

# MIZAN- TEPI UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Gender, Culture and Society - SANT - 364

# Gender, Culture and Society SANT 364

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#### **Module Introduction**

This module for the course Gender, Culture and Society is designed to introduce students to the study of gender in the social sciences, theoretical works significant to gender analysis; and deals with the relations of production within relevant institutions of the family, market, state and community; dimensions of social relations that create and reproduce differences in the positioning of men and women in society; and women's subaltern voices and forms of resistance to domination. Examines, in each of the foregoing institutions, culturally constructed roles, responsibilities, ideologies and stereotypes about the different capacities and aptitudes of men and women, and how these determine differentiated claims, rights and obligations of men and women in Ethiopian society. Pays special attention to the ways in which gender is intertwined with other social relations such as class/caste, ethnicity, age and religion as well as the specificities of gender relations in urban and rural life.

Generally, the module is prepared to enable students to point out the difference between gender and sex, discuss how roles are determined based on gender in different societies, explain the roles of women and men in the society, inculcate gender mainstreaming issues, as well as discuss ideas related to the socio-economic and political dimension of gender.

#### **Symbols**

Dear learners! To make your learning faster and easier, we have used the following symbols.

	This tells you that there is an introduction of the course, module, unit or overview.
3	This tells you there are questions to answer or think about in the text.
	This tells you there is an activity for you to do.
<b>A</b>	This tells you there is a self-check question/exercise for you to do.

#### Unit One

#### Introduction

This unit deals with an introduction to the basic concepts in the study of the relationships between gender, culture and society. In addition, the unit also tries to trace the development of women's studies

and its link with feminism and feminist theory.

The unit consists of two sections. Section one deals with central concepts in gender studies and tries to identify the major difference between sex and gender. Section two gives an overview on women's studies, its nature, rationale and history. Moreover, the unit also contains in-text questions, activities, summary as well as self-check questions.

#### **Objectives**

After successfully completing this unit, you will be able to:

- define the basic concepts in gender studies;
- discuss the development of women's studies;
- identify the difference between sex and gender;
- explain the nature, content and practice of gender studies; and
- discuss the relationship between feminist theory and women's studies.

#### Section 1: Overview of Key Concepts in Gender Studies

Dear learners! In this section you will be introduced to the basic concepts in gender studies. Being familiar with these concepts will help you understand ideas explained in the remainder of the module.

#### **Objectives:**

After successfully completing this section, you will be able to:

- define sex and gender;
- discuss the difference between sex and gender;
- identify feminine and masculine characteristics or stereotypes;
- define concepts like patriarchy and misogyny;

#### 1.1. Gender in Society

Gender, ethnicity and class are interlocking categories of experience that affect all aspects of human life. Although, these elements can be seen as different axes of social structure, individual persons experience them simultaneously. Every society cops with the issue of how to organize the distribution of its assets and opportunities. In some cases, this would be done in a relatively egalitarian way while in others it would be highly unequal. Those societies that tend toward a less egalitarian approach, adopt various ways of doing it. However, the most commonly found basis of this redistribution are factors like sex, race, class and so on. Hence, as categories of social experience, gender, race and class shape all social institutions and systems of meaning. The analyses of these categories, therefore, assume great significance from the point of view of all social sciences.

Gender and race differences are often portrayed as unbridgeable and immutable. Men and women have been portrayed as polar opposites with innately different abilities and capacities. Race difference has also been similarly portrayed. White skinned people of European origin have viewed themselves as innately superior in intelligence and ability to people with darker skin or different physical characteristics. (Paula S. Rothenberg, 2003) Class status too, has been correlated with supposed differences innate ability and moral worth. Property qualifications for voting have been used not only to prevent African Americans from exercising the right to vote, but to exclude poor whites as well.

These realities are more and more coming out in the open and that requires an analysis of their dynamics at a deeper level. One needs to ask a few questions here. Who are all excluded from the world that is known to us? How different the world would be if we acknowledge and value the experiences and thoughts of those who have been excluded? The ongoing analyses have proved that, over the centuries Western thought has been centered in the experiences of a privileged few whose particular views of the world and experiences within it have shaped what is known. Otherwise, how do we explain the idea that democracy and egalitarianism were defined as central cultural beliefs in the nineteenth century while millions of African-Americans were enslaved? Why have social science studies been generalized to the whole population while being based only on samples of men? The exclusion of women, African-Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, gays and lesbians, and other groups from formal scholarship has resulted in distortions and incomplete information not only about the experiences of excluded groups but also about the included ones. Thus, the benefits of development of women's studies is not just limited to the study of women, instead, have changed the way we look at men, and the study of

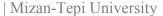
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racial ethnic groups have transformed our understanding of white experiences as well.

The data coming from different parts of the world clearly show that racism, sexism and class inequities continue to affect the distribution of all types of resources and privileges. Although, overt discrimination has been lessened, marked differences by race, gender and class are still evident in all comparisons of employment, political representation, schooling, and other basic measures of group well-being. Such facts show that race, class, and gender, are inextricably intertwined, and they compel us to think about the structure of race, class and gender relations in society. Although, some people argue that race, class, and gender are relics of the past, they are deeply embedded in the structure of social institutions.

On the face of it, whether a person is male or female or a member of a particular race seems to be a straight forward question of biology. But like most differences that are alleged to be 'natural' and 'immutable' or unchangeable, the categories of race and gender are far more complex than they might seem. Far from reflecting any natural or innate differences among the people, the categories of gender, race and class are themselves socially constructed. Rather than being 'given' in nature, they reflect culturally constructed differences that maintain the prevailing inequalities in distribution of power and privilege in society and they change in relation to changes in social, political and economic life. Gender studies, in specific have brought out these anomalies to the forefront and this course would, therefore, focus more on the category of gender.





#### 1.2. Terminologies in Gender Studies

5	Can you	mention	some	terms	which	you	think	are	important	for
	studying	gender?								
-										

#### Sex

Sex is used to indicate the biological categories within which people are typically placed, or the biological difference between males and females. It is a physiological concept and is thought to natural to a person. Sex is an ascribed social status.

#### Gender

Gender is the social significance of the difference in sex. Gender is a social concept. Masculinity and femininity are usual descriptors of gender and they refer to a complex set of characteristics and behaviors that are prescribed for members of a particular sex category. Gender is an achieved social status.

#### Role

A role is the pattern of behaviors prescribed for and expected from a person that corresponds to his/her position in society. A person may, of course, have multiple positions in society and multiple role expectations.

#### Stereotype

A stereotype is a composite image of characteristics and experiences pertaining to some group. This image is present in the social consciousness, but it is generally inaccurate or is skewed in one or more ways. For example, we can identify some stereotypes on the basis of gender:

5

Feminine Stereotypes	Masculine Stereotypes
Should stay at home in the kitchen	Bread winner
Emotional	Unemotional
Listening	Active
Small and petite	Rugged
Weak	Strong
Submissive	Dominant
Sexy	Bigger Ego
Anorexic	Big
Nurturing	Spontaneous
Attached	Independent

•	

What do you understand by the term 'equality'?

#### **Equality**

Equality is the condition of being alike in value, having the same potential for accomplishment, and having the same inherent worth- in spite of individual differences. In other words, even though people are not the same, they can (and should) be considered and treated as equals.

#### **Patriarchy**

Most of the societies we know are patriarchal. They are based on organizing principles that privilege the males over the females. In patriarchy, power is held by and is transferred through men. This can be through educational and societal restrictions on women or by laws that favor men.

#### Feminism

Feminism is a philosophy that holds with the ideal of equality. It is the belief that although they are different men and women are equal. Feminism recognizes that women have been oppressed and repressed in certain societies throughout history. It also carries with it the commitment to change the attitudes and behavior of those who do not see men and women as equals. This equality should be reflected in economic, political, and social equality for both sexes.

#### **Positionality**

The concept of positionality recognizes that people's perspectives, their perceptions of reality and their actual realities are dependent upon where they are positioned in society. In other words, it sees truth and reality as being relative and multi-faceted.

#### **Misogyny**

Misogyny is the hatred of or hostility toward women. In a society that subordinates women it is easy to understand that people within that society would or could hold such beliefs.

# 

#### 1.3. Sex and Gender

?	What do you think is the major difference between sex and gender?

Differences between men and women have often been divided into biological, or sex based differences, on the one hand, and everything else, variously construed as psychological, social, and /or cultural differences on the other hand. Gender studies revolve around the constructional basis of these categories and 'sex' and 'gender' constitute most primary of them. Social scientists, on the one hand, distinguish between 'sex,' which



is, in fact, a biologically based category, and 'gender,' which refers to the particular set of socially constructed meanings that are associated with each sex. These are seen to vary over time and place so that what is understood as 'naturally' masculine or feminine behavior in one society may be the exact opposite of what is considered 'natural' for women or men in other culture. The biological approach, on the other hand, considers women as those adult persons having two X chromosomes, and men as those adult persons having an X and a Y chromosome. According to them, this chromosomal difference leads to biological differences between the sexes, such as women's abilities to bear children and produce milk. Hence, 'sex' characteristics are defined as attributes of men and women that are created by their biological characteristics.

The psycho-social and cultural approaches to differences between men and women, moves around the concept of gender and gender attributes that are culturally associated with being male and female. Feminine persons look and act in ways that lead observers to classify them as women without directly observing their chromosome pattern; the same assumption is true for masculine persons. This classification can, however, vary in details across cultures, and there may be ambiguity in determining a person's gender, while there is no ambiguity in determining his or her sex. It is possible to refer to a woman as being a masculine woman and a man as being a feminine man. Hence, while certain group of analysts argues that gender differences are biological differences and are therefore traceable to the genetic and hormonal differences between men and women, there are some others who argue that gender differences in effect are separable from sex differences and that they are determined by cultural influences. Some of these influences may occur so early in child development as to be hard to distinguish from sex differences, but they are cultural nonetheless. This debate is often known as nature versus nurture debate.

Different academic disciplines have approached this debate using different theoretical and methodological tools, but no consensus has been achieved either within or between disciplines. In the area of natural sciences, most of the debate has, not surprisingly, occurred within the field of biology. Hybrid disciplines have sprung up, notably biopsychology and sociobiology, that attempt to bridge biology and the social sciences. Although, such interdisciplinary contacts have become widespread, it was the emergence of women's movement and the rise of academic feminism that really set the foundation for Gender studies to establish itself. Academic feminism has three main accomplishments to date: (1) it has documented the extent to which academia has excluded women, both as researchers and as subjects; (2) it has begun to redress these shortcomings; and (3) it has opened up the question of how gender shapes scientific enquiry and thought in general. Above all these, it also brought out the primacy of gender as a category affecting human thought and behavior. Till date, women's studies have generally remained women's studies rather than gender studies. Most of the people working in women's studies are women, and few people are interested in documenting male experiences, arguing that the traditional academic disciplines have been doing just that. This reality of intellectual discrimination prevalent within the western intellectual history, however, has brought in a lot of ambiguities and uncertainties into the arena of women's studies. More specifically, it has shaped up the women's studies as a very passionate, subjective, and a purely political academic practice. In a sense, it has made the practice of academic studies of gender a very difficult one too. An analysis of the history of gender studies and its nature across different periods would make these points clearer.

	1.	From your own personal experience, can you state example that could explain the difference between sex a gender?	
			-
3			-
			- - -

#### Section 2: Women's Studies

Dear learners! Under this section you will learn about the development of women's studies as a formal area of study. This section will also provide you with the content and practice of women's studies and its relation with feminist theory.

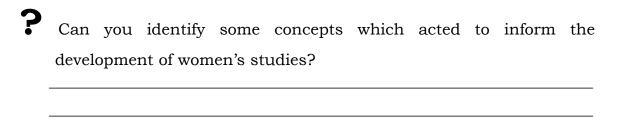


#### **Objectives:**

After successfully completing this section, you will be able to:

- define women's studies;
- discuss the content and practice of women's studies;
- explain the role of feminist theory in the development of women's studies.

#### 2.1. Definition of Women's Studies



Women's Studies has been difficult to define, partly because of the diversity of feminist thought and positions and also because it has no straight forward parallel to other subjects. The feminist voices, as early as 1980s, have attempted to explain why women's studies had been necessary. Basic to their claim is the criticism that women have been left out of codified knowledge; where men have formulated explanations in relation to themselves, they have generally either rendered women invisible or classified them as deviant. This recognition has entailed the setting up of Women's Studies. It was the women's movements of the 1960s and 1970s in the Western world that really had a fundamental impact on the establishment of this discipline. This connection between the academic world and the world of social movement, however, made the setting up and teaching its courses a very difficult and political act. (my own status as a teacher of women's studies) There have been a number of debates over whether Women 's Studies is an extension of the

women's movement or if 'it is now structurally distinct from that movement'. But it is quite widely acknowledged that the feminist insistence on the importance of sisterhood is global, the personal being political, the false separation of public and private spheres, a recognition of the common oppression of women and their diversity in terms of 'race', ethnicity, sexuality, class, age, and levels of disability, as well as the acknowledgement of the importance of women's historical and immediate experience and the idea of the development of a feminist consciousness, were central concepts to the women's movement and they have also acted to inform the development of Women's Studies. Women's Studies as a formal area of study emerged in the USA in the late 1960s. In Britain, women involved with left politics and the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s began to set up Women's Studies courses within higher education.

Women's Studies is an evolving, fluid and dynamic area of study connected to the women's movement. It is also a political act against phallocentric knowledge-making. The feminists challenged the 'objectivity of objectivity' and recognized that subjectivity was a valid part of theorizing emphasizing at first on the differences in experience between men and women and later on, even by differentiating between the experiences of women themselves. The starting point was, of course, a redefinition of the concepts of sex and gender.

#### 2.2. History, Nature and Rationale of Gender Studies

?	What are the two interrelated aims of women's studies?

Women's studies first appeared in the United States in the second half of the 1960s, with courses and degree programs emerging in other Western countries during the 1970s. Subsequently, expansion has been so great that Women's Studies is now something of a global educational phenomenon. Initially, Western women's studies were set up as part of a thorough-going feminist critique of patriarchal institutions which was taking place within Women's Liberation Movement. It was argued that neither the construction of knowledge, nor the practices involved in education, were exempt from oppressive and exploitative processes. As one facet of the educational wing of the Women's Movement, women's studies had two particular and interrelated aims. The first was to provide information and analyses about the lives of women, with a view to bringing about social changes which would end gender inequalities and women's subordination. The second was to develop a critique of existing knowledge forms which would demonstrate how, and why, women's lives, views and perspectives remained largely hidden in the existing academic disciplines. It was suggested that academic scholarship had either ignored women, assumed their experiences were the same as men's (thereby overlooking the importance of gender as a dimension of analysis) or treated them as deviant.

?	Can you identify the three main headings under which women's studies have evolved?			

With these objectives, women's studies evolved under three main headings. The first one is concerned with epistemology and the feminist theoretical critique of male knowledge as the grounds for setting up autonomous women's studies. The second focuses on the theoretical ideas which have influenced both the content and practice of women's

studies and how these have changed over time. The third section concentrates on the changing shape of those kinds of feminist theory which have been concerned with analyzing the social situation of women.

#### 2.3. The Feminist Critique of Male Knowledge

A feminist critique of existing knowledge forms began to develop as academic feminists started to discover the difficulties inherent in using existing discipline based frameworks to explore the ideas which were emerging from the grassroots women's Movement. Initially, certainly in Britain, the impetus for this critique came from the social sciences, although it was soon being debated, to a greater or lesser extent, within other disciplinary contexts. A very early version, for instance, is to be found in the existential feminism of Simone de Beauvoir, who wrote, in 'The Second Sex,' about how men both made the world and went on to represent it from their own point of view, which they then confused with the absolute truth (1972). The American feminist, Catharine MacKinnon, has since dubbed this position 'the male epistemological stance'. Writing about the sexist, biased and exclusionary nature of much of what, prior to feminism, counted as knowledge, MacKinnon observes that: 'men create the world from their own point of view, which then becomes the truth to be described......Power to create the world from one's point of view is power in the male form'.

?	What was the crucial observation made by the American feminist Catharine MacKinnon?

MacKinnon's arguments draw attention not just to what might have been overlooked or left out from a woman's point of view in various knowledge creating processes. It also points to the fact that the issues which have

been given attention, together with the ways this has been achieved, have derived from male interests and ways of seeing. This was previously the case, it has been suggested, even when women have been involved in producing knowledge. Because the content, concepts, theories and methods of academic subjects have largely derived from a male perspective of the universe, this has had a profound influence on which aspects of the world have been regarded as significant for study and how they have been perceived as structured and ordered. For instance, prior to the 1970s much sociology in the US and Britain focused on public issues such as work, production, class and belief systems which were of relevance to men. Where there was interest in more private matters, such as the family, this ignored those aspects of particular concern to women, such as housework, motherhood, the role of emotions and sexuality. It is only since women's studies has come to be regarded as a legitimate area of scholarship that aspects of women's experiences such as these have been properly researched.

Another point which MacKinnon makes is that the social world, as it is constructed from a male perspective, affords men a privileged position. Dorothy Smith endorses this, and refers to the existence of two words, the male and the female, in sociology, where the domestic sphere has been constructed as the domain of women and portrayed as dependent on, as well as subordinate tom the world of men (1974). Smith claims that the implications of this are that women have been forced to conceptualize their world in terms derived from those of men. This means that, prior to women's studies at least, women have been alienated from their experiences because they have not been able to represent and understand them on their own terms. A similar point has also been made by feminist historians and literary critics, who have criticized the ways in which their subjects have been determined on the basis of men's interests and criteria.

A further aspect to which MacKinnon draws attention, the concern about objectivity – was also a significant characteristic of early feminist debates about knowledge and, indeed, still features prominently in them today. Feminists have been critical about claims as to the possibility of producing value-neutral accounts about the nature of the social world. Firstly, the supposed objectivity of masculinist knowledge has been exposed as a sham, due to its partial nature and gender-blindness. Feminists, along with other critics, have also been skeptical about the possibilities of ever being able to produce completely objective understandings or 'truth'. This is because, they argue, it is impossible for researchers to stand outside of a social situation, since their taken-forgranted biographical and cultural assumptions will always be implicated in the questions that are asked, how these are studied and the interpretations that are made. For this reason, more reliable knowledge will be produced if we are reflexively aware of the hidden agendas that will be brought to the practice of research and knowledge-creation more generally.

It is against criticisms of conventional forms of knowledge such as these that women's studies has emerged. Women's studies seeks to address the fact that individual disciplines themselves are gender-blind, presenting male values and experiences as general human ones and as representative of all. Autonomous women's studies are required, it is argued, because of the necessity for all women to alter their frames of reference to ones in which women's different and differing ideas, knowledge, experiences, needs and interests are accepted as legitimate in their own right and form the basis of research, and knowledge-creation. Different perspectives exist on how this might be achieved. Some argue for a multi-disciplinary approach, whereby the most useful parts of different disciplines are critiqued and brought to bear on a topic in

differing ways. Others argue for an interdisciplinary perspective in which this is done in more holistic and integrative ways. A further possibility, even though, more difficult to achieve, is to develop a trans-disciplinary framework in which existing disciplines are transcended. Each kind of women's studies, however involves theorizing the gendered power relations inherent in current knowledge creation processes. In placing women themselves at the centre of research and analysis, they question how previous meanings have been constructed and evaluated.

Activity 3  1. Do you think most of the concepts, theories and methods in sociology have been derived from a male perspective? If so, can you explain your answer using an example?



#### 2.4. The Content and Practice of Women's Studies.

5	In which phase in the development of women's studies did terms and
	topics which structured the practice of existing disciplines started to be reevaluated and redesigned?

In terms of the content of its courses and scholarship, women's studies has moved through three broad and interconnected phases, each influenced by the current stage reached in theorizing about feminist knowledge. They are, the recuperative phase, reconstructive phase, and the reflexive phase.

The first, recuperative, phase aimed to challenge the silencing, stereotyping, marginalization and misrepresentation of women in historical, social science, literary and cultural studies. It questioned assumptions, discovered and disseminated empirical evidence, and grappled with the conceptual and the explanatory implications of restoring the female half of humanity as a proper and necessary part of research and analysis. Women's lives, experiences and perspectives were brought into the picture by designing practical research projects and explanatory frameworks which might redress the situation.

During the second, reconstructive, phase the terms and topics which structured the practices of existing disciplines have been re-evaluated and redesigned. Whereas the recuperative phase largely involved 'adding' women into existing knowledge, the reconstructive focused on new areas of concern and the generation of new concepts and theories. Substantive issues such as those of sexuality, violence towards women and 'the body'

came to the fore. Particularly important was the way in which knowledge was transformed by a continuing insistence on the relevance of 'private' phenomena and not just the masculinist emphasis on the public sphere. Further, there were also serious conceptual and theoretical disagreements over questions such as the nature of patriarchy or male power, the relationship between gender power and inequality and other forms of domination and exploitation.

It is, however, the third phase, the reflexive, which has raised issues which have been, and continue to be, particularly difficult and painful. This has involved feminists in being both self-critical and self-aware about their women's studies work. Recently, questions have been raised about the white, western, privileged heterosexist and other biases (both political and intellectual) in women's studies. In the early days, cozy assumptions were made, both explicitly and implicitly, that all women could be defined in terms of a universal 'sisterhood', meaning that they could be described in terms of the things they experienced and shared in common. Challenges to these ideas have come from a variety of sources, but many originated from Black women in the US and Britain. They argue that the focus in women's studies work on white women's experiences, to the virtual exclusion of Black and Third World women's lives, constitutes a form of racism, in which the concerns of a small group of white women are prioritized and treated as the norm. Further, women's studies has suppressed the ideas of Black women, to the extent that few manage to find their way into mainstream debate. Similar criticisms have been made by women from other groups. Frustrations around heterosexism have led some lesbians to set up their own lesbian studies courses.

These are crucial matters for women's studies to confront. One way in which this has been attempted is via the introduction of the concept

'difference'. This is intended to signal a move away from assumptions about homogeneity, emphasizing, instead, the diverse nature and variety of women's lives.

### 2.5. The Changing Nature of Feminist Theory in Women's Studies

?	What do you understand by the term 'feminist theory'?	
		_

For many commentators the term 'feminist theory' is associated, in particular, with the analysis and explanation of women's subordinate social situation. Until recently, it was customary to categorize different ways of doing this in terms of three major perspectives, each with their own historical tradition and legacy. The first of these, liberal feminism, is depicted as focusing on individual rights and on the concepts of equality, justice and equal opportunities; women are presented as being prevented from achieving equality with men by certain social barriers. It is argued, therefore, that specific legal and social policy changes are the necessary tools for rectifying women's inferior position. The second position Marxist feminism - is identified by a concern with women's oppression as it is tied to forms of capitalist exploitation of labor, where women's paid and unpaid work are each analyzed in relation to their function within the capitalist economy. Thirdly, racial feminism is 'radical' because, unlike the previous two, it eschews existing theoretical frameworks and attempts to formulate new ways of theorizing women's relationship to men. In particular, men's social control of women through various mechanisms of patriarchy is emphasized - especially violence, heterosexuality and reproduction, where men as a group are seen as responsible for maintaining women's oppression.

The problem of portraying feminist theory in terms of the 'Big Three', however, is that this formulation could never totally encompass and encapsulate every strand of feminism. Not only were a number of prominent thinkers excluded by such categorization, but there was not always agreement as to which writers should be given which label. Further difficulties in attempting to classify theories in this way lay in the fact that this was largely a white, Western feminist endeavor. As a consequence, the ideas of Black women became even more marginalized and invisible. Additionally, during the 1980s, as the external intellectual and political influences on feminist theories began to increase, so the number of categories to describe them also proliferated. The introduction of labels such as dual systems, materialist, psychoanalytic, postmodern, Black, lesbian, together with other forms of feminist thinking, suggests that, currently, it is more appropriate to view feminist theorizing as a complex, dynamic and evolving process, rather that in terms of narrow and static stereotypes. It is no longer useful to portray feminist theory in terms of discrete positions which can be 'mugged up', learnt parrotfashion and applied in unproblematic ways. Not only is theory more pluralistic than was previously conceived, it now encompasses a number of organizational axes which cannot be regarded as absolute.

There have been two specific theoretical trends which have influenced the development of feminist theory in the late 1980s and 1990s, as they have other disciplinary areas. These are the psychoanalytic thinking of Jacques Lacan and the post-structuralist ideas of Michel Foucault. Some feminists have used their concepts and theories to explore such areas as sexuality, desire and the body, although such work is not uncontentious. However, it is not these more substantive issues which are of concern here. Rather, the focus is on the more general influence that Lacan and Foucault have had on the nature of feminist theory and the parameters which it can be said to encompass. Their ideas about knowledge have

affected what such theory can be expected to achieve and how its various elements should be structured.

For example, the importance assigned by Lacan and Foucault to language and discourse has meant something of a re-focusing of women's studies interests away from the material aspects of women's lives (and a concern with such matters as economics, the labor market, the sexual division of labor) to an emphasis on symbolization, representation and textual analysis. In other words, changes in theoretical emphasis have increasingly led women's studies to focus less on social and more on cultural phenomena. As a consequence, explorations of the meanings of 'difference' for women have begun to involve less of a concern with diversity of experience and more of an emphasis on the deconstruction of subjectivity. The self is no longer presented as rationalistic, monolithic and unified and gender itself becomes a problematic term. Instead, each is portrayed as fragmented, pluralistic and continually changing. What constitutes 'woman', it is argued, can no longer be taken for granted and accepted at face value. Through the processes of deconstruction, the multiple subjectivities, identities and complexities of womanhood are displayed.

Another way in which writers such as Lacan and Foucault have had an impact on feminist theory is in terms of their criticisms of attempts to produce grand theories or meta-narratives. Many feminists have accepted the arguments that the latter provide falsely homogenizing accounts, which are obsessed with monocausal and universalistic explanations. Instead, they are currently more likely to theorize in ways which acknowledge the specifics of cultural and historical location, and which shy away from overly expansive and totalizing claims. This may be seen, for instance, in two particular developments. The first is the move away from foundationalism, the assumption that theories need to be

based upon some fundamental core to which all other elements of which they are comprised can be reduced. This involves rejecting any claim that there can be a specific cause of women's subordination (be this male violence, capitalism's need for a docile work force or discriminatory laws) which is primary to all others. Relatedly, the second involves the move away, in feminist theory, from positioning women as a group within some overarching oppressive structure or system, whether patriarchy, capitalism or a male-defined liberal democracy. This is because the connotations of passivity and determinism in such a formulation deny women agency and the ability to struggle and resist. Thus, concepts such as patriarchy have given way to more pluralistic notions, such as patriarchal relations, taken to signify that relationships between men and women are not uniform and can, indeed, be contradictory. This, further, facilitates an understanding of the unevenness of power. Not all of women's experiences are negative, neither are they necessarily and inherently those of being oppressed. Additionally, some women may be in positions from which they can exercise power over other women. As may be seen, developments such as these signify considerable changes in the nature and content of what constitutes feminist theory, when compared to the earlier 'perspectives' approach.

Activity 4						
1.	What are the three customary categories of 'feminist theory'					
2.	Briefly discuss the two specific theoretical trends which have					
	influenced feminist theory in the late 1980s and 1990s?					

#### Summary

Gender, ethnicity and class are interlocking categories of experience that affect all aspects of human life. Although, these elements can be seen as different axes of social structure, individual persons experience them simultaneously. The data coming from different parts of the world clearly show that racism, sexism and class inequities continue to affect the distribution of all types of resources and privileges. Although, overt discrimination has been lessened, marked differences by race, gender and class are still evident in all comparisons of employment, political representation, schooling, and other basic measures of group well-being.

Differences between men and women have often been divided into biological, or sex based differences, on the one hand, and everything else, variously construed as psychological, social, and /or cultural differences on the other hand.

Gender studies revolve around the constructional basis of these categories and 'sex' and 'gender' constitute most primary of them. Social scientists, on the one hand, distinguish between 'sex,' which is, in fact, a biologically based category, and 'gender,' which refers to the particular set of socially constructed meanings that are associated with each sex.

Women's studies first appeared in the United States in the second half of the 1960s, with courses and degree programs emerging in other Western countries during the 1970s. Subsequently, expansion has been so great that Women 's Studies is now something of a global educational phenomenon.

Women's studies evolved under three main headings. The first one is concerned with epistemology and the feminist theoretical critique of male knowledge as the grounds for setting up autonomous women's studies. The second focuses on the theoretical ideas which have influenced both the content and practice of women's studies and how these have changed over time. The third section concentrates on the changing shape of those kinds of feminist theory which have been concerned with analyzing the social situation of women.

However, the above discussion on the theoretical development within gender studies is incomplete. There were also other channels of influence affecting the nature of growth and expansion of Women's Studies and its theoretical perspective. A further evaluation of these theoretical positions can make the issue clearer.

#### Self-Check Exercise 1

#### Part I: Multiple Choices

Instruction:	Choose	the	best	answer
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- 1. \_\_\_\_\_\_ is a composite image of inaccurate characteristics and expectations pertaining to a particular group. A. Role B. Gender

  - C. Stereotype
  - D. Patriarchy
  - E. None of the above
- 2. Which of the following terms represents hatred or hostility towards women?
  - A. Equity
  - B. Misogyny
  - C. Patriarchy
  - D. Feminism
  - E. None of the above
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_refers to the set of socially constructed meanings that are associated with each sex.
  - A. Role
  - B. Feminism
  - C. Gender
  - D. Sex
  - E. None of the above

- 4. Which American feminist stated the "... power to create the world from one's point of view is power in the male form."
  - A. Simon De Beauvoir
  - B. Dorothy Smith
  - C. Catharine MacKinnon
  - D. None of the above

#### Part II: True/False

## <u>Instruction</u>: Answer 'True' if the statement is correct and 'False' if the statement is incorrect

- 1. Women's studies is an evolving, fluid and dynamic area of study connected to the women's movement.
- 2. Women's Studies seeks to address the fact that individual disciplines themselves are gender blind.
- 3. The three phases in the development of women's studies were free from feminist knowledge.
- 4. Psychoanalytic thinking and post-structuralist ideas were the two specific trends which have influenced the development of feminist theory.

#### **Unit Two**

#### Theoretical Development in Gender Studies



Dear learners! Can you recall what you have learnt in unit one?

Good! In this unit you will learn about theoretical developments in gender studies. You will be familiar with feminist theory and different feminist thinkers.

The unit has two sections. The first section introduces you to feminist thinking while the second section contains subsections dealing with liberal feminism, essentialist feminism, radical feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, essentialist feminism, black feminism, and postmodern feminism. Moreover, the unit also contains in-text questions, activities, summary as well as self-check questions.

#### **Objectives**

After successfully completing this unit, you will be able to:

- identify the major objectives of feminist theory;
- explain the particular focuses of feminist theory;
- discuss the central arguments of the different strands of feminist theory;
- identify the difference between sex and gender; and
- compare the similarities as well as differences between the varying strands of feminist theory.

#### **Section 1: Feminist Theory**



Dear learners! This section will provide you with an introductory

knowledge about feminist theory as one vast field of study. Moreover, more detailed discussion of the different types of feminist theory will be presented to you in the following section of the unit.

#### **Objectives**

After successfully completing this section, you will be able to:

- identify the focus of feminist theory;
- explain the need for a feminist theory; and
- analyze the general feminist view on women.

#### 1.1. What is Feminist Theory?

?	What do you think is the major focus of feminist theory?

Feminist theory seeks to analyze the conditions which shape women's lives and to explore cultural understandings of what it means to be a woman. It was initially guided by the political aims of the women's Movement, the need to understand women's subordination and their exclusion from, or marginalization within, a variety of cultural and social arenas. Feminists refuse to accept that inequalities between women and men are natural and inevitable and insist that they should be questioned. Theory, for them, is not an abstract intellectual activity divorced from women's lives, but seeks to explain the conditions under which those lives are lived. Developing this understanding has entailed looking at the material actualities of women's everyday experience and

examining the ways in which we are represented and represent ourselves within a range of cultural practices, such as the arts and the media.

?	What does it mean to think as a feminist?

Thinking as a feminist involves challenging much of what has counted as 'knowledge'. Because we have historically lived in male-dominated societies, women have more often been the objects of knowledge than the producers of it. As a result, much of what has passed as objective knowledge of the world has been produced by men, framed by their particular location in society as men and usually white, middle-class and heterosexual men. Feminist modes of theorizing contest this andocentric (or male-centered) ways of knowing, calling into question the gendered hierarchy of society and culture. Feminist theory is about thinking for themselves, women generating knowledge about women and gender for women. Yet this immediately raises questions. Who are the 'they' doing the thinking and who are the 'themselves' for whom they claim to be thinking: women in general or only some women? Are certain women being left out of the picture? Are we not in danger of perpetuating the same faults we have criticized in male thinkers marginalizing women not like 'ourselves', casting them as 'other'?

Women are not a homogenous group. This is not merely to restate a truism that we are not all alike but to underline the social significance of differences among us. We are differently located within global and local social contexts and differently represented in art, literature and other media. Distinctions of nationality, ethnicity, education, language, family, class, employment, ability/disability and sexuality are important. These

are not merely differences, which can be acknowledged and passed over; these differences are often hierarchical, producing inequalities among women which intersect with gender inequality. Hence, while we need to pay attention to commonalities among women, we cannot afford to ignore these crucial differences.

Hence, feminist theory is not, and has never been, a static phenomenon. This is one reason why it has proved so difficult to capture within classifications such as 'liberal', 'Marxist' or 'radical'. Diversity and change are interlinked. As feminism has evolved, theorizing has taken many different directions and forms. Individual feminists have also changed their views over time and this is evident in the reflexive, self-critical tenor of much feminist work. Feminists are constantly reflecting on their own ideas, changing their stances in response to debates and challenges from other feminists. Hence individual theorists cannot always be pinned down to a single statement of their position, since this is continually being developed and modified.

Feminist theory has now grown into a vast field. While some feminists, especially in the 1970s, attempted a grand synthesis in order to account for the totality of women's subordination, much theorizing since has focused on specific aspects of social life or cultural production, or on specific applications of particular theories.

5	Can you mention some of the important feminist thinkers of the twentieth century?

The chapters covers the developments in feminist theory since 1970. While there were certainly important feminist thinkers writing earlier in the twentieth century, such as Virginia Wolf, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan, the rise of Second wave feminism provided the impetus for a rapid growth in feminist thought. The feminist theory we know today has derived from that period but has developed and diversified through a constant process of debate, critique and reflection. As a result, different strands of theory and new objects of theoretical inquiry have emerged at different times in this process.

#### Section 2: Types of Feminist theory



From the brief discussion of feminist theory and feminist thinking

presented in the previous section, you have been introduced to feminist theory as one grand theory on women. In this section of the unit you will learn about the different strands of feminist theory which have their own specific views and focuses.

#### **Objectives**

After successfully completing this section, you will be able to:

- discuss the historical origins of feminist liberalism;
- identify the prominent arguments of essentialist feminism;
- explain the radical feminist view on women;
- analyze gender operation as explained by Marxist feminists;
- discuss the nature of gender operation from the view point of socialist feminists;
- explain the central focus of existential and black feminism; and
- analyze what makes postmodern feminism different from the other versions of feminism.



#### 2.1. Liberal Feminism

What is Liberalism	5		

Feminist liberalism is the most prominent feminist strand in the United States. It invokes theoretical liberalism; the United States' dominant ideology which is so entrenched in most American's thinking that no other seems viable. American's are schooled in the Enlightenment, liberalism's wellspring, the cluster of doctrines that emerged triumphant in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The historical origins of contemporary liberal feminism go back to 18th century - the enlightenment period of Western Europe. It was the age of reason. One of the important tenets of liberal philosophy was individualism by which it was meant that the individual possesses the freedom to do what he wishes without interference from others. Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the earliest liberal thinkers, was well known for her ardent support for women's cause. Basic idea of her work is that women are first and foremost human beings and not sexual beings. Women are rational creatures. They are capable of governing themselves by reason. Hence if women are to be denied natural rights, it must be proved that they have no rational capacity. John Stuart Mill another ardent liberal also argued that "the existing relationship between the sexes, the legal subordination of one sex to the other is wrong in itself and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvements and that it ought to be replaced by the perfect equality admitting no power, no privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other".

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Feminist liberals argue that women evolved equally with men. They work on the assumption that men and women are of equal value and deserve equal rights as individuals. Their practices aim to enable the individual person to pursue their rights unhindered by gender. One of the strengths of this approach is its relative palatability to mainstream Western Political thought, which has been dominated in both Europe and the USA by liberal humanism and individualism. Liberal feminism has been successful in bringing about changes in legislation relating to sex discrimination, equal pay and childcare provision in the USA and Western Europe, though there is still considerable progress to be made on these issues.

Not surprisingly, this approach has been criticized for its individualist and liberal-humanist base, which asks only for correctional adjustments to the gendered status quo in order that women may participate on an equal footing to men. In doing so, it is argued that the liberal approach tends to ignore the powerful effects of 'unconscious gender' that is heterosexism, and places the responsibility for challenging oppression firmly on the shoulders of the oppressed individuals themselves.

#### Activity 5

1.	Ü	do you d'Libera		of	feminist	theory	discussed	above	is

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#### 2.2. Essentialist Feminism

Essentialist feminists, on the other hand, see women as innately different from men. Using some of the same biological arguments adopted by socio-biologists, essentialist feminists, such as Mary Daly (1978), maintain the view that women are, by virtue of their biological make-up, psychologically different from men, and, some argue, naturally superior. This veneration of women's ability to bear and nurture children, and their supposed tendency to avoid conflict, war and destructive competition, has led some essentialist feminists to criticize both men and masculinity, and in some cases to advocate a rejection of both.

They reject the liberal's claim that women and men possess the same epistemological resource, the transcendent mind. Instead, it locates an aspect of females which makes them essentially different from males. Dubbed 'essentialists' in feminist literature, advocates counter pose a Universal Woman to the Enlightenment's Universal Man. In various ways they project her worldview to show that the Enlightenment's asymmetrical ordering of reality is a male construct validating masculinity and social paradigms of dominance and subordination. In contrast, the female perceives reality in terms of unities. Her rational mind is embodied, has feelings, and is engaged with, not in opposition to, other persons and things. These feminists celebrate aspects of the human being, which have been depreciated and ascribed to women. They are intellectual kin to phenomenology in that they propose an original female self. Like Husserl (1983), they assume that the self interacts with

internal and external contingencies, but do not reduce it to atoms for a revivalist science as he does.

The theme of essential womanhood emerges in various forms. Carol Gilligan (1982) in the US valorizes women's morality, contesting the historical truth of their defective ethical sense. She targets psychology's pre-eminent stage theorists, Freud, Piaget and particularly her Harvard professor, Kohlberg, for claiming that women do not attain men's level of moral reasoning.

Gilligan reversed that procedure. She developed norms by studying women, then investigated females' and males' moral reasoning. Her conclusions; her predecessors confused men's notions of morality with human values. Women's moral development is not deficient but different from men's. Women possess an ethic of care, which peaks when they consider their own needs as well as others'. In contrast, boys and men reason from rules that permit no exceptions for individual needs. It provides an alternative to psychology's male' not a challenge to its construction.

Sara Ruddick (1989) attributes women's caring to their maternal experience, which generates maternal thinking. It does not necessarily entail physical childbirth. She argues that anyone who does what mothers do cares for young children and prepares them for social acceptability, has an epistemological resource for developing maternal thinking. In maternal thinking she sees a route to world peace. To reach that point, she urges men to share childcare with women, thereby becoming maternal thinkers.

Nancy Chodorow's (1989) account of mothering suggests an origin of the caring function that Gilligan and Ruddick believe determines women's lives, though her picture is less benign than theirs. A psychoanalyst, she

believes with Freud that the human psyche is formed in infancy in a family drama. Her scenario retains his Oedipus scene but highlights an earlier one in which mothers determine unconscious desires. Mothering becomes the cause of not only the female's lifelong search for close relationships, but also men's avoidance of intimacy.

In an elaboration of object relations theory, scarcely known outside psychoanalytic circles until Chodorow popularized it, she has mother and child alone on stage with no scenery to suggest a context. They are subject and object for each other, motivated by sex difference or sameness. The mother pushes the son away, impelling him to reject her feminine role. Presuming some intimate caring as likely consequences, Chodorow thinks the rejection prepares men for masculine power conflicts and rules of capitalist competition, traits reinforced in the oedipal scene. Her mother and daughter develop a 'prolonged symbiosis', implanting the daughter's desire for continuity with others. Ultimately, the daughter must seek intimacy with a man, the Oedipus effect, but then reproduces the mothering of daughter and sons. In other words, the mother-child scene constructs the political economy. Chodorow's theory presupposes a father earning income and a mother isolated at home with a child in a nuclear family.

Whereas, Freud creates a female trapped into neurosis by her anatomy, and morally defective because she misses his oedipal lesson; Chodorow's female is the instrument of her own and all humanity's oppression. As a preventive, Chodorow recommends shared parenting. This, she believes, would free women to experience the external world, becoming less dependent on relationships, and would teach men to appreciate intimacy; everyone in society would value caring. Beyond her lens are lesbians,, single mothers, married mothers earning income, mothers who must rely on sons for status and future financial support, mothers who

prepare their daughters for self-reliance, women who do not want children, and mothers for whom any child is a burden, another mouth to feed.

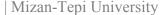
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Can you explain Mary Daly's vision of emancipation?

While the feminists discussed above assume women's attachment to men, Mary Daly (1978) thinks, women's liberation requires separation from them. As evidence of the male's invariable oppression of women, she points to Western gynaecology, European witch burning, Hindu sati, and Chinese foot binding. Her vision of emancipation has fired the imagination of any women. It involves an escape from male-defined femininity that turns them into domesticated, cosmetized, and caged birds in order to realize their inherent creative energy. For a key to open the cages, she provides a lexicon redefining words that convey patriarchal values. For example, a 'spinster' becomes a passionate spirit spinning imaginatively through life, not a pitiable unmarried woman; a witch is a wise woman with healing powers, not an evil, ugly one.

Luce Irigary (1980 and 1985), in France, offers a more complex analysis that weaves critiques of Western philosophy, its political economy, linguistics, and psychoanalysis. Sometimes considered a post-modernist because she addresses multiple oppressions, her identification with essentialists comes from her location of women' sensitivity to interrelatedness in their biological sexuality. Irigary locates the origin of men's consciousness in their possession of a singular erotic resource, and interprets capitalism as an expression of their use of the genitals as an instrument for penetration and oppression. Women's multiple sites of

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erotic pleasure, she assumes, give rise to a psyche that prefers caring relationships.

To develop and emancipate themselves from male visions, Irigary urges women to discover their sexual potential in autoerotic and lesbian relationships. They would work with men and initially experience heterosexuality. To protect themselves in patriarchal society, they could practice mimesis, flaunting and exaggerating, mimicking the femininity that men define. Irigary concedes that this is risky since they may become what they play. But the greater risk she sees is to define the 'feminine' and slide into patriarchal terms. In other words, she wants women to withdraw from the patriarchal process while living in it.

In India, Vandana Shiva (1988) develops an eco-feminist account of women's caring, associating their tendency to preserve life with their use of natural products. Her analysis of the economy centres on ecological concerns, the destruction of resources women need to feed and care for their families. She shows how corporations clearing land for factories to produce products for export destroy forest products, wrecking women's subsistence economy. But her women are not willing victims. She offers a model of women's activism in response to threats against their life-sustaining work. In the Chipko campaign, mostly women hugged trees to prevent men from chopping them down for a factory, then monitored the use of the forest. The extent to which such campaigns can affect national and global policies on the environment and poverty, Shiva's larger goal, is an open question.



Can you identify some weaknesses of essentialist feminism?

In the United States, criticism of essentialists' thought by other feminists revolves around three points;

- 1. It universalizes women, assuming erroneously that all experience gender alike.
- 2. It confuses natural phenomena with women's strategies for coping with patriarchal demands.
- 3. It invites continued perceptions of women as social house keepers in worlds that men build.

The essentialists, however, generate profound questions. Should we understand women in terms of patriarchal constructions or value their models of human ideals? How is women's sexuality to be comprehended outside of patriarchal visions? How do women resist control?

This approach provides an important redress to the bias in Western thought which elevates the masculine and devalues the feminine. However, its rather static and fixed approach to gender creates problems for feminists who seek change in the status quo. Essentialism alone is regarded as an insufficient theoretical base to support active gendered politics, so some feminists have taken the approach further in the form of radicalism.



#### 2.3. Radical Feminism

The radical feminists have replaced the struggle for vote and for the legal reform with the demand for the destruction of patriarchy. At the heart of radical feminism is the belief that men are responsible for and benefit from the exploitation of women. The analysis of patriarchy- the systematic domination of females by males- is of central concern to this branch of feminism. Patriarchy is viewed as a universal phenomenon that has existed across time and cultures. They often concentrate on the family as one of the primary sources of women's oppression in society. They argue that men exploit women by relying on the free domestic labor that women provide in the home. The radical feminism's main contention is that the roots of subordination lie in the biological family, the hirarchised sexual division of society and sex roles themselves, factors which must be fundamentally recognized if true gender equality has to be established. The biological differences result in the male domination of power over women.

Radical feminists, however, differ in their interpretations of the basis of patriarchy, but most agree that it involves the appropriation of women's bodies and sexuality in some form. Shulamith Firestone, an early radical feminist argues that men control women's roles in reproduction and child-rearing. Because women are biologically able to give birth to children, they become dependent materially on men for protection and livelihood. This 'biological inequality' is socially organized in the nuclear family and she therefore argued that women can be emancipated only

through the abolition of the family and the power relations that characterize it.

Radical feminists, such as Andrea Dworkin, argue for the overthrow of patriarchy through active refusal to collaborate with the structures, institutions and practices which uphold masculine power and its abuse. This can involve decisions not to engage in sexual relationships with men, to reclaim power over sexual reproduction (for example, through the use of technology such as artificial insemination), or to provide and organize in women-only spaces and organizations. As a consequence, many radical feminists have chosen to be lesbian, though some have gone further to suggest that lesbianism is women's natural state. Some other radical feminists argue for the feminization of language (for example, 'her story' as opposed to 'his-story' (History).

The radical approach highlights the oppression of lesbians by heterosexual women as well as by men, and introduces sexual orientation as an additional theoretical axis for consideration alongside gender. Radical feminism's links with the gay rights movement and women-only organizations have helped to ensure its political edge. However, the refusal of radical feminists to compromise on the issues of separatism and heterosexism has led to conflict between themselves and potential allies from elsewhere across the feminist spectrum.

?	How do you think patriarchy operates in society?

The use of patriarchy as a concept for explaining gender inequality has been popular with many other feminist theorists also. In a famous work, entitled 'Theorizing Patriarchy' (1990) Sylvia Walby presents a way of

understanding patriarchy that is more flexible than its predecessors. For Walby patriarchy is "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women". She identified six different structures through which patriarchy operates. They are;

\*Production relations in the household- Women's unpaid domestic labor, such as housework and child care, is expropriated by her husband (or cohabite).

\*Paid work- Women in the labor market are excluded from certain types of work, receive lower pay, and are segregated in less skilled jobs.

\*The patriarchal state- In its policies and priorities, the state has a systematic bias towards patriarchal interests.

\*Male violence- Although male violence is often seen as composed of individualistic acts, it is patterned and systematic. Women routinely experience this violence, and are affected by it in standard ways. The state effectively condones the violence with its refusal to intervene, except in exceptional cases.

\*Patriarchal relations in sexuality- This is manifested in 'compulsory heterosexuality' and in the sexual double standard between men and women (in which different 'rules' for sexual behavior apply).

\*Patriarchal cultural institutions- A variety of institutions and practices – including media, religion and education – produce representations of women 'within a patriarchal gaze'. These representations influence women's identities and prescribe acceptable standards of behavior and action.

#### 2.4. Marxist Feminism

Marxist feminists argue that the roots of gender oppression can be traced to capitalism as a means of production, and the power structures reproduced by class in capitalist societies. They argue that freedom from the constraints of gender-stereotyped roles and patriarchal power structures can best be achieved in a Marxist economy. Unlike liberalism, which assumes we have already attained our evolutionary peak by conceptualizing transcendent reason, Marxism projects two more stages. It sees in capitalist class structure the setting for a final synthesis of the contradiction in capitalism: technology to satisfy human needs has reached a high point, but most benefits accrue to the few who own the means of production, through their exploitation of the workers who actually produce goods. This approach addresses the concerns about individualism expressed by critics of liberal feminism but can be criticized for placing gender as a second-order priority, dwarfed by the central concern, class. Given the monocausal account of social arrangements, conflicts such as those in gender, race and caste relations are regarded as by-products of class. They reside, in Marxist terms, in society's superstructure, not its economic base. Presupposing a unitary class of workers, it is anticipated that by overthrowing capitalism all other conflicts would be resolved. In other words, Marxist feminism envisions a second-stage liberation of women; it comes after capitalism is eliminated.



#### 2.5. Socialist Feminism

Socialist Feminism	difference between Marxist Fen	
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Socialist feminists view the essentialist and radical feminist definitions of patriarchy as generative of human oppression as being anti-theoretical. Dissatisfied with the tendency of radicals to focus on gender to the neglect of class, and Marxist feminists to do the reverse, socialists have proposed an eclectic theory which acknowledges the multiple nature of gendered oppression. They want sexuality and gender relations included in the analysis of society, something that Marx ignored. It is this inclusion that really differentiates socialist and Marxist feminisms. However, there are also similarities like both socialist and Marxist feminists agree that humans are defined by their production of the means of their existence. Both see humans, not as liberals do, differentiated from animals by their rational capacity, but as biological beings in a continual process of praxis to solve problems of existence. Taking on board ideas from all the other major strands of feminist thought, socialist feminism offers an account of gender which acknowledges material, social and unconscious processes and accepts that race, gender, sexuality and class combine to produce power relations which systematically disadvantage women. Socialist feminism subscribes to the notion of patriarchy as proposed by early theorists, but acknowledges it to be much more complicated than other approaches suggest. However, its admirable attempts to cope with diversity have not prevented it being superseded by other new kinds of feminism like post modern feminisms with a very different agenda.



#### 2.6. Existential Feminism

Existential feminists, the first and best known of whom, Simone de Beauvoir, argue that humans naturally tend to polarize the world into masculine and feminine, and then overlay these categories with value judgments which privilege the male. De Beauvoir argued that, for historical reasons, man established himself as the generic self and placed woman as the essential 'other', defined through what she lacks and the hidden, fearful qualities that she possesses.

	Act	tivity 6
	1.	Can you list some value judgments which privilege males in your society?
<b>P</b>		



#### 2.7. Black Feminism

Do you think the different types of feminist theory discussed above fully explain the situation of black women? If so, why?

Do the versions of feminism outlined above apply equally to the experiences of both white and nonwhite women? Many feminists, especially from the developing countries claim they do not. They argue that ethnic divisions among women are not considered by the main feminist schools of thought, which are oriented to the dilemmas of white, predominantly middle-class women living in industrialized societies. It is this dissatisfaction with existing forms of feminism that has led to the emergence of black feminism, which concentrates on the particular problems facing black women. Black feminists, such as African American theorist Bell Hooks, criticize academic feminism for its white middleclass bias, and its neglect of the gendered experiences of women of color. Hooks is a black academic feminist participating in the white-dominated debates of contemporary feminist theory, but she retains contacts with her working-class black extended family and is active in the black rights movement. Given her multiple identity and membership of numerous political constituencies, Hooks and her black feminist colleagues have been able to draw attention to the lack of theorizing about race inherent in white feminism.

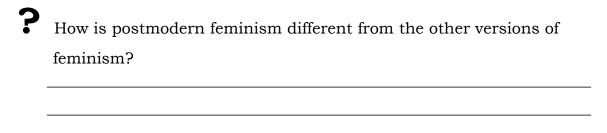
#### 2.8. Postmodern Feminism

in lemmist theory?	you think there is
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Postmodern feminism arose from several different sources and has a complicated history. It is associated with a wider movement in the social sciences which rejects certainty and structured accounts of social phenomena. Like socialist feminists, postmodern theorists were dissatisfied with the limited range of other feminist theories and their tendency to focus on single explanations of gender. However, whereas socialist feminists chose to adopt certain aspects of existing theories to construct a new eclectic approach, postmodern feminists began to question the wisdom of constructing great theories at all. Postmodern writers, such as Kenneth Gergen and Michel Foucault, reject 'grand narratives', arguing that the social world is much less structured and much more fragmented than these theories suggest. They advocate a shift away from a focus n a single material 'reality' to a position where there are many alternative versions or constructions of reality.

The appeal of the post-structuralist approach for feminists lies in the possibility of exposing gender as being not real or fixed, but constructed and therefore amenable to change. Marginalized groups are seen as fertile sources of alternative construction, so that feminisms can be constructed from a variety of perspectives. There are potentially black, lesbian, heterosexual, white, middle-and working-class constructions of feminism; in fact, as many versions of feminism as there are combinations of experience. This approach offers on way of dealing with the diversity in feminist thought and practice, and can explain the ways

in which power can be achieved through symbolic, as well as material, means.



Prominent among postmodernist feminist theorists are Judith Butler, Donna Haraway and Laurel Richardson. Some of Butler's most important works centers on how cultures make only certain identities 'intelligible' so that other enactments of identity are defined as abnormal and perverse. According to her 'identity categories are never merely descriptive, but always normative, and as such, exclusionary'. Not all constructions are equally available and some may be systematically promoted over others. For example, constructions of sexuality which privilege heterosexuality are more widely employed in contemporary popular media than alternatives which promote lesbian, bisexual or celibate practices. Radical lesbian theory on such heterosexism demonstrates that constructions are not neutral and are often used to serve the purposes of particular individuals and groups.

Though postmodern/constructionist feminism is appealing for the reasons outlined above, it worries some feminists because of its move away from a focus on the material or real. Given the continuing existence in many parts of the world of gendered oppression such as sexual violence, enforced pregnancy, sexual slavery, unequal or non-existent pay, educational and employment discrimination, for some it would be politically damaging if feminism were to direct its attentions away from these material problems. Because of these concerns, some feminists

adopt a type of constructionism which acknowledges a material basis upon which different versions of reality may be constructed.

One of them is the Feminist Standpoint theory. Feminist Standpoint theory assumes that women are essentially different from men and need to be studied separately and in their own right. They do not accept the view that subordinate social positioning determines consciousness but that it makes specific sorts of knowledge available.

All of the strands of thought outlined above (and most of the practices associated with them) coexist today. There is no single orthodoxy in contemporary feminism; no end-point has been reached in the development of feminist theory. The story is continuing to be rewritten.

#### Summary

Feminist theory seeks to analyze the conditions which shape women's lives and to explore cultural understandings of what it means to be a woman. It was initially guided by the political aims of the women's Movement, the need to understand women's subordination and their exclusion from, or marginalization within, a variety of cultural and social arenas. Thinking as a feminist involves challenging much of what has counted as 'knowledge'. Because we have historically lived in maledominated societies, women have more often been the objects of knowledge than the producers of it.

The feminist theory we know today has derived from the 1970s but has developed and diversified through a constant process of debate, critique and reflection. As a result, different strands of theory and new objects of theoretical inquiry have emerged at different times in this process. Feminist liberals argue that women evolved equally with men. They work on the assumption that men and women are of equal value and deserve equal rights as individuals. Their practices aim to enable the individual person to pursue their rights unhindered by gender. Essentialist feminists, on the other hand, see women as innately different from men. Using some of the same biological arguments adopted by socio-biologists, essentialist feminists, such as Mary Daly (1978), maintain the view that women are, by virtue of their biological make-up, psychologically different from men, and, some argue, naturally superior.

Radical feminists have replaced the struggle for vote and for the legal reform with the demand for the destruction of patriarchy. At the heart of radical feminism is the belief that men are responsible for and benefit from the exploitation of women. Radical feminists, such as Andrea Dworkin, argue for the overthrow of patriarchy through active refusal to collaborate with the structures, institutions and practices which uphold

masculine power and its abuse. Marxist feminists argue that the roots of gender oppression can be traced to capitalism as a means of production, and the power structures reproduced by class in capitalist societies. They argue that freedom from the constraints of gender-stereotyped roles and patriarchal power structures can best be achieved in a Marxist economy. Socialist feminists view the essentialist and radical feminist definitions of patriarchy as generative of human oppression as being anti-theoretical. Dissatisfied with the tendency of radicals to focus on gender to the neglect of class, and Marxist feminists to do the reverse, socialists have proposed an eclectic theory which acknowledges the multiple nature of gendered oppression. They want sexuality and gender relations included in the analysis of society, something that Marx ignored.

Like socialist feminists, postmodern theorists were dissatisfied with the limited range of other feminist theories and their tendency to focus on single explanations of gender. However, whereas socialist feminists chose to adopt certain aspects of existing theories to construct a new eclectic approach, postmodern feminists began to question the wisdom of constructing great theories at all.

#### Self-Check Exercise 2

#### Part I: Multiple Choices

#### Instruction: Choose the best answer

- 1. For feminists is not an abstract intellectual activity divorced from women's lives, but seeks to explain the conditions under which those lives are lived.
  - A. Gender Studies
  - B. Feminism
  - C. Theory
  - D. Women's Studies
  - E. None of the above
- 2. Which of the following statements is INCORRECT?
  - A. Feminist theory seeks to explore cultural understandings of what it means to be a woman
  - B. Feminist modes of theorizing contest female-centered ways of thinking
  - C. For feminists women are not a homogeneous group
  - D. Feminist theory is not a static phenomenon
  - E. None of the above
- 3. Which of the following individuals is an essentialist feminist?
  - A. Mary Wollstonecraft
  - B. John Stuart Mill
  - C. Carol Gilligan
  - D. Simon De Beauvoir
  - E. None of the above



- 4. \_\_\_\_\_have replaced the struggle for vote and legal reform with the demand for the destruction of patriarchy.
  - A. Liberal Feminists
  - B. Essentialist Feminists
  - C. Black Feminists
  - D. Radical Feminists
  - E. None of the above

#### Part II: True/False

## <u>Instruction</u>: Answer 'True' if the statement is correct and 'False' if the statement is incorrect

- 1. Thinking as a feminist involves accepting much of what has been counted as 'knowledge.'
- 2. Essentialism is regarded as a sufficient theoretical base to support active gendered politics.
- 3. Marxist feminism envisions second-stage liberation of women.
- 4. Postmodern feminism is associated with a wider movement in the social sciences which accepts certainty and structured accounts of social phenomena.

# Unit Three Women, Family and Marriage



Dear learners! Women, more than anything else, are commonly

associated with marriage and the family. Therefore, this unit tries to deal with the relationships between women, family and marriage. The unit also attempts to provide an overview on the way feminists understand and try to reinterpret the family as a major social institution in society.

The unit has two sections. The first section analyzes the relationships between women and the family while the second section deals with the relationship between women and marriage. Moreover, the unit also contains in-text questions, activities, summary as well as self-check questions.

#### **Objectives**

After successfully completing this unit, you will be able to:

- explain gender inequalities in the family;
- describe how feminists understand the family as a social institution;
- explain how feminists have tried to reinterpret the family; and
- describe the possible impacts of marriage on the lives and life choices of women.

#### Section 1: Women and Family



Dear learners! This section provides you with an explanation of

women's place in the family. It assesses some manifestations of gender inequality in the family and what feminists have recommended in their attempt to reinterpret the family.

#### **Objectives**

After successfully completing this section, you will be able to:

- define the family;
- describe gender inequalities in the family; and
- discuss the feminist understanding of the family

#### 1.1. Gender Inequalities in the Family

?	Can you define the family in your own words?

Ever since the turn of the previous century 'Family' had become the focal point for many social science disciplines. Today it has become commonplace to talk about a crisis in this institution, implying thereby that the very fabric of society is under threat. Innumerable studies are being conducted under the auspices of different disciplines, to trace out the reasons for this transition and also to depict a comprehensive picture of this change. Several methodologies are also being introduced, or at evolve better understanding least proposed, to а transformations. These new propositions, however, are also invariably affected by a number of anomalies. The most significant problem here is

that, there is still no uniformly accepted framework to transcend this problem of 'the family in crisis'.

Traditionally 'family' has been looked at as the most fundamental basis of the social structure, and, therefore, any change in this institution aroused a number of apprehensions among the analysts. For generations, we have relied on the family to provide a framework within which human beings were reproduced, children cared for and the elderly supported. The notion of family has, therefore, been invariably locked up within an altruistic, monolithic image. However, this has become a serious constraint for the present day analysts of the family who try to look into the so called inequities of this institution, which are becoming increasingly visible today. The problem is that no analyst is left with the option of looking into these anomalies as that is otherwise considered as going against the broader interest of society. While on the one hand, the emerging understanding of the functional dynamics of this institution is largely pointing to various discriminatory practices in it and the existing notions of this institution are not flexible enough to integrate such details into its mould. On the other hand, these notions are also acting as constraints in the emergence of alternate visions, in spite of the enormity of those instances. The end result is that there exists a very high level of unevenness in the theories of this institution, practically transforming the existing concepts, totally redundant.

The only exception to this situation is the works of feminists, who have, at least partially, succeeded in problematising the mainstream theories. However, that too was not without some fall outs. One such fall out is that it resulted in earning them the status of being the 'antisocial', or as the, 'violators' of traditions? Nevertheless, this has also earned them the credit for being the proponents of an alternate thinking on this otherwise crucial institution, which is in 'crisis'. The most outstanding of their

contribution is that they while challenging the outmoded premises of this social unit articulated a different vocabulary or a criterion of understanding for it. During the 1970s and 1980s, feminist perspectives dominated most debates and research on the family. If previously the sociology of the family had focused on family structures, the historical development of the nuclear and extended family and the importance of kinship ties, feminism succeeded in directing attention inside families to examine the experiences of women in the domestic sphere.

Given the importance of family relationships in most women's lives it is not surprising that 'the family' has occupied a central place in feminist theory and research. Various aspects of family life have been identified as crucial to an understanding of women's subordination. Some feminists have emphasized male violence and men's control over women's sexuality and reproduction; others have looked at the economics of domestic labor and have looked at the contribution it makes to capitalism or the extent to which men benefit from it; still some others have concentrated on the familial relationships which shape the construction of masculinity and femininity; and many more have examined the state regulation of family life. However, three issues can be specifically highlighted as the most widely prevalent and discussed themes within feminist understandings of family. At first, is the issue of domestic division of labor- the way in which tasks are allocated between members of a household. Among the feminists there are differing opinions about the historical emergence of this division. While some feminists see it as an outcome of industrial capitalism, others claim that it is linked to patriarchy, and thus predates industrialization. There is reason to believe that a domestic division of labor existed prior to industrialization, but it seems clear that capitalist production brought about a much sharper distinction between domestic and work realms. This process resulted in the crystallization of 'male

spheres' and 'female spheres' and power relationships which are felt to this day.

The second aspect is the issue of unequal power relationships that exist within the families. The widespread discussion of the problem of domestic violence was a result of this newfound awareness. Wife battering, marital rape, sexual abuse of children etc received more public attention as a result of feminists' claims that the violent and the abusive sides of family life have long been ignored in both academic contexts and legal and policy contexts and legal and policy circles.

The third area is the study of caring activities. This is a broad realm which encompasses a variety of processes, from, attending to a family member who is ill to looking after an elderly relative over a long period of time. Sometimes caring means simply being attuned to someone else's psychological well-being- several feminist writers have been referring to this as 'emotion work' within relationships. Not only do women tend to shoulder concrete tasks such as cleaning and childcare, but they also invest large amounts of emotional labor in maintaining personal relationships.

There were also studies of other areas of family life brought out by feminist scholarship. Of primary concern here are the larger transformations which are taking place in family forms – the formation and dissolution of families and households, and the evolving expectations within individual's personal relationships. The rise in divorce and lone parenting, the emergence of 'reconstituted families' and gay families, and the popularity of cohabitation are all subjects of concern.

#### 1.2. Feminists and the Reinterpretation of Family

?	How do you think feminists understand the family?								

Thus the feminists have reformulated the treatment of the family on several grounds. Firstly, they object to its neglect of the gender issue. Secondly, they challenge the idea of family as composed of individuals with identical rights and interests. Thirdly, they also argue that different members of the family experience the family life in different ways. Fourth, they criticize the glorification of images like the insulating character of the family as leading to a failure to perceive the violent and hierarchic power relations that are inherent in this institution. Fifthly, feminists have also questioned the standard boundaries and dichotomies associated with the concept of the family, such as between private and public space.

While in reality, women and children are often cut off from the outside contact, this is not recognized as an issue in the public realm. Finally, feminists also challenge the view that the family is becoming more and more egalitarian and symmetrical. They argue, by contrast, that the family is a site of inequality. In an article, Neera Desai has rightly captured these arguments and made the following four propositions for family studies:

- A. Treat gender as a primary variable in the study of family
- B. Challenge the prevailing assumption of the monolithic family
- C. Question the notion of family boundaries



D. Recognize the prevalence of consensual and conflicting elements in the family [Neera Desai; 1997].

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### Section 2: Women and Marriage

Dear learners! In this section you will learn about the impact of marriage on the lives of women. The section introduces you with the way in which pervasive sex-role socialization prepares women for accepting the clear impacts of marriage on their lives.

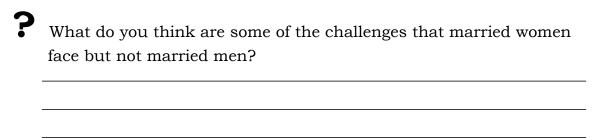


#### **Objectives**

After successfully completing this section, you will be able to:

- identify the impacts of marriage on the life choices of women;
- explain how socialization restricts the range of women's choices in life and work; and
- understand the impacts of unequal distribution of benefits and burdens between husbands and wives.

#### 2.1. Impacts of Marriage on Women



Although all men and women marry, marriage has earlier and far greater impact on the lives and life choices of women than on those of men. Socialization and the culture in general place more emphasis on marriage for girls than for boys and, although people have recently become less negative about remaining single, young women are more likely than young men to regard "having a good marriage and family life" as extremely important to them. This fact, together with their expectation of being the parent primarily responsible for children, clearly affects women's decisions about the extent and field of education and training they will pursue, and their degree of purposiveness about careers.

Although, the proportion of young women who plan to be housewives exclusively has declined considerably, women's choices about work are significantly affected from an early age by their expectations about the

effects of family life on their work and of work on their family life. As is well known, the participation of women in the labor force, especially women with small children, has continued to rise. But, although a small minority of women is rapidly increasing the previously tiny percentages of women in the elite professions, the vast majority of women who work outside the home are still in low-paying jobs with little or no prospect of advancement. In short, the occupational aspirations and expectations of adolescents are highly differentiated by sex. Given the pervasiveness of sex-role socialization (including the mixed or negative messages that girls are often given about their future work lives) the actual obstacles that our social structures place in the way of working mothers, and the far greater responsibility, both psychological and practical, that is placed on mothers than on fathers for their children's welfare, it is not surprising that women perceive a conflict between their own work interests and the interest of any children they might have. Needless to say, such a choice does not confront boys in their formative years.

When women envisage a future strongly influenced by the demands on them as wives and particularly as mothers, they are likely to opt for traditionally female fields of study and/or occupational paths. The typical rout for women is still to finish their education with high school and to marry and have children in their early twenties, though a growing minority is continuing their education, establishing themselves in careers, and marrying later.

It is, however, the fact that most women are, even before marriage, in an economic position that sets them up to become more vulnerable during marriage, and most vulnerable of all if their marriage ends and-unprepared as they are- they find themselves in the position of having to provide for themselves and their children.

The cycle of this inequality continues even after marriage partly because of society's assumptions about gender, but also because women, on entering marriage, tend already to be disadvantaged members of workforce, married women are likely to start out with leverage (advantage) in the relationship than their husbands. The impact of this unequal distribution of benefits and burdens between husbands and wives is hardest and most directly felt by the increasing numbers of women and children whose families are no longer intact. Marital disruption through the death of a spouse, divorce, or separation is consistently rated as the most psychologically stressful life event for both women and men alike. But in women's lives, the personal disruption caused by these events is multifarious as it will be accompanied by a host of serious social and economic dislocations. Many studies have shown that whereas the average economic status of men improves after divorce that of women and children deteriorates seriously.

In short, women are differently located within a patriarchal society and thus have varying experiences of family life and marriage. Composition of family is therefore, taking a variety of turns in terms of its nature and character. Many homosexual men and women now live in stable relationships as couples. But because most countries still do not sanction marriage between homosexuals, relationships between gay men and between lesbians are grounded in personal commitment and mutual trust rather than law. Many traditional features of heterosexual partnerships – such as – mutual support, care and responsibility in illness, the joining of finances and so forth – are becoming integrated into gay and lesbian families in ways that were not possible earlier.

Activity 8	
1. Can y	ou list some societal expectations from a 'good wife' in your
societ	y?
A.	
В.	
C.	
D.	
	you mention the possible impacts of these societal tations on the lives of women in your society?
Α.	
В.	
C.	
D.	

# Summary

Traditionally 'family' has been looked at as the most fundamental basis of the social structure, and, therefore, any change in this institution aroused a number of apprehensions among the analysts. For generations, we have relied on the family to provide a framework within which human beings were reproduced, children cared for and the elderly supported.

Various aspects of family life have been identified as crucial to an understanding of women's subordination. Some feminists have emphasized male violence and men's control over women's sexuality and reproduction; others have looked at the economics of domestic labor and have looked at the contribution it makes to capitalism or the extent to which men benefit from it; still some others have concentrated on the familial relationships which shape the construction of masculinity and femininity; and many more have examined the state regulation of family life.

Three issues can be specifically highlighted as the most widely prevalent and discussed themes within feminist understandings of family. At first, is the issue of domestic division of labor- the way in which tasks are allocated between members of a household. The second aspect is the issue of unequal power relationships that exist within the families. The third area is the study of caring activities. This is a broad realm which encompasses a variety of processes, from, attending to a family member who is ill to looking after an elderly relative over a long period of time.

Most women are, even before marriage, in an economic position that sets them up to become more vulnerable during marriage, and most vulnerable of all if their marriage ends and- unprepared as they are- they find themselves in the position of having to provide for themselves and their children. The cycle of this inequality continues even after marriage partly because of society's assumptions about gender, but also because

women, on entering marriage, tend already to be disadvantaged members of workforce, married women are likely to start out with leverage (advantage) in the relationship than their husbands. The impact of this unequal distribution of benefits and burdens between husbands and wives is hardest and most directly felt by the increasing numbers of women and children whose families are no longer intact.

Generally, women are differently located within a patriarchal society and thus have varying experiences of family life and marriage. Composition of family is therefore, taking a variety of turns in terms of its nature and character.

#### Self-Check Exercise 3

### Part I: Multiple Choices

#### Instruction: Choose the best answer

- 1. Which of the following is/are among the most widely prevalent and discussed themes within feminist understandings of family?
  - A. Domestic division of labor
  - B. Power relations within families
  - C. Caring activities
  - D. All of the above
  - E. None of the above
- 2. Which of the following is/are FALSE about feminists?
  - A. They object the neglect of gender issue in the study of the family
  - B. They challenge the idea of family as composed of individuals with identical rights and interests
  - C. They argue that different members of the family experience family life in different ways
  - D. They question the standard boundaries and dichotomies associated with the concept of the family
  - E. All of the above
  - F. None of the above
- 3. All are parts of Neera Desai's propositions for family studies EXCEPT:
  - A. Treat gender as a primary variable in the study of family
  - B. Challenge past assumptions about the monolithic family
  - C. Question the notion of family boundaries
  - D. All of the above
  - E. None of the above



# Part II: True/False

# <u>Instruction</u>: Answer 'True' if the statement is correct and 'False' if the statement is incorrect

- 1. Young women are more likely than young men to regard "having a good marriage and family life" as extremely important to them.
- 2. Women's choices about work are significantly affected from an early age by their expectations about the effects of family life on their life.
- 3. Women are differently located in a patriarchal society and thus have similar experiences of family life and marriage.
- 4. Marital disruption through the death of a spouse, divorce, or separation is consistently rated as the most psychologically stressful life event for both women and men alike.

### **Unit Four**

# Gender and Economics

Dear learners! This unit deals with the role of women in the

economy of the society in which they live in. To do so this unit concentrates on sexual division of labor and its implications for gender inequality. The unit also attempts to describe how sexual division of labor perpetuates the subordination of women both in wage and non-wage work.

Accordingly, the only section in the unit wholly focuses on the relationship between sexual division of labor and the subordination of women. It tries to explain how and why female labor power has been significantly obscured in the economy.

# **Objectives**

After successfully completing this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the relationship between sexual division of labor and the subordination of women;
- discuss why the value of women's work often goes unnoticed; and
- identify the place of female labor in capitalism as the dominant economic system in the contemporary world.

# Section 1: The Sexual Division of Labor and the Subordination of Women

?	What do you think is the importance of attempting to understand
	sexual division of labor in any analysis of gender inequality?

All societies exhibit a sexual division of labor. That is, there are some tasks which are allocated predominantly or exclusively to women, others to men, while some may be done by both men and women. As societies also undergo economic change, the nature of work changes, and so does its distribution between men and women. And at any point in time, of course, the division of tasks varies from country to country. But the existence of some sexual division of labor, some sex-typing of activities, is a very persistent fact of human society.

Feminists have long been interested in this persistent fact, arguing that to understand the sexual division of labor is crucial to any attempt to understand, and to change, the social position of women as a whole. Feminists, then, are interested in the sexual division of labor in society because it appears to express, embody, and furthermore to perpetuate, female subordination. This can be easily illustrated. In areas where both women and men work for wages, women workers tend to be segregated into certain industrial sectors, and into certain occupations within those sectors. Within these jobs, women are typically lower paid, defined as less skilled, low in the hierarchy of authority and have relatively poor conditions of work. Moreover, it is striking how rapidly, as new factories and plantations are established, new categories of 'women's work' become established, with relatively disadvantageous wages and conditions. In this way the sexual division of labor is created and

recreated as the wage labor market develops, and one form of women's subordination is perpetuated.



How does sexual division of labor contribute to the subordination of women?

The existence of a sexual division of labor is not of course limited to the sphere of wage work. In non-wage work, whether in farming, in urban self-employment in trading or manufacturing, or in 'domestic' tasks such as cooking or child care, a sexual division of labor is also a continuing fact, and frequently works to the relative detriment of women. Women work as unpaid labor in household-based activities-agricultural and non-agricultural- for an often meager share of the benefits. In poor agricultural areas, the development of cash cropping and new farming methods and the shifting of food processing outside the home, have brought changes in the sexual division of labor, creating financially profitable activities for men, and segregating women in the less productive activities.

Gender subordination is thus embedded in the sexual division of labor. As shown, the sexual division of labor, reorganized and often strengthened as the cash economy spreads, tends to act to the detriment of women. Feminist analysis of such sexual divisions therefore starts from the premise that they are not 'natural', that they do not merely embody complementary roles for men and women. Rather, we can turn such a proposition on its head: only in a society where men and women constitute unequal genders is there any reason why gender should be an important organizing principle of the social division of labor, with the exception of the physical process of childbearing. For, nothing in the fact

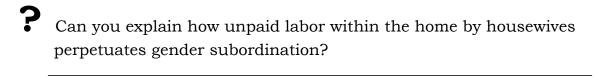
that women bear children implies that they exclusively should care for them through their childhood; still less does it imply that women should also feed and care for adults, nurse the sick, undertake certain agricultural tasks or work in electronics factories. A society where men and women were equal would be one where the arbitrary fact of sexual difference did not mark out the possibilities and limitations of economic activity for the individual. The evidence thus strongly suggests a link between the sexual division of labor and the subordination of women.

How can gender subordination against women benefit capitalist economic structures?

Within the sphere of wage work, for example, women have long formed a cheap labor force, paid less relative to their productivity than ,men, and the effect of this has been to increase profits both within developed industrial capitalist countries and in the Third World. It has also been suggested that capital benefits from using women as a 'reserve army' of labor: a flexible supply of workers who can be absorbed in a phase of expansion, and thrown out – not merely out of work but out of the labor force, back into dependency within the home – when a crisis sets in. Women from one of the cheapest and most vulnerable parts of the wage labor force, and are thus open to a high level of exploitation. Furthermore the material divisions which emerge in the work force between men and women – difference in pay, competition for jobs in situations of unemployment – lessen the strength of workers as a whole, allowing capital to divide and rule and thus to increase profits at the expense of wages.

A similar line of argument has been applied to women's work done outside the wage labor force, such as unpaid work within the household. Within Europe and North America, a recent debate about the analysis of domestic labor, or housework, focused on the advantages of such work for capital. Housework is work done within the home, producing goods for immediate consumption within the household (cooked meals, clean clothes, child care). How then, it was asked, is the process of capital accumulation assisted by this mass of unpaid labor? The unpaid labor within the home, almost all done by women, raises the standard of living of the working class above that provided by wage alone, and provides the services of care and socialization of children, that is, of the future labor force. These are services which could only otherwise be provided, less effectively and at high cost to capital, by the state.

### 1.1. A Women's Work Is Never Done



Thus, the irony behind the idyllic happy family as a place of repose is the consumption of female labor power. Work in capitalism is something men do. Men are the providers because they are paid money. Women are only allowed money by their husbands; many men are suspicious of their wives achieving the status of wage-earner, because money – even a little money – means power and independence. Because housework does not fit into the prevailing notions of work it mysteriously becomes not work at all. It is not counted. The woman at home is described as a woman who doesn't work. 'In sheer quantity, household labor, including child care, constitutes a large amount of socially necessary production.

Nevertheless, in a society based on commodity production, it is not usually considered "real work" since it is outside of trade and the market place.'

One estimate of housewives' work showed housewives with children and without jobs doing an eighty-hour week, and women with children who went out to work doing an extra fifty hours at home every week. Juliet Mitchell quotes other studies which also indicate something of the significance of this work which is not seen as work. It has been calculated in Sweden that 2,340 million hours a year are spent by women in housework compared with 1,290 million hours in industry.

The significance and value of female labor power has been obscured for all the same reasons that the labor of other subordinate groups is not given its due, but the peculiar nature of female oppression has made it particularly invisible. The fact that work outside the commodity system is not within the scope of economic calculation and that this work is done by women is part of the more general economic dominance and cultural hegemony of men over women. Every individual man is forced to use his wife's expenditure of herself in the family in order to 'earn' money in the form of wages. He is dependent for his survival on her 'non-work' and is conditioned to see the world through male eyes and from the point of view of the development and maintenance of male power.



What do you think are the consequences of non recognition of women's labor within the household?

Nor is the connection of women to commodity production clear like that of the male worker: 'The labor of the worker and his wife is appropriated, the one directly the other indirectly, by capital whilst only that portion of their labor time is paid (via the man) which is required to maintain them and perpetuate their laboring power at the customary standard of living established in the process of class struggle'. Even if the means of population are socially owned and controlled, women remain part of the means of production for the individual man in the family. This has been disregarded by Marxists writing about women because the theory of surplus value, while relating clearly to the dominant capitalist mode of production, is difficult to apply to production within the family which is governed by quite different conditions and circumstances.

The non-recognition of women's labor in the home leaves them with no sense of value as a group at all. The subordination of women as a group and the particular nature of female conditioning serve to maintain this. Ultimately the only way of establishing an alternative value of female human beings is to shatter the system of capitalist production at home as well as at work. Only when the notion of human value can become general in a society without exploitation can both the relationship between man and woman and the relationship of human beings to nature cease to be relations determined by the needs of commodity production.



Housework is not only excluded from the prevailing economic notion of value, the actual nature of the work makes it invisible in another sense, men do not generally see it being done, the woman in the home works in isolation while the man is away. When he returns he notices absences, things which have not been done. The day's routine of tasks is not apparent because they result merely in the creation of a normal environment for him. But house work often does not seem like job work even to the women. It is very different from work outside. Obviously there is no wage, no union, and no strike. There is no clear distinction between work place and leisure, no clocking in and out, no time-and –motion study. It stretches over the whole time of existence. Its space is the whole space of a woman's life a woman does not go to work, she wakes up to work. Home is work and work is home, within the space of the house and the time of the day there are certain tasks to be done. The tasks are the boundaries of a woman's work in the home.

In the society which values people by the wages they earn women receive no wage and do work which is barely recognized as work, in which productivity can't be measured and nothing is ever ultimately accomplished. They do this in a society which conditions women to believe they are inferior to men that women were brought into the world to magnify a man's image of himself and serve him. When you go out to work the job is something you do. But the work of a housewife and mother is not just something you do, it's somebody you are. Because women's work in the home retains certain pre-capitalist elements, the bonds of the family are not on the cash-nexus: the work-discipline and wage-time of the factory don't exist; the things women make are consumed more or less immediately, a woman is not transformed into a hand or an operator. Quite the contrary, women's work is completely unspecialized. A woman in one day performs the functions of

innumerable workers, nurse, cleaner, psychiatrist, stripper, fortuneteller, and cook. A woman has to be all kinds of people on demand.

As Sheila Rowbotham aptly said once, to compensate her lack of purpose she has to nurture the image of the indispensable housewife who devotes her life to her husband and children. Even when she openly recognizes the sacrifice, she tends to see it as martyrdom and is proud to have 'given her life' for her family. The psychological bondage remains even after its economic rationale has dissolved.

# Summary

All societies exhibit a sexual division of labor. That is, there are some tasks which are allocated predominantly or exclusively to women, others to men, while some may be done by both men and women. As societies also undergo economic change, the nature of work changes, and so does its distribution between men and women. But the existence of some sexual division of labor, some sex-typing of activities, is a very persistent fact of human society.

In areas where both women and men work for wages, women workers tend to be segregated into certain industrial sectors, and into certain occupations within those sectors. Within these jobs, women are typically lower paid, defined as less skilled, low in the hierarchy of authority and have relatively poor conditions of work.

The existence of a sexual division of labor is not of course limited to the sphere of wage work. In non-wage work, whether in farming, in urban self-employment in trading or manufacturing, or in 'domestic' tasks such as cooking or child care, a sexual division of labor is also a continuing fact, and frequently works to the relative detriment of women. Women work as unpaid labor in household-based activities-agricultural and non-agricultural- for an often meager share of the benefits.

Gender subordination is thus embedded in the sexual division of labor. The sexual division of labor, reorganized and often strengthened as the cash economy spreads, tends to act to the detriment of women. A society where men and women were equal would be one where the arbitrary fact of sexual difference did not mark out the possibilities and limitations of economic activity for the individual.



# Self-Check Exercise 4

### Part I: Multiple Choices

#### Instruction: Choose the best answer

- 1. Which of the following is FALSE?
  - A. All societies exhibit a sexual division of labor
  - B. Gender subordination is embedded in the sexual division of labor
  - C. Feminist analysis attempts to show that sexual divisions merely embody complementary roles for men and women
  - D. Feminists are interested in the sexual division of labor because it appears to perpetuate female subordination
  - E. None of the above
- 2. Within the sphere of wage work:
  - A. Women have long formed a cheap labor force
  - B. Women have been treated as 'reserve army of labor'
  - C. Women have been open to a high level of exploitation
  - D. All of the above
  - E. None of the above



### Part II: True/False

# <u>Instruction</u>: Answer 'True' if the statement is correct and 'False' if the statement is incorrect

- 1. Work in capitalism is something women do.
- 2. The non-recognition of women's labor in the home leaves them with no sense of value as a group.
- 3. According to feminists a woman has to be all kinds of people on demand.
- 4. Housework often does not seem like job work even to women.



#### **Unit Five**

#### Women's Movements in the United States



Dear learners! This unit tries to uncover women's movements for

liberation particularly in the United States. It deals with the crucial processes that led to the emergence and development of such movements. Moreover, it is hoped that such a unit would help understand women's persistent struggle for equality.

The only section in the unit gives an overview on the origins of women's movements in the United States, the emergence of the new women's movements of the 1960s and 1970s as well as ways in which the United States women's movements flourished in the 1970s.

# **Objectives**

After successfully completing this unit, you will be able to:

- Identify factors that gave rise to women's movements in the 1960s;
- Explain the multicultural nature of feminist movements in the United States;
- Discuss major episodes in the course of women's movements; and
- Identify factors that slowed the progress of women's movements in the 1980s.



#### Section 1: The U.S. Women's Movement

# 1.1. Origins of the U.S. Women's Movements

?	What do you think led to the rise of U.S. Women's Movements in the late 1960s?

The U S women's movement that burst into public consciousness in the late 1960s had its origins in the nineteenth-century struggle for the abolition of slavery, as African American and white women abolitionists who had been denied membership in some organizations and the right to speak in public began to protest the subordination of women and to agitate for women's rights. The first women's rights convention, held at Seneca Falls, New York, July 19-20, 1848, adopted the formal Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions on the Rights of Women and launched a multi-issue feminist movement. Soon, however, winning the vote for women became the movement's top priority, and it gradually became a women's suffrage movement. After the vote was won in1920, the women's movement continued on a smaller scale as suffragists turned their attention to other issues; working for peace, family planning, worker's rights to unionize, and other social reforms.

# 1.2. Launching the "New" Women's Movement: 1960s-1970s

What was unique about the situation of Black Women in the U.S. in the 1960s?

During the turbulent, idealistic 1960s, profound social change suddenly seemed possible. The government's war on poverty and the African American civil rights movement generated fervor for justice and social change that inspired activists in other communities of color and advocates for women. The reinvigorated women's movement developed along two paths: the liberal women's rights movement and the more radical feminist movement for women's liberation. In both contexts, many women struggled to build a multicultural feminist movement. Confronting the demand from men of color and from white women that they had to choose whether racism or sexism was most oppressive, some feminists of color and white feminist theorists began to develop a third way, considering racism and sexism as twin evils and women of color as the experts on their impact.

Like their foremothers working for suffrage, women of color often experienced racism from white women and sexism from men of color. White feminists often assumed that similarities of gender would overcome differences of race and class and sought to recruit women of color into their organizations and their ideology. Many white feminists thought they were being antiracist by attempting to be "color-blind". However, many women of color and others understood this as an insult, recognizing that asking women to deny their differences was ultimately destructive of the unified feminist vision that was their goal.

The women's movement during the 1960s and early1970s was exciting, invigorating, and transformational for many women. The movement encompassed efforts to attack sex discrimination in law and social policy through legislative and legal means as well as "consciousness-raising" to understand patriarchy and women's subjugation and create strategies to transform society-from government to religion to the family-into an egalitarian one. While the growth of the women's movement was gradual and built on women's experiences in other progressive social movements, several explosive moments helped shape feminism during the 1960s.

In 1961, in response to pressure from women's groups, President John F Kennedy appointed the first President's Commission on the Status of Women chaired by former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Largely in response to the commission's recommendations, President Kennedy in 1962 ordered federal government agencies to stop discriminating against women employees. In 1963, Congress passed the Equal Pay Act, requiring employers to pay women and men "equal pay for equal work". The commission's work initiated government action for women's rights over the next fifteen years and served as the model for other official government structures through which feminist advocates could work for legal and policy changes.

During this same period, Betty Friedan's 1963 book, The Feminine Mystique, articulated widespread discontent among white upper-middle-class homemakers and assured them that this discontent was not a sigh of neurotic maladjustment to their "proper role". The fact that the book was a best-seller reflected the hunger among many women for a larger life and helped prepare them to join the National Organization for Women (NOW), the new women's rights organization that Friedan and her colleagues established three years later in June 1966. This explosive moment had begun when many of the women attending the third annual

conference of state commissions on the status of women were denied permission to propose resolutions demanding changes in enforcement of the law prohibiting sex discrimination in employment. Their outrage sparked the creation of NOW, which took the women's movement forward into new levels of activism.

?	What was the role of radical feminism in the U.S. Women's Movements?							

During 1967 and 1968, radical women organized women's liberation groups in several cities. While these groups were predominantly composed of young white activists, women of color were also building feminist organizations such as the National Black Feminist Organization, Asian Women United (San Francisco), and Asian Sisters in Action (Boston). Native American women were leaders in the fishing rights struggles of the 1960s, building on a long tradition of indigenous women's activism as political leaders.

The women's liberation groups also suffered through a series of conflicts and splits based on ideology, sexual orientation, ethnic and class differences, and structural problems. Feminist theorists developed extensive analyses of the structures of patriarchy, institutionalized sexism, and male supremacy and the links among sexism, racism, heterosexism, and classism. Disputes erupted between New Left women, who held that the nation's political and economic system was responsible for women's problems, and radical feminists, who insisted that male supremacy and patriarchal institutions were the source of women's oppression. Radical feminists also rejected the notion that moving women into equality with men in an inherently unjust system should be

the goal of feminism. Instead, they sought to analyze and alter the cause of all forms of inequality—the oppression of women as a class. Lesbian feminists challenged the movement to confront both misogyny (hatred of women) and homophobia (bias, prejudice) and to recognize their common source in patriarchal structures.

The radical feminists soon became the movement's creative, cutting edge in both theory and practice, developing tactics that would be used for the next two decades. In 1968, New York Radical Women developed consciousness-raising as a strategy for sharing women's personal experiences in order to explore the many ways in which women were oppressed individually and collectively. Thousands of other women around the country also formed consciousness-raising groups. The first "speak-out" where women publicly described their experiences of abortion was organized in 1969 by the radical feminist group Red stockings. The speak-out created a model for raising a range of other issues, including rape, sexual harassment, and incest, which opened up taboo subjects and transformed them into topics for public debate. Radical feminists also conducted public demonstrations and zap actions, such as the headline-grabbing demonstrations outside the Miss America beauty pageant, where undergarments were stuffed in to a "freedom trash can" to protest the treatment of women as sex objects. Finally, women's liberation activists launched several publications and a number of feminist books were published, all of which helped build the movement and shape the thinking of activists and of women who were not affiliated with feminist organizations. In short, radical feminism in the United Stated during this period was earth-shattering and mind-opening for many women; its participants built new worldviews that have influenced American society in ways they could not have conceived.



# 1.3. The Flourishing of the Women's Movement: The 1970s

What factors were responsible for the rapid growth of the U.S. Women's Movement particularly in the 1970s?

The women's movement grew rapidly in the late 1960s and into the early 1970s.Its diversity was the hallmark of its success and evidence of its growing influence. The movement needed these many factions, from the radical to the moderate, as feminists were addressing the underlying patriarchal assumptions that shaped society while also seeking to reform discriminatory laws and policies and to inspire individual women to change their own lives. The movement's diversity helped it build a powerful base of theory and tactics that made it strong enough to withstand both its own internal disputes and the virulent opposition that was to come in the 1980s. During the 1970s, the women's movement achieved substantial gains in law and public policy, in the creation and expansion of feminist organizations, and in consciousness-raising that moved many radical feminist ideas and demands into the mainstream. Feminist lobbying and organizing brought about major legislative victories and built a body of federal anti-sex discrimination law and court decisions during the 1970s and into the 1980s. however, feminist initiatives to address the social and economic bases of women's lower status—women's poverty, comparable worth, child care, and family leave, for example-were far less successful.





What was the major factor that slowed the progress of the U.S. Women's Movement in the 1980s?

The 1980s brought to fruition a virulent antifeminist reaction that had begun in the 1970s. It marked the low ebb of the women's movement and slowed much of its progress. Feminist success inevitably engendered antifeminist backlash. Initially focused on the Equal Rights Amendment and the right to abortion, it was expanded by a right-wing social agenda that defines feminism as a destroyer of the traditional, patriarchal family and the American way of life. Women and women's rights came under attack. Abortion rights were threatened; educational equity programs were targeted for elimination. At the same time, more subtle antifeminist reaction was portrayed throughout the mass media, suggesting that the women's movement was both dangerous and dead. Stories and images suggested that society had entered a "post-feminist" and "post-civil rights" era in which "equality" had been achieved for capable women and men of color.

Despite media assertions to the contrary, the women's movement in the United States was far from dead. Instead, the movement had become more diverse and diffuse, encompassing women's groups organized everywhere-within unions and churches, state legislatures and corporations, universities and school systems. The persistence of the women's movement during the 1980s is largely attributable to these many organizations, and the movement's strength is in the multiplicity of these organizations and structures. They have brought feminism to diverse groups of women and in the process transformed the women's movement. While most of the original women's liberation groups

disbanded, their ideology and strategies persisted. Many early activists brought their radical feminist agendas to the pro-choice movement, the environmental and antinuclear movements, the gay and lesbian movement, and NOW and other "mainstream" feminist organizations.

As in earlier decades, explosive moments have continued to galvanize women's attention and focus their activism in the 1990s. The 1980s and early 1990s also marked the expansion of coalitions between feminists and gay and lesbian activists, culminating in the 1992 March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights. In short, the roots of the feminist movement run deep throughout American society and that its seeds are scattered everywhere. Some are enthusiastically multicultural, and some are learning how to value and incorporate difference. Some embrace the word feminism, while others have adopted new words such as womanist, and still others are uncomfortable with any labels. All are clear that they are part of a long and large struggle for women's equality.

# Summary

The U S women's movement that burst into public consciousness in the late 1960s had its origins in the nineteenth-century struggle for the abolition of slavery, as African American and white women abolitionists who had been denied membership in some organizations and the right to speak in public began to protest the subordination of women and to agitate for women's rights.

During the turbulent, idealistic 1960s, profound social change suddenly seemed possible. The government's war on poverty and the African American civil rights movement generated fervor for justice and social change that inspired activists in other communities of color and advocates for women. Like their foremothers working for suffrage, women of color often experienced racism from white women and sexism from men of color.

The women's movement during the 1960s and early1970s was exciting, invigorating, and transformational for many women. The movement encompassed efforts to attack sex discrimination in law and social policy through legislative and legal means as well as "consciousness-raising" to understand patriarchy and women's subjugation and create strategies to transform society-from government to religion to the family-into an egalitarian one. While the growth of the women's movement was gradual and built on women's experiences in other progressive social movements, several explosive moments helped shape feminism during the 1960s.

During 1967 and 1968, radical women organized women's liberation groups in several cities. The women's movement grew rapidly in the late 1960s and into the early 1970s. During the 1970s, the women's movement achieved substantial gains in law and public policy, in the creation and expansion of feminist organizations, and in consciousness-

raising that moved many radical feminist ideas and demands into the mainstream.

The 1980s brought to fruition a virulent antifeminist reaction that had begun in the 1970s. It marked the low ebb of the women's movement and slowed much of its progress. Feminist success inevitably engendered antifeminist backlash. Initially focused on the Equal Rights Amendment and the right to abortion, it was expanded by a right-wing social agenda that defines feminism as a destroyer of the traditional, patriarchal family and the American way of life. Women and women's rights came under attack. Abortion rights were threatened; educational equity programs were targeted for elimination. At the same time, more subtle antifeminist reaction was portrayed throughout the mass media, suggesting that the women's movement was both dangerous and dead. Stories and images suggested that society had entered a "post-feminist" and "post-civil rights" era in which "equality" had been achieved for capable women and men of color.



#### Self-Check Exercise 5

### Part I: Multiple Choices

#### Instruction: Choose the best answer

- 1. Which of the following statements is/are TRUE?
  - A. The first women's rights convention was held at Seneca Falls, New York, July 19-20, 1848.
  - B. The U.S. Congress passed the Equal Pay Act in 1963.
  - C. Native American women were leaders in the fishing rights struggles of the 1960s
  - D. The 1980s and early 1990s marked the expansion of coalitions between feminists and gay and lesbian activists.
  - E. All of the above
  - F. None of the above
- 2. The first President's Commission on the Status of Women in the U.S. was chaired by\_
  - A. John F. Kennedy
  - B. Eleanor Roosevelt
  - C. Betty Friedan
  - D. Virginia Wolf
  - E. None of the above



### Part II: True/False

# <u>Instruction</u>: Answer 'True' if the statement is correct and 'False' if the statement is incorrect

- 1. The U S women's movement burst into public consciousness in the late 1970s.
- 2. The National Organization for Women (NOW) by Betty Friedan in June 1966.
- 3. The women's liberation groups in the U.S. suffered a series of conflicts and splits based on ideology, sexual orientation, ethnic and class differences.
- 4. Radical feminists in the U.S. rejected the notion that moving women into equality with men in an inherently unjust system should be the goal of feminism.

### **Unit Six**

# Women in Ethiopia



Dear learners! In this unit you will learn about the situation of

women in Ethiopia. The only section in this unit is compiled based on a 2005 report by the government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia on the Implementation of the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and attempts to relate Ethiopian women with issues like HIV/AIDS, gender based violence, gender parity, human rights of women, right to inheritance of land and property, as well as women's access to education.

# **Objectives**

After successfully completing this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the relationship between the spread of HIV/AIDS and the situation of women in Ethiopia;
- discuss the state of gender parity in Ethiopia;
- identify the protection of human rights of women in Ethiopia;
- explain Ethiopian women's right to inheritance of land and property; and
- discuss women's access to education in Ethiopia

# Section 1: The Situation of Ethiopian Women

#### 1.1. Introduction

Do you think women in Ethiopia enjoy the fruits of their labor? Explain?						

Like many African countries, the majority of women in Ethiopia hold low status in the society. They have been denied equal access to education, training and gainful employment opportunities and their involvement in policy formulation and a decision making process has been minimal. Women play a vital role in the community by taking care of all social activities. However, they do not enjoy the fruits of their labor and suffer from political, economical, social and cultural marginalization. Although women constitute 49.8% of the population and contribute their share in agricultural production and other household activities, they have not benefited from their labor equally with their male counterparts. The participation of women in qualified jobs and related fields is at its lowest level. For instance, the National Labor Force Survey (CSA, 1999) indicates that women account for only 23.9% in technical and professional fields. The majority of women perform tiresome, low paid and even unpaid jobs. The 1994 census on employment also shows that women represent only 27.3% of the total government employees and 93.2% of them are engaged in low-grade jobs. The Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) formulated several laws and policies to promote gender equality. Particularly Article 35 of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia clearly stipulates the rights of women. The government has also been promoting

the mainstreaming of gender in all its development policies and strategies to address gender inequality. Women's National Policy was formulated and adopted in 1993 in order to address gender inequality. National institutional machineries were established at federal, regional and Woreda (district) levels to implement the policy. The Women's Affairs Office has been reestablished as a full-fledged Ministry in October 2005 with the duties and responsibilities of ensuring participation and empowerment of women in political, economical, social and cultural matters.

The Labor proclamation No 42/93 as well as the newly amended labor law 377/2004 stipulates that women shall not be discriminated against employment and equal payment on the basis of their sex. It also prohibits employment of women on a type of work that may be harmful to their health. The criminal code/penal code has been recently revised and amended to address discrimination against women and protect them from criminal acts such as rape, abduction, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), sexual exploitation and harassment ...etc. The Criminal procedural code has also been revised and the first draft has been submitted to the Council of Ministers. The document is forwarded to the parliament for further comment and approval.

The 1997 Federal Rural Land Administration Law has provisions on equal rights of women to land. The Federal Government and 3 Regional States have enacted Land Use and Administration Laws that took into account the issue of gender. Proclamation No.9/1995 that established the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) also ensures women's environmental rights. The Civil Service proclamation No.262/2002 provides equal employment opportunity for both sexes. Moreover, efforts have been made to address the problem of gender inequality and gender based discrimination in the Education and training policy. Economic

Reform policy that was formulated in 1992 also aims to promote economic development and improve the living standard of the most vulnerable sections of the society, particularly women. The economic policy ensured equal rights of agricultural land use, control and participation of women in extension services. The Health Policy, Developmental Social Welfare Policy, Cultural Policy, the Policy on Natural Resources and the Environment, the Civil Service Proclamation, Pension Law, Penal Code...etc. aim to improve the livelihood of women.

	Activity 9
	1. What do you think is special about the situation of women in developing countries in general and in Ethiopia in particular?



# 1.2. HIV/ AIDS and Other Related Infectious Diseases

?	Can you identify legal grounds that are setup to protect Ethiopian women from HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases?
-	
-	

There are basic supportive legal grounds conducive for combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other related infectious diseases, among which, the following are the major ones. Article 34 (4) and article 35 (9) of the Constitution provide the right to health care and the right to protection from harmful customs and practices. Moreover, Article 35 (7) of the Constitution provides equal rights for women with regard to inheritance and property rights. On the other hand, article 514 of the Penal Code makes any deliberate or negligent act to transmit any kind of disease to a person punishable by law. Efforts are underway to enact specific law for HIV/AIDS. The legal provisions regarding gender based violence are specified in the gender based violence section.

However, there are many challenges with regard to implementation because of lack of awareness and other social barriers. There is also a problem of capacity in the judiciary. The hope is that the Justice Sector Reform Program currently underway will help resolve this problem.

#### 1.3. Gender Based Violence

5	How Ethic	·	Harmful	Traditional	Practices	do	you	think	there	in

The constitution has provisions that protect victims of harmful traditional practices, for all its citizens and particularly for Women. Article 35(4) stipulates that the State shall enforce the rights of women and that laws, customs and practices that oppress or cause bodily or mental harm to women are prohibited. Rape, abduction, female genital mutilation and early marriage are some of the main gender based violence perpetrated against women in our society.

In a baseline survey conducted in 1998 by the National Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices on ethnic groups in the country, it was reported that there are some 88 forms of Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs), 90% of which are found to have negative consequences on the physical and mental health of Women and Children.

Recommendations were made by this and other related studies to formulate a specific law or revise the existing laws to mitigate HTPs against women. Accordingly, different measures have been undertaken in order to amend discriminatory legislations. For instance, the revisions made in the family code, among others, include the following major amendments:

 Whereas the minimum age for marriage which used to be 15 and 18 for female and male, respectively, has been revised to be 18 years for both sexes.



- The revised code came up with a provision that common property shall be administered jointly by the spouses unless there is an agreement, which empowers one of them to administer all or part of the common property.
- It permits divorce by mutual consent of the spouses and it is not classified in serious and other cases unlike the previous provisions, which was considered to be discriminatory against the woman.
- It limited the role of family arbitrators who used to refer divorce cases to be entertained by courts.
- It also states that marriage should be based only on the consent of the spouses. The criminal code is also revised taking into account the issue of gender. It has the following punishable provisions, which did not feature in the previous code.
- Endangering the lives of pregnant women and children through Harmful Traditional Practices.
- Causing bodily injury to pregnant women and children through Harmful Traditional Practices.
- Violence against a marriage partner or a person cohabiting in an irregular union. Female circumcision and FGM are also punishable. Whoever circumcises a woman of any age and infibulates the genitals of women will be punished.

Early marriage is another form of gender based violence. It is a harmful traditional practice common in most parts of our country. The national rate for early marriage stands at 54%. Although early marriage is not stated in the chapter on HTPs, in the new criminal code it is considered as a punishable act (Article 648). The government has accorded particular attention to the issue of gender based violence and the National committee on Traditional Practices in Ethiopia (NCTPE), the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) and others government bodies are

striving towards the elimination of gender based violence and HTPs. Measures have been taken to enhance the capacity of law enforcement agencies as well as journalists to address gender-based violence through workshops, trainings and symposiums. The National Plan of Action for Gender (2000-2010) particularly addresses gender based violence, FGM and other harmful practices and Sectoral Ministries, Regional Offices and NGOs are implementing it.

## 1.4. Gender Parity



How do you characterize the participation of Ethiopian women in the decision making structures of the country?

Article 3 of the constitution provides equal opportunity for women to participate in the decision making process by giving them the right to vote and be elected. In this regard, a number of measures have been taken in terms of advocacy, lobbying and awareness creation in order to increase the participation of women in the decision making structures of the country. Though much still remains to be done, there are noticeable achievements in the participation of women particularly in the parliament as well as in regional councils. The ruling party took an important stride by making 30% of its candidates for 2005 election to be women. As a result, the number of women in parliament has increased significantly.

The Civil Service Reform Programs also contributed a lot to women's participation in decision-making. Article 13 (1) of the Civil Service Proclamation No 262/2002 prohibits discrimination among job seeker on the basis of sex. The proclamation also incorporates an affirmative action

by stating that preference shall be given to female candidates who have equal or close scores to that of male candidates. The representation of women in the different decision making structures is shown below:

Women's Representation in Federal Parliament

	2000		2005	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
House of People's Representative	502	42	413	117
House of the Federation	110	7	91	21

Source: House of People's Representatives

The number of elected women has also increased at regional level. In Oromiya from 537 seats 199, in Tigray from 157 seats 76, in Afar from 82 seats 8, in Somali from 160 seats 5, in Harari from 36 seats 7, in Amhara from 250 seats 84 and in Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR) from 347 seats 95 are women.

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Women's Representation in the Executive Branch

	2000			2005		
Positions	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Ministers	16	1	20	2		
Deputy Minister/State Ministers	12	4	30	5		
State Ministers			30	5		
Ambassadors	16	4	35	3		

Source: Federal Civil Service Agency

## 1.5. Human Rights of Women

The Ethiopian government has signed and ratified important regional and international instruments that promote and protect the rights of women. The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was ratified in September 1981 and periodical reports have been submitted on its implementation. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was ratified in December 2002 and the National Action Plan for Children has been prepared for its implementation. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was ratified in September 1990 and the Ministry of Women's Affairs is given the responsibility of overseeing its effective implementation.

The Human Rights Commission was established in 2000 with the objective of sensitizing the public about human rights, ensuring that they are respected and take necessary measures where they are found to have been violated. Similarly, the Ombudsman was established in 2000 with the objective of fostering good governance, the rule of law, by way of ensuring that citizen's rights are respected.



Activ	rity 10
1.	Can you mention some regional and international documents on women that were signed and ratified by the Ethiopian government?

# 1.6. Right to Inheritance of Land and Property

?	Are you aware of any measures taken by the Ethiopian government in order to strengthen the participation of women in the economy?

The Constitution gives special attention to women's equal economic rights, equal acquisition and inheritance of property including land. According to the Federal Rural Land Administration Law (1997), the land administration law of each Administrative Region shall ensure the equal rights of women in holding, administering, and transferring land. It also provides for women's participation in decision-making on land-related



matters. The following are important steps taken to strengthen women's role in the country's economy:

- Registration of the names of both spouses is undertaken in the rural areas of the country in order to solve the problems women face to access land.
- The National Food Security Program regards women as its priority target group. Specially, women from food insecure households in rural areas of Ethiopia get support through productive safety nets including public works and direct income support.
- The Technical and Vocational Education and Training Program
  (TVET) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development take
  into consideration affirmative action. This has been helpful to
  increase women's access to services where female agents are
  responsible for the delivery of extension services.
- Women in Urban areas of Ethiopia have equal access to employment opportunities and are entitled to equal payment for equal work. Ethiopia has ratified international conventions that ensure non-discrimination in employment opportunities. The Constitution and the Civil Service Proclamation give guarantees to this end. Domestic labor laws are also reviewed in such a way to integrate the rights of women.
- The government is taking measures to alleviate the burden of selfemployed and other women employees living in urban areas. Credit services rendered by governmental and non-governmental organizations give special attention to poor women. Priority is also given to poor women in the distribution of low cost houses built by government.

In conclusion, it is important to note that despite the government's effort, misconception and lack of awareness towards the issue of gender is a

challenge in its effectiveness. The Second National Development Program has taken this situation into consideration and is prepared in such a way that gender issues are fully integrated in the government's efforts to achieve sustainable growth.

#### 1.7. Women's Access to Education

?	Have you witnessed any change in the educational participation of women in your locality?

The Ethiopian government has committed itself to various national, regional, and international initiatives to eliminate gender-based disparity in terms of access to education. Progress has been made with regard to achieving the MDGs ("Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education" and "Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women) and implementing the Beijing commitments. The National Education Policy, which is prepared in the spirit of achieving the Universal Primary Education by 2015, recognizes the importance of affirmative action in enhancing girls'/ women's participation in decision-making. Education Sector Development Programs, which are prepared on the basis of the "Education for All" (EFA) initiative formulated at the Jomtien (Thailand) World Conference, are being implemented throughout the country with the objective of achieving gender equality in education by 2015. The government's dedicated efforts have led to progress in reducing gender disparity in education. The following are some of the major achievements:



- The establishment of women's affairs departments, within the Ministry of Education and at regional level, has facilitated the coordination and follow-up of the implementation of gender mainstreaming. This has not only prevented social and cultural barriers to women's education but has also created a womenfriendly environment. Furthermore, it has helped to diffuse curricular textbooks and teaching materials that are free of gender based discrimination.
- Guidelines, which encourage the participation of the community in the decentralized education system, have been drafted and implemented to promote the education of girls. The education board, with members drawn from teachers, parents, women and youth associations, was established at the grass roots level. Guideline for integrating gender issues in the preparation of the teaching-learning materials has also been developed and the curriculum is being reviewed every two years to ensure that gender issues are included.
- Trainings have been provided to the professionals of the education sector on gender and related matters. This has contributed to the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming.
- Notable sensitization and advocacy activities were undertaken at all levels in order to abolish cultural discriminatory practices.
   Some types of discriminations, on which greater focus was made, were the preference of sons over daughters and traditional practices like early marriage, widely practiced abduction and rape.
- Different guidelines, checklist and training manuals related to gender mainstreaming, have been prepared and disseminated to schools in order to promote a female-students' friendly environment in schools. Most Regional Administrations have also developed five-year strategic frameworks to increase the enrollment

- of girls in higher educational institutions. Gender focal points have also been established to assist and encourage girls to join genderstereotype fields of study such as science.
- Strategy has been formulated to increase the school enrollment of girls in pastoral areas. The committee, which has been set up at the House of Peoples' Representatives to follow up the implementation of the development program undertaken in pastoral areas, has also contributed to girls' education in pastoral areas.
- Efforts were made to encourage women participate in informal education programs. However, participation was lower than expected and women's heavy and tedious workload has been noted as the major factor.
- Activities are underway to provide financial assistance to needy females. The concerted effort of the government and nongovernmental organizations has resulted in an increase in the level of girls' primary school enrollment, which was only 19% 15 years ago. The following data indicates the growth in girl's enrollment in schools.

**Gross Enrollment Ratio in Primary School (1-8)** 

Indicator	2002/2003		2003/2004		2004/2005	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
GER at Primary (1-8)	74.6	53.8	77.4	50.1	88.00	71.5
GER at Secondary (9-10)	24	14	28.2	15.9	34.6	19.8

Source: Ministry of Education



Education is one of the priority areas of the government and the Third Education Sector Development Program (ESDP III), which was launched recently, continues to give greater attention to gender.

Activ	ity 11
1.	Discuss the educational participation of women in your locality?
2.	What factors do you think hinder women's access to education in your locality?
3.	Can you list some problems that affect the educational performance of women in your locality?

### Summary

The majority of women in Ethiopia hold low status in the society. They do not enjoy the fruits of their labor and suffer from political, economic, social and cultural marginalization. The participation of women in qualified jobs and related fields is at its lowest level.

Considering this situation characterizing women in the country, the government has been promoting the mainstreaming of gender in all its development policies and strategies to address gender inequality. Women's National Policy was formulated and adopted in 1993 in order to address gender inequality. National institutional machineries were established at federal, regional and Woreda (district) levels to implement the policy. The Women's Affairs Office has been reestablished as a full-fledged Ministry in October 2005 with the duties and responsibilities of ensuring participation and empowerment of women in political, economical, social and cultural matters.

However, it is important to note that despite the government's effort, attempts to address the issue of gender still face a number of challenges in their effectiveness. In addition, misconception and lack of awareness towards the issue of gender also present further obstacles against the attainment of gender equality in the country.



## Self-Check Exercise 6

#### Part I: Multiple Choices

#### Instruction: Choose the best answer

- 1. Which of the following statements is FALSE?
  - A. In Ethiopia, women constitute 49.8% of the population
  - B. Article 36 of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia stipulates the rights of women.
  - C. The number of female parliamentarians in the house of peoples representatives has increased from 42 in 2000 to 117 in 2005
  - D. All of the above
  - E. None of the above
- 2. Which Millennium Development Goal states about the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in all countries including Ethiopia?
  - A. Goal 4
  - B. Goal 3
  - C. Goal 1
  - D. None of the above





#### Part II: True/False

# <u>Instruction</u>: Answer 'True' if the statement is correct and 'False' if the statement is incorrect

- 1. Limited judiciary capacity is one of the major barriers against the implementation of legal frameworks established for protecting the rights of women in Ethiopia.
- 2. In a baseline survey conducted in 1998 by the National Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices, it was reported that there were 10 forms of Harmful Traditional Practices in Ethiopia.
- 3. In the revised family code of Ethiopia the minimum age for marriage which used to be 18 years for both sexes, has been revised to be 15 and 18 for female and male, respectively.
- 4. The national rate for early marriage in Ethiopia stands at 54%.



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