child and infant mortality. Also, educated women contribute significantly more towards the economy of a country

In 2011, the disparity in access to education between genders was most visible in India's childhood literacy rates – 82% of boys were literate while only 65% of girls could read and write.

Statistics show that around 10% more girls were enrolled in secondary school in India by 2019 when compared to 2011. While this is a significant increase, there's still a

long way to go in ensuring that girls have the same access to quality education as boys.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), poverty and local cultural practices play a big role in gender inequality in education throughout India. Another obstacle to education is a lack of sanitation in schools across the country. In many schools, there aren't separate toilet facilities for children who menstruate. Separated toilet facilities are important once children reach puberty. Without privacy and the facilities they need to manage menstruation, many children choose to leave schooling altogether.

AC Nielsen and the NGO Plan India carried out a study that showed that 23% of girls in India leave school once they hit puberty. And, the girls who continue their education miss as many as 50 school days each year as a result of menstruation.

In a society as deeply stratified as India, disparities in education can be observed through various distributions, such as caste, religion and gender, among others. It is interesting, however, that even within such disadvantaged communities, a consistent feature is widespread gender disparity in educational attainment. For scheduled caste and scheduled tribe girls, the gender gap in education is almost 30 per cent at the primary level and 26 per cent at the upper primary stage. In India's most depressed regions, the probability of girls getting primary education is about 42 per cent lower than boys, and it remains so even when other variables, such as religion and caste, are controlled. It will take a bold and creative policy to bridge this gap. Acknowledging this, the Indian Government has made female education a priority. Its flagship programme for the achievement of universal primary education -- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) or "Education for All" -- places special emphasis on female education and the achievement of gender parity.

traditionally, a boy's education has been seen as an investment, increasing the earnings and social status of the family; however, different standards apply for girls.

## Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes evolve based on a culture's belief systems regarding the attitudes, behaviors, and other characteristics that seem to differentiate the two sexes. Gender stereotypes are the strong beliefs that people have about the features and characteristics of males and females. The content of stereotype varies over societies and over time. These expectations are sometimes related to the roles that the sexes fulfill in the society. Aspects of stereotypes are being learned by children at younger ages. It develops quickly during preschool years and reach at high level at kindergarten. Later it broaden to include sports, school subjects, and personality traits. With age, children become increasingly knowledgeable about gender stereotypes and yet the rigidity of their stereotypes declines as they increasingly recognize the cultural relativity of these norms. Some evidence suggests that boys hold more rigid gender stereotypes than girls and are held to more rigid ideals than girls. In adolescence, flexibility in stereotypes fluctuates in response to two opposing forces—increasing cognitive flexibility tends to increase adolescents' flexibility in applying stereotypes whereas increasing pressure to conform to stereotypes in preparation for sexual roles and adult status increases adherence to stereotypes (Ruble and Martin 1998). Children use gender stereotypes to make inferences about others at a young age. When making judgments of other people, children and adults will apply their gender stereotypic expectations to them. Even more than adults, children will rely on a person's sex to make judgments and they are less likely to consider other relevant information about the person than adults are.

Eg.

- Girls should play with dolls and boys should play with trucks
- Boys should be directed to like blue and green; girls toward red and pink
- Boys should not wear dresses or other clothes typically associated with "girl's clothes"
- Girls are better at reading and boys are better at math
- Girls should be well behaved; boys are expected to act out
- Boys shouldn't cry or to be shy

## **Position of Dalit women**

Dalit women are positioned at the bottom of India's caste, class and gender hierarchies. It is the outcome of severely imbalanced social, economic and political power equations. Violence against Dalit women presents clear evidence of widespread exploitation and they are subordinated in terms of power relations to men in a patriarchal society, as also against their communities based on caste. Dalit women are thrice discriminated against - treated as untouchables and outcastes due to their caste, face gender discrimination as women, and also economic impoverishment due to wage disparity. Caste, class and gender discrimination prevent Dalit women from enjoying their basic human rights, particularly to dignity, equality and development. Atrocities and violence against Dalit women are means of sustaining systemic discrimination and a means to preserve the existing caste and gender disparities.

The caste system declares Dalit women 'impure' and, therefore, untouchable, and hence socially excluded. This is a complete negation and violation of women's human rights. It was said that in the brahminical patriarchal system, Dalit women had greater space compared to dominant caste women. By 'greater freedom' they meant freedom of movement, interactions and work opportunities in the public sphere; but they do not necessarily enjoy freedom that is safe, secure, productive and progressive. This is due to limits and restrictions imposed on Dalit women's movement in the public spaces where men, and particularly dominant caste men, predominantly operate. These public spaces act for the dominant caste men as opportune places for exercising power and authority over Dalit women.

Caste-wise, both forward castes and backward castes engage in violence against Dalit women, either as individuals or as a group. A study conducted by Women's forum shows that dominant caste men involve four forms of violence, namely physical assaults, verbal abuse, sexual harassment and sexual assaults, and rapes. This is particularly so where the Dalit woman is seen to transgress established caste norms, for example, defying untouchability. The punishment may befall on Dalit women in the form of gang rape or forced prostitution. Sometimes, the punishment takes on the form of collective punishment that is both expressive of caste outrage as well as instrumental in teaching the woman and her community a lesson of 'obedience' to caste norms. Violence against Dalit women is triggered by petty reasons, for example, trying to cross a dominant caste's fields, asserting equal rights to access water from common taps, or asserting the right to

own economic resources. Patriarchal caste system assumes that Dalit women are available for any form of exploitation and violence, as a result of their 'low' and 'impure' character of their caste that does not deserve honour and respect. The gender-caste-class axis, therefore, provides the base for violence against Dalit women. In view of their superior caste status, dominant caste men lay their hands on Dalit women's sexual or bodily integrity.

They perceive that they have a right over Dalit women's bodies and they would be grateful for the sexual attention they receive from higher caste men. Thus sexual violence is understood in caste ideology. Economic exploitation plays a prominent role in Dalit women's oppression. Their landlessness combined with their dependence on dominant castes for work; wage and loans make their position vulnerable. Dalit hamlets are usually located at the end of the main village or on the village outskirts.

The Dalits live in small huts, and even the few who may have slightly better housing are devoid of basic amenities such as sanitation, light and safe and clean drinking water. The women have to walk miles to collect not just water but also fuel and fodder for their domestic chores. The women work on construction sites, carrying heavy loads of construction materials. They also work in brick kilns for long hours, as casual labourers, to lay roads with hot tar in the burning sun, without sandals or any other protective gear. Manual scavenging continues as an occupation in India and most of the manual scavengers is Dalit women. The women are forced to do this humiliating and degrading work, which further results in discrimination and social exclusion. They have no protection or benefits that labour law should provide, since the majority of the women are in the unorganized sector. They do not even get the minimum wages that the state/country has specified, since they are unable to organize and demand decent wages.

Dalit women undertake manual, low-paying, tedious, and time-consuming work. Dalit women are facing violence from male members in the family. Dalit men assimilate the patriarchal norms prevalent in the society with its notions of women's honour, purity and obedience and become the causal factor for violence. Gender inequality and norms of female subordination formed a major category of causal factors for violence meted out by natal and marital family members to Dalit women. Caste and Gender Caste and gender are closely related and the sexuality of women is directly linked to the question of purity of race

## **UNIT IV – WOMEN PUBLIC SPHERE**

### **WOMEN IN INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT**

There is no doubt that women participated in the Indian anti-imperialist struggle in large numbers. If we were to recall the names of women leaders in our national movement, we will find that the list is a very long one. Starting with Sarojini Naidu, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and Mridula Sarabhai at the national level, we may go on to provincial level leaders like Annie Mascarene and A.V. Kuttimaluamma in Kerala, Durgabai Deshmukh in Madras Presidency, Rameshwari Nehru and Bi Amman in U.P., Satyawati Devi and Subhadra Joshi in Delhi, Hansa Mehta and Usha Mehta in Bombay and several others.

Besides all these Indian women, there were also Irish women like Annie Besant and Margaret Cousins, who brought their own knowledge of the Irish experience of British exploitation to bear on India.

girls' schools and ladies' clubs mushroomed in different parts of the country. In Delhi, the Indraprastha Girls' School was set up at this time on the outskirts of the Jama Masjid, in the haveli of one of the businessmen of Chandni Chowk, Rai Balkrishan Das. In the UP, Sayyid Karamat Husain was busy setting up a whole network of girls' schools from Aligarh to Allahabad. On the other hand there were several illiterate women who also participated in the movement

### **MAHILA SAMITIS (WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS)**

The early twentieth century also witnessed the emergence of many city and townbased women's associations. Unlike the girls' schools mentioned above, these were initiated by women themselves. It was as if there was something in the air at that time which made women want to reach out to each other, to do activities together and to broaden their mental and physical horizons.

In the light of the Swadeshi agitation, women's associations like the Mahila Shilpa Samiti and the Lakshmir Bhandar were set up by the nieces of Rabindranath Tagore, Hironmoyee Devi and Sarla Devi. The Hitashini Sabha, a women's group, organised an exhibition of Swadeshi goods in 1907.

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, in her autobiography titled Inner Recesses, Outer Spaces, describes how, in her home town, Mangalore, her own mother Girijabai set up a Mahila Sabha around 1911 to bring women together to discuss their problems and seek ways of resolving them.

Even earlier, she would visit homes and read out newspapers to women. Slowly, the activities of the Mahila Sabha expanded – women were encouraged to read books, journals and newspapers from Girijabai’s own personal collection. Kamaladevi goes on to add: “the discussions were later lightened by music, vocal or instrumental. Later, outdoor games such as badminton were added...”

Two years before Girijabai set up her Mahila Sabha in Mangalore, Rameshwari Nehru, wife of a cousin of Jawaharlal Nehru, was creating a similar organisation in Allahabad. Known as the Prayag Mahila Samiti, it tried to draw the women of Allahabad out of their homes to discuss political issues. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, sister of Jawaharlal Nehru, has this rather evocative description of one of the meetings of the Samiti in 1917.

Rameshwari Nehru had also set up a women’s journal at this time: the Stree Darpan, which was extremely popular with the Hindi reading public. It had an interesting mix of political coverage of national and international issues, short stories, poems and other prose pieces.

It was the new direction and focus given to the Indian National Movement by Mahatma Gandhi that enabled them to come out of their homes. Mridula Sarabhai was a trusted lieutenant of Mahatma Gandhi and was often sent out by him to various places to assess the political situation and even control communal riots. Another example is that of Sucheta Kripalani, who actively participated in the movement and was a true Gandhian.

Women’s participation in the first major Gandhian movement, the Khilafat and Non-cooperation Movement of 1920-22, was limited but there were some important developments. The Khilafat Movement in the U.P. was marked by the energetic efforts of Bi Amman, the mother of the Ali Brothers, Maulana Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali. Bi Amman was the popular name by which she was known. Her actual name was Abadi Bano Begum. Despite her age – she was over sixty by then – she toured the Punjab, Bombay, the U.P. and Bihar during the Khilafat Movement, addressing several meetings and collecting large sums of money for the Movement

The women of U.P. in particular responded to the appeal, setting forth from their distant homes, travelling third class to Ahmedabad, staying at Sabarmati Ashram and experiencing the rigours and austerities of Ashram life. Attending the Congress session, participating in the discussions and getting more deeply drawn into the spirit of **non-co-operation** were exhilarating experiences.

The Non-Cooperation Movement was at its peak, most of the leaders had been arrested. The women took upon themselves the responsibility of keeping the movement alive by holding meetings, often in defiance of prohibitory orders, addressing large crowds, usually for the first time in their lives, and if need be, even going to jail.

**The Civil Disobedience Movement** of 1930-33 was undoubtedly a major landmark in women's participation in political activity. We begin with the historic Dandi March of Mahatma Gandhi in March 1930. When he set out from his Sabarmati Ashram with his group of 78 volunteers, he declared that no women would be part of the Dandi March. This was extremely disappointing for women like Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay who has given us this account of what she felt: "As batches for the first Satyagrahis were to be selected, I asked that women be included. I was told that Gandhiji did not want them as he had other programmes reserved for them. I was flabbergasted."

Kamaladevi rushed to Surat and then took a bus to Jambusar, where Gandhiji and his group of volunteers were expected to reach. She impressed upon Gandhiji the need to involve women in direct action during the Civil Disobedience Movement. After listening to her, Gandhiji finally held out a slip of paper on which he had written: "All may regard this as the words from me that all are free and those who are ready are expected to start mass civil disobedience regarding the Salt Law from April 6." Kamaladevi took this as the green signal from Gandhi for women's participation in mass direct action and this made it easier for the women's sections of the Seva Dals (volunteer organisations of the Congress) to issue directions and organise participation of women volunteers in all the programmes of Civil Disobedience. Women's meetings, processions, picketing of shops the making and selling of salt, all became generalised activities in all parts of the country.

If women came into their own in the 1930s, the 1942 **Quit India Movement** was one in which women's participation was even more significant. Interestingly, women understood the complexities of this movement very well.

Usha Mehta, along with Vithalbhai Jhaveri, Babubhai Khakar and Rammanohar Lohia set up the **Freedom Radio** in Bombay which successfully broadcast from 3rd September 1942 until 12 November of the same year.



In the Quit India Movement, there were women's processions even in such unlikely places as Bannu in the North West Frontier Province. Girl students were active in Meerut, parts of Assam, Sagar and Wardha in Madhya Pradesh and different parts of the Madras Presidency.

Women went to jail in large numbers both during the course of the Quit India Movement and the previous Civil Disobedience Movement

### **WOMEN IN SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENT**

Women's movement is an important variant of social movement in the sense that it aims to bring changes in the institutional arrangements, values, customs and beliefs in the society that have subjugated women over the years. The women's movement is an important variant of social movements. It is an important but neglected aspect of studies on social movements like tribal and ethnic, peasant and workers, backward classes, cultural and religious movements, etc.

In Indian society, differences based on caste, class, religious and ethnicity distinguish the life and problems of women in different parts of the country. An overwhelming majority of 80 percent people in India live in rural areas. The process of development and change affects various sections of women differently.

The position of women in India has varied in different periods and in different classes, religion and ethnic groups. By nineteenth century there were several evil social practices like Sati (burning of widow on the funeral pyre of her husband), child marriage, ban on widow remarriage, polygamy etc. which were a matter of debate.

During the British rule the spread of English education and Western liberal ideology among Indians and spread of Christianity and missionary activities, resulted in a number of movements for social change and religious reform in the nineteenth century.

The broad objectives of these movements were caste reform, improvement in the status of women, promoting women's education and an attack on social practices whose roots lay in social and legal inequalities and religious traditions of different communities.

In the earlier phase of the social reform movement during nineteenth century, the initiatives came largely from male reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy. The issues that were taken up by them were Sati, ill treatment of widows, ban on widow remarriage, **polygyny**, child marriage and denial of property rights to women and the need to educate women. Struggle for women's education initiated by men resulted in setting up of women's schools, colleges, hostels, widow homes, protection homes etc. The social reformers' assumptions were that female education would revitalise the family system, which was threatened by the increasing communication gap between educated men and their uneducated wives. The social reform movement saw the emergence of women's organisations and institutions. However, the movement was led by men and originated in **metropolitan cities**.

## **The Brahmo Samaj**

It was founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1825, and attempted to remove restrictions and prejudices against women, which had their roots in religion. These included child marriage, polygyny, limited rights to inherit property and seclusion of women. Education of women was seen as the major instrument to improve women's position. Keshab Chandra Sen stressed the need for educating women at home and government support was sought for this purpose. A women's magazine called *Bambodhini Patrika* was started. An inter-caste marriage was also solemnised under the auspices of the Brahmo Samaj.

Opposition to such moves from Hindu orthodoxy resulted in the passing of Civil Marriage Act, 1872.

## **The Prarthana Samaj**

It was founded in 1867 and had more or less similar objectives as Brahmo Samaj. However, it remained confined to western India. M.G. Ranade and R.G. Bhandarkar were the leading figures. In 1869 the Bombay Widow Reforms Association was formed which arranged the first widow remarriage in 1869. Two leaders of the Prarthana Samaj, R.G. Bhandarkar and N.G. Chandravarkar, later became Vice-chancellors of the first Women's University set up by Karve in 1916 in Bombay. This was later named as the SNDT Women's University. Both these movements stressed women's education to bridge the widening gap between males who had the benefit of modern education and women of the family.

## **The Arya Samaj**

The Arya Samaj was founded by Dayanand Saraswati in 1875. Unlike the above two movements the Arya Samaj was a religious revivalist movement. While rejecting Hindu religious orthodoxy, idol worship and the caste society, the slogan of this movement was to go back to the vedic period. Painting a glorious position of women in ancient India, it advocated reform in the caste system, compulsory education for both men and women, prohibition of child marriage by law, remarriage of child widows.

## **Muslim Women and Social Reform**

Similar movements began, within the Islamic community in the late nineteenth century. However, emphasis on *purdah* system and slow spread of education among women delayed the development of a progressive movement to improve the opportunities for Muslim women. People like Begum of Bhopal, Syed Ahmad Khan and Sheikh Abdullah in Aligarh and Karmat Hussain in Lucknow spearheaded a movement to improve women's education. In 1916 Begum of Bhopal formed the All-India Muslim Women's Conference. The traditionalists disapproved such activities and were enraged by the resolution passed by the Muslim Women's Conference in 1917 that polygamy should be abolished. In the later years several Muslim women joined the nationalist struggle and non-cooperation movement against the British.

**Savithri Phule** - Wife of famous reform leader Jyothibha Phule. She advocated for girls education and widow re marriage and became a teacher. She started a school for backward community.

**Seva Sadan** was a Movement started by Ramabhai Ranade in 1908 for the upliftment of backward women and it provided training for poor women.

## **WOMEN IN INDIAN POLITICS SINCE 1947**

Several women leaders, who had actively participated in the freedom movement, occupied important positions in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha (the two houses of Parliament), state legislatures. They became governors, chief ministers, cabinet ministers and held other position within major political parties.

### **1. Sarojini Naidu: First Woman Governor**

Sarojini Naidu became the President of Indian National Congress and was later appointed as Governor of the United Provinces soon after Independence, (now Uttar Pradesh) becoming the first woman governor of the Republic of India. She was the governor from August 15, 1947, till 2nd March 1949.

Sarojini Naidu was a prominent figure in the Independence movement. She was a poet, women's rights activist and a politician. She took part in the independent movement in the wake of partition of Bengal in 1905, following Mahatma Gandhi and fought for Swaraj.

### **2. Indira Gandhi: First Woman Prime Minister**

Indira Gandhi is the first and as of now, the only woman to become the Prime Minister of India. Daughter of Indian freedom fighter Jawaharlal Nehru, she served as his personal assistant and hostess during his tenure as Prime Minister between 1947 and 1964. She was elected as the president of the Indian National Congress in 1959.

She was elected as the MP of Rajya Sabha and served under Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's cabinet as Minister of Information and Broadcasting. In 1966, she was elected as Prime Minister of India by the Congress party.

### **3. Pratibha Patil: First Woman President Of India**

Pratibha Patil broke the highest glass ceiling when she was elected as the 12th president of India in 2007. Prior to that, she served as the governor of Rajasthan, the first woman to do so. She has a Bachelor of Law degree by Government Law College, after which she began to practice law at the Jalgaon District Court while taking interest in activities such as improving the conditions faced by Indian women. At the age of 27, she was elected as an MLA at Maharashtra Legislative Assembly for the Jalgaon constituency

### **4. Dr. Shwetha Shetty: Founder Of All Woman Political Party**

Hyderabad based doctor, Shwetha Shetty founded India's first all-women political party with a sole aim for improving the conditions of women in India. She launched the National Women's Party in December 2018, in Delhi and eventually in Mumbai

### **5. Annie Besant: First Woman Leader Of A Major Party**

During the freedom fight, India had support from several foreign nationals including Annie Besant. She is a socialist, theosophist, women's rights activist, writer, orator, and supporter of both Irish

and Indian self-rule. She was the first woman president of Indian National Congress, thus becoming the first woman to lead a major party in India. All her life she resorted to liberal thinking and fought for the same, such as freedom of thought, women's rights, secularism, birth control, Fabian socialism, and workers' rights.

### **6. Mamata Banerjee: First Woman Minister Of Railways**

Mamata Banerjee has several achievements to her name. She was the first woman to be elected as the chief minister of West Bengal and the first woman Railway minister and minister of Coal for India. She also founded All India Trinamool Congress after separating from the Indian National Congress. She became victorious after defeating 34-year-old Communist government to finally become the chief minister of West Bengal. Time magazine named as one of the 100 Most Influential People in the World, in the year 2012.

### **7. V.S Ramadevi: First Woman Election Commission**

In 1990, V.S Ramadevi first woman to become Chief Election Commissioner of India. She is also the first and till date the only woman to serve as Secretary General of the Rajya Sabha, from 1 July 1993 to 25 September 1997. She was succeeded by T. N Seshan as the Election Commission

### **8. Sonia Gandhi: First Woman Leader Of The Opposition Of Lok Sabha**

Sonia Gandhi was not elected in any powerful positions in the Indian government but she was listed as one of the most powerful women in the world. She was elected as the Leader of the Opposition of the 13th Lok Sabha in 1999 when BJP formed the ruling government under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee where she has filed 'No-confidence' motion against the Vajpayee government

### **9. Sucheta Kriplani: First Woman Chief Minister Of A State, UP**

Sucheta Kriplani made history by becoming the first woman leader of a state. She was a former freedom fighter and a politician who founded all Mahila Congress in 1940. Served as the CM of Uttar Pradesh from 1963 to 1967, she handled the state employees' strike firmly, one of the highlights of her career

### **10. Mayawati: First Woman Dalit Chief Minister**

Mayawati broke the glass ceiling for the marginalized women of India by becoming the first female Scheduled caste (SC) Chief Minister of India. She spent four terms as the CM of Uttar Pradesh and is the president of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which focuses on the political involvement, social change, and empowerment of the marginalized Bahujan community

### **11. Vijaylakshmi Pandit: First Woman To Hold A Cabinet Position**

In the pre-independent era, Vijayalakshmi Pandit served a cabinet position, being the first woman to do the job. She was elected to the provincial legislature of the United Provinces and was designated minister of local self-government and public health in 1937. She was elected to the constituent assembly in 1946, a year before achieving the Independence

## **WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN INDIA**

The late 1970s and 1980s was marked by a resurgence of women's struggle and emergence of new women's groups and organisations. After their participation in nation's independence struggle women again withdrew from public life and the debate on women's issues also faded out from the public arena. Several scholars have talked about the absence of women's movement in the 1950s and 1960s in India and the slow erosion of concern for women's issues.

The autonomous women's organisations' took up issues related to women's oppression like dowry, violence within the family, alcoholism among men and wife-beating, discrimination at the work place etc. to mobilise women for collective action. For the first time some groups in Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Patna etc. raised issues such as sexual exploitation of poor scheduled castes and scheduled tribe women by upper caste landlords.

### **Anti-dowry Movements**

Dowry murders have witnessed a sustained campaign by several women's organisations and civil rights groups. Journalists wrote extensively about the dowry problem. In the 1980s several women's and other progressive organisations formed a joint front in Delhi called "Dahej Virodhi Chetna Manch". Organisations in other major cities also campaigned through protest, demonstrations, discussions, street theatre, posters etc. against the ghastly murders of young brides for dowry. The Law Commission and the Parliamentary Committee also looked into the problem. After a sustained campaign, finally a Bill was introduced in the Parliament in 1984, which made certain changes in the Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act of 1961. The Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act, 1984 was passed.

### **Anti-sati Movement**

In 1829 the practice of Sati was abolished through a legislation which marked the culmination of a debate initiated by the British.

The burning of a young widow Roop Kanwar in 1988 on the funeral pyre of her husband in Deorala, Rajasthan, sparked off strong protests by women's organisations. The delayed response of the government came in the wake of mounting agitation in the shape of Commission of Sati (Prevention) Bill, which was hurriedly passed in the Parliament

### **Anti-rape Movement**

An anti-rape movement was launched in the last decade demanding review of the Supreme Court judgment in a rape case, which acquitted the culprit. Women activists forced the government to review Rape Laws. Several women's organisations and legal and social activists held discussions

with the Law Commission to amend the law and in 1983 Criminal Law (Amendment) Act was passed.

### **Government's Response**

- As a response to women's movement that began in the late 1970s, the government set up women's cells within a few ministries (Rural Development, Labour and Human Resource Development).
- In government's programme for rural poor 30 per cent women beneficiaries are to be selected for training and income generation programmes.
- In the late 1980s the government prepared a National Perspective Plan for Women (1988-2000 A.D.), which has made several recommendations relating to legal, economic, social and political status of women.
- The government also appointed a National Commission on selfemployed women and women in the informal sector to look into the specific problems of unorganised women labour who constitute eighty seven per cent of women workers but do not get any protection from Labour Laws like equal wages, maternity benefits, childcare facilities and better working condition