

PREFACE

With its grounding in the “guiding pillars of Access, Equity, Equality, Affordability and Accountability,” the New Education Policy (NEP 2020) envisions flexible curricular structures and creative combinations for studies across disciplines. Accordingly, the UGC has revised the CBCS with a new Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes (CCFUP) to further empower the flexible choice based credit system with a multidisciplinary approach and multiple/ lateral entry-exit options. It is held that this entire exercise shall leverage the potential of higher education in three-fold ways – learner’s personal enlightenment; her/his constructive public engagement; productive social contribution. Cumulatively therefore, all academic endeavours taken up under the NEP 2020 framework are aimed at synergising individual attainments towards the enhancement of our national goals.

In this epochal moment of a paradigmatic transformation in the higher education scenario, the role of an Open University is crucial, not just in terms of improving the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) but also in upholding the qualitative parameters. It is time to acknowledge that the implementation of the National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF) National Credit Framework (NCrF) and its syncing with the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) are best optimised in the arena of Open and Distance Learning that is truly seamless in its horizons. As one of the largest Open Universities in Eastern India that has been accredited with ‘A’ grade by NAAC in 2021, has ranked second among Open Universities in the NIRF in 2024, and attained the much required UGC 12B status, Netaji Subhas Open University is committed to both quantity and quality in its mission to spread higher education. It was therefore imperative upon us to embrace NEP 2020, bring in dynamic revisions to our Undergraduate syllabi, and formulate these Self Learning Materials anew. Our new offering is synchronised with the CCFUP in integrating domain specific knowledge with multidisciplinary fields, honing of skills that are relevant to each domain, enhancement of abilities, and of course deep-diving into Indian Knowledge Systems.

Self Learning Materials (SLM’s) are the mainstay of Student Support Services (SSS) of an Open University. It is with a futuristic thought that we now offer our learners the choice of print or e-slm’s. From our mandate of offering quality higher education in the mother tongue, and from the logistic viewpoint of balancing scholastic needs, we strive to bring out learning materials in Bengali and English. All our faculty members are constantly engaged in this academic exercise that combines subject specific academic research with educational pedagogy. We are privileged in that the expertise of academics across institutions on a national level also comes together to augment our own faculty strength in developing these learning materials. We look forward to proactive feedback from all stakeholders whose participatory zeal in the teaching-learning process based on these study materials will enable us to only get better. On the whole it has been a very challenging task, and I congratulate everyone in the preparation of these SLM’s.

I wish the venture all success.

Professor Indrajit Lahiri
Vice Chancellor

Netaji Subhas Open University
Four Year Undergraduate Degree Programme
Under National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF) &
Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes
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**Netaji Subhas
Open University**

**UG : Political Science
(HPS)**

Course : Feminism : Theory and Practice

Course Code : NMD-PS-01

Module-1: Introduction

Unit-1 □ What is Feminism?	9-20
Unit-2 □ Distinction between Sex and Gender	21-29
Unit-3 □ Biologism and Social Constructivism	30-38
Unit-4 □ Private — Public divide	39-49
Unit-5 □ Diaspora and Hybridity: Changing ways of representation	50-60

Module-2: Feminist Tradition

Unit-6 □ Understanding Patriarchy	63-72
Unit-7 □ Liberal Feminism	73-82
Unit-8 □ Socialist Feminism	83-91
Unit-9 □ Radical Feminism	92-101
Unit-10 □ New Feminism	102-106

Module-3: Feminism in Practice

Unit-11	□ Feminism in the West	109-121
Unit-12	□ Feminism in the Socialist Countries	122-131
Unit-13	□ Islam and Feminism in West Asia	132-142
Unit-14	□ Social Reform Movements and the Women's Question in Colonial India	143-153
Unit-15	□ Women's Movement in India	154-162

Module- 1

Introduction

Unit-1 □ What is Feminism?

Structure

1.1 Objective

1.2 Introduction

1.3 First Phase

1.3.1 Important personalities linked to Liberal Feminism

1.3.2 Early achievements in a few countries

1.4 Second Phase: Radical Feminism

1.5 Marxist and Socialist Feminists

1.6 A new phase of feminist thinking: The Third Wave

1.7 Post-Colonial and Third World Feminism

1.8 Conclusion

1.9 Summing Up

1.10 Glossary

1.11 Probable Questions

1.12 Further Readin

1.1 Objective

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to :

- Analyse the trends that have developed in feminist ideology over the years.
- Understand the nature and evolution of feminist theories that emerged from feminist movements.
- Explain the historical overview of the key waves of feminist movements.

1.2 Introduction

There can be no singular definition of feminist ideology that can be used to explain the varied trends of thought that have developed over years deriving inspiration from equally varied sources. However, to begin with, feminism can broadly be presented as a system of thought that challenges the social privileging of the male point of view and seeks to establish the right of women to be treated as equals of men

politically, economically and culturally. Thus, the ideology of patriarchy, which recognises men as supreme at both social and familial levels has been the main target of attack of all kinds of feminist movements. Feminist theories, which emerge from feminist movements, aim to understand the nature of gender inequality by examining women's social roles and lived experiences. These theories have been incorporated in a variety of disciplines in order to respond to issues concerning gender. Feminist movements are concerned with a wide range of issues namely, woman's right to own property and vote, getting same pay as men for the same work, gaining control over their own bodies by fighting for reproductive rights through the use of contraception and abortion and so on.

It is obvious that this philosophy with all its ramifications was not shaped in a day; it developed over time responding to the contemporary socio-political, economic and cultural trends and visions implicating women's subordination in some way or the other. Some scholars consider feminist campaigns to be a main force behind major historical societal changes for women's rights, particularly in the West. Although feminist advocacy is, and has been, mainly focused on women's rights, some feminists, viz., Bell Hooks (Gloria Jean Watkins, an American author, professor, feminist, and social activist better known by her pen name *Bell Hooks*) argue for the inclusion of men's liberation within its aims because they believe that men are also affected by traditional gender roles. Now let us take a historical overview of the waves of feminist movements.

Feminist movements, even as they developed in waves or phases, display a great deal of overlap among themselves. The most fruitful method to explore the concept will be through a discussion of the broadly identified trends.

From Plato to Indian *sastrakars*, men have defined the ideals of womanhood and social and familial roles of women, but it is from the time when women themselves began to speak about their goals and roles that the term feminism becomes meaningful.

1.3 First Phase: *Liberal Feminism*

The group that is known as liberal feminist was the first to foreground the idea of feminism in literary and social practice. At the theoretical level, the liberal feminists analyse gender inequality in terms of divergent processes of socialization, sway of superstition, irrationality and so on. Their preferred solution lies in legal reform, affecting change in the structure of values through sustained propaganda etc. The essential thrust of this theoretical tendency is individualism.

It was in the backdrop of Enlightenment around seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that the earliest sounds of feminism (not all theorists would choose to apply the term ‘feminism’ to this phase, for them it could at best be called ‘proto-feminist’) were heard in United States and Great Britain when women started demanding legal equality, such as the right to be treated as full individuals endowed with the capability to make choices of life, such as the right to hold property and to choose their husbands. In most crucial sense, the status of women in these countries was very similar to that of children who were not considered capable of making rational choices. As only the householder could cast a vote, the restriction on property right kept most women disenfranchised.

1.3.1 Important personalities linked to Liberal Feminism

Judith Sargent Murray in her landmark essay *On the Equality of the Sexes* (1790) articulated her thoughts on women’s rights which were worked upon, expanded and elaborated by other feminist writers as the century rolled on. Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the early feminists, heavily influenced by Rousseau and French political thinkers, in her immensely influential book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), argued that women are not naturally inferior to men, but appear to be so only because they lack education. She suggested that both men and women should be treated as rational beings and imagined a social order founded on reason. By the turn of the century similar ideas started pouring in. For instance, Frances Wright in her *Views of Society and Manners in America* (1821) brought her to public attention as a critic of the new nation by advocating women’s full political inclusion.

In the contemporary period one of the most important male philosophers to support this wave of women’s movement was John Stuart Mill (1806–1873). Similar to Mary Wollstonecraft, he compared sexual inequality to slavery, arguing that husbands are often just as abusive as masters. In his book *The Subjection of Women*, Mill argued that sex inequality inhibited societal progress and believed that both sexes should have equal rights under the law. He also argued that until conditions of equality exist, no one can possibly assess the natural differences between women and men, distorted as they have been.

1.3.2 Early achievements in a few countries

USA: Increasingly, more feminists began to see that obtaining voting rights was perhaps among the most important steps before other rights could be secured. But it took immense activism almost over half a century for women to gain voting rights in USA. Through stepping stones like Seneca Falls Convention

(1848), National Women's Right Convention (1850) National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) was ultimately formed, women had specific laws sanctioning their rights to vote. In 1920, after nearly 50 years of intense activism, women were finally granted the right to vote and the right to hold public office in the United States. After repeated failures in legal battle the National Woman's Party formed by Alice Paul in 1916 took to militancy over the question of suffrage. After a hard-fought series of votes in the US Congress and in state legislatures, the Nineteenth Amendment became a part of the US Constitution in 1920. It states that the right of US citizens to vote shall not be denied or abridged on account of sex.

UK: In the UK, militant campaign began with the formation of the Women's Social and Political Union in the first decade of twentieth century. Perhaps the most prominent agitator was Sylvia Pankhurst, a famous socialist who helped campaign for women's equality with men *inter alia* many other issues which exemplified social injustice. Women gained the right to vote in 1918 although their rights were not fully equal to men. Representation of the People Act 1918 enfranchised all men, as well as all women above the age of thirty who met minimum property qualifications. It was in 1928 that the Conservative government ultimately passed the act of equal franchise giving all men and women above the age of twenty-one the right to vote. Apart from voting right another important triumph for UK women came in 1857 when the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 set up a special court to deal with divorce cases. This meant that women could get divorce without the endorsement of the church.

France: It appears ironical that the country that was the earliest to declare the 'Rights of Man' was almost the last to grant voting rights to its women. In 1909 French Union for Women's Suffrage, French feminist organization was formed primarily to fight for voting right, which was eventually granted in 1945.

Through the 18th century Feminist movements also developed in many other countries. For instance, in Southern Australia, right to vote was achieved by women in 1895, Catherine Spence being a relentless campaigner for this right. In Denmark, they had already achieved not only voting rights but equal rights laws that protected a woman's access to education, work and marital rights during the 1920s.

Liberal feminism was quiet for four decades after winning the vote. In the 1960s during the civil rights movement, liberal feminists drew parallels between systemic

race discrimination and sex discrimination. Groups such as the National Organization for Women, the National Women's Political Caucus, and the Women's Equity Action League were created to further women's rights on issues such as reproduction, child care, domestic violence, work and equal pay and so on.

1.4 Second Phase: *Radical Feminism*

The second wave of Feminism, often termed as radical feminism, began in the late 1960s and continued into the early 90s. This wave unfolded itself in the context of the anti-war and civil rights movements and the growing self-consciousness of a variety of minority groups around the world.

The book *The Second Sex*, (1949) an extremely important contribution to Feminist philosophy by Simone de Beauvoir, the French Existentialist author, is often regarded as the starting point of second-wave feminism. In *Second Sex*, her *magnum opus*, published in 1949 in French as *Le Deuxième Sexe*, she famously declared 'one is not born but becomes a woman'. Beauvoir argued that men had made women the 'other' in society by application of a false aura of 'mystery' around them and used this as an excuse to create an 'unfathomable woman' stereotype whose real problems need not be addressed. Its social expression, she clarified, was the creation of Patriarchy. After the publication of de Beauvoir's text, feminists began to employ 'gender' as a crucial analytical category for explaining social processes. These theorists were advocates of gender division as the most fundamental of all social divisions and the universality of patriarchy.

The radical Feminists argued that sexual objectification was the most widely shared experience of women on the basis of which a common identity and common goal of action could be forged. Significantly this phase began with protests against the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City in 1968 and 1969. With the rise of the New Left, this feminist phase got entangled with many other social movements. Whereas the first wave of feminism was generally propelled by Western white middle class women, the second phase drew in women of color and developing nations, seeking sisterhood and solidarity, claiming 'women's struggle is class struggle.' Feminists spoke of women as a social class and coined phrases such as 'the personal is political' and 'identity politics' in an effort to demonstrate that race, class, and gender oppression were all related. The second wave became increasingly theoretical, based on a fusion of neo-Marxism and psycho-analytical theory, and began to associate the subjugation of women with broader critiques of patriarchy, capitalism, normative heterosexuality, and the woman's role as wife and mother.

Radical feminists generally formed small activist or community associations around either consciousness raising or concrete aims. Many radical feminists in Australia participated in a series of squats to establish various women's centers, a form of action that became common in the late 1970s and early 1980s. By the mid-1980s many of the original consciousness raising groups had dissolved, and radical feminism was more and more associated with loosely organized university collectives. Radical feminism can still be seen, particularly within student activism and among working class women. While radical feminists aimed to dismantle patriarchal society, their immediate aims were generally concrete. Their common demands included:

Expanding Reproductive Rights: This was defined by feminists in the 1970s as a basic human right that included the right to abortion and birth control and much more. To be realised, reproductive freedom, it was argued, must include not only woman's right to choose childbirth, abortion, sterilisation or birth control, but also her right to make those choices freely, without pressure from individual men, doctors, governmental or religious authorities.

At a broader plane they sought to change the whole organization of the sexual culture, e.g., breaking down traditional gender roles and re-evaluating societal concepts of femininity and masculinity (a common demand in US universities during the 1980s). To achieve this, they often formed tactical alliances with other currents of feminism.

1.5 Marxist and Socialist Feminists

Much of what radical feminists were arguing had overlaps with the thoughts of Marxist and Socialist Feminists, the latter being more focused on historical approach. The early Marxist Feminists, while accepting Patriarchy as an important cultural more, were keener on finding a 'material' explanation of gender, the whole approach being an attempt to develop a critique of Capitalism from gender perspective. Given this main theoretical thrust, they, none the less, were vexed by such questions as to what extent economic systems influence gender relationships, or whether subordination of women predates capitalism or, more crucially, the possibility of its continuance even in socialism etc. In an attempt to break-out of this theoretical deadlock, a new position emerged. The economic and gender system are not causally linked social processes, but operate simultaneously and interactively. The early Marxist Feminists from Clara Zetkin to Alexandra Kollontai variously drew their inspiration from F. Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Among the later Marxist Feminists were Maria Mies, [German professor of sociology and author of

several feminist books, including *Indian Women and Patriarchy* (1980), *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (1986), etc], Gayle Maria Rosa Dalla Costa (Italian autonomist feminist who co-authored with Selma James the classic *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*). 'The Power etc' launched the 'domestic labour debate' by re-defining housework as reproductive labour necessary to the functioning of capital, rendered invisible by its removal from the wage-relation. Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James American writer, feminist and social activist were co-founders of the International Wages for Housework Campaign, and coordinators of the Global Women's Strike etc.

1.6 A New Phase of Feminist Thinking: The Third Wave

In the 1980s radical feminism as a theoretical approach was subjected to severe criticisms. The central charges were of essentialism and biological reductionism. It was alleged that their entire emphasis lay on the male 'need' to oppress women, but they have failed to provide any explanation beyond biology as to why it should be so. The obvious tendency of this approach was to treat men and women as 'homogenous' and 'unhistorical' categories.

The critical atmosphere of the 1980s generated another theoretical trend that has been somewhat loosely termed as the Post-Modern or Post-Structuralist approach to feminism. Deriving from a wide range of philosophical currents as represented by the thoughts of Foucault, Freud, Lacan and Derrida, the feminism of this phase was by no means a homogenous trend. In examining identity formation and generation of stereotypes, the theorists variously explored the tools of psychoanalysis and the role of language. All these led to the destabilization of a variety of notions such as 'universal womanhood', body, gender, sexual heteronormativity and so on. Their celebration of ambiguity and refusal to think in terms of 'us-them' (or men-women binary) led most of them to deny identification as 'feminists' as they found the word limiting and exclusionary.

Given the immense complexity and variety of this approach it is difficult to delineate the salient points of a theoretical model. Yet a few directions can be indicated. Focusing on the early stages of child development emphasis has been placed on the centrality of language in communicating, interpreting and representing gender. By language the 'Post Structuralists' do not mean words but systems of meaning — symbolic orders — that precede the actual mastery of speech, reading and writing. Again, those who follow the Foucauldian method question causality or idea of single origin and conceive of processes to be absolutely interconnected and

entangled. Joan Wallach Scot, one of the very well-known theorists of this trend, provides illuminating exposition of how gender becomes the primary way of signifying relationships of power. To explain this, she enumerates few inter-related constitutive elements of gender. First, in every society there are available cultural symbols that evoke the idea of womanhood. These symbols are multiple and can also be contradictory. The most commonly available cultural icons in Western societies are those of 'Eve' or 'Mother Mary'. Then these symbols are employed in every sphere of social activity such as pursuance of religion, education, scientific research, legal and political doctrines and variously fix binary opposition of concepts of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' with clear implication of power relationship. This takes on a different dimension in modern societies with much wider purview of governance. Finally, the biological sexuality transforms into subjective identity through enculturation and further reinforces the stereotypes. This theoretical trend takes us beyond any simplified concept of fixed binary and fixed origin and opens the scope of dialogue with most other disciplines, namely History, Economics, Sociology, Psychology and so on.

1.7 Post-Colonial and Third World Feminism

In the 1980s Postcolonial or often called the Third World Feminism, originated in countries that emerged out of colonial domination, as a critique of feminist theorists in developed countries pointing out the universalizing tendencies of mainstream feminist ideas in which the women living in non-Western countries are misrepresented. Postcolonial feminism emerged as part of the third wave of feminism, which began in the 1980s, in tandem with many other racially focused feminist movements in order to bring into focus the diverse nature of each woman's lived experience.

As can be quite expected there is no singular 'Third World Feminism', yet there are certain underlying common theoretical assumptions and lived experiences that can qualify them as a trend. First, postcolonial theorists concern themselves with evaluating how different colonial and imperial relations throughout the nineteenth century have impacted the way particular cultures view themselves. The second defining factor is their opposition to 'Western Feminism' which, they argue, universalizes their own experience thereby becoming a participant in the Western knowledge hegemony. There is a general tendency of Western Feminism, they allege, to construct the 'Third World Women' as a homogenous 'powerless' group suffering victimhood of particular

socio-economic systems. They argue that this approach issues from collapsing the distinction as women as real historical subjects and their representation.

By rejecting the Western feminist imaging of non-western women, post-colonial feminism promotes a wider viewpoint of the complex layers of oppression that exist within any given society. Audre Lorde, American writer, Feminist and Civil Rights Activist, contributed to the creation of Postcolonial Feminism in her 1984 essay *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House*. The essay of Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Professor of Gender Studies and Sociology in Syracuse University, *Under Western Eyes* also came out in 1984, analyzing the homogenizing Western Feminist depiction of the 'Third World Women.' These works, along with many others, were foundational to the formation of postcolonial feminism. Celebrating difference in the lived experiences of women, Lorde asserts, that these should be used to create a community in which women use their different strengths to support each other. Mohanty's primary initiative has been to allow Third World Women to have agency and voice within the general feminist realm.

The major emphasis of this group of Feminists has been on movement. In the article *Third World Women and the Inadequacies of Western Feminism*, Ethel Crowley, Professor of Sociology at Trinity College of Dublin, writes about how Western Feminism is lacking when applied to non-western societies. She accuses western feminists of theoretical reductionism when it comes to Third World Women. Her major problem with Western Feminism is that it spends too much time in ideological 'nit-picking' instead of formulating strategies to redress the highlighted problems. The most prominent point that Crowley makes in her article is that ethnography can be essential to problem solving and that freedom does not mean the same thing to all the women of the world.

Postcolonial Feminism has strong ties with indigenous movements and wider Postcolonial theory. It is also closely affiliated with Black Feminism because both Black Feminists and Postcolonial Feminists argue that mainstream Western Feminism fails to adequately account for racial differences. Racism has a major role to play in the discussion of Postcolonial Feminism. Postcolonial Feminists seek to tackle the ethnic conflict and racism that still exist and aim to bring these issues into feminist discourse. In the past, Lorde argues, mainstream Western Feminism has largely avoided the issue of race, relegating it to a secondary place behind patriarchy and somewhat separate from feminism. It was only in recent times that 'White' Feminists are waking up to the need to address this issue.

Criticized as they are, the Western Feminists also launched their critique of Postcolonial Feminism in much the same way. It has been argued that Third World Feminists are also in danger of being ethnocentric, only addressing what is going on in their own cultures at the expense of other parts of the world for colonialism occurring across different timelines embodies different meaning for people across the world.

1.8 Conclusion

Feminist thought and movements, as we have discussed, have different shades and strands. But policy making at both national and international levels has been compelled to acknowledge the concerted strength of their contributions, however variegated. Feminism has barely exhausted its potential and different issues, will continue to come and debates rage for a long time to come. The multiplicity of feminist trends not only indicates divergence, it more crucially implies the growing audibility of women's voice that had been achieved through long struggles and sacrifices.

1.9 Summing Up

1. Feminism can broadly be presented as a system of thought that challenges the social privileging of the male point of view and seeks to assert the right of women to be treated as equals of men politically, economically and culturally. Thus, the ideology of patriarchy at both social and familial levels has been the main target of attack of all kinds of feminist movements.
2. It was in the backdrop of Enlightenment around 17th and 18th centuries that the earliest sounds of feminism were heard in United States and Great Britain when women started demanding legal equality, such as the right to be treated as full individuals endowed with the capability to make choices of life, such as the right to hold property and to choose their husbands.
3. Wollstonecraft was one of the early feminists, heavily influenced by Rousseau and French political thinkers, in her immensely influential book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), argued that women are not naturally inferior to men, but appear to be only because they lack education.
4. The second wave of Feminism, often termed as Radical Feminism, began in the late 1960s and continued into the early 90s. This wave unfolded itself in

the context of the anti-war and civil rights movements and the growing self-consciousness of a variety of minority groups around the world.

5. The book *The Second Sex* (1949), an extremely important contribution to Feminist philosophy by Simone de Beauvoir, the French Existentialist author, is often regarded as the starting point of second-wave feminism.
6. The early Marxist and Socialist Feminists, while accepting Patriarchy as an important cultural move, were keener on finding a 'material' explanation of gender, the whole approach being an attempt to develop a critique of Capitalism from gender perspective.
7. The 1980s generated another theoretical trend that has been somewhat loosely termed as the Post-Modern or Post-Structuralist approach to feminism. Deriving from a wide range of philosophical currents as represented by the thoughts of Foucault, Freud, Lacan and Derrida they represented widely variegated strands of thought. Closely connected with them were the so-called Post-Colonial and Third World Feminists who were equally divergent in their approaches.

1.10 Glossary

1. **Patriarchy**— A socio-familial system in which social and political leadership rests with men. At the family level, the father or the eldest son is considered the head of the family and descent is determined by male-line. At the political and social level, power crucially rests with males, women being ascribed a secondary role.
2. **Structuralism**— It is employed in philosophy, sociology, anthropology, history and so on, structuralism indicates a method of understanding of human behaviour in terms of underlying broad structures that determine feelings, perceptions and thought processes.
3. **Hegemony**—In ancient Greece hegemony meant political military dominance of one city state over another, the dominant one being called the hegemon. However, in the definition of Antonio Gramsci, Italian Marxist, it came to denote the manipulative power of the ruling class to get people believe that their own interest was essentially catered by accepting and embracing the rulers' ideology.

1.11 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. Write an essay on the Liberal Feminist theory.
2. Discuss the different phases of the feminist tradition.

Short Questions :

1. What are the theoretical overlaps between Radical and Marxist Feminists? What are their differences?
2. How do the Third World Feminists critique Western Feminism?

Objective Questions :

1. What is the preferred solution of the liberal feminists to the problem of gender inequality?
2. What is the primary objection of the post colonial Feminism against Western Feminism?

1.12 Further Reading

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Unit-2 □ Distinction between Sex and Gender

Structure

2.1 Objective

2.2 Introduction

2.3 Feminist critique of sex-gender equation

2.4 Patriarchy

2.5 Role of other Institutions

2.5.1 State and the church working in tandem

2.5.2 Law

2.5.3 Politics

2.5.4 Media

2.6 Conclusion

2.7 Summing Up

2.8 Glossary

2.9 Probable Questions

2.10 Further Reading

2.1 Objective

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to :

- Understand the linguistic meaning of the term 'gender'.
- Distinguish between 'sex' and 'gender' within the framework of feminist epistemology.

2.2 Introduction

The word 'gender' in common English usage is often used interchangeably with the word 'sex', implying male/female anatomical binary. But if we go a little deeper we see neither linguistically nor sociologically such interchangeability as tenable.

Let us first look at language. Linguists generally use the word 'gender' to classify nouns. In most Indo-European group of languages (There are about 445 living Indo-

European languages and nearly 42% of the human population speaks an Indo-European language as a first language, by far the highest of any language family) gender implies classification of animate and an inanimate. But the classification mode widely varies. For instance, in both English and Bengali languages we find a triadic gender structure – masculine, feminine and neuter. But in languages like French, German etc. feminine and masculine binary applies to both animate and inanimate. Thus, a scale or a pencil can either be feminine or masculine. This applies to Hindi language as well. Such variations notwithstanding, given the global dominance of English, in our commonplace understanding gender broadly implies ‘masculine/feminine’ division and we tend to believe that gender and sex is one and the same thing.

2.3 Feminist critique of sex-gender equation

Over years’ feminists have been arguing for making a distinction between sex and gender. The main point that they want to make is that while sex is a biological given, gender means the social role that society attaches to the sex-based division. In other words, while sex indicates biological man and woman, gender indicates social ‘manhood’ and ‘womanhood’.

This distinction is also reflected in dictionaries. For instance, the entry of ‘gender’ in Oxford dictionary reads as follows: noun. Either of the two sexes (male and female), especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones. It further states that the term is also used more broadly to denote a range of identities that do not correspond to established ideas of male and female.

Now the question arises as to how ‘manhood’ and ‘womanhood’ are defined. Feminists argue that ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ are products of social construct that vary from epoch to epoch and in accordance to difference in social organizations. For instance, the concept of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ in matrilineal tribal societies and so-called ‘mainstream’ societies are often different in terms of certain crucial factors of social organization and day to day living. Then again, difference also occurs from one historical period to another depending on their specific notions of social production. For instance, in pre-modern agrarian society, where the economy was at least partially home-based, woman’s social productivity was viewed differently from that of industrial societies.

Thus, femininity is a social construction just as masculinity is. Then again it should be understood that if the idea of gender had merely been indicative of social and historical variations of the notions of manhood and womanhood, it would have

essentially remained a matter of anthropological interest. But as the gender stereotyping in almost all societies remain crucially linked to domination of females by males, the concept of gender is rendered politically charged.

This will take us to a discussion of the Patriarchy and how patriarchal ideology permeates various institutional forms through which this domination is exercised.

2.4 Patriarchy

Previously, narrowly conceived patriarchy simply implied a familial system where the father, being the Patriarch was vested with supreme authority. In current sociological usage, patriarchy is made to stand for a social system that creates conditions of subjugation of women by men. This is not to mean that domination by some ‘cruel’ men over women who are hapless victims. Feminists use the word to indicate systemic control over women. Juliet Mitchell, British psychoanalyst, socialist feminist and a prolific writer, describes patriarchy as a kinship system in which fathers are vested with certain symbolic powers to exercise within the system. She clarifies that such power creates a psychological ambience within which women naturally consider themselves as the inferior others. In short, by discussing the institutional forms of domination the feminists, over decades, are trying to drive home the point that to comprehend the unequal power relation between men and women we need to look beyond biology.

Kamla Bhasin, Indian developmental feminist activist, poet, author and social scientist, provides a succinct summarization of the methods of patriarchal control over women. This formulation not only applies to India, but across countries of the world albeit with variations.

Household work: In so far as women’s work is concerned both within and outside the household, the control of men is only too obvious. Women’s relentless household work is not only unpaid; it often goes without recognition. Little wonder that those who do not work outside are called ‘unemployed’. The non-recognition of women’s household labour as socially productive did not apply so much to pre-industrial household economy as it does to industrial and capitalist economy. In the former, as the household was the main centre of productivity, it was natural to treat household labour as socially productive. But in industrial societies on the other hand, since the major economic activities take place outside the house, home-centered activities of women become identical with unemployment. In the opinion of Maria Mies the surplus that women produce through their ‘shadow work’ is entirely discounted and is subjected to no economic evaluation. The UNDP (United Nations

Development Programme) Human Development Report of 1995 says that the value of the invisible and unpaid labour of women the world wide is over 11 trillion US dollars. Then again to what extent women can be permitted to work outside their homes is determined by the male dominated familial culture that expects women to fulfill certain obligations.

Biological productivity: Not only her economic activity, even the biological productivity of woman is subjected to similar control. Motherhood being a chief identifier of women, have to deal with a lot of social pressure upon them to exercise their choice in this regard. Women the world over have fought and are still fighting for control over their own sexuality. In the West it was a long and arduous struggle through which abortion rights were secured. There are still areas in the West where social consensus is strong against it.

In India community pressure barely allows women freedom of choice. In very many places forceful abortion of female child at the fetal stage is still quite prevalent.

2.5 Role of other Institutions

Patriarchy, as a mode of thinking, permeates all kinds of institutions and influences their policy decisions. We will take up these institutions one by one.

2.5.1 State and the church working in tandem:

History has shown us as how the state in its own interest regulates and controls women's productivity and mobility. This was evident particularly in Post Second World War period when Germany was faced with the task of reconstruction. The crucial necessity then was labour power. Women were called upon to engage actively in the work of social and economic reconstruction. But something quite different took place in Britain. After the end of the same war, women who had joined in war efforts were asked to go back to their homes leaving the task of peace-time social reconstruction exclusively to men. The impact of the war in the United States saw an unprecedented population growth that added more than 50 million babies to the country by the end of the 1950s, a phenomenon that has gone down in history as 'Baby Boom'. During the Great Depression in the 1930s, economic pressures dissuaded many Americans from having children and the population growth dropped to a meagre nine million. The post-war economy proved to be more robust and families were encouraged to have more children. This was a covert encouragement to 'motherhood'.

The transformation of the Free State of Ireland into the Republic of Ireland is a glaring example of how the state and church combine to control the policy of birth control. In order to handle the wartime anarchy and restlessness the state called upon the church to come to its aid. One of the prescriptions that the church floated as a solution was to reassert the ideal of motherhood. As a method, birth control measures were not only prohibited, any campaign for them was also banned. So, women now only lost their right to choose, they were even deprived of their right to know. The New Constitution of the Irish Republic retained the anti-abortion law of the earlier Irish State.

2.5.2 Law

Legal structure embedded in the patriarchal belief system has its own way of perpetuating male domination. One of the crucial zones of social discrimination pertains to women's right to property. While it took a very long time to formally grant women, the right to household property that normally passed from father to son in most of the 'mainstream' societies, the actual enjoyment of it often remains unexercised under direct or indirect social pressures. Given the general social practise of women going over to the husbands' family after marriage, there is often a tacit or stridently expressed discouragement for women to ask for a share of her familial property. According to 2015 UN report on women, although, laws provide for gender equality in inheritance for the overall population, discrimination is still found in practice among many groups of population. This is the case for about half of the 116 developing countries with available information. Discriminatory informal laws, customs and practices restrict women's access to land and other property in a large proportion of developing countries, including more than three quarters with regard to land and nearly two thirds with regard to other property.

2.5.3 Politics

In most of the 'mainstream' societies men are the masters of the world of politics. In almost all political associations, from the village level to the Parliament, men almost invariably dominate. In the United States a woman cannot dream of being a presidential candidate for a very long time. It is only very recently that a few parties have started thinking in terms of fielding women as Presidential candidates. But to have women leading role in politics does not imply any immediate change in the status of women in the society at large.

For instance, the South Asian countries which are noted for having woman Presidents and Prime Ministers, women's presence in the Parliament had never been

more than 10 percent. As a repair move, few countries like India have even taken up policies to ensure greater presence through system of reservation of seats. But such policies have barely brought serious change in the ground reality. Newspapers are still rife with cases of various kinds of abuse of women.

2.5.4 Media

Media is the main vehicle of propagating ideology in modern societies. Films of both the West and India, by and large, use woman's body as a consumer item while at the same time reinforcing the home-centric status of woman.

On television, marriage, parenthood and domesticity are generally shown as more important for women than men. In the Western media between mid-40s and the 60s white middle class women were predominantly portrayed as 'house wives', their major concern being to keep the houses impeccably clean and rearing children. It cleverly hid the fact that by 60s, 40 percent of these women worked outside homes and post- World War II divorce had become rampant. In a study made in 1975, it had been found that while women were shown to be concerned with romance and family problems in 74 percent cases, men are shown to be sharing them only in 18 percent of the cases. The portrayal of women as weak and ineffectual continued to be overwhelming. But as the century rolled to its close and women entered the media profession in far larger numbers, they no longer remained mere consumers of media products, they got involved in decision making and directing. This obviously led to some balancing effect on gender sensitive questions.

If we come to the advertisements the reflection of this change can be easily identified. In the erstwhile advertisements on the 'so-called' 'soap war', from the way women were portrayed one would assume that women by and large did nothing but washing clothes. With feminist protest against certain kind of stereotyping of women and with more women entering the world of media, there have been attempts to change certain stereotypes by featuring men in roles which we are used to seeing women in. But these are few and far between and remain as exceptions not to be taken very seriously. Discussion of advertisements perpetuating and even reinforcing divided gender roles of patriarchal tenor can become long enough meriting a separate discussion altogether.

2.6 Conclusion

In rounding up the discussion let us once again look at the central idea at the basis of patriarchy. Patriarchy creates within family as well as other institutions a gendered

consciousness under the influence of which men internalize their dominance and women their subjugation. This engenders two diverse visions and missions of life. Once again the point to note that as an ideology patriarchy not only enjoys the support of men, it is able to secure the consent of a large section of women as well. The cooperation of the subjugated can be secured in a variety of ways. Gerda Lerner, Austrian-born American historian and feminist author, in her book *The Creation of Patriarchy* enumerates them as follows: by educational deprivation, the denial of women the knowledge of their history, by putting restraints on access to political power and economic resources and creating division among women through defining 'respectability' and 'deviance', and by according class privileges to conforming women and so on.

Patriarchal ideology not only creates a subjugated psychology that women internalize, it also creates an 'ideal type' for males which they internalize.

However, the idea of transgender has complicated the feminist notion of gendering through social construction. In the late 70s and early 80s, corresponding roughly to the second wave of feminism, feminists (especially early radical feminists) were often in conflict with trans-women within feminism. Janice Raymond, professor of women's studies and medical ethics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, published *The Transsexual Empire* in 1979. In *Empire*, Raymond criticised contemporary medical and psychiatric approaches to trans-sexuality and accused trans-women of reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes.

However, the third wave of feminism showed greater acceptance of transgender rights within feminism, largely due to the influence of philosophers like Judith Butler, American philosopher and gender theorist, and Kimberle Crenshaw, American lawyer and civil rights advocate. These philosophers argued for a greater inclusion of other fields (such as critical race theory and queer theory) within feminism. Butler in particular argued that the liberation of women required a questioning of gender itself, and that acceptance of gay and trans-people would promote that sort of questioning.

So, the horizon of feminist questioning of all hitherto existing stereotypes of man and woman is ever expanding and entering all systems of knowledge and activism.

2.7 Summing Up

1. Over decades, feminists, especially those belonging to the Second wave feminism, have been arguing in favour of making a distinction between sex and gender. Their main argument is that while sex is a biological given, gender is a product of social construct that varies from epoch to epoch and in accordance to different social organizations.
2. Patriarchy is an ideological system that not only creates fixed stereotypes of men and women, but ensures domination of men over women. Permeating through all social institutions it propels both men and women to internalize the notions of dominance and subjugation.
3. Institutions like state and church often act together to perpetuate the subordination of women.
4. The media representation of men and women more often than not serve to further entrench the dominant gender stereotypes.
5. In terms of enjoyment of property, legal enactments in favour equal enjoyment of property rights is often thwarted by customs and prejudices that still hold strong especially in developing countries.
6. With the inclusion of issues of trans-gender movement, the purview of feminist activity has substantially broadened.

2.8 Glossary

1. **Great Depression**—Lasting from 1929 to 1939 was a terrible economic downturn witnessed by the industrialised world. It began with a Stock Market crash which led the Wall Street investors go into panic, most of them ultimately getting wiped out.
2. **Baby Boom**—The period of Great Depression being over and the Second World War having ended the US went through a period of prosperity and witnessed a surge of population. It was this period, roughly extending from 1946 to 1964 that is generally referred to as the period of baby boom.

2.9 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. Discuss the institutional forms through which Patriarchal ideology is propagated.
2. Examine the feminist critique of sex gender equation with special reference to the concept of patriarchy.

Short Questions :

1. Write a brief note on how media representation of women perpetuates role stereotypes. Give examples to illustrate your argument.
2. How is gender discrimination entrenched in law and politics?

Objective Questions :

1. How does church come to aid the state in controlling women's sexuality?
2. How do the feminists define the word 'patriarchy'?

2.10 Further Reading

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Unit-3 □ Biologism and Social Constructivism

Structure

3.1 Objective

3.2 Introduction

3.3 Gender in Sociology

3.4 Socialist Feminists

3.5 Intervention of feminist Anthropologists

3.6 Summing Up

3.7 Glossary

3.8 Probable Questions

3.9 Further Reading

3.1 Objective

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to :

- Understand the concept of gender essentialism.
- Explain how the construction of femininity is a result of social learning.

3.2 Introduction

The discussion on biologism and social constructivism needs to be read along with the earlier discussion on the difference between sex and gender as the two discussions complement each other.

3.3 Gender in Sociology: Feminist critique of biologism or essentialism

Gender essentialism is a concept that attributes fixed, innate biological qualities to men and women. While femininity is often equated with motherhood, homeliness, caring and nurturing traits, masculinity is equated with power, rationality, worldliness and ambition. In Western civilization such ideas go back to the ancient Greeks, although with variations. Male dominance being the general ethos Greece also had

city-states dominated by female warriors. Accomplished women were also not unknown. For instance, poet Sappho of Lesbos has become iconic to posterity by entering the English lexicon. But with the advent of Christianity the whole idea of fixed attributes came to be more firmly grounded as these fixed attributes were presented in theological terms, as the creation of God, i.e., divinely ordained and therefore immutable. This view remained essentially unchanged till the middle of 19th century when Darwin replaced Creation by Evolution. Though shorn of divinity, the belief in an immutable origin did not change so much.

It was around the middle of the twentieth century during the second wave of the Feminist movement that the idea of gender as socially constructed was floated. Feminists called the tendency to attribute certain characteristics defined as the essence of women and essence of men shared in common by all women and men of all times. Against this position feminists stressed that gender, instead of biological traits, denotes cultural constructions of societies based on their distinct conceptions of femininity and masculinity and of appropriate roles of men and women. They also said that there was nothing static about these roles and in keeping with the system and values pertaining to each society and age these roles were defined and redefined.

We have already read about Simone de Beauvoir's statement in the *Second Sex* that 'one is not born but becomes a woman'. The idea that it was actually specific kinds of socialization that create 'femininity' in women and 'masculinity' in men was taken up by most of the later feminist challenging arguments regarding the biological roots of such attributes. The main argument is that the mechanism of creating feminine and masculine is social learning rather than biology. According to Kate Millet, Feminist writer, educator, artist and activist and the first American woman to be awarded a degree with first-class honors from St Hilda's College, Oxford, gender is the product of the sum total of parenting, peer pressure and the cultural notions regarding appropriate gender roles obtaining in specific societies. The combined influence of these reinforces women's subordination by socializing women into subordinate social roles. As a result women, in order to live up to social expectation, cultivate and project an image of being passive, emotional, ignorant and docile help-meet for men. Her book *Sexual Politics* (1970) had seminal influence on second-wave feminism.

To repeat, social learning theorists hold that a huge array of different influences socialize us as women and men. It begins with parenting right at the time of birth. From the offered choices of toys through colour of clothes to choice of profession, girls and boys keep getting different signals that leave deep imprints on their psyche and mould their behavioral and belief patterns.

3.4 Socialist Feminists

Before we come to the contribution of Socialist Feminists of the 70s, we need to take a look how the concept of Feminism germinated within Marxism. For the foundation of idea of women's rights we need to go to *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* by Friedrich Engels where he argued that women's subordination was not a result of her biological disposition but of social relations. Engels traced this phenomenon to the exclusive control of private property by the patriarchs of the rising slave owner class in the ancient mode of production, and the attendant desire to ensure that their inheritance is passed only to their own offspring. This led to the valorisation of chastity, fidelity and docility in women. Hence, onwards in the successive modes of production the same concern for private property led to the perpetuation of the subordination of women.

In the early twentieth century, both Clara Zetkin and Alexandra Kollontai counter posed Marxism against bourgeois feminism, rather than trying to combine them. Instead of feminism, the Marxists supported more radical programme of liberating women through socialist revolution believing that change in social relation will automatically bring women's liberation in its trail.

Towards the 1960s and 70s Socialist Feminists who arose as an offshoot of feminist movement and the New Left, drew upon many concepts found in Marxism, such as a historical materialist point of view, which meant that they related their ideas to the material and historical conditions of people's lives. For Maria Mies, maleness and femaleness are not biological givens, but rather the result of long historical processes. In each historical epoch maleness and femaleness are differently defined depending on the principal mode of production of the epochs. This means that the organic differences between men and women are differently interpreted and valued according to the dominant form of appropriation of resources for the satisfaction of human needs. In this way men and women develop qualitatively different relationships to their own bodies. Radical Women, a major Marxist-feminist organization, based its theory on Marx' and Engels' analysis that the enslavement of women was the first building block of an economic system based on private property. They contend that elimination of the capitalist profit-driven economy will remove the motivation for sexism, racism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression. Later on through 80s and 90s, Socialist feminists of various groups belonging to Britain, USA, Germany developed their own theories on women's oppression along Marxist lines but with much greater emphasis on 'Patriarchy' as an autonomous institution that had to be addressed independently regardless of obtaining relation of production (see the earlier discussion on 'What is Feminism').

3.5 Intervention of Feminist Anthropologists

Anthropologists, towards the second half of the twentieth century, have made valuable contribution to the issue through various case studies. For instance, Sherry Beth Ortner, American cultural anthropologist, tries to find an explanation of universal devaluation of women. She says that biological determinists argue that there is 'something' inherent in the male species that naturally makes them the dominant sex. And as this 'something' is lacking in females, they are not only subordinate, but in general quite satisfied with their position since it affords them protection and opportunity to maximize maternal pleasures, which are most satisfying experiences of her life. While refuting this position, Ortner does not say that biological facts are irrelevant, or that men and women are not different, but these facts and differences only take on significance of superior/ inferior within culturally defined value systems. Now she asks the most crucial question. Given the fact that all cultures have their own specificities, how is it that in every culture women are accorded a second class status compared to men? To answer this question she delves into the idea of 'nature', 'culture' dichotomy. Ortner observes that every culture implicitly recognizes and asserts a distinction between the operation of nature and the operation of culture (human consciousness and its products). Culture, in almost all societies, is recognized as something superior to nature because culture is capable of transforming nature. Then as women in almost all cultures are seen to be closer to nature and men associated with culture that has crucial transformative capability, women are located in a lower order that is as a subordinate of culture.

The question of cultural expression of sexual asymmetry has been variously probed by feminists. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, American social psychologist and linguist, lists the available range of explanations, from historical, in which it is asserted that at one point of time men usurped power from women to more suggestive accounts of male envy of women's productive power, or different hormonal cycle or emotional orientation, she expresses surprise as to how these could possibly lead to moral evaluation in terms higher and lower. Rosaldo states that biological research may illuminate the range of human inclination and possibilities, but cannot account for the interpretation of these facts in a cultural order. It also cannot explain why cultures everywhere have given Man, as a category opposed Woman, social value and moral worth. In order to get to the root of this Rosaldo gives examples of quite a few societies. In certain African societies like the *Yoruba*, women may control a good part of food supply, accumulate cash and trade in distant and important markets; yet when approaching their husbands, wives must feign ignorance and obedience, kneeling to

serve men as they sit. As an example how linguistic practice symbolizes subordination of women, Rosaldo cites the example of *Merina tribe* in Madagascar. It is a custom there that in order to be cultured, sophisticated and respectable one must learn to speak indirectly. Rather than being assertive, men, here, are masters of an allusive, formal style in public speech. Women, on the contrary are said not to know the subtleties of polite language. They are, in effect, are cultural idiots who are expected to blurt out language. In some of the Jewish ghetto communities of Eastern Europe women are generally strong, self willed, shapers of political events decision makers and so on. Yet, wives defer to husbands and their greatest joy is to have a male child. Taken individually none of these examples appear surprising. But Rosaldo points out a common thread running through them. Everywhere, even in those appear to us as very egalitarian, men are the locus of cultural value. Some areas of activity are always seen as exclusively or predominantly male and therefore overwhelmingly morally important.

It is possible to go on with such examples of feminists of various strands pitting against gender essentialism. In substance, it needs to be noted that post sixties feminists, cutting across ideological persuasions, point out the historico-socio-cultural factors behind gender construction. (If the early Liberal Feminists of the West were charged for universalizing the experience of White women and using ‘woman’ as a-historical category, the later liberal feminists substantially modified their position.)

Then again gender does not merely mean certain sets of culture specific symbols constituting the subjective identities of men and women: gender remains integrally linked and embedded in institutional and organizational practices. The latter encompass almost every inch of social space and every social action from the manner of speaking to the choice of economic activity, each item being defined either as manly or womanly. To give an example of gendered nature of the language, we need to go back to Simone de Beauvoir once again. A long time before gender was recognized as an analytical category, she argued that in the English language the word ‘man’ is often made to refer to humanity as a whole. The word ‘woman’, however, never enjoyed such broad applicability.

Moving away from English language, if we look at some of the South Asian languages, we will come across such terms — as *swami*, *pati*, *malek* etc—which simultaneously mean husband and master. Many similar examples can be cited to

demonstrate the gendered nature of our world of words. And it is through these words that we begin to learn about ourselves as well as the world that we live in.

Now from language if we move to other social processes and institutional practices, we see the division to be operating just in the same way.

Let us begin with home.

Parenting: Almost unwittingly parents tend not only to buy their children gender stereotypical toys (guns and cars for boys and dolls for girls) and clothes (frocks for girls and shirt and trousers for boys), the choice colors is also stereotyped (blue for boys and pink for girls). Then Parents (often quite unintentionally) extend this difference in setting down their code of 'appropriate' behavior. While this precise form of gender socialization has changed a lot with the passage of time, even today girls are discouraged from sports like football or from playing 'rough and tumble' games and are more likely than boys to be given dolls or cooking toys to play with while boys are told not to 'cry like a baby' and be given 'masculine' toys.

Children's books keep on replicating similar differentiating models of conduct. For instance, males in most children stories are adventurers and leaders while girls are helpers and followers. Fairy tales are replete with stories where princes appear as saviors of hapless women. No wonder young girls are fed with dreams of an arrival of prince charming and made to believe that their future bliss lay in their natural obedience to their husbands.

Division of space: Public places also tend to be categorized along the line of this difference. For instance, places like inns, motels, theatres, tea stalls, local clubs, coffee houses etc are clearly marked masculine spaces. Women are not denied entry to these places, but they are generally expected to come with male companions. Again there are specific spaces like kitchen, the precincts of water wells etc which are not only earmarked for women, but are treated as areas of their sovereignty where men are almost denied entry. (How spaces will be divided not only vary from culture to culture, the division is also not static and unchanging. And it goes without saying that the aforesaid division applies lot more to Indian, South Asian and Middle Eastern countries than to Western ones. In the former however, with more and more women entering the public sphere, such spatial division is increasingly coming under challenge.)

Thus, it is evident that gender does not merely have psychological and linguistic

dimensions, it has spatial dimension too. Even categories like race and class can also be gendered. For instance, during the colonial period in the eyes of the British the non-warrior Bengali race appeared effeminate and therefore feeble and emasculated.

It is evident that beyond certain biological givens, complex social and historical processes work behind the creation of notions of femininity and masculinity. In every society, its notions of rights and wrongs, duties and obligations, behavioural norms and so on combine to create specific cultural ideals within which women and men learn to recognize their distinctive identities. Just like women, neither men are born men, they become so.

3.6 Summing Up

1. Gender essentialism is a concept that attributes fixed, intrinsic, innate biological qualities to men and women. While femininity is often equated with motherhood, homeliness, caring and nurturing traits, masculinity is equated with power, rationality, worldliness and ambition.
2. It was around the middle of the twentieth century during the second wave of the Feminist movement that the idea of gender being socially constructed was given theoretical expression. Feminist called the tendency to attribute certain characteristics defined as the essence of women and men as biologism.
3. Gender as an analytic category had mostly to do with social construction rather than any 'innate' attribute supposed to be having biological roots.
4. Anthropologists have made valuable contribution to this debate by studying the variation of social roles of men and women across societies. They have demonstrated that in almost all societies with great differences in the social activities, women are almost universally accorded a secondary status.
5. The social construct of the division of gender permeates almost every institution.

3.7 Glossary

1. **Gender**—Grammatically gender in most of the major languages is loosely related to sex differentiation, male and female (and in some, neuter as well.)

In sociological usage, however, male and female signify a range of attributes that societies view as femininity and masculinity without any necessary biological correspondence with the latter categories.

2. **South Asian Languages**— Of the huge variety the major languages are Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Malayali, Canara, Nepali, Pali, Panjabi, Prakrit, Sanskrit and Sinhalese. The roots of these languages are generally Indo Aryan, Dravidian, Austro Asiatic, Tibeto-Burman etc. Many of the Himalayan languages are still unclassified.
3. **New Left**—A broad range of activist movements and intellectual currents that arose in Western Europe and North America in the 1950s and 60s. This phase was specifically marked by student radicalism and innovative reinterpretation of Marxism.

3.8 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. What is biologism? How do feminists criticise biologism in terms of gender theory?
2. How do cultural anthropologists describe subordination of women across societies?

Short Questions :

1. Write an essay on how gender distinction permeates various social institutions.
2. Explain how gender is viewed in sociology?

Objective Questions :

1. What does the concept of gender essentialism imply?
2. Who is the author of the book *Sexual Politics*?

3.9 Further Reading

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Unit-4 □ Private—Public divide

Structure

4.1 Objective

4.2 Introduction

4.3 Social Contract Theorists

4.4 Habermas and the general theoretical thrust

4.5 Issues of working women

4.6 Personal is political

4.7 Indian Context

4.8 Conclusion

4.9 Summing Up

4.10 Glossary

4.11 Probable Questions

4.12 Further Reading

4.1 Objective

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to :

- Analyse the public-private divide and its impact on women.
- Explain how feminist discourse challenges the existing public-private dichotomy and demonstrate how their interconnection is rooted in patriarchy.

4.2 Introduction

Modern World as defined by sociologists is based on a system of rights that recognize two distinct realms of people's day to day activities: the public and the private spheres. The basic distinction between them, is that, the public sphere is the larger realm of politics open to everyone where people (even if they are strangers) come together to engage in free exchange of ideas, whereas the private sphere is a smaller, enclosed realm (like a home) with restricted access.

In trying to trace the origin of the division of spheres political theorists go back to classical antiquity. For Plato (as he states in *Republic*) the main social division was a sexual one for man's virtues lay in knowing how to administer the state, while a woman's lay to order her house and in being obedient to her husband. For Aristotle, good life was possible only through participation in the life of the *Polis*. Although all other associations aimed at some good, it was in the *Polis* that the realization of highest good was possible. However, participation in the *Polis* was restricted only to citizens. Public persons, stated Aristotle, were responsible and rational beings who shared a public life of the *Polis* through its constitutive elements. Private persons (that included women and other non-citizens), on the other, were not fully rational and could only share in the limited goodness appropriate to their spheres. But this did not render the private sphere insignificant; it existed as a necessary condition for the superior public realm.

4.3 Social Contract Theorists

Carole Pateman, English political theorist and feminist, writes that among the Social Contract theorists Hobbes and Locke both regarded women as incapable of public 'political' participation. For Hobbes, in the State of Nature the ultimate driving force was self-interest. Pursuance of uninhibited self interest led to a state of war—a situation in which none could be assured of peaceful life. To avoid the horrors of the state of nature people came together to hand over absolute power to sovereign who in return would ensure people's peace and security. It is necessary to remember that in Hobbes' hypothetical State of Nature men and women were equal—they could freely kill and be killed. Political or moral issues were not Hobbes' concern. Susan Okin, liberal Feminist, philosopher and author, points out that while women are mentioned by Hobbes in the familial structure in the State of Nature, they are entirely left out when people enter political society. Locke, however, allows women certain rights, but in any difference of interests between husband and wife, he makes clear that the will of man will prevail. Locke does not offer any satisfactory answer as to why it should be so. However, among the three Social Contract theorists, Rousseau shows most negative attitude towards women. Rousseau's *Sophie* (in his *Emile et Sophie*, incomplete sequel of *Emile*) lacking the 'wholeness of a unified soul' can merely qualify as man's help-mate rather than 'citizen'. Even though both men and women are passionate creatures, only man has 'reason' to restrain himself. Woman, on the other hand, is passionate but lacks moral restraint; she is docile, meek and physically weak, all of these being typified as strongly 'feminine' traits. Men, on the

other, are not only more capable of exercising moral control over their passions they are also physically strong, intelligent and overall rational and democratic. Wedded in marriage men are the instrument of 'will' and the 'head' of family, while woman has to submit to him.

4.4 Habermas and the general theoretical thrust

Coming to modern times, we find, theorists of various ideological persuasions arguing in favour of a robust public sphere that encourages plurality of views and is necessary to avoid social and political stagnancy. Emphasis on the importance of the public sphere however, does not mean discounting the importance of the private sphere.

The most influential text on the subject, however, was produced by Jurgen Habermas, German Sociologist belonging to the Frankfurt School. In his work *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere* (1962) Habermas argues that the public sphere, a place where the free exchange of ideas and debate take place is the cornerstone of democracy. It is, he writes, made up of private people gathering together as a public articulating the needs of society before the state. Theoretically, public sphere do not debar the entry of anyone; all people regardless of their status can participate.

Speculating on the development of public realm, Habermas argues that it actually took shape within the private sphere through the practice of discussing literature, philosophy and politics among family members and guests. Later this practice left the private sphere and effectively created a public sphere where men started engaging in such discussions and debates outside their homes. Especially, in 18th century Europe, the spread of coffee houses and other joints of gathering across the continent and Britain created a space where the concept of modern Western public sphere first germinated.

In contrast to this, the private sphere is the realm of family and home life, which in theory is free of the influence of government and other social institutions. In this realm, one's responsibility is to oneself and the other members of one's household and work and exchange that takes place within the home is separate from the economy of the greater society. However, the boundary between the public and private sphere is not fixed and inflexible.

It is important to note that in all these formulations the issue of women's participation in the public sphere is either ignored or dealt with hesitancy. Women's primary definition as 'care giver' and the general idealization of 'motherhood' fix

women's home-bound role as the primary one. That is why gender stereotypes about women 'belonging to the home' linger even today. But women do not constitute the only category to be excluded. Within the United States of America, people of colour and others perceived as different or deviant have been excluded from participating in the public sphere for a long time. Though progress in terms of inclusion has been made over time, we see the lingering effects of historical exclusion, among other things, in the over-representation of white men in the U. S. Congress.

4.5 Issues of working women

Feminists have been trying to break out of this socially created separation since long ago. From the beginning of first wave feminism and the fight for women's suffrage, women have been using politics to enter the public realm of men, thus, challenging the strict division between public man and private woman.

Since the Industrial Revolution in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, men have been defined as the money-making workers and women as the child-bearing emotional support for men. In this traditional model, the ability of the unencumbered individual (man) to participate in the public sphere of work and politics assumes that someone, usually a woman, is preparing his food, cleaning his house, and raising the next generation of labourers through her reproductive labour. But gradually various extraneous forces created the need for greater labour hands. This often required women to move out of the precincts of home into the labour market. But women's participation in the labour market did not bring about any radical change in the value system. In fact, much of it lingered till quite late into our times.

The expectation that child care will be done 'for free' by the mother at home is connected to the lack of publicly funded day care that can enable women to work outside the home. This also turns the societal attention from the 'actual labour' involved in child care and home-making. Everything tended to be glossed over as 'labour of love'.

By the same token, the non-valuation of child care and the work of nurturing also serve to under value the work performed by women in the labour force. Women have demanded the creation of better child care facility, better paid maternity and paternity leave, and equal pay in all occupational fields — all the issues that push the feminist agenda of equality for the sexes. Unfortunately, in politics, women's concerns and demands are largely regarded as reflections of moral or familial commitment, rather than authentic political stance. These issues often deemed as 'women's issues' tend to be trivialized and bypassed by the male-dominated political system.

4.6 Personal is political

It should be noted that women have never been completely excluded from public life but the ways in which they are included are grounded firmly in their position in their domestic spheres and in patriarchal beliefs and practices. Women's presence serves to highlight the continuity of patriarchal values in the sexual division of labour in the family and the sexual division of labour in the workplace. From *laissez faire* liberals to Marxists, it has been assumed that it is possible to understand economic activity in abstraction from domestic life. In the liberal model, the basic issue has been to create a structure of rights between individuals and contractually created organizations on the one hand and state action on the other. But in this theoretical formulation, family being a matter of private sphere, the rights of women have never been addressed or if at all addressed, then solely acknowledged in terms of women's reproductive function.

Feminists insist on their interconnection. They insist that the liberal vision of separation between private and public realms is actually untenable. The essential connection between the two is grounded in the patriarchal structure of the society at large.

The *mantra* of second wave feminism, 'the personal is political', signifies the first serious attempt to question the identification of public sphere with political and that between private with non-political.

Feminists emphasize the ways in which the public/private dichotomy is gender-linked in terms of structure and ideology. Moreover, by designating family as private, most frameworks shield abuse and domination in this realm from legal redress and political scrutiny.

For a long time politics had rested in the public realm, the private realm being a place to escape from politics. Frances Olsen, America-born feminist and legal theorist, explains that as family is regarded as the repository of values destroyed in the market place, the family is also seen as the sanctuary of privacy into which one can retreat to avoid state regulation. Thus, the ideology of public/private allows the state to wash off hands from any responsibility of the 'private' world.

Thus, one of the main agenda of feminism is to question, critique, reformulate and redraw the public and private distinctions and their boundaries. Carole Pateman contends that the dichotomy between the private and the public is central to almost two centuries of feminist writing and political struggle, and it is ultimately, what the feminist movement is all about.

Second Wave Feminists laid bare the contradictions within early liberalism. Without addressing the patriarchal structure of private life, they argue, women cannot expect to benefit from the scheme of universal rights or can be ensured equal standing with male in the public sphere.

The slogan ‘personal is the political’ has led feminists to explain and argue about the ways in which women’s lives are constrained by the private. They have emphasized how personal circumstances are structured by public factors, by laws about rape and abortion, by the status of wife, by policy of child care and sexual division of labour in the home and at the workplace. For feminists, personal problems can be solved only through political means and political action. In other words, it ought to be recognised that most of women’s individual problems are not domestic and private problems, but in fact structural, public, and shared problems.

There is no reason to believe that feminists offer any uniform point of view. There are differences between Liberal, Radical and Marxist feminists regarding their stance towards division of spheres as well as to the extent to which private sphere ought to be brought under the purview of state legislation.

For instance, Susan Okin, in her work *Feminism* contends that challenging the dichotomy does not mean demeaning the value of privacy or making all behaviour subject to state action. As politics influences every inch of interpersonal behaviour – from small emotions to linguistic pattern– women’s issues should always remain in focus of public debate. People need to realize from everyday experience that the determination of the model behaviour in the private sphere is often the result of the decision taken formally or informally in the public domain. The domestic division of labour underlies the public inequalities between men and women.

Marxist scholars have pointed out that the boundary between public and private and the laws that enforce those boundaries, benefit capital more than labour. Feminist scholars, however, point out that these boundaries and the laws that reinforce them benefit men far more than women. According to Rawls, the celebrated American moral and political philosopher of the liberal tradition, the benefits and burdens of maintaining and sustaining the boundary between public and private are not equally shared among men and women. While women have to bear most of the burden, benefits accrue to men, thereby rendering this distinction unjust, unreasonable, and problematic. Besides, this injustice is very crucial as it makes the domination of men over women look ‘natural’.

Louise Lamphere, American anthropologist, writes that since mid nineteen

seventies the dichotomous relationship between men in the public sphere and women in private sphere has been critiqued by a number of Feminist anthropologists. For instance, talking of a small village in southern France, Rayna Reiter shows how men and women inhabit different domains. While women are primarily confined to the household, there are two public places that fall within women's domain: the church and few shops of which the most important is the local bakery. She shows how men and women use public places in different ways and at different times. While early in the day men leave for fields and congregate in squares and cafes to socialize after work in the evenings. In the early part of the day when women are cooking at home and doing other household chores, they are invisible to public view. But when the men have abandoned the village for fields, women come out to do their marketing in a leisurely fashion. The village then is in female hands. This kind of temporal adjustment of day to day activities testifies to fact of overall linkage between politics and the idea of division of spheres.

Feminist anthropologists have led researches through almost all societies, Western and Eastern, among those emerging out of colonialism and those unaffected by it, to stress the afore-mentioned point. Thus, it becomes evident that private is not so private after all.

4.7 Indian Context

Let us now briefly look at the Indian context. The reform movement that germinated under the aegis of the British colonial rulers and also engaged the Indian intelligentsia had the 'women's question as the nodal point. Its legacy continued through the first two decades of Indian Independence. Soon more specific issues relating to women's work and familial environment had to be attended to especially under the influence of refugee migration when substantial section of the middle class women started joining the workforce. From 1960 to 1975 the major issues related to discrimination of wages, health hazards and education. Although during the successive Five Year Plan Period, nothing much was achieved in actual terms, the Government appointed a Committee to undertake a thorough survey of the related rights and problems of women against the changing backdrop of the socio-economic scenario and make remedial recommendations. This brought to the fore an awareness of the major problems to be addressed. Meanwhile, the year 1975 was declared the International Year of Women and was subsequently extended for a decade. This created the context for the Indian Council for Social Science Research to majorly take up women related issues for in-depth exploration and policy formulation. Much

emphasis was given to the multifarious problems of lower class women in a developing economy like India. But no miracle happened. Violence in both public and private spheres went on unabated. But visibility of women and their issues had certainly increased. It is on this plank that future feminist movements could bring in more subtle issues as women's rights over their bodies and wedlock between patriarchy and state power, questions that had hitherto remained beyond the purview of women's movement in India.

4.8 Conclusion

We will end with the problematization of the issue by Carole Pateman. She faults the leading theorists of democracy for ignoring the sexual division of labour along with women's dependent status. Pateman intends to 'connect' the public and the private, and wonders how the public world of paid employment and citizenship can be divorced from the private sphere. Pateman observes that feminists are torn by the dilemma over whether to become likemen and thereby full citizens, or to continue doing women's work that is of no value to citizenship. She searches for a non-patriarchal definition of democratic citizenship that would at once preserve women's autonomy and break down the opposition between paid and unpaid work, public and private work and independence and dependence.

Given the deep social entrenchment of an ideology like patriarchy it is quite reasonable for one to wonder as to how feminism intends to simultaneously retain the division of the public and the private and break down the political implication associated with it. To reconnect the public and private in a way that women and their experiences are not subordinated and overlooked is a task that still awaits more imaginative attention of the feminists the world over.

4.9 Summing Up

1. The idea of division of spheres goes back to Classical antiquity. From Plato to Aristotle division of spheres have been variously explained. Women, by and large, have been denied political right. The same continues with the Social Contract theorist as well.
2. The most influential text on the subject, however, was produced by Jurgen Habermas, German Sociologist belonging to the Frankfurt School. In his work *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere* (1962) Habermas

argues, that the public sphere, a place where the free exchange of ideas and debate take place is the cornerstone of democracy. In contrast to this, the private sphere is the realm of family and home life, which in theory is free of the influence of government and other social institutions. In this realm, one's responsibility is to oneself and the other members of one's house hold and work and exchange that takes place within the home is separate from the economy of the greater society. However, the boundary between the public and private sphere is not fixed and inflexible.

3. The *mantra* of second wave feminism, 'the personal is political', signifies the first serious attempt to question the identification of public sphere with political and that between private with non-political.

Feminists emphasize the ways in which the public/private dichotomy is gender-linked in terms of structure and ideology. Moreover, by designating family as private, most frameworks shield abuse and domination in this realm from legal redress and political scrutiny.

4. It should be noted that women have had never been completely excluded from public life but the ways in which they are included are grounded firmly in their position, in their domestic spheres, in patriarchal beliefs and practices. However, women's presence serves to highlight the patriarchal continuity that exists between the sexual division of labour in the family and the sexual division of labour in the workplace.
5. From *laissez faire* Liberals to Marxists, it has been assumed that it is possible to understand economic activity in abstraction from domestic life. Feminists insist on their interconnection. Feminists conclude that the separate liberal world of private and public life are actually inter-related, connected by a patriarchal structure.
6. The year 1975 was declared the International Year of Women and was subsequently extended for a decade. This created the context for the Indian Council for Social Science Research majorly takes up women related issues for in-depth exploration and policy formulation. Now, more emphasis was given to concentrate on lower class women in a developing economy like India.

4.10 Glossary

1. **Polis**—Usually used to mean ancient Greek city-states consisting of a walled city and the surrounding countryside. Its life was marked by self-sufficiency, distinctive administrative and socio-political ethos. It was also used to mean a body of citizens.
2. **Frankfurt School**—Founded by Karl Grunberg in 1923 as an adjunct of the university of Frankfurt. The main project of the associated intellectuals (Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Habermas to name a few) was to develop a critical Marxist approach, by borrowing tools from psychoanalysis, sociology, existential philosophy and other currents of thought, to analyse society and culture.
3. **Laissez-faire**—The policy of letting things take their own course without interfering. In economics it means the abstention of the government to interfere in the workings of free market.

4.11 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. Trace the evolution of the idea of division of spheres from classical antiquity to modern times.
2. What do you understand by personal is political?

Short Questions :

1. Write a short note on Habermas' theory of Public Sphere.
2. What is the difference between liberal and radical Feminist positions on the division of spheres?

Objective Questions :

1. What according to Habermas, is the cornerstone of democracy?
2. What, according to Carole Pateman, is central theme of feminist writing and political struggle?

4.12 Further Reading

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3. Louise Lamphere, *The Domestic Sphere of Women and the Public World of men: The Strengths and limitations of an anthropological dichotomy* in C.B. Bretell and C,F Sargent (eds) *Gender in cross-cultural perspective*, New Jersey: Pearson and Prentice Hall, 2005 pp. 86-95.
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5. Menon Nivedita, *Gender and politics in India*, New Delhi, OUP, 2001.
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Unit-5 □ Diaspora and Hybridity: Changing ways of representation

Structure

- 5.0 Objective**
- 5.1 Introduction**
- 5.2 Diaspora and Hybridity**
- 5.3 Major Movements: History and Present**
- 5.4 Conclusion**
- 5.5 Summing Up**
- 5.6 Glossary**
- 5.7 Probable Questions**
- 5.8 Further Reading**

5.0 Objective

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to :

- Define the concepts of diaspora and hybridity.
- Trace the history of diaspora in the modern world.
- Explore the concept of the ‘other’ in the context of hybridity.

5.1 Introduction

If one goes by dictionary entries, one will find the earliest use of the word diaspora in most of the well-known dictionaries, namely, the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s or Oxford or Webster, being inevitably linked with early Jewish movements from Israel to other parts of the world. Originally associated with the dispersal of the Jewish people in sixth century BC, the word today is widely used for the migration or scattering of people away from an established or ancestral homeland.

In its most basic sense, hybridity refers to mixture. The term originated from biology and was subsequently employed in linguistics and in racial theory in the

nineteenth century. Its contemporary uses are scattered across numerous cultural concepts related to colonialism, identity, anti racism and multiculturalism and globalization.

Essentially diaspora and hybridity are linked phenomena, i.e., movement of people from their original homeland to other places and new identity formation through selective appropriation, modification and various other negotiations with the 'host culture'.

The objective of the present discussion is a brief exploration of the phenomena of diaspora and hybridity in the twentieth century with emphasis on South Asian and particularly Indian scenario as can be gleaned from cultural representations.

5.2 Diaspora and Hybridity

From time immemorial the world civilization has been witness to the fact of vast masses of people journeying out of their native soil. Migration may be voluntary within one's region, country, or beyond and also involuntary under pressure of environmental change, paucity of resources and various kinds of political and social persecution.

Recently, scholars have distinguished between different kinds of diaspora, based on its causes such as imperialism, trade or labour migrations, or by the kind of social coherence within the diaspora community and its ties to the ancestral lands.

For instance, according to Rogers Brubaker, Professor of Sociology at the University of California, from the initial paradigmatic case of Jewish diaspora, the term later expanded to refer to similar other cases as the Armenian or the Greek diasporas. More recently, it has been applied to emigrant groups that continue their involvement in their homeland from overseas, such as the Albanians, Basques, Hindu Indians, Irish, Japanese, Kashmiri, Koreans, Kurds, Palestinians, Tamils and so on.

Diaspora theorist William Safran, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Colorado Boulder, delineates the features of the people of a diasporic community as follows: 1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original 'center' to 'peripheral,' or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland; 3) they believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society and therefore, feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home to which they would eventually return; 5) they

believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance and the safety and security of their original homeland; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and this defines their ethno-communal consciousness and sense of solidarity.

Closely in line with this typography A.K.Sahoo and Brij Maharaj in their work on Asian diaspora Sociology, argue that a migration can be defined as ‘Diaspora’ if four conditions are met: firstly, an ethnic consciousness; secondly, an active associative life; thirdly, contacts with the land of origin in various forms, real or imaginary; and fourthly, by relations with other groups of the same ethnic origin spread over the world. Thus, diaspora as a social form is an identified group characterized by their relationship despite dispersal.

5.3 Major Movements: History and Present

If we try to look into the history of diaspora in the modern world, we have to begin from mid 15th century when Christopher Columbus voyaged out to discover a new sea-route and incidentally opened the ‘New World’.

The British Empire began to take shape during the 16th century, precisely from the Elizabethan period (1558-1603), with the English settlement of North America and the smaller islands of the Caribbean, and the establishment of joint-stock companies, most notably the East India Company, to administer colonies and overseas trade. From then onwards migration took a whole new dimension. Under socio-economic and even religious compulsions people in hordes from Britain crossed the Atlantic Ocean and settled in the ‘land of promise’, a land which promised a fresh new start. In order to help them build their dream land, these ‘New Englanders’ transported the Africans slaves to cope with the problem of shortage of manual labour. This process continued till the 20th century even after official prohibition of slavery. Although there has been a great deal of cross-racial and cross-cultural fusion, two distinct races, the native ‘Whites’ and the immigrant ‘Blacks’ still in racial turmoil continue to plague the social fabric. In so far, as studies on diasporic communities are concerned forced migration from Africa still occupies the centre stage.

After losing the thirteen colonies in North America the British concentrated their full attention in the East. South Asia was also a fertile ground for fulfilling ever increasing need of the British for working hands. Just as the British imperialists journeyed out to the colonies, there was a horde of indigenous people from the colonies who were made to move to the Empire.

These voyages however, did not end with the official withdrawal of British power from the various colonies. In fact, it can be said that at the end of the Second World War the former colonizing nations have witnessed a series of migratory moves of the people from erstwhile colonized nations to the old colonial centres often as government recruits in public services like health and transport and also as a refugee to escape the difficult and rigid political and economic conditions in their native lands. As a result, at the end of the twentieth century, Britain housed a wide variety of diaspora communities that grew out of their close connection with Australia, Africa, South Asia and China.

Studies have shown that diaspora communities are always subjected to the predominant socio-politico-cultural norms of the 'host country'. Too often, these people feel marginalized and suffer from a sense of alienation. The feeling of exclusion in a new country keeps them in a state of unmitigated psychological angst. Migrant population reveals a complex tension existing between distinct generations. In spite of the generational differences, the children of migrant families continue to suffer from sense of rootlessness and displacement. These have been major fodder of countless films and novels of our time.

Hybridity and the concept of 'Other'

This discussion takes us back to colonialism. Justification of their cultural superiority required the colonizers to create an 'inferior other'. The celebrated thesis of Edward Said has made it well known that the British colonialists had to justify their domination by convincing the subject populace of their civilization superiority and their glorious 'mission' to civilize them. This conversely saw the creation of Orient as an inferior homogenous entity to be used in defining the superior Occident.

The most effective strategy of achieving this was through education policy. Macaulay's famous or infamous Minutes on education declared that the need of the day was to create a class of Indian natives who would be Indian in blood and colour, but European in taste, morals and intellect. The educational policies of the colonizers aimed at creating Europeanized natives, who suffered a precarious location between 'we' and 'they'. Homi K Bhaba, Indian English scholar and critical theorist, has developed a number of the key concepts, such as mimicry, difference and ambivalence to theoretically capture the duality that cause a split in the identity of the Western educated colonized, a social group that were a hybrid of their own cultural identity and the colonizer's cultural identity.

It is in terms of this psychological ambivalence we need to understand the struggle of the first generation of South Asians, who immigrated to Britain and USA after the independence of the subcontinent, and their progeny to find a space for articulating their diasporic identities. The predicament of the immigrant communities, as represented by films and literature, is that their fight is spread over multiple fronts like forging a positive identity by erasing a pre-given negative one, maintaining and resuscitating ties with the homeland left behind, and also adapting to the cultural mores of the new land. The result of such struggle has often been the creation of a condition of perpetual non-belonging, both here and there. We will come back to the cultural representation of this phenomenon.

Feminism and Diaspora

Developments in gender studies, second wave feminism, and feminist politics thereafter, have significantly impacted the western scholars' understanding and approach of diasporas. A gendered lens highlights how different the diasporic experience might be between men and women. Nadjie Sadig Al-Ali, Egyptian professor of gender studies says that as in other fields of study, large segments of diaspora studies reveal either limited or narrow conceptualization of gender roles or complete gender blindness. Diasporas cannot be fully understood and studied without taking into account how patriarchal control in the areas of laws, rights, and political dynamics and socio-cultural representation of women's bodies and sexualities. These aspects crucially inform and impact the context in which fluid diasporic individuals or communities build cultural identities.

There has been a lot of theorization on Black diaspora referring to memory trauma and sense of loss. Ann Hua, Associate Professor in the Department of Women's Studies at San Diego State University, California, proposes to read Asian diaspora in the light of the theories offered for Black diaspora to gain a proper understanding of the complexities of both. Talking of diasporic Asian feminism in US and Canada, she underlines the basic issues at stake: history of colonialism and anti-colonial struggles, racism and sexism, the inter-connections among gender, race, class, sexual oppression, belonging/unbelonging and so on.

One of the main objections of Asian Diasporic feminist theorists is that barring a few writers like Avtar Brah, Rey Chow and others, most other renowned theorists of diaspora like James Clifford, William Safran etc. have neglected to explore the theme of gender inequality in the context of diaspora.

Representations

Novels

In the age of globalisation and mass migration, societies can hardly claim an exclusive cultural, ethnic or religious origin. Diasporas are a prime example of groups of individuals living in the contact zone between two cultures. Situated as they are in neither-here-nor-there, in-between cultures, their identities challenge any simplistic approach in terms of opposition of the mutually exclusive categories of the 'self' and the 'other'. There are often multiple layers within the 'otherness'. These complexities are best brought out through novels, films and other modes of cultural representation. Just as they explore the general feeling of alienation and rootlessness among diasporic communities, they also often speak for women and their precarious location in a doubly oppressive situation characterized by patriarchal sway along with shared general sense of alienation and loss. A few powerful exploration of the theme of dual marginalisation of displaced women, and the contradictory roles of an immigrant and expatriate communities are Anita Desai's *Journey to Ithaca*, Bharati Mukherjee's *Darkness* and *Desirable Daughters*, and Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth*.

The following discussion will take up two novels which are major efforts to portray the dilemmas and difficulties of diasporic experience.

A major theme of the novels by Amitav Ghosh is diaspora.

The Shadow Lines:

The first section of the novel titled 'Going Away' constitutes breaking down of utopian ideas and ideals that cause diaspora. Ghosh makes Ila a spokesperson of the present generation which believes in westernization in particular and internationalism in general as the only paths to follow. Ila represents the author's take of the young generation of India that is contemptuous of whatever that is happening inside, a perception that impels it leave the country to find 'space' elsewhere. 'West' to at least a section of this generation is a heaven for freedom. This is the hope that makes Ila leave India: to be free, to be free from the shackles of any cultural grid, to be free from all the conventionally-indoctrinated principles. Her departure from the 'fixity', i.e. home, entails the very possibility for freedom. For Ila nothing really important ever happens in her homeland except riots and disasters which are local and petty in nature. These are absolutely different from revolutions or anti fascist wars, that spring

from higher political ideals and are laden with the promise to change the order of the world. Ila negotiates between two lands: separated by space, geography and history.

However, the rosy picture of the West that Ila had in mind is soon tarnished. Being in London, Ila realizes that her freedom is more apparent than real as deep seated racial prejudice of the new land barely allows her to actually enjoy the freedom. This is topped by the infidelity of Nick Price that actually shatters Ila's hopes of finding any real foothold within another culture. Her subsequent efforts of to carve out a niche for herself in an alien land continue to be disappointing in the same way. She remains in rootless.

Ghosh creates a contrast between Ila's 'Going Away' and Thamma's 'Coming Home'. Having to leave her place of birth that is Dhaka because of marriage, Thamma, while living in Calcutta, was always haunted by nostalgia of the large and comfortable house where she was born and grew up. But the home that she cherished so long never created a permanency in her imagination due to the change of times that saw Partition of the country with Dhaka becoming the capital of East Pakistan, while both the countries became a hot bed of violent riots.

Now when she goes back to her home after many years, she finds that nothing was the same as she remembered. Dhaka remains her place of birth only on her passport and disembarkation card. She feels like a foreigner. She desperately searches for her once familiar Dhaka but finds it nowhere. The house where she and her sister Maya Debi had grown up was crumbling. In place of what was once a garden in their house there is now an automobile workshop with a large number of families living there. Ghosh establishes striking metaphoric parallels in delineating the dislocated persons like Thamma and Ila. Thamma has been uprooted from Dhaka while Ila has failed to cultivate roots to any place. She has no place to call her own, no culture to assimilate into.

Through the process of 'going away' and 'coming home' Ghosh examines the various perspectives that encourage the state of physical mobility, connected with the idea of finding 'home', but in both cases 'home' continue to be elusive in a world of confused search for identity.

The next novel that will be taken up for discussion is Jhumpa Lahiri's *Namesake*.

The Namesake

In her novel (2003), Jhumpa Lahiri, a second generation Indian immigrant, reflects the immigrants' inner psyche, identity crisis, sense of belongingness, loneliness, alienation, the clash of culture, the conflicts of adjustment and the baffling ties between the first and second generation.

Ashoke Ganguli in pursuance of higher studies in fiber optics goes to settle in

Cambridge and Massachusetts in USA with his wife Ashima. This was Ashoke's choice and Ashima's compulsion. Ashima, while trying hard to adapt to the ways of the new place, constantly pines to go back home. After their first child was born, as a suitable name takes time to come from 'home', they willy-nilly named the baby boy after Ashoke's favorite Russian writer Nikolai Gogol as Gogol Ganguli. Readers get to know that way back in his youth Ashoke survived a terrible train derailment where many had died. He had been reading a short story collection by Gogol just before the accident, and lying in the rubble of the accident he clutched a single page of the story 'The Overcoat' in his hand. Severely injured and with no strength to call out, dropping the crumpled page was the only thing Ashoke could do to draw the attention of medics looking for survivors. But our protagonist Gogol, ignorant of this connection between his father and Gogol, is however, not comfortable with the name that was neither American nor Indian and a point of fun and ridicule of his friends and associates. At the age of 14 he comes to hate his name. He finally had it changed to 'Nikhil' Gogol Ganguli. This change in name and Gogol's going to Yale, rather than following his father's footsteps to MIT, sets up the barriers between Gogol and his family. The distance, both geographically and emotionally, between Gogol and his parents continues to increase.

Meanwhile, we get the pen picture of the struggle of Ashoke and Ashima to bring up their children the way it is done in their home country India. Lahiri shows how the first generation immigrants try their level best to follow the mannerisms, values and beliefs of their own culture and they feel bafflement noticing clash between their inherited ones and their children's imbibed ones. But for the sake of fulfilling the demands of their children, they often assimilate with the culture of the land they were living in.

Gogol and her sister suffer the double alienation of the second generation migrants who are neither completely assimilated in the culture of their present homeland nor feels identity with that of their parents.

However, years later in another context of accident his father revealed to him the background of his name. The rest of the story unfolds in the shadow of Ashoke's sudden death with Gogol undergoing failed relationships one after another and hopelessly searching for roots. Absolutely lonely, he is nonetheless comforted by the fact that Ashoke, prior to his death, finally told his son why he had chosen that name for him. Gogol comes to accept his name and picks up a collection of the Russian author's stories that his father had given him as a birthday present many years ago. At 32, feeling proud for his name and its meaning, Nikhil Gogol Ganguly accepted his name and destiny.

Lahiri's expertise in exploring the diasporic traits in all their complexity and indeterminacy is fascinating.

Visual medium

Here the discussion of TV channels like BBC, Channel 4 and ITV which regularly telecasts shows that range from genre of comedy, family drama to thrillers on Asian life in Britain will be left out because of their less familiarity with Indian/Bengali TV viewers.

Visual representation of diaspora in this discussion will be based on a somewhat popular film *Bend it like Beckham* made in 2002 by Gurinder Chadha. Chadha, born in Africa to Indian parents who migrated to Britain, grew up accustomed to ambivalence. Just as her Britishness was not pure, her Indianness was also not. She regularly clashed with her family's traditions, refusing to wear Indian clothes and trying to get out of her cooking duties. The director set the film in the area of England where she grew up and had the film show case many of her autobiographical components.

In *Bend it like Beckham* the protagonist, Jesminder Bhamra, or "Jess", a Punjabi Sikh by birth isn't just a young woman trying to balance her British and Indian identities, she is also one who loves football.

Jess, like Chadha, also comes from a family who was part of the Indian Diaspora and resents the traditional agenda imposed on her. In nearly every scene, we find Jess trying to come up with her own unique formula for balancing her heritage and her obsession with football. When she's in the kitchen with her mom, Jess is practicing knee-ups with a cabbage, and when hanging laundry, she bends the ball around the clothes—at once conforming to her familial duties and pursuing her dream to be a part of one of the sports that is quintessentially British.

Viewers see Jess in many traditional situations—making Indian food, dancing at her sister's wedding ceremonies, and trying to wrap a pink sari in the locker room—*alongside* the scenes of her trying to pursue football. *Bend it like Beckham* helps viewers understand Jess's clever invention of a hybrid identity. Although Jess does not ignore her roots, she also does not resign herself to a life dedicated to be a faultless subscriber of tradition. Her attempt to play soccer in the park with boys and then secretly play for a team, while also trying to be a good Indian daughter, requires continuous maneuvering. David Beckham's (legendary English footballer) trademark kick of curling the ball so it looks like it's going one way, but, in midair, it actually swerves around a wall of defenders before hitting the back of the goal becomes 'a metaphor' especially for girls constantly trying to walk a tight rope between fulfilling parental expectations and personal ambition.

The climactic football and the intermittent wedding scenes which Jess would have to attend capture the beauty and fullness Jess achieves from weaving her worlds together. When Jess's teammates lift her in the air, it truly feels as though she has transcended so many of the restrictions placed on her. In the locker room afterward, her

teammates try to help her put her sari back on so she can get back to the wedding—a move that finally expresses their solidarity with her and respect for her culture.

5.4 Conclusion

Diasporic experience is extremely complex to be homogenized in terms of any simple oppositional singularity like ‘we’ ‘they’. In diasporic space borders of both the worlds are constantly challenged and negotiated through which ever new forms and identities are generated. Our foregoing discussion of literary and visual representation presents a thumbnail impression of this enormously variegated playing field.

5.5 Summing Up

- Essentially diaspora and hybridity are linked phenomena, i.e., movement of people from their original homeland to other places and new identity formation through selective appropriation, modification and various other negotiations with the ‘host culture’.
- Developments in gender studies especially second wave feminism have significantly impacted the western scholars’ understanding and approach of diasporas. A gendered lens highlights how different the diasporic experience might be between men and women.
- Diasporic experience is extremely complex to be homogenized in terms of any simple oppositional singularity like ‘we’ ‘they’. In diasporic space borders of both the worlds are constantly challenged and negotiated through which ever new forms and identities are generated.

5.6 Glossary

1. **Diaspora**—Originally associated with the dispersal of the Jewish people in sixth century BC, the word today is widely used for the migration or scattering of people away from an established or ancestral homeland.
2. **Hybridity**—Essentially meaning mixture, the term originated from biology and was subsequently employed in linguistics and racial theory in the nineteenth century. Its contemporary usage encompasses numerous cultural concepts like colonialism, multiculturalism, globalisation etc.
3. **New World**—A term used generally to indicate a large part of Western Hemisphere, specifically the Americas. It gained currency in the 16th century

during the so-called 'Age of Discovery', specifically after Amerigo Vespucci, the Italian explorer, declared that America represented a new continent and published his findings in pamphlet called 'Mundus Novus'.

5.7 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. How do sociologists describe diasporic communities?
2. Write an essay on Amitav Ghosh's novel 'Shadow Lines' discussing how the author explores the idea of searching roots.

Short Questions :

1. Explain how Jhumpa Lahiri has explored the idea of searching roots in her novel *Namesake*?
2. What do the activities of Jess in the film *Bend it like Beckham* signify to you?

Objective Questions :

1. What is the meaning of the concept of diaspora?
2. What is the major theme of the novels by Amitava Ghosh?

5.8 Further Reading

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Module-2

Feminist Tradition

Unit-6 □ Understanding Patriarchy

Structure

- 6.1 Objective**
- 6.2 Introduction**
- 6.3 What is patriarchy?**
- 6.4 Role of Patriarchy in history**
- 6.5 Patriarchal society**
- 6.6 Means and agencies of patriarchal exploitation- Sexism and misogyny**
- 6.7 Effects of Patriarchy on society**
- 6.8 Societal rectification- Equality based on education empowerment**
- 6.9 Conclusion**
- 6.10 Summing Up**
- 6.11 Glossary**
- 6.12 Probable Questions**
- 6.13 Further Reading**

6.1 Objective

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to :

- Identify the sources and agencies through which patriarchy operates, both in everyday life and as a system of thought throughout the historical development of society.
- Examine both explicit and implicit forms of exploitation as key expressions of patriarchy, analysing them for a comprehensive understanding of patriarchy and the system it supports.

6.2 Introduction

The first step to solve any problem begins by accepting that there is a problem. To understand the problems of modern day gender discrimination as well as disparity that persists there is a need to grasp the basics of the source of such disparity which inadvertently is Patriarchy. As mentioned in *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Sociology* patriarchy is defined as “the totality of male domination and its pervasiveness in women’s lives.” The briefest glance at the current and historical outcomes of men relative to women yields an immediate impression that the latter are an unfortunate party to a societal flawed system and the origin of this system can be found in the agency of Patriarchy. To put it simply, it is a system created by and for men at the direct expense of women in a social setup which can include but need not be necessarily limited to family, clan, tribe, a grouping, or any social institution. The mechanism and institutions that reinforce and strengthen patriarchy are important facets in learning how to deal with the problems it gives birth to and provide solutions for creating an antithetical reality against the machinations of patriarchy itself.

6.3 What is Patriarchy?

Patriarchy understood in its most naïveté terms is superimposition of male dominated behaviour, thoughts and exercise, perpetuation of the same to maintain the status quo over any system where there exists members of two or more sets of genders. Classically the victims of patriarchy have been women as major part of civilized human historical epochs show the structural domination of the idea of a linear binary of gender roles put into practical effect by the agencies of patriarchy and its supporters, but the same effects have been felt by the newly acceptable ideas of third gender roles.

For many civilizations all over the world patriarchy is considered a very normal form of social behaviour, the same is true for many of the modern multicultural States and Nations which support the cause of liberty equality and justice. Accepting the premise of patriarchy and being comfortable with it is the omission of not only the dignity of women but also show the decimation of the society which aims for advancement based on an all encompassing virtue of development. Modern day patriarchy expresses itself both in the private and public domains of social life in various forms. The most prevalent forms this in modern daily life is expressed in wage gap in the professional sphere, women being excluded from certain areas of work

which are specifically dominated by male and restricted to womenfolk such as combative role in the military prevalent in many countries. Social demarcation based on gender discrimination is a reality both in the developed and the developing world and it is a serious cause of concern for the holistic development of humankind.

6.4 Role of patriarchy in history

The term 'patriarchy' has an ancient connotation to the faith of the Hebrews, as the term was first applied to the male leaders of the tribes of Israel whose source of power was based upon kinship and not 'contract.' In light of the controversy raging in seventeenth-century England about the legitimate source of power in society and how power relations were to be regulated and maintained, the term according to the patriarchalist such as Sir Robert Filmer argued towards a gender based source of authority centred around the male heir of a male sovereign against the contractual argument of power to the people and then to the King. Filmer argued for absolute monarchy on the patriarchalist grounds that 'kings were fathers and fathers were kings'. According to the views supported under the banner of 'classic patriarchalism' as opposed to traditional patriarchy which is later defined as paternal rule of the family. Filmer's addition was to make the procreative power of the father in the family the origin of political right in society. The patriarchalist theory didn't meet much success as the counter arguments proposed by John Locke and Thomas Hobbes triumphed over the traditional patriarchalist tradition. These philosophers argued that all men are 'naturally' free and political right can only be imposed by contract not by patriarchal fiat. Hobbes and Locke separated paternal from political power and claimed that 'contract was the genesis of political right. However, they did not include women in their notions of contract and political right. Women continued to be subordinated to men as fathers and husbands. Hobbes conceived of the family as patriarchal 'wherein the Father or Master is the Sovereign,' and Locke concluded that there is 'a Foundation in Nature' for the legal subjection of women to their husbands. Therefore, by denigrating entire half of humankind both the patriarchalist and the contractualists divided the social sphere into a superior and inferior sector. And the most noteworthy factor being that this demarcation happened in the land of the enlightening civilization by proponents of liberal order.

To understand why women are typically thought to inhabit a specific role in the arena of domestic household while men have the privilege to not only seek professional satisfaction outside of the home but engage in it vociferously, the question goes directly to the origins of patriarchy beyond the determinants of contractual theory. The layman's argument resides in the division of labour which is

frequently mapped onto a social hierarchy in which males' freedom to venture outside of the home and presumed control over women is perceived as superior and dominant characteristics of any normative social life. As such, rather than working to destabilize the historical notion of patriarchy, much literature and history assess the origins of patriarchy with great implication on the institutions of male rule and privilege and entails female subordination.

6.5 Patriarchal society

The exposition of patriarchy in a system is directly related to the concept of power exercise of one social strata over the other. Power in this sense is related to a position of privilege and preference in a society. In a system in which men have more power than women, it is understood that men enjoy a higher level of privilege to which women are not entitled residing in the same system. Therefore, exposition of power in a hierarchical and exploitative manner has been central to the antithetical onslaught led by feminist theories. It is an attempt to explain the stratification of power and privilege by gender that can be observed by many objective measures, society can be observed as the macrocosm of patriarchal machination.

A patriarchy, deriving from the ancient Greek patriarches, was a society where power was held by and passed down through the elder males. The modern historians as well as sociologists while theorising, describes a "patriarchal society," as men hold the positions of power and have more privilege, which can be seen both in the microcosmic entity of family where the male acts as head of the family unit, leaders of social as well as political outfits and groups, leaders and bosses in the workplace, and in the meta structure of state as heads of government (HOG's). In systematic patriarchy, there exists a hierarchy among men as well. In traditional patriarchy, the elder men had power over the younger generations of men. In modern patriarchy, some men hold more power (and privilege) by virtue of the position of authority, and this hierarchy of power (and privilege) is considered acceptable. The situation gets problematized in various ways as the patriarchal society perceives women in power as an exception to a collectively held view of women's role in society which is considered an aberration rather than an encouraging behaviour to be replicated en-masse. Feminist theorists have replaced the discourse that individual men oppressed women, with the structural argument that oppression of women came from the underlying bias of a patriarchal society and it's acceptance by all actors indulged in its perpetuation and exploitation. The stabilization of a patriarchal society over vast

arrays of cultural denominations and political entities for a great part of human history shows its acceptability and invulnerability even by its victims. This societal acceptability has made the existence of patriarchy as a structural form of domination. It persist even through ever changing historical conditions and stages of human development both on a atomistic level as well as a macro institutional level.

6.6 Means and agencies of patriarchy- Sexism and misogyny

Patriarchy functions through various means and agencies both tangible and intangible in the society. The various institutions that perpetuate patriarchal narratives and imposes them upon the members act hand in glove with the patronage of its instigators and profiteering section. Even the agents in the form of male hegemons create a structure of systematic oppression to align themselves with the ideology of patriarchy in order to maintain their domination and protect their privileges in the bifurcated society. The reluctance to share power as well as responsibility creates the need to maintain the dominant status quo over the exploited section. Considering the Hegelian premise of ideas triumphing over intent as well as the actions, thoughts play a great role and act as prime agency of propagation of any idea as a cohesive cognitive mainframe to be implemented upon a working environment comprising of objective reality based humans with subjective thoughts. Two of the most widespread agencies to propagate the idea of patriarchy as a definitive means of controlling society are

- I. Sexism- Sexism as a way of functioning within a society includes most commonly discrimination and prejudice based behaviour against women and girls. Sexism as an agency functions to maintain as well as sustain the existence of the patriarchal order, or male domination, through ideological and material practices of individuals, collectives, and institutions that oppress women and girls on the basis of sex or gender. Such oppression usually takes the forms of economic exploitation and social domination both in private as well as public. Sexist behaviours, conditions, and attitudes perpetuate stereotypes of social (gender) roles based on one's biological sex. A common form of socialization that is based in sexist concepts teaches particular narratives about traditional gender roles for males and females. According to such a view, women and men are biologically opposite and therefore, their social roles are also widely different. Rather both the sexes share complementary roles based on their physiological disposition: women are physically weaker sex and less capable than men, especially in the realm

of logic and rational reasoning. Therefore, women are subjected to be relegated to the domestic realm of nurturance and emotions and, therefore, according to the same line of reasoning, cannot be good leaders in business, politics, and academia. Although women are seen as naturally fit for domestic work and are superb at being caretakers, their roles are devalued or not valued at all when compared with men's work. Patriarchalist tendencies see an overt expression through the agency of sexism which seeks not only to discriminate women but also demean them to secondary status due to biased perceptions and false premises. Sexism therefore acts as a medium to keep patriarchal powers at the helm of affairs by keeping women out of the line of contention by denigrating their status based on their sex.

- II. Misogyny- Misogyny which conventionally means hatred of women, was once a radical accusation. A way of not only discrimination but also insult, ridicule and even imposition misogyny not only takes sexist attitudes but acts on them in a hostile or violent way, and is often revealed through demeaning or denigrating comments and to an extreme point even violence. The issue with misogyny is more structural than mere hatred and dismissal. Society was and in many ways even today is organized in a misogynistic way, even if its individual members didn't see themselves as woman-haters, the structure encourages a system of behaviour where there are certain acts which are considered demeaning or insulting just because it was expected to be done by a female. For millennia, rigidity and repetition has been ingrained into male and female identities, but behind these social structures may be something more primal which is expressed by thought perpetuation of patriarchy and its manifestation in action.

6.7 Effects of patriarchy on society

Patriarchy, misogyny, sexism, toxic masculinity, domination, deprivation, isolation and denigration create the entire corpus of thought based exploitation of society along strict gender lines especially targeted towards the women. It creates an entire system of restrictions put on women to stop them from venturing out in public life and gaining the prerequisites for an independent and self actualised life without the shadow of patriarchal domination. Patriarchy not only harms the women from going forward and create a holistically developed society free from discriminating and denigrating tendencies but also restrengthens the shackles of disparity between

women themselves as an overlapping agency to demarcate power parity based on status and relation to the menfolk with power. Patriarchy does not exist only in men. The force of patriarchy have a sway of both the sexes. Women can be just as patriarchal as men by holding those same types of values and biases. The effects on men have a subdued but potent effect as patriarchal agencies create a situation where they are expected to behave in an oppressive manner to support the system which in many ways limits the scope of expression of oneself. Males are subjected to ignominy if they don't toe the misogynistic line and may lead to the same form of dehumanisation faced by the women.

6.8 Societal rectification- Equality based on education empowerment.

To counter the menace of patriarchy one of the foremost things to understand is that, it is a system supported by all its constituents units, both the oppressed and the oppressor. Therefore, the solution must be aimed to rectify the thought that goes behind patriarchy functioning in the social institutions both in private and public. Educating the masses about empowerment based gender roles where equality acts as the core ideal is a great method to eradicate patriarchal stereotypes. People need to be shown and made to realise how patriarchy is prevalent around them. Issues of masculinity, customs, and practices rooted in gender bias, media portrayal of women, and unequal opportunities at work, need to be debated within daily personal exchanges. The transformation of patriarchal education into transpersonal, integrative education will have to wait until the relevant authorities get over the still-prevailing taboo against therapeutic and spiritual elements in education. When systemic oppression seeps into the very core of human existence, it is tough to remove it at surface level. It requires critical intervention and sustained effort. Given the omnipresence of patriarchy, any form of affirmative action is a welcome step.

6.9 Conclusion

Patriarchy has a long history in the human social sphere. It's existence is as long as civilization itself and it has sustained itself in every great historical epochs. Throughout various countries, cultures and institutions patriarchy has strengthened itself by creating differences between the genders and subverting the aspirations of women. The modern age seeks to rectify the historical mistakes perpetuated by the agencies of patriarchy and render more rights for a collaborative impetus for creation

of an equality based society that bases itself on skills rather than stereotypes. Indian patriarchy is about removing barriers from existing gender norms which create disparity and discrimination. To eradicate the patriarchal view on women in the society, it must be overtly displayed that irrespective of any gender an individual is capable of choosing their own path in life and be consistent with it. Never restricting oneself from achieving one's full potential in reaching desired targets, disproving the patriarchal belief that women cannot do things that men can do.

6.10 Summing Up

- Patriarchy is an institution that has developed along with human civilization.
- Patriarchy is domination of male based thoughts and actions making them primary actors over women.
- Patriarchy functions in various institutions both in the public and private sphere.
- There are various means and agencies by which patriarchy creates a hegemonic structure to subvert the identity of women.
- The attributes of power, control, rationality and extreme competitiveness to disenfranchise the women are central to the exercise of patriarchy.
- Sexism, misogyny, deprivation, discrimination, masochism, chauvinism are various way by which patriarchy imposes itself upon the societal structure to create a system of oppression aggravating the problems of women.
- Feminist critique of patriarchy blames the perpetuation of exploitative means to males as well as to the acceptance and admittance by women and subtle means of expanding it through antithetical agencies as well.
- The rectification of this system can be overtaken only by propagation of equality based education to create empowering situations for the womenfolk to achieve a stabilized developing and conducive environment for the future generations.

6.11 Glossary

1. **Patriarchy-** Patriarchy in literal terms mean a system or social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line.

2. **Subjugation-** The act of subduing, subverting someone's action, speech or role in a public or private affair to control their movements in order to create disparity is called subjugation.
3. **Sexism-** Sexism is prejudice or discrimination based on sex or gender, especially against women and girls. Although its origin is unclear, the term *sexism* emerged from the "second- wave" feminism of the 1960s through the 80s and was most likely modelled on the civil rights movement's term *racism* (prejudice or discrimination based on race). Sexism can be a belief that one sex is superior to or more valuable than another sex. It imposes limits on what men and boys can and should do and what women and girls can and should do. The concept of sexism was originally formulated to raise consciousness about the oppression of girls and women, although by the early 21st century it had sometimes been expanded to include the oppression of any sex, including men and boys, intersexual people, and transgender people.
4. **Microcosm-** The microcosm-macrocosm analogy refers to the view according to which, there is a structural similarity between the human being and the cosmos as a whole. Given this fundamental analogy, truths about the nature of the cosmos as a whole may be inferred from truths about human nature, and vice versa.
5. **Misogyny-** Misogyny is the hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against women or girls. It enforces sexism by punishing those who reject an inferior status for women and rewarding those who accept it. Misogyny manifests in numerous ways, including social exclusion, sex discrimination, hostility, androcentrism, patriarchy, male privilege, belittling of women, disenfranchisement of women, violence against women, and sexual objectification.

6.12 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. What is Patriarchy? Explain with examples how patriarchy functions in a society?
2. Describe the various forms in which patriarchy creates restrictions on women.

Short Questions :

1. Describe the various forms in which patriarchy affects the other members of society apart from women.
2. Discuss in detail how gender hierarchy in society disenfranchises women in public realm.

Objective Questions :

1. What are the main agencies of Patriarchy?
2. What does the concept of misogyny signify?

6.13 Further Reading

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Unit-7 ☐ Liberal Feminism

Structure

- 7.1 Objective
- 7.2 Introduction
- 7.3 What is liberal feminism?
- 7.4 History of liberal feminism
- 7.5 Autonomy of personal and political
- 7.6 Equity feminism
- 7.7 Criticism
- 7.8 Summing Up
- 7.9 Glossary
- 7.10 Probable Questions
- 7.11 Further Reading

7.1 Objective

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to :

- Understand the theoretical trajectory and political phenomenon of feminism, with a focus on Liberal Feminism.
- Analyse the three waves of feminism and assess the impact of feminist narratives worldwide.
- Examine the manifestation of liberal theory across various disciplines.

7.2 Introduction

The term feminism can be used to describe a political, cultural or economic movement aimed at establishing equal rights and legal protection for women. Feminism involves political and sociological theories and philosophies concerned with issues of gender difference, as well as a movement that advocates gender equality for women and campaigns for women's rights and interests. Although the terms "feminism" and "feminist" did not gain widespread use until the 1970s, they were already being

used in the public parlance much earlier. Feminism has altered predominant perspectives in a wide range of areas within Western society, ranging from culture to law. Feminist activists have campaigned for women's legal rights (rights of contract, property rights, voting rights); for women's right to bodily integrity and autonomy, for abortion rights, and for reproductive rights (including access to contraception and quality prenatal care); for protection of women and girls from domestic violence, sexual harassment and rape; for workplace rights, including maternity leave and equal pay; against misogyny; and against other forms of gender-specific discrimination against women.

Liberal feminists believe that their philosophy positively answers each of these critiques and though liberal feminism at one time was racist, classist, and heterosexist, it has overcome these issues. With its focus on gender justice and its ability to adapt, liberal feminism is here to stay.

7.3 What is liberal feminism?

Liberal Feminism began in the 18th and 19th centuries and has continued till the present day. Throughout its history the liberal feminist movement has been and continues to be focused on eliminating female subordination. Its long history is a testament to how well it has been able to adapt and change to the many issues confronting women.

Liberal feminism conceives of freedom as personal autonomy—living a life of one's own choosing—and political autonomy—being co-author of the conditions under which one lives. Liberal feminists hold that the exercise of personal autonomy depends on certain enabling conditions that are insufficiently present in women's lives, or that social arrangements often fail to respect women's personal autonomy and other elements of women's flourishing. They also hold that women's needs and interests are insufficiently reflected in the basic conditions under which they live, and that those conditions lack legitimacy because women are inadequately represented in the processes of democratic self-determination. Liberal feminists hold that autonomy deficits like these are due to the "gender system" or the patriarchal nature of inherited traditions and institutions, and that the women's movement should work to identify and remedy them. As the protection and promotion of citizens' autonomy is the appropriate role of the state on the liberal view, liberal feminists hold that the state can and should be the women's movement's ally in promoting women's autonomy. There is disagreement among liberal feminists, however, about the role of personal

autonomy in the good life, the appropriate role of the state, and how liberal feminism is to be justified. Liberal feminism is built upon two inter-related elements.

Firstly, women are rational individuals entitled to inalienable and universal human rights. In the eloquent words of the pioneering first-wave feminist Mary Wollstonecraft; “the mind has no gender.” In the context of gender equality, liberal feminists advocate a society in which women hold political equality with men. The second aspect of liberal feminism is the aim to facilitate a diversity of lifestyles amongst women. Diversity is the watchword of liberal feminists and the guiding principle should be one shaped by individual choice (as in the case of pro-choice pressure groups). A society governed by liberal feminism enables women (and men) to maximise their personal freedom to the very full. Liberal feminists contend that the governance of society would be improved significantly by a more inclusive attitude to women. These benefits would also apply to the economic realm. Access to education and career opportunities must also be broadened to benefit women – particularly those marginalised within society. Liberal feminists also wish to dismantle the patriarchal character of social institutions (notably within the political realm) that force women to suppress their natural femininity.

Liberal feminism is the most significant of the main strands of feminism, and was the dominant strand during both the first-wave and the third-wave of the women’s movement. At heart, liberal feminism entails a constructive engagement with the political and legislative process (such as the One Billion Rising worldwide movement in opposition to violence against women). Ultimately, the problem of sexism is resolvable via a set of legislative and employment measures to prevent discrimination in the workplace. The focus of liberal feminism thereby, centres upon protecting the rights of females with regard to employment and reproduction. As the strand of feminism closest to the centre of the political spectrum, liberal feminism entails a rejection of the overt emphasis upon equality from those on the left of the women’s movement, and the extremist stance adopted by radicals at the margins of political debate.

7.4 History of liberal feminism

Liberal feminism is part of, and thus, finds its roots in, the larger tradition of liberal political philosophy; thus, we see much liberal feminist work inspired by Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill, and John Rawls (and other figures in this tradition). But liberal feminism shares with feminist political philosophy generally a concern with understanding the “gender system” that is, the patriarchal nature of inherited traditions

and institutions, so that it might recommend a remedy. To get a good picture of that system, liberal feminists draw broadly from the rich tradition of feminist theorizing. For example, some liberal feminists draw on radical feminist insights into the nature of violence against women and into the nature of gender identity, some draw on psychoanalytic feminist theory; some on socialist feminist work on women's exploitation in the home.

Classical-liberal or libertarian feminists understand themselves as heirs to the first generation of feminist political philosophers, for example Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Taylor Mill, and John Stuart Mill ; the first generation of feminist political reformers in the United States, the abolitionist feminists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Sarah Grimke and the tradition of 19th century anarchist feminism, including figures such as Voltairine de Cleyre. Equity feminists stress the extent to which these early thinkers and activists identify women's liberation with equal respect for women's right against coercive interference . Cultural libertarian feminists emphasize the extent to which these thinkers and activists challenged both coercive state power and the patriarchal culture.

Classical-liberal or libertarian feminists hold that “the very arguments that rightly led to the legal reforms affecting the status of women during the 19th century militate against the demands for reform from the late 20th century women's movement”. That is, they hold that the defense of equal rights and independence for women promulgated by these early feminists is incompatible with the tendency of the contemporary women's movement to call on the state to improve the lives of women.

7.5 Autonomy of Personal and Political

Liberal feminists hold that women should enjoy personal autonomy. That is, they hold that women should live lives of their own choosing. Some offer “procedural” accounts of personal autonomy. These accounts suggest that to say women should enjoy personal autonomy means they are entitled to a broad range of autonomy-enabling conditions. On this view, the women's movement should work to identify and promote these conditions. Identifying these enabling conditions requires careful attention to the particular ways in which autonomy deficits are produced in diverse women's lives. Procedural accounts avoid judging directly the substance of women's choices or the arrangements that ensue. The following list of enabling conditions is representative.

Being free of violence and the threat of violence: Violence and the threat of violence violate women's dignity; they make women do what others want or reduce

women's sphere of activity to avoiding harm. In some cases, violence fractures the self and takes from women their sense of self-respect. The feminist literature on violence against women documents the particular role that violence and the threat of violence play in unfairly disempowering and limiting women.

Being free of the limits set by patriarchal paternalistic and moralistic laws: Patriarchal paternalistic laws restrict women's options on the grounds that such limits are in women's interest. Think for example of laws that limit women's employment options on the grounds that taking certain jobs is not in women's interest. Patriarchal moralistic laws restrict women's options on the grounds that certain options should not be available to women because morality forbids women's choosing them. Again for example, the laws that prohibit or restrict prostitution or abortion, or laws that favour certain kinds of sexual expression or family forms. Together, patriarchal paternalistic and moralistic laws steer women into socially preferred ways of life. These are unfair restrictions on women's choices, on the liberal feminist view, because women's choices should be guided by their own sense of their self-interest and by their own values.

Having access to options: On the liberal feminist view, women are entitled to access to options. Women's access to options is frequently and unfairly restricted due to economic deprivation, in particular due to the "feminization of poverty". Other sources of unfairly reduced options for women are stereotyping and sex discrimination in education and employment. Such stereotyping and discrimination affects some racial, ethnic and cultural groups in particularly pernicious ways. Liberal feminists also point to the way cultural homogeneity unfairly limits women's options, for example when culture assigns identities and social roles according to sex.

Some emphasize the importance of internal, psychological enabling conditions as well, for example the ability to assess one's own preferences and imagine life otherwise. Without the ability to assess the preferences on the basis of which one makes choices, and the ability to imagine life otherwise, one can't meaningfully be said to have options other than affirming the status quo. These internal enabling conditions are related to the external ones. Violence and the threat of violence, stereotyping and discrimination, material deprivation, and cultural homogeneity all can have the effect of closing down reflection and imagination.

Some liberal feminists emphasize the importance of political autonomy, that is, being co-author of the conditions under which one lives. Some use contractualist political theory to argue that the state should ensure that the basic structure of society satisfies principles of justice that women, as well as men, could endorse. Others argue

that the democratic legitimacy of the basic conditions under which citizens live depends on the inclusion of women in the processes of public deliberation and electoral politics. Some liberal feminists, inspired by John Rawls' contractualist liberal theory of justice, argue that the state should ensure that the basic structure of society distributes the benefits and burdens of social cooperation fairly, that is, in a manner that women as well as men could endorse. They argue that the basic structure currently distributes benefits and burdens unfairly, in part due to the gender system, or the patriarchal nature of inherited traditions and institutions. A substantial liberal feminist literature engages this tension between associational liberty and possible state action aimed at remedying the way the current distribution of the burdens of reproduction disadvantages women. Much of this literature draws on both the liberal tradition within feminism and feminist work on care giving.

7.6 Equity feminism

Equity feminism is a form of classical-liberal or libertarian feminism that holds that feminism's political role is simply to ensure that everyone's, including women's, right against coercive interference is respected. Feminism's political role involves assuring that women's right against coercive interference by private individuals is recognized and protected by the state. On the equity feminist view, the feminist slogan "the personal is political" is accurate when the state fails to recognize women's right against coercive interference, especially in women's personal lives. So, for example, in some countries husbands have legal control over their wives' persons and property. If women are to be described as currently oppressed in societies like the United States, on the equity feminist view, one must show that the state fails to protect women, as a group, from sustained and systematic rights violations. Some feminists have argued that violence against women is pervasive in societies like the United States so that, even though the law recognizes women's right against it, that right is insufficiently protected, and thus, women endure sustained and systematic denial of their right to bodily integrity.

Equity feminists argue that the differences in outcomes between women and men can be explained, not by violence against women and sex discrimination, but by differences in the preferences of women and men. To be sure, classical-liberal or libertarian feminists hold that women and men are sufficiently the same that they have the "same political interests," in particular the interest in being treated as a self-owner.

7.7 Criticism

By far the most common argument in the classical-liberal or libertarian feminist literature is consequentialist. The argument says that the political arrangements recommended by classical-liberalism or libertarianism, as compared with the alternatives, will provide women with more of what is good for them: for example safety, income and wealth, choices, and options. Some critics take aim at the consequentialist argument offered in support of classical-liberal or libertarian feminism.

In addition to the consequentialist argument, classical-liberal or libertarian feminists offer an argument from principle. According to this argument, regardless of the consequences, women and men should be treated as self-owners with rights to property justly acquired and to freedom from coercive interference because this is what they deserve as ends in themselves, or because this is what moral insight teaches, or because this is what their perfection requires. In short, the claim is that the dignity of women and men depends on their being treated as self-owners.

Critics urge us to consider that all human beings are utterly dependent on the care of others for many years at the start of life; many come to need the care of others due to temporary or permanent disability later in life; and many require care as they become infirm at the end of life. Those who provide care for those who cannot care for themselves will also find themselves dependent on others for material support.

Liberal criticism of the argument from principle begins by noting that the liberties championed by classical-liberals and libertarians are valuable because of what they make it possible for individuals to be and do. But it is not liberties alone which facilitate our being and doing what people value. It is required also, at least, adequate material resources, genuine opportunities, and standing as an equal in society. Critics have also taken aim at the treatment of oppression in classical-liberal or libertarian feminism. Recall that equity feminism holds that women are oppressed when the state fails to protect them, as a group, from sustained and systematic rights violations. Equity feminists argue that, in western countries like the United States, women are not oppressed because the state protects these rights of women. It should be conceded that much violence against women which was, in the past, tolerated or condoned is now unambiguously prohibited. But, critics contend, violence against women remains all too common in western countries, and thus, it is premature to suggest that women are not oppressed, that is, are not effectively protected against sustained and systematic rights violations.

To summarize, critics suggest that classical-liberal or libertarian feminism is not adequately supported by a consequentialist case; fails to recognize our obligations to those who cannot care for themselves; hides from view the way in which the work of care is distributed in society; denies that state power should be used to ensure equality of opportunity for women and women's equal standing in society; and (cultural libertarianism excepted) is uncritical of traditional social arrangements that limit and disadvantage women. For reasons such as these, some have argued that classical-liberal or libertarian feminism counts as neither feminist nor liberal.

7.8 Summing Up

- The term feminism can be used to describe a political, cultural or economic movement aimed at establishing equal rights and legal protection for women.
- Feminism involves political and sociological theories and philosophies concerned with issues of gender difference, as well as a movement that advocates gender equality for women and campaigns for women's rights and interests.
- Liberal feminism conceives of freedom as personal autonomy.
- Liberal feminists hold that women should enjoy personal autonomy. That is, they hold that women should live lives of their own choosing.
- Equity feminism is a form of classical-liberal or libertarian feminism that holds that feminism's *political* role is simply to ensure that everyone's, including women's, right against coercive interference is respected.
- Feminism's political role involves assuring that women's right against coercive interference by private individuals is recognized and protected by the state.

7.9 Glossary

1. **Liberal-** Liberals espouse a wide array of views depending on their understanding of these principles, but they generally support free markets, free trade, limited government, individual rights (including civil rights and human rights), capitalism, democracy, secularism, gender equality, racial equality.

2. **Emancipation-** Emancipation is any effort to procure economic and social rights, political rights or equality, often for a specifically disenfranchised group, or more generally, in discussion of many matters.
3. **Rights-** Rights are legal, social, or ethical principles of freedom or entitlement; that is, rights are the fundamental normative rules about what is allowed of people or owed to people according to some legal system, social convention, or ethical theory.
4. **Gendered-** Reflecting the experience, prejudices, or orientations of one sex more than the other.

7.10 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. What is liberal feminism? Explain its basic tenets.
2. Trace the history of liberal feminism.

Short Questions :

1. What measures can a liberal state take to empower women? Mention two steps.
2. Examine the criticisms labelled against the liberal feminists.

Objective Questions :

1. How do the liberal feminist define freedom?
2. What is meant by the expression 'Feminisation of Poverty'?

7.11 Further Reading

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Unit-8 □ Socialist Feminism

Structure

- 8.1 Objective
- 8.2 Introduction
- 8.3 What is socialist feminism?
- 8.4 History of socialist feminism
- 8.5 Why Socialist feminism
- 8.6 Critique of Global capitalism.
- 8.7 Marxist critique
- 8.8 Criticism
- 8.9 Summing Up
- 8.10 Glossary
- 8.11 Probable Questions
- 8.12 Further Reading

8.1 Objective

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to :

- Analyse the relationship between socialism and feminism, exploring the larger narrative of socialist feminism.
- Understand the phenomenon of socialist feminism and how it introduces class and class oppression into the discourse of gender oppression.
- Examine the relationship between the class and gender dichotomy and its impact on feminism as a liberating ideology.

8.2 Introduction

The phrase “socialist feminism” was increasingly used during the 1970s to describe a mixed theoretical and practical approach to achieving women’s equality.

Socialist feminist theory analysed the connection between the oppression of women and other oppressions in society, such as racism and economic injustice. Socialists had fought for decades to create a more equal society that did not exploit the poor and the powerless in the same ways that capitalism did. Like Marxism, socialist feminism recognized the oppressive structure of a capitalist society. Like radical feminism, socialist feminism recognized the oppression of women, particularly in a patriarchal society. However, socialist feminists did not recognize gender and only gender as the exclusive basis of all oppression. Rather, they held and continue to hold that class and gender are symbiotic, at least to some degree, and one cannot be addressed without taking the other into consideration. Socialist feminism has often been compared to cultural feminism, but they are quite different although there are some similarities. Cultural feminism focuses almost exclusively on the unique traits and accomplishments of the female gender in opposition to those of men. Separatism is a key theme, but socialist feminism opposes this. The goal of socialist feminism is to work with men to achieve a level playing field for both genders. Socialist feminists have referred to cultural feminism as “pretentious.”

Socialist feminism is also distinctly different from liberal feminism, although the concept of liberalism has changed over the early decades of the 21st century. Though liberal feminists seek equality of the sexes, socialist feminists do not believe that is entirely possible within the constraints of current society. Socialist feminists intend to integrate the recognition of sex discrimination within their work to achieve justice and equality for women, for working classes, for the poor and all humanity.

8.3 What is socialist feminism?

Socialist feminism addresses women’s inequality in a two-pronged approach, connecting capitalism and patriarchy and proving that patriarchy isn’t the sole source of oppression. The first objective is often referring to women’s limited roles in society, staying at home and raising a family, as a major factor in their oppression. The second object aims to show that women can experience it in various other ways, including race, class, sexual orientation, and education, among others. Socialist feminism gained momentum during the 1960s to 1970s, a timeframe also known as the second wave of feminism. This wave was focused on social welfare issues. Though it is not considered the most radical form of feminism, socialist feminism still has strong ties to Marxist theory and calls for a major shift in societal structure. More specifically, it calls for an end to the capitalist economic system, which social

feminists believe perpetuates sexism, patriarchy, and a division of labour based on gender. A common mentality during that second wave of feminism was that children needed their mothers at home in order to be properly nurtured. However, with the rise of single mothers and a lack of affordable childcare and liveable working wages for women, socialist feminism began to spread.

Instead of focusing primarily on working-class women, socialist feminism also reached out to poor women of colour and colour activists. At the time, women of colour were experiencing a different kind of oppression based on their race. Many were victims of forced sterilization while giving birth at local hospitals, some through coercion and others through complete deception. As result of this cooperation a joint attack on male dominated economic system and its perpetuation in the social level was addressed by the socialist feminists.

8.4 History of socialist feminism

Socialist supporters for feminism have existed since the 19th century with prominent socialist thinkers such as Friedrich Engels who outlined how the capitalist economic system acts to reinforce the oppression of women under the nuclear family. Friedrich Engels set forth the theoretical basis for modern socialist feminism in his book *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. He explains that a communal, matriarchal social system preceded the rise of private property, class society, patriarchy, slavery and the state. He pointed to the primary role women played in the economic, social, cultural and political life of these communal societies and the egalitarian relationships that characterized them.

Socialist feminists argue that women are shackled by capitalism because of their function as bearers of children. It is in the capitalist class' interest to maintain control over women's sexual functions because of the need for capitalists to secure the inheritance of their property and wealth by their own offspring. Thus, capitalists have historically sought to constrain women's sexuality under notions of the feminine virtues of virginity, female chastity and submission to one's husband. This is the cornerstone of the nuclear family and while this model of the family has gradually broken down in many western societies it is still a powerful feature in the lives of women in developing countries and even in the west it hasn't totally disappeared. For example, even today women are often quietly discriminated against due to the expectation by employers that they will become mothers and will thus, leave their profession to start a family or at the very least be rendered less productive by the burden of pregnancy. Thus, women are often passed over for promotion in favour of

men and also face wage discrimination even in the advanced west with women still frequently earning less than men for the same work.

Another area which capitalism oppresses women uniquely is their role in providing unpaid household labour. Even in the developed world it is still remarkably common for women to do the majority of household tasks and chores, almost by default, leaving men free to work more and women tied to the home. Capitalism has often encouraged men to support this status quo. For instance, one of the chief propaganda tools of the anti-women's suffrage campaign in the early 20th and late 19th centuries was an appeal to working men about who would look after the house if women were allowed to take a role in the public sphere (as opposed to the private sphere of the home) with suffragettes demonized as poor wives and bad mothers for taking time out of household work to engage with politics.

As a result of the overthrow of the matriarchy and the rise of private property and capitalism, women now bear the brunt of the poverty, suffering, deprivation, wars and environmental devastation the profit system creates.

8.5 Why socialist feminism?

One answer is that reforming capitalism so that it is “kinder and gentler” is a dead end. Reforms are important for survival but they are always undermined or reversed. Never-ending attacks on reproductive rights and affirmative action and endless imperialist wars are just a few examples of the limits of reformism. Social justice advocates end up fighting the same battles over and over again instead of expanding democratic rights for excluded groups or preventing the next war. Equality for women cannot be achieved under capitalism while socialism cannot be attained without the participation and leadership of working and poor women in the struggle to win it. Socialist feminists believe that the only way to win the fight for women's rights is to connect it up with the larger global campaign for human liberation in all its forms.

Women are the most oppressed of every oppressed group. No one needs revolutionary transformation of society worse than they do and no other group has the capacity to unite the oppressed in a mighty, working class movement that addresses all the injustices suffered by the dispossessed under capitalism: racism, poverty, homophobia, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, ageism, and war.

The profit system survives on women's unpaid labour in the home and low-waged labour in market place. Their inequality is solidified like concrete in a perverse

arrangement where owners and employers profit off of women's second-class status and misery. This is a radicalizing experience and accounts for the tremendous role women play, particularly women of colour and indigenous women, as leaders in the struggle for revolutionary change.

Both men and women have a stake in changing their unequal relationship. The subjugation of females lays the basis for ruling class exploitation of poor and working-class males of all races, nationalities, abilities and sexual orientations. The profit system, and the oppression of women which keep it afloat, must be overthrown for women, children and men to be free of economic insecurity and discrimination. Working class men who are feminists know that when they fight for women's rights, they are making a stand for all the exploited—including themselves!

Socialist feminism would turn capitalism and the subjugation of women and all other underdogs upside down. First, because socialism replaces the current system of wealth for a few with a system that can meet the human needs of the majority. Secondly, because the fight for women's equality, with the lowest paid and most oppressed in the leadership, would guarantee everyone wins, because when those at the bottom of the economic ladder rise up, everyone moves up with them.

8.6 Critique of Global capitalism

Socialist feminism developed as a critique of both radical feminism and of Marxism. Its point of departure was that radical feminism alone was ahistorical and idealist and therefore inadequate to provide an understanding of the situation of women. It argued that the radical feminist use of the concept of patriarchy was ahistorical because it assumed that relations between men and women were unchanging throughout history and universal in different cultures. The socialist feminists argued that radical feminism was simplistic in arguing that there was one single cause of women's oppression. They also said that it focused too exclusively on ideological factors and that it totally separated the oppression of women from capitalist social relations.

Socialist feminism argued that Marxism was the main theoretical source that could provide feminist analysis with a materialist foundation - an analysis that took account of class relations as well as the concept of patriarchy. Such a synthesis was said to be necessary because Marxism alone was incomplete or deficient when it came to a comprehensive understanding of women's oppression.

Having rejected Marxist analysis, socialist feminism then sets up the concept of

patriarchy as the centrepiece of its viewpoint. While criticizing the ahistorical approach of radical feminists such as Kate Millett, socialist feminism adopts the radical feminist notion that women's oppression is a result of a distinct system of social relations based on male supremacy and oppression of women. In the socialist feminist view, patriarchy is a system of oppression bearing equal responsibility with economic / class relations for the shape and character of a society. It rejects as "reductionist" and "economist" the notion that all social relations, including those between the sexes, are framed and determined by historically developed systems of social relations (such as capitalism, feudalism, etc) centring on production of the essentials of life.

Socialist feminism asserts that patriarchy and particular relations of production have different origins and are relatively autonomous of each other. It rejects the notion that particular forms of social organization can be understood as a unified whole. Relations between men and women are said to have their own, independent logic, dynamic and history that do not stand in any necessary or contingent relationship to the prevailing relations of production.

8.7 Marxist critique

Socialist feminism is a popular trend among the petty bourgeois women's liberation movement that split from the "new left" and various other liberation struggles of the late '60's and early '70's. Socialist feminists are not a consolidated group but rather various groups whose common unities are the criticisms of what they call the Marxist movement and the feminist movement as advocated by old Marxists School.

The Marxist critique of socialist feminism states that it does not speak to the oppression of women but merely concerns itself with things that "relate directly to the productive process." Many view "orthodox Marxism" as an outdated product of 19th century capitalism that has traditionally been insensitive to women's needs and struggles only to improve the economic conditions of workers.

Feminism, on the other hand, is seen as a response to the inequality of the sexes that exists to some degree in all societies. Socialist feminists see that feminism exposes the oppression of women by men the same way that they see Marxism exposing the class nature of society. Feminism, however, is aimed only at men, ignoring what socialist feminists consider the "other" enemy of women, the capitalist system. Socialist feminists borrow much of radical feminist analysis, some of which can be seen in the analysis of the origin of women's oppression.

8.8 Criticism

Socialist feminists do put forward that full liberation cannot exist for women within a capitalist society, not because class society and private property are the material basis for the oppression of women, but rather because, imperialism uses and distorts any reform designed to alleviate the oppression of women. Their analysis seems to indicate that they see imperialism more as an obstacle to their primary struggle against the patriarchy. Many, however will not agree with this characterization.

Socialism is the alternative proposed. Their view of socialism, however, is Utopian. They see socialism not as the dictatorship of the proletariat, but as the elimination of what they call the hierarchy of society. Socialism, they say, is a social system where decisions are made collectively. “Collectivity” is seen as a feminist alternative to capitalism because it is the negation of the male principle of “competition” which they see as the driving force of capitalism. Thus, socialism is seen as the triumph of women over both of their enemies, the patriarchy and imperialism.

In the main, this position vacillates between that of men as the enemy and imperialism as the enemy. Their tactics inevitably reflect this vacillation. Some socialist feminists choose to work on alternative institutions based on the female principle; others will join anti-imperialist organizations, such as the Lawyers Guild, but within those organizations will focus primarily on the woman question. Many times, however, socialist feminists will combine the struggle for legal reforms and the struggle for alternative institutions. Unlike radical feminists, socialist feminists tend to rely more on the state.

8.9 Summing Up

- Socialist feminists agree that liberal feminism does not appreciate the depth of the oppression of women and basically only addresses the situation of women of the upper and upper middle classes.
- They also agree that women have been oppressed in virtually all known societies, but the nature of this oppression has differed because of the different economic realities.
- Socialist feminists do not think that the oppression of women is based solely

on the economic system, and they suggest that patriarchy and capitalism are combined into one system. They believe that we must understand the continuing effects that colonization, imperialism, and racism have on the women of the world.

- Socialist feminists maintain that it is wrong to suggest that any one form of oppression is the most important or key form of oppression. Instead, they recognize that oppression based on sex/gender, class, race, and sexual orientation are all interwoven. To effectively challenge any one of these forms of oppression, we must understand and challenge all of them.
- Socialist feminists emphasize the economic, social, and cultural importance of women as people who give birth, socialize children, care for the sick, and provide the emotional labour that creates the realm of the home as a retreat for men from the realities of the work place and the public arena.
- Socialist feminists emphasize that within the work place women face challenges of job market segregation, lower wages for the same work, and sexual harassment. They also recognize that the labour movement has been complicit in maintaining this.

8.10 Glossary

1. **Socialist-** An Individual who believes in a political, social, and economic philosophy encompassing a range of economic and social systems characterised by social ownership of the means of production.
2. **Economic determinism-** Economic determinism is a socio economic theory that economic relationships (such as being an owner or capitalist, or being a worker or proletarian) are the foundation upon which all other societal and political arrangements in society are based.
3. **Materialism-** Materialism is a form of philosophical monism that holds that matter is the fundamental substance in nature, and that all things, including mental states and consciousness, are results of material interactions.
4. **Dogma-** Dogma in the broad sense is any belief held unquestioningly and with undefended certainty. It may be in the form of an official system of principles or doctrines of a religion.

8.11 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. Explain and situate Socialist feminism in the context of Marxism?
2. Discuss how gender struggle is related to class struggle in the context of Engels work on the Family, Private Property and the State.

Short Questions :

1. ‘Gender roles are determined by who imposes them’. Explain the sentence in respect to discrimination against women.
2. Explain how socialist tradition differed from the liberal tradition of feminism.

Objective Questions :

1. Name two socialist feminists.
2. ‘Women hold up half the sky’- What is meant by the statement?

8.12 Further Reading

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Unit-9 □ Radical Feminism

Structure

- 9.1 Objective**
- 9.2 Introduction**
- 9.3 What is radical feminism?**
- 9.4 History of radical feminism**
- 9.5 Discourse of radical feminism**
- 9.6 Critique of radical feminism**
- 9.7 Conclusion**
- 9.8 Summing Up**
- 9.9 Glossary**
- 9.10 Probable Questions**
- 9.11 Further Reading**

9.1 Objective

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to :

- Understand radical feminism as distinct entity within feminist studies and recognize its opposition to other feminist trajectories.
- Provide a radical feminist critique of patriarchy, liberal feminism, and status quo tendencies, offering a fresh perspective within the broader feminist discourse.

9.2 Introduction

Radical feminism is a philosophy emphasizing the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women, or, more specifically, the social domination of women by men. Radical feminism views patriarchy as dividing societal rights, privileges, and power primarily along the lines of sex, and as a result, oppressing women and privileging men. Radical feminists tend to be more militant in their approach (radical

as “getting to the root”) than other feminists. A radical feminist aims to dismantle patriarchy rather than making adjustments to the system through legal changes. Radical feminists also resist reducing oppression to an economic or class issue, as socialist or Marxist feminism sometimes does. Radical feminism opposes patriarchy, not men. To equate radical feminism to man-hating is to assume that patriarchy and men are inseparable, philosophically and politically.

Radical feminism arose from the backlash of the 1960s’ focus on liberal and Marxist feminism. Radical feminism focuses on male oppression of females both privately and politically. Radical feminists claim that the central issue is the subordination of women by men within the private and political spheres. This subordination is exemplified by the rhetoric surrounding rape and victim blaming. During the 1970s, radical feminists argued that rape was not a biological predisposition among men but the socialization of men that projected women as objects. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, radical feminists, along with liberal feminists, reformed rape statutes in all states to reflect the sentiment that rape was not just a crime against virginal women but against all women, through the fear of rape. Radical feminism focuses on the rejection of the patriarchal ideal that the private sphere (for women) focuses on child rearing, marriage, and the maintenance of the household. Due to this private sphere, the political sphere of patriarchy results in women being harmed through rape, domestic violence, and prostitution.

Many radical feminists prioritized the struggle against violence on women since they saw that violence as upholding patriarchy. Radical feminists often were the driving force behind rape crisis hotlines and shelters for women subjected to domestic violence. In speaking out and organizing against violence against women, radical feminists transformed the discussion within our society. Their efforts successfully ended the silence about rape and domestic violence and helped to begin changing our criminal justice system. Many radical feminists took a stand against pornography, because they viewed it as propaganda for patriarchy and violence against women. This was more controversial and was rejected by many other feminists.

9.3 What is Radical feminism?

Radical Feminist theory analyses the structures of power which oppress the female sex. Its central tenet is that women as a biological class are globally oppressed by men. Radical feminism has from the beginning been concerned with all forms of oppression which affect the life chances and human dignity of women, that is, with

all forms of oppression. By attributing all forms of oppression to male domination, the early radical feminist account linked them together, and provided the beginnings of a framework for understanding all forms of invidious hierarchical distinctions between categories of human beings.

It believes that male power is constructed and maintained through institutional and cultural practices that aim to bolster male superiority through the reinforcement of female inferiority. One such manifestation of the patriarchy is gender. The theory supports that manifestation of such kind are a socially constructed hierarchy which functions to repress female autonomy and has no basis in biology. Radical Feminists also critique all religions and their institutions and other practices that promote violence against women such as prostitution.

9.4 History of Radical feminism?

One of the first theoretical advances of second wave feminism was to separate out biological conceptions of women's identity from socially-constructed ones in order to disprove the notion that biology was destiny and hence, that women's main role was as mothers and caregivers. It was in the 1960's which saw Radical feminism emerging from second-wave feminism and the civil rights movement. Radical feminism began to diverge from other forms of feminism with their belief that the whole system of social and political institutions should be destroyed and rebuilt. Radical feminists emphasized the creation of alternative institutions and women-only spaces. They were involved in cultural initiatives such as women's music festivals.

Kate Millet, in her book *Sexual Politics* (1970), writes that the root of women's oppression lies in the sex/gender system, and to eliminate oppression, gender has to be eliminated. This is because through elaborate social sanctions of institutions like religion and family, patriarchy justifies male control by imposing naturalized gendered ideals. Though she looks forward to an androgynous world, she warns against embodying undesirable masculine and feminine traits. The assertiveness to change this oppressive system demanded the radicalisation of the feminist movement bringing the radical feminist to the mainstream.

9.5 Discourse of Radical feminism

Unlike liberal feminists, who view power as a positive social resource that ought to be fairly distributed, and feminist phenomenologists, who understand domination in terms of a tension between transcendence and immanence, radical feminists tend to

understand power in terms of dyadic relations of dominance/subordination, often understood on analogy with the relationship between master and slave.

Like socialist feminists, radical feminists take issue with the individualism of liberalism and argue that personal choices and individual achievement are not enough to transform society. And they locate women's oppression in a broader, societal context.

Thus, the initial task which faced early radical feminist thinkers was that of creating a theory which both treated the family as a social institution and recognised its centrality in structuring social life as a whole. Thus, if for liberalism the state, or public law, has been seen as possessing priority in structuring social life, and if in certain interpretations of Marxism the economy, or sphere of production, has been viewed as the base from which might be explained all other social phenomena, so for radical feminism the family, sometimes described as the sphere of "reproduction," occupies an analogous role.

From the beginning, radical feminists have been especially concerned with sexual and domestic violence, seeing it as fundamental to women's oppression. Andrea Dworkin, one of the most prominent radical feminists of the 1980s, distinguished herself with her crusade against sexual violence. In one of her most famous speeches, "I Want a 24 Hour Truce During Which There is No Rape," Dworkin implored men in the audience to try to understand the profound fear of sexual violence that women live with every day.

This commitment to combatting sexual violence — a scourge that hinders all aspects of women's lives — is admirable. So too is radical feminists' emphasis on large-scale reform rather than small-scale tweaks.

Those who work in radical feminism continue to take issue with many of the central tenets of liberal feminism, especially its focus on the individual and the supposedly free choices that individuals can make. Where the liberal sees the potential for freedom, the radical feminist sees structures of domination that are bigger than any individual. Patriarchy itself, according to this view, dominates women by positioning them as objects of men's desire. Radical feminists remain committed to getting at the root of male domination by understanding the source of power differentials, which some radical feminists, including Catharine MacKinnon, trace back to male sexuality and the notion that heterosexual intercourse creates male domination over women. "Women and men are divided by gender, made into the sexes as we know them, by the requirements of its dominant form, heterosexuality, which institutionalizes male sexual dominance and female sexual submission.

Claiming that an exclusive feminine gender identity is detrimental to women's development as full human persons, radical libertarian feminists encouraged women to embrace androgyny, i.e., embodying both masculine and feminine characteristics. This claim was challenged by other radical feminists who believed that being androgynous necessarily implied assuming mostly masculine traits, and sometimes the worst of the masculine characteristics. However, they understood that this was an attempt to free women to express and choose their own gender identities. Radical cultural feminists rejected this model of androgyny by suggesting that women should embrace their femininity and celebrate those values that are culturally associated with being women, thus, essentializing the 'female nature' that is common to all women, across varied socio-cultural-political contexts.

According to radical-libertarian feminist Gayle Rubin, the sex/gender system is a "set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity. This means that society (associated with patriarchal norms) takes certain biological characteristics of being male and female and converts that into a system of masculine and feminine identities that create a hierarchical power relation between men and women. Masculine traits (assertiveness, independence, practicality, etc) are associated with being a man and these are more celebrated than feminine traits (submissiveness, interdependence, being emotional) that are looked down upon. These societal constructions are naturalized as biological or inherent to individuals and this limits their freedom to express their gender identities if different from their biological identities.

The early organisers of radical feminism shared with the rest of the New Left a belief in the systemic nature of much of political injustice. Thus, when these women began to perceive the situation of women as representing a case of this injustice, they employed the adjective "radical" to describe their stance. It signified a commitment to look for root causes. Radical feminists viewed the activities of women who had been involved in existing business and professional women's organisations as "reformist," helpful and necessary but fundamentally inconsequential. This view stemmed both from a belief that the criticisms liberal feminism made of relations between women and men in both domestic and non-domestic life did not go far enough, and also, from a belief that liberal feminism had no sense of the importance of gender, and the social relations of domestic life, in structuring all social life. For radical feminism, liberal feminism's belief in the power of the law to remedy inequalities between women and men testified to a lack of insight into the fundamentality of the "sex-role system," those practices and institutions which were important in creating and maintaining sex-role differences. Of particular importance was the family,

for it was here that biological men and women learned the cultural constituents of masculinity and femininity, and learned about the fundamental differences of power which, according to radical feminism, were a necessary component of both.

The attention that radical feminists gave to the dynamics of personal relations was accompanied by a belief that attention to feelings and personal experience was a necessary condition for eliminating the present sex-role system. Since the components of that system were embedded in deep and complex ways in daily life experience, it was only through careful examination of that experience that the multiple manifestations of gender could be understood and thus changed.

Essentially, radical libertarian feminists claimed that gender is separable from sex, and naturalized gender roles are attempts on the part of patriarchal society's to control women through rigid sanctions. Hence, most of them supported the idea of androgyny as it implied women, (and men) can choose to embody the combination of gender identities and traits at will. While most radical libertarian feminists believed that there should not be any judgment towards sexual practices (as being good, healthy, normal as opposed to bad, unhealthy, abnormal), radical cultural feminists believed that the only unambiguously good form of sexuality for women is monogamous lesbianism. They believed that patriarchy as an institution traps women into heterosexual relationships that need to be severed in order to end sexual oppression.

9.6 Critique of radical feminism

Both radical libertarian and radical cultural feminism have been heavily critiqued by each other as well as non radical feminists. Radical libertarian feminism has been criticised for its overemphasis on 'choice'. Critics argue that while the idea of women's freedom to choose is empowering, in reality, their ability to do so is seriously constrained in a patriarchal context. Patriarchy coerces women into upholding patriarchal norms by constraining the range of choices available to them, and creating the illusion of 'free choice', when in reality women are conditioned to act a certain way due to patriarchal social conditioning. On the other hand, radical cultural feminists have been criticized because of essentializing masculine and feminine traits as being universal. Essentialism has been previously used to justify many forms of oppression (racism, colonialism, slavery), and by trapping women into rigid roles, radical cultural feminism falls into the danger of doing the same. Generalising every man as the oppressor and every woman as the victim is oversimplifying the way patriarchy works- through elaborate system of social sanctions and institutions. Further, this also rejects the nuanced relationship that sexism has with other forms of

oppression, such as racism or classism or casteism, in the case of India. In other words, the power hierarchies become unstable when one or more of these axes of oppression are thrown into the equation. For instance, the direction of oppression between a white woman and a black man, or between an upper caste woman and a lower caste man cannot be analysed as simplistically as saying 'all men are oppressors'. By proclaiming universal sisterhood through similar experiences, radical feminism negates the unique socio-cultural contexts that different women come from, thus, being in danger of being representative of only one type of feminism, that of a white, western feminism. It is precisely in this context of essentialism and being perceived as primarily a feminism of white, middle class women, other forms of feminisms such as feminism of colour, postcolonial and third world feminism emerged. The strengths of radical feminism lay in its recognition of the interconnection of sexuality and gender and of their importance in affecting social life, its weaknesses result from its tendency to collapse gender into sexuality and to see all societies as fundamentally similar.

9.7 Conclusion

In sum, for radical feminism, women's inferior political and economic status were mere symptoms of a more fundamental problem: an inferior status and lack of power built into the role of femininity. Radical feminism challenged prevailing beliefs that the constituents of this role, such as women's abilities and interests in child-rearing or lack of assertiveness or even the content of women's sexual interests, were "natural." Rather the argument was made that all but certain limited biological differences between women and men were cultural. The constituents of the sex-role system were social constructions, and more important, such constructions were fundamentally antithetical to the interests of women. The norms embodied in femininity discouraged women from developing their intellectual, artistic, and physical capacities. It dissuaded women from thinking of themselves and from being thought of by others as autonomous agents. Whereas "masculinity" embodied certain traits associated with adulthood, such as physical strength, rationality, and emotional control, "femininity," in part embodied traits associated with childhood, such as weakness and irrationality. The norms of femininity created an emphasis in women's lives on achieving the roles of wife and mother whose outcome was a comparable imbalance between men and women in economic and emotional autonomy. Moreover, while the norms embodied

in femininity often worked against women, the norms embodied in masculinity served to create many unattractive beings, those who too frequently were aggressive, selfish, instrumental in their dealings with others, and unskilled in the arts of nurturance and caring. The source of the problem, according to radical feminism, was to be found in the home and family, where girls and boys received their initial and most primary lessons on the differences between the sexes and where adult women and men played out the lessons that they learned. The lessons of gender differences learned and practiced in the home were in turn transferred to the outside world when women did leave the home. Thus, when women took paid employment, they replicated and were expected to replicate the practices and inferior status of women which were a part of the home. In sum, according to radical feminism, the inferior status of women as political or economic beings was merely the symptom of a problem whose roots were to be located elsewhere.

9.8 Summing Up

- Radical feminist thought analyses women's oppression primarily from the understanding of patriarchal control over women's sexuality and reproductive labour.
- Radical feminism not only attempts to understand women's oppression and victimhood but also focuses on celebrating womanhood and sisterhood and consciousness raising to negotiate with patriarchal and structural inequities.
- Societal constructions are naturalized as biological or inherent to individuals and this limits their freedom to express their gender identities.
- Commitment to getting at the root of male domination by understanding the source of power differentials.

9.9 Glossary

1. **Radical-** If something is considered extremist or very different from anything that has come before it, call it radical. A radical is someone who has very extreme views, so you could say that their views are different from the root up. Similarly, a radical flaw or change is a fundamental one whereas a radical design or idea is very new and innovative.

2. **Objectification-** Objectification is a notion central to feminist theory. It can be roughly defined as the seeing and/or treating a person, usually a woman, as an object. In this entry, the focus is primarily on sexual objectification, objectification occurring in the sexual realm.
3. **Counter culture-** A counterculture is a culture whose values and norms of behaviour differ substantially from those of mainstream society, sometimes diametrically opposed to mainstream cultural mores. A countercultural movement expresses the ethos and aspirations of a specific population during a well-defined era.
4. **Second-wave feminism-** Second wave or second wave of feminist movement was a period of feminist activity, and though it began in the United States in the early 1960s, it lasted roughly two decades. It quickly spread across the Western world with an aim to increase equality for women by gaining more than just enfranchisement.

9.10 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. Discuss the prime arguments of Radical feminism and its take on oppression eradication?
2. Discuss the issues that radical feminism answered in respect to liberal Feminism?

Short Questions :

1. Trace the history of radical feminism.
2. Make a critical assessment of radical feminism based on the arguments forwarded by its critics.

Objective Questions :

1. What, according to the radical feminists, is the root cause of gender inequality?
2. How is the concept of power defined by the radical feminists?

9.11 Further Reading

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Unit-10 ☐ Neo-Feminism

Structure

- 10.1 Objective
- 10.2 Introduction
- 10.3 Meaning of neo-feminism
- 10.4 History of neo-feminism
- 10.5 Difference feminism
- 10.6 Conclusion
- 10.7 Summing Up
- 10.8 Glossary
- 10.9 Probable Questions
- 10.10 Further Reading

10.1 Objective

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to :

- Understand the meaning and context of neo-feminism.
- Comprehend the complementary role of the opposite sexes in relation to feminist thought.
- Examine the evolution of neo-feminism and its distinct features compared to earlier feminist movements.
- Analyse the contributions of neo-feminism in addressing contemporary gender issues.

10.2 Introduction

Feminism is being re-shaped by its increased articulation through a global discourse of human rights and an increased focus on state interventions. There is an increase in the use of rhetoric that women's rights are human rights as a framing and justification of feminist action, simultaneous with a turn of feminist activity away from autonomous separatist groups towards their mainstream within civil society and the state. Of course, neither the use of the notion of equal rights nor demands on the state are entirely new within feminism, but both the state of the use of universalistic conceptions of human

rights, which draw down on global and regional practices and institutions, and the extent of the orientation to states constitute new developments. This raises a number of questions as to how this is to be understood and why it is happening. Globalization has facilitated new spaces, institutions and rhetoric where the notion of universal human rights is a powerful justificatory principle embedded in specific institutions. Globalization constitutes a new framing for feminist politics that assists the change in discursive presentation and new opportunities for argumentation. Globalization impacts on the nature of feminism especially by creating changes in political opportunities. On a different stratum altogether we have seen an overlapping of the traditional and the modern aspects of feminism with the advent of the new millennium. New Feminism becomes a crucial part of this overlapping and resuscitate the controversial dichotomy of the linear and horizontal progression of modernity and its aspects.

10.3 Meaning of neo-feminism

New feminism is traditionally attributed to the opponents of the 1920's suffragette movement claiming that differentiation of the female self from the men women duality and creating an individualist rhetoric will only harm the cause of feminists. The new feminists argue in favour of such measures as family allowances paid directly to mothers, welfare schemes targeted towards the females of the society and increased impetus on female health care within the state. They were also largely supportive of protective legislation and safeguards in the industry. The new feminists in many places have been referred to as welfare feminists or welfare suffragists for their encouragement of state based gendered welfare.

10.4 History of neo-feminism

In an 180° turn, the Welfare suffragist based new feminism has been taken over by one of the most patriarchal institutions in existence, The Roman Catholic Church. The term New feminism that has been revived by feminists responding in actuality answers to the call of Pope John Paul II's idea for a "new feminism" which rejects the temptation of imitating models of 'male and domination'. On the other hand the Pope affirmed that in order to acknowledge the true potential of women in every aspect of the life of society there is a need to overcome all discrimination, violence and exploitation and with it creating an independent narrative of women power and empowerment. The crucible of such a thought is centred around integral complementarity of sexes. Pope John Paul II had begun his theologically-based affirmation of integral gender complementarity in his Wednesday audiences between 1979 and 1984, in what is now compiled as the Theology of the Body. In this work,

he describes his belief that men and women are formed as complementary human beings for the sake of loving and being loved.

Pope John Paul II continued his call for women to become advocates of humanity in his Apostolic Letter to Women prior to the 1995 Beijing Women's conference. Integral complementarity differs from fractional complementarity. In that it argues that men and women are each whole persons in and of themselves, and, together, equal more than the sum of their parts. The concept of fractional complementarity argues that a man and woman each make up a part of a person. The form of integral complementarity supported by the Pope eschews the idea that the relationship between the two sexes isn't based on the dichotomous relationship of superiority or inferiority. Both men and women are integral part and are cooperative in nature.

10.5 Difference feminism

New feminism in the broader corpus of feminism is identified as a form of difference feminism,. Difference feminism advocates the idea that women and men are different in respects of role as well as identity. There is no competition between both and both exists as coordinated units of the human social structure. It also supports the idea that men and women have different strengths, perspectives substantiating varied roles. Though new feminism supports differentiation of assessment, it supports the contradictory idea of judging the roles based on the premise of holistic equality. New feminism gives equal worth and dignity to both sexes despite differentiation of characteristics and functionality. Certain concepts that make it a distinct trend among feminists is that it recognises biological differences as significant and does not compromise sexual equality. New Feminism holds that women in society should be valued in their traditional role as child bearers which have been vehemently opposed by radical feminists maintaining that women are individuals with equal worth as men; and that, in social, economic and legal senses they should be equal, while accepting the natural differences between the sexes. The acceptance of naturalization of gender roles among sexes is what that has brought the wrath of radical feminists against the new feminists. New feminists support the idea that politics is what that has problematized the feminists movement and in a way discredited it as a reactionary movement rather than progressive stance for equality. To solve this the narrative put forward by the new feminists is that natural roles are dedicated to women due to societal and historical imperatives which is not demeaning or exploitative. Treating the natural roles with respect and keeping them in the same precipice as men is what is required to emancipate the women of the world. Where major trends of feminism support politicization of the gender and political change supporting it's cause, the new

feminists argue that depoliticising of the gendered norms can create real equality with mutual respectability of respective roles. Radical feminists have criticized this stance as imposition of latent patriarchy in the name of biological imperative. This is seen as moulding thought process to keep command over the power structure by the association of the exploitative gender and conservative dogmatism of religion.

10.6 Conclusion

New feminists claim that men and women are different and that this difference affects the way they live their lives, what they care about, and their strengths and weaknesses. Women can fulfill their vocational calling by acting as spiritual mothers in whatever their occupation: as wife, mother, consecrated woman, working professional, or single woman. Differences between the sexes should never be used to unilaterally discriminate except in cases when a task is contingent upon a person being of a certain category.

10.7 Summing Up

- With an increased focus on state interventions and a global discourse of human rights, feminism was reshaped.
- The neo feminists were supportive of protective legislation and safeguards in the industry.
- The term new-feminism has been revived by feminists responding to the call of Pope John Paul's idea for a 'new feminism'.
- It is often identified as a form of difference feminism.
- It gives equal worth and dignity of both sexes despite differentiation of characteristics and functionality.

10.8 Glossary

1. **Third wave feminism-** Influenced by the postmodernist movement in the academy, third-wave feminists sought to question, reclaim, and redefine the ideas, words, and media that have transmitted ideas about womanhood, gender, beauty, sexuality, femininity, and masculinity, among other things.
2. **Theology-** Theology literally means 'thinking about God'. In practice it usually means studying the sources of Christian belief like the Bible and the Creeds, and exploring the meaning of Christianity for today.

3. **Articulation-** Articulation (expression) theorizes the relationship between components of social formation or relationship between cultural and political economy.
4. **Autonomous-** Political autonomy exists when a group of persons or a territory are self-governing, thus not under the control of a higher level of government.
5. **Foucauldian-** Foucauldian discourse analysis is a form of discourse analysis, focusing on power relationships in society as expressed through language and practices, and based on the theories of Michel Foucault.

10.9 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. Explain the different ways by which women participation and empowerment can be encouraged in society.
2. How has modern opportunities changed the life of women in public sphere. Explain with examples.

Short Questions :

1. Which institution has been blamed to overtake the new feminist phenomenon?
2. What is the difference between equal feminists and difference feminists?

Objective Questions :

1. Which wave is considered as the advent of neo-feminism?
2. What is new in neo-feminism?

10.10 Further Readings

1. Allen, Prudence, “Can Feminism be a Humanism?” *Women in Christ : Toward a New Feminism*. Ed by Michele M. Schumacher. Cambridge, UK: WBE Publishing Co., 2004.
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Module - 3

Feminism in Practice

Unit-11 □ Feminism in the West

Structure

- 11.1 Objective**
- 11.2 Introduction**
- 11.3 Early Feminism in the West**
- 11.4 Feminism in the West: Eighteenth to Nineteenth Century**
 - 11.4.1 Liberal Feminism: First Wave**
 - 11.4.2 Marxist-Socialist Feminism**
- 11.5 Feminism in the West: Twentieth Century**
 - 11.5.1 Liberal Feminism: Second and Third Wave**
 - 11.5.2 Radical Feminism**
 - 11.5.3 Marxist and Socialist Feminism**
- 11.6 Post Modern Feminism**
- 11.7 Conclusion**
- 11.8 Summing Up**
- 11.9 Glossary**
- 11.10 Probable Questions**
- 11.11 Further Reading**

11.1 Objective

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to :

- Understand the evolution of the feminist approach in the West.
- Explore the diversities within Western feminist thought and examine its various variants.
- Analyse how different schools of Western feminism have shaped social, political, and cultural discourses.
- Investigate the key figures and movements that contributed to the development of Western feminism.

11.2 Introduction

Feminism is a concept with complexities and diversities. It has always involved theoretical disagreements and reflected different perceptions and interests of women. Today it has multiple connotations and includes a diversity of approaches with relative focus on different issues. To understand the crux of the feminist approach, we need to examine these diversities. In this context, it is pertinent to use the term 'feminisms' rather than feminism. Despite its multiple connotations and diversities, it can be argued that feminism believes in subordination, oppression and subjugation of women and calls for equal rights and opportunities and a change in this subordination. It differs on the sources and levels of subordination and the means to change it. The origin of feminism lies in the West though there is debate on the exact period of emergence of the feminist approach. Feminism in the West is also a site of disagreements, debates and controversies. Our objective is to explore those debates. The term 'feminist' was first used in 1880s to indicate demands for equal legal and political rights of women. Feminism is often being criticized as a Western approach or an approach that addresses the problems of Western white women only. The idea originated and flourished first in the West but later came to include women and issues of the non-western world too. To understand the evolution of the idea of Feminism, we must study the development of Feminism in the West. Feminism in the West has gone through different changes and phases with each phase focussing on different issues. From this perspective, Feminism can be divided into three waves-First wave, Second wave and Third wave. These divisions are not in terms of time period but in terms of issues that they addressed. Within these three waves, we find different variants of Feminism-Liberal feminism, Radical feminism, Socialist feminism and Postmodern feminism. Each of these variants differ with the other in terms of the broader political ideologies they identify with, their theoretical standpoints and the issues they focus upon.

11.3 Early Feminism in the West

Feminist activity in the West initiated in early modern England though the term 'feminist' first came into use in the 1880s. These activities are usually identified with efforts made by women to seek better treatment from men though there exists debate on whether they can be regarded as feminism. The earliest documented expression of feminist consciousness is said to have occurred in the West wherein alternative readings of Christian theology were used to assert the worth of women. In the beginning of the fifteenth century, claims were raised in Europe on educating women and subsequently there

developed a Europe-wide public debate called *Querelle des femmes*. This debate was mainly focussed on education of women and feminine morality and manners and the arguments in favour of women were based on alternative readings of Bible. In 1405, Christian De Pisan published a book, *Book of the City of Ladies* wherein she documented remarkable contributions made by women since ancient times. This book is regarded as one of the earliest feminist text. England, during the period between sixteenth to eighteenth century witnessed several developments that challenged patriarchal authority in social, religious and cultural fields like education, arts, and literary tradition. From sixteenth century there emerged feminist voices in the field of literature. Katherine Philips (Orinda), Aphra Behn (Astrea), Deleriviere Manley, Mary Pix, Catherine Trotter, Mary Astell were all female writers from seventeenth and eighteenth century England who made remarkable contributions in the field of literary tradition. Their work highlighted different woman-identified issues. Women poets in the later half of the seventeenth century took up the subject of female friendship and also wrote passionately about relationships between women. The woman-centric literary tradition of this period was England-based and it also raised the issue of women's education. In the early seventeenth century, the English Catholic reformer, Mary Ward, created a new religious order called the Institute of Blessed Virgin Mary. This institution offered an opportunity to English girls to have free education and thus, expanded the scope of women's education. The humanist philosophers of the Renaissance also reflected enlightened views of women. Inspired by Enlightenment philosophers' focus on reason and rationality thinkers like Mary Astell, Marie de Gourmay, Anna Maria Van Schurman questioned the traditional authority of patriarchy exercised through unreasonable institutions. Akkerman and Sturnum have described this seventeenth century feminism as 'rationalist feminism' in Europe. These activities, often termed as 'early feminist' activities in the West, may not have brought crucial legislative changes but they laid the foundation for further development of feminist thought in the forthcoming centuries.

11.4 Feminism in the West: Eighteenth to Nineteenth Century

The eighteenth century was the time when the Enlightenment ideas reached their fullest political expression. The ideas of reason, rationality, freedom and individual worth got a tangible form through the French Revolution and the American Declaration of Independence. It was in this backdrop that the first wave of feminism evolved in the West. The first wave of feminism, that was initiated in the late eighteenth century, challenged the idea of individual in the contemporary dominant Western ideology of liberalism. This variant of feminism was called liberal feminism and it was a Western

idea. Chris Beasley refers to liberal feminism as a ‘broad church’ where inspite of all commonalities, variations exist between its different variants [Beasley, 2005]. She has identified three characteristic features of liberal feminism:

- Focus on reason and the idea of the universal human
- Focus on the status of women as the basis of a just society
- Focus on social reforms to ensure to alleviate the status of women

11.4.1 Liberal Feminism: First Wave

The liberal feminism of the first wave argued for inclusion of women in the liberal project. Influenced by the Enlightenment philosophy’s focus on reason, Liberalism was based on the belief in the autonomy and freedom of individual as a rational agent. Liberal feminism argued that liberalism is a flawed descendent of Enlightenment as this rational individual of liberalism is exclusively male and does not include women and women were considered irrational creatures without any social, economic and political rights like right to education, vote or property. Liberal feminism challenged liberalism’s claim of universality and argued for extension of social and political rights to women. The most important proponent of liberal feminism of this era was Mary Wollstonecraft. She is known to be the first major feminist thinker of the West. Her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) is regarded as a crucial text of liberal feminism where she called for inalienable human rights for women also. An advocate of individual rights, she challenged the idea that women are devoid of the power of reason and have a different set of virtues. She questioned the dominant feminine virtues of her time like frivolity, vanity, sensuousness or sensibility and called for the power of reason. These feminine virtues are a construct that impedes the development of women. Women, to her, are equally capable of reason as men. She wanted women to be given access to equal education with men and social participation to public life. She had a debate with Rousseau on education of women. Rousseau, in his *Emile*, argued for an education of women that was different from men. Confronting Rousseau’s view, she argued that since by nature men and women are equally capable of reason, there should never be different set of virtues for men and women. Liberal feminism wanted equal rights for men and women and believed that this could be achieved through legislative changes. It never challenged the capitalist system and believed that changes in the position of women can be brought through guarantee of rights through legislative changes within that system. It is also called equal rights feminism. The principles of liberal feminism later faced criticism from radical feminism as well as Marxist and Socialist feminism.

11.4.2 Marxist-Socialist Feminism

Liberal feminism has been criticized by another tradition of feminist thought in the West- Marxist and Socialist feminism. This tradition has Marxism as its intellectual foundation. By the late nineteenth century, a sharp split was observed in many European states between mainstream feminists with their focus on equality and rights and the Marxist- Socialist feminists who emphasized on class struggle and revolution. Classical Marxism viewed women's oppression as a product of capitalism which can be solved only with the abolition of capitalism. It gave primacy to class politics over sexual politics but both Marx and Engels have identified the sexual division of labour between man and woman as the first division of labour in human history. Fredrich Engel's *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) gave an account of how the origin of class society based on private property led to a transition from matriarchal to patriarchal family and can be regarded as an earliest expression of the origin of patriarchy. He gave a historical-materialist explanation of the oppression of women. As he says, 'The overthrow of the mother's right was the world historic defeat of the female sex. The man seized the reign in the house also; the woman was degraded, enthralled, the slave of man's lust, a mere instrument of breeding children'. Following the Marxist line, Alexandra Kollontai argued that the world of women is divided between bourgeois and proletariat women, the interests and aspirations of which differ from each other. Other than the suffering within a family, there can never be a universal 'woman question' for there can never be any unanimity of aspirations between these classes of women. For women, the solution of the oppression within the family is no less important than achieving political rights and economic independence.

The 'woman question' acquired importance in the writings of August Bebel, leader of the German Social Democratic party, who established an official party line on this question in Germany in late nineteenth century. His book *Woman under Socialism* (1878) is considered a key text of the Marxist-socialist feminism in Germany. Bebel agreed with Engels that oppression of women is a product of society and it can only end with a socialist revolution and establishment of a socialist society, where women will have economic independence and all domestic work will be done collectively. But Bebel gave importance to non-economic aspects of women's oppression also like the double standard or sexual morality or the restrictions imposed on women's freedom through conventional female dresses. He also recognized the dual oppression of women through capitalism and patriarchy and highlighted the role of women in socialism. Bebel's ideas were later supported by Clara Zetkin, another leader of the Social Democratic Party, who believed that socialism cannot be achieved without establishing equality between sexes.

11.5 Feminism in the West: Twentieth Century

The twentieth century has been crucial for feminism in the West as the diversities in the feminist tradition flourished and acquired more complexities in this century. This century witnessed liberal feminism and Marxist feminism acquiring new dimensions. There have also been alternative traditions like the radical feminism and post-modern feminism.

11.5.1 Liberal Feminism: Second and Third Wave

Liberal feminism of the first wave inspired the Suffragette movement in Europe and America that initiated in nineteenth century and reached its culmination in twentieth century. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, The Pankhurst sisters, Sarah Grimke, Angelina Grimke were all British and American women who demanded political, legal and economic equality of women with men. John Stuart Mill was also an ardent campaigner for women's economic and political rights. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the American feminist, was an activist of the American anti-slavery movement and she along with others raised voice against exclusion of women from an anti-slavery convention held in London in 1840. In her leadership the first women's rights convention was held in America in 1848 - the Seneca Falls Convention. The convention made a Declaration of Sentiments and Resolution through which demands were raised for rights of women as citizens to vote, to property, to education, to employment and to public participation in politics and church. Elizabeth Cady Stanton is known for being instrumental in making a trans atlantic network of feminists demanding equal rights for women.

The first wave of liberal feminism brought the following changes through legal reforms in different states:

- Rights for women to have admission in medical schools
- Right to have job opportunities in public and clerical work
- Reforms in matrimonial laws ensuring equality of women
- Reforms in laws on sexual morality
- Right to have custody of child
- Right to have ownership in property
- Right to have access in political process

Liberal Feminism of first wave in the West is said to have reached its fullest expression by the first half of the twentieth century. Then there was a period of silence after which the major feminist breakthrough again took place in the 1970s. On first wave of liberal feminism, Betty Friedan said, 'The fact is that to women born after 1920, feminism was dead history. It ended as a vital movement in America with the winning of that final right: the vote' [Friedan, 1965]. In her *The Feminine Mystique*, she raised the issue of the emergence of a new feminism of women's liberation which is more complex than the old feminism of equal rights. This new version of liberal feminism is said to be belonging to the second wave of feminism. While the earlier version of liberal feminism was individualist and reformist, the new one was collective and revolutionary. Focus on collective action was found in the writings of second wave liberal feminists like Gloria Steinem and Beatrice Faust. Equal rights, opportunities and non-discrimination were again demanded in new forms. Friedan founded the National Organization for Women (NOW) in the USA which demanded equal participation in mainstream American society within the framework of existing laws. The liberal feminism of the second wave does not focus upon freedom or equality of individual woman or self-realization of individual woman to put an end to gender-based social hierarchy; rather it focuses on legal and political reforms through collective action. It shares commonality with the first wave on its support for the liberal ideas of equality and democracy and furthering the cause of women through institutional reforms.

Waves of feminism are not chronological developments and are often found to be coexisting. Second wave of liberal feminism and third wave of liberal feminism often coexisted with each other. Naomi Wolf, Natasha Walter, Camilia Paglia, Kate Rolphe, Susan Okin can be regarded as proponents of the third wave of liberal feminism, which emerged as a response to radical feminism. In 1993, Naomi Wolf in her *Fire with Fire* gave the idea of 'power feminism' and 'gender quake' where instead of viewing women as victims of oppression she asserted on independence of women and their power to achieve success. The focus was strongly on individual self-development as the political means to achieve equality and the idea of woman as a rational autonomous individual. The demands were no longer limited to involvement of women in public sphere; rather there were demands for better conditions in employment to make it more compatible with family life and more involvement of men in domestic responsibilities. There was call for a paradigm change in social policy with more role of state in ensuring gender equality and justice through education, employment legislation and child care provisions. A gender just society needs a restructuring of domestic and caring responsibilities and this structuring should be done by public policy.

11.5.2 Radical Feminism

Radical feminism is a development of twentieth century. The idea developed as a critique of and a response to the first wave of liberal feminism based on equal rights campaign. Criticizing liberal feminist position on equality, radical feminism focussed on difference. In 1949, Simone De Beauvoir published *The Second Sex*, known as a ground breaking work on how gender is constructed. “One is not born a woman, but made”, argued Beauvoir [Beauvoir, 1949]. Her main argument was that the main reason behind women’s oppression is their cultural construction as the *other*. This argument later became the key issue of second wave feminism. Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics*, Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch*, Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex*, Michael Wandor’s *The Body Politic* are all key texts that propagated the idea of radical feminism during the second half of the twentieth century.

The key ideas of radical feminism are:

- Patriarchy is the basis of subordination and oppression of women
- Position of women can improve only if patriarchy is overthrown
- Legal reforms cannot bring the desired changes in society
- Society needs radical change not reforms
- Whatever personal is political
- Relation between sexes is power-centric and thus political
- Focus on difference and not equality between sexes

Radical feminism put forth the idea of patriarchy as a root cause behind subordination and oppression of women in society. Patriarchy is the principle of rule of men. Radical feminism focussed on patriarchy as power-centred political relationship between sexes and believed that emancipation of women cannot be possible within this structure of power-centred relationship. Millett argues that the principle of patriarchy is two-fold – ‘male shall dominate female, elder male shall dominate young’. This sexual domination of male is so universal and complete that it expands over all spheres of life. It permeates our culture and appears as natural to us. It becomes a pervasive ideology through gender socialization from early stages of life. Women are conditioned to believe that they are made for roles in private sphere only while the public sphere is for men. Radical feminism focused on the idea of ‘personal is political’ and contested the idea of public-private divide. Politics does not end at the threshold of home. It is very much existent in personal man-woman relationships.

Marriage and motherhood bear the manifestations of patriarchy. Marriage is conceived by radical feminists as perpetuating male domination camouflaged by love. Firestone argued 'Love, perhaps even more than child bearing, is the pivot of women's oppression today'. Radical feminism brought to the forefront several aspects of subordination and oppression of women- domestic violence, sexual violence, domestic labour, reproduction, pornography. Catherine Mckinnon and Andrea Dworkin were radical feminists known for their anti-pornography campaigns. The idea of reproductive rights was also advocated by them as rights of women to decide on the time and mode of reproduction. Some radical feminists have also challenged the idea of heterosexuality and called it a political act. 'Woman identified woman' or 'lesbian continuum' are all challenges to heterosexuality as an essentialist principle. With its radical ideas radical feminism made a significant challenge to mainstream political theory and traditions of feminist thought influenced by it and successfully laid the claim that woman should develop their own political theory.

11.5.3 Marxist and Socialist Feminism

The classical Marxist position gave primacy to class politics over sexual politics. This classical Marxist position that developed in nineteenth century was contested later by some socialist feminists of twentieth century. Socialist feminists agree with classical Marxism that the oppression of women is rooted in their social and economic life, but they differ on the relative importance of gender and class. Classical Marxists gave priority to class division over sex division and regarded 'class war' as more fundamental than 'sex war'. Women's revolution is just viewed as a by-product of social revolution in which capitalism will be overthrown and socialism established. But socialist feminists of twentieth century questioned this prioritization of class politics over sexual politics and highlighted the discrimination women faced in socialist societies or within socialist parties. Marxist-socialist feminism in West during this period focused on cultural and ideological roots of patriarchy and its link with capitalism. Juliet Mitchell suggested in her *Women's Estate* (1971) that women perform four social functions: i) they are all members of the workforce and are active in production; ii) they bear children and thus, reproduce human species; iii) they socialize the children; iv) they are sex objects. Abolition of capitalist system is not enough to liberate women.

Marxist-Socialist feminism became popular in Britain and America also in the twentieth century. Male domination of socialist politics in Britain was challenged by Sylvia Pankhurst. An active participant of revolutionary political movements in Europe after the First World War, she argued that emancipation of women is linked

to emancipation of the working class. She argued for collectivisation of housework and child care and condemned marriage as an unequal economic relation between sexes where the woman is economically dependent on the man. She supported open relationships based on love. The American Communist Party was founded in 1919 where a handful of women acquired important positions during the 1930s giving rise to debates on feminist issues. Mary Inman, an American feminist of the Marxian tradition, focused on the politics of personal life and domestic labour. She extended Marxist economic categories to include women's domestic labour and to highlight how housework plays an important role in capitalism as it is the process through which labour power is reproduced and maintained. She wanted housewives in capitalist societies to organize and demand for changes in their working conditions. An important feature of Marxist-socialist feminism in America is that within these tradition voices of black women were raised. A group of American black women, who were part of the Communist Party, highlighted the issue that the specific condition of exploitation of poor black women and argued for making their struggle central to any sort of emancipatory movement for women. They insisted that the people who were most exploited in the capitalist societies were black women domestic workers, who were employed by white housewives to do menial domestic chores. They focused on the issue of triple oppression-race, class and gender- of black women in capitalist societies.

11.6 Postmodern Feminism

Feminism has many variants most of which thrive on the modern-postmodern continuum. In the earlier section we have discussed feminism with focus on issues of modernity like equality, freedom, rights and justice. They have existed as part of the metanarratives of liberalism and Marxism. But we also have approaches of feminism which can be associated with postmodernism. The ideals and principles of modernity that developed in Europe since the Enlightenment got challenged during twentieth century in the works of theorists like Lacan, Derrida and Foucault. Influenced by postmodern approach, French Feminism focused on issues of different dimension. Theorists like Julia Kristeva, Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray raised the issue that whether there exists anything particular called feminine or is there any essential femininity based on biology. Postmodern feminism criticized all the earlier feminisms for being universal and based on meta narrative. If gender is a construction, the idea of any essential femininity becomes fluid. If all dichotomies or binaries are constructed, the question of gender becomes linguistic rather than material or social, argues Judith

Butler. To her, not only gender but sex is also a product of society and not determined by nature. Society creates the categories of 'man' and 'woman' by socializing us and attaching great importance to certain physiological features of our anatomy. Society constructs the idea of masculinity and femininity, which is called gendering. Gender roles, thus, can be undone also.

11.7 Conclusion

The different phases of feminism indicates that there have always been many feminisms in the movement. It is, therefore, not just a single ideology to suit all time and conditions. There have always been debates and counter debates which have enriched the ideology with an innate objective to reduce gender discrimination and in promoting equality.

11.8 Summing Up

- The present unit, have studied the idea of feminism as it evolved in West with a focus on the diversities and complexities of the concept. Often criticized later as a Western idea, the evolution was predominantly Western as most of the main variants of feminism have developed in the West, particularly Europe and America.
- The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been most crucial for feminism in the West as in these centuries most of the crucial categories of feminism developing in the West namely liberal feminism, Marxist-socialist feminism, radical feminism and postmodern feminism have been found.
- Diversities and critiques have been the major features of feminism in the West as each variant differed as well criticized the other. There have been reformists as well as radicalists, liberal as well as socialists.
- Feminist theory reached its highest level in the twentieth century where new dimensions as well radicalism were found. It addressed so many issues that with the end of the century there developed a belief that the movement has achieved all and facing a phase of decline. From this belief, there emerged the idea of 'post-feminism' which argues that most of the feminist goals have been achieved and the movement has no further relevance. But the fact is that patriarchy still exists and asserts itself in new forms. The idea of feminism is no longer limited to the West and we must focus on feminism in the

Islamic countries or feminism in Africa. So long as patriarchy exists, feminist theory will never lose its relevance.

11.9 Glossary

Patriarchy: A social structure where there is rule by men. It operates through two principles- rule of women by men and rule of younger males by older males.

Sexual Politics: A key concept of feminist theory that argues that relations between different sexes in society are power-structured and thus, political. To bring women's liberation, it is necessary to understand the dynamics of operation of sexual politics.

Liberal feminism: A type of feminist theory which have challenged the idea of universal human of liberalism on the ground that it is male-defined. It calls for equal political and economic rights for women and argues that subjugation and oppression of women can be changed through legal reforms.

Marxist-socialist Feminism: A type of feminist theory that is based on Marxian analysis. It argues that women's oppression is due to the dual operation of capitalism and patriarchy and their emancipation is possible only if capitalism is overthrown and socialist society established.

Radical Feminism: A type of feminist theory that views patriarchy as the root cause of subordination and oppression of women. It does not believe that any change can be achieved through reforms and argues for radical change in the society.

Power-feminism: A concept put forth during liberal feminism of the third wave .The term was used by Naomi Wolf to mean a type of feminism that emphasizes power of women instead of presenting them as victims.

11.10 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. Explain the evolution of the idea of liberal feminism.
2. Narrate the development of the idea of feminism in the West during eighteenth to nineteenth century.
3. Write a note on the development of feminism in the West in the twentieth century.

4. Explain the key ideas of the main variants of feminism in the twentieth century
5. Explain the first wave of liberal feminism as it developed in the West.

Short Questions :

1. Enumerate the main argument of radical feminism.
2. Analyse the development of Marxist-socialist feminism in the West.
3. Examine the idea of radical feminism that developed in West in the twentieth century.

Objective Questions :

1. What is the meaning of the concept of power feminism?
2. What is the main argument of postmodern feminism?

11.11 Further Reading

1. Beasley Chris, *Gender and Sexuality: Critical Theories, Critical Thinkers*, Sage Publications, 2005.
2. Gamble, Sarah eds., *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Post-feminism*, Routledge, London, 2001.
3. De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, Penguin Books, London, 1972.
4. Naomi Wolf, *Fire with Fire*, Random House Publishing, New York, 1993.
5. Wollstonecraft, Mary, *A Vindication of the Rights of a Woman*, T.F.Unwin, London, 1891.
6. Heywood Andrew, *Political Ideologies*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007.

Unit-12 □ Feminism in the Socialist Countries

Structure

- 12.1 Objective**
- 12.2 Introduction**
- 12.3 The Marxist-socialist argument**
- 12.4 Feminism in Russia**
- 12.5 Feminism in Czechoslovakia**
- 12.6 Feminism in Bulgaria**
- 12.7 Feminism in Yugoslavia**
- 12.8 Conclusion**
- 12.9 Summing Up**
- 12.10 Glossary**
- 12.11 Questions**
- 12.12 Further Reading**

12.1 Objective

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to :

- Examine the development of feminist ideas in socialist countries.
- Explore the differences between feminism in socialist and non-socialist worlds.
- Analyse how the political and economic contexts of socialist countries influenced their approach to feminism.

12.2 Introduction

The Marxist line of feminist theory and feminism in the socialist countries are related as Marxism forms the ideological basis of the political system of socialist states. Marxist-Socialist feminism believed that the 'women's question' is a by-product of capitalism and women face oppression due to the dual operation of capitalism and patriarchy. It considered capitalism as a more fundamental reason behind women's oppression and argued that with the overthrow of capitalism and establishment of a socialist society, equality between the sexes will be achieved. This

argument of classical Marxism was supported by many socialist feminists though some of them later questioned the primacy of class politics over sexual politics. If we study the condition of women in the socialist countries we will find that establishment of a socialist society was not a solution to the problems women faced. The disappointing progress made by women in socialist countries made it evident that socialism could not overthrow patriarchy. An overview of feminism in the socialist countries is crucial to understand the idea of feminism as a practice.

12.3 The Marxist-Socialist Argument

Classical Marxist theory has given primacy to class politics in society over divisions over sexual politics. Class divisions in a society are more fundamental than class divisions and class exploitation is deeper than sexual oppression. It recognized the importance of 'women's question' but considered it as a by-product of capitalism. This 'women's question' cannot be separated from social and economic life. Women face oppression in a capitalist society and with the abolition of capitalism they will be liberated from their subordination. Women's emancipation is a by-product of a social revolution that will overthrow capitalism and establish socialism. This position can be found in the ideas of thinkers like Frederick Engels, August Bebel and Clara Zetkin.

Engels, in his *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State*, explained the evolution of the family from the earliest savage society. He contested the claim that the evolution of family is natural and argued that in the primitive societies sexual relations were free and unregulated and relations between sexes were based on equality and not domination. Women had a superior status in society as descent was calculated in female line. This position of equality changed with development of private property. The overthrow of mother's right was viewed by him as the first historic defeat of women in society. With this, men took command in the home also degrading the women and making them live a life of servitude. With class society women lost their status and can regain it with the abolition of the class society only. The basis for equal relations between sexes evolves within the capitalist society as capitalism demands involvement of more women in the labour. Female paid employment was viewed by him as a progressive force but he recognized the exploitation of women in capitalist societies. Women's liberation, to Engels, is subject to two condition. The first condition is to bring the whole female sex back into public industry and the second condition was the social revolution that would overthrow capitalism and establish an economic system based on common ownership.

Bebel, a leader of the German Social Democratic Party has also been crucial in his ideas on feminism. His work *Women under Socialism* (1878) is regarded as an important document of the Marxist position on women. Like the classical Marxist position of Engels, Bebel also believed that women's liberation is subject to socialist revolution. Only in a socialist society, women can have full economic independence and freedom from domestic responsibilities as domestic work and child care would be collectivised. He gave full importance to role of women in socialism and argued that without active participation of women socialism cannot succeed. He focused on dual exploitation of women in capitalist societies as a labour earning less than men and as a person with the burden of domestic responsibilities. Bebel was the Marxist thinker who recognized the non-economic oppression of women like the norms of sexual morality that are different for women.

12.4 Feminism in Russia

The origin of feminist thinking in Russia, as says Valerie Bryson, was during nineteenth century. Feminist thinking originated in pre-socialist Tzarist Russia. It is said that the early feminism in Russia was influenced by feminist thinking in Western Europe. Russia had an extremely patriarchal society with its basis in the Orthodox Church. Men dominated every aspect of personal and public life. To give legal validity to existing patriarchal customary practices, in 1836 a Russian law code was passed by Tzar Nicholas I in which men were given full legal right to control their wives. Women were not allowed any separate civil identity and required permission of their husbands to work, study or travel. Marriage was considered as a career option and women were not given any right to initiate divorce proceedings. Norms of sexual morality were also stricter for women than men. From mid nineteenth century, middle class women in Russia were found demanding right to education, economic rights, right to vote and equal legal rights with men. These demands were raised as part of other broader demands for social reform. The left-wing organizations treated women's issues seriously and alongside demands for social reforms there were also radical women's movements during the late nineteenth in support of equal rights. These movements even used terrorist measures and women became actively involved in anti-Tsarist movement also. This involvement was so keen that the assassination of the Tzar Alexander II was orchestrated and led by a woman, Sofia Perovskaya, in 1881. She was executed and now known as Russia's first woman terrorist.

The Bolshevik Revolution took place in Russia in 1917 putting an end to Tzar regime. Inspired ideologically by Marxist ideas, the 'woman question' was a part of

the socialist question in the new regime established after 1917. Nedezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, was the first to apply Marxist ideas to address the women's question in post-Bolshevik revolution Russia. Following the classical Marxist tradition of thinking, she argued that women's participation in the workforce is progressive and women's liberation can only be achieved through class struggle. She published a pamphlet, *The Woman Worker*, where she highlighted the working condition of both working class and peasant Russian women. Her pamphlet was instrumental in making issues of legal and political rights of women a part of the party programme from 1903. Women's issues were not matters of political priority for Lenin but he also focused on the need to liberate women from the burden of everyday domestic responsibilities. He wanted to make use of technology and public provisions to liberate women from the drudgery of housework. Women have specific needs and problems and there should be separate organizations and methods to involve women in revolutionary politics. He established a separate women's department called *Zhenotdel* in 1919. It was the women's section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The *Zhenotdel* was entrusted with the responsibility of educating women in socialism and involving them in the revolutionary politics.

The *Zhenotdel* made significant contributions to organization-building and improving political participation of women during the period 1919-1923. It was based on the idea of involving women in their own emancipation and to achieve this goal it worked in close cooperation with the Commissionate of Health, Education and Labour, Social welfare and Internal affairs to address different aspects of Russian women's lives. Issues of motherhood, abortion, labour rights, prostitution, child care were addressed by the *Zhenotdel* members and they also published journals highlighting women's issues and women's pages in leading newspapers. It worked both at national as well as grassroots level and helped women get empowered through formation of self help groups of women. Alexandra Kollontai was in charge of the *Zhenotdel* for a brief period in the 1920s. After the establishment of the socialist state of Soviet Union, Kollontai became the Minister of Social Welfare. With her initiative, the socialist state ensured legal equality of women and guaranteed them reproductive rights by legalizing abortion. But the legalization of abortion was revoked later by Stalin in 1936 to increase birth rate for the purpose of fulfilling the demand for labour. Kollontai also influenced the ruling Communist Party to adopt policies on collective housework and childcare to relieve women from the burden of domestic responsibilities. Initially it was taken but soon withdrawn as other policy decisions took priority over women's liberation. When the New Economic Policy was introduced in 1921, Soviet Union faced disproportionate and rising female employment, budgets cuts for local

party committees resulting in liquidation of their women's sections and budgets cuts in social services like public child care and food preparation services that helped in making women free from the drudgery of domestic chores. Kollontai was removed from *Zhenotdel* and the ministry and sent on a diplomatic mission to Norway. With her exit, the issue of women's liberation took a back seat and the *Zhenotdel* focused more on low key issues. Finally, the *Zhenotdel* was abolished by Stalin in 1929 with the argument that the 'woman question' has been solved.

The initiatives for a gender-just society that characterized the early years of the socialist state of Soviet Union gradually declined from the 1920s. With Stalin's rise to power, women who were active politically earlier were gradually removed from important political positions. The Soviet authoritarian state considered the women question as a solved issue and focus was laid on women's role in family rather. There were campaigns to emphasize role of women in a family. The idea of women's liberation from the drudgery of housework, that was once a policy objective, was no longer given any importance. Women were expected to work for a job as well as in the home simultaneously. Women's agenda were only discussed in the context of their familial responsibilities. In the mid 1980s Mikhail Gorbachev introduced *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* and Soviet citizens were ensured of greater civil liberties. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1989 is often considered as the time for emergence of Russian feminism. With greater opportunities to speak and to be heard, women's organizations raised their voices. Demands were raised on domestic violence law, maternity and paternity leave, abortion rights and post-divorce custodial matters. Several women's groups became active in their protests. The Pussy Riot and the Femen are some of such organizations that operate in contemporary Russia. The Pussy Riot is a feminist punk rock group, which became famous for its protest through performance of a song in the Church of Christ the Saviour in Moscow. The Femen is a Ukraine-based women's group, which has protested sexual exploitation, corruption, homophobia and fascism.

12.5 Feminism in Czechoslovakia

Feminism in Czechoslovakia is often conceived as a development after the Velvet Revolution of 1989. Though the Czech history has a long tradition of women's activism that started much before the establishment of the socialist regime, the socialist republic of Czechoslovakia has no major instance of any feminist activism. The Czech land was once part of the Austro-Hungarian empire and there was a

movement for Czech national revival in the nineteenth century. In this movement women participated actively along with men. There was focus on education of women in their own language and their right to vote. In early twentieth century, when there were movements for civil and political rights of women in the Western world, there were no such activities in Czechoslovakia as Czech women have already achieved them. The first President of Czechoslovakia, Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, was an advocate of women's rights. Radical feminists argue that Masaryk's regime resisted the formation of woman's separate identity as there was no confrontation between men and women.

The socialist state that was established in 1948 gave no priority to women's issues. Feminism was considered as a silly Western import which women don't need. Women's participation in labour work force increased but their role in family also increased simultaneously. The equality between men and women was considered an important part of the political programme of the socialistic rebuilding of the Czech society but liberation of women was viewed as dependent upon the liberation of the working class. The Stalinist regime in Soviet Union stopped giving any special primacy to the idea of women's liberation. Influenced by the Stalinist regime of the Soviet Union, the socialist state of Czechoslovakia focused on the role of female labour force. But this participation didn't bring any change in their familial responsibilities. With the breakdown of the traditional family structure, collective responsibility of child rearing came to an end. Unlike Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia did not have any provision for state-supported collective child rearing. So the domestic burden on women increased but their share in economic activities also increased. There was also a rise in their level of education. But an independent collective feminist movement failed to develop in the socialist regime of Czechoslovakia as the communist state did not provide any opportunity to raise the question of rights. Feminism was considered as a 'bourgeois ideology' and as women were bound to participate in the workforce, the 'women's question' was perceived to be solved. With higher level of participation of women in workforce and a rise in their level of education, birth rates started declining. The Czech government placed restrictions on abortions affecting women's reproductive rights. From 1960s motherhood incentives were also introduced to increase birth rate. Women's role as natural mothers was valorised. The objective was not ensuring women's rights but induce them for reproduction. The Czechoslovak state-controlled Czechoslovak Women's Union (CSWU) was re-established in 1967. It worked to increase the length of maternity leave, increase welfare services to women and children and

ensure equal pay for men and women. The CSWU worked in cooperation with the popular women's magazine *Vlasta* to raise awareness on these issues. But both were controlled by the centralized Czechoslovak state. Feminist activities were there in socialist Czechoslovakia but they were shaped and controlled by the state. This state-controlled feminism was there in Czechoslovakia from 1948-1989, the period when Czechoslovakia was socialist. The Velvet Revolution of 1989 put an end to the socialist regime and established democratic rights. The women's movement was liberated from state control and acquired new dimensions.

12.6 Feminism in Bulgaria

Feminism in Bulgaria also has a similarity with Feminism in Czechoslovakia. It also had an official state-sponsored women's committee and most activities concerned with women's issues were framed and controlled by the committee on behalf of the socialist Bulgarian state. In 1968, the Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement (CBWM) was formed by the Bulgarian state to address issues concerned with women. The magazine *Zhenata Dnes* was the official state women's magazine and it was controlled by the CBWM. This magazine was the platform of communication between the Bulgarian women and the CBWM. The Bulgarian women were encouraged to share their views on domestic issues through the magazine. Since 1944, like Czechoslovakia, the participation of Bulgarian women in the workforce also increased. The economic dependence of women on men declined and their access to education increased. But at the same time like all other socialist states of the time their domestic responsibilities also increased and there was focus on women's dual role as workers and mothers. When the birth rate in Bulgaria started declining the CBWM was reorganized to make plans to increase birth rate without affecting women's participation in the labour force. The CBWM encouraged women for reproduction but advocated the concept of shared parenting rather than placing the burden of child rearing on women alone. The socialist state of Bulgaria countered the traditional patriarchal expectations of the Bulgarian society and encouraged men to share domestic responsibilities. The CBWM proposed expansion of state entitlements for mothers that included a new maternity leave policy with paid leave of two years for mothers and counting the time spent in motherhood as labour service in calculation of pension for women. The proposal also included child allowances for women with new born babies, creches at work place and provisions for meals at workplace so that women can carry them to home after work. Bulgaria was much ahead of all other socialist states in making provisions for women that can help them to participate in labour

force and reduce their burden of domestic responsibilities. Like Czechoslovakia, Feminism in Bulgaria was also state-controlled and state-sponsored. Women's issues were determined from above in the context of other broader issues.

12.7 Feminism in Yugoslavia

Yugoslavia had a history of feminist activism during the pre Second World War period when it did not have a socialist regime. When the socialist state came to power, like all other socialist states women's issues were considered dependent upon other broader issues. But feminist activism in Yugoslavia reappeared in 1970s and Yugoslavia is said to have one of the most vibrant feminist movement among the socialist states of that time. The Communist Party in Yugoslavia supported the role of women in the public life but the party was itself dominated by men. From 1970s different feminist groups started operating in different parts of Yugoslavia like Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana. They were active in discussing wide ranging issues like Christianity, patriarchy, family, gender and language. They were called the new Yugoslav feminists. The feminism which reappeared here had a new form and it reformulated the 'women's question'. It provided a critique of the model socialist-state sponsored women's emancipation which was the practice in other socialist states of East Europe. The new Yugoslav feminism provided a feminist critique of socialism. The socialist state guaranteed equality of women with men but the feminist movement questioned this equality in practice. This new Yugoslav feminism had a wide range of activities that include artwork, intellectual discussions, publications and direct political activism. On one hand, it tried to include its agenda in the official policies while on the other, it provided a critique of the socialist state. There were regular feminist conferences in Yugoslavia during the 1980s and help lines launched for abuse victims or victims of domestic violence. Initiatives were also taken to institutionalize feminist knowledge through introducing subjects like women's studies or gender studies in the university curriculum.

12.8 Conclusion

The experience of the socialist regimes suggests that the blooming feminist ideas was followed by a subordination of the woman question to the class struggle. The ushering in of socialism resulted standardisation in addressing the woman question.

Though the socialist governments were committed to emancipation but they seem to have different constraints in implementation particularly when women questions were concerned. However, at the same time what is highly neglected in most of the works on women of socialist regimes is the assumption that it was the government alone and not women who were active in doing anything for emancipation. Such an approach in a way undermines the positive role played by the women of the region in promoting sexual equality.

12.9 Summing Up

- In this unit we have studied the development of feminism in socialist countries. Classical Marxist theory has always given primacy to class politics over sexual politics. So, feminism was not a matter of interest in classical Marxist thought.
- Feminism has also taken different forms and character in different socialist countries. The socialist states of Russia, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria or Yugoslavia have witnessed feminist movements but the pattern has differed according to their specific context.

12.10 Glossary

Zhenotdel: A special woman's department that was established in USSR in 1919. It was the women's section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The Zhenotdel was entrusted with the responsibility of educating women in socialism and involving them in the revolutionary politics.

CBWM: CBWM is the Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement (CBWM) which was formed by the Bulgarian state to address issues concerned with women. It used the columns of a woman's magazine to communicate with the Bulgarian women. The Bulgarian women were encouraged to share their views on domestic issues through the magazine.

CSWU: The CSWU is the Czechoslovak state-controlled Czechoslovak Women's Union (CSWU) which was established in 1967. It worked to increase the length of maternity leave, increase welfare services to women and children and ensure equal pay for men and women. The CSWU worked in cooperation with the popular women's magazine *Vlasta* to raise awareness on these issues.

Pussy Riot: The Pussy Riot is a Russian feminist rock group famous for staging

feminist protests in different parts of contemporary Russia. The group is based in Moscow and it was established in 2011. The band is also called a protest band. They are famous for organizing performances in public places and voice their protests. They have raised issues like LGBT rights.

12.11 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. Give an outline of the development of Feminism in socialist countries.
2. Do you think that Feminism has not played a significant role in socialist states? Argue your case.
3. Explain the role of Feminism in the socialist states of Russia and Czechoslovakia.

Short Questions :

1. Explain the development of Feminism in Russia.
2. Trace the evolution of Feminism in Czechoslovakia.
3. Trace the evolution of Feminism in Bulgaria.
4. Explain the Marxist-socialist argument of Feminism.

Objective Questions :

1. What according to Engels are the primary conditions for women's liberation?
2. Which incident put an end to the socialist regime in Czechoslovakia?

12.12 Further Reading

1. Beasley Chris, *Gender and Sexuality: Critical Theories, Critical Thinkers*, Sage Publications, 2005.
2. <https://web.ics.purdue.edu/~msubrama/Carstens%20Feminism%20in%20Russia-%20Confronting%20a%20Gendered%20Regime%20Final.pdf>
3. <https://core.ac.uk/display/97679697>
4. <https://historum.com/threads/feminism-in-sfr-yugoslavia.178997/>

Unit-13 □ Islam and Feminism in West Asia

Structure

- 13.1 Objective**
- 13.2 Introduction**
- 13.3 Feminism in Saudi Arabia**
- 13.4 Feminism in Iran**
- 13.5 Feminism in UAE**
- 13.6 Feminism in Israel**
- 13.7 Conclusion**
- 13.8 Summing Up**
- 13.9 Glossary**
- 13.10 Probable Questions**
- 13.11 Further Reading**

13.1 Objective

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to :

- Understand the evolution of feminism in West Asia.
- Analyse the differences between feminism in West Asia and the West.
- Explore the cultural, social, and political factors influencing feminist movements in West Asia.
- Compare the approaches and priorities of feminist movements in West Asia with those in Western countries.

13.2 Introduction

Feminism in Islamic countries has not developed in uniform pattern. There have been diversities. When Western feminism made its foray into Islamic countries, many Muslims grappled with its colonial and secular undertones. Many of these countries

were on the way of gaining freedom from colonial powers and they were uncomfortable with the colonial connotation of Western feminism. The same uneasiness was also there for the ideal of secularism. As a response to this, feminism in Islamic countries took a dual mode. On one hand, there developed secular feminism, mostly practiced by upper class Muslim women while on the other hand, there developed a new variant called Islamic feminism. The term Islamic feminism was coined in the 1990s. Islamic feminism provides a challenge to Western secular feminism. On one hand, it challenges the Christian modality of Western secular feminism, on the other hand it tries to accommodate the demands of Muslim women with reference to Islam. Like all other non-western feminisms, Islamic feminism also tried to nuance feminism with specific religion and culture. It is often conceived as a reaction to the Western model. Islamic feminists have criticized the traditions and practices of Islam and not Islam itself. Their argument is that though religious texts of Islam were open for interpretation, women in Islam were never given the opportunity to interpret the holy text. They were always subjected to patriarchal interpretation of the text and faced discrimination. Subjugation of women was never a part of Islam and they came into being just as practices associated with the religion. Islamic feminism is based on this argument that core values of Islam have principles of equal rights for women but it is the way Islam is practiced that women get deprived of their rights. Islamic holy texts can thus, be reinterpreted and the feminine voice accommodated therein. The patriarchal bias of Islamic traditions is due to misinterpretation of Islamic holy texts. Islamic feminist writers like Fatima Mernissi, Margot Badran, Leila Ahmad, Asma Barlas and Amina Wadud believe that religious text is open for interpretation but women are never given the opportunity to interpret it and are always subjected to male interpretation, which is discriminatory. Islamic feminism can be found in different Islamic countries of the world. West Asia is the region which is predominantly Muslim and follows Islam as its religion. An overview of feminism in West Asia can help understand the position of feminism in the Islamic world. West Asia comprises of the states of United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Cyprus, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Israel, Yemen, Oman, Qatar and Syria.

13.3 Feminism in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a country in West Asia. It follows *Sharia* law supplemented by some secular codes. Islam is the official religion. Segregation of sexes is followed formally in public places and maintained by the religious police '*mutawa*'. All activities in public life are conducted in a way that restricts intermingling of unrelated

men and women. Feminist development in Saudi Arabia and demands for equal rights for women is a recent development that specifically initiated in the 1990s. The interest of the Western public, specifically in America, in Saudi women was mainly triggered by the 1991 Gulf War. As Saddam Hussein approached the Saudi border, the United States sent troops to Saudi Arabia to stop another invasion by Iraq. This was the formal start of the Gulf War which witnessed the largest deployments of female soldiers in American history. The experiences of military women were heavily documented in Western media. These women often reported the restrictions they have to face as compared to their male counterpart. Patriarchal bias of Saudi police was also reported. Feminist advocates and American feminists lobbied to change foreign policies by virtue of which America was patronizing countries that violate basic human rights. In these debates one thing was highlighted that Saudi women is lacking agency and they need the help of Western feminists to achieve equality. The advent of digital technology gave an impetus to women's rights based groups. Several women's rights based groups started developing in Saudi Arabia. Through the digital platform women got the opportunity to exchange their ideas. It is also often argued that with globalization women got opportunities for economic empowerment. There was expansion of work opportunities for women and women's participation in jobs started rising since 1990s. They were found opting careers in the public as well as the private sector. The number of women in workforce rose with most being employed in the field of education and government jobs. Many women took to entrepreneurship also. In the private sector also the areas of finance, manufacturing, retail and business services started having increasing representation of women. This economic empowerment of women had family support also. So, Saudi women were found making a balance between their traditional family roles and economic empowerment. Many Saudi women started expressing their agency through breaking dress code rules or other areas of discrimination while at the same time adhering to religious laws. Use of veil continued but it was made a fashion symbol with more decorations. Saudi women were found combining modern fashion with traditional practices. Feminist was not the preferred term and women activists from Saudi Arabia used the term womanist. They did not question Saudi culture or Islam and argued for alternative reading of religious texts. Space for protest and activism is limited in Saudi Arabia but within that restricted space women were found expressing their agency. Demands for equal rights were voiced in areas of driving and guardianship.

In 2011, Saudi Arabian activist Maran-al.Sharif, posted a video of her driving on youtube. Driving has been an activity which was prohibited for women in Saudi Arabia and this video became the symbol of discrimination women faced in Saudi

society. After the video went viral and used by Western media to depict the plight of women in Saudi Arabia, Maran-al Sharif was arrested. She got support from feminists all over the world, who highlighted women's prohibition to drive as an ultimate form of injustice to women. Subsequently, women's restrictions to driving were removed. Several other areas of discrimination also came into focus. There was a concept of male guardianship whereby women required male approval for certain activities. Women could be jailed for driving or inciting political dissent but require a male guardian to sign their prison release papers. They can vote but they have to be escorted by a male chauffeur in the car that drives them to the polling station. There is also the practice of wearing an *abaya* that women use to cover their body. Though there is no law that provides for using the *abaya* but Saudi women would use it in public places. Western feminists view these as symbols of oppression and some Saudi women prefer not to conform to these practices. But many Saudi women who are advocates of women's rights voluntarily don the *abaya* or don't object to be driven by male chauffeurs. Contrary to the Western secular version of feminism, they believe that the best way to further their rights is to act within the structure of Islamic law. A growing number of Saudi women are now found using their traditional attire but asserting their authorities at the work place, home or even in the corridors of the government.

13.4 Feminism in Iran

Like other countries of West Asia, in Iran Islamic law forms the basis of the constitution and treats man and woman unequally. Iran has a theocratic state which applies Islamic law to personal, social and political spheres. In 1979 the Pahlavi dynasty under Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi was overthrown in Iran and replaced by an Islamic republic under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The revolution was led by people representing diverse political and social groups ranging from leftists, nationalists, and Islamists to middle-class women and men and the working class. During the movement, the cleric faction following Khomeini's lead became powerful and casted out other groups. It is often argued that Iran had two revolutions: a populist revolution and an Islamic one. The leftists and liberals were part of the populist revolution that led to the overthrow of the monarchy and gave rise to a republic. However, due to the lack of cohesion and organization, they were marginalized by the Islamic one, and a theocratic state was established in Iran. During the following years, the new regime crushed most of its opponents inside the country. The Islamic Republic of Iran under the leadership of Khomeini approved a new theocratic-

republican constitution that applied Islamic law to personal, social, and political areas and made the provision of veil mandatory for women. These changes weakened the position of women and decreased their legal status. The Family Protection Laws, which restricted polygamy and raised the marriage age for women passed under the previous regime, was abrogated. Women were banned from occupying public office. All public spaces were segregated on the basis of sex. The practice of veil or *hijab* was made legally mandatory and not following it a punishable offence under Islamic Punishment Law of Iran. Before Khomeini's regime, the Iranian women have achieved certain degrees of gender equality in terms of right to vote, right to have custody of children, right to have maintenance after divorce and right to move to court. Polygamy was also banned in Iran in 1976. But under Khomeini's regime all these provisions were abrogated and women were driven back to the sphere of domesticity.

Iranian women continued their fight for equality and it became more prominent after the election of President Khatami in 1997, who had women as a major group of supporters. Although under Khatami's rule there were changes in many discriminatory measures but Khatami was not able to remove the influence of the conservative clerical establishment of Iran and his measures were restricted. In spite of those women were able to make achievements in the field of education and their representation in universities improved. They were also given scholarships to study abroad. In 2002, Women's Studies as an academic discipline were introduced in many universities of Iran. But in 2012, Iran's Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution changed the name of the discipline to 'Family Studies and Women's Rights in Islam' and subsequently it was removed from the curriculum of different universities.

Feminists in Iran belong to both the schools of secular feminists and Islamic feminists. One of the first scholars who started discussing the women's movement in Iran in terms of Islamic feminism is Afsaneh Najmabadi. In her famous essay '*Feminism in an Islamic Republic: Years of Hardship, Years of Growth*', Najmabadi considers Islamic feminism as an opportunity for dialogue and debate between Islamic and secular feminists. Though as per Iranian law, women are not equal to men in legal and social status, Najmabadi sees "an incredible flourishing of women's intellectual and cultural productions" in Iran. She highlighted Iranian women's active presence in the diverse fields of artistic, educational, industrial, social, and athletic activities. Although most secular feminists believe that Iranian women have gained these successes despite the Islamic Republic and against Islam as the dominant discourse in the society, Najmabadi does not consider it as a valid explanation for the achievements

of Iranian women. After the revolution of Iran, the task of confronting the apparent misogyny of Islam fell on the women who supported the Islamic Republic. This gave rise to efforts to rethink gender and women's status in Islam. As a result, many women's organizations and institutions were formed which focused on reinterpretation of Islam. Many journals also came out representing women's views. *Zanan* was one such journal that represented voices in support of reform. It was founded by Shahla Sherkat in 1992. Sherkat believed that gender equality is Islamic and the religious texts have been misinterpreted by the misogynists. Ziba-Mir-Hosseini is another Iranian woman, who focused her research on status of women in Iran after the revolution. She argued that women's participation in public and politics increased after the revolution as the enforcement of *hijab* in public space by women appear morally correct to the traditionalist society and thereby gave legitimacy to women's involvement in public life. Mir-Hosseini has been a strong Iranian voice of Islamic feminism.

One of the problematic laws of Iran is the law on custody which makes a distinction between guardianship and fostering. Guardianship of the child is considered as the natural and automatic right of the father and in his absence the paternal grandfather. And fostering or caring for the children is considered as the natural right of mothers. Mothers do the caring work while the important decisions of guardianship like finance, marriage etc are managed by the fathers. Fathers and paternal grandfathers, on their death, can leave this duty to others. This law has been opposed by the feminists. There have been other discriminatory laws like the law of using compulsory veil or the law that prohibits women from holding position of judges in the judiciary, who can make judgements. Women are allowed only in the lower rungs of the judiciary, where they cannot pass a verdict. Islamic feminists in Iran are often criticized for not demanding formal equality of sexes in these spheres.

13.5 Feminism in UAE

United Arab Emirates is not a democracy. It is a union of several monarchies. Traditionally women are considered the backbone of family life and society and an important part of the country's Islamic heritage and national culture. In the United Arab Emirates, women enjoy the same constitutional rights as men. Under the Constitution, women enjoy the same rights as men regarding access to education, healthcare and social welfare. They also have equal rights to employment. As per the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, 2018, the UAE ranks 121

among all the countries with respect to gender balance and this position is higher than other countries of the region like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon, Jordan, Oman or Qatar. Of the four indices of gender inequality, UAE scores most in terms of political empowerment of women. In the field of political empowerment of women, UAE ranks 68, which is higher even than the USA. To improve her gender balance, in 2015, the UAE formed a Gender Balance Council to make women equal partners in nation building. The establishment of the UAE Gender Balance Council aimed at reducing gender gap in all sectors, public as well as private. It also aims at achieving gender balance in centres of decision-making and strengthening the position of the UAE in the Global Competitiveness reports in the area of gender gap at workplace. According to government figures, while the literacy rate of both women and men in the UAE is close to 95%, participation of women in secondary education and university enrolment is higher than men. In September 2014, the UAE opened the region's first military college for women. The state-of-the-art military college provides world-class training, physical fitness sessions and leadership development. Women in the UAE participate actively in the private sector also. They have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws. The UAE had the highest number of women on Forbes' 100 most powerful Arab business women with 19 Emirati women on the list. Women business-owners account for 10% of the total private sector in the UAE. There are several active women's organizations in the UA Eliekei the General Women's Union (GWU), Family Development Foundation and the Dubai Women's Establishment. The GWU was established in 1975 by HH Sheikha Fatima Bin Mubarak. The GWU has been a key player in the government's strategy to provide a supportive environment for women. It was established to bring together all the existing women's societies under one umbrella. Since its formation, the government-funded GWU has been instrumental in organizing literacy programmes, vocational training, job placement services and family mediation services for women. It helped women to organize small businesses and become economically independent. It also made suggestions for new laws and amendments in existing laws that would benefit women.

13.6 Feminism in Israel

Feminism in Israel can be said to be having three phases. The first wave started in the pre-statehood Yishuv period when women demanded inclusion in the public sphere on equal terms with men. The women wanted to preserve their distinctive

identity as women and gain civic equality with men. This feminist movement was very popular during the first two decades of the twentieth century when there was a movement in the region demanding the right to vote in the Yishuv institutions. Israeli women believed that suffrage could ensure them equality in other spheres. The second wave of feminism in Israel initiated during the 1970s when women's status became a crucial part of the social and national agenda of Israel. In the 1960s the second wave of feminism was very popular in the Western world but Israel remains largely unaffected by this Western wave. Distinct from the West, Israel had its own second wave of feminism. In 1970, Shulamit Aloni, the founder of Citizen's Rights movement returned to Israel. She was the first to ask 'Does Israel need a women's right movement?' In 1972, the first radical women's movement was initiated in Israel and this period was marked as the second phase of feminism in Israel. As a part of the movement a society was established, called 'Women for a Renewed Society'. The appointment of Golda Meir as Prime Minister in 1969 and the economic boom that followed the 1967 war paved the way for entry of more Israeli women into the labour market. It helped expose the myth of equality in Israeli society. Women realized that they were mostly channelized into feminine occupations and were just secondary players in the workforce. They were also absent from the decision-making level of the economic, social and political spheres. The Yom Kippur War of 1973 constituted a watershed in the feminist movement of Israel. The three weeks of hostilities of the war revealed the full intensity of the gendered role division that existed between men and women and the marginality of women in the public sphere. Women were excluded from the military leadership, the civilian administration, and war production. Many women reported a feeling of helplessness during the war. However, the feelings of anger and frustration were soon channelled into areas of activity that are considered legitimate for women. These activities include concern for the soldiers, caring for the wounded, the widows, and the orphans. Women cooked and knitted for the men at the front, inundated the hospitals that cared for the wounded, and of course looked after family members who remained at home. The longer the hostilities persisted, the greater became the number of caring and integration roles were performed by women. The importance of the potential of women in times of crisis was felt. The waste of human capital in a gender-stratified society was felt.

The first body to react to the situation was the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). The process of self-criticism carried out by the military high command after the war, combined with the need to strengthen combat units and the increasing use of advanced technologies, led the army to reassess its policy toward women. The adoption of the new technologies, whose operation required trained and high-quality

personnel, opened many new military fields to women and afforded them new opportunities. Women's functions in the military became more diverse, a trend that has continued ever since. From the late seventies, feminist organizing in Israel intensified. It has diverse features and comprises different forms of social-feminist endeavours like feminist writing, translations of leading international feminist articles, local texts, and a feminist journal, *Noga*. Shelters for battered women and rape crisis centres have been established. Various mutual support groups were set up by women. A women's party was founded in 1977; though it did not attain the minimum percentage of votes required, it was clearly another milestone in the feminist fight. Alongside the radical feminist organizations, the Israel Women's Network was established in 1984 which worked in close cooperation with the policy-makers. In 1992, the government established a Committee on the Status of Women which became a statutory committee in 1996.

Since the last decade of the twentieth century there has been an outburst of voices of secular as well as religious women, which is often termed as the third phase of feminism. Mizrahi women, Palestinian women living in Israel, lesbians, single mothers, mothers of soldiers, women in black, women in green, and women with political views ranging from right to left became voices of women in the public-political discourse. Everyone raised her voice in her own way. Feminist movement in Israel has grown more diverse preventing the formation of any uniform female identity.

13.7 Conclusion

For long, the possibilities for combining Islam and feminist movements were regarded as inconsistent and incoherent through the lens of western epistemology. In an age of multiculturalism, when diversities and differences in culture had received special acknowledgment within a dominant political culture, stereotyping the usage of veil as a symptom of oppression for muslim women has resulted in severe complications over the issue. Again on the question of women's liberty to make their own choices of political and social rights, the fear psyche of Taliban rule in Afghanistan for the second time, has asserted the existence of a strong patriarchal religions culture within Islamic society. However, Islamic culture cannot be used in an uniform manner since its variations is evident and noticed in different Islamic states. What is worth here to note, is that, if interpretations on Islam needs to be reshaped to meet the changing demands of women over time then's it is equally important to review the Islamic feminism independent of existing western biases and its deep ingrained cultural variations need to be reconsidered.

13.8 Summing Up

- Feminism in West Asia has a character which is distinct from feminism in the West.
- Within West Asia there are distinct diversities. We have discussed feminism as it developed in some states of West Asia. Feminism has not always been the preferred term in the region and in many states women are found opting for empowerment along with maintaining their traditional and religious customs and duties.
- Islamic feminism is mostly used to describe the development of the region with again, Israel being an exception.
- Intersectionality is the best way to describe feminism in West Asia where the identity of a woman intersects with her other identities to form a distinctive character.

13.9 Glossary

- **Islamic World**—Commonly known as ‘Ummah’ it usually refers to the Islamic community which consists of all states that adheres to the religion of Islam.
- **Sharia**—Islamic law based on the teachings of the Koran which prescribes the sacred duties and even penalties for law breaking.
- **Mutawa**—It refers to the religious police in Saudi Arabia whose duty is to ensure obedience to the established codes of conduct.
- **Polygamy**—The custom of being married to more than one person at the same time.

13.10 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. Discuss the diverse character of feminism in West-Asia.
2. Do you think feminism in West Asia has a different character than feminism in the West? Argue your case.

Short Questions :

1. Explain the idea of feminism as it developed in Saudi Arabia.
2. Analyse the idea of feminism as it developed in Iran
3. Do you think feminism in West Asia is abided by the Islamic law? Argue your case.

Objective Questions :

1. What does Mutawa refer to?
2. What is the specificity of Islamic Feminism?

13.11 Further Reading

1. Al-Dabbagh, May. "Saudi Arabian Women and Group Activism." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 11, no. 2 (2015): 235-237.
2. Badran, Margot. *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences*. London: One World Publications, 2013.
3. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf
4. <https://www.uae-embassy.org/about-uae/women-uae>
5. <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/feminism-in-contemporary-israel>

Unit-14 □ Social Reform Movements and the Women's Question in Colonial India

Structure

- 14.1 Objective**
- 14.2 Introduction**
- 14.3 Abolition of *Sati***
- 14.4 Education for Women**
- 14.5 Widow Remarriage**
- 14.6 The New Woman**
- 14.7 Conclusion**
- 14.8 Summing Up**
- 14.9 Glossary**
- 14.10 Questions**
- 14.11 Further Reading**

14.1 Objective

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to :

- Study how the social reform movement in colonial India addressed women's issues.
- Analyse the role of the social reform movement in improving the social conditions of women in India.
- Examine key social reformers and their contributions to women's rights during the colonial period.
- Understand the impact of colonial-era social reforms on the status and empowerment of women in India.

14.2 Introduction

In colonial India the ‘woman question’ acquired a central importance during the nineteenth century. The question was not ‘what do women want?’ rather it was on ‘how to modernize them?’. The social reform movements that started taking shape in early nineteenth century India gave primary importance to women’s issues like education, widow remarriage and discriminatory social practices like the child marriage and *Sati*. Influenced by the Enlightenment ideas and the liberal ideas of the West, the West-educated Indian intelligentsia led the social reform movement in India and the major focus of this movement was the uplift of women and ensuring them equal opportunities in different spheres of life. So the women’s issues acquired a position of importance in the social reform measures of the nineteenth and early twentieth century India. The experience of the colonial rule is considered as having a formative influence on the feminist movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth century India. The nineteenth century was a period when justices and injustices done to women became major issues and there were organized movements to alleviate the conditions in which Indian women were living. An interesting feature of the social reform movements of the early nineteenth century was that the attempts to bring changes in the lives and status of women were mostly led by men. Women were the subject and they did not have agency. By the late nineteenth century women started joining the movement as wives, sisters and daughters of the male protagonists or as women affected by the reform measures. By early twentieth century, autonomous women’s organizations were formed and women’s movement in India acquired an activist role. The male reformers played an important role in upholding and advocating ‘woman question’. In Bengal there Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar championed the cause of female education and led the campaign to legalize widow remarriage. Raja Rammohan Roy, a pioneer of the Brahmo Samaj was active for abolishing *Sati*. Keshav Chandra Sen, another leader of the Brahmo Samaj, sought to bring women into new roles through education. Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the pioneer of Arya Samaj, advocated for female education and condemned discriminatory practices like dowry and polygyny. Among Muslims, Kwaja Altaf Hussain Ali, Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah, Syed Ahmed Khan, Shakhawat Hossain supported the cause of educating women.

14.3 Abolition of *Sati*

The nineteenth century has been defined as ‘an age of women’ by Radha Kumar. It is called an age of women all over the world because in this period the rights of women, the wrongs done to them, their capacities as well as their potentials became subjects of discussions. In Europe feminist consciousness started becoming popular

during the French Revolution and by the end of the eighteenth century it has spread its wings to Russia also. In all these states, the 'woman question' became an important issue. In India, the injustices done to the women became subject of interest to the social reformers of the nineteenth century. The social reform movements of this period was mainly in Bengal and Maharashtra and the 'woman's question' also became a crucial issue in these states. As parts of demands for social reforms, there were campaigns against caste, polytheism, idolatory, *purdah*, child marriage, and *sati*. They were considered as reflections of pre-modern identity, which needs to be reformed for the establishment of a modern civilized society based on egalitarian principles.

The social reform movements of this period were not uniform as different campaigns were there at different points of time and different issues were addressed. Some of these campaigns and some of these issues focused on women. The introduction and spread of British education in India created an Indian intelligentsia who were dedicated to the principles of liberty and equality. Rationalism, evolutionism and utilitarianism were ideas that were very popular in nineteenth century Britain. Influenced by these ideas, the Indian intelligentsia initiated campaigns in support of certain social reform measures in Indian society. Bengal and specifically Calcutta became an intellectual centre and there started a process which was called the Bengal Renaissance. In this period there started the Young Bengal Movement. Under the Young Bengal Movement, different groups were formed who concentrated mainly on defying caste hierarchies by encouraging and participating in practices like eating meat, drinking wine or attempting to reform women.

Several issues and campaigns concerning women were raised during the early nineteenth century. Of these various issues, two of the earliest issues were introduced by the same group of people. The importance of educating women and the abolition of *Sati* were these issues. The importance of educating women was first discussed publicly in Bengal by the *Atmiya Sabha*. The *Atmiya Sabha* was founded by Raja Rammohan Roy in 1815. In the same year he wrote the first text in which he attacked the practice of *Sati*. The campaign for abolition of *Sati* got support of the colonial government instantly and law was enacted soon in this regard. The movement for women's education continued for a long time with many Indians participating in it over the period. Rammohan Roy is regarded one of the first Indians who campaigned actively in favour of abolition of *Sati*. But British missionaries and the colonial government have from the late eighteenth century cited it as a practice reflecting Hindu barbarism and as a reason that justifies the British rule as a civilizing mission. In spite of depicting it as a barbaric practice the British Parliament was initially reluctant to pass legislation in this regard. The issue even became an issue of

contention among the British politicians with the conservatives supporting non-interference and the liberals campaigning for legislative action. The Liberals were divided into the Radicals and the Evangelists with the latter interested in the construction of a cruel and barbaric native in need of the civilizing mission of the Christian evangelists. The Liberals wanted support from the community that was practicing *Sati* and with Roy and others initiating the campaign; they got the support they were asking for. In 1817, Mrityunjaya Vidyalamkara, the Chief Pundit of the Supreme Court announced that *Sati* has no *shastric* sanction. In 1818, the provincial governor of Bengal, William Bentinck, prohibited *Sati* in his province. The abolition of *Sati* act was finally passed in 1829, when William Bentinck became the Governor General of India. There were protests from the Hindu orthodoxy and in 1830 orthodox Hindus in Calcutta formed the Dharma Sabha to campaign against the act.

By the end of the nineteenth century a strong reformist ideology emerged. The position of women in this ideology was retained throughout the twentieth century. Indian women were conceived to be in misery. This view of pity towards Indian women became a major component of the Western critique of Indian society. Humanitarianism was considered as the basis of social reforms. Influenced and inspired by the Western ideas, many reformers like Raja Ramnohan Roy, Pandit Vidyasagarr and Swami Dayananda Saraswati wanted India to recover from her dark age and revive the golden age. Social reform measures were considered as being in harmony with natural law and reason. Customs like child marriage and polygyny were considered as not being in harmony with nature and nor regarded as rational.

There is a body of scholarship which argue that the colonial power influenced anti-abolition movement and might have created a myth of an existing practice of *Sati*, which did not exist in reality. Doubts were cast in the numbers of *Sati*. It was also argued that it is strange that most of the *Satis* were reported from Bengal with Ashis Nandy calling it the Bengali ‘epidemic’ of *Sati*. Scholars like Anand Yang has pointed out that a considerable proportion of *Satis* recorded in early nineteenth century Bengal were of women who killed themselves years after their husbands have died and it may be due to other reasons rather than the cause of *Sati*.

14.4 Education for Women

The movement for women’s education was another part of the social reform movement of early nineteenth century. The first school for girls was started by the English American missionaries in the 1810s. In 1819, a text on women’s education was written by Gourmahan Vidhyalankar and published by the Female Juvenile Society in Calcutta in 1819. Several other schools were opened in the vicinities of

Calcutta in the next decade. By 1827, many girls schools were opened by the missionaries in the Hooghly district. The Ladies Society for Native Female Education also opened schools for women. By the mid nineteenth century, women's education became an issue that was campaigned by the members of the Brahmo Samaj and even Muslim women got enthusiastic in getting education. Hindu and Brahmo schools for girls were opened. Radha Kumar argues that while poor women attended schools opened by the missionaries, women from upper castes attended the schools by Hindus and Brahmos. Campaign for adult education for women or offering services of education to women at home for those who cannot attend schools gathered momentum. This was called home education and the endeavour was started by the missionaries, it was soon followed by the Brahmos. Special curriculum were adopted for this practice of home education. Bethune school was opened in Calcutta in 1849 and in 1882 the Indian Education Commission (Hunter Commission) was constituted to assess the progress of education in India. In the interim period several efforts were made to develop primary school for girls and teacher-training institutions. But higher education for women and co-educational institutions, argues Geraldine Forbes, were still debatable issues. Hunter Commission report pointed out that 98 percent of school age girls were still not in school and recommended more grants for opening schools for girls than for boys. In the next two decades of the nineteenth century, higher education for women expanded rapidly. So, while in 1881-82 there were only six women in the Indian universities, by the end nineteenth century this figure went upto 264. Secondary school enrolment of girls also increased significantly from 2054 to 41,582.

Geraldine Forbes argues that the story of women's education in India following the Hunter Commission till the end of the nineteenth century can be best told through the work of three great educationists-Pandita Ramabai, Mataji Tapaswini and D.K Karye. Pandita Ramabai was part of the social reform movement. She started the Sharada Sadan in Bombay and Poona. She was a pioneer in women's education and a champion of women's rights. She worked with the Arya Mahila Samaj to educate women and focused on the need to have more women doctors and teachers. In 1889, after receiving education from England, USA and Canada, she started the Sharada Sadan, a school for widows. In the Sharada Sadan, all the caste rules of Brahmins were observed, which attracted high caste Hindu widows to the school. Though Pandita Ramabai was later accused of converting widows to Christianity in her school, she was successful in bringing changes in the lives of Hindu widows of Maharashtra. She herself was a Christian and she denounced the caste practices of Hindus. In 1897, she started a second school called Mukti in a place called Kedgaon near Poona. There was a famine in Maharashtra during that period and women and

child victims of the famine sought refuge in Sharada Sadan. To accommodate the larger number of inmates in Sharada Sadan she started the second school at Kedgaon. This school accommodated 2000 women and children. It provided industrial training to the inmates. Ramabai designed a unique educational programme to suit the needs of the inmates. Literature, physiology, botany, printing, carpentry, masonry, tailoring, wood-cutting and weaving all became parts of the curriculum. Funding for her Mukti came from an American organization.

Mataji Tapaswini's contribution to women's education was different from that of Pandita Ramabai. She founded the Mahakali Pathsala of Calcutta in 1893 and was considered as an Indian attempt of making provision for women's education. The school had many branches which imparted education to women on what was later called 'the nationalist line'. These schools had no foreign assistance or foreign teachers and they did not advocate the idea of co-educational institutions or common curricula for boys and girls. Their objective was to educate Indian girls on national lines and regenerate the Hindu society. Mataji Tapaswini wanted to introduce female education keeping harmony with Hindu religious and moral principles. To her, education for women should be based on a syllabus that included sacred literature and history, myths and legends that spoke of duties of mother, daughter, wife and sister. Education should enable women to be better members of the Hindu society. Though the people associated with Mahakali Pathsala had differences with the liberal reformers, they too believed in the importance of female education.

D.K. Karve was known for starting schools for widows in Poona in the 1890s. He was associated with the social reform movement of this period and founded the first school for widows in 1896 in Poona. He viewed education as a medium of empowering widows and making them self-sufficient. He also designed a curriculum for his school which could make the widows employable and self-sufficient. Apart from widows, he also started a school for unmarried girls. The curriculum for unmarried girls was different. While the objective of widow's education was employability, the objective of education for unmarried girls was to train them to be good wives, mothers and neighbours. Karve was not an advocate of widow remarriage; rather he supported economic independence of women. In 1916, Karve started Women's University. This university was later adopted by Sir Vithaldas Thackersey and renamed after his mother as Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University or the SNDT University.

Another crucial effort of women's education was made in the early twentieth century by Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain. She was the pioneer of education for Muslim women in India. She started a school for Muslim girls in 1909 in Bhagalpur

district of Bihar. Later she closed this school and opened the Sakhawat Memorial School in Calcutta in 1911. Supported by her husband, Syed Sakhawat Hossain, Begum Rokeya got education in Urdu and English and published articles, short stories and novels at a very young age. She believed that neglecting female education would ultimately threaten Islamic culture. She wanted to make women conscious of their oppression and conceived education as a means of doing that. The schools started by Begum Rokeya maintained provisions for *purdah* and female seclusion. Arrangements were made to transport girls to and from the school in carriages with curtains and students were allowed to cover their head inside the school. In the curriculum that was taught in Begum Rokeya's school practical subjects like handicrafts, home science and gardening were included. There were also provisions for physical training for girls in the school.

Radha Kumar has pointed out that by the end of the nineteenth century, several strands were visible in the social reform movement that differ on why women should be educated and what their education should comprise of. On one hand, there were demands for education in English language where reformers wanted English behaviour and manners for the women. Bombay Parsi Framji Bomanji was very vocal about English education for women. Keshav Chandra Sen preferred Bengali literature and Brahmo religious instructions in the curriculum for girls of his schools and home education groups. His schools taught cooking, sewing and nursing to the girls. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar did not favour religious instruction but wanted Sanskrit and Bengali in the curricula of his schools for women. Syed Ahmed Khan, a pioneer of Muslim social reform movement, wanted home education for Muslim women and was strictly against any sort of anglicisation of Muslim girls through English education. Dayananda Saraswati and his Arya Samaj held both Hinduism and Islam responsible for degradation of women in India and wanted education for girls in secular lines. He differed from many of his contemporaries on the view that women should be educated so that they can be better mothers and wives. To him, women's education should be a path to virtue. Education following the Vedic texts was also advocated by the Tattavabodhini Sabha formed by Rabindranath Tagore in 1839. The Sabha preferred reading of the Upanishads over any other religious texts.

14.5 Widow Remarriage

The deplorable condition of Hindu widows led the reformers work on reforming on discriminatory Hindu customs and resist the degradation of women. There have been diverse responses from the social reform movement on the question of condition of widows. Vidyasagar wrote a tract supporting widow remarriage in 1855 in which

he claimed that this practice was permissible in *Kaliyug*. He was supported by many as well as opposed by many and even subjected to abuse and insult. He urged the British to legislate on the matter and also collected signatures in support of his appeal. Finally, the colonial government passed the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act in 1856. Despite effort by Vidyasagar and legislation by the government, widow remarriage was not approved by the larger society. In the 1890s it was reported that even forty years after the act, the number of widow remarriages in India was barely five hundred. Widows were forced to relinquish their jewellery and food habit. Young widows were often victim of lust of men and many of them landed in brothels. In 1869, a report was published in the *Amrita Bazaar Patrika*, which claimed that ninety percent of Calcutta's prostitutes were widows of whom a large number were from upper caste Hindu families. Remarriage was also used as an excuse to deprive them of their rightful share of inheritance. Another reformer who fought for widow remarriage was Kandukuri Virasalingam Pantulu. As a member of Brahmo Samaj and Prarthana Samaj he supported the idea of purifying religion by eliminating inhuman customs. He made widow remarriage and female education the key points of his programme for social change. The widow remarriage campaign led by Virasalingam brought the Western-educated Telugu people into social reform activities.

14.6 The New Woman

The social reform movement of the nineteenth century changed the way Indian women were living. By the end of the nineteenth century there emerged a group of women who were educated, liberated and mobile. They were not merely good wives and mothers but were actively visible in public life. These were the 'new women' of the nineteenth century who benefitted from the 'woman question' of social reform movements. They were educated, either at home or in schools. There were women who were married at a later age or women who continued their education after marriage. They also started experiencing increased opportunities to express their individuality. Women developed a voice of their own and started reading, writing and publishing on a regular basis. Pandita Ramabai, Begum Rokeya or Sarala Devi Caudhurani were examples of this breed of new women.

14.7 Conclusion

Social reform is not meant the same way as it did in the West. In the West social reform primarily meant a reorganisation of the entire structure of society with a view

to improve the conditions of the under privileged. In India, social reforms was more an infusion into the existing social structure of newer ways of life and behaviour. So social change in India was gradual and was mostly initiated by the upper class. However, social reform movement in India was not an isolated phenomenon. It had much wider national and political implications. It provided a strong impetus to nationalism in India though its practical appeal remained confined to urban population in India.

14.8 Summing Up

- The social reform movement of the nineteenth century encompassed the ‘woman question’ and played a crucial role in changing the lives of women. As part of the reform movement there were efforts to reform Hindu customs and practices that discriminated or degraded women and also initiatives to make women educated and in some instances, economically independent.
- Abolition of *Sati*, education for women and widow remarriage were the prominent issues that became part of the ‘woman question’. Apart from these issues there were also issues of rehabilitating prostitutes, child marriage and debate over the age of consent.
- The pioneers of the social reform movement fought for justice for women through legal measures.
- The ‘woman question’ was relegated to the spiritual sphere by the nationalists in the twentieth century. The new and reformed women who emerged from the nineteenth century moved forward to set up their own organizations.

14.9 Glossary

Sati: *Sati* or *Suttee* is the act or custom whereby a Hindu widow burned herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. The act was supposed to be voluntary. It was considered a prevalent practice of among upper caste Hindus against which the reformers as well as the British voiced their views. Though a body of scholarship expresses doubt on the frequency of occurrence of *sati* and considers the figure as a myth created by the colonial powers to justify their missionary zeal.

Brahmo Samaj: The Brahmo Samaj is a monotheistic reform movement of the Hindu religion, which stood against orthodox customs and believed in the existence of a single god. The phrase means a society of worshippers of one true God. The

movement was started in 1828 by Raja Rammohun Roy and his friends by opening a place for worship at Chitpore, Calcutta. Prior to that in 1815, he has started a society of friends called Atmiya Sabha for discussion of religious truth and translation of Sanskrit monotheistic treatises. The movement gained momentum when Keshav Chandra Sen joined in 1857.

Arya Samaj: The Arya Samaj was a reform movement within Hinduism. It was started in 1875 at Bombay by Swami Dayananda Saraswati. The objective was regeneration of the Vedic texts and based on those initiate programmes of social reform. The Samaj was against caste practices, child marriage and idolatry. It worked for female education as a part of social reform measures.

Tattwabodhini Patrika: The Tattwabodhini Patrika was a journal of the Tattwabodhini Sabha. The Tattwabodhini Sabha was a splinter group of the Brahmo Samaj, established by Maharshi Debendranath Tagore in 1839. In 1843, it started a journal called the Tattwabodhini Patrika.

14.10 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. Analyse the 'woman question' in the social reform movement of colonial India.
2. Do you think the social reform movement of colonial India adequately addressed the 'woman question'? Give arguments in support of your answer.
3. Analyse the contribution of the social reform movement in abolishing *sati*.

Short Questions :

1. Write a short note on any pioneer of women's education in India.
2. Do you think the 'woman question' was part of the social reform movement of the nineteenth century? Argue your case.
3. Examine how education of women was emphasized by the reformers.

Objective Questions :

1. What are the issues concerning women raised during the early 19th century social reform movement?
2. Who was the pioneer of Muslim social reform movement in India?

14.11 Further Reading

1. Kumar Radha, *The History of Doing*, Zubaan, New Delhi, 2007.
2. Forbes Geraldine, *Women in Modern India*, Cambridge University Press, 2007.
3. Khullar Mala (ed.), *Writing the Women's Movement: A Reader*, Zubaan, 2005.

Unit-15 □ Women's Movement in Post-Independent India

Structure

- 15.1 Objective**
- 15.2 Introduction**
- 15.3 Women's Movement in post-independent India: 1950s and 1960s**
- 15.4 Women's Movement in post-independent India: 1970s onwards**
- 15.5 Women's Movement of the Nineties**
- 15.6 Conclusion**
- 15.7 Summing Up**
- 15.8 Glossary**
- 15.9 Probable Questions**
- 15.10 Further Reading**

15.1 Objective

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to :

- Understand the changing issues and concerns of the women's movement in post-independent India.
- Analyse the role of women's organizations working for the emancipation of women in India.
- Explore the complexities and debates within the women's movement in the post-independence era.
- Examine the evolving strategies and goals of the women's movement in response to societal, political, and economic changes in India.

15.2 Introduction

The idea of feminism is said to have originated in the West with the liberal feminists asserting their demands on the suffrage issue and the issue of women's education. Since then it has traversed a long way with significant changes in its

issues and concerns. Today it is better to say ‘feminisms’ rather than feminism. Now if we focus on India, we can find here women’s activism and awareness of women’s issues intensified since the nineteenth century simultaneously with the development of liberal feminist ideas in the West. Though initially inspired by the liberal school of thought, women’s movement in India has never blindly followed the footprints of its Western counterpart. Rather it has developed a dynamic and distinct character of its own according to the local socio-political, socio-economic and cultural condition. A brief overview of the trajectory of the movement would show how it has been responsive to the broader issues. The history of women’s movement in India is said to have passed through different phases or ‘waves’. The first phase began in the early nineteenth century as a part of the social reform movements and continued till the first half of the twentieth century. Radha Kumar held the view that from the early nineteenth century there arose the issue of deplorable condition of Indian women and the need to change them through reform. By the early twentieth century the emphasis shifted to stressing on women’s rights to be treated as useful members of society and by the late twentieth century the emphasis further shifted to the demand that women should have the power to decide their own lives. The first phase of the women’s movement witnessed campaigns for social reform and the issues related to women were addressed within the broader agenda for social change. The early nineteenth century social reform movements, supported by the colonial government addressed the ‘woman’s question’. The main argument was that women’s difference from men does not justify the suffering and subjection of the former and their condition needs to be reformed through legal and social changes. This period witnessed some significant legal reforms like abolition of *sati* and provision for widow remarriage. There were also strong campaigns supporting women’s education. The early twentieth century was the phase when women’s activism took a concrete shape and several women’s organizations were formed like the *Bharat Stri Mahamandal*, Women’s Indian Association and the All India Women’s Congress. These organizations heralded the emergence of a rudimentary women’s movement in India. Entry into the nationalist struggle for freedom marked the period between 1930s to 1947. Women were motivated to serve the nation with their abilities to nurture and care.

15.3 Women’s Movement in post-independent India: 1950s and 1960s

Women’s participation in the nationalist movement created the preconditions for

the growth of a critical consciousness that found expression in the radical recommendations made by the Women's Sub-committee of the National Planning Committee set up by Nehru in 1939-40. This committee comprising of women active in the nationalist movement was formed to study and draft a plan to improve Indian women's status in the planned economy of free India. It wanted development of women based on the ideal of equality and just society and stressed the importance of social as well as economic planning in uplifting the status of women in India. Though the committee report was a landmark document, it did not receive any importance in post-independent India.

During the immediate post-independent period, programmes for women empowerment were undertaken by the state and the focus was on women's welfare. Women from diverse groups came forward to explore avenues for socio-economic mobility or a search for new identities in the new democratic set-up. The Constitution guaranteed them new rights and the exercise of these rights came into conflict with the patriarchal values of society. During the first two decades after independence except for the spirit of protest build up before the passage of the Hindu Code Bill of 1956, there was not any remarkable agitation on women's issues. The women's movement got fragmented and the women's issues gradually disappeared from the political agenda. The 1950's and 1960s were decades when the state-led developmental model was having its heyday and the nation enjoyed a hegemonic status in the eyes of its citizens. This period is often referred to as the silent period of the women's movement.

15.4 Women's Movement in post-independent India: 1970s onwards

The 1970s witnessed a renewal of concern for women's issues. The United Nations mandate given to governments of all member countries to critically assess the status of their women led to the formation of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI). The CSWI comprised of activists, academicians and members of Parliament. The report of the CSWI was called 'Towards Equality', which is regarded as the founding text of women's movement in India. It highlighted gender inequalities reflected through the imbalanced sex ratios and constraints experienced by women as a result of socio-cultural institutions like dowry, polygamy and child marriage. It also identified discriminatory legal frameworks and economic practices that did not recognize the contribution of women, an educational system that was not equally

accessible to women and a political system that did not promote women's participation adequately. The women's movement in India since 1970s onwards is also viewed as one of the many efforts of reassertion of citizens' claims to participate as equals in the political and developmental process. The main concerns of the movement were based on the issues brought to the forefront by the CSWI report. Agnihotri and Majumdar points out that in contemporary India, the resurgence of the women's movement should be examined in the light of: 1) The crisis of the state and the government culminating into emergency; 2) The post-emergency upsurge in favour of civil rights; 3) The mushrooming of women's organizations in the early 1980s and the arrival of women's issues on the agenda.

From its earliest phase in the late 1970s one of the major issues addressed by the contemporary women's movement has been violence against women. One of the first cases that came to limelight in the late 1970s was the rape of a poor Muslim woman, Rameeza Bee, in Hyderabad in 1978. Rameeza Bee was a poor Muslim woman, who while returning home with her rickshaw puller husband, was picked up by police and accused as being criminals. Rameeza Bee was raped in the police station and when her husband protested, he was beaten to death. The incident created serious repercussions among the masses and there were severe protests from all over Andhra Pradesh that demanded action and even resignation of the Chief Minister. There were protests from diverse groups and everywhere the issue was highlighted as a women's issue. Several women's organizations actively participated in these protests. In 1980, another incident of rape became subject of serious protests by women activists. It was the custodial rape of Maya Tyagi in Uttar Pradesh and in this case also the husband was killed and before rape the woman was made to strip and parade naked. Women activists from all over the country responded immediately and the government was forced to set up an enquiry commission to probe the incident. In 1979, the Supreme Court judgement in the Mathura rape case consolidated women's groups all over the country on the issue of rape as a form of violence against women. In Maharashtra, a young woman called Mathura was raped by two policemen who were found guilty by the High Court. Later the Supreme Court acquitted them and even held that Mathura has submitted to the rape. Women's groups all over the country protested this move. It was highlighted that rape violates human rights of women under the law and the Constitution. Women's groups in Mumbai took the initiative to protest and a series of coordinated demonstrations were held in various other cities. These groups demanded action and accountability of the government and expressed their solidarity with victims of other similar cases. Several other incidents, which have erstwhile remained outside the public eye, came to the forefront. The demand was to change

the law on rape, which have not changed since the last one hundred and fifty years. The state responded to the demands and the Law Commission was charged with the responsibility of drafting a new legislation. The Law Commission made a comprehensive document incorporating some of the observations of the women's groups. Scholars like Urvashi Butalia points out that when the legislation was finally accepted by the Parliament in 1983 it was found it was a much diluted version of what was actually demanded by the women's groups. The activism that centred around Mathura rape case represented the resurgence of organized women's activism in post-independent India. Bombay became the centre of protest against rape and a forum was set up in 1981, called the Forum Against Rape. It later became Forum Against Oppression of Women.

During the same period of 1970s and 1980s another issue that crystallized in the women's movement was dowry. During this period newspaper reported regular occurrences of dowry deaths. In most of the cases the deaths were presented as suicide and accident and the guiltiest acquitted by the court. The victims were all young and earlier subjected to violence and demands for dowry. Though dowry was legally prohibited as early as in 1960s, it continued to be an important part of marriage rituals of many families. Organized protests against the practice of dowry and dowry deaths originated from Delhi during the latter half of 1970s. Two Delhi-based women's groups were at the forefront of these protests-Mahila Dakshata Samity and Stree Sangharsh. Various demonstrations were organized in Delhi which targeted the police, the state, the offending families and also the communities that tacitly provided support to the perpetrators of violence. Groups were also formed in other states like Mahila Utpidan Virodhi Mancha of Uttar Pradesh. The anti-dowry agitation caught much attention during the 1980s. The agitation developed some popular slogans like 'Brides are not for Burning'. There was organized public assertion on issues that were earlier considered as private agenda. There were demands for amendments in existing laws. The most remarkable instance of amendment was the introduction of Sec 498A in the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) of the Indian Penal Code as a law designed for victims of dowry violence wherein mental cruelty to victims was made legally punishable.

In the 1980s the women's movement brought within its ambit the campaign against widow immolation following the death of Roop Kanwar in Rajasthan. This issue of forcible widow immolation of Roop Kanwar as a *Sati* was taken up by many women's organizations and there were massive protests from all over the country. These protests resulted in a court order to stop the celebration of the event. The government was also forced to intervene with a law. In the same decade female

foeticide and infanticide were also taken up as issues by the activists. A number of autonomous women's groups emerged during this period like Manushi (1979), Saheli (1981), Jagori (1984), Kali for Women (1984) etc.

The eighties were also the time when the Shah Bano judgement was delivered by the Supreme Court. In the early seventies, Shah Bano, a Muslim woman, was divorced by her husband, Mohammad Ahmad Khan. Shah Bano filed an application for maintenance under Sec 125 of Criminal Procedure Code. The case continued for a considerable time for the contradictions between Sec 125 and the Muslim Personal Law and finally came before a bench of the Supreme Court. The five-member bench of the Supreme Court upheld Shah Bano's right to maintenance under Sec 125 of CrPC. This landmark judgement of Supreme Court created several repercussions among Muslim religious leaders, who were of the opinion that the judiciary did not have the right to interfere with Muslim Personal Law and Muslim women must be excluded from Sec 125 of CrPC. As a result of this reactions, the Parliament in 1986 passed the Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, whereby Muslim women were entitled to have maintenance only under this Act. Women's groups supported the Shah Bano judgement of the Supreme Court and vehemently protested against the Act.

Women's activism in the 1970s and 1980s was one among the several other movements of the period demanding democratic rights. Large scale capitalist model of development in the 1950s and 1960s, unemployment and poverty have given birth to student's movements, worker's agitations, peasant, tribal, anti-caste and consumer movements. Women participated in many of these movements actively. The Adivasi women initiated strong struggles particularly in the Shahada movement against consumption of alcohol by men and domestic violence. In Maharashtra, an anti-price rise movement was organized by a temporary coalition of women belonging to the Communist Party of India (CPI), Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPIM] and the Social Democratic Socialist Party. The emergence of the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in 1972 was also an important development wherein women went for self-employment through formation of cooperatives. SEWA became a movement for economic empowerment of women.

15.5 Women's movement of the Nineties

The 1980s was also crucial for the emergence of Dalit women's voices within the women's movement. Earlier, caste identities were camouflaged by the larger demands of sisterhood. Young dalit feminists formed the Mahila Samsad in Mumbai to discuss

issues concerning dalit women. In the mid 1990s the Dalit Stree Sahitya Manch was formed which was a forum of the Dalit feminist literary movement. By the 1990s there developed several independent and autonomous organizations of Dalit women like the National Federation of Dalit Women and the Christi Mahila Sangharsh Sangathana. The Dalit feminist movement challenged the brahminical bias of the Indian women's movement and the patriarchal bias of Dalit politics in India. The Dalit feminist movement highlighted the issue of difference within the feminist movement. The women's movement in India has not addressed the concerns of Dalit women and has been mostly dominated by urban upper caste women. This thrust changed the character of women's movement in India.

The debate that was initiated within the women's movement during the eighties culminated in a more fragmentation and difference in the 1980s. Anupama Rao points out that it was in the 1990s that the Indian lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) movement sought to place diversity of sexualities and genders on the agenda of the women's movement. They demanded recognition of sexual and gender diversities and elimination of discrimination against the LGBT people. The central concern of the Seventh National Conference of the Autonomous Women's Movement in Kolkata in 2006 was affirming diversities without divisiveness.

The Women's movement in the 1980s and 1990s also encompassed the struggle to enhance women's representation to elected bodies. The issue first emerged in pre-independent India and was revisited by the CSWI report 'Towards Equality' in the 1970s. The CSWI report highlighted the structural constraints that inhibit women's representation in elected bodies. The report was not able to provide a principle for reservation but it recognized that they face constraints. But it provided recommendations for one-third representation at the Panchayat level. A demand for increased representation for women was raised again in the 1980s. Under pressure from the women's movement the National Perspective Plan for Women (1988) emphasized reservation upto thirty percent at the Panchayat and Zilla Parishad level. Under the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Act reservation of seats for women were provided to Panchayats and Municipalities respectively. The Women's organizations continued their demand for reservation of seats at state assemblies and parliament. The Women's Reservation Bill was tabled in the Parliament for the first time in 1996. But due to lack of unanimity among different political parties on the terms and conditions of the bill, it has failed to have its passage through the Parliament till date.

With the initiation of the liberalization process in India, there has been a change in the character of the women's movement. The liberalization of the economy brought non-governmental organizations in the process of development alongside the

state. There was a proliferation of autonomous organizations running on funds from international organizations. The NGOs and their funding facilitated in many cases campaigns on specific issues. So, several networks are often formed on specific agenda and they become inactive after some time and replaced by some other network. This is often called the NGO-facilitated women's activism.

15.6 Conclusion

The genesis of women's movement in India was not a recent one. Its history can be traced way back before independence when women's question was adequately addressed and became a bone of content for the later scholars. The civilizing mission of the colonial masters and the counter arguments by the nationalists, no wonder has succeeded in politicising the women's question. Since then women's movement has traversed a long way wherein its style, form and mode of functioning have been changing to keep up with the passage of time. Thus, women's movement in recent years has embraced a varied range of issues to fight against violence to economic and political empowerment.

15.7 Summing Up

- The women's movement in India is full of diversities in terms of issues addressed, participants and political affiliations.
- A large number of organizations with wide range of political affiliations from left to Gandhian can be traced.
- There has also been a trend of autonomous women's movement where women's groups have established themselves as groups distinct from any political parties.
- Women's movement has brought within its ambit a diverse range of issues from violence to economic and political empowerment.

15.8 Glossary

SEWA—Self-employed women's association (SEWA) is a women's movement for economic empowerment and self-reliance. It was founded in 1972 by Ela Bhatt. It is basically a trade union organization of poor, self-employed women workers of unorganized sector. The members of SEWA earn their own living through small businesses.

Dalit Feminism—Feminist consciousness of Dalit women. Dalit feminism is a challenge to brahminical bias of the mainstream feminism and the patriarchal biasness of Dalit politics. Dalit Feminism emerged in India in the 1980s.

15.9 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. Explain the major issues of the Women's movement in India.
2. Do you think the women's movement in India has covered a wide range of issues? Argue your case.
3. Describe the different phases of the women's movement in post-independent India.

Short Questions :

1. Do you think India has an autonomous women's movement? Argue your case.
2. Write a short note on the women's movement in India during 1970s and 1980s.
3. What is the full form of SEWA?

Objective Questions :

1. What do you mean by autonomous women's movement?
2. What was the primary objective of self-employed women's Association (SEWA)?

15.10 Further Reading

1. Indu Agnihotri and Vina Majumdar, Changing Terms of Political Discourse: Women's Movement in India, 1970-1990s in, Mala Khullar (ed.) *Writing the Women's Movement: A Reader*, Zubaan, 2005.
2. Mala Khullar (ed.) *Writing the Women's Movement: A Reader*, Zubaan, 2005.
3. Kumar Radha, *The History of Doing*, Zubaan, 2007.
4. Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, Cambridge University Press, 2007.
5. Rao Anupam, 'The Women's Movement' in Niraja Gopal Jayal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India*, OUP, 2013.

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