WOMEN AND SOCIETY

VI SEMESTER

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WOMEN AND SOCIETY

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MODULE 1
NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN STUDIES

Women Studies-Meaning .Definition History & Importance

Women's studies, also known as **feminist studies**, is an interdisciplinary academic field that explores politics, society, media, and history from women's and/or feminist perspectives or it examines socially- and culturally-defined gender roles. It is closely related to the broader field of **Gender studies**. Women Studies is the study of subjects relating to women, their roles in history and their contributions to society.

Definition of women's studies

The multidisciplinary study of the social status and societal contributions of women and the relationship between power and gender may be defined as Women studies.

Women's studies is "the pursuit of a more comprehensive, critical and balanced understanding of social reality. Its essential components include

(i) Women's contribution to the social process,

(ii) Women's perception of their own lives, the broader social reality and their struggles and aspirations,

(iii)Roots and structures of inequality that lead to marginalization, invisibility and exclusion of women from the scope, approaches and conceptual frame-works of most intellectual enquiry and social action.

Women's studies should, thus, not be narrowly defined as studies about women or information about women, but be viewed as a critical instrument for social and academic development".

1.1 Origin and Development of Women Studies International and National Settings

International Settings

Women's studies were first born as an academic rubric apart from other departments in the late 1960s, as the second wave of feminism gained political influence in the academy through student and faculty activism. As an academic discipline, it was modeled on the American studies and ethnic studies (such as Afro-American studies) and Chicano Studies programs that had arisen shortly before it. **Women's Studies** is an [interdisciplinary](#) university curriculum originating in the United States in the late 1960s. Almost simultaneously in 1969–1970, the first women's studies courses appeared in a handful of American universities.

The first accredited Women's Studies course was held in 1969 at Cornell University. The first two Women's Studies Programs in the United States were established in 1970 at San Diego State College (now San Diego State University). They were undergraduate offerings, team taught, and provided overviews of the issues that arose out of the women's liberation movement. The SDSU program was initiated after a year of intense organizing of women's consciousness raising groups, rallies, petition circulating, and operating unofficial or experimental classes and presentations before seven committees and assemblies. Carol Rowell Council was the student co-founder along with Dr. Joyce Nower, a literature instructor. In 1972, Sarah Lawrence College became the first institution to grant Masters Degrees in Women's History. Throughout the later 1970s many universities and colleges created departments and programs in women's studies, and professorships became available in the field which did not require the sponsorship of other departments. Within thirty years, it developed into a recognized discipline with undergraduate majors, masters and doctorates programs, university departments and programs, a scholarly literature of books and journals, and professional associations.

The landscape of higher education changed dramatically in the 1960s as larger numbers of women and minorities entered the professorate and the number and size of institutions grew. Many of the women who entered the academy in the next decade had been influenced by the women's movement and undertook research on women. Thus, scholarship on women grew in the existing disciplines and was designated as feminist scholarship. The field of women's studies emerged as the site for investigating these questions, forging new subject matter, employing multiple research methodologies, and experimenting with pedagogies that took into account gender differences in learning styles. Research revealed that new information and interpretations about women forced a reframing of what was known about men and masculinities at any given time or place. Advocates of research on gender argued that the expanded focus enabled scholars to see the sex/gender system holistically.

Women's studies scholarship is in its most basic form an epistemological endeavor. It asks teachers, students, and researchers to develop a reflective critical consciousness whose goal is not only to inform, but also to transform what one knows and how one knows it. To accomplish this goal, it uses a wide variety of methodological approaches and investigates questions at the center of women's lives.

Women's studies grew rapidly in the 1970s, so that by the end of the decade, the National Women's Studies Association counted some 200 programs offering undergraduate minors and majors. The introductory course covered some aspects of women's history, an examination of quantitative research on women's status, selected reading of literary works by women, and attention to issues largely absent from the overall curriculum. These issues centered on the oppression of women, sexual assault, questions of marriage and family, the professional advancement of women, pay equity, and representations of women in media, among other topics. Courses offered by department related to women i.e., The Psychology of Women, Images of Girls in Literature, Feminist Methods and Feminist Theories.

The Ph.D. in women's studies emerged in the 1990s. In the United States, M.A. and Ph.D. programs tended to be organized around issue clusters and offered students opportunities to enter the professorate as well as to assume research positions in government, corporate, and non-profit sectors. In Europe, Japan, Latin America, and the United Kingdom, undergraduate degrees in women's studies were less common and graduate research degrees more frequent.

As programs became departments and as departments grew, the course offerings of the major changed to reflect the emergent scholarship. Courses on identities and differences among women, courses with a global focus, courses that linked with other new fields (cultural studies, American studies, popular culture, media studies, ethnic studies, gay and lesbian studies, queer studies) all emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. The most significant shifts in course offerings at the undergraduate level occurred in the 1990s as the study of gender and of race were added to the study of women. By 2000 women's studies programs numbered nearly 800; most had added a concern with gender to their teaching and research missions while retaining a focus on women's inequality.

By the late twentieth century, women's studies courses were available at many universities and colleges around the world. A 2007 survey conducted by the National Women's Studies Association included 576 institutions offering women's studies or gender studies at some level. As of 2012, there are 16 institutions offering a Ph.D. in the United States. In addition, there were women's studies programs and departments at universities around the world, including many sites in Canada, Europe, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and Australia, as well as Japan, Korea, Lebanon, Mexico, Ireland, Sudan, Turkey, and Uganda.

National Settings

Women's studies first emerged in India during the 1970s as a forceful critique of those processes that had made women invisible after independence - invisible not only to society and the state, but also to higher education and its disciplines. The Asian region, India seems to be occupying a significant position in terms of quantity and diversity of material in women's studies. Though the concern for studying women and organizing action for improving the conditions of women is not new, what is strikingly different is the new perspective based on theoretical knowledge and ideological underpinning both in research and in action.

However, the education system has been rather lukewarm in promoting the values of equality and gender justice.In many ways the educational system on the other hand actively reinforces gender differences through curriculum and teacher bias. Only after 1970 some attention been drawn into focus on women in the educational system. The indifference of the system in incorporating women's dimensions in the syllabi was clearly made evident at the First National Conference on Women's Studies(NCWS)held in Bombay in 1981.Areview of curricula in different disciplines undertaken by the NCWS, highlighted the virtual absence of women in curricula. In response to an appeal sent by the conference organizers to one hundred universities and nearly fifty institutions of higher learning, technical or otherwise for a status report on research on women and women's presence in curricula, only fifty-seven institutions responded and out of them only twenty-three institutions sent their syllabi. Even a cursory look at the syllabi of various social

sciences and literature left no one in doubt about the near total absence of women in the curriculum. More concerned effort was made by the Research Centre on Women's Studies, SNDT in 1984 by listing the Universities were approached, only thirty responded from among them. Of these twenty – six Universities reported having some kind of women's studies programs but of these again, barely twelve had teaching programs at various levels. This is marked improvement within the course of three years- an encouraging development indeed. While this is the history of the introduction of women's studies in India.

Many Indian universities offer women's studies or gender studies as part of their under-graduate programme in social sciences. At the post-graduate level the scope for in-depth studies is limited to specialization in specific gender issues. Avenues for research after the Master's level tend to widen. To facilitate research, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has sponsored a number of study centers in universities -- Jadavpur University, SNDT, Mumbai, and the Women's Studies Research Centre in Calcutta University .

The need for the incorporation of women's studies in the university curriculum was felt by academics in the early 1980s. Following the recommendations of the First National Conference of Women's Studies, held at SNDT Women's University (Mumbai) in 1981 and the UNESCO workshop of 1982, the UGC suggested, in 1983, the start of programmes on women's studies and their incorporation in the curricula of social sciences. Centres for women's studies have since been established in several universities.

Set up to understand and integrate education from women-centric point of view by the University Grants Commission (UGC), the Centre for Women's Studies has come as an effort to mainstream women's issues, an effort to increase women's participation in education.

Going in line with the objective, the UGC has started about 70 centers for Women's Studies in various institutions across India. Recognized as a separate discipline, the centers have been involved in analyzing women's issues through non-conventional means of learning and teaching.

With the Declaration of the Year 2001 as Women's Empowerment Year the momentum of women's empowerment has been accelerated over the past one decade. At various levels the women's issues have been taken up on priority basis. The technological courses for women at undergraduate level in the university provided opportunity to women in the sphere of engineering and technology. The women Universities promote professional courses for women. The universities have taken steps to set up permanent cell in universities to combat issues on violence and sexual harassment to women.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has promoted, strengthened and given direction to the Women's Studies programme in the country since the VII Plan period. Women's Studies Centers have been established in the University System in the VIII, IX and X Plan periods. They have contributed significantly to the expansion of Women's Studies teaching, research and field action.

The guidelines for the XI Plan have taken a broader view of the women's studies constituency by supporting. Further, the thrust is to develop field action projects for action, research, evaluation and enhancement of knowledge and partnership across boundaries of caste/class/religion, community and occupations. To meet these ends, the new focus emphasizes mentoring, partnership and clustering as well as orientation and training workshops. The thrust is to involve many more people and many more organizations in the network as well as to ensure the focus and the quality of this newly emerging discipline are maintained. Hence, the need for a Chair for Women's Studies at the UGC level to ensure the same is an added dimension in the approach to the Scheme of Women's Studies in the XI Plan.

Currently, there are 67 Women's Studies Centers (WSCs) established in various universities and colleges in the country. WSCs, established during the earlier plan periods, also face considerable difficulties due to the lack of clarity about their roles and the terms under which the UGC disburses its grants. Furthermore, in the last three decades, Women's Studies has gained in academic stature and developed rich materials. This rich material needs to be introduced to students in the classroom. The world, and indeed India too, is witnessing changes in the new century and these changes are occurring faster when compared to the earlier centuries. Women's Studies was initially conceptualized as a branch of the social sciences and humanities. However, today, the Women's Studies Programme, in addition to social sciences and humanities, must engage with other disciplines and professions such as life sciences, biosciences and other areas of science and technology, such as agriculture and forestry, medicine, and architecture, as in the X Plan, the UGC has funded 51 Centers in the Universities and 16 Centers in the Colleges, under this scheme. The budget allocation for these centers has risen from Rs.50 lakhs to Rs.10 crores in the X Plan and has overspent above it.

The introduction of women's studies in the higher education system was a major achievement for the women's movement in India. Women's studies centers were envisaged as playing an interventionist role by initiating the gender perspective in many domains in the generation of knowledge; in the field of policy and practice. The Centers for women's studies were designed to act as catalysts for promoting and strengthening women's studies through teaching, research, dissemination of knowledge and field action. In the last Plan period, the Centers for Women's Studies have carried out their work, not only in the above areas, but also in several other directions. They have been instrumental in the incorporation of women's studies in various courses of teaching as well as facilitated research on socially relevant areas. They have provided consultation to scholars, served as evaluators for development projects, generated resource material and documentation in the regions in which they are located, and established networking both within and outside the university system. Although much needs to be done, yet, the Centers for Women's Studies have contributed to the visibility of women's issues, tried to combine erudite knowledge with socially relevant theories, and have succeeded in opening a dialogue in multi-disciplinary collaborations.

Objectives of Women Studies.

1. To change the present attitude values in society regarding women's roles, and rights, to one equal participation in all social, economic and political processes and national and international development.

2. To create awareness among both men and women by helping them to understand, recognize and acknowledge the multidimensional roles played by women in society.

3. To promote awareness among women and men, of the need to develop and utilize women's full potential as resources for national development in its economic political and socio cultural aspects, to question existing values; and to promote awareness of their social responsibilities so as to participate equally.

4. To counter the reactionary forces emanating from certain sections of the media, economic, social and political institutions, that encourage the demotion of women from productive to mere reproductive roles.

5. To revitalize university education, bringing it closer to burning social issues, to work towards their solution and to produce sensitive persons able to play more committed and meaningful roles in developmental activities for women in all sectors.

6. To fulfill a special responsibility to produce for all levels of the educational system, teachers who are aware of the need for non-sexist education and who would actively pick up the challenge to promote values of social equality including gender equality, secularism, socialism and democracy.

7. To update university curricula by incorporating the results of new scholarship and issues raised by the latter as they challenge some of the established theories, analytical concepts and methodologies of various disciplines.

8. To promote increased collaboration between different disciplines in teaching, curriculum designing, research and extension activities since women's studies are interdisciplinary by nature,

9. To generate new and organic knowledge through intensive field work. This would help in the generation of data essential for evaluation and correlation of developmental policies and programmes and in extending the areas for academic analysis, into hitherto neglected sectors.

10. To Examine the impact of gender identity on human relations historically and cross-culturally

11. To help develop alternative concepts, approaches and strategies for development.

12. To empower women in their struggle against inequality and for effective participation of all areas of society and development

Relevance of women studies

Women's studies is an interdisciplinary field of inquiry that arose in the early 1970s. Within thirty years, it developed into a recognized discipline with undergraduate majors, masters and doctorates programs, university departments and programs, a scholarly literature of books and journals, and professional associations.

The Women's Studies courses foster a learning environment that nurtures intelligent discussion and application of that knowledge to practical issue.Women Studies examine the impact of gender identity on human relations historically and cross-culturally and it also explores the diversity of women's experiences and their contributions historically and across cultures.

Women's Studies examines knowledge and practices of the world in the light of gender differences and suggests new ways to conceptualize the relations between the self and the ever changing global communities.

- Women's Studies cover areas including media images of women, work and economic issues, gender issues in the family and social problems associated with gender.

- It helps to understand the different layers of gender as determined genetically, anatomically, and socially and the inherent conflicts when these layers do not 'match up' in an individual.

- It helps to develop empathy, tolerance, and understanding for those previously thought of as "other" and their relationship to themselves, family, business/career, and society at large.

Because of the growing importance of women's concerns globally, students with a concentration in Women's Studies are well prepared for professional programs in law, medicine, and business, as well as graduate programs in social work, education, and arts and sciences. Indeed, students who major in Women's Studies, whether or not they choose to go on to professional or graduate school, are especially well positioned to work in education, policy institutions, development, media, social work, and the private sector.

Students also can take a variety of cross-listed courses from programs including history, sociology, English, human development, communications studies, philosophy, political science and psychology. Courses stress the importance of social ideas and relationships, such as those shaped by gender, ethnicity, race, and class to better understand individual and collective experiences, past and present. Women studies provides students with a solid foundation in women's studies and gender analysis, introduces them to a range of disciplinary approaches to women and gender, and helps them develop an area of specialization within the field.

As an area of academic study, Women's Studies provide new frameworks that are sensitive not only to issues of gender, but also race, class, and ethnicity. By analyzing the powerful and problematic impact of sexual inequalities. The emphasis is on encouraging students to think critically and re-examining history cross-culturally using a feminist perspective. Women's Studies revise the way we see ourselves and our world.

Some Women Studies programs offer internships that are community-based allowing students the opportunity to gain a better understanding of how oppression directly affects women's lives. This experience, informed by theory from feminist studies, queer theory, black feminist theory, African studies, and many other theoretical frameworks, allows students the opportunity to critically analyze experience as well as create creative solutions for issues on a local level.

1.2 Major Concepts in Women Studies.

Sex and gender

In the English language, the terms sex and gender are often used interchangeably in the vernacular. However, in a medical and technically scientific sense, these words are not synonymous. Increasingly, the term gender is being accepted to define psycho physiologic processes involved in identity and social role. Therefore, it is not uncommon to hear references to "gender" by professionals from numerous disciplines, including medicine, psychology, anthropology, and social science.

Sex, from the Latin word *sexus,* is defined by the gonads, or potential gonads, either phenotypically or genotypically. It is generally assigned at birth by external genital appearance, due to the common assumption that this represents chromosomal or internal anatomic status. When an intersex condition is noted in a newborn, one sex is often chosen with the intention of simplifying social interactions and rearing.

Sex is annotated as different from *gender* in the *Oxford English Dictionary* where it says *sex* "tends now to refer to biological differences, while . . . [*gender*] often refers to cultural or social ones." The *American Heritage Dictionary*, however, lists *sex* as both "Either of the two divisions, designated female and male, by which most organisms are classified on the basis of their reproductive organs and functions" and "One's identity as either female or male," among other definitions. It also refers to a usage note associated with the *gender* entry.

A working definition in use by the World Health Organization (WHO) for its work is that "'[s]ex' refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women" and that "'[m]ale' and 'female' are sex categories".

The distinction between sex and gender distinguishes sex, the biological makeup of an individual's reproductive anatomy or secondary sex characteristics, from gender, an individual's lifestyle (often culturally learned) or personal identification of one's own gender (gender identity). This distinction is not universal. In ordinary speech, *sex* and *gender* are often used interchangeably. Some dictionaries and academic disciplines give them different definitions and others do not.

Sometimes it is hard to understand exactly what is meant by the term "gender", and how it differs from the closely related term "sex".

"Sex" refers to the biological and physiological characteristics or sex categories that define men and women or male and female

In humans, biological sex is determined by five factors present at birth: the presence or absence of a Y chromosome, the type of gonads, the sex hormones, the internal reproductive anatomy (such as the uterus in females), and the external genitalia. People with mixed sex factors are intersexed. People whose internal psychological experience differs from their biological sex aretransgender or transsexual.

Scientific research shows an individual's sex influences his or her behaviour.

Gender and Gender Differences.

Some people maintain that the word *sex* should be reserved for reference to the biological aspects of being male or female or to sexual activity, and that the word *gender* should be used only to refer to sociocultural roles.

Aspects of sex will not vary substantially between different human societies, while aspects of gender may vary greatly.(examples of sex characteristics)

"Gender" refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

the term applied to the typical differences between men and women that is often specific to a particular culture where domains as careers, communication, health, social awareness and orientation to the environment are seen.

Gender differences are based on the concept of gender, which refers to socially and culturally defined differences between men and women. By contrast, sexual differences can only be attributed solely to biological differences between males and females. However it is common to use gender differences to encompass both sex and gender differences when referring to people, since those differences cannot.

SEX	GENDER
Male or female	Masculine or feminine behavior or roles
Biological, physiological characteristics	Expectations and activities in society.
Natural or biological features	Cultural or learned significance of sex
Sexual activity	Socio cultural roles.
Biological Identity	Social identity

Gender identity

A person's inner sense of being male or female, usually developed during early childhood as a result ofparental rearing practices and societal influences and strengt-hened during [puberty](#) by hormonal changes.

There are, however,circumstances in which an individual experiences little or no connection between sex and gender; intranssexualism, for example, biological sexual characteristics are distin ct and unambiguous, but the affected person believes that he or she is-or ought to be of the opposite sex (see transsexualism).

Individual's selfconception as being male or female, as distinguished from actual biological sex. Formost persons, [genderidentity](#) and biological characteristics are the same.Gender identity is not fixed at birth; both physiologic and social factors contribute to the earlyestablishment of a core i dentity, which is modified and expanded by social factors as the child matures.

Thus, gender role is often an outward expression of gender identity, but not necessarily so. In most individuals, gender identity and gender role are congruous. Assessing the acquisition of this congruity, or recognizing incongruity (resulting in gender-variant behavior), is important in the developing child. It is important also to note that cultural differences abound in the expression of one's gender role, and, in certain societies, such nuances in accepted gender norms can also play some part in the definition of gender identity.

A person's sex is a primary state of anatomic or physiologic parameters. A person's gender is a conclusion reached in a broad sense when individual gender identity and gender role are expressed: Sexual identity is in the perineum; gender identity is in the cerebrum..

Note that just as gender and sex are not interchangeable terms, neither are gender development and sexual development interchangeable. Physiologic sexual development progresses through distinct stages from the neonatal period through infancy, childhood, puberty and adolescence, and adulthood. Such physiologic change is distinguishable from gender-related behaviors during each of these stages. The sexual identity that emerges beyond childhood is very clearly a separate entity from gender identity. Aspects of physical sexual growth, eroticism, and eventual sexuality, although closely related to gender, should not necessarily be used to draw gender inequality

Gender Inequality

Gender inequality refers to unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender. It arises from differences in socially constructed gender roles as well as biologically through chromosomes, brain structure, and hormonal differences. ...

Gender inequality can be defined as allowing people different opportunities due to perceived differences based solely on issues of gender. Gender discrimination is the prejudicial treatment of an individual or group due to gender. Gender inequality and discrimination are generally discussed as pertaining to women, but anyone can experience gender-based inequality or discrimination.

Gender inequality is when women have less power than men In order for these definitions to have meaning; we must first define "gender." The terms gender and sex are sometimes used interchangeably, but social scientists and medical personnel are beginning to recognize them as different. Sex refers to one's biological identity as defined by physical and/or chromosomal makeup. Generally, people are categorized as either male or female depending on their chromosomes and/or genitalia. Gender is commonly defined as the social identity of the sexes. It is determined by socialization and social values, not biology, and includes social markers such as behavior and appearance. Do or vice versa. The social construct that results in women not having equal rights, opportunities or privileges to women.

Gender Bias

Gender bias is defined as "prejudice in action or treatment against a person on the basis of their sex" and as "discrimination on the basis of gender." of that person's gender. In a legal context, *gender discrimination* may also be defined as unequal treatment of persons for reasons that have nothing to do with their legal rights or ability.

Gender bias is a preference or prejudice toward one gender over the other. It is the unequal treatment in employment opportunity such as promotion, pay, benefits and privileges and expectations due to attitudes based on the sex of an employee or group of employees. Gender bias can be subtle or overt, and can result in small or large consequences. Most countries have laws eliminating gender bias in work places. Gender bias can be a legitimate basis for a lawsuit under anti-discrimination statutes.

Gender Discrimination

Discrimination based on gender or sex is a common civil rights violation. Discrimination on the basis of gender takes many forms; including sexual harassment, pregnancy discrimination, and unequal pay for women who do the same job as men.

Gender discrimination refers to situations in which an employer treats an individual or group of individual employees differently, based on their gender, whether female or male.

Generally, gender discrimination falls into two distinct categories, "disparate impact" and "disparate treatment." Disparate treatment means simply "different treatment," and is treating an individual or group of individuals differently because of his/her or their sex. Disparate impact refers to an employer's practices or a company's policy which impacts "differently" on a individual or group of individuals, depending on whether they are male or female.

MODULE II

SEX ROLE THEORIES

Women produce children; women are mothers and wives; women do the cooking, mending, sewing and washing; they take care of men and are subordinate to male authority; they are largely excluded from high status occupations and from positions of power. These generalizations apply, to some degree, to practically every known human society. The most basic division of labor appears to be founded on sex or gender . There are men's jobs and .women's jobs in the simplest hunting and gathering bands. And the most complex industrial societies. In terms of the rewards of prestige, wealth and power attached to gender roles, women almost invariably come off worst. In recent years, particularly with the rise of the Women's Liberation Movement, the reasons for a sexually based division of labour and for the inequality between male and female roles have been hotly debated. Two main positions have emerged from the debate. The first maintains that the sexual division of labour and inequality between the sexes is determined to some degree by biologically or genetically based differences between men and women. This position is opposed by those who argue that gender roles are culturally determined and inequality between the sexes results from socially constructed power relationship.

II.1 Biological Theories

The role of women- genes and biology

Clearly women are biologically different from men. Though there is disagreement about the exact nature and consequences of this difference some sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists argue that it is sufficient to explain the basic sexual division of labour in all societies.

Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox- The Human Biogrammar

Tiger and Fox argue that compared to women, men are more aggressive and dominant. These characteristics are genetically based; in particular they result from differences between male and female hormones. These differences are due partly to genetic inheritance from man's primate ancestors, partly to a genetic adaptation to a hunting way of life. Males hunt which is an aggressive activity. They are responsible for the protection of the band and for alliances or wars with other bands. Thus men monopolize positions of power. Since Tiger and Fox see dominance as a 'sex-linked characteristic', it comes as no surprise that politics is the province of men.

By comparison, women are programmed by their biogrammars to reproduce and care for children. Tiger and Fox argue that the basic family unit consists of mother and child. In their words, 'Nature intended mother and child to be together'. It does not particularly matter how this basic unit is supported and protected. It can be by the addition

of a single male, as in the case of the nuclear family, or by the impersonal services of a welfare state. The close emotional bond between mother and child is a genetically based predisposition for both parties and it is particularly important for the welfare of the child. Tiger and Fox maintain that, 'The mother is totally essential to the well-being of the child'. Unless this close emotional bond obtains the child will be unable to establish successful relationships in later life.

In short, Tiger and Fox argue that male and female brogrammars are adapted to a sexual division of labour in a hunting society. as they put it, 'We are wired for hunting' Compared to cultural change, genetic change is slow.. Thus the male and female biogrammars of a hunting existence continue in modern industrial society. From this it follows that attempts to abolish gender roles and replace them with unisex roles, however desirable this may be, will 'go against nature.

George Peter Murdock- Biology and Practicality

George Peter Murdock was a very notable American anthropologist and a major contributer to the field of Anthropology in the middle years of the twentieth century. In 1949, the study entitled "Social Structure," examined the family institution in a wide variety of societies. With this study, he said that some form of family exist in every society and that the family is universal.Through this study he laid the foundation for systematic cross cultural study/research about human society and culture.

Though an anthropologist like Tiger and Fox, George Peter Murdock operates from very different assumptions. He sees biological differences between men and women as the basis of the sexual division of labour in society. However, he does not suggest that men and women are directed by genetically based predispositions or characteristics to adopt their particular roles. Instead he simply suggests that biological differences, such as the greater physical strength of men and the fact that women bear children , lead to gender roles out of sheer practicality. Given the biological differences between men and women, a sexual division of labour is the most efficient way of organizing society.

In a cross-cultural survey of 224 societies ranging from hunting and gathering bands to modern nation states, Murdock examines the activities assigned to man and women. He finds tasks such as hunting, lumbering and mining to be predominantly male roles, (men were predominantly responsible for physically-demanding tasks), cooking gathering wild vegetable products, water carrying and making and repairing clothes to be largely female roles. He states that, 'Man with his superior physical strength can better undertake the more strenuous tasks, such as lumbering , mining, quarrying, land clearance and house building. Not handicapped, as is woman by the physiological burdens of pregnancy and nursing, he can range farther afield to hunt, to fish, to herd and to trade. Woman is at no disadvantage, however, in lighter tasks which can be performed in or near the home, e.g. the gathering of vegetable products, the fetching of water, the preparation of food, and the manufacture of clothing and utensils'. Thus, because of her biological function of childbearing and nursing, woman is tied to the home base; because of her

physique she is limited to less strenuous tasks. Murdock finds that the sexual division of labour is present in all of the societies in his sample and concludes that, 'The advantages inherent in a division of labour by sex presumably account for its universality.

Talcott Parsons - Biology and the 'Expressive' Female

Talcott Parsons theorized that a family is held together by gender socialization and complementary roles between men and women. The mother would take care of the children and household. The father would labor in the economy Parsons believed that children were socialized to develop certain gender specific attributes

- For Women "expressive attributes" i.e. being sensitive to others' feelings and emotional needs

- For Men "instrumental attributes" i.e. independence, leadership, and competitiveness.

American Sociologist Talcott Parsons sees the isolated nuclear family in modern industrial society specializing in two basic functions: the socialization of the young and the stabilization of adult personalities.

For socialization to be effective, a close, warm and supportive group is essential. The family meets this requirement. Parsons implies that the family is essential for this purpose. Within the family, the woman is primarily responsible for socializing the young. Parsons turns to biology for his explanation of this fact. He states that, 'In our opinion the fundamental explanation of the allocation of roles between the biological sexes lies in the fact that the bearing and early nursing of children establish a strong presumptlve primacy of the relation of mother to the small child'. Thus, because mothers bear and nurse children, they have a closer and stronger relationship with them. This is particularly so in modern industrial society since the isolation of the nuclear family 'focuses the responsibility of the mother role more sharply on one adult woman. Furthermore the absence of the husband-father from the home premises so much of time means that she has to take the primary responsibility for children'.

Parsons characterizes the woman's role in the family as 'expressive' which means she provides warmth, security and emotional support. This is essential for effective socialization of the young. It is only a short step from applying these expressive qualities to her children to applying them also to her husband. This is her major contribution to the second function of the isolated nuclear family, the stabilization of adult personalities. The male breadwinner spends his working day competing in an achievement oriented society. This 'instrumental ' role leads to stress and anxiety. The expressive female relieves this tension by providing the weary breadwinner with love, consideration and understanding. Parsons argues that for the family to operate efficiently as a social system, there must be a clear-cut sexual division of labour. In this sense, the instrumental and expressive roles complement each other. Like a button and a buttonhole, they lock together to promote family solidarity. Biological differences between the sexes provide the foundation on which the sexual division of labour is based. Parsons and his complementary sex role theory is widely criticized by modern sociologists.

II.2 Cultural Theories

The role of women- Culture and Society

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

Ann Oakley- the cultural division of labour

Ann Oakley Internationally renowned British feminist sociologist, Ann Oakley's research and writing on sex and gender, housework, motherhood, women's health, and social science, have enormously influenced the thinking of many inside and beyond social science, and have helped to shape the academic study of women and gender right up to the present day.

Ann Oakley, an ardent supporter of the Women's liberation Movement, comes down strongly on the side of culture as the determinant of gender roles. Her position is summarized in the following quotation, 'Not only is the division of labour by sex not universal. But there is no reason why it should be. Human cultures are diverse and endlessly variable. They owe their creation to human inventiveness rather than invincible biological forces'. Oakley first takes George Peter Murdock to task to arguing that the sexual division of labour is not universal nor are certain tasks always performed by men, others by women. She maintains that Murdock's interpretation of his data is biased because he looks at other cultures through both Western and male eyes In particular, she claims that he pre-judges the role of women in terms of Western housewife-mother role.

Oakley finds plenty of evidence from Murdock's own data to attack the assumption that biology largely determines the sexual division of labour. There are fourteen societies in Murdock's sample in which lumbering is done either exclusively by women or shared by both sexes, thirty-six societies in which women are solely responsible for land clearance and thirty-eight in which cooking is a shared activity. Oakley examines a number of societies in which biology appears to have little or no influence on women's roles. The Mbuti Pygmies, a hunting and gathering society who live in the Congo rain forests, have no specific rules for the division of labour by sex. Men and women hunt together. The roles of father an d mother are not sharply differentiated, both sexes sharing responsibility for the care of children. Amongst the Australian Aborigines of Tasmania, women were responsible for seal hunting, fishing and catching opossums (tree-dwelling mammals). Turning to present-day societies, Oakley notes that women form an important part of many armed forces, particularly those of China, Russia, Cuba and Israel. In India, some 12% of labourers on building sites are women and in some Asian and Latin American countries, a quarter of the labour force in mines is female . Oakley claims that the above

examples show clearly that there are no exclusively female roles and that biological characteristics do not bar women from particular jobs She regards as a myth the supposed biologically based incapacity of women to carry out heavy and demanding work.

Ann Oakley also attacks the arguments of Parsons by pointing to the kibbutz to show that systems other than the family and the female mother role can effectively socialize the young. Using the example of Alor, an island in Indonesia, Oakley-shows how in this and other small-scale horticultural societies, women are not tied to their offspring and this does not appear to have any harmful effects on the children. In traditional Alorese society, women were largely responsible for the cultivation and collection of vegetable produce. This involved the m spending considerable time away from the village. Within a fortnight o the birth of their child, women returned to the fields leaving the infant in the care of a sibling, the father or a grandparent turning to Western society.

Oakley is particularly scathing m her attack on Parsons's v1ew of the family and the role of the 'expressive' female within it. She accuses him of basing his analysis on the beliefs and values of his own culture and in particular on the myths of male superiority and of the sanctity of marriage and the family. Oakley argues that the expressive housewife-mother role is not necessary for the functioning of the family unit. It merely exists for the convenience of men. She claims that Parsons's explanation of gender roles is simply a validating myth for the 'domestic oppression of women'. Oakley draws the · following conclusions. Gender roles are culturally rather than biologically determined. Evidence from a number of different societies shows that there are no tasks (apart from childbearing) which are performed exclusively by females. Biological characteristics do not bar women from particular occupations. The mother role is a cultural construction. Evidence from several societies indicates that children do not require a close, intimate and continuous relationship with a female mother figure.

Bruno Bettelheim - collective childrearing

Bruno Bettelheim is a psychiatrist specializing child development. His study of co1Iective childrearing in a kibbutz indicated that a close, continuous mother-child relationship is not essential for effective socialization . Bettelheim found there was little mental illness among kibbutz children and little evidence of jealousy , rivalry or bullying. The children appeared hardworking and responsible, there was no delinquency and no equivalent of the high school 'dropout '. Compared to Western soeiety, there is a strong pressure to conform to group norms and as a result, Bettelheim found that children tend to be less individualistic. He argues that they develop a collective' rather than a personal sense of self . By Western standards, the children appear 'emotionally flat', they 'shun any show of emotion' and seem unable to establish 'really deep, intimate and loving relationships'. Bettelheim claims that parents raised in the kibbutz expect little intimacy with their children , do not hope for or wish for a unique one-to- one relationship with them. Hence their relations with their children are more comfortably relaxed - neither intimate nor intense.

Any assessment of the results of collective childrearing involves value judgments. From a Western viewpoint the system has advantages and disadvantages for the children. They appear more stable and less prone to anxiety and neuroses than children in the West. However, this advantage may be paid for by a sacrifice of individuality and warmth and intimacy in personal relationships. Bettelheim draws the following conclusion from his study. 'The kibbutz experience clearly demonstrates to me that children raised by educators in group homes can and do fare a lot better than many children raised by their mothers in poverty-striken homes, and better than quite a few raised at home by their middle-class parents.

II.3 Psychological Theory: Sigmund Freud

Perhaps the most influential – and controversial –theory of the emergence of gender identity is that of Sigmund Freud. Freud argued that everyone passes through five stages of psychosexual development in their life. The first three stages are where the focus of Freud's theory is at, because those occur during the first five years of life . Freud believed that at each stage, the centre of sexual energy was located in a different place. Freud said that it was possible to come out of a stage having not fully resolved it. If each stage is not resolved correctly, a person becomes fixated at that stage, which will result in problems later in life.

The first stage of psychosexual development is the oral stage. This lasts from birth to around the age of 18 months. The second stage of psychosexual development is the anal stage. This lasts up to around the age of three years. The third stage of psychosexual development is the phallic stage. This stage occurs at around the four yearsof age. The psychodynamic theory of gender development suggests that gender identity and role areacquired during the third stage of psychosexual development, the phallic stage. Before this, in the oral and anal stages, the child does not have a gender identity and its sexual drives are directed indiscriminately. As the child enters the phallic stage, the focus of its libido moves to the genitals and the development of girls and boys diverges. Following the phallic stage comes a period known as the latency period It starts from the age of about five .The final stage of psychosexual development is the genital stage. This stage begins at puberty, and the focus of sexual energy is the genitals again.

According to him, the learning of gender differences in infants and young children is centered on possession or absence of the penis. "I have a penis" is equivalent to 'I am a boy'; while 'I am a girl' is equivalent to 'I lack a penis'. Freud is careful to say that it is not just the anatomical distinctions that matter here; possession or absence of the penis is symbolic of masculinity and feminist.

In the Oedipal phase a boy feels threatened by the discipline and autonomy which his father demands of him, fantasying that the father wishes to remove his penis, that is, castrate him. Partly consciously, but mostly on an unconscious level, the boy recognizes the father as a rival for the affections of his mother. In repressing erotic feelings towards the mother and accepting the father as a superior being, the boy identifies with the father and becomes aware of his male identity. The boy gives up his love for his mother out of an unconscious fear of castration by his father. Girls, on the other hand, supposedly suffer from 'penis envy' because they do not possess the visible organ that distinguishes boys. The mother becomes devalued in the little girl's eyes, because she is also

seen to lack a penis and to be unable to provide one. When the girl identifies with the mother, she takes over the submissive attitude involved in recognition of being, 'second best'. Once the Oedipal phase is over, the child has learned to repress its erotic feelings. The period from about five years old to puberty, according to Freud, is one of latency- sexual activities tend to be suspended until the biological changes involved in puberty reactivates erotic desires in a direct way. The latency period, covering the early and middle years of school is the time at which same sex peer groups are most important in the child's life.

Freud's psychosexual theory contains a lot of information, and the credibility of it is questionable. Of course, these stages of psychosexual development are probably the most controversial aspect of Freud's work

II.4 Feminism

Feminism a doctrine that advocates equal rights for women or the movement aimed at equal rights for women. Feminism is a collection of movements and ideologies aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, and social rights for women. This includes seeking to establish equal opportunities for women in education and employment.

The **goals of feminism** are to get women equal rights under the law and equal stature in society. It is the movement towards the social, political and economic equality of all people. A **feminist** advocates or supports the rights and equality of women.

Objectives of Feminism

- To understand the nature of gender inequality.

- To examine women's social roles and subjection of women in society.

- To find out the causes of subordination status of women.

- To analyze the origin of subordinate status of women.

- To identify different forms of discrimination against women.

- To identify the existing power relationships in specific spheres- family, economy, political, and other areas of social and cultural.

- To examine social construction of sex and gender

- To focus on Women's rights-law, wage property, voting and reproductive rights.

- To protect women and girls from domestic violence, sexual harassment, and sexual assault.

The history of the modern western feminist movements is divided into three "waves". Each wave dealt with different aspects of the same feminist issues.

First-wave feminism was a period of activity during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. In the UK and US, it focused on the promotion of equal contract, marriage, parenting, and property rights for women. The feminism comprised women's suffrage movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, promoting women's right to vote .(In Switzerland, women gained the right to vote in federal elections only in 1971,] and in the canton of Appenzell Innerrhoden women obtained the right to vote on local issues only in 1991, In Lichtenstein, women were given the right to vote in 1984)   .By the end of the nineteenth century, activism focused primarily on gaining political power, particularly the right of women's suffrage, though some feminists were active in campaigning for women's sexual, reproductive, and economic rights as well.

The **second wave** was associated with the ideas and actions of the women's liberation movement beginning in the 1960s. The second wave campaigned for legal and social equality for women. It second wave feminism is largely concerned with issues of equality other than suffrage, such as ending discrimination. Second-wave feminists see women's cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked and encourage women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and as reflecting sexist power structures.

The **third wave** is a continuation of, and a reaction to, the perceived failures of second-wave feminism, beginning in the 1990s.[64]In the early 1990s in the USA, third-wave feminism began as a response to perceived failures of the second wave and to the backlash against initiatives and movements created by the second wave. Third-wave feminism seeks to challenge or avoid what it deems the second wave's essentialist definitions of femininity, which, they argue, over-emphasize the experiences of upper middle-class white women.

Third-wave feminists often focus on "micro-politics" and challenge the second wave's paradigm as to what is, or is not, good for women, and tend to use a post-structural interpretation of gender and sexuality. Since the 1980s, standpoint feminists have argued that the feminist movement should address global issues (such as rape, incest, and prostitution) and culturally specific issues (such as female genital mutilation in some parts of Africa and the Middle East, as well as glass ceiling practices that impede women's advancement in developed economies) in order to understand how gender inequality interacts with racism, homophobia, classism and colonization in a "matrix of domination."

The women studies activists and academics world over, agree that women at present have a lower status than men: that socially, economically, and politically women are discriminated against this state of affair is unfair and must be changed. However, there is a difference in the analysis of the origin of subordinate status of women: why the lower status has still persisted. What strategies are to be devised to end this subordination and such other queries' Within the women's movement there have been three major ideological positions described as Liberal Feminism (LF), Radical Feminism(RF) and Social Feminism(SF).They differ in their study on women's position, power ,causes of subordination and subjugation and their argument and strategies for equality.

Liberal feminism

The historical origins of contemporary liberal feminism go back to 18th century the Enlightenment period of Western Europe lt was the Age of Reason. The triumph of reason was the key conviction. Institutions and ideas which could not stand the critical test of reason have to be repudiated and discarded even though they may have been bexisting for ages. It was natural that one o many subjects the thinkers of this era touched was the nature and role of women, Another important tenet of liberal philosophy was individualism, by which it was meant that the individual possesses the freedom to do what he wishes without interference from others. Besides other theorists, Mary Woll- stone craft (17191797) as a liberal thinker is well-known for her ardent support for woman's cause. She was the founder of Feminism. Her work, A Vindication of the Rights of Women published in 1792 is perhaps the first, serious and systematic work. The basic Idea is that women -are first and foremost human beings and not sexual beings. Women are rational creatures. They are capable of governing themselves by reason. Hence if women are to be denied natural right it must be proved that they have no rational capacity.

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) an ardent Liberal, argued, in his famous work, The Subjection of Women, "the existing relations between the sexes, the legal subordination of one sex to the other, is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement, and that it ought to be replaced by the perfect equality admitting no power or privilege on the one side nor disability on the other. One of the important corollaries of the positions of the liberals was that they accepted the common arrangement by which' the man earns the family income and the wife superintends the domestic expenditure. The wife if she goes out to work will not be able to perform the tasks of child rearing and house management well and,' therefore, a wife should contribute by, her labour Thus the sex role differences are accepted but with a proviso that both are considered equal. Liberal feminism holds that the oppression of women is the denial of their equal rights, representation and access to opportunities. Liberal feminism takes a gender- neutral approach holds that all men and women are created equal and should be treated the same and seeks to reform oppressive systems. Liberal feminism focuses strongly on fixing women's exclusion from political power. Hence women should have civil rights, they must have the right to vote and they must be given education. Indian social reformers of the 19th century talked practically in the same vein as giving the right of education to women so that they become better wives and mothers, removal of social customs like 'sati', child marriage, ban on widow remarriage etc.

The liberal feminism, did not provide more insights into the roots of women's inferior status. However the feminists began to extend the concept of equality beyond the earlier emphasis on formal equality in the civil and political sphere. They thus demanded child care facilities, talked about the rights of poor women and control over one's re- productive 1ife.,Liberal feminism argued for equal rights for women but accepted the existing social order as valid and advocated for improvement of social customs, institutions, laws, attitudes, without altering the social structure, particularly the family. They also subscribed to the hope that an accumulation of reforms will transform society but radical restructuring is not necessary,

Radical feminism

A very significant perspective but one perhaps much distorted by the media, is the radical feminist perspective about women's subordination in society. Although the beginnings of radical feminism are considered to coincide with the beginnings of the second wave of feminism around 1969-1970, it has been contended that radical feminism has important ties with liberal feminism the feminists who spoke of sexual politics before-Kate Millett. However, liberal feminism overlooked the necessary connection between sexual oppression, sexual division of labour and the economic class structure. Hence their claims remained reformist. Radical feminism is a perspective within <u>feminism</u> that focuses on the hypothesis of <u>patriarchy</u> as a <u>system of power</u> that organizes society into a complex of <u>relationships</u> based on the assertion that <u>male supremacy</u>[1] oppresses women. Radical feminism aims to challenge and overthrow patriarchy by opposing standard <u>gender roles</u> and oppression of women and calls for a radical reordering of society.

The radical feminists' main contention is that the roots of subordination lie in the biological family, the hierarchical sexual division of society and sex roles themselves factors which must be fundamentally recognized if true gender equality has to be established. The proponents of radical feminism contended that the biological distinction i.e. male/female is used to distinguish social functions and power. The dictum that anatomy is destiny operates in the present society through sex role distinctions. The biological differences result in the male domination of power over women. Patriarchy is identified by the radical feminist as an autonomous historical fact more rooted in biology than in economy and they consider gender relations to be the fundamental form of oppression. Kate Millett(sexual politics-1969),Shulamith Firestone, (The Dialectic of Sex-1970) Germaine Greer(The Female Eunch-1970), Ellen Frankfort (Vaginal Politics-1972) are some of the well-known radical feminists who see patriarchy as male control over women's fertility It is the male hierarchical ordering of society. A more important contention of the radical feminists is that the patriarchal system is preserve via marriage and the family through sexual division of labour in the society As patriarchy is rooted in biology, and the battle lines are drawn between men and women. Patriarchy exhibits itself in a great variety of forms, but in all such forms, the avenues of power are in the male hands. Sexual politics is the politics of patriarchy. Patriarchy's chief institution is the family. It perpetuates the sexual division of labour through socialization. Further the family is maintained by the principle of legitimacy, thus the stigma against out of wedlock children. The feminists aver that though there is no biological reason why reproduction and socialization should occur in the family, however, this has been the basic pattern in the historical societies. Thus the nuclear family is considered to be an impediment to the full realization equality, which contention is very different from the liberal feminists perspective on family.

Man being the enemy and subordination seen as the bio psychological supremacy of male over female, the radical feminists' main plea is not only removal of all sex distinctions, but for many, there seems to be no place for men in their life span. Sexual

preference, control over one's body, free sexual experience and collective child care are some of the action programmes outlines by the radical feminists. Masculine hostility manifests itself through rape, pornography and sexual violence. The overthrow of male dominance requires a complete sexual revolution which would destroy traditional sex taboos; through consciousness raising, women should be made aware of this dominance, solidarity among the women be developed and women should be self-reliant so that they are not dependent on men in any sense.

Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminism is the idea that the liberation of the woman is not complete without ending oppression on an economic and cultural level. The philosophy of socialist feminism takes the theory that capitalism is a primary cause for the oppression and exploitation of women. This belief is considered to be a radical feminist position that places the idea of freedom as recreating gender roles and the patriarchy of men being superior to women, particularly economically.

Socialist feminism takes many of the beliefs of Marxism, and focuses on the economic aspect of oppression as the root source of oppression.

Some of the largest and longest lasting socialist feminist organizations are the Radical Women, the Freedom Socialist Party, and the Socialist Party USA.

Socialist feminism is a branch of feminism that focuses upon both the public and private spheres of a woman's life and argues that liberation can only be achieved by working to end both the economic and cultural sources of women's oppression. Socialist feminism is a two-pronged theory that broadens Marxist feminism's argument for the role of capitalism in the oppression of women and radical feminism's theory of the role of gender and the patriarchy. Socialist feminists reject radical feminism's main claim that patriarchy is the only or primary source of oppression of women.[2] Rather, socialist feminists assert that women are unable to be free due to their financial dependence on males in society. Women are subjects to the male rulers in capitalism due to an uneven balance in wealth. They see economic dependence as the driving force of women's subjugation to men. Further, socialist feminists see women's liberation as a necessary part of larger quest for social, economic and political justice. Socialists had fought for decades to create a more equal society that did not exploit the poor and powerless in the ways capitalism did. Like Marxism, socialist feminism recognized the oppressive structure of capitalist society. Like radical feminism, socialist feminism recognized the fundamental oppression of women in patriarchal society. However, socialist feminists did not recognize gender and only gender as the exclusive basis of all oppression.

According to socialist view, women's inferior status is rooted in private property and class divided society. Sexist ideology and structures such as the family maintain women's inferior status in society. Oppression is inclusive of exploitation but reflects a complex reality. Power is derived from sex and class and this manifested materially and ideologically in patriarchy and class relations. The major task is to discover the interdependence of class and patriarchy. For the socialist feminists it is imperative to understand the operation of hierarchical sexual ordering of the society within the class

structure. They also feel that overthrow of the capitalist system by itself will not mean transformation of patriarchal ideology. It would be necessary to organize struggles simultaneously against capitalism and patriarchy.

According to socialist feminists, the powerlessness of women in society is rooted in four basic structures: those of Production, Reproduction, sexuality and socialization of children. Family as the radical feminists believed , was an institution which reinforced women's oppressive condition. Family and economy should not be looked upon as separate systems but as vitally interacting systems. The unequal and hierarchical sex roles operate in both the domains of family and economy.

The socialist feminists have raised the whole debate of domestic work. The orthodox Marxist analysts consider housework as producing only **use value** but not **exchange value**. A group of socialist's feminists argue that women's oppression is based on **unpaid housework**. Child-bearing, child-care and housework are material activities resulting in products. The debate further focused attention on the issues of women's position as housewives and domestic labour's contribution to the reproduction of social relations. Of course the discussion is carried on in a broad Marxist framework.

Other questions raised by the socialists refer to the role of the family in strengthening sexism as contended by the radical feminists. Different approaches emerged in understanding the problem of relationship between patriarchy and the working of a particular mode of production. A very important issue related to the strategy is whether there is a place for women's movement. What is the relation of the women's movement and the wider struggles? Like the radical feminists, the socialists' feminists are not anti-man; they believe in collaborating with men if the letter support their cause and do not exhibit an instrumental approach towards women. But they do believe that women's issues are specific, they need focused analysis and focused attention. Hence women's groups have to be independently organized but they cannot ignore the other struggles of oppression.

The three main approaches which have been used for understanding women's subordinate status and also for evolving strategies to establish women's equality. In the Indian context, the dominant approach has been liberal feminist, when action has been organized taking the existing structures for granted. Some of the concepts and ideas used by the radical feminists/socialist feminists have to be critically used in India where conditions of poverty, unemployment, insufficient development prevail. For example, in a situation where other support structures are not available,; family may not be viewed as an obstruction but as a security. Similarly, issues of sexual freedom, sexual preference etc. may not be as widespread as in other developed western countries. Perhaps non-development of aggressive individualism might prove functional in the overall conditions of deprivation. In short the persepctives developed in the West are not absolutely relevant to Indian conditions. The necessity to find out which concepts are applicable, and when and how newer perspectives have to be developed, provides a good justification developing more researches in the theoretical areas.

MODULE III

CHANGING STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

III.1 Status of Women in India:

The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. From equal status with men in ancient times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful. In modern India, women have held high offices in India including that of the President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Leader of the Opposition. As of 2011, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha (Lower House of the parliament) were women. However, women in India continue to face discrimination and other social challenges and are often victims of abuse and violent crime. According to a global poll conducted by Thomson Reuters, India is the "fourth most dangerous country" in the world for women.

In the following sections we shall make an attempt to discuss various aspects of women's status in Indian Society. In order to have a better understanding of the present social position of women, it is necessary to know the various historical, political, cultural and economic factors muolding the society. It is also crucial to have a brief look at the past society because some of the norms and values affecting women today have their roots in past. In our society, due to various socio-cultural factors women have remained mostly unrecognised and marginalised. While discussing the position of women in Indian history Romila Thaper observes infinite variations in the status of women in Indian society. Family structure, cultural Milieu, class, caste, property rights etc are some relevant indications which constitute the variations. Besides, the difficulty to provide a monolithic picture of women's status at various phases of development, there in a serious difficulty is locating authentic sources which can help to construct a profile of Indian women.

Status of Women in Ancient Society:

In Rig-Vedic Civilisation , women enjoyed equal status with men. Women, like men received education and specialized in skilled jobs. Women studied Vedas and composed vedic hymns. They had access to all branches knowledge. In the age of upanishads, there were women rishis like Gargi and Maitrey. Women could own property and widow could remarry. They also became teachers. Women were not secluded from men, and they freely participated in public life marriage was sacred and was a religious bond. Girls enjoyed great freedom and settled their own marriages. Monogamy was a general rule, child marriage, Polyandry and Sati were unknown. The wife was given a place of honour and participated with her husband in religious ceremonies.

The position enjoyed by women is the Rig-Vedic period deteriorated in the later-vedic civilization. A daughter began to regard as a curse. Women were denied the right of inheritance and of ownership of property. Even the earnings of women became the property of their husbands and sons. However, women continued to have received education and worked as teachers.

The position of women is further deteriorated in Indian society. The Smriti period shows anti-feminist doctrines and principles. The ancient doctrine of perpetual dependence of women (her father, husband, and son protecting her in child hood, youth and old age respectively) is amplified by Manu. The laws of Manu insist that women must constantly worship her husband as God. The ideal women are those who do not strive to break these bonds of control. The salvation and happiness of women revolve around their virtue and chastity as daughter, wives and widows.

Concerning the religious status, women are denied vedic studies and performances, but they are permitted to practiced some rituals and rites for the protection and well being of her husband, brother and son, not for them.

The status women Medieval India

The period between A.D. 1206 and 1526 witnessed further deterioration of women's position. In this period female infanticide, child-marriage, sati and slavery were main social evils affecting the position of women. The birth of a daughter was considered bad luck. Women were largely uneducated and remained confined to their homes. A Women's devotion to her husband, children and home was universally accepted as a positive value.

The age old doctrine of the division of society into four varnas continued to be the keynote of social system during medieval period. The marriage rules of this period permit the marriage of Brahmin, a Kshatriya and a Vaishya with four, three and two wives respectively. The rules relating prohibited degree of marriage follow the older lines the marriage between the blood relations (Sapinda) on mother's side and the same gotra on father's side is prohibited.

The concept of anuloma and prathiloma marriage by practice itself degenerated women's position is society. A marriage between a boy of upper caste and a girl of lower caste is approved and called anuloma. While marriage of virtually high status groups with men of lower status groups considered prathiloma and very serious offence. Punishment like excommunication or even death could be evoked for violating the rules. Another manifestation of inequality is the diffential status of the bride givers and bride takers, the bride givers have to give compensation in terms of dowry. Dowry emerged as an institution is this period. Widows could not remarry again. They had to spend a life is pursuance and austerity. Sati became popular by this time, and women had no right to real property. Some women did receive higher education even in this period. Leelavathi and Khana were experts in arithmetic and Astronomy.

The social laws existed in this period treat women and sudras as equal is an evidence of the law position of women. The caste laws provide justification of the subordinate of women.

During the Buddhist period women took active part in social life Buddhist religious ideology kept open three alternative rules for women- the first one, the role of the wife and mother, the second that of a courtesan. She does not seem to a suffering from social condemnation. However, she was under male control. Third the role of Bhikkuni, here the women had greater freedom and more mobility. But inside the Sanga she experienced severe discrimination.

The impact of Bhakti movement is considerable for the upliftment of women's position in India. Bhakti movement attacked Bhrahmanical ritualism, and opened the gates of religion to women. The Bhakti movements tried to restore women's status and questioned certain forms of oppression. Mirabai, a female saint-poet, was one of the most important Bhakti movement figures. Other female saint-poets from this period included Akka Mahadevi, Rami Janabai and Lal Ded. Bhakti sects within Hinduism such as the Mahanubhav, Varkari and many others were principle movements within the Hindu fold openly advocating social justice and equality between men and women. This movement not challenged the unequal social structure and could not alter the gender subordination.

Immediately following the Bhakti movements, Guru Nanak, the first Guru of Sikhs, preached equality between men and women. He advocated that women be allowed to lead religious assemblies; to lead congregational hymn singing called Kirtan or Bhajan; to become members of religious management committees; to lead armies on the battlefield; to have equality in marriage, and to have equality in Amrit (Baptism). Other Sikh Gurus also preached against the discrimination against women.

Ram Mohan Roy worked against the social evil sati and announced that the rite was not a part of shartras. He states that sati was not an integral part of the Hindu religion. The British had shown interest in the abolition of Sati in is 1813.

Women in colonial Period.

British rule in the country witnessed several economic and political developments. The introduction of machineries and commercialization of goods made far reaching impact on the entire social structure. English language and new educational system provided the ideology of liberalism and equality.

The social reform movements of the 19th centuary and the national movement of the 20th century changed the situation. Female infanticide was found mainly among Rajasthan, Madhyapradesh, Parts of Punjab and Sindh. In 1779, infanticide was declared to be murder by the Bengal Regulation XXI. In 1804, this was extended to other parts of India. However, the practice continued in secret till recently Dowry was its main reason.

Sati, infanticide, child marriage, the prohibition of widow remarriage and the lack of women's rights were some of the social problems which attracted the attention of the British rules and social reforms. During this period two major movements affected the position of women a) Social Reform Movement and b) National Movement. Child marriage is prevalent among rural people and illiterates, due to the result of hyper gamy, dowry, the notion of virginity and chastity. The problem of poverty, unemployment, and ill-health has resulted in the institution of child marriage. The first legislation was passed in 1860 under which the minimum age for girls was raised to ten. In 1891, the age for girls was raised to twelve, and in 1925 to thirteen. In 1929 the child marriage restraint Act (Sharada Bill) was passed, under this act the minimum age of marriage for girl was fixed at fourteen and for a boy at eighteen. Today both sexes have the right to a civil marriage. The age has been increased to 18 for girls and 21 for boys.

In 1917, the first women's delegation met the Secretary of State to demand women's political rights, supported by the Indian National Congress. The All India Women's Education Conference was held in Pune in 1927. The widow remarriage Act was passed in 1956. In 1861 a widow marriage association was formed during this period favorable climate was created to improve the status of women through legal reforms, Women's Right to Property Act, 1937, special marriage Act 1954, the Dowry prohibition Act, 1961, Equal remuneration Act, 1976 and the criminal law Amendment 1983 are enhanced the status of women in matters of marriage, adoption and inheritance.

The nationalist movement draw a large number of women is to political activity. The formation of the All India Women Conference in 1927 was a council event in women's March towards equality.

Women in Independent India

After independence the status of women in India has substantially improved. The waves of anti-imperialistic national movement provide efficient and powerful women leaders with political shade. Women in India now participate fully in areas such as education, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, science and technology, etc. Indira Gandhi, who served as Prime Minister of India for an aggregate period of fifteen years, is the world's longest serving woman Prime Minister

In India for a long time women remained within the four walls of their households. Their dependence on men folk was total. Educated women is particular and the poor ones is general realized the need for taking up employment outside the household. In recent years, the middle class women have taken various social issues like price rise, atrocities against women etc, and launched various movements in different cities of India.

Women have demanded equality with men. What exists for men is demanded for women. The constitution guaranteed formal equality for women in India. It provides citizens justice and social economic and political liberty of thought and expression. It ensures the equality of status and opportunity. Indian women are beneficiaries of these rights of guarantees provided by constitution in the same manner as men.

Women and Education

It is a widely acknowledged fact that improvements in the quality of women's education will bring about gender development to a certain extent. Although literacy alone is not sufficient to subdue the existing levels of discrimination, still one cannot rule out its potential benefit for women's empowerment. Hence, female education had always been given priority in the Five Year Plans (since the 6th Five Year Plan onwards). The National Policy on Education in its Resolution in 1968, laid emphasis on improving the quality of education and the need to focus on the education of girls. The NPE -1986 provided for a comprehensive policy framework for educational upliftment and in1992 a Plan of Action (P0A), assigned specific responsibilities for organizing, implementing and financing its proposals.Over the last two decades, significant improvements have been

observed the proportion of literate women, from 39 % in 1991 to 54 %in 2001. High women's literacy levels have been observed in states of Kerela, Mizoram and Goa. However even today, there exist over 193 million women who are still illiterate. The states having the lowest literacy level for women in the country are Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand. In Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, the literacy levels have been far below the all-India average. Inequality in education in Rajasthan have been a result of gender and caste attitudes. In 1991, the state had the worst literacy rate for women which was as low as 20 %. However, by 2001, several improvements were made in women's literacy in Rajasthan(the proportion of literate women had almost doubled)as well as in Madhya Pradesh. This positive effect was the due to the implementation of educational programmes like Adult Literacy Mission, Mahila Samakhya and District Primary Education Programme(DPEP).

Female Literacy and Gender Gaps

As per the 2001 census, the relevant data pertaining to literacy presents an optimistic picture. As can be observed from Table 1 below, there has been a rise in female literacy by 15% during the period 1991 -2001 as compared to 12% rise in male literacy. The overall literacy rate during the same period has increased by 13.2%. However, we see a slightly different picture when we analyze the absolute numbers. While the number of illiterate men is 106,654,066, it is seen that 189,554,886 women are still illiterate.

Inspite of the above stated facts, the differences in literacy rates for both males and female s in rural   and urban areas continues to be grossly high, although the overall literacy rate for women has been catching up in the country. In the rural areas only 46 percent of women were literate compared to nearly 73% in urban areas (year 2001) .Between 2001-02, the enrollment of girls was well below 50 % of the total enrolment in primary schools. In states like U.P, Bihar, Rajasthan and W.B, the enrolment rates and dropout rates for girls in primary schools have been very high. As a result, very few girls get the opportunity to pursue secondary or higher levels of education. This further indicates low human development; lack of trained or skilled people to meet the demands in the market. It also lowers the probability of women joining the labor force, except being employed in the informal sector. Lower literacy rates have a detrimental effect on the awareness of women regarding their health needs. This forecloses the possibility of their access to services available for their well being.

This has been mainly due to the additional burden of responsibilities upon girls, like sibling care, helping their mothers in household activities etc. As a result, very few girls get the opportunity to pursue secondary or higher levels of education beyond the primary level. Studies have even found that among women, those making it to higher secondary education levels, mostly study arts or humanities subjects. They are often discouraged from undertaking any technical or skill based education. This raises serious questions about the value of female education and the trend is quite critical for the future of female literacy. A number of factors are responsible for low literacy rate, such as the shortage of teachers, schools and infrastructure which both gir ls and boys have to face.

However, the most important factors assigning the lowest priority to girls' education are perception and social attitude and this further increases the gender gap in education. The low enrolment of girls in schools can be explained by a number of factors like greater emphasis on training girls for their marriage, inadequate number of female teachers and high levels of dropout among girls.

In the states of North India, the huge gender gap in education has been mostly due to long established gender norms. Here girls are married-off at very young ages and parental investments in the education of girls are practically nil. According to Census 2001 figures, the percentage of girls attending school in this State has been only 37.4 percent .Moreover a large proportion children out of school were girls. The literacy rates for women among the Scheduled Castes and Tribes were as low as 9 per cent and 7 per cent respectively. Thus, gender , caste and social attitudes have resulted in severe gender inequity in education and has contributed to the existing low status of women in Rajasthan.

Opportunities and constraints facing female education

There are two main schools of thought that exist on issues of female education. The first school of thought focuses on the provision of services and higher quality schools to be distributed equitably amongst different regions. The second school of thought addresses the social dynamics that involves the decision to send girls to school .The key points of both these schools of thought are as follows:

Health: The differential access to health services and nutrition greatly affects performance of girls at schools and also makes thereby further reducing her chances of going to school.

Marriage and Marriagebility: In rural areas and low income families, a highly educated girls is perceived to lack good domestic skills and this drastically reduces her scope for marriage. The case is reverse in urban areas where education is considered an asset for girls to get a good suitor. The implementation of the legal age of marriage and Government laws of mandatory education are therefore essential for increasing their chance to go to school.

Cost of Education: The unwillingness or inability of parents to bear the fees for their girl child is another major point. In this context, it is worth mentioning that subsidies funding the education of the girl child that cover the minimal costs of education (e.g. Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have been effective in raising the enrollment rates of girls). Therefore, subsidizing the training for women at the secondary level, would encourage more girls to enter the graduate level of studies.

Syllabi: Different boards of education should consciously undertake the task of including positive images of women.

Safety: Ensuring the safety of girls is one of the major task that needs to be undertaken in a collective manner. Inspite of the aforesaid policy prescriptions , the challenge posed in trying to retain the enrolment of girls in school far surpasses the efforts required to enroll them. Thus, unless girls continue their education upto higher levels of schooling, the potential benefits of education will be far limited .To attain it, the indispensable need for a more structured effort on the part of the Government is necessary.

To take care of such inequalities, appropriate corrective steps needs to be undertaken. The prominent among them are as follows.

a) It is important to introduce measures that are needed to reduce rather than accommodate the workload of girls .This is important for improving their access to education. This problem could be addressed through the provision of crèches.

b) Specific attention should be given to tribal, Dalit and Muslim girls while attemptin g to retain them in education.

c) Various policies that promote female employment need to take account possibility that there may be a negative impact on the education of girls if women work outside the home.

d) Identification of factors that enable girls to remain in education through project related research. It is also important to identify the various factors relative impact of which increases the enrollment and retention of girls.

e) The gender bias in education that can be addressed through appropriate economic policies must be identified. Educated women in the rural areas can be empowered through better employment opportunities and creating incentives to female education like relaxing the criteria for recruitment for women seeking jobs in public service positions.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN

The Indian Constitution came into force in 1950. It announced the decision of the Constituent Assembly (which framed the Constitution) to provide social, political and economic justice to all. To this end, the Constitution had several provisions to protect women and improve their position.

The Constitution effects social justice in two ways. Firstly, it confers certain rights on men and women (Articles 14 to 32). These are called "fundamental" rights and can be enforced by the courts. Secondly, the Constitution directs the state to implement certain principles. These are called "Directive Principles of State Policy." These are not enforceable as such in courts, but are declared to be fundamental in the governance of the country. So they have a moral and political value.

For practical purposes, fundamental rights are the more important of the two. A person whose fundamental right has been infringed can take proceedings to the court. Of course, fundamental rights are conferred on both men and women. But the right of equality, which is one of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution, is of special value to women.

Some important constitutional aspects relating to women are discussed below.

The Indian Constitution, in the first place, tries to ensure that men and women are treated equally. Secondly, it notes that in certain respects, women have been ill treated or regarded as inferior. To remove this injustice and to re-introduce real equality, the Constitution allows the state to make special provisions favouring women, i.e. provisions for the benefit of women. Thirdly, the Constitution expects that the State will make special efforts to improve the position of the weaker sections of the society, including women. Fourthly, the Constitution also expects the state to take steps to prevent the exploitation of women.

The first two approaches are fundamental rights. The third and the fourth are directions, which the state should bear in mind.

Constitutional provisions pertaining to equality

Article 14 of the Constitution provides that the state will not deny any person equality before the law and equal protection of law within India.

Article 15(1) of the Constitution provides that the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

Article 15(3) of the Constitution specially provides that the State is permitted to make special provisions for the benefit of women.

Article 16(1) and Article 16(2) prohibits discrimination in general and also discrimination on the ground of sex in employment and those employed under the State.

Article 39(a) of the Constitution provides that the State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing that citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood. This is also a Directive Principle of State Policy.

Article 39(b) of the Constitution provides that the State shall direct its policy towards ensuring equal pay for equal work for men and women. This is a directive principle of State policy. To further this provision, the parliament has enacted the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 for the payment of equal remuneration to men and women workers and for the prevention of discrimination on the ground of sex, against women and in the matter of employment or in matters connected therewith.

Article 39 (c) of the Constitution requires that the State shall secure health and strength of workers, men and women and that children are not abused and citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter vocations unsuited to their age and strength. This again is a Directive Principle of State Policy.

Article 51A(e) of the Constitution provides that it will be the duty of every citizen of India to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

III.2 Status of women and changing form of family structure

The Family and Women's Work

It is not enough to say that any society consists of men and of women. It is equally important to look at how the two groups of people interact, as well as at the roles and expectations each group has of the other. Such roles and expectations are a product of the stereotypes of each gender. By gender stereotype we mean attributes and qualities commonly associated with a gender. These attributes arise out of the interaction of a complex set of factors, many of which operate in the context of the family.

Lineage, Residence and Women

Most families in India, irrespective of their caste and religion, are **patrilineal**. The exceptions are the matrilineal Nairs of Kerala and tribes like the Khasis of Meghalaya. Simply put, patrilineality implies descent and inheritance through the male line. It also usually implies patrilocality or living of the husband in his father's home, quite often with his father, brother or brothers and their wives and children. This is also a simplified definition of a joint family. Under patrilocality a wife's visits to her natal home are usually restricted to ritual occasions, and a child is socialised mainly according to the values of the father's family. Even though a mother has a vital part to play in the child's life, major decisions regarding his/her future and that of others in

the family are taken by the men in the family.

Gender Role Stereotyping and Household Chores

Thus the first idea on gender role differences which a child acquires is that of women of one's family marrying and leaving their homes to live with different groups of people. Secondly, men appear to exercise far greater influence in decision-making and are far more visible and audible than their wives. Third, most of the tasks within the home are done by the mother, grand-mother, sisters and so on. At meal times, they carry food to the fields for the men. All these tasks which consume time and energy are not counted as 'work' or 'employment' and there is no payment involved. In Western countries, women's groups, politicians and other concerned individuals have been arguing for payment for housework and childcare. In India the question of payment for household jobs has not really been an important issue or demand. As we shall see, there are many other issues, which require urgent attention. At the same time, it is important for us to remember that non-payment should not also mean non-recognition. The fact that women are expected to perform all these tasks as a part of their conventional roles and no special merit is awarded to them for these tiring and tiresome jobs.

III.3 Women's movement in pre and post independent India

Like other social groups women also have been involved in collective actions equipped with their agenda, leadership, ideologies and organisations in order to have their proper and dignified place in all aspects of life. This unit deals with social movements of women. Social movement has been defined as an organized effort by a group of people either to bring or resist change in the society. 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 hat have subjugated women over the years.

The roots of the Indian women's movement go back to the nineteenth century male social reformers who took up issues concerning women and started women's organizations. Women started forming their own organization from the end of the nineteenth century first at the local and then at the national level. In the years before independence, the two main issues they took up were political rights and reform of personal laws. Women's participation in the freedom struggle broadened the base of the women's movement. In post independence India, large number of

women's autonomous groups have sprung up challenging patriarchy and taking up a variety of issues such as violence against women, greater share for women in political decision making, etc. both at the activist and academic level. India has a rich and vibrant women's movement but it has still a long way to go to achieve gender equality and gender justice.

Social Reform Movements

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. Leaders of the social reform movement also realised that religious reforms cannot be separated from it. The British policy was to keep different religious communities separate from each other and maintain each system of family laws, which was closely related to the religious and customary traditions of each community. Social reform movement never developed as a unified movement but developed within each community. This period has witnessed the proliferation of various organisations. These Women's and Movement organisations took the lead to project important issues, which adversely affected the status of women in the society. The most important of these organizations where the Brahmo Samaj,Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission. In the following section, we shall be discussing these organisations briefly.

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 Chadra Sen stressed the need for educating women at home and government support was sought for this purpose. A women's magazine called Bamabodhini 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. This Act, which permitted inter-caste marriage and divorce, fixed 14 and 18 as the minimum age of marriage for girls and boys respectively. The influence of the Brahmo Samaj was confined to Bengal and North India.

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. Bhandarker 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 idea was to make them better wives and mothers. The debate on women's education that raged in nineteenth and early twentieth centuries shows that it did not originate from the influences of Western education only. Other reformers also stressed the need for women's education. Both these movements were the outcome of the reaction of urban, western educated men and aimed to change women's position within 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. It was opposed to divorce and Women and Society widow remarriage in general, and emphasised separate school for girls and boys. Several Arya Kanya Pathashalas were set up which later became colleges and contributed to the cause of women's education. Though mainly an urban movement, its influence also extended to semi-urban and rural areas. While rejecting the caste system it never demanded its abolition. Preference for arranged marriages within the caste group and emphasis on home-making roles of women limited its contribution to the cause of women's emancipation.Social reformers (like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, M.G. Ranade and Swami Dayanand Saraswati) eulogised the position of women in ancient India. However, the radicals like Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Jyotirao Phule and Lokhitvadi Gopal Hari Deshmukh attacked the caste system, which they said was responsible for the subjugation of women. Phule said that Sudras and women had been denied education so that they would not understand the importance of human rights of equality and freedom and would accept the low position accorded to them in law, custom and traditions.

Rama krishna Mission

Rama Krishna mission was founded by swami Vivekannda in 1987 to preach universal ideas of Vedanta.mission worked for women upliftment. Sister Nivedita ,Vivekandas disciple, started schools for girls in culcutta.It is kmown as Niveditha girls school. Branches of Rama

Krishna Mission centers founded all over the country made women not only socially aware of their importance but politically conscious of the slavery of their motherland. Thus, the mission contributed to free women from ignorance and superstions.

Social Reform and Muslim Women

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 noncooperation movement against the British.

All these movements had a very limited perspective of changing the position of women.Gender equality was not on their agenda. The movement was not conceived as a radical onslaught on the religious orthodoxy, which subjugated women. Social reformers viewed women's question as a social problem. Almost all the socio-religious reform in the country focused their full attention on the problems facing women. Though they differed in their views regarding the nature and scope of the work, they were always unanimous that women's status in India needed to be improved.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Freedom movement covered a period of 90 years starting from 1857 when the first attempt was made and up to 1974 when India attained independence. Women participated in the movement during the entire e period through the degree of participation varied across different stages of the movement. Many women freedom fighters have played a significant role in the various stages of the freedom struggle. Let us discuss the Social background and contributions of prominent women participants in the freedom struggle.

The first attempt for freedom was made in 1857, popularly known as first war of Indian independence. Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jansi emerged as great heroine during this time. Rani's determined fight and death in battle field is an inspiration for all time. she lived and died for her country. Other prominent women who participated in the 1857 revolt were, Ranitarabai, Begum Hazeat Mahal, Lalitha Bhakshi, Sundar Kasi bhai Motibai,Rani of Ramgrah and Rani of Ttulsipur. They were all elegant fighters of freedom. The self respect, spirit of sacrifice dedication courage and devotion to mother land made them the champions of freedom. They may be little in number, but they mobilized the spirit and quality of Indian womanhood.

In 1885 Indian national congress was established, it provided the platform for the men and women to fight against the British and to achieve the freedom for the country. The member ship of

Indian national congress was opened to women because the political leaders were aware of women's worth. In 1889 ten women attended the fourth session of congress at Bombay.

With the spread of women's education among middle class several women became active in political life of India. Majority of them were from Calcutta and Bombay. Swarna Kumari Debi, first Indian woman editor and sister of Rabindranath Tagore joined the Indian National Congress and took keen interest in the welfare of Indian women. She started a Ladies Association to foster the women activities. The other women present were Pandit Rema Bai, Shevanthi Bai Kaniker, all of them worked as educationalist and social reformers. Thus the participation of women during the early phase of freedom struggle is limited in terms of the number of participants. Majority of the participants are hailed from the princely class and the upper caste.

During 1900-1913 the participation of women has increased. Women of different classes involved in mass struggles, militancy and publications. The period 1940-1980 is of great significance in the history of women movements. These years' women began to realize their exclusion from mainstream political movements. It was due the leadership of Annie Besant an organized movement for the emancipation of women and for political right came to be established. She prepared the ground for the Gandhian freedom movement in which women have played a prominent role.

Gandhiji's call played the most significant role in involving large number of women in the nationalist movement. It is important to understand the impact of Gandhian ideology on women's movement. He said "the women of India should have as much share in winning swaraj as men probably in this peaceful struggle". He believed women are the companion of men gifted with equal mental capacities. He proclaimed that "if women of India aroused, no one could stop the countries march to freedom." This is the way Mahatma appealed to the women of India to enter the struggle for the freedom. The involvement of really large number of women in the national movement began when Gandhi launched the first Non Co-operation Movement and gave a special role to women. Peasant women played an important role in the rural satyagrahas of Borsad and Bardoli. Women participated in the Salt satyagraha, in the Civil Disobedience Movement, in the Quit India Movement and in all the Gandhian satyagrahas. They held meetings, organized processions, picketed shops selling foreign cloth and liquor and went to jail.

a)Bardolli Satysgraha of 1928: In Bardoli Sartyagraha, a no-tax campaigning was launched under the leader ship of Sardar Patel. The women of Bardoli took part in this movement. The peasants of Bardolli were forced to leave their land, buffaloes and cows were conflicted, their house hold goods were auctioned. But they refused to pay taxes. The women supported their men fully. Bardoli Sthyagrha shows the strength of women. It set new examples this was the first time that simple unsophisticated women participated in the freedom struggle.

Many women in different part of the country participated in large number s in civil Disobedience Movement under the leader ship of prominent women. Gandhiji nominated Sarojini Naidu to lead the movement after he and Abbas Tyabji were arrested. In Bombbay Kamaladevi Chattopadhaya abd Avantibai Gokhale were the first women to break salt law. In Madras, Durgabai Desmukh was nominated and in Gujarath Mirdul Sarabai led the women sthyagrha. A procession of

five thousand women inaugurated the civil Disobedience movement in the Punjab. In Kerala, women from all sections participated in salt sthyagraha and civil disobidennce movement. AV Ammalukutiyamma,Kamalaprabha,Kunnilakhimia Amma,Margeret Pavamani M R Janaki Amma ,Iswari ammahas been the earliest to lead the sathyagrha and non violent agitation in kerala.

Marching in procession, singing patriotic songs picketing liquor shops, were repeatedly undertaken by women in various parts of the country. During the civil Disobedience Movement of 1930.twenty thousand women were imprisoned. In other words, every six person who arrested,there was one women. Jawaharlal Nehru was overwhelmed at women's participation in the sathyagraha.

The last phase of freedom struggle is marked by the quit India Movement of August 1942.Durin this period many women leaders like Sucheta Krupalani, Sarojini Naidu and Kamaladevi Cattopadhyay were arrested. While women jined the freedom movement in large numbers at the Gandhiji,s call ,ther were few who colud not accept his non violence.Some of them joined in the Indian National Army.In 1943,inspired by Subhash Chandra Bose,awomen regiment popularly known as Pani Jansi Regiment Was Made.Thye take active part in activites of Indian National Army. Captina Lakhmi was the leader of Rani Janci Regiment.

Women participated in the freedom movement because they were inspired by patriotism and wanted to see the end of foreign rule. It is debatable as to how far this participation liberated them. Women's participation in the freedom movement did not lead to a separate autonomous women's movement since it was part of the anti-colonial movement. While women who picketed shops, marched in processions or went to jail or threw bombs did not question male leadership or patriarchal values, it did generate in them a sense of self-confidence and a realization of their own strength. Many returned to their homes but others continued their activities in the public arena. It transformed the lives of many young widows such as Durgabai Deshmukh or Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya. Women won respect for their courage and the large numbers in which they participated in the freedom struggle and at the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress in 1930, the resolution on Fundamental Rights gave equal rights to women.

Women's Movement in Post Independence Period

The attainment of independence in 1947 ushered in a new era of hope. Indian National ongress, which came to power, under the leadership of Jwaharlal Nehru initiated steps to put an end to the ge old unequal status of women through the constitution of free India. Jawaharlal Nehru believed that 'without economic freedom other aspects of women's equality would not be realised'. He isagreed with the limited view that women's education alone can bring about the desired changes and he wanted women trained in all human activities. He said that "if women's struggles remained isolated from the general political, economic and social struggles, the women's movement would not gain strength and will remain confined to the upper classes". There cannot be any doubt that a single factor which contributed to the transformation of women's roles and status in the Indian society was their massive participation in the national freedom movement. Equality between men and women was accepted as one of the objectives in the Fundamental Rights Resolution of the Indian National Congress in 1931.

Constitutional Provisions and Social Legislations

The Constitution of independent India followed the basic principle of women's equality as accepted in the Fundamental Rights Resolution of the Karachi Congress. The provision of Article 15(3), which empowered the state to make special provisions for women and children, suggests that there was a realization of women's disadvantaged position and the need for the state to enact special measures to bring them at par with men. During freedom movement it was felt that with the nation's Independence would disappear many of the disabilities, and problems of women attributed to colonial rule. The national government undertook to remove the legal disabilities suffered by women and initiated major reforms in Hindu family laws. The legal reforms in the 1950s sought to provide greater rights to Hindu women in marriage, inheritance and guardianship,.ie Special Marriage Act, Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act 1956,The Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, Legal Termination of Pregnancy Act etc.. Similar changes in the family laws of other communities like Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Jews, have not yet come up due to political resistance despite the Directive Principle of State Policy clearly stating the need for uniform laws for all the communities. With these legislative measures in the fifties women's organisation became passive and lost the vigour shown during the pre-Independence period. In post independence era, 2692 agencies receiving grants from the Centra Welfare Board and their activities were shaped by the grants they received for activities like adult education, nutrition programmes for children, tailoring classes under vocational training programmes and family planning programmes. Most of these organisations were urban based and the leadership came from the educated middle and upper class women. In the post-Independence period, two important organisations for rural women were set up, i.e., Kasturba Memorial Trust and Bharatiya Grameen Mahila Sangh (Indian Rural Women's Organisation). Their main objective was to assist the rural women in developing leadership potential.

In the mid of sixties onwards, we can see the birth of new socio-political movements due to the economic crisis and stagnation. Poverty and unemployment is widespread and people grew discomfort with development policies, the prevalent economic rights, land rights and the price rise. India saw a series of struggles and peasant movements in the early 1970s such as the anti-price-rise agitation in Bombay and Gujarat between 1972 and 1975. The radicalization of women during 1960's effected women of west Bangal,Andra Pradesh,Bihar and Kerala.Tribal women in Bihar and MadyaPradesh participated in the fight against landlords. The formation of Shramic Sangatana in 1970 of Bhil tribal landless agitate against the land lords, lot of women participated violently. In Dhulia District of Maharashtra in 1972, struggle against land lords and corrupt officials, also focused on women's issue.

Chipko Movement: Another significant movement was the famous Chipko Movement of 1970.It is an example of women participation in novel way .It is an ecological movement concerned with preservation of forest and the maintenance of eco- balance.Chipko movement is considrderd as a eco-feminist movement in india.Meera Behan ,Sarala Behan Bima Behan are the women leaders of the movement. Sunderlal Bahuguna,Chandi Prasad are the male leaders of the movement. Vandana Shiva says that the chipko movement is a struggle to recover the invisible productivity of women.

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 progressiveorganisations formed a joint front in Delhi called "Dahej Virodhi ChetnaManch". Organisations in other major cities also campaigned through protest, demonstrations, discussions, street theatre, posters etc. against the 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.

Trade union movement: The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) movement in Ahmedabad led by Ela Bhatt was a women's trade union movement that began in 1972. Women involved in various trades in the informal sector were brought together by their shared experiences such as low earnings, harassment at home, harassment by contractors and the police, poor work conditions, non-recognition of their labour to list just a few. Apart from collective bargaining, the movement strove to improve working conditions through training. The Nav Nirman movement of 1974, which was began as a student   movement in Gujarat. The movement criticized the caste system and religious rituals. Besides involvement in political and economic issues it was also concerned with those that were considered private such as family violence, domestic roles and challenged patriarchal stereotypes. The Progressive Organisation of Women (POW), developed in Hyderabad in the year 1974, worked towards organising women against gender oppressive structures in society, namely, the sexual division of labour and the culture that rationalized this discrimination. The organisation promoted the ideology of 'equality' and opposed the economic dependence of women on men.

The National Commission for Women was set up in1992 to cover all issues relating to safeguarding women's rights and promotion of their empowerment. The government also appointed a National Commission on self employed women and women in the informal sector to look into the specific problems of unorganized 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. The 73rd and 74th amendments of the Constitution were

passed in 1993 and it contained reservation of 33.33 percent in panchayats, zilla parishads and local body institutions for women. Besides this the government has come out with various programmes such as Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), Indira Mahila Yojana(IMY), Balika Samriddhi Yojana (BSY), Swasakthi Project etc. for the benefit of the women. The women's movement in post independence era is effective in bringing women's issues back into the arena of public debate. It is only a beginning of the long struggle for equality, justice and dignity to all women.

MODULE IV

MAJOR ISSUES OF WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

The Concept of Women's Issues

Women form an important social category. The basis of this category is not simply the biological entity but also the socio-cultural construct. Social status and roles of women are defined not only in terms of the gender dimension but also in terms of the norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and customs of the society. Women as a social category cut across the boundary of caste, class, race, estate etc. social groupings. The concept of women's issues does not pertain to women alone because it neither exclusively belongs to the domain of women nor is it totally an outcome of injustices meted out to women by men. In our society, we find several instances in our religious traditions, which relegate women to an inferior status in comparison to men. However, we cannot simplify women's issue as a conflict between men and women, or the women's movements as a crusade against men. Indeed, these issues are an outcome of the prevailing social system. The norms, values, customs and old socialisation processes govern each member of society, over generations to form his/her attitudes and behavioural patterns. Similarly, these also formulate expectations of each member of society. The structural arrangement of the society provides women low position. They are economically exploited and discriminated, socially subjugated and politically rendered a powerless group in the society. Women's issues are thus perceived to be linked to social issues. These issues are especially focussed on women's unequal access to productive resources,

Women and Society decision-making bodies, health care facilities, education, employment opportunities and social justice. In this respect, the study of women's issues needs to be incorporated within the discussion of wider social issues, concerning the rights of underprivileged sections of society.

Gender Role Stereotyping and Women's Issues

The institutional arrangements, the values, norms and customs of the society create and sustain female role stereotypes. For example, within this sociocultural set up, with the concept of marriage as the true destiny of a woman and with her important obligation to bear a son, the roles of wife and mother emerge as proper to women (CSWI, 1974). Hence, by eulogising her motherhood, religion binds a woman to the home and to her role of creating and nurturing children Women play crucial roles both in the productive and reproductive activities. However, in the process of rapid economic development and social change women's contributions have remained invisible and unrecognised within the given process of role stereotyping and traditional role expectations.

In India a large body of literature has emerged on women studies since the 1980s. These have covered various aspects including their social status, economic roles in agriculture, industry

and plantation, political participation in the national movement, peasant movements and industrial unrest. Some recent studies have also touched upon their legal and medical status. Besides the social science studies various national committees and commissions have also produced important reports stating the status of women in contemporary Indian society. The most important of these have been that of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, 1974, National Commission on Self-Employed Women, 1988, National Perspective Plan for Women, 1988, National Commission for Women, 1992 etc. While the social scientists, policy planners and the media generated enormous data on women's issues in India, since late nineteen seventies there have emerged numerous women's organisations in various parts of the country. These organisations have made their presence felt through various mass mobilizations and protests against women's discrimination in the society. Since the beginning of 1980s there has been increasing awareness among the women, both in the rural and urban areas, though in varying degrees. They have raised the issues related to the socio-economic injustice faced by them in the society. With the growing awareness women's issues have came into sharp focus in literature, media, discussion and policy formulation. Hence, women's health and legal status have emerged to be crucial contemporary women's issues in India.

IV.I Major Gender Issues

Sexual Exploitation:

In India, rape, sexual harassment, and the abuse of women are common occurrences that go unspoken due to social stigma or fear. The problem of gender-based violence is getting worse. National Crime Record Bureau statistics show crimes against women increased by 7.1 percent nationwide since 2010. Let us discus major sexual exploitation against women in India

Rape:

Rape refers to forced sexual relations often with actual or threatened violence. Often the rapist's motivation is not to enjoy sexual pleasure but to express anger, hostility, power, or aggression, either towards the victim personally or towards a class of people whom the victim represents. There are many myths in society regarding rape that helps to romanticize it, especially in films. The truth is that rape is a forced sexual act. It can affect a person of any age, of any sex, and at any place. Most rape victims are women.

In India, on December 16, 2012, 23-year-old young woman was beaten and gang-raped so badly she spent several days in intensive care before being transferred to Singapore for further medical treatment. She died from her injuries on December 29, 2012. Indian capital witnessed mass protest and anti-rape protests broke out across India as citizens demanded that rape cases be expedited and that parliament hold an emergency session to strengthen laws against sexual assault.

In 2013, Indian Parliament introduced amendments to the Indian Penal Code making various changes to the anti-rape laws in India. The offence of rape under Section 375, have made both penile and non-penile insertion into bodily orifices of a woman by a man an offence. The definition is broadly defined in some aspect, with acts like penetration of penis, or any object or any

part of body to any extent, the section has also clarified that penetration means "penetration to any extent", and lack of physical resistance is immaterial for constituting an offence. Except in certain aggravated situation the punishment will be imprisonment not less than seven years but which may extend to imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine. In aggravated situations, punishment will be rigorous imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than ten years but which may extend to imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine. A new section, 376A has been added which states that if a person committing the offence of sexual assault, "inflicts an injury which causes the death of the person or causes the person to be in a persistent vegetative state shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than twenty years, but which may extend to imprisonment for life, which shall mean the remainder of that person's natural life, or with death. In case of "gang rape", persons involved regardless of their gender shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than twenty years, but which may extend to life and shall pay compensation to the victim who shall be reasonable to meet the medical expenses and rehabilitation of the victim.

Punishment for rape

1. Normal punishment for rape is minimum 7 to 10 years imprisonment and maximum life mprisonment and fine.

2. Punishment for raping one's own wife, who is not under 12, is two years imprisonment or fine r both. The amount of fine is to be fixed according to the discretion of the judge.

The court has power to impose a sentence for less than seven years. In that case, it must explain he special reasons for giving lighter punishment in its judgement.

3. Punishment shall be rigorous imprisonment for not less than 10 years or imprisonment for life, lus fine, when—a police officer commits rape, (a) within the limits of the police station to which he is appointed, or (b) in the premises of any police station, or (c) rapes a woman, in his custody or in the custody of his subordinate, - a public servant, commits rape on a woman in his or his subordinate's custody, or - a member of the anagement, or staff of a hospital, jail, remand home, women's or children's institutions commits rape on any of its inmate, or - a person commits rape on a pregnant woman or on a girl under 12 years of age, or - a gang commits rape on a woman.

Even in these special cases of rape, the court has the power to award lighter punishment, i.e., imprisonment for less than 10 years for adequate and special reasons, which are to be mentioned in its judgement.

Prostitution:

Prostitution is the practice or occupation of engaging in sexual activity with someone for payment. The Concise Encyclopedia defined prostituting as a Practice of engaging in sexual activity, usually with individuals other than a spouse or friend, in exchange for immediate payment in money or other valuables. Prostitutes may be of either sex and may engage in either heterosexual or homosexual activity.

Prostitution in India:

India has a long recorded history and great store is set by tradition, therefore it is important to face the history of prostitution to see how for practices in the past account for the position of women in present day society and reinforced toleration of assaults on the dignity of women by sexual violence and forced prostitution. India which is justly claimed to be one of the most ancient civilizations of the world, presents an extensive account of the rise and development of the prostitution.

Sex tourism

Sex tourism is travel for sexual intercourse with prostitutes or to engage in other sexual activity. The World Tourism Organization, a specialized agency of the United Nations defines sex tourism as "trips organized from within the tourism sector, or from outside this sector but using its structures and networks, with the primary purpose of effecting a commercial sexual relationship by the tourist with residents at the destination often the term "sex tourism" is mistakenly interchanged with the term "child sex tourism". As opposed to regular sex tourism, which is often legal, a tourist who has sex with a child prostitute will usually be committing a crime in the host country, under the laws of his own country (notwithstanding him being outside of it) and against international law. Child sex tourism (CST) is defined as a travel to a foreign country for the purpose of engaging in commercially facilitated child sexual abuse. Thailand, Cambodia, India, Brazil and Mexico have been identified as leading hotspots of child sexual exploitation.

Negative Portrayal of women in India:

The subject of portrayal of women in Indian media has drawn the attention of media critiques in the present times. Listening to radio programmes and watching the television and reading the newspaper reports you may feel that issues, relating to women are now receiving more attention. Whether it is a horrifying description, of a 'dowry death' or of atrocities against a scheduled caste or tribal woman, of more girls going to school each year, there seems to exist more information of what we can call gender issues. At the same time the media through advertisements, television serials and other programmes continue to portray women as either weak, defenseless creatures, or as bewitching maidens, out to win the hearts of unsuspecting young men. Anything ranging from a motorcycle to a soap is advertised with an appealing woman model inviting us to buy the particular item. Women have been portrayed as men would like to see them- beautiful creatures, submissive mothers of their children, efficient house keepers, but nothing else.

Women as Projected on Television and Cinema

There has been gender bias in the television programmes. In television; Men appeared as 'newsmaker' in 77.4 per cent of the cases while women were in that role in only 6.5 per cent. Reporting on politicians, women appeared in the political news as wives, mothers and daughters of well-known leaders. In television; they appeared as victims of calamities and as members of audiences. The analysis of serials and cinema shows that men characters were almost double that of women characters. In terms of occupation women appeared mainly as housewives. If employed,

they were invariably school teachers, office workers and flight attendants. By and large, women are depicted as dependent, submissive and sacrificing, whereas men are self-confident, dominant, ambitious and even ruthless. In India women are underrepresented in general, and the television programmes and cinema have distorted the women's movement and its role.

WOMEN AND HEALTH

In India, within the given socio-cultural matrix women get low access to medical care. Women belonging to the low strata of the socio-economic hierarchy and to the rural areas have been the critical manifestation of this aspect. Women's health is affected by a series of interrelated economic and socio-cultural factors, viz. levels of earnings and educational background, and the attitudes to marriage, age of marriage, value attached to fertility and sex of the child, the pattern of family organisations and the ideal role demanded of Women by social conventions. Let us examining some of the important features of women's health-status in India.

Sex Ratio:

Sex-ratio is an important indicator of women's status in the society. Sex ratio measures the overall distribution of   population between male and female. It represents number of females per thousand males. In India, sex ratio was at all time high of 972 in 1901 and has continuously declined since then to reach the level of 945 in   1941 and 946 in 1951. After being stable for these 20 years, it has again declined to 941 in 1961, 930 in 1971. It improved a little bit to 934 in 1981 to again decline to 926 in 1991. There has been some increase in the sex ratio to 933 in 2001. This has further increased to 940 in 2011. From this, it is not difficult to conclude about a declining trend in sex ratio for the past 100 years. This trend in India is indicative of some systemic factors which impose upon this outcome. It is indicative of: a) Poor physical and mental care of women b) Poor nutritional access and intake, unsatisfactory health and sanitary   conditions. c) Deliberate preference accorded to males over females.

Life Expectancy:

Life expectancy is a function of income level, awareness and management of basic health facilities, access to and ability to have better medical care. It is a state policy in regard to control of diseases, epidemics and general medical facilities. India has made considerable progress overtime in these areas and life expectancy at birth was 32.1 and has continuously increased to 41.9, 46.4, 50.9, 58.6 and 61.6 years at the end of each decade till 2001. During the period 2002-06, life expectancy at birth was 63.5 years. Since 1981, females enjoyed a slightly higher life expectancy at birth compared to males. There exists considerable variation in the life expectancy among the states because of diverse socio-economic features. Thus life expectancy at birth during 2002-06 was higher in Kerala at 71.4 years followed by Punjab at 68.4 years to nearly 58.60 years for Assam, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. For females, life expectancy at birth was highest at 76.3 years in Kerala, 68 years in Punjab to 59 - 60 years in Assam, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. The low female sex-ratio and the life expectancy of the female are partly due to differential sex-ratio of newly born infants and partly due to high female mortality rate.

Sex Determination Test:

After determining the sex of the unborn foetus, termination of foetus in the womb is termed foeticide. This phenomenon is widely rampant in India. The prenatal techniques of sex determination called amniocentesis are medically useful for detecting genetic disorders or congenital malformations in pre-born foetuses. However, this technology is misused in large scale for sex determination of the foetus and to the practice of female foeticide in large parts of India. In order to curb the social evil of female foeticide, Government of India has enacted the Pre Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Act (PC&PNDT ACT) in 1994. Yet the incidence of female foeticide is unabated in several parts of India. States like Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and Gujarat and Union Territory of Chandigarh have witnessed large decline in sex ratio which has reached the alarmingly low level of 900 girls per 1000 boys in these states. Female foeticide is thus the result of an unholy alliance between the traditional preference for sons and modern medical technology coupled with other factors like the increasing greed of doctors, the rising demand for dowry that makes daughters a financial burden, the ineffective implementation of the Pre-conception and Prenatal Diagnostic Act and the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, and most important of all, the lack of serious involvement of civil society in fighting the menace.

Now let us have an idea on the laws related to the foetal killing in India. According to Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 abortion is legal in India. Again the Government of Maharashtra has gone far ahead by passing the Maharashtra Regulation of use of Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1988. This law has made prenatal sex determination test illegal in Maharashtra. Government of India passed the Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (regulation and prevention of misuse) Act in 1994. It was proposed to prohibit pre-natal diagnostic techniques for the determination of sex of foetus leading to foetal infanticide. This Act was again amended in 2001. The government of Tamil Nadu passed a similar law in 1996.

MMR and IMR (maternal mortality rate and Infant Mortality Rate)

India has experiencing a slow decline in birth and death rates. The Crude Birth Rate (CBR) shows a declining trend. It is attributed to economic development resulting in higher level of income and standard of living spread of literacy and social awareness for small family norms. Similarly, the Crude Death Rate (CDR) in India has also declined at a faster rate. The fall in CDR is in line with the success of epidemics controls, better access and management of health facilities and improved medical attention and care.

The above macro trend of movement in birth and death rate hides the disturbing picture of high incidence of death of females at the time of child birth and also the deaths of infants at the time of birth. These events are measured through Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) and the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR).

Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR):

The maternal mortality rate (MMR) is the annual number of female deaths per 100,000 live births from any cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management (excluding accidental or incidental causes). The MMR includes deaths during pregnancy, childbirth, or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, for a specified year.

Infant Mortality Rate (IMR):

An infant mortality rate (IMR) is considered a primary and important indicator of a geographic area's (country, state, county) overall health status or quality of life. Reduction of infant and child mortality has been an important tenet of the health policy of the Government of India and it has tried to address the issue right from the early stages of planned development. The National Population Policy (NPP) 2000, the National Health Policy 2002 and National Rural Health Mission (NRHM - 2005 – 2012) have laid down the goal Infant Mortality Rate in India was as high as 116 per thousand in 1961 with Male Infant Mortality Rate at 122 and Female Mortality Rate 108. This has declined to 53 per thousand in 2008 with male mortality rate at 52 compared to female mortality at 55 per thousand. The female infant mortality has increased in recent times due to indifferent attitude to birth of a girl child leading to poor care at infancy, ignorance and social taboos. 11th Five Year Plan notes 'the child sex ratio (0-6years) plummeted from 945 to 927 (p.186) the implication is that factors that militate against the existence of female child got spread and lengthened. Infant Mortality Rates differ among the states reflecting the social awareness level, the success of public health programmes, spread of literacy and education and urbanisation. Madhya Pradesh had highest IMR at 150 in 1961, followed by UP at 130, and Kerala has lowest IMR at 52 per thousand. In 2008 also Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have recorded higher than national average IMR at 70, 67 and 63 per thousand. A disturbing feature is that all states of Indian Union have recorded higher IMR for females than for males in 2008. In the country still 51 percent deliveries are uninstitutionalised and unsafe. It indicates systematic socio-economic and cultural factors at work to explain this unwelcome situation.

Food and Nutrition:

The World Health Assembly 1992 rightly observed that the health conditions in one phase of a woman's life affect other phases of her life as well as the health and well being of the future generations. The health of women is not only a manifestation of her biological but a reflection of socio-political, economic and religious contexts of women's lives also. Health is an important indicator in the achievement of social status of women whose health is conditioned to a great extends by social attitudes. Studies show that there is a difference between men and women in terms of access to health services and the quality of the care that they receive. Discrimination against the girl child as seen in most societies retards her growth and development. It is evident that the health problems that begin in the childhood and adolescence affect the health status of women during their reproductive years and beyond as well as the health of the new born. The neglect of the health needs of women especially that of the pregnant women, adolescent girls and girl babies is responsible for the high rates of infant mortality rates, child mortality rates and maternal mortality

rates in many societies. Women in the developing countries are generally more malnourished than men. The additional biological demands due to menstruation, pregnancy and lactation have made nutritional deficiencies the most widespread and disabling health problem among women. The low birth weight in new born is partly a reflection of poor maternal nutrition. Iron deficiency or anemia is more common among women than in men. Anemia lowers the physical work capacity of women and their ability to cope with various infections. It has serious repercussions on their reproductive health. Another serious problem afflicting women is the lack of adequate nutrition. One of the reasons for this is that girls and women often get the leftovers because of the patriarchal system, which is reflected in the social custom any practices, poverty and their poor social status.

In India the health status of females and girl child at all stages presents an alarming picture of weak health and nutrition deficit. India continued to grapple with unacceptably higher MMR, IMR, increasing rate of anemia and malnutrition. NRHM (National Rural Health Mission) was launched in India in 2005 to provide quality health services to rural areas with emphasis on poor persons in remote areas Anemic women are the prime cause of anemia in children. According to the 11th Five Year Plan, the pitiable condition of women throughout their life is due to lack of healthcare facilities, paucity of resources, and persistence of age old practices which deny large number of women access to good nutrition and care before and after child birth. Sick and malnutrition mother gives birth to a sick and vulnerable child, who again grows into an anemic and malnutrition mother. The cycle goes on.

IV .2 Major welfare policies and empowerment programmes for women in India. A critical evaluation

Policies on women empowerment:

Merriam Webster dictionary defines empowerment as to give official authority or legal power to the powerless; to promote the self actualization. It is providing opportunity to the people to come out of their subordination, deprivation and seek their entitlement. Srilatha Batliwala defines empowerment as a range of activities from individual self assertion to collective resistance, protest and mobilization that challenge basic power relations. For individuals and groups where class, caste, ethnicity and gender determine their access to resources and power, their empowerment begins when they not only recognize the systemic forces that oppress them, but act to change existing power relationships. Empowerment, therefore, is a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systemic forces that marginalize women and other disadvantaged sectors in a given cont.

Empowerment means involvement in decision making and control over resources for being able to achieve higher quality of life, and also improving the capability for taking advantage of the opportunities for development, provided by the system. Women empowerment is a mission that aims at enabling women to gain control over the sources of power - economic, social and political - through awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation in decision making process, control and transformative action.

The National Mission for women Empowerment (NMEW)

The National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) was launched by the Government of India on International Women's Day in 2010 with the aim to strengthen overall processes that promote all-round Development of women. It has the mandate to strengthen the inter-sector convergence; facilitate the process of coordinating all the women's welfare and socio-economic development programmes across ministries and departments.

The Mission aims to provide a single window service for all programmes run by the Government for Women under aegis of various Central Ministries. In light with its mandate; the Mission has been named Mission **Poorna Shakti**, implying a vision for holistic empowerment of women. The National Resource Centre for Women has been set up which functions as a national convergence centre for all schemes and programmes for women. It acts as a central repository of knowledge, information, research and data on all gender related issues and is the main body servicing the National and State Mission Authority.

Mission Statement: NMEW will achieve gender equality, and gender justice and holistic development of women through inter-sectoral convergence of programmes relating to women, forging synergy between various stakeholders and creating an enabling environment conducive to social change.

KEY STATAGIES:

-Facilitating inter-sector convergence of schemes meant for women, monitor and review the progress on regular basis

-Strengthening institutional framework offering support service for women

-At policy level commission research, evaluation studies, review schemes, programmes and legislation, do gender audit and outcome assessment to build the evidence for policy and programme reform and scale up implementation of the initiatives

-Enhance economic empowerment of girls and women through skill development, micro credit, vocational training and entrepreneurship and SHG development

-Evolve with the support of community representatives and groups appropriate and localized communication to strengthen public education on gender, behavior change and social mobilization using 360 degree approach on media and communication

 What is important here is to identify the factors that result in poor women empowerment.

Factors Behind Women Disempowerment

The factors behind women's disempowerment can be classified under two head viz. (i) general and (ii) women specific.

The general causes include: (i) lack of possession of productive assets, (ii) inadequate access to institutional sources of credit due to absence of ability to provide collateral security, (iii) gender discrimination in general, and (iv) lack of skills.

Causes specific to women can be identified as: (i) illiteracy, (ii) seclusion, (iii) lack of organisation, (iv) absence or limited control over family earnings, (v) exclusion in household decisions relating to size of the family, education and marriage of female children, purchase or sale of assets etc., and (vi) lack of awareness and information.

Various strategies aimed at empowering women have been tried out to address the causes of women disempowerment. It is particularly emphasised in all developmental plans to have greater focus on women empowerment. A more vigorous thrust in this respect is particularly given since the 8th Five Year Plan in India. Since overall empowerment of women is crucially dependent on earnings of women, policy makers have time and again reinforced government intervention at different levels to ensure removal of discrimination as a step towards enhanced earnings for women. These include focused development projects that enhance income earning capacity of women through appropriate and specific skill formation, capacity building, and increased access to institutional credit. In this context, the efforts of many non-government organizations and social workers who have supplemented the government efforts in bringing women into the mainstream of economic development need to be appreciated. The 73rd and the 74th constitutional amendments affected in 1994 marks a significant step in the direction of providing legislative provision for women empowerment in India. Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act Panchayat Acts at the state level have reserved not less than one-third of the seats for women in all tiers of gram panchayat, panchayat samiti, and zilla parisad.

The issue of empowerment of women cannot be addressed in isolation from the larger feminist issues, or from the issues of development. The empowerment of women ought to happen simultaneously in the economic, social, cultural and political fields. Even the familial field cannot be left aside. In order to be able to participate in a social movement the women have to free themselves from familial constraints that are imposed in patriarchal terms.

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