

**GENDER STUDIES AND UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM :  
A SOCIOLOGICAL ENQUIRY**

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**BY**

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### CERTIFICATE

This is to Certify that the dissertation entitled **Gender Studies and University Curriculum: A Sociological Enquiry** submitted in partial fulfillment for the M.Phil degree of this university has not been previously submitted for any other university and is my original work.

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We recommend that the dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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## Introduction

I have always found it quite interesting to trace the role, women's studies or gender studies<sup>1</sup> play in ameliorating the gender inequality, especially in a country like India, where the principle of women's equality is accepted in every sphere of national life.

We were living in the world of complacency till the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women<sup>2</sup> in India shook our conscience. We recognized fairly soon that the instrument of law, education and franchise had failed to bring about a meaningful transformation of women's status for the majority of women's. The findings were not only disturbing but also frightening. The demographic indicators of declining status such as declining sex ratio, declining economic participation rate, growing gaps in life expectancy and mortality rates between men and women, low rate of literacy. Women's position was worsening in practically every sphere, with the exception of some gains for middle class women in the field of education and work. They are the victims of least paid job, long working hours. There was growing violence against women - rape, wife battering, family violence, dowry deaths and prostitution. Women were always looked upon either as victims of social practices or targets for development (post-independence period) but never as participants, in spite of their greater participation in all leading national, regional and social movements.

In this context I am interested in locating the academia's response to the women's question. I am also trying to locate how India's formal University education

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<sup>1</sup> . In its recent usage gender is a synonymous for women. Gender has more neutral and objective sound than does women. Gender seems to fit within the scientific terminology of social science and thus dissociates itself from the politics of feminism. In this usage gender does not carry with it a necessary statement about inequality or power nor does it name the aggrieved party. Where as the term 'women' claims its politics by asserting that women are valid historical subjects. Gender includes, but does not name women, and so seems to pose no critical threat. Gender as a substitute for women is also used to suggest that information about women is necessarily information about male. In addition gender is also used to designate social relations between the sexes. Its use explicitly rejects biological explanations. Because of these reasons, I prefer to call it gender study than mere women's study.

<sup>2</sup> . **Towards equality: Report of the Committee on Status of Women in India, 1974**  
Govt. of India.

system, addressing the problem and trying to sensitise its adherents to the politics of knowledge and curriculum. I tried to see formal education system not only as mere agent but also as facilitator of social change through actively influencing public policies.

Gender studies provide the theoretical basis for the women's movement and the socio-political context of gender politics. Gender studies made an attempt to remove women from the footnotes and appendices of academic discourse to main text. They are doing so through the critical reconstruction of women's lives and experiences and by studying the developmental content. The emergence and growth of gender study in India, reflects women's conscious engagement in the politics of knowledge.

According to Kumud Sharma<sup>3</sup> two perspectives dominate the current discourse on the role of gender studies in India: the **first** sees gender studies as a corrective to social science teaching and research, with an emphasis on improving theoretical frame-works and methodological tools for the generation of knowledge; the **second** sees gender studies in terms of intervention-as an instrument for social transformation linking research and action.

Thus gender study is accepted to perform two roles (1) to generate new knowledge by questioning the theoretical assumption of various disciplines and (2) to enhance consciousness about the material and ideological dimensions of women's subordination.

**[A] Specific Focus of the Study:-**

In my work, I would like to throw light on a very important problem of how gender questions particularly questions raised by feminists do have an impact on making and construction of knowledge. As there is a relationship between patriarchy and the way it defines knowledge, my study would like to identify the gender dimension of knowledge.

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<sup>3</sup> . K.Sharma: **Women's Studies In India's Academia and Action** in J.S. Grewal and Hugh Joheston (ed) **The-India-Canada Relationship Exploring the Political, Economic and Cultural Dimensions**, Sage, New Delhi. p.94.

My second contribution would be in the field of curriculum and the role played by curriculum in growth and development of gender studies. It will show the existence of a symbiotic relationship between gender study and gender sensitive curriculum for imparting knowledge.

Finally, I would like to see the future of independent gender study courses in India since there are proposals from the various groups as well as from the University Grants Commission that gender question should be made part of all disciplines rather than one exclusive discipline.

To find the validity of this hypothesis I would like to conduct a small field survey on functioning and impact of gender study in my own university, to be specific, in my own sociology department. I have chosen my own University primarily because of paucity of time as my M. Phil. work doesn't permit extensive field work and secondly I have chosen Sociology Department because it is pioneer in India to start gender study course as a part of a discipline called "sociology".

#### **[B] Scope and Limitations of the work**

My study will endorse the idea that gender studies is a critical instrument for Social Science development and it should not be defined narrowly as studies about women. It is pursuit of a more comprehensive, critical and balanced understanding of social reality. It will throw light on the "otherness" or subordinate role played by women in the realm of knowledge. My study will reveal how gender study with its active intervention in curriculum development for various disciplines, helped in emergence of gender as an analytical category in the same way as caste, class ethnicity and religion. It will show effectiveness of gender study is lying on generating new knowledge by questioning the theoretical assumptions of various disciplines and by enhancing consciousness about the material and ideological dimensions of women's subordination.

Despite the impressive growth of research, women's studies are faced with several dilemmas, both within and outside the academia. The educational system suffers from much confusion, structural rigidities which create obstacles in the development of gender studies as an integral part of educational system.

According to me perusing gender study at higher education particularly from the “gender sensitivity” point of view is nothing but watering the tree from the top. Due to time constraint I have to confine myself at the level of higher education only rather than studying entire education system from the point of view of gender studies.

Some scholars claim that, women’s studies or gender studies is a new discipline with its methodology, tools of data collection and content different from traditional disciplines of Social Sciences. The contention that gender studies are a multi-disciplinary area contains a good deal of confusion about the process and conceptual framework for analysis. The multi-disciplinary approach means an analytical synthesis and more meaningful interaction between different disciplinary methods and theoretical formations, but very little progress has been made in this direction. Since University departments operate in a compartmentalized manner, how does one ensure the inputs of several disciplines in a given problem area while creating a mechanism for multi-disciplinary inputs and curriculum development? The growth of multi-disciplinary research will need a major shift in teaching and research in the Social Science in Indian Universities.

In order to become part of the broader process of social science development, gender study has to shed its exclusivist tendencies, which promote a new sexual division of labour within the university system in which gender studies become the exclusive domain of women. Since gender as a substitute for women is also used to suggest that information about women is necessarily information about men, gender study needs to put adequate emphasis on the perspective of “men”.

### **[C] Chapterisation Scheme**

Apart from Introduction and Conclusion, my work is divided into three chapters.

In my first chapter, I have tried to show that in spite of its aspiration to be a pure, neutral, unmotivated and disinterested reason; knowledge is susceptible to feminist critique because of its sexist, phallogentric and patriarchal nature. Then I tried to locate the genesis of social construction of gender identity and different



approaches to study 'gender' within feminist discourse. Finally I wanted to trace the emergence and growth of gender question in India.

My second chapter deals with the strategic role played by curriculum in achieving the desired objectives of gender study. In this context it throws light on the various curriculum debates, which shows curriculum has to be in the line with the life of the people and needs of the day. It expresses views and suggestions of various feminist schools of thought and finally in this chapter I tried to locate emergence, growth and ideological debates on building gender studies curriculum in India.

In third chapter my objective is to see how gender studies are really operationalized and practiced in the domain of higher learning. To prove my point, I have chosen to concentrate on the experience of gender studies at the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University. My goal is to examine the meanings of the courses related to gender studies: the way these courses are taught, the experiences of the teachers and the students, and the impact of the courses on the formations of new thinking and consciousness. A concrete case study of this kind, I believe, would enable me to substantiate the arguments I have developed in the other two theoretical /conceptual chapters.

My fourth chapter i.e. conclusion contains findings of my work.

### **[C] Methodology**

In first two chapters my work is more exploratory in nature. The major emphasis is on the discovery of ideas and insights. I followed a flexible Research Design providing opportunity for considering different aspects of a problem under study. Generally the following three methods I have used in first two chapters:

- a) The survey of concerning literatures
- b) The experience survey
- c) The analysis of insight stimulating examples

In third chapter I basically followed descriptive and diagnostic research design. There, I have tried to describe the functioning of gender study course

within sociology department of Jawaharlal Nehru University and tried<sup>to</sup> locate its impact and cognitive status. For this purpose I took help of unstructured, in-depth interview method of data collection. I interviewed both students and teachers, actively associated with the course and those who belongs to the outside of the domain of the course. Apart from this I took the help of various documents as well.

To sum up, this work can be situated in the emergent debates in the two sub-disciplines of sociology – (a) gender studies, and (b) sociology of education. In other words, the objective of this dissertation is to throw light on gender questions in the realm of education: how the politics of knowledge is constricted and shaped by say, the growing movement for gender justice and equity.

## Chapter I

### Gender Question and Politics of Knowledge

In this chapter I have tried to examine the reasons for the growth and existence of gender studies and the challenges it poses to the dominant system of academics and higher learning. In other words, the objective of this chapter is to debunk the neutrality of knowledge system and argue that there has always been a gendered meaning of knowledge. Gender studies would argue, evolve and grow as a powerful challenge to male-centric knowledge system and seek to articulate the experiential knowledge of women.

To study this I divided the chapter into four sections. First, I would study the sociological meaning of 'gender', how it ought to be distinguished from biology/sex. Second, I would try to examine how especially in the west, the feminist movement (of different ideological varieties) have created an awareness of gender discrimination and how the all-pervasive influence of this movement has penetrated even into the domain of knowledge and raised new questions relating to knowledge, gender and ideology. This would take us to the third section in which we will deal with the meaning of gender-studies, the questions and the issues and the priorities of research, which gender studies raise. With this historico-theoretical analysis I would come to the fourth section and examine the arrival and growth of gender studies in India.

#### [I] UNDERSTANDING GENDER

The study of men and women as such has moved through three distinct stages in just the past twenty years, from an emphasis on sex differences through preoccupation with sex roles to the centrality of "gender".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>. Hess & Ferree. (ed.), *Analyzing Gender : A Handbook of Social Science Research*, Sage, New Delhi, 1987.pp-14.

The sex differences perspective is of course, the most traditional. It holds that maleness and femaleness are biologically given properties of individuals with clear implications for social behaviour of one sort or another. Within this perspective, the egalitarians have always found themselves on the defensive, trying to demonstrate that the intrinsic differences between men and women are not large or meaningful enough to account for the degree and ubiquity of male domination observed in society. Historically, a non-egalitarian view of sex differences has been more prevalent; these differences are used to explain male dominance by assuming that they are large, socially significant and favour men.

Politically and conceptually, the move to sex role socialization model was a great improvement from this perspective; the biological determinants of maleness and femaleness could be combined with social determination via upbringing in any proportion of nature and nurture that seemed appropriate.

As a result, recent years have seen the emergence of an entirely new perspective on maleness and femaleness. The key concept in this view is 'gender', seen as a principle organizing social arrangements, behaviour and even cognition. In grammar, Gender is understood to be a way of classifying phenomena, a socially agreed upon system of distinctions rather than an objective description of inherent traits. In addition, classifications suggest a relationship among categories that make distinctions or separate groupings possible.

In its most recent usage, "gender", seems to have first appeared among American feminists who wanted to insist on the fundamentally social quality of distinctions based on Sex. The word denoted a rejection of the biological determinism implicit in the use of such terms as "sex" or "Sexual difference". "Gender" also stressed the relational aspect of normative definitions of femininity. Dr. R. Stoller defines the relationship between two as follows: "with few exceptions, there are two sexes, male and female. To determine sex one must assay the following physical conditions: Chromosomes external genitalia, internal genitalia, gonads hormonal states, and secondary sex characteristic...one's sex, then is

determined by an algebraic sum of all these qualities, and as is obvious, most people fall under one of the two separate bell curves, the one of which is called "male" and the other "female".

Gender is a term that has psychological and cultural rather than biological connotations. Gender is the amount of masculinity or femininity found in a person, and obviously, while there are mixtures of both in many humans, the normal male has a preponderance of masculinity and the normal female a preponderance of femininity".<sup>2</sup>

In this respect Ann Oakley in her "subject women" has clearly shown that Gender is a psychological and cultural construct. To be a man or woman, a boy or a girl, is as much a function of dress, gesture, occupation, social network and personality as it is of possessing a particular set of genitals.

For Oakley making of a woman necessarily includes:

1. Genes and Gender,
2. A kind of person,
3. Childhood - Lessons, and
4. Education.

There main Theories of gender development are:

- (A) Cognitive development theory of Piaget (1952) who says gender is based on genital sex and so in physical property of people that has to be learnt in the same way as other unchanging physical properties. For him, everyone has a gender and that gender is primarily a question of physical sex differences. Once the idea of a stable feminine gender identity is developed,

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<sup>2</sup>. Dr. Robert Stoller, in his book **Sex and Gender**, Science House. 1968,

she begins actively to prefer feminine activities and objects. The thinking is: I am a girl; therefore I like girl things; therefore doing girl thing is rewarding.

(B) The second theory, that of social learning process that is essentially the same as other learning processes. A little girl observes her parents performing feminine and masculine roles, but when she initiates the various behaviour she sees she is only rewarded for those considered appropriate to her gender.

(C) Thirdly, we have the psychoanalytic view of gender "identity development", according to which awareness of genital difference comes first and paves the way for identification with the parents who have a similar set of genitals. The formula is, I don't have a penis; therefore, I am a girl.

In addition, and perhaps most important, 'gender' was a term offered by those who claimed that women's Scholarship would fundamentally transform disciplinary paradigms. Feminist scholars pointed out early on that the study of women would not only add new subject matter but would also force a critical re-examination of the premises and standards of existing scholarly work.

In its simplest recent usage, 'gender' is a synonym for "women". In some cases, this usage, though vaguely referring to certain analytic concepts, is actually about the political acceptability of the field. In these instances, the uses of "Gender" is meant to denote the scholarly seriousness of a work, for "gender" has a more neutral and objective sound than does "women". "Gender" seems to fit within the scientific terminology of Social Science and thus dissociates itself from the politics of feminism. In this usage "gender" does not carry with it a necessary statement about inequality or power nor does it name the aggrieved (and neither to invisible) party. Where as the term "women's study" proclaims its politics by asserting (contrary to customary practice) that women are valid historical subjects, "gender", includes, but does not name women, and so seems to pose no critical threat. This

use of "gender" is one facet of what might be called the quest of feminist Scholarship for academic legitimacy in the 1980s.

Gender as a substitute for "women" is also used to suggest that information about women is necessarily information about men, that one implies the study of the other. In addition, gender is also used to designate social relations between the sexes. Its use explicitly rejects biological explanations, such as those that find a common denomination for diverse forms of female subordination in the facts that women have the capacity to give birth and men have greater muscular strength. Instead, gender becomes a way of denoting "cultural constructions"--the entirely social creation of ideas about appropriate roles for women and men. It is a way of referring to the exclusively social origins of the subjective identities of men and women. Gender is in this definition, a social category imposed on a sexed body. The use of gender emphasizes an entire system of relationship that may include Sex, but is not directly determined by sex nor directly determining of sexuality.

Thus gender can be defined as: A constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power, changes in the organization of social relationship always correspond to changes in representations of power, but the direction of change is not necessarily one way.

As a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived difference between the sexes, gender involves four interrelated elements"

**First** is the problem of culturally available symbols, which evoke multiple representations. Ortner's essay, together with Edwin Ardener's article "Belief and the problem of women", initiated an influential and powerful framework for studying the problem of women's subordination through an analysis of gender symbolism. Other began with the proposition that female subordination is universal, and since this condition is not inherent in the biological differences between the sexes, an

alternative explanation must be found. Her two main arguments may be summarized in the following way.<sup>3</sup>

1. Woman's physiology and her specialized reproductive functions make her appear closer to nature. Men, unlike women, have to seek cultural means of creation technology, symbols--while women's creativity is naturally fulfilled through the process of giving birth. Men, therefore, are associated more directly with culture and with the creative power of culture, as opposed to nature. Woman creates naturally from within her own being, whereas man is free to, or forced to, create artificially, that is through cultural means, and in such a way as to sustain culture.
2. Women's social roles are seen as closer to nature because their involvement in reproduction has tended to limit them to certain social functions which are also seen as closer to nature. Here, Ortner is referring to women's confinement within the domestic domain. In the context of the domestic family, women are primarily associated with the rearing of children and thus with the pre-social or not yet culturally created person. The 'natural' association of women with children and the family provides an additional level of categorization. Since women are confined to the domestic context, their main sphere of activity becomes intra and inter-familial relations, as opposed to men, who operate in the political and public domain of social life. Men thus become identified with society and the public interest, while women remain associated with family and therefore with particularistic or socially fragmenting concerns.<sup>4</sup>

**Second**, normative concepts that set-forth interpretations of the meanings of the symbols, that attempt to limit and contain their metaphoric possibilities. These

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<sup>3</sup> . Henrietta Moore, **The Cultural Construction of Gender: The Polity Reader in Gender studies**, Cambridge Polity Press, 1994, pp. -15

<sup>4</sup> . Ibid. pp 15-16.



concepts are expressed in religious, educational, scientific legal, and political doctrines and typically take the form of a fixed binary opposition, categorically and unequivocally asserting the meaning of male and female, masculine and feminine. Repressing other, the position that emerges as a dominant, however, is started as the only possible one. Subsequent history is written as if these normative positions were the product of social consensus rather than of conflict. The point of new historical investigation is to disrupt the notion of fixity, to discover the nature of the debate or repression that leads to the appearance of timeless permanence in binary gender representation.

**Third**, some scholars, notably anthropologists, have restricted the use of gender to the kinship system. (Focusing on household and family as the basis for complex modern Societies). We need a broader view that includes not only kinship but also (especially for complex modern societies) the labour market (a sex segregated labour market is a part of the process of gender construction) education (all-male single sex, or coeducational institutions are part of the same process), and the polity (universal male suffrage is part of the process of gender construction) Gender is constructed through kinship, but not exclusively, it is constructed as well in the economy and the polity, which in our society at least, now operate largely independent of kinship.

**Fourth**, aspect of gender is subjective identity. Anthropologist Gayle Rubin formulated that psychoanalysis offers an important theory about the reproduction of gender, a description of the "transformation of biological sexuality of individual as they are encultured." But the universal claim of psychoanalysis is not justified. Even though Lacanian theory may be helpful for thinking about the construction of gendered identity, historians need to work in a more historical way. If gender identity is based only and universally on fear of castration, the point of historical inquiry is denied.

Thus it is better to say, gender is a primary field within which or by means of which power is articulated. Gender is not the only field, but it seems to have been a

persistent and recurrent way of enabling the signification of power in the west in the Judeo-Christian as well as Islamic tradition.

### **[II] DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO STUDY "GENDER" UNDER FEMINIST DISCOURSE:**

In fact, feminism has a very long history even though the term is of more recent origin. It derives from the Latin "Femina" (woman), feminism initially meaning 'having the quality of females', and came into use as a perspective on sexual equality in the 1890s. Rosi (1974) traced its first usage in print to a book review published in "The Athenaeum", 27th April 1895 although this does not signal the beginning of feminism as a movement since, prior to this 'womanism' was more commonly used to describe interest in sex equality issues. According to Tuttle, 19th century usage of the term, 'The woman question' to denote interest in the condition of women signalled a 'pre-feminist' consciousness rather than feminism as a political movement as it is conceived today.

However, different feminism has prioritised different aspects of women's struggle against oppressive forces. It has been common in recent years to categorize each, feminism according to its particular ideological source in order to show the differences within feminism as well as the shared commitment to women's advancement.

We tend to be familiar with the two most recent feminist 'waves' the first in the 19th century stretching into the first two decades of the 20th century and the second from the late 1960's onwards. In the west women's studies is a "movement - born" programme. It has been legitimised in the educational system and further got reinforced by women's movement from outside.

Let us discuss in brief the different approaches to study feminism and its related understanding of gender.

## Liberal Feminism

The first wave movement was associated with the emergence of liberal individualism and Protestantism at the time of "Enlightenment" (at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century) drawing specifically on ideas about natural rights, justice and democracy. Not surprisingly given its origins, the movement was liberal, bourgeois and highly individualistic, principally concerned with extending legal, political and employment rights of middle class women.

Besides other theorist **Mary Wollstonecraft** as a liberal thinker is well known for her ardent support for women's cause. Her work, "A vindication of the Rights of women published in 1792, is perhaps the first, serious, systematic work. The basic idea is that women are first and foremost human beings and not sexual beings: Women are rational creatures and, therefore, capable of governing themselves by reason. **John Stuart Mill**, an ardent liberal, in his famous work. "The subjection of women" argued "The existing relations between the sexes, the legal subordination of one sex to the other, is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement, and that it ought to be replaced by the perfect equality admitting no power or privilege on the one side nor disability on the other".<sup>5</sup>

One of the important corollaries of the positions of the liberals was that they accepted the common arrangement by which the man earns the family income and the wife superintends the domestic expenditure. Thus the sex role difference are accepted but with a provision that both are considered equal.<sup>6</sup>

The liberal feminism, which flourished in the 1960's, did not provide more insights into the root of women's inferior status. Liberal feminism argued for equal

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<sup>5</sup>. G. Weiner. **Feminism In Education: An Introduction**, Open University Press Philadelphia, 1994, pp.53-55.

<sup>6</sup>. Desai, Krishnaraj **Women & Society in India**, Ajanta, New Delhi, 1987, pp.13-14

rights for women and control over one's own reproductive life but accepted the existing social order as valid and advocated for improvement of social customs, laws, attitude, without altering the social structure, particularly the family. They also subscribed to the hope that an accumulation of reforms will transform society, but radical restructuring is not necessary.

### **Radical Feminism**

The second wave women's movement had more dissident origins and aims, although was initially much influenced by the liberal feminism of Betty Friedan whose 1963 publication "The Feminine Mystique" has been popularly regarded as signalling its beginnings. The women liberation movement was born in U.S.A in the 1960's out of other movements of the political "new left", particularly the civil Rights and anti-Vietnam war movements. A group of women thoroughly disenchanted with the male domination of political organizations ostensibly committed to democratic/egalitarian politics, began to explore ideas about women-centeredness in political organization and to organize their own autonomous movement for women's liberation. In 1980 Friedan in her "Second Stage" wrote what diverted women from their dream in 1960's and 1970's was sexual politics. Man-hating approach is counter-productive. She shows a shift from classical liberal to welfare liberal, who put emphasis on Governmental role to bring an end into asymmetrical gender ratios.

The movement Friedan, inspired, clearly acknowledges its indebtedness to Marxism through the terminology used. Shulamith Firestone's "Dialectic of sex" sought to define society in terms of a sex/class system and offered the case for a feminist revolution, the ideas developed come to be known as radical feminism<sup>is</sup>; a very significant and perhaps much distorted by the media. Kate Millet, Shulamith Firestone, Germaine Greer, Ellen Frankfort are some of the better-known radical feminists.

Radical feminists first used the concept of patriarchy to analyse the principles underlying women's oppression. Its original meaning –the rule of the father--was altered to describe the historical dominance of men over women, this being seen as the prototype of all other oppression and necessary for their continuation.

"Male supremacy is the oldest, most basic forms of domination. All other forms of exploitation and oppression...are extensions of male supremacy...All men have oppressed women. <sup>7</sup>

Further, Millet (1971) argued that patriarchy is analytically independent of capitalist or other modes of production and Firestone (1970) defined patriarchy in terms of male control over women's reproduction.

However, concept of patriarchy has been crucial to modern feminism because feminism needed a term by which the totality of oppressive and exploitative relations, which affect women, could be expressed.<sup>8</sup>

Another related assumption of radical feminism is that of the "universal oppression" of women. It necessarily follows that if all men oppress women, women are the oppressed class, though there has been some disagreement about how patriarchal relations were/are created and sustained. Firestone (1970) argued that the fundamental inequality between men and women is traceable to the physical realities of female and male biology (particularly their roles in reproduction) and their consequence. Ortner (1974) in contrast, saw the relegation of women to the private sphere arising out of the interpretation of biology in terms of women's association with nature and man's with culture and civilization.

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<sup>7</sup>. Redstockings Manifesto, Quoted in Bouchies. D. 1983. **The Feminist Challenge**. London. Macmillan.

<sup>8</sup>. Weiner. G. **Feminisms In Education: An Introduction** Open University Press, Philadelphia, 1994. 57-59.

The third main assumption of radical feminism is that, to be aware of the effects of male domination, women have to undergo a process of women focussed education (or re-education) known as "consciousness-raising". Developed in the 1960's consciousness raising is a means of sharing information about female experience and was used as a means of education for women in the absence of a comprehensive knowledge based on women.

Feminists grouped to address or more of the numerous concerns of women characterizing the last quarter of the 20th century: issues such as sexuality, women's health, abortion and reproductive rights, pornography, male violence and also to access to and conditions of employment, child-care provision, sexual harassment in the work place and so on. The need to create a knowledge base that illuminated the experiences of women resulted in a burgeoning feminist scholarship and also the emergence, particularly in U.S., of a proliferation of women studies courses.

Further as Mitchell (1986) points out: one of the most striking features of women's liberation and radical feminism was their recourse to a new language--the language of liberation rather than emancipation, of collectivism rather than individualism.<sup>9</sup>

According to radical feminists, patriarchal system is preserved via marriage and the family through sexual division of labour in the society. Patriarchy's chief institution is the family. It perpetuates the sexual division of labour through Socialization. The overthrow of male dominance requires a complete sexual revolution which would destroy traditional sex taboos, through consciousness raising, women should be made aware of this dominance, solidarity among the women be developed and women should be self-reliant so that they are not dependent on men in any sense.

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<sup>9</sup> Rosemarie Tong, **Feminist Thought: A comprehensive Introduction**, Unwin Hyman, Sydney 1989.

Radical feminists like Kate Millet, Marilyan French and other looked forward to an "androgynous" future as solution. "Androgyny" for Millet is an integration of separate masculine and feminine sub-cultures, which must proceed cautiously with an evaluation of the true human desirability of all masculine and feminine traits.

But French's conception of androgyny was very different from Millets. She was ultimately unconvinced that under patriarchy, there are any unambiguously positive masculine traits for the androgynous person to possess. Thus, before any masculine trait can be made part of the androgynous person, there must be a rectification of terms; positive meanings and therefore positive referents must be supplied for positive sounding masculine terms. Only then can the construction of the androgynous person is possible.

### **Psychoanalytic Feminist Theory**

Another form of feminism to emerge in the 1970's drawing to some extent on both Marxist-Radical feminism but also with its own specific knowledge base was that of psychoanalytic feminism. Its main concern was to place greater emphasis within feminism on how the oppression of women affects their emotional life and their sexuality.

Psychoanalytic feminists find the root of women's oppression embedded deep in her psyche. Originally, in the pre-oedipal stage, all infants are symbiotically attached to their mother's, whom they perceive as omnipotent. The pre-oedipal stage ends with Oedipus complex, the process by which the boy gives up his first love object, mother, in order to escape castration at the hands of father. As a result of submitting his id (or desires) to the super-ego (collective Social Conscience) the boy is fully integrated into culture. Together with his father he will rule over nature and woman, both of who contain a similarly irrational power. In contrast to the boy, the girl, who has no penis to lose, separates slowly from her first love object, mother. As a result, the girl's integration into culture is incomplete. She exists at the

periphery or margin of culture as one who does not rule but is ruled, largely because, as Dorothy Dinnerstein suggested, "She fears her own power".

Because the Oedipus complex is the root of male rule, or patriarchy, some psychoanalytic feminists suggest that it is an invention of men's imagination--a psychic contraception that every one especially women should escape. Criticisms of the phallogocentric nature of Freud's work led other feminists into alternative ways of theorizing women's position in the family and in child rearing. "Nancy Chodorow" explored mother/daughter relationships, rejecting the notion that women's universal primary role in child care could be explained in purely biological or social terms. Chodorow claims that women become mother because they were themselves mothered by women. In contrast, the fact that women parent men physically reduces their potential for parenting. Women's exclusive mothering Chodorow asserted: "Creates a psychology of male dominance and fear of women in men. It forms a basis for the division of social world into unequally valued domestic and public sphere, each of the province of a different gender".<sup>10</sup>

According to this view, patriarchy stem from the gender formation of females and males, uniting psychic and property relations. Thus to achieve women's liberation family must be recognized so that women and men share parenting responsibilities equally and children grow up dependent upon both women and men from their earliest days.

According to "Sherry Ortner", we need not also accept Freudian version, which labels authority, autonomy, and universalism as "male" and love, dependence and particularism as "female". These labels, which attach more value to being male than to being female, are not essential to the Oedipus complex. Rather, they are simply the consequence of a child's actual experience with men and women. Like

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<sup>10</sup> N. Chodorow. **The Reproduction of Mothering : Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender**. University of California Press. Berkeley. 1978.



Chodorow and Dinnerstein, Ortner also believes that solution lies in "dual parenting".

The major criticisms cited against psychoanalytic feminists due to their prioritisation of psychic dynamics over social structures in women liberation, and their failure to appreciate the diversity of family inter and intra culturally.

### **Marxist Feminism:**

Marxist feminists think it impossible for anyone especially women; to obtain genuine equal opportunity in a class society where the wealth produced by the powerless many ends up in the powerful few. With Friedrich Engels, he claims that women's oppression originated in the introduction of private property, an institution that obliterated whatever equality the human community had previously enjoyed. Private ownership of the means of production by relatively few persons, originally all male, inaugurated a class system whose contemporary manifestations are corporate capitalism and imperialism. Capitalism, under which men are privileged over women, is the cause of women's oppression. If all women--not just the relatively privileged or exceptional ones are ever to be liberated, the capitalist system must be replaced by a socialist system in which the means of production belong to one and all. Because under socialism no one would be economically dependent on anyone else, women would be economically freed from men and, therefore, equal to them.

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Eli Zarestsky has written a series of articles that detail the ways in which a capitalist mode of production has determined the contours of women's lives. Zarestsky argued that we have grown accustomed to a work--family split, and to a concomitant version of the private--public split, this is peculiar to capitalism. In the days before industrial capitalism, people lived in extended family. Insofar as the project of sustaining everyday life was concerned, the work women did was considered just as important as the workmen did. Women saw themselves as "insiders" not as "outsiders". Significantly, this society was patriarchal in so far as

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women were barred from the realm of freedom or intellectual discourse, culture and especially politics and confined to the realm of necessity or physical labour.

Given that the modern family – woman as reproducer, man as producer -- is a capitalist construction. Zaretsky argued that liberation of woman requires the elimination of capitalism.

She was most emphatic that women will not achieve liberation just by entering the labour force. As long the family remains the primary institution through which women participate in this society, and thus as long as the family remains in its present form, each and every woman in a familial relationship will be subordinated whether or not she enters the labour force. What Zaretsky wanted for each woman is, minimally, the sense of self - worth that comes from the realization that the work she does is of value to others and more specifically to society as a whole.

### **Socialist Feminism**

The task of weaving these several strands of feminist theory together seems to have been taken up most effectively by Socialist feminists. In "woman's Estate", for example, Juliet Mitchell argued that women's condition is over determined by the structures of production (from Marxist feminists) reproduction and sexuality (from Radical feminists) and the socialization of children (from liberal feminists). Women's status and function in all these structures must change if she is to achieve anything approximating full liberation. Furthermore, as Mitchell made clear in her later book, "Psychoanalysis and Feminism", woman's interior world (her psyche) must also be transformed (as emphasized by psychoanalytic feminism); for without such a change, improvements in her exterior world will not liberate her from the kind of patriarchal thoughts that undermine her confidence (as emphasized by existential feminists).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>. Rosemarie Tong, **Feminist Thought: A comprehensive Introduction**: Unwin Hyman, Sydney, 1989.pp.173-193.

Another powerful attempt has been made by Alison Jagger who insisted that what is unique about socialist feminism is its concerted effort to interrelate the myriad forms of women's oppression. Jagger used the unifying concept of alienation to explain how under capitalism, everything (work, sex, play) and everyone (family friends) that could be a source of women's integration, as person instead becomes a cause of her disintegration.

To overcome the limits of traditional Marxist feminism on the one hand, and of radical and psychoanalytic on the other, Socialist feminism have developed two approaches--dual system theory and unified system theory.

Dual system theorists (J.Mitchell) maintain that patriarchy and capitalism are distinct forms of social relations and distinct sets of interest, which when they intersect oppress women in particularly egregious ways. For women's oppression to be fully understood, both patriarchy and capitalism must be analysed first as separate phenomena and then as phenomena that dialectically related to each other.

In contrast to dual system theorists, unified system theorists attempt to (Iris Young Alison Jaggerr) analyse capitalism and patriarchy together through the use of one concept. According to these theorists, capitalism is no more separate from patriarchy than the mind is from the body. This is an even more ambitious form of socialist feminism than is the dual system approach, for if there is one conceptual lense through which all of the dimension of women's oppression can be filtered then it may be possible to unite all of the feminist perspectives.

### **Existentialist Feminism:**

Simon de Beauvoir's major theoretical work "The second sex" has within a short span achieved the status of classic in feminist thought. Thus any discussion on feminism is incomplete without the discussion of this work, which has helped many feminists understanding the full significance of woman's otherness.

In making it clear that she had adopted the ontological and ethical claims of existentialism, de Beauvoir announced that from the beginning man has named himself the "self" and woman the "other". According to Dorothy Kaufmann McCall, de Beauvoir's development of the Sartrean thesis – man as self, woman as other-- in "The second sex" was completely her own. If the other is a threat to self, then woman, is a threat to man.

A good way to test de Beauvoir's characterization of woman's oppression as "unique" is to ponder her analysis of how women became the 'other', not only different and separate from man but also inferior to him. She advanced this analysis in the first three chapters of "The second Sex". Which she respectively entitled "The Data of Biology", "The psychoanalytic point of view" and "The point of view of Historical Materialism". She argued biology identifies the basic difference between male and female as one rooted in the reproductive roles of males and females. These reproductive "facts" suggested to de Beauvoir why it might be harder for a woman to become and remain a self, especially if she has a child, however, these facts did not also suggest to de Beauvoir that women's capacity for selfhood is less than men's.

When de Beauvoir looked beyond ideology to psychology, especially psychoanalysis, for a better explanation of women's otherness, she was disappointed. According to de Beauvoir, traditional Freudians all tell essentially the same story about woman that she is creature who must struggle between her "viriloid" and her "feminine" tendencies. To win this battle--to become normal-- woman must overcome her "viriloid" tendencies, that is, she must transfer her love from a woman to a man. She rejected Freud as civilization cannot be explained merely as the product of repressed and/or sublimated sexual impulses. Civilization is more complicated than this and so are the relations between men and women. Freud's theory of women's "castration complex" is, in her estimation, a poor psychological explanation for their inferior and subservient social status. The reason women suffer from so called penis--envy is not that they want a penis per-

se, but they desire the material and psychological privileges that society has accorded to men.

Finally de Beauvoir considered Marx's explanation for why woman is the "other" and found it nearly as unsatisfying as Freud's. Because she saw it, the relations between men and women will not automatically change even if we move from capitalism to socialism. Women are just as likely to remain the other in a socialist society as in the capitalist, Engels's presentation, she said, failed to convince her the oppression of women is a necessary consequence of the institution of private property.

Unsatisfied by the traditional biological psychological and economic oppression, de Beauvoir sought an ontological explanation based on woman's "being". She looked at woman and recognized a self that man has defined as other. In determining reason for this definition, de Beauvoir observed that as soon as we assert ourselves "as subject and free being the idea of the other arises. From that day the relation with the other is dramatic, the existence of 'other' is a threat, a danger". Due to variety of factors, most of them related to their freedom from reproductive burdens, men probably had the time and energy to use air, wind, fire and water to create new instruments, to invent, to shape the future. Perceiving themselves as subjects capable of risking their lives in combat.

"It is not in giving life but in risking life that man is raised above the animal, that is why superiority has been accorded in humanity not to the sex that brings forth but to that which kills. Because of this alleged difference, women were decisively relegated by men to the sphere of otherness -- the realm of the immanence, of the body".<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 195-203.

Clearly wifing and mothering are in de Beauvoirs estimation two feminine rolls that block woman's bid for freedom. Career women too are not in any better position.

Women is no more Being-in-Itself than man is, she like man, is Being-for-Itself, and it is high time for man to recognize this fact. On the way to transcendence there are three strategies that woman can employ

1. Woman must go to work.
2. Woman can become intellectuals, members of the vanguard of change for women.
3. Woman can work toward a socialist transformation of society.

Later in the 1980's younger French feminist writers such as Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva drew on the work of de Beauvoir as well as the philosophical writings of Foucault, Derrida and Lacan to develop a philosophy of deconstruction which aims to illuminate the internal contradictions of the pre-dominant systems of thought and also to reinterpret Freudian psychoanalytic theory and practice. Cixous for instance applies Derrida's notion of "difference to writing", a contrasting feminine writing with masculine writing and arguing that this differences are psychically constructed. According to Cixous women need to write themselves out of the world men have constructed for them by putting into words of the unthinkable/unthought, and by using women's own particular form of writing.<sup>13</sup>

### **Post -Modern Feminism**

Attempts to find integration and agreement, to establish one specific feminist standpoint that could represent how women see the world have not gone without challenge. Post-modern feminists regard this whole enterprise as yet another instantiation of "phallogocentric thought". It is typical male thinking to seek the "one,

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.* 195-203.

true, feminist story of reality". For post-modernist, such a synthesis neither is feasible nor desirable. It is not feasible because women's experiences differ across class, racial and cultural lines. It is not desirable because the "one and true" are philosophical myths that have been used to club into submission the differences that, in point of empirical fact, but describe the human condition. That feminism is many and not one is to be expected because women are many and not one. The more feminist thoughts we have, the better. By refusing to centre, congeal and cement their separate thoughts into a unified truth, too inflexible to change feminists resist patriarchal dogma.<sup>14</sup>

### **Some Other Feminist Thoughts**

By the end of the 1970s a number of different feminist perspectives surfaced to challenge the hegemonic position of radical (and to some extent, liberal) feminism both as a critique and as an extension of the feminist project.

In many way, the most important challenge to radical feminism came from "**Black Feminism**" which criticized not only the white patriarchal society for triply oppressed black women (on the basis of sex, colour and class) but also the oppressive nature of the white women's movement which had glossed over economic and social differences between women in its attempt to articulate an authentic, overarching female experience. Moreover, in U.S. both waves of feminism were associated with black political campaign: in the 19th century, around the abolition of slavery and in the 20th century, around the civil Rights movements, Black feminists challenge the idea that a feminism that ignores racism can be meaningful. As Bel Hooks writes in 1984 "Feminist theory would have much to offer it showed women ways in which racism and sexism are immutably connected rather than pitting one struggle against the other, or blatantly dismissing racism."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>. Ibid. p.180.

<sup>15</sup>. Hooks, **Feminist Theory : From Margin to Center**. South end Press, Boston, 1984, p.52..

Simultaneously, radical feminism began to exhibit divisions as break ways championing a separatist feminine position were taken up by the "New Age" philosopher of Mary Daly and her followers on the one hand and "**Political Lesbianism**" on the other. Mary Daly in her 1979 volume *Gyn/Ecology* offers a new, metaphysical spiritual feminism in which men are depicted as evil and death loving women. Daly argued that patriarchy is itself the worlds prevailing religion and that women need to withdraw from men in order to create a new women - centred universe with a new philosophy and theology and even a new language.<sup>16</sup>

Lesbian - feminism, in sharp contrast, took a much more overtly political stand, arguing that lesbianism is not simply a matter of sexual preference or an issue of civil rights but rather a whole way of life combining the personal with the political. The concept of political lesbianism was developed as a critique of the ideology and practices of heterosexuality. The argument was made that since sexual orientation is a matter of personal preference, lesbianism should not be stigmatised and further more, that lesbianism should made more visible within the women's movement in history and in society as a whole. Moreover, because political lesbianism constitutes a major challenge to male domination in its commitment to an autonomous, women - centred society, it has a legitimate central place in any movement, which seeks to redress the power balances between the sexes.<sup>17</sup>

As feminism has become more fractured, and identity politics more possible, other feminism have continued to emerge: for example, **Christian feminism** (concerned with creation of feminist theology) **Humanist feminism** (advocating equality that judges men and women by a single stand), **Muslim feminism** (which sees women's liberation as both more threatening to Islam than it is but also more broadly based); **Ecofeminism** (another broad-based movement with aims ranging

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<sup>16</sup>. Weiner, **Feminism In Education: An Introduction**, Open University Press. Philadelphia. 1994.

<sup>17</sup>. *Ibid.* pp.60



from a quest for a new spiritual relationship with nature to concern to empower women in developing countries) and so on. Conflicts within feminism led also to the use of labels of a more derogatory nature for the activities and beliefs of certain forms of feminism by those holding alternative view.

Thus Mitchell points out: "If feminism is a concern with issues affecting women, a concern to advance women's interests, so that, therefore, anyone who share this concern is a feminist, whether they acknowledge it or not, then the range of feminism is general and its meaning equally diffuse."<sup>18</sup>

All these different feminist schools of thought tend to revolutionize human consciousness, not solely that all these movement invite activists, educationists, researchers and policy-makers in a collective endeavour for implementing an alternative form of gender relations. As a result these movements also led to serious Sociological, Philosophical writing which have been inspiring the new generation of students, researchers and activists. It is obvious that the academic culture can no longer remain insulated from this new thinking and practice.

### **[III] PLEADING FOR A CASE FOR GENDER STUDY**

"I think it's a legend that half of the population of the world is female; where on earth they keeping them all."<sup>19</sup>

-- Russ.

"A woman does not want the truth; what is truth to women?  
From the beginning, nothing has been more alien, repugnant

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<sup>18</sup> Mitchell. J. **Reflection on Twenty years of Feminism**. in Mitchell 4 oakley (ed) **What Is Feminism?** Oxford, Blackwell. 1986.

<sup>19</sup> Russ, **The Female Man**, Star Books, London, 1977, pp-204.

and hostile to woman than the truth – her great art is the lie, her highest concern is mere appearance and beauty".<sup>20</sup>

**Friedrich Nietzsche.**

In each area we have come to understand that what we took to be humanly inclusive problematic, concepts, theories, objective methodologies, and transcendental truths are in fact a less than that. We can easily imagine knowledge in terms of institutional ordering, but the emphasis does not usually fall on who is doing the ordering or on what is "excluded" in this process. "Knowledge is not usually seen as being attached to specific people who 'master' it, process it, and then dole it out to those who succeed in gaining access to certain privileged territory."<sup>21</sup> But knowledge, without any doubt bear the mark of their collective and individual creators, and the creators in turn have been distinctively marked as to gender, class, race and culture.

Thus the struggle by women to gain equal access to the academy is a bulky chapter in the history of feminism and is far from over. It was only slowly and grudgingly that the various doors in the academy of knowledge were, in principle, opened to women. In practice this did not mean that women were actually encouraged to go there. Thus one can safely say that the academy was largely operated by men who were in the privileged position of creating meaning in terms of its public discourses. This is evident from the following statement; written in 1792; of a frustrated scholar caught in her age's assumptions concerning the essential opposition between male and female knowledge.

"To render mankind more virtuous, and happier of course, both sexes must act from the same principle, but how can that be expected when only one is allowed to see the reasonableness of it? To render also the social compact truly equitable,

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<sup>20</sup>. Para. 232 'Our Virtues', in *Beyond Good and Evil* [Nietzsche 1966, Sec 163].

<sup>21</sup>. Sneja Gunew, (ed) *Feminist Knowledge: Critique and Construct*, Routledge, London, 1990, pp.-15,

and in order to spread those enlightening principles, which alone can ameliorate the fate of man, women must be allowed to found their virtue on knowledge, which is scarcely possible unless they be educated by the same pursuits as men. For they are now made so inferior by ignorance and low desires, as not to deserve to be ranked with them: or, by the serpentine wriggling of cunning, they mount the tree of knowledge, and only acquire sufficient to lead men astray.<sup>22</sup>

Wollstonecraft believed with other feminist thinkers like Simon de Beauvoir that male knowledge constituted the preferred model.

Knowledge, then, in spite of its aspiration to be a pure, neutral, unmotivated, and disinterested reason, is as susceptible to a feminist critique as many of its branches. It has defined women as secondary, subservient, peripheral, dependent, irrational, bound to nature, emotional, and so on. In collaboration with other knowledge, philosophy has rendered women, femininity and their characteristics irrelevant, invisible, or incapable of representation, and thus outside the philosophical or theoretical realm. Woman and femininity serve as the unacknowledged supports or foundations of a patriarchal and masculine body of knowledge.<sup>23</sup>

Because most research within the Social Sciences has suffered from systematic biases against women, feminists see a need for correction on several levels. The most elementary is the recognition of absence--that women have been excluded from consideration, and that many of the most meaningful issues have not been addressed. Recognition of these gaps demands a rethinking of basic

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<sup>22</sup> Wollstonecraft *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. 1789, pp.293-94.

<sup>23</sup> Gunew Sneja (ed). *Feminist Knowledge: Critique and Construct*, in this book E. Grosz's article *Philosophy*. Routledge, London, 1990, pp. 148-149.

conceptual frameworks, including a re-examination of how women and men are differentiated.<sup>24</sup>

As men have formulated Social Scientific thought, placing men at centre, and with men as the intended audience, women have been relegated into objects without consciousness, existing only in relation to men. According to Dorothy Smith: The Social Sciences, constitute a community of discourse with a momentum of its own, a landscape in which even the most accomplished women scholars are in part strangers because it fails to incorporate their experience of reality, even as an African child brought up on British books finds a division between the mental and physical world of experience".<sup>25</sup>

Because of these biases, the structural perspective characteristic of the Social Sciences has not yet been consistently and coherently applied to men and women as such. The feminist project demands re-conceptualisation of what "male" and "female" mean in terms of the social systems that organize perception, identity, action, and the allocation of costs and benefits for all people. "Maleness" and "femaleness" are then perceived consequences of the operation of these social systems on the variability provided by nature rather than as the property of individuals abstracted from their culture. This is a perspective that is as distinctively social as it is feminist.<sup>26</sup>

E. A. Grosz, surveying the kind of relations; feminist Scholars have adopted in their various encounters with mainstream knowledge; has identified, three levels or types of intellectual misogyny for the purposes of analysis. These are:

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<sup>24</sup> Hess & Myra Marx Ferree, **Analysing Gender : A Handbook of Social Research**, Sage, New Delhi, 1987 pp.-11

<sup>25</sup> J Sherman & E.T Beek (eds) **The Prism of Sex: Essays In Sociology of Knowledge**. In this book Dorothy Smith's article **A Sociology for Women** University of Wisconsin Press. Madison, 1979, pp. 135-138.

<sup>26</sup> Hess & M.M. Ferree (ed), **Analyzing Gender: A Handbook of social Science Research**, Sage, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 12.

### **(a) The Operation of Sexism:**

Sexism resides in a series of individual or collective acts of discrimination, against women. There are a vast number of sexist behaviours ranging from pejorative, negative comments and assumptions about women, to their active exclusion from certain social spheres or activities, to conscious intimidation, harassment, and overt violence including rape. Sexism is an empirical phenomenon. It is visible, designable material, a set of actions (including language), which treats women in unequal ways to men. It is thus the unwarranted differential treatment of the two sexes, to the benefit of one and the expense of the other.

Arguably, sexist discrimination is in principle reversible. Women could behave in a sexist manner towards men. But in the context of our culture, where women as a social group lack the positions and power to enforce female supremacism, this cannot occur. It is for this reason that although women can discriminate against individual men, women as a group cannot oppress men as a group. This requires the support of a second form of oppression, which makes sexism possible.

### **(b) Operation of Patriarchy:**

Patriarchy is a historic creation, formed by men and women in a process, which took nearly 2500 years to its completion. In its earliest form patriarchy appeared as the archaic state. The basic unit of its organization was the patriarchal family, which both expressed and constantly generated its rules and values. The roles and behaviour deemed appropriate to the sexes were expressed in values, customs, laws and social roles. They also, and very importantly, were expressed in leading metaphors, which became part of the cultural construct and explanatory system.

The sexuality of women consisting of their sexual and their reproductive capacities and services, was commodified even prior to the creation of western

civilization under patriarchy. The development of agriculture in the Neolithic period fostered the inter-tribal "exchange of women" not only as a means of avoiding incessant warfare by the cementing of marriage alliances but also because Societies with more women could produce more children. In contrast to the economic needs of hunting/gathering societies, agriculturalists could use the labour of children to increase production and accumulate surpluses. Men-as-a group had rights in women which women-as-a group did not have in men. Women themselves became a resource, acquired by men much as the land was, acquired by men. Women were exchanged or bought in marriages for the benefit of their families; later, they were conquered or bought in slavery, where their sexual services were part of their labour and where their children were the property of their masters. In every known society it was women of conquered tribes who were first enslaved, where men were killed. It was only after men had learned how to enslave the women of groups who could be defined as strangers, that they learned how to enslave men of those groups, and, later, subordinates from within their own societies.

Thus enslavement of women, combining both racism and sexism, preceded the formation of classes and class oppression. From the second millennium B.C. forward, control over the sexual behaviour of citizens has been a major means of social control in every state society. Conversely, class hierarchy is constantly reconstituted in the family through sexual dominance. Regardless of the political or economic system, the kind of personality, which can function in a hierarchical system is created and nurtured within the patriarchal family. The patriarchal family has been amazingly resilient and varied in different times and places. Oriental patriarchy encompassed polygamy and female enclosure in harems. Patriarchy in classical antiquity and in its European development was based upon monogamy, but in all its forms a double sexual standard, which disadvantages women was part of the system. In modern Industrial states, in some cases, sexual relations are more egalitarian, while economic relations remain patriarchal, in other cases the pattern is reversed. In all cases, however, such changes within the family do not alter the

basic male dominance in the public realm, in institutions and in Government. The family not merely mirrors the order in the state and educates its children to follow it also creates and constantly reinforces that order.

The system of patriarchy can function only with the cooperation of women. This cooperation is secured by a variety of means: gender indoctrination, educational deprivation, the denial to women of knowledge of their history, the dividing of women, one from the other, by defining "respectability" and "deviance" according to women's sexual activities, by restraints and outright coercion, by discrimination in access to economic resources and political power, and by awarding class privileges to conforming women. For nearly four thousand years women have shaped their lives and acted under the umbrella of patriarchy, specifically a form of patriarchy best described as paternalistic dominance. The term describes the relationship of a dominant group, considered superior, to a subordinate group, considered inferior, in which the dominance is mitigated by mutual obligations and reciprocal rights. The basis of paternalism is an un-written contract for exchange: economic support and protection given by the male for subordination in all matters, sexual service, and unpaid domestic service given by the female. Yet the relationship frequently continues in fact in law, even when the male partner has defaulted on his obligation.<sup>27</sup>

Thus sexist act is a structure that systematically evaluates masculinity in positive and femininity in negative terms. Patriarchy is a structural mode of organization placing men and women in different positions in social, economic and interpersonal relations. It does not consist in empirical acts, it is a latent structure, which makes possible and organizes these individual acts into systematic form, providing the context and the meaning(s) for sexist inequalities. This is made up of not only different, unequal treatment of the two sexes, but also of the different meanings and values accorded to the two sexes, even in cases where they behave in the same ways. Patriarchy is a regulated system which positions men and

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<sup>27</sup>. Gerda Lerner. **The Creation of Patriarchy**, Oxford University, Press. 1986, pp 212 218.

women in superior and inferior social positions and grants different meanings and values to them. It is all pervasive in so far as it affects all aspects of interpersonal and social life. Patriarchal structures are not immutable, but are historically variable, operating in specific ways in Socio-geographically specific cultures; yet it always retains the primary commitment to upholding and maintaining male supremacy.

**(C) Phallogentrism:**

If sexism, according to E. A. Grosz, operated empirically and observably, and if patriarchy operate structurally, a third level of social misogyny that is of major significance for those interested in the operation of theory, representations, and discursive systems. The proliferation of oppressive images and representations of women and the feminine is not entirely distinct from Sexist or patriarchal power relations, each require representational system. This mode of oppression could be described as 'phallogentric'.

Phallogentrism is a specifically discursive series of procedures, a strategy for collapsing representations of the two sexes into a single model, called 'human' or 'man', but which is in fact congruent only with the masculine. It is the universalisation of particular features of masculinity, as if these were genuinely representative of both sexes. Phallogentrism effaces the autonomous representation of femininity. Within phallogentric paradigm femininity can only be represented in some necessary relation to masculinity.

As a textual or discursive strategy, phallogentrism provides for patriarchal relations. It leaves women no conceptual space for developing autonomous interests and points of view other than or different from men's. Women are constricted to three possibilities, each confirming the primacy of the masculine and the subordination of the feminine. Whenever women or femininity are conceived in terms of either an identity or sameness with men; or with their opposition or inversion of the masculine; or of a complementarily with men; their representation is phallogentric.



Sameness or identity (as is conceived in all universal or 'human' models of subjectivity), opposition or binary categorization (as occurs when feminine attributes are considered the negative or inverse of masculine ones) and complementarily (where the sexes are seen as a form of completion of the lacks in each other) privilege and take as given the qualities attributed to masculinity. Each takes the male as primary and measuring and defines the female only in her relation to the male. Sameness, identity, or equivalence implies a given norm or standard according to which one term is measured and judged as the same. Opposition is simply the negative of positively conceived properties or predicates; negation always involves a prior affirmation, on which it thus depends. And likewise, complementarily implies taking one term as the standard and assessing to what extent the other completes it. In each case, the male or masculine is granted an autonomous; self-defined position while the female or feminine a dependent position.

The distinction between sexist, patriarchal, and phallogocentric forms of women oppression may prove useful in describing and assessing the way in which all Social Sciences as well as Natural Sciences actively participates in that oppression. Social Sciences Sexism takes two forms. The first consists in openly derogatory or discriminatory remarks about women and femininity, designed to keep women's participation at a minimum. In other words, this form of sexism is based on the exclusion of women as philosophical agents and producers. Such exclusion may well have had dire effects on the nature and type of knowledge that has developed and practiced today.

A second form of Sexism is provided by a vast mass of philosophical material on the topic of women. Few Social Scientists, it seems, can resist making some remarks about women, their 'natures', functions, social roles, and relations to men. These remarks range from most hostile diatribes against women's inferiority, weaker moral sense, and intellectual frailties (e.g. Aristotle) to patronizing

comments about their charm and their unsuitability for intellectual tasks (e.g. Kant, Rousseau) to apparently even - handed treatment (e.g. J.S. Mill).

“Philosophy's patriarchal investments become clear in focusing, not on what philosophers say about women and femininity, but on what they do not say. The feminine is disembodied, woman is etherealised and rendered metaphoric in order to harmless, while not acknowledging what women may have to offer, (male) knowledge's”.<sup>28</sup>

Philosophical phallogentrism is possible because of a two-fold process. On the one hand, there is a levelling procedure in which all differences and distinctions between subjects are ignored, or reduced to a common denominator, implicitly defined by masculine interests. On the other hand, there is a process of hierarchisation, where one sex is judged better than its counterpart. As a consequence of this dual process, woman can be regarded as a 'deformed man' (Aristotle), a 'lesser man' (Augustine) or a 'castrated man' (Freud) that is, as a being who is defined by the presence or absence of the characteristics valued in and by masculinity.

The “**Natural Sciences**” are a comparatively recent subject of feminist scrutiny. The critiques excite immense anticipation - or fear - yet they remain for more fragmented and less clearly conceptualised than feminist analyses in other disciplines. During last century, the social use of Science has shifted: formerly an occasional assistant, it has become the direct generator of economic, political and social accumulation and control. Hope to "dominate nature" for the betterment of the species has become the effort to gain unequal access to nature's resources for purposes of social domination. No longer is the Scientist - if he ever was - an eccentric and Socially marginal genius spending private funds and offend private

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<sup>28</sup> E.A.Grosz, **Philosophy** in Sneja Gunew's Book, **Feminist Knowledge: Critique and Construct** Routledge, London, 1990, pp-147-148.

time on whatever purely intellectual pursuits happen to interest him. Only very rarely does his research have no foreseeable Social uses of course, feminists are not the first group to scrutinize modern science in this way. Struggles against racism, colonialism, Capitalism and homophobia, and the contemporary ecology and antimilitarism movements, have all produced pointed analyses of the uses and abuses of science. For one thing, at their best they incorporate the key insights of these other movements while challenging the low priority that specifically feminist concerns have been assigned in such agendas for Social reform.

Feminist critiques claiming that science, too, is gendered appear deeply threatening to social order even in societies such as ours where racism, classism, and imperialism also direct all our lives. Obviously, the different forms of domination use one another as resources and support one another in complex ways.<sup>29</sup>

Criticizing sexist, patriarchal and phallogocentric nature of knowledge, Feminist Scholars have given an alternative approach towards knowledge. Taking the help of E.A.Grosz and B.B. Hess & M.M.Ferree I will indicate some of the major lines of development in present feminist researches and methods which pose challenge against the "masculine" nature of knowledge.

#### **(A) Rejection of Value Neutrality:**

There is a fundamental rejection of the ideal of value free research in favour of a conscious partiality. The increased visibility of the once unconscious bias towards a male - defined, male centred world in the supposedly value free research of the past has exposed this ideal as a political myth. There is also a theoretical objection to the idea that any significant work can be done without a perspective or theory behind it, any choice of perspective is by definition political because it defines both a community of knower and objects to be known. The "generalizing impersonal

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<sup>29</sup> Sandra Harding, **Science Questions In Feminism**, Open University Press, England, 1986 pp.16-19.

mode" obscures but does not eliminate the reality of a perspective rooted in the experience of a specific limited community and concrete, every day activity.<sup>30</sup>

By the affirmation of its own perspectives, the fact that theories elaborate particular point of view, specific aims and values, it accepts its own historicity. Feminist theory can acknowledge its own interests openly as those of women, patriarchal theory, by contrast, is unable to admit its masculine interests without risking its status and rationale.

**(B) Reclaiming and Legitimising the value of women:**

Instead of regarding philosophy as unfolding of reason, a sure path of progress towards truth, a feminist philosophy can accept itself as the product of a specific socio-economic and textual discursive history. Neither relativist nor absolutist, neither objective nor subjectivist, it occupies the middle ground excluded by oppositional categories. This is not, however, to claim that it cannot be evaluated in any terms, simply that the criteria used must be different. A theory's validity is not judged simply according to its adoption of a fixed or pre-given form, but it may be judged according to this inter-subjective effects, that is, its capacity to be shared, understood and communicated by those occupying similar positions, and also by its inter-textual effects, that is, its capacity to affirm or undermine various prevailing or subordinated discursive system, and the effects it has on other discourses.<sup>31</sup>

**(C) Against Duality :**

Instead of separating the subject and object of knowledge, a feminist philosophy may instead assert continuity between them. The image of Science as establishing mastery over subjects, as demanding the absence of feeling,

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<sup>30</sup>. D. Smith. **A sociology for Women** in J. Sherman & E.T. Beek (ed) **"The Prism of Sex : Essays in Sociology of knowledge,** University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1979. pp.-135-188.

<sup>31</sup>. Grosz, **Philosophy,** Routledge, London 1990 pp.167-68.

and as enforcing separateness of the knower from the known, all under the guise of "objectivity", has been carefully critiqued even in reference to the Physical Sciences. Elements that are present in Scientific knowing but devalued because they are associated with femaleness - intuition, empathy and passion- are ignored in the positivist account and eventually distort the actual process of doing science. This idealized space, the prerequisite of the knowing objective, rational subject is based on the male disavowal of his body and his sex, and the assumption that he occupies a neutral position. Yet it is this masculinised image of Science, rather than more complex reality, that the social sciences embraced in their drive to attain academic credibility. Feminist social scientists, reclaiming the value of the female, legitimate these very elements that have been denied and repressed in science itself.

(D) *Anti-Functionalist Thrust :*

The emerging feminist methodology that is developing is profoundly anti-functional, whether this comes in a conventional or Marxist guise. There is a desire to accommodate a holistic view of social structural arrangements as defining situations and limiting the range of possible actions with recognition of individuals as agents of change. Social structures are viewed as having contradictory impulses rather than as promoting a smooth and satisfactory accommodation between individual needs and social demands. Attention is directed to the conflicts within experience, to the reality of guilt and ambivalence rather than either simple accommodation or resistance to structures that oppress people.

Resistance, ambivalence, conflict and struggle are key concepts for feminist theory and methodology because of the centrality of the distinction between what is and what ought to be the view of women as agents of change rather than as merely passive victims of circumstances animates research into how women themselves interpret and respond to structures of opportunity and constraint, but also forces

recognition of the limited alternatives for action facing women who wish to resist oppression.<sup>32</sup>

#### **(E) Redefining Language:**

Feminist theory is crucially engaged with the question of language and representation in their material and political effects. In challenging prevailing knowledge's, feminists also tackle the question of the language available for theoretical purposes and the constraints it places on what can be said. Rather than ignoring language as a material, active, productive system, feminists are clearly concerned with creating new modes of expression, new discursive styles, new enunciative positions to experiment with a language that may be able to articulate women's specificity and avoid the strategic deafness hitherto common in male paradigms.<sup>33</sup>

#### **(F) Theory as a Form of Practice**

Instead of dividing theory from practice - so that practice is located chronologically before and after theory (constructed as either a plan or a post facto reflection, respectively) a feminist philosophy may regard theory as a form of practice, a textual, conceptual, and educational practice, one involved in struggles for theoretical ascendancy, where dominant and subordinated discourses battle with each other. Theory is not privileged by its isolation from practice and its relegation to a pure conceptual level. It is not hierarchically privileged over other practices, reserving the right of judgment; rather it is itself capable of being assessed by other practices.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Hess & Ferree, (ed) **Analyzing Gender: A Hand Book of Social Science Research**, Sage, New Delhi, 1987.

<sup>33</sup> B.Caine, E.A Grosz, M. deLepvanchi (ed) **Crossing Boundaries: Feminism and the Critique of Knowledge**, Allen & Urwin, Sydney 1988. pp. 100-101.

<sup>34</sup> Grosz, **Philosophy** Routledge, London. 1990, 166-67, 1990

### **(G) Towards Epistemological Break:**

Instead of accepting dominant models of knowledge (with their logic, binary structure, desire for precision and clarity) a feminist philosophy can accept its status as material, textual, and institutional. As such, it can accept the provisional status which aims for the production of new methods of analysis, new methods of knowing, new modes of writing, new kinds of textual objects, new texts. No one method, point of view, position for subjects and objects is the norm or model for all philosophy.<sup>35</sup>

In this way putting a strong opposition against the prevailing Sexist, patriarchal, phallogocentric nature of knowledge and exposing its inability to depict the true Social reality, Gender study made its presence both necessary and inevitable. Therefore, its objectives are:

1. Removing the Invisibility of women.
2. Introducing Critical questioning of established myths assumptions
3. To improve the content, quality and perspective of research and teaching on women.
4. To appreciate the position of women in relation to their many sided roles in Society and to stress their positive contribution to all aspects and areas of Social living.
5. To collect, coordinate, systematize and put to shape in an easily available form existing knowledge and known material.

Just as organized feminism breaks the silence and opens women's mouths on the matter of their supposed contentment, so women's study asks repetitively, where are the women and why are their voices not heard? Women are not absent

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. pp. 68-69.

from history, or art or society or whatever, they are present in distorted and distorting images and mammoth archeological expeditions are required to bring the reality of their existence to our attention.<sup>36</sup>

What Sheila Rowbotham has to say about "Women's liberation and New politics" is applicable both to feminism and its academic counterpart "Gender study". According to Rowbotham, thinking is difficult when the words are not your own. Borrowed concepts are like passed - down clothes: they fit badly and do not give confidence; we lumber awkwardly about in them. First, there is the paralysis. Their words stick in your throat. There is not only the paralysis, there is the labour of making connections. Theory makes reality intelligible. But this theory is constructed from the experience of the dominators and consequently reflects the world from their point of view. They, however, present it as the summation of the world as it is.<sup>37</sup>

#### **(IV) GENDER STUDIES IN INDIA**

After discussing development of "gender study" in the west, it is now our turn to shift our attention to our own country - "India".

Research and writing on women and their situations in society has a very old history in India but most of it has remained unknown to the contemporary world of academic scholarship. We are just beginning to discover a few writings on this theme, going right back to the Buddhist period. The "Therigatha" - songs composed by Buddhist nuns, only a few of which are available in translations, present vivid descriptions of women feeling oppressed by their subordinate position. The Tamil poetry of the Sangam period (circa 3 century BC), rock inscriptions in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, the writings women who became great mobilizes of peoples movements in the medieval period, along narrative poem by a palace maid in

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<sup>36</sup>. Am Oakley, **Subject Women**, Martin Robinson, Oxford, 1981, pp. 320-334.

<sup>37</sup>. Rowbotham.S **Women's Liberation and the New Politics in Wonder** (ed). 1973.



Mysore Challenging the double standards prescribed by society for men and women - are just a few illustrations of existing material which we have been able to identify after a very cursory search during the last few years<sup>38</sup>

According to Vina Majumdar, the women's question, like the untouchability or the communal question, that had to be solved to give shape to the vision of a free Indian Nation. But this political aspect of Women's equality or inequality has never received adequate attention from historians or other Social Scientists –a neglect which has helped to perpetuate many ambiguities, misconceptions and under-valuation of this issue. The primary role of women's studies in the contemporary period is to rectify this neglect and to generate both empirical data and theoretical perspectives to place the issue in its proper context.

From the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly from the beginning of the Indian Press, the women's question has formed one of the major issues in social debate – first among social reformers, then among the nationalist and finally in the contemporary period, among all those who are concerned with problems of development, of growing inequality, poverty and unemployment. These debates, from the second quarter of the 19th century till today, fall into five Phases. (Majumdar, 1985).

In the **First phase**, the women's question emerged essentially in the context of the identity crisis of the new educated middle class--the first products of the colonial system of education. many of them, trying to imitate the life styles of the colonial rulers, found the condition of their own women to be a stumbling block. The criticism of many of our traditional customs like the treatment meted out to widows, child marriage, the denial of education to women, were felt to be blots on our society and first generation of reformers were anxious to remove those blots.

In the **Second phase**, namely in the last half of the 19th century, the women's question got increasingly coloured by the rise of cultural nationalism and

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<sup>38</sup> V. Majumdar, **Emergence of Women's Questions In India and the Role of Women's Studies** CWDS occasional paper, 7, 1985, p.-7.

revivalism as a counter attack to the spread of western influences and values in our society, particularly among the educated youth. The revivalists, interested in conserving indigenous cultural traditions, began to support women's education against the attack by orthodoxy, on the grounds that women's education would help to strengthen the hold of indigenous culture through the institution of family. The cultural nationalist thus introduced a new concept into women's question -- women as the custodians of traditional cultural values.

The voice of dissent was present also during the second phase. Writing around the 1890's Jyotiba Phule, whose primary concern was to break the hegemony of the high castes, referred to the subjugation of women as an instrument for maintaining Brahminical dominance in Indian Society'. During the same period, B.M. Malabari demonstrated for the first time the role that the Press could play in mounting a social campaign -- in the agitation that he promoted for the Age of consent Bill. For the first time, readers of the Times of India read of real life stories of women who had experienced torture and oppression.

In the **Third phase**, the women's question began to get increasingly intertwined with the trends within the national movement. A handful of women got involved in revolutionary activities and challenged their leaders refusal to allow them to participate fully in freedom movement. As the movement increasingly took a turn towards mass mobilization, women's participation in increasing numbers became visible and raised basic questions of women's equality in political sphere as well.

19<sup>th</sup> century reforms were basically preoccupied with the problems of the newly emerging urban middle class and had concentrated all their concerns for women with the problems experienced by women of this class. The image of the suppressed subjugated and secluded Indian woman - Hindu or Muslim -- that preoccupied the Indian literati and their counter-parts in the west took no note of the millions of Indian women who formed the back-bone of Indian economy and who were far greater victims of the colonial transformation of the Indian economy.

According to Majumdar. It is surprising that problem of women in cottage industries, Silk textile industries, tribal women in plantation and mining remained outside the concern of most reformers. It is even more surprising according to Majumdar that historians who have applauded women's participation in the freedom movement as one of the achievements of Mahatma Gandhi have never gone beyond his charisma to provide an explanation for women's participation.

Except for the Gandhian interlude, the first three phases of the women's question had focused entirely on the issues of women's familial status, their access to education and better legal rights as the instrument of reform. Till then Indian Gender question had a liberal welfarist approach. It questioned the hegemonic exploitation under patriarchy but it never wanted its abolition. Rather it was in favour of gradual transformation. This compromising attitude was basically an out come of the nature of leadership, which was basically conferred on males shoulder. Exceptions like Pandita Rama Bai and other were considered as rebel.

In the **Fourth Phase**, after independence, the question was deemed to have been solved which first addressed the civil rights of women with the adoption of Principle of equality in the constitution and throwing open to women the rights to education, the vote and entry into professions, public services and political offices. In this phase though women took active role in some socialist kind of movements right from Telengana to Naxalbari, more or less complacency developed to support status quo. For all practical purpose, the women question disappeared from the public arena and this was reflected in decline of both research and writings about women during this period.

According to Majumdar, the **Fifth and the last phase** is really set in the context of the growing crisis in our society, with increasing inequality, poverty and threats to people's rights. The committee on the status of women in India (1971-74) was inexorably forced to conclude of an increasing marginalisation of women in the economy and society.

In contemporary India the resurgence of the women's movement and its reflection on academics have to be seen in the light of (1) The crisis of state and Government in the 70's going into emergency. (2) post -emergency upsurge in favour of civil rights, (3) the mushrooming of women's organization in the early 1980's and the arrival of women's issue on the agenda (4) the mid 1980s marked by a fundamentalist advance and the 1990s when the crisis has deepened with regard to state, Government and Society.<sup>39</sup>

The women's question today is, therefore, no longer an issue confined to the position of women within the family or their rights to equality with men in different aspects of social life. It is part of the total, far broader question of the direction of change that our society is taking economic social, political and the intellectual perception and analysis of that process. It is in this context role of women's studies assume critical dimensions.<sup>40</sup>

The concern that women's studies had for equity and justice in society is based on consciousness of the injustices that society has perpetuated on women and of the process of development and social change that have contributed to these injustices. When women's studies rejects the dichotomy between theory and practice or between research and action and derives its legitimacy from action and intervention, it adds new dimension to social science Scholarship.<sup>41</sup> Women activists argue that:

"The new social science would be born at the grassroots level and women's studies should be seen as an effort to develop participatory process to develop articulation from the hitherto-silent sections of

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<sup>39</sup>. Agnihotri & Majumdar, **Changing Terms of Political Discourse, Womens Movement in India 1970-1990s**, EPW, July 22, 1995

<sup>40</sup>. Mazumdar, **Emergence of Women's Question in India and the Role of Women's Studies**, CWDS occasional Paper. 7. 1985, pp-6

<sup>41</sup>. K.Sharma, **Women's studies In India. Academia and Action**, Sage, New Delhi, 1994. pp.339

society. This would require a radical spirit, daring to make departures, whether it be in the empirical or in theoretical frame work".<sup>42</sup>

The emphasis on a dialectical relationship between gender studies and women's movement has resulted in expansion into new areas of concern: violence against women, revivalism and new modes of male domination, media ecology and environment, women's access to and control over productive and natural resources grassroots organizations of rural and urban poor women for empowerment, issues of power and autonomy etc. An eminent social scientist M.N. Srinivas observed "women's studies represent a trend in Indian Sociology towards viewing Indian society from the point of view of the under-privileged, the oppressed and the exploited. Women's studies signify the emergence of a view of Indian Society from below".<sup>43</sup>

In this context first National conference on Women's studies held in Bombay in April 1981. The first National conference debated alternative approaches to the development of women's studies in India. The consensus was clear that in the Indian context what was needed was incorporation of the women's question and its implications in various disciplines. Marginalized separate programme of gender study will make no impact on the minds of the larger student community or faculty groups.

There is lot of confusion in people's mind about the term Gender studies. Vina Mazumdar and others define it as "the pursuit of a more comprehensive critical and balanced understanding of social reality. "It's essential component includes"

- (i) Women's contribution to the social process.

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<sup>42</sup>. Womens Studies Zonal Meeting (IDS Jaipur, 1987).

<sup>43</sup>. M.N.Srinivas, **Development of Sociology In India - An Over view**, EPW XXII, 1988.

- (ii) Women's perception of their own lives, the broader social reality and their struggles and aspirations.
- (iii) Roots and structures of inequality that lead to marginalisation, invisibility and exclusion of women from the scope, approaches and conceptual frame works of most intellectual enquiry and social action. Women's studies should, thus, not be narrowly defined as studies about women or information about women, but be viewed as a critical instrument for social and academic development.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>. V. Mazumdar. Emergence of the Women's Question in India and the Role of women's studies, CWDS occasional Paper, 7, 1985, pp-14

## Chapter II

### Gender Studies: Reflections on Knowledge and Curriculum

I've already discussed the meaning of Gender Studies. It is at this juncture we ought to know how the operationalization of Gender studies, particularly, in the domain of higher learning, led to the reformulation of structure of knowledge and Curriculum. In this chapter I would try to examine precisely these – how because of gender studies we are rethinking the nature of curriculum – altering it, and creating a new system of knowledge which is more sensitive to gender equality and harmony.

#### [I] Discourse on the Curriculum:

The curriculum is concerned with all aspects of an institutions life and work. Teaching and learning take place within a context of purpose and intention. This leads to a definition of the Curriculum as a process whereby pupils are assisted towards desired learning. This entails four interrelated components.

- 1) Aims and objectives
- 2) Content
- 3) Teaching Methods and Resources
- 4) Assessment<sup>1</sup>

"The core of the curriculum is the institution and the outermost circle is the larger community. The academic content of the curriculum ultimately impinges on larger social structures. It should encourage questioning and alternative frameworks".<sup>2</sup>

However, for most writers on curriculum, its social origins and practices appear not to be a central issue. They are more concerned with definitions,

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<sup>1</sup>. Hegarty Seamus, **Curriculum In Special Education** in Noel Entwistle (ed.), *Hand Book of Educational Ideas and Practices*, Routledge, p.1059, 1990.

<sup>2</sup>. V.K.Srivastava, Presented on National Workshop on **Building Womens Studies Curriculum in India: Issues and Challenges**. 1999 IT College, Lucknow. **Mapping Women's Studies in the Academic Terrain: Teaching Womens' Studies as P.G. Course**.

particularly about the precise meaning of the term 'Curriculum' and about its relationship with pedagogy. But according to 'Carr', curriculum is much broader than subject content or syllabus. 'Pring' argues for a broader definition of curriculum based on professional assumptions about the positioning of teachers in curriculum discourses and the relationship between syllabus and pedagogy.<sup>3</sup>

Discourses on the curriculum, such as those of Pring and Skilbeck, produce the term 'curriculum' as real, fixed and neutral. They do not allow that such meanings may be fought over and remade according to prevailing views about how to create good society. Carr takes a different view.

'The way in which the curriculum is made and remade – the process of curriculum change – is essentially a process of contestation and struggle between individuals and social groups. Whose different views about the curriculum reflect their differences about the good society and how it may be created.'<sup>4</sup>

Feminist among others, have been more likely to see the curriculum as a site of struggle and contestation and have, therefore, been active in developing alternative meanings, which point up power relations and inequalities that suffuse curriculum formulations and relations. Moreover, they have tended to focus rather more on the possibilities of pedagogical rather than curriculum change. Feminists have sought to transform notions of pedagogy to accommodate feminist understanding about epistemology and classroom practices.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Pring: **The New Curriculum**, London, 1989.

<sup>4</sup> Carr; **Reconstructing the Curriculum, Debate: An Editorial Introduction**; Curricular Studies, London 1993, 5-9.

<sup>5</sup> G. Weiner, **Feminisms In Education: An Introduction**, Open University Press, Philadelphia, 1994, pp.31-33.



A well-structured and well-controlled curriculum is the most strategic issue with reference to the up coming issues of women's studies. A well conceived and thought fully designed curriculum plays a vital role in achieving the desirable objectives. The objective of a sound educational system needs to be well supported by a planned curriculum. The right kind of curriculum enables to inculcate valuable skills. Right kind of attitudes, interests and values. It has to be in line with the life of the people and demands and needs of the day.

A careful look at HISTORY would enable us to understand more meaningfully the discourses of curriculum. Before the enlightenment at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the western conception of curriculum and schooling was principally as a means of promoting spiritual deliverance in which Bible study formed the basis of all worthwhile knowledge. Later as study of nature replaced biblical studies, and reason replaced 'belief'; modern, more familiar forms of knowledge began to emerge. Teaching and learning become more secular and scientific. Social knowledge began to infiltrate Post- Enlightenment Curriculum thinking. These includes notion such as:

- Curricula should be represented as a selection from available knowledge (as knowledge about the world increased)
- There should be differentiated Curricula for different social groups. (as new class formation emerged)
- The functionality (or usefulness) of curricula should be emphasized.
- Curricula should be developed with the aim of promoting social advancement rather than merely with ensuring continuity of the existing social order.<sup>6</sup>

The four features of curriculum thinking – *selection, differentiation, functionality and social advancement* – are visible in more recent curriculum formations as well.

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<sup>6</sup>. Ibid. pp.33-34.

19<sup>th</sup> century curriculum tradition is characterized by emergence of two parallel female curriculum tradition related to both gender and class” the first based on Victorian middle class assumptions concerned ‘the perfect lady’ and the second, her hard-working proletarian sister, the “good woman”.<sup>7</sup>

The female curriculum was invariably linked to girl's biology and their eventual domestic destinies within the family, exemplified in the claimed link between female ‘over-education’ and infertility. In contrast men were focused in curriculum in public roles, as labour force and as citizens. Moreover, throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where education and schooling were considered an option for women, two perspectives predominated. The first and most popular view was that women were different from (and inferior to) men, biologically but socially, intellectually and psychologically. Hence, according to this view girls needed an education different from that of boy, which related specifically to their inferior roles in society. A sub-branch of this view was that women were different from, yet complementary and equal status to, men – a rhetoric that was never translated into practical action though was evident in later curriculum documentation.

The second view (held by most feminist of the period) was that if women were educated equally with men, they would be able to assume their rightful place in society as the social and intellectual equals of men. In practice, however, gender-specific subjects were introduced: for girls – in 1870's, sewing, knitting and cookery and in the 1880's laundry work, dress making, home-nursing, elementary hygiene and physiology, and for boys – more mathematics and technical drawing. In contrast apart from the few girls, who attended the newer girls grammar school, most middle-class girls languished in academies learning accomplishments (e.g. piano playing, etiquette) to prepare them for the social setting of the drawing room and parlour.

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<sup>7</sup>. Ibid. pp.34-35.

By the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century however, growing interest in the operations of the mind and, in particular, in the work of Sigmund Freud, began to transform understandings about the curriculum. Perceptions of the importance of the framework of the learner started to displace previous conceptualisations of curriculum based exclusively on realms of knowledge. Emergence of child-centred curriculum under the influence of Montessori and Froebel is worth mentioning.<sup>8</sup>

Simultaneously, shifts in the school Curriculum were being forced by the new work opportunities open to women, such as typewriting, clerical and telephonic work – despite the fact that the main purpose of female education was still thought to be for motherhood and domesticity.

A recurrent theme, noticeable both in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century discourses on women's education, was an apparently genuine fear that the working of female body, and that, somehow, academic work will inevitably intervene and destroy woman's natural destiny as wife and as mother.<sup>9</sup>

By the early post World War II period, the importance of education for an advanced industrial power began to emerge as a new curriculum discourse, i.e. creation of a more highly skilled labour force.

During the early post-war period the most influential debates about curriculum came from North America: from professional curriculum theorists in the form of Bloom's Taxonomy of educational objectives (1956), **Tylers'** Basic Principles of Curriculum and Institution (1949) both of which stressed the objectives of curriculum planning. Later Burner's emphasis on structure in curriculum planning in his books "Process of Education" (1960) and towards a

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<sup>8</sup>. Ibid. pp.34-35.

<sup>9</sup>. Delamonts and Duffin. L. (ed.) The Nineteenth Century Women: Her Cultural and Physical World, London, Heinemann.

"Theory of instruction" (1966) provided an alternative perspective for teachers and curriculum developers. But gender equality question was neglected altogether.

So what can be made of this admittedly selective account of curriculum development? According to G. Weiner:

**First**, it implies legitimation for gender curriculum reform within discursive framework of curriculum since. Social advancement is one of the four constant features of curriculum, as mentioned others are selection, differentiation and functionality. It is particularly important to note that, in a democracy, education has never been concerned only with supplying the needs of the economy or ensuring effective socialization; it also has strong tradition of preparing for citizenship extending possibilities for learning and promoting social progress.

**Second**, what is also apparent is that the curriculum itself is necessarily gendered because of its close link with schooling and the state. Historically, as we have seen in education as well as in policy on housing, health, welfare benefits etc., State policy has been suffused with sexist assumptions about the needs and potential of individuals. In fact, it is hard to avoid the numerous allusions, within the curriculum literature, to the conflicting nature-nurture duality, characterized in terms of the perceived oppositional forces of women's nature on the one hand and female education on the other.

**Third**, whilst each of the two most active eras of curriculum development, the 1960's and the 1980's took off in very different ideological climates, the opportunities for those wishing to promote greater equality in education were not noticeably different. The social democratic or professional ethos of the School council was, perhaps, even less conducive to challenging forces of inequality than the market driven vocationalism of the 1980's which seemed more in accord

with liberal feminist ideas concerning the freedom of girls and women to move up the educational and occupational ladder.<sup>10</sup>

There still remains a main curriculum problem for feminists: how to resolve the tension between the principal organizing curriculum feature of order and control, and the ideological frame work of feminism which rests on the commitment to expanding rights and freedom? Perhaps, according to Weiner, resorting to the notion of variety of feminisms rather than one unified feminism might be helpful here.

Therefore, it will come as no surprise that different feminist perspectives have generated different research question and different curriculum set up for education, e.g.

**“Liberal Feminist”** research studies have tended to focus on girls failure or underachievement in order to campaign for change. They have thus explored the apparent failure to achieve by girls and young women at school, in higher education, and in work-place in relation to their male peers, the causes of differential attainment patterns between sexes in certain subject areas (particularly in Maths, Science and Technology), sex stereotyping in optional subject areas, bias in the way examinations and tests are constructed and worked and so on. The aim has been very clearly directed towards working within the current system to achieve change quickly and with minimal disruption. Thus, in utilizing terms such as access, choice, disadvantage, under representation in which the most acceptable answers are those that are unlikely to make too many overtly threatening demands on a largely sceptical (and male) educational status-quo.<sup>11</sup> This has parallels with Dawe’s (1992) claim that liberal feminism is in sympathy with system maintaining curriculum theories in that its main orientation

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<sup>10</sup>. G.Weiner: **Feminisms in Education: An Introduction**, Open University Press, Philadelphia, 1994, pp. 48-49.

<sup>11</sup>. *ibid.* p.67.

is increased access to existing structures and toleration of dominant social values.

**Radical Feminists**, within education, on the other hand, seem to have no such reservations about alienating the educational establishment being concerned with more fundamental criticisms of the male-domination of society and the nature of school knowledge. Thus their research questions have tended to focus on critiquing "male" school subjects and patriarchal nature of curriculum and power relations between the sexes in the classroom. Unlike their liberal feminist sisters, they prioritise the role played by sexuality in the oppression of girls and women both outside and within the family and educational institutions. Thus the terms most frequently used within this feminist research discourse – patriarchal relations, domination and subordinations, oppression and empowerment, women and girl centredness signal both its connectedness to radical feminist thinking in general and its fundamental criticism of current educational practices.<sup>12</sup>

"Radical feminist thinkers attribute inequalities in educational attainment to patriarchal forces and male dominated power relationships in which (hetero) sexualities and hierarchy combine to create the dominant male and subordinate female dualism".<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, neither responsibility nor solution to sexual inequality can be placed entirely on the shoulders of educator. They must do what they can to re-educate society into non-sexist behaviours and practices, as part of the over all feminist challenge to patriarchal forces. This view holds that education can be potentially liberating but not in its present state, it can only be transformative if it shifts the curriculum and knowledge and educational culture from its male baseline".<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>. *ibid.* pp. 53-54.

<sup>13</sup>. *ibid.* pp. 55-56.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.* p.57.

**Marxist and Socialist Feminist** research on education appears more complex in orientation, concerned with examining the degree to which education and schooling have been effective in producing sexual inequality as well as in reproducing class inequality. The concepts utilized within this discourse – capitalism, production, reproduction, class, gender, patriarchal relations etc.

Marxist and socialist feminist educators appear to have less faith in the role of education in social change, rather they see it as one of the terrains upon which the sex as well as the class struggle is played out and in which pattern of social domination and subordination are reproduced and sustained”.<sup>15</sup>

So we can say working class girls are doubly exploited on the basis of their sex and class position as well. The solution of this feminist perspective to educational inequality is, thus, fairly limited because of the perceived structural nature of sexual inequality within capitalism although socialist feminism places equal importance on the influence and necessary overthrow of patriarchy.

Thus radical and socialist feminist are more in accord with Dawe's 'system opposing curriculum' theories in their demands for fundamental changes not only in terms of access to educational benefits but more widely to embrace curriculum knowledge and schooling structures.

**“Black Feminism”** has also seemed equally sceptical about the extent to which education can overturn or transform inequalities in society, for them law has to some extent been more important in eradicating some of the most overt forms of racial and sexual discrimination. They have also pointed out that by distinguishing between gender and race issues in education, (rather than fusing them), black girls have been effectively rendered invisible. Also, the tendency to

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<sup>15</sup>. Ibid. p.57.

treat girls from a variety of ethnic groups as a homogenous group on account of their colour has been heavily criticized.

**Post-modernist and Post-Structuralist** feminist educators, although comparatively new on the education scene, are also beginning to have more say about inequalities in education and about how challenges can be made. Because of their interest in the way in which discourse operates as a “normalizing” and “naturalizing” process in which knowledge and power are connected and, also, in their prioritisation of the “local”, they argue that it is possible to create a counter discourse in which unsaid may be said.<sup>16</sup> Certainly post-modern and post-structural feminism can offer a clearer analytical challenges and counter discourses in its emphasis on agency as well as structures and in its focus on revealing how power is exercised through discourses.

### **[II] Towards an Inclusive Curriculum:**

According to Margaret. L. Anderson, curriculum-change designed to bring the scholarship on women into the whole curriculum have been variously labelled “*mainstreaming*”, *integrating women’s studies into the curriculum*” and “*gender-balancing the curriculum*”. There are problems with each of these labels.

According to **McIntosh**,<sup>17</sup> the label “*mainstreaming*” trivializes women by implying that we have been out of, and only now are entering, the mainstream. The term implies that there is only one mainstream and that, by entering it, women will be indistinguishable from men. It makes the reconstructive work of curriculum change seem like a quick and simple process, whereas women’s studies builds its understanding on the assumption that there are diverse and plural streams of women’s and men’s experience.

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<sup>16</sup>. *ibid.* pp.67.

<sup>17</sup>. Peggy McIntosh, **A Note to Terminology** *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 11 [summer 1983. pp. 29-30.



The use of the terms "*integration*" and "*balance*" to describe these projects is also problematic. Feminist Scholarship has rested on the assumption that the exclusion of women leads to distorted, partial, and false claims to truth, yet, "balancing" may imply that all perspectives; even if they are racist, anti-Semitic, ethnocentric, class-biased and sexist; are of equal importance.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, liberal calls for balance often cloak an underlying appeal for analyses that are detached and dispassionate, as if those who are passionately committed to what they study cannot be objective. Gloria Bowles and Renate Duelli-Klein,<sup>19</sup> among others, argue that it is unrealistic to seek a balanced curriculum in a world that is unbalanced. Their concern reflects the understanding that most educational curricula mirror the values and structure of the dominant culture, yet they may under estimate the power of education to generate change.

Similarly, "integration" implies that women's studies can be assimilated into the dominant curriculum, when women's studies Scholarship demonstrates that women can not be simply included in a curriculum already structured, organized, and conceived through the experience of men. Integration is inadequate if it means only including traditionally excluded groups in a dominant system of thinking, so if integration is interpreted as assimilation, these critics are right, but the history of the black protest movement understood that the concept of integration can not be dismissed merely as assimilation. If we take meaning from black culture and politics, integration is a more complex idea and goal than

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<sup>18</sup> Anderson, **Black Studies/Women's Studies: Learning from our Common parts/Forging a Common Future in Women Place in Academy: Transforming Liberal Arts Curriculum** (ed.) by Schuster & Susan van Dyne, N.J. Rowman and Allan Held, Totowa, 1985, pp.29-30.

<sup>19</sup> G.Bowles & R.D. Klein (ed.) *Theories of Women's Studies*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Boston, 1983.

assimilation.<sup>20</sup>

The debate about women's studies and curriculum change has been described as a debate between autonomy and integration, and it reflects the origins of women's studies as both an educational project and as a part of broader social efforts for Emancipatory change. Those who argue for autonomy worry that integration projects compromise women's studies by moulding it to fit into patriarchal systems of knowledge. Developing women's studies as an autonomous field is more likely, they argue, to generate the new knowledge we need because it creates a sustained dialogue among feminists working on common question and themes<sup>21</sup>. Integrationists see a dialectical relationship between women's studies and inclusive curriculum and recognize that curriculum-revision projects are not a substitute for women's studies. They see curriculum as both growing out of women's studies and fostering its continued development

Project to balance the curriculum also raise the question of what it means to have men doing feminist studies. Merely having men study women as new objects of academic discourse does not necessarily represent a feminist transformation in men's thinking. "Transforming men through feminist studies must mean more than their just becoming aware of new scholarship on women or understanding how their characters and privileges are structured by gender, it must include their active engagement in political change for the liberation of women."<sup>22</sup>

Adrienne Rich pointed the way to curriculum change through women's studies when she distinguished between *claiming* and *receiving* an education. Receiving an education is only "to come into possession of to act as receptacle or

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<sup>20</sup> M. Anderson, **Black Studies/Women's Studies: Learning from our common Parts/Forging a common Future**" In **Women's place in Academy: Transforming the Liberal Arts Curriculum** (ed) by Marilyn Schuster and Susan van Dne (Totowa, N.J: Rowman and Allan held, 1985, pp. 62-72.

<sup>21</sup> Sandra Coyner: **The Ideas of Mainstreaming women's studies and the Disciplines,** *Frontiers* 8 no. 3 (1986, 87-95).

<sup>22</sup> . *ibid.* p.85.

container for; to accept as authoritative or true," while claiming an education is "to take as the rightful owner; to assert in the face of possible contradiction". For women Rich said, this means "refusing to let others do your thinking, talking and naming for you".<sup>23</sup>

For women's studies to realize Rich's vision means we must develop women's studies itself to be inclusive by building an inclusive curriculum. In this sense, changing the curriculum has three dimensions: changing our selves, changing our work and changing society.

### **[III] Gender Studies Curriculum in India**

"The deep foundations of the inequality of the sexes are built in the minds of men and women through a socialization process which continues to be extremely powerful. If education is to promote equality for women, it must make a deliberate, planned and sustained effort so that the new values of equality can replace the traditional value system."<sup>24</sup>

"Instruction and inter disciplinary research on women and the implications of the goals of the decade (must be promoted) as an input to the educational process, particularly in institutions of higher education in order to draw on the experience already acquired in some countries with women's status and to eliminate all attitudinal and conceptual biases and prejudices, especially those relating to class that hinder understanding of the role and situation of women."<sup>25</sup>

In order to comprehend the importance of integrating Gender studies into the higher education in India and to frame a strategy of incorporating the women's

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<sup>23</sup> . A. Rich. **Claiming an education In On Lies, Lies, Secrets, and Silence.** W.W.Northon & Co., New York, 1979, p.231.

<sup>24</sup> . **Towards Equality: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India.** 1974.

<sup>25</sup> . **General Assembly of UN on women's Decade (1980-85).**

study in the mainstreams disciplines, it is necessary to have a look at the beginnings of women's studies in India - the aims and objectives and its subsequent evolution.

Nineteenth century social reform movements introduced women's status as a major issue for debate and change. Gender equality has been accepted as a Fundamental Right in the Constitution of India. But there was no visible change till the national conscience was shattered by the publication of the Report of the Committee on the status of women in India. Which not only revealed the dismal state of existence of women in every walk of life, but also did a brilliant academic exercise in indicating the roots of the painful discrimination against women at every layer of society - both private and public.<sup>26</sup> The publication of this Report - towards Equality (1974) followed by the U.N. declaration of the International Women's Year and Decade, provided required momentum to women's study. Significantly the 1970's not only saw a spurt in research on women, it also saw a shift in the stance and area of research. Such extensive research succeeded in reviving the social debate on women's question and also helped creating a repertoire of knowledge on women. It questioned the theoretical approaches methodology, concepts and analytical tools that have failed to register women's contribution to society. These researcher-activists who had close links with women's movements contributed to the rise of women's studies movement.

In 1981 the first National conference on Women's Studies was convened with the objective of incorporating women's issues in the University Curriculum. In 1982, at the UNESCO meeting of experts on Women's Studies and Social Sciences, it was specified that though the major task of the women's studies is to make women visible in the curriculum yet an important purpose of incorporating topics on women in various disciplines was to provide a critical instruments for examining society which is biased towards men. The purpose was to enrich the

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<sup>26</sup> A. Chanda, **Building Women Studies into Mainstream Disciplines**, Lucknow, National Workshop, 99, pp.1-3.

area of study by examining and redefining conceptual framework of the discipline so as to accommodate women's experience.<sup>27</sup>

Necessarily this new approach of women's studies meant the abandoning of the value free notion of existing social sciences. The basic premise of women's studies is that gender discrimination is the fundamental reality of the existing society and to get a deeper understanding of the women's issues, experimental data from women's lives (which by definition is subjective) must be used. On the whole women's studies is to be understood not merely in the context of research and teaching but also action.

From the very beginning of this movement attention was paid to structure and pattern of incorporating women's studies within the educational set up. In the Inaugural address of the First National Conference on women's studies, Madhuri Shah, the then chairperson of University Grants Commission, introduced the debate as to whether women's studies should be, introduced as a separate course or should it be integrated into mainstream disciplines. Referring to the non-viability of independent courses on multi discipline problems in the Indian context, she emphasized the need to introduce women's studies in the Mainstream. She said

".....In some western countries, women's studies programmes have been developed as independent multi-disciplinary courses, or a package of separate courses within individual disciplines. We have to agree that women's studies cannot be a discipline by itself. It's development will depend on the extent to which it acquires an intradisciplinary as well as interdisciplinary thrust. Its future as a legitimate area of academic concern will also depend to a great extent on its ability to shed new light and new perspectives on various areas of knowledge. In my opinion the ideal state would be reached when women's concerns, perspectives and problems have been so

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<sup>27</sup>. A. Chanda, **Building Women Studies into Mainstream Disciplines**, Lucknow, National Workshop, Lucknow, 1999.

internalized by different disciplines at different levels of the educational process, that there will be no need for promoting women's studies separately. It is true that such integration of internatisation, faces many risks of being neglected, overlooked and starved of resources, or of receiving only taken recognition. There will be problems of managing the academic hierarchy, of overcoming the resistance of non-specialists, of getting adequate teaching time or other resources, of persuading students of significance in the face of the indifference of the senior faculty. The temptation, in face of such odds to introduce separate courses is overwhelming. But the history of independent courses on multi-disciplinary problems in India provides ample lessons of their non-viability in the Indian context.<sup>28</sup>

Though Shah's argument did not go without controversy but the general need for incorporation of women's question and its implications in various discipline in Indian context was understood.

The new guidelines for the development of women's studies in Indian Universities and colleges issued by the U.G.C in 1996 subscribe to this view and state that".

"Women's studies should not be organised as a separate discipline or department. The ideal situation envisaged is one of incorporation of the women's dimension within disciplinary course at undergraduate and post-graduate levels, pursuing its line-ages with other discipline and extension."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> . Madhuri Shah, **National Conference on Women's Studies Report**. 1981.

<sup>29</sup> . U.G.C Guidelines for the Development of women's Studies in Indian Universities and Colleges. 1996.p.6.

This official position needs to be discussed in the light of how we define "Women's" Studies", or gender studies, Women's studies or gender studies does not imply just learning/thinking about women. It has a larger academics agenda the pursuit of a " most comprehensive, critical and balanced understanding of social reality" from a gender justice perspective. It is thus viewed as "a critical instrument to improve our knowledge about society which at present remains partial and biased projecting only a view of social reality derived from a male perspective". The stress is on redressing the balance in knowledge and of giving an integrated view of the world. Along with the academic agenda, women's studies has a political agenda of social change aiming towards a more egalitarian society based on gender justice. Given these objectives it is only imperative that a larger student community and faculty groups be introduced to the new knowledge generated by women's studies. The methodological innovations in knowledge acquisition aiming at a more holistic view of life - the women's worldview - is to be brought into the mainstream disciplines, which through their rigidities of discipline give only a fragmented picture. Only then the artificial barriers of discipline can be broken and only then the, desired impact of gender discrimination and social inequality can be more effectively addressed.<sup>30</sup>

According to Chanda, the above-mentioned effect cannot be achieved by organizing women's studies as a separate programme/department. On the contrary that will confine knowledge input of women's studies only to a small number of students, possibly all female, and even in the best of times, leave the mainstream untouched and social inequities intact. In the worst of times, such as during the periods of financial stringency, separate women's studies programme have the possibility of being marginalized/scrapped. Integration into mainstream is an essential way of purging existing scholarship and dissemination of knowledge and information of bias. Through reconceptualisation, recognising the need for research on women and aiming at a total transformation in the concepts, perspectives and

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<sup>30</sup> . Chanda, **Buidling Womens Studles Into Mainstream Curriculum**, Lucknow, National Workshop, 1999. p.6.

methodologies of individual discipline so that they are able to incorporate women adequately, we have to integrate feminist perspectives and methodologies within the other disciplines, ultimately transforming them.

It is thus strategically important to entrench women's studies into mainstream discipline. It is also academically important to bring women's Studies into mainstream because then only it would work, however slowly, to break the artificial boundaries and rigidities of traditional disciplines, thereby upgrading the educational system and make it more meaningful and relevant to society.

"There is, however, a possibility of its being subsumed by the traditional disciplines which are well entrenched in the knowledge hierarchy for ages. There is also the danger of tokenism and lip service being paid to women's studies, with the mere filling in of gaps. Some information about women added on to existing courses, without adequate analysis. To counter this threat it is absolutely essential to have an institutional mechanism within the educational structure to ensure the development of women's studies perspective, in face of new challenges ...Women's studies can be brought into the mainstream only if the women's studies centres play to catalyst's role...For the centres within Universities need to be independent to the, departments and faculties to avoid structural constraints and delays. These centres need to be in constant interaction with the mainstream disciplines through inter-departmental seminars workshops and orientation courses. They have to pressurize, cajole and convince other departments to bring about necessary changes in the curriculum by incorporating the knowledge inputs in the area both of theory and praxis from women's studies and feminist research. Indeed, women's studies involved a multidisciplinary approach.

It necessarily requires analytical synthesis and a meaningful interaction between different, disciplinary methods and theoretical formulations. This is a



difficult task. Given the compartmentalized nature of university departments, this forms one of the big challenges to the Women's studies centres. Along with efforts of main streaming women's studies, these centres have to keep contact with women's movements and to work for generating new knowledge.<sup>31</sup>

According to U.G.C Guidelines for the Development of Women's studies (1998) a broad spectrum of organisations in the country are engaged in women's studies. In the last 10 years, their number has increased in response to: **both**

1. (a) the needs of planners and policy makers for understanding women's particular role in policy. Particularly their role in establishing a just and secular society in India and the growing complexities in the problems faced by women which require to be understood and analysed.

(b). The need to have a better understanding on women's problems and roles.

2. The needs of women, especially those from the disadvantaged sections and those belonging to different communities: the needs of grassroots women leaders, the needs of elected women representatives of the Panchayati Raj institution system, for information and advice in their efforts for action and advocacy.

U.G.C. has grouped these organisations in following manner:

- i) Women's studies centres attached to the University, funded by the U.G.C.
- ii) Women's organisations such as non-Governmental registered societies, being supported by Grants from either the ICSSR, or a department of central Government or state Government for specialist sectors.
- iii) Grassroots organisations as well as feminist resource centres which develop their funding base through projects which are commissioned by a broad spectrum of agencies, Government, corporate, financial institutions as well as international donors.

It is proposed that in the Ninth plan, a broader view is taken of this constituency of women's studies centres and women's studies scholars who have been playing a significant role in facilitating the national goals of removal of poverty

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<sup>31</sup>. A.Chanda. National Workshop, 1999, Lucknow.

and discrimination. It is proposed that support is given to strengthen and sustain the University women's study centres, and to facilitate their own capacity to network with other constituents, such that they are naturally reinforcing as well as synergising one another. The functions of these institutions are identified as

1. Teaching and Training.
2. Research
3. Extension.
4. Dissemination (library, documentation and publication)
5. Advocacy.

National conference of on women's studies 1981 had identified the approaches to women's studies as:

- a) The historical and material culture context should be kept in mind.
- b) Comparative studies within the country and outside would be useful.
- c) Research should be based on concrete data and adequate facts.
- d) Existing methodologies, concepts, definition, need to be re-examined and re-evaluated in order to meaningfully incorporate women's roles and evolve a paradigm that does not push out of sight inconvenient facts in order to uphold a particular logical frame work and in this process discipline barriers need to be broken.
- e) Field experience with women from different Social Groups and various women's organisations should be made obligatory for students.
- f) Documentation by an independent agency by would be necessary.

#### **[IV] Recommendations for Building Gender Studies Curriculum in Different Academic Disciplines**

1. Women's studies in the sense of scientific studies of women's multiple roles in society must become a component in different subjects e.g. historical evolution of the position of women must find a place in all Social Sciences and as part of Social History.

2. All textbooks and general books should be scrutinised to identify prejudicial material.
3. The interrelationships of social, economic and political rights of women of different classes of society should be examined and researched and the focus of the new curriculum should be masses of women and not only elite groups.
4. Attempts should be made to improve and recast data collection systems. Statisticians must take into account the sensitive methodologies suggested by subject specialists.
5. Research knowledge should be made available to active group and the work of active groups could be evaluated and studied by researchers.
6. Indigenous teaching materials should be prepared.
7. Documentation, Clearing-house facilities need to be built up to support the curriculum change. Newsletters and periodic workshops will aid this process.
8. A fundamental change that is necessary in the study of woman is to regard her as an individual and not just an appendage to the "family". A feminist approach to women's studies would have two criteria: equality and a woman's right to independent action.

As a stepping-stone of "curriculum revision" 1981's conference suggested tentative syllabus for women's study under various disciplines. Now we will have a quick look at those syllabuses.

**Panel : Sociology:**

The reviews covered the universities of Bombay, Poona, Nagpur, Marathwada, Gujrat, Kerala, Madras and North Indian Universities and the I.I.Ts. Review shows as bulk of research work done now is through grants sponsored by funding agencies, it prevents the development of consistent cumulative and comparative data substantial enough to afford generalization regarding the social reality of women placed in diverse social situations. Secondly, in the discipline as a whole, important social relationships (like the family) are not dealt with from a

women's point of view. In social Anthropology, though women are more visible, subordination of women is assumed as a datum and to establish this certain activities are selectively highlighted to the exclusion of other significant activities.

Discussion emphasized the necessity of incorporating into the sociological syllabi different positive aspects, such as for instance, women's role in production and in reproduction, their contribution to social movements etc. to bring out the integral part that they play in the social process.

- a). Paper No. I: Researches and Readings, on Women in India.
- b). Paper No. II: Experiences and issues of women in Indian Society.
- c). Paper No. III: Issues and perspectives on women's study.

The first paper is introductory and explanatory. The second paper identifies both research as well as action areas having a bearing on women. The third paper provides focus and thrust for research both intellectual exercise and as policy research.

Each paper could have four sections:

- i) Structural states
- ii) Normative Nexus of Women
- iii) Behavioural milieu and characteristics.
- iv) A case study to be selected by the department (monograph).

By a gradual process of experience and accretion of new information we can in due course, have specific papers on women from different groups rural urban, tribal non-tribal, scheduled caste, industry and other areas, other work situations, health etc. It is urgently needed that comprehensive reports on review of studies on women be prepared on several themes. And secondly, a comprehensive report on legislation and customary laws pertaining to women is written.

In the existing courses also, incorporation of women can be done. In the paper on "Industrial Sociology": differential wages, legislation, condition for work in

male dominated and female dominated occupations; women in the organised sector etc. can be included. Under the paper on "social stratification" the following could be included:

- a) Evolution of Social Stratification including the role of women in pre-colonial, hunting, gathering Societies.
- b) Effects of different kind of stratification on women.
- c) Low ranking women v/s high-ranking males and females.

Under 'Society and Personality' could be included the study of myths to find out how myths play a role in influencing self-images and moral behaviour.

#### **Panel : Demography - Economics:**

The reviewers covered the syllabi of Universities in the North-eastern, Western and Southern regions. The reviewers of demography syllabi pointed out how inadequate it was to explain demographic parameters in demographic terms alone, as is done at present. Activities in the field of population such as census, social science research and welfare programmes over stress women's reproductive role and under stress her productive role. While fertility studies focus entirely on women ignoring the men's responsibility, census underestimates women's economic participation. Societies are not yet ready to plan the educational process to cope with the new value framework and social ethics.

Review papers of economics argued that female labour should be treated as a significant and separate category. Women's economic obligations and rights under different social systems: patriarchy - matriarchy monogamy - polygamy - polyandry need to study.

A sample scheme in terms of analytical categories was worked out:

- i. Women as consumers
- ii. Women as producers
- iii. Division of Labour and women.

- a) Attempts to explain sex-wise occupational distribution on grades of national aptitudes and women's reproductive role. The exploitative aspects of women's occupational segregation.
  - b) Supply of female labour - determinants of women's labour supply function – family income, distribution of Skills and training women's role in household etc.
  - c) Discrimination against women in the labour - market.
  - iv) Women and Organisation
  - v) Women as Entrepreneurs
  - vi) Women and Development
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- a) Review of Social Science theories for their underlying assumptions on women.
  - b) Social history of women's work for the analysis of women's frame-work for the analysis of women's work in production, subsistence production, commodity production, domestic labour, wage labour etc.
  - c) Examination of structures, institutions, and mechanism of control over women's productive and reproductive forces through sexual division of labour family, class state and ideology (e.g. motherhood, romantic love, femininity, chastity).
  - d) Women as agricultural workers,
  - e) Female migration
  - f) Women and industry.
  - vii) Measurement of Women's Work
  - viii) Students involvement with masses of women

**Panel : History**

The paper presented fell into two categories.

- a) Historiography papers with critiques of methodology.

- b) Detail item-wise examination of topics in current syllabi with suggestions for inclusion of women's studies.

The critiques of methodology papers felt that what was important was not just filling in gaps in women's history but to examine the forces that influence the position of women. It was necessary to link the position of women to its basis in the material culture, property relations, economic conditions and the interrelations between general conditions in society and its material culture. Kinship structure and the nature of family organisation were closely connected to the mode of production, which was subject to change according to changing socio-economic needs. The economic underpinning of the position of women at every major stage of social change is necessary. The persistence in modern India of endogamy in spite of the loosening of heredity-based occupation can be seen, as made possible by the socio-economic subordination of women. Secondary, before putting women into history, biases in history writing needs to be evaluated e.g. the over playing of the impact of Buddhism on lay women and Society or the selective identification of Indian Culture with only Brahminic or the Hindu.

The other papers make detailed comments on where women's studies can be incorporated in the existing syllabi. These suggestions are included in the panel's recommendations.

Suggestions and Recommendations include:

- (1) The group note that women were not even mentioned in the history syllabi of the universities with a few exceptions. Also since teaching and learning in Indian Universities is totally examination oriented and question on women are rarely asked, it may be presumed that even when women are mentioned, no serious study is undertaken.
2. They agreed that no reading material for students or teachers existed at the school level and university level even though there was ample source

material, which could be tapped. Whatever little texts were used was unsuitable.

3. Without extensive and intensive research with a women's studies perspective it would be impossible to include these topics in the courses.
4. It was agreed that women's studies should be incorporated in the existing B.A/M.A syllabi rather than devise separate courses. At the level of research or seminars, optional courses of a more specialized nature could be offered revolving round themes of women's history.
5. Women's participation in social and political movements should find a place and particularly so in the causes on national movement and social reform movements. Tribal history is need to be adequately represented in tribal dominated areas.
6. There should be more emphasis on regional history using regional language sources.
7. In the courses on history of the U.S. U.S.S.R. China, women's history and women's movements can be incorporated easily as there is enough available materials.
9. In economic history greater attention should be paid to the impact of British colonialism on land relations, technology, occupations etc. as they attested women's growth, education, employment, wage structure, conditions of work etc. It should include history of women's struggles in labour movement and peasant struggles.
10. Contribution of women to the development of classical, regional languages and literature in fine arts etc. should be studied.
11. Family histories, history of various caste and other associations, biographies, autobiographies can be tapped as new sources.
12. There should be no compartmentalization between modern history and ancient history. Courses without textbooks should be tried as an experiment. Let historian be allowed to explore history.



13. A priority area for research would be study of female education, survey of women in the history faculties of different universities and preparation at a biography of research on women's history.

Finally, the group discussed the machinery needed for implementing the above suggestions and recommendation.

### **Panel : Literature**

The panel agreed that the aim of teaching literature should be broadly put under two categories, viz. -(a) study of the language and (b) study of the creative works of literature. Both literary and linguistic aims should be safeguarded while analysing and recasting the curricula of literature. The aim of teaching a language is to develop powers of comprehension, develop sensibility, power of expression, capability of reading witting, conversation etc. while teaching literature would require a full historical and socio-economic analysis of author's approach to the views reflected in these books.

Literature curricula should be analysed for revision from three angles:

- a). Content orientation, leading to
- b). Review of texts and consequently
- c). Teacher orientation for a new approach to teaching.

### **Content Orientation:**

The group recommended that all existing curricula be scrutinised to see how to include more content on women. A systematic critique should also be prepared to expose underlying ideologies including religious obscurantism, Idealised models of women should be critically evaluated and dominant trends of portraying a negative image of women should be eliminated from the text books of all the languages prescribed for the study of literature in these languages. Areas of

comparative study of different literatures of different languages need to be expanded.

**Review of Texts:**

To guide the selection of alternative texts, the task force going into review of texts should include sociologists, historians, activists, and teachers of literature involved in the emancipation of women.

Book chosen should emphasize the study of women through different ages in the same setting and a comparative study of such portrayal of women be made of the part of the curricula (e.g. Anna Karenina with Modern Russian Novels).

Prescribed textbooks need to be carefully evaluated and an effort for getting women oriented material be made. Ordinary women of the present era and women leaders of less known communities should be highlighted # choice of text should include literary work by eminent women writers, and works that project positive images of men and women.

**Teacher Orientation:**

Changing the curricula in it is not sufficient. Along with such changes, teaching approaches reflecting the emerging image of women must be included. The aim should be to promote a better understanding of women as well as women's image projected in the curriculum. Teaching of literature should generate critical thinking towards the works of art and towards life.

**Panel : Political Science:**

The unanimous verdict of the reviewers who reviewed the syllabi of seventy universities was that issues concerning women, their rights, roles and status in the political process in India or any where else in the world were conspicuous by their absence in the political science curriculum with the exception of a few universities in

western India, women's political science courses, amounted to as argued by some reviewers, a violation of the objectives of a syllabus as envisaged by the UGC panel on Political Science, which require the syllabus to be socially relevant and helpful in the search for truth regarding the political reality. The only presence of women's issues in the curricula was in indirect form in political sociology and Indian Government and Politics but the books prescribed suggest that the articulation of this indirect presence could at the most, be a wishful thought, depending for translation into reality on the presence of a teacher sensitive to the issue.

The problems in attempting a revision therefore were thus two:

- a). Removal of the invisibility of women in the curriculum and the strategies most appropriate for the purpose and
- b). Introduction of critical questions regarding the gap between symbolism and actuality, between formal rights and real participation, between token presence and actual invisibility of women in the power process and invisibility before those who study that process.

The group was of the view that without the complementary support from the second, mere mechanical incorporation of data on women in existing courses would not serve the purpose. It was imperative for the discipline to address the following critical questions.

- a). Origins and the patterns of the subordination of women in political institutions
- b). Evolution of the issue in scientific analysis of politics and resource for its revival in the contemporary world.
- c). Development of new perspectives through teaching of these issues among university people.

To remove the invisibility of women in the curriculum, the group recommended that the issues pertaining to women should be incorporated in the existing compulsory papers both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

The group strongly felt that there should be a compulsory paper at M.A. level in all the Universities. The paper could be: women and political institutional systems, with special reference to India. Important areas should be:

- 1). Status of women in the Matriarchal Society, the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy, origins of state, private property and monogamy, the role of state in subjugation of women.
- 2). Vedic age and the Status of women in India, Manu and Status of women, Kautilya's Arthashastra and the status of women, Medieval India, Mughal period and the status of women, British period and the Status of women, British administration and reform movement and abolition of Sati, widow remarriage and abolition of child marriage etc.
- 3). Post-Independence State system and the status of women; legal position under the present constitution, right to property in theory and practice, the operation of rape, anti-dowry and other laws affecting women of and different political and social movements (feminist, women and trade union movements)

Finally, the group felt it pertinent to define research priority on women's studies. The following areas, it was realized needed special attention:

1. Muslim women, political status impact of Muslim personal law on their status, political attitudes and political participation.
2. Tribal women and their socio-economic and political condition.
3. The nature and exploitation of unorganised women labour and ways and means of organizing them.
4. Peasant women
5. Women and trade union movement.
6. Women and decision - making agencies.
7. Women and freedom - struggle.
8. Women and Agrarian-struggle.
9. Women's movement in India
10. Socialization process among different groups of women

11. Studies concerning mobilization of rural women in political field.
12. Probing studies on remnants of matriarchy in India.
13. Inter-relationship of social economic and political rights of women of different classes of society.
14. Politics of sexual division of labour both at Macro and Micro-level.
15. Power relations within different family structures across class and communities.

**Chapter III**  
**Meaning of Gender Studies: The Experience of the**  
**Centre For the Study of Social Systems,**  
**Jawaharlal Nehru University**

In my preceding chapters I wanted to establish the relationship between politics of knowledge and emergence and growth of gender studies. I also traced how gender studies can influence curriculum development i.e. active intervention of gender studies in mainstream curricular politics. Due to sustained efforts of feminists and academia, sensitive to gender issues, "Gender" has emerged as an important analytical category for analysing socio-economic processes along in the line with caste, class, kinship and ethnicity.

In this chapter, on the basis of findings of my previous chapters, I would like to make an in depth study of functioning of a gender study course within a formal university set up and the extent to which it influences the other courses and mind set of both students and teachers. Since ideal situation perceived by us is a situation where gender question should be asked by all disciplines rather than having a separate gender study course, I would like to see how Centre for <sup>the</sup> <sup>of</sup> Study Social Systems of Jawaharlal Nehru University is addressing this question.

I have chosen Centre for the Study of Social Systems i.e. Sociology department of J.N.U as field of my study because it was one of the pioneering effort in India to address gender question by being part of a particular department rather than establishing a separate discipline. Secondly it facilitated the emergence of other independent gender studies courses under department of history, literature, geography and so on within the University. No doubt interdisciplinary fabric of the Jawaharlal Nehru University helped in rightful dissemination, and development of gender sensitiveness of academia as well as student community

## **(I) ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION**

To begin with it is important to understand the culture of learning prevalent in the Jawaharlal Nehru University. It would not be wrong to say that the J.N.U., right from its inception has been deeply associated with a series of socio-political questions confronting the nation. The Nehruvian agenda of nation-building was the broad ideological background against, which the University and its academic pursuits have to be studied. No wonder, J.N.U. although not a very old university became widely known because of its secular, liberal modern knowledge system. Distinguished left historians, political scientists and sociologists began to give new meaning to the culture of this university. Moreover, the political culture of the student community was quite vibrant. The culture of perpetual debate, dialogue and discussion characterise the teacher – taught relationship in this university. It can be said what happens to the university cannot be understood without locating it in the political questions.

It is not surprising that university of this kind with its extreme political sensitivity cannot remain indifferent to the gender question. At the Centre for the Study of Social Systems the courses, which are offered were designed to make the learner, conscious of theoretical issues and empirical Indian social reality. It was in late 80's that the centre, because of the changing politico-cognitive environment all over the world was stimulated to rethink its knowledge systems and curriculum. It was at this juncture that Patricia Uberoi – a feminist scholar of great repute joined the centre, introduced courses related to gender studies.

She started the course from the academic calendar of 1987-88. In her own narratives:

“When I joined the faculty of the centre in the middle of the academic year 1985-86, I was rather surprised to find, given J.N.U's generally 'progressive' image, that no compulsory or optional courses on Gender were being offered either at the M.A or M.Phil. levels. This was despite the fact that our

handbook proudly lists some 29 course titles at the M.A. level and 35 course titles for the M.Phil. There was also no evidence that a 'women's component' or 'perspective' was being conscientiously introduced into any of our compulsory papers either in areas such as anthropological theory, Family and Kinship, economy and Society, political Sociology, Social Stratification – all of which are currently arenas of feminist reinterpretation – let alone any sensitivity to feminist critiques of the founding fathers of the discipline, Marx and Weber in particular, or to new feminist applications of their sociological insights.”<sup>1</sup>

Students' response has always been very encouraging. Taking the help of interdisciplinary nature of J.N.U. Curriculum students from other disciplines like History, Political Science, Economics, English Literature have also opted for this course. Warm response from the students laid the strong foundation for the course.

The course initiated by Patricia Uberoi further developed by Maitrayee Chaudhuri and Susan Visvanathan. In 1995 Beatrice Kachuk of New York state University took the M.A course for a semester, when she came to India as a Fullbright Scholar. In the year 2000 Dr. Renuka Singh took the M.A course for the first time. Now five competent teachers are there in the centre to teach the course. On this Susan Visvanathan proudly commented that now they can run a parallel gender study department.

The centre also has arranged and regularly organising National Seminars, lectures, workshops on Gender related issues of importance. These seminars

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Uberoi : **Some Reflections on Teaching the Sociology of Gender**, Samya Shakti vol IV & V, 1989-90, pp.280.



and workshops have really raised the interest and curiosity of intelligentsia towards the gender related issues.

According to Maitrayee Chowdhuri the real success of the course lies in development of gender as an analytical category. Now almost all courses are paying serious attention towards gender perspective. Now gender study course teachers do not need to teach gender and stratification, economy and gender etc. Because, these issues are well addressed, in the respective courses on 'Social Stratification', "Economy and Society", and so on. Methodology courses are also giving due importance to gender perspective. Classical thinkers and founding fathers of Sociology are also reinterpreted in gender line. Every year lots of students are opting for gender related issues as their area of research. Even apparently the teachers who were critical about it, can no longer afford to maintain indifference towards it. If they don't support it they have to oppose it.

## **(II) COURSE CONTENTS**

According to Patricia Uberoi, in setting out to design courses on Gender studies to be thought in the centre for study Social System, she felt obliged to keep several principles in mind. These are quite interesting to understand the basic ethos of the course structure.

**Firstly**, she wanted the courses to be accessible to those non-sociology students who might like to opt this unit, and also to take serious stock of contributions to the Sociology of Gender deriving from other Social Science disciplines – history, politics, economics etc. and the insights emerging from psycho analysis and feminist literary criticism. At the same time she felt that the sociology – social anthropology content should receive priority, especially at the M.A level where students are simultaneously getting their grounding in basic concepts.

**Secondly**, administratively and academically, centre has had a policy to classify courses into two categories: 'theoretical' versus 'substantive courses, the latter having primary reference to Indian materials.

Accordingly she designed the M.A course as a 'substantive' one, that is, as a course on the Sociology of 'Women and Society in India', and the M.Phil course as a 'theoretical' course, tackling basic issues in feminist theory. This latter course entitled 'Themes in Gender, Culture and Society'. This tradition has been continuing till today. But Maitrayee Choudhuri is virtually unhappy with this distinction of courses in two categories i.e. substantive and theoretical. According to her view each course deals with both the aspect of theory as well as empirical reality. Thus this distinction is irrelevant.

According to Susan Visvanathan, this is high time we should think of introducing one compulsory course with proper blending of theory and empirical reality at the M.A level and various optional courses at M.A. as well as in M.Phil level, prioritizing specific area of interest. In this context Patricia Uberoi commented:

"Naturally, it was not part of my conscious design to produce a course on the Sociology of Gender which iterated so perfectly the dependent structure of our academic life in its division of labour between foreign theory and Indian empirical data. Quite other considerations were in fact uppermost in my mind, chief among them being an attempt to combine the cultural ideological and the political economy angles in a reasonable balance within the frame of a single course, given that our case studies and readings tend to pan out along either one or the other axis. Second was an explicit

concern with the process of social change and development, this being a major programmatic emphasis of our centre".<sup>2</sup>

Study of Course-content for M.A level course as conceived by different teachers.

Over the time

**Course Title:** "Women and Society in India: A comparative Perspective".

**Patricia Uberoi:-**

Beginning with a consideration of general theoretical and methodological issues, she divided the course in three sections:

- i). Construction of gender identity.
- ii). The political economy of gender
- iii). Women and development, covering a few selected areas of contemporary interest. Putting emphasis on these three broad areas she conceived the course outline as following:

**I) Methodology :** becoming 'visible' in Social Sciences.

**II) The construction of Gender Identity**

- a. normative models in religious and folk tradition.
- b. Socialization; the family, the school, the media.
- c. Time & Gender : Individual life crises.
- d. Space and gender: Separate worlds

**(III) The Political Economy of Gender:**

- a. Procreative ideologies,
- b. Women and work
- c. Women and Property
- d. Authority in family

**(IV) Women and development:** Some contemporary issues.

- a. The unorganized sector.
- b. Ecology

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<sup>2</sup> Patricia Uberoi: **Some Reflections on Teaching the Sociology of Gender.** Samya Shakti/vol IV & V 1989-90. p.282.

- c. Migration and women headed households
- d. New technologies

She divided her resource materials into two parts. First section deals with theoretical and comparative perspective. While second section provide information about India and South East Asia. To bring comparative aspect in the course outline she compared Indian situation with other selected south East Asian countries. Although it is a very comprehensive and well thought out curriculum, I think it is lacking in putting due emphasis on 19<sup>th</sup> century social reform movements and its influence on emancipation of Indian women. It is also silent about how womanhood is defined by Indians (from Manu via Gandhi, Nehru, Tagore and finally by contemporary feminist ideologues).

**Dr. Maltrayee Chaudhuri:**

According to her a course of this nature can only be partial. She made an attempt to begin with a consideration of general methodological issues and then more on to specific substantive areas. Theoretical debates about gender is discussed in the context of the substantive areas.

Her course-outline contains:

1. Basic concepts
2. Status Reports.
3. Women and Development.
4. Theoretical Approaches.
5. Indian story of the Women's Issue.

Her course-content is also lacking the due emphasis on social reform movements of 19<sup>th</sup> century and construction of womanhood in Indian Social and Philosophical thought. Since she confined herself in India itself, it is not at all comparative in nature. According to her women and development is an ever, changing field which she keeps on changing with the demand of time. In her

course outline in a very interesting way she defined various women's movements in India to achieve Gender Equality.

**Dr. Renuka Singh:**

Here, the course aims to understand the impact of patriarchy and development on the changing roles, status and images of women in India. She dealt with methodological issues involved in doing Feminist Research and theoretical debates about gender. This would be followed by a comparative portrayal of women's situations the world over.

Her course contains:

1. Status Reports.
2. Theoretical Approaches and Methodological Issues.
3. Women, Nature, Culture & Development.
4. Comparative studies.

She has started taking the course only very recently. So I am mainly confining only to the specialties of her course, which attracted me. First, she treated the issue of women and development from a very different perspective than her predecessors. She tried to catch the problem under nature/culture controversy. And secondly she compared the conditions of women in different countries from much wider perspective rather than limiting herself to South-East Asia only.

**Course Content for M.phil Course.**

**Course Title: Themes in Gender, Culture & Society.**

**Patricia Uberoi:** In this course she wanted to cover theoretical and substantive issues in gender studies and key concepts in feminist theory. In addition to the writings of sociologists and anthropologists, it would consider also the contribution of people working in the disciplines of History, Psychoanalytic theory

and literary criticism, areas from which major new theoretical insights have emerged.

Under this title of "Themes in Gender, culture and Society" she has conceptualised six different courses. These are

1. Marriage transactions
2. The Female Body and Gender Identity
3. Issues in Marxist Feminism
4. Women, work and Property
5. Women under Socialism
6. Sexuality and the state.

During her stay in J.N.U she mainly concentrated on the topic – "The Female Body and Gender Identity" as this evoked lots of interest among students.

Now we will throw light on the content of the course" Female Body and Gender identity.

This course focuses on the question of the collective representation of the female body and female sexuality in three different cultural areas. The west, the Islamic world and Hindu South Asia with reference to three different discursive domains – the Sacred, the life-cycle of the individual (in psychoanalysis and Social anthropology), and the medical system. The course will aim to encourage discussion on the relevance and utility, or otherwise, of theoretical models generated in the western cultural and intellectual tradition, and in the counter tradition of western feminism, in the understanding of problems of femininity in South Asian Society. This will be done, in particular, by considering texts which explicitly apply Western analytical theories, in contrast with texts which proceed inductively from South Asian ethnographic materials. The central problems will be: Is there a distinctively South Asian perspective on female sexuality, and if so, what are its special characteristics? Or does the South Asian Case represent merely a transformation of a universal pattern. To this end she juxtaposed:

1. Writing by Freud and those other psychoanalysts who derive feminine gender identity from the problematics of the female body and of female psychosexual development
2. Feminist critiques and revisions of this theory
3. Ethnographies that explicitly utilize such theories and counter theories in the interpretation of South Asian data. And
4. Ethnographies, which proceed more inductively from the specialties of South Asian materials.

Since, M.Phil. course generally develops through the Seminar paper presented by students, lists of Seminar topics will help us to understand the nature of the course.

1. Sex, Sexuality and Gender.
2. Woman as nature/Man as culture
3. Female Physiology: Is anatomy destiny?
4. Socialisation into gender roles
5. The female life cycle: puberty and female initiation rites.
6. Masculinity
7. Religious models: Hindu, Muslim & Christian
8. Male control of female sexuality: virginity Suicide, terror.
9. Reproductive ideologies and the compulsion for motherhood.
10. Female diseases: hysteria & anorexia nervosa
11. Women and madness.
12. The medicalisation of the female body and invention of gynaecology
13. Representation.

She herself made reflection on the criticism this course evoked in her article on Samya Shakti.

“....a colleague remarked that the courses and their reading lists would seem to indicate that serious reflection on the nature of

female gender identity in South Asia was just a dependent offshoot of the Western feminist movement of the 1960's & 1970's...

...Related to this was the comment that South Asia has generated its own literature on female sexuality, and this literature ought to be considered explicitly...

...Some students, I know, feel that what one might call in shorthand the 'political economy' angle on gender relations has become obscured and even negated, by a project whose explicit focus is the derivation of gender identity from culturally constructed notion of females body & its processes

...A second resistance will surprise no one familiar with the ambience of the women's movement and academic feminism in India. Indian Students are quite unsympathetic to the lesbian overtones of much contemporary Western feminism: for whatever reason, this does not strike a resonant chord, and they are to even willing to consider this point of view as an intellectual possibility, ...some how I do not think this was were embarrassment with the rather explicit handling of this sensitive theme, though they may have been a component in [their]. Strongly negative reaction. She may genuinely have considered the issue irrelevant or trivial in the Indian context.<sup>3</sup>

**Susan Visvanathan:-**

According to her, under the title of "Themes in Gender Culture and Society every year she develops new courses on the basis of students response as well as interest.

The basic thrust areas of the course in recent past are:

- Division of Labour (covering whole theory of work).
- Human Rights.

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<sup>3</sup> . ibid. pp.-283-286.



- Narrative Analysis. etc.

Here we are concentrating on the course which was based on Human Rights.

In her course content; focussing on understanding the construction of gender within the larger problematic of "Human Rights", attempt to locate the debates on gender in the works of Durkheim, Weber, Marx and Malinowski. It focuses specifically on the contributions of Hannah Arendt, Simone Weil, Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf and M.K. Gandhi.

She expected students to locate the category of gender as a social fact in the classical literature and to provide through the seminar papers specific insights with regard to the problem of rights, labour, ritual and politics – the questions that gender studies pose.

### **(III) COGNITIVE STATUS**

It is important to know how these courses are being seen and evaluated by the teachers and the students. Because, in the popular imagination courses, are often hierarchised and ranked according to their cognitive status. Courses are seen as "difficult" and "easy", "theoretical" and "practical", "useless" and "job-oriented", "value neutral" and "politically loaded", "jargonised" and "straight-forward". No wonder, a course on gender study will be perceived in divergent ways. It may be seen as a course relevant for only women and feminists. It may be seen as a course having prestigious "cultural capital" towards striving for "politically correct" solutions for all problems. It may, also be felt by some as a course that breed exclusivist tendencies and feminises the academic culture. We, therefore, should examine the cognitive status of these courses at the CSSS/JNU.

To begin with let us see, how the teachers look at it.

**Patricia Uberoi:-**

She does not believe that real success lies in setting up more and more women's studies centres or gender studies centres. Our goal should be setting up independent gender studies course under each discipline, be it sociology, economics, medicine, natural science, education or other. In designing every course gender question should be properly addressed. Accordant to her, Gender Studies Courses will remain incomplete, if it fails to address the question of the other half i.e. male, Since understanding of women necessarily involves understanding of men. In reply to the question why male teachers are not interested in teaching gender study course, she opined that gender study is quite a growing, interesting and challenging as a field and if male teachers are not ready to take up this challenge its their problem, not ours.

**Maitrayee Chowdhuri:-**

According to her during even 70's there were no consciousness about women's issues. Women were discussed exclusively in terms of family-kinship. Gender study first exposed the true patriarchal, Sexist, Phallogocentric nature of knowledge. It helped in developing "gender" as an analytical category along with caste, class, ethnicity and religion. Gender study gave a political edge to women's question. It is the sustained effort of gender study courses and institutions that women's questions acquire a kind of respectability. Now no body can overlook this question. Either they have to agree or disagree with it.

She believes ideal situation would be that when gender question would be addressed in every discipline. But since this is a process of gradual evolution, independent gender study courses should be seen as a means to achieve this goal.

### **Susan Visvanathan:-**

She believes a well developed discipline can subscribe its ideas to other disciplines. This view justifies the need for having independent gender study course. Gender-study is not necessarily a polemical space; it is a value neutral space. Gender study gives recognition to the actual condition of women in the society. Recognition gives self-confidence and it finally helps in dissemination of knowledge into all other fields. She believes gender study as a sequestered movement is here to stay. She believes further development of gender-study lies in excavation of new kinds of materials e.g. oral history, autobiography, diary etc.

### **Anand Kumar:-**

He is one who is not associated directly in teaching gender study courses. He believes gender-study is more comprehensive, sociological and conducive for presenting society scientifically than "Women's study" which is compartmentalized and study one component considering other as constant.

He believes in India social science underwent feminisation, decolonisation and Indianisation, which gave rise to.

- 1) Dalit consciousness.
- 2) Awareness towards gender issues.
- 3) Poverty consciousness.
- 4) Awareness of decolonisation.

But he is extremely unhappy on the exclusivist tendency of women associated with teaching gender-study. He termed it as "Ghettoisation". If mainstream sociology is a bastion of patriarchal mind set, then gender study mobilization, he believes suffers from a nagging doubt on whether a non-women can interpret the reality or not?

The courses he offers:

- Polity and society
- Media, Democracy and Nation building
- Modernization and Development
- Indian Social thought.

These courses contain women's question without any conscious effort on teacher's part. If he is given opportunity he will like to teach a course on social movement with gender perspective. He believes present day gender study is very much jargonized. Gender study is catalytic agent in its capacity to deconstruct rather than construct.

**Dipankar Gupta:-**

He is also not directly associated with teaching gender-study courses. He believes "gender emerged as an autonomous category. He believes in since sensitivity was there, gender issues were not forgotten but seen as part of over all class movement. He thinks Indian Sociology preoccupied with caste, class, religion has failed to recognize female body as site of exploitation.

He doubted on how much analytical work has been done under it. But there is no doubt that it is gender-study, which has brought "gender issues" in the surface and here lies its success. It gives a feeling of self-assurance and solidarity among those who are pursuing it. He believes women are naturally attracted towards this course since they can identify themselves more closely with it.

If he has given an opportunity he would like to teach a gender study course from the point of view of anthropological theories, from the point of view of Marxism, Functionalism and conflict theory, at which extent they are entrenched in gender.

### **Views of the students:-**

In spite of the active presence of large number of boys, "gender study" is still a girl's territory. While most of the girls opted for the course to redefine their everyday experience, many boys took it out of sheer curiosity and sometimes to oppose it from within. It shows the successful penetration of gender studies in the politics of knowledge. But according to Maitrayee Choudhuri in recent past students response is lukewarm, since they are guided by a "know all about it" attitude. In spite of their lukewarm response in class participation many students both boys and girl's every years are choosing gender related issues as their area of research, which shows the success of gender study as thought provoking and insight stimulating experience.

Although girls claim that they have a natural affinity for the course since they can identify more with it. But boys strongly opposed this view, according to them it is nothing but an exclusivist tendency and sensitivity and concern for the issue is enough to counter it.

Sometimes students find, western feminism with its primary emphasis on sexuality, which shows the whole relationship of women to their bodies would define their freedom, as quite alien. They believe course require more practical orientation and Indianisation.

### **(IV) EMERGENT AREAS OF RESEARCH :**

Here is a university in which together with teaching research plays a key role. A careful study of the kind of research areas students are pursuing would further help us to evaluate the impact of gender studies. True, in Indian sociology the researchers have shown tremendous interest in issues relating to caste and social stratification, tradition and modernity, social change and development, agrarian struggle and changing structure of rural India, changing pattern of family-kinship ties. But with the changing time new frontiers of research and knowledge have emerged in the fields of media, cultural studies and above all gender. Perhaps, it can be said that, in recent times, particularly since late 80s and early

90's this new areas have become more popular than conventional sociological themes.

A look at the M.Phil./Ph.D. works as completed in the CSSS would suggest how for instance gender studies have occupied the cognitive map of young scholars.

Here is the list of Ph.D. thesis and M.Phil. dissertations to show the nature of work pursuing in the centre since 1987.

1. **Ms. Renuka Singh:-** Status of Indian Women: A Sociological Study of Women in Delhi. Prof. K.L. Sharma, 1987.
2. **MS. Rita Sood:-** Changing Status of Women patterns and adjustment: A Sociological Study in Delhi metropolis. Prof. K.L. Sharma, 1989.
3. **MS. Lindsay Barnes:-** Women's, Work and Struggle Bhowra Colliery, 1900-1985, Prof. Y Singh, 1990.
4. **MS Nigar Fatima Abidi:-** Social roles and professional roles: A study in role conflict of female physicians in government Hospitals of Delhi. Dr. J.S. Gandhi, 1990.
5. **Kalpana Kannabiran:-** Temple women in South India: A Study in Political Economy and Social History. Prof. Y.Singh, 1993.
6. **Usha Panini:-** Social structure and occupation: A Sociological Study of Women Employees in the Banking Industry Delhi Region. (Prof T.K. Oomen), 1994.
7. **Preeta Nath:-** Women in Management: A Behavioural Analysis of Gender Perceptions in Selected Industries in India. (Y. Singh), 1994.

8. **Abha Chauhan:-** Tribal Women Amidst Continuity and Change: An Enquiry into three villages of Shivpuri District (Prof. R.K. Jain), 1994.
9. **Shahsi Khurana:-** Sociology of the Indian English Novel: A Textual and Empirical Study of Women and Society (Prof. K.L. Sharma), 1996.
10. **Lavleena Vyas:-** Notions of Masculinity and Femininity and Caste Identities: A comparative Study of Brahmans, Rajputs and Banias in the city of Jaipur. (K.L.Sharma), 1996.
11. **Padma Ravi:-** Occupational Patterns and Family Roles: A Sociological Analysis. C.N. Venugopal, 1997.
12. **Gh. Nabi Itoo:-** Social Development of Women and children in Jammu and Kashmir. A Sociological Study of Policies and Processes in District Anantnag (Y. Singh), 1997.
13. **Arvinder Kaur:-** Impact of Communal violence on Women: A Sociological Study of Riot Victims of Delhi and Surat. (Anand Kumar), 1998.
14. **Minakshi P. Thorat:-** A Gender Perspective of Female Participation in some selected occupations in Pune City. (M.Chaudhuri), 1998.
15. **Fazila Banulily:-** Construction of the Gender Division of Labour in Rural Production Systems in Bangladesh Policy Implications (M.Chaudhuri), 1998.

**List of M.Phil dissertation in the area of gender related issues since 1987.**

1. **Mr. Sakarma:-** Authority and Decision Making Process in Family: A comparative analysis of Britain, Japan and India. (Prof. T.K.Oomen), 1987.

2. **Mr. Abdul Waheed:-** The phenomenon of Dowry among Muslims in India. (Dr.E.Haq), 1988.
3. **M.S. Vandana Jain:-** Technology and the Status of Women's in India: A sociological Study (Prof. Y. Singh), 1988.
4. **Abha Chauhan:-** Social change and the Status of Tribal Women in India with special reference to Baster District, MP (Y. Singh), 1989.
5. **Mr. S.C. Mukhopadhyay:-** Androgyny and Genderization: A Sociological Analysis. (P. Uberoi), 1990.
6. **Mr. Awungshi Gimson:-** Gender Relations in Meghlaya Society. (Dr. T.Nongbri), 1990.
7. **Mr. Sujit Kumar Chowdhury:-** Portrayal of Ethnic groups and Women: A Sociological Study of Selected Doordarshan Programme. (T.K.Oomen), 1992.
8. **MS Aparna Joshi:-** Women and Ecological problem in Uttarakhand U.P. (R.K. Jain), 1990.
9. **Ms Amita Tyagai:-** Courtship and Confugality: A Sociological Analysis of the men women relationship in Indian popular fiction. (P.Uberio), 1990.
10. **Ms Jahanzeb Akhter:-** Muslim women in India and Pakistan: A Sociological Analysis. (Prof. Y. Singh, 1990).
11. **Mr. Abdul Hayat:-** Great tradition and little cultures: A Study of Muslim practices with reference to marriage inheritance and Purdah. (Dr. Dipankar Gupta), 1990.



12. **Ms Monica Sharma:-** The Patriarchal Gaze: A Symbolic interactionist Study of Genderized Advertisements. (P. Uberoi), 1991.
13. **Ms Lavleena Vyas:-** Notions of Masculinity and Femininity in the Rajput Ethos. (P.Uberio), 1992.
14. **Mr. Viswa Swarup P:-** "The transition from childhood to Adulthood: Initiation rites and puberty rituals in Hindu tradition". (P. Uberoi), 1992.
15. **Minakshi P Thorat:-** Colonial Law, Women and the State: A Gender perspective on Social Reform in Maharashtra in the late Nineteenth Century. (P.uberio), 1993.
16. **Smita Verma:-** "Women in the Indian Planning Process" ( Dr. M. chaudhuri), 1993.
17. **Suruchi Pant:-** "Rape and Sati": conceptualizing Violence". (M. Chaudhuri), 1993.
18. **J. Michael Kennedy:-** " Reading the popular Text: A Study of Cultural contestation" (P.Uberoi), 1995.
19. **Gh Nabi Itoo:-** A critical Evaluation of Social Welfare Policies in Jammu and Kashmir: with special reference child and women's development programmes (Y Singh), 1994.
20. **Anjali Widge:-** "The New Reproduction Technologics: A Sociological Perspective on Social Control of the Female Body. (P.Uberoi), 1994.
21. **Bena Jain:-** "Female Sexuality: Polarity and paradox in the Indian Tradition". (R.K.Jain), 1994.

22. **Niharika Barik**:- "Themes and Issues in Women's Studies in India in the post-sixty Phase: A Sociological Analysis" (G.S.Gandhi), 1995.
23. **Sunita Tripathy**:- " Indian Women and Movement Politics: Towards Empowerment" (Anand Kumar), 1995.
24. **Sukanta Tripathy**:- Agenda of Democratic Decentralization in India: Legitimising the role of Case and gender (Anand.Kumar), 1996.
25. **Anju Yoduvanshi**:- "Feminine in Advertising": A sociological Focus." (G.S.Gandhi), 1996.
26. **Tumpa Sen**:- " Religions, State and Gender in India: A Sociological Study (T.K.Oomen), 1996.
27. **Farah Yasmin Abdullah**:- " A Socio-historical Study of Education among Muslim Women in India. (R.K. Jain), 1996.
28. **Anupama Kumar**:- Women's Question in Colonial India: A Sociological Analysis (Avijit Pathak), 1996.
29. **Minakshi Dahiya**:- " Women (Criminality: A limited Sociological Exploration." (J.S.Gandhi), 1996.
30. **Padma Priyadarshini**:- " Impact of Globalisation on Indian Women. (M.N.Panini), 1996.
31. **Firoz Akhtar**:- Changing profile of Divorce in Urban India Since Independence (K.L.Sharma), 1996.

32. **Madhuri Das:-** Human Rights and Women Non-Governmental Organization: A Sociological Exploration. (J.S.Gandhi), 1997.
33. **Sheetal Sharma:-** "Women and Decision-making: A Sociological profile of status of women in India. (J.S.Gandhi), 1997.
34. **Somogyan pal:-** Gender Stratification among Tribes: A comparative study of tribes of North-East and Chotanagpur Areas. (Dipankar Gupta), 1997.
35. **Mani Pande:-** Female Marginalisation in the Labour Force in India. (Tiplut Nongbri), 1997.
36. **Nalini Kumari Prusty:-** Women and Print Media: A Sociological Study of Sati. (Anand Kumar), 1997.
37. **Tanushree;-** " Women and Work in India: Their participation in Economic Activity. (Tiplut Nongbri), 1997.
38. **Arundhatie Biswas:-** "The Lace Ghetto: The portrayal of Indian Women in Advertisements" (K.L.Sharma), 1997.
39. **Amita Tripathy:-** Development and Partriarchy (Dipankar Gupta), 1998.
40. **N.Rajashree Kunungo:** "Female Education in India: A Sociological Deflection on the Ideals, achievements and obstacles. (Avijit Pathak), 1998.

It is evident from the topics that students have chosen varied areas as their research interest. Some thrust areas are status of women in different ethno-religious and tribal groups, women and decision making, empowerment of women, women in different professions, women and reproductive health, women and

development, some theoretical issues concerning construction of gender identities and so on.

Thus from the above discussion it is evident that gender study<sup>has</sup> made a strong inroads in the department. Though course outlines are more or less consistent with the recommendations of 1981's National Conference on Curriculum Building in Gender Studies, the course can be made more interesting by incorporating monographs depicting true life stories and throwing some lights on legislation and customary laws, pertaining to women.

## Conclusion

After all our discussions and taking the cue from the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India and National Conference on Women's Studies held in Bombay in 1981, we can safely conclude that main success of gender studies lie in bringing women's issues onto the surface. It helped in understanding the changing position of women in its historical and contemporary context. Vina Majumdar rightfully opined that it aimed to bring together teachers, researchers, students, voluntary workers and government functionaries with the hope of initiating the long overdue process of incorporating women's roles and experiences in academic studies. The plan of establishing and strengthening communication between institutions, organizations and individuals – academic and non-academic – aimed to develop a deliberate, planned and sustained effort so that the new value of equality can replace the traditional value system.<sup>1</sup>

'Gender Study', by the affirmation of its own perspectivism i.e. a fundamental rejection of the ideal of "value-free" research in favour of conscious partially specific aims and values accepts its own interests as those of women where mainstream knowledge is unable to admit its masculine interests without risking its status and rationale.

History indicates that in critical moments of social history educational institutions have played vital and positive roles through their intellectual creativity and their ability to influence people's thinking. According to V. Majumdar, the large number of students – both men and women – who pass through the universities, need to receive sustained, continuous exposure to women's issues and women's roles in society through teaching and research. She believes neither sporadic research nor occasional media coverage could be a substitute to this. In order to obtain a better insight and understanding of the position of women in its historical

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<sup>1</sup> Vina Majumdar, **Women's Studies : Challenge to Educational System** EPW Vol. XVI, No. 20, 1981, pp. 890)

and contemporary context, it is necessary that Gender Studies become part of the curriculum.<sup>2</sup>

At a national workshop sponsored by University Grants Commission of India, a small group, which included some male vice-chancellors and senior academicians as well as gender studies activists, defined the objectives for incorporating gender studies within university system as both academic and social.

1. To change the present attitudes/values in society regarding women's roles and rights and made their participation in every walk of life possible.
2. To promote awareness among women and men of the need to develop and utilise women's full potential as resources for national development.
3. To counter the reactionary forces emanating from certain sections of the media, economic, social and political institutions, that encourages the demotion of women from productive to mere reproductive roles.
4. To revitalize university education, bringing it closer to burning social issues, to work towards their solution, and to produce sensitive persons able to play more committed and meaningful roles in development activities for women in all sectors.
5. Teachers should fulfill a special responsibility by promoting a non-sexist education at all level and preaching for values of social equality, including gender equality, secularism, socialism and democracy.
6. To update university curricula by incorporating the results of new scholarships and the issues raised by the latter.
7. To promote increased collaboration between different disciplines in teaching, curriculum designing, research and extension activities, since women's studies are interdisciplinary in nature.
8. To generate new and organic knowledge through intensive fieldwork. For better understanding and investigation of problems being experienced by women at the grass-root level, a closer contact between institutions of higher education and groups directly involved in action to assist women to enjoy

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<sup>2</sup> V. Majumdar, **Women Studies as a Strategy for Educational Change**, CWDS, July 1985.

their rights within the family, the community and at work would be very valuable.

9. To contribute to the global debate on the women's question through rediscovery of the debate in India- from ancient to contemporary periods, through research and translation from Indian literature including folk literature.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the common theme coming out of entire range of discussion is the non-viability and impossibility of isolating women's issues from the general issues of social inequality and stratification. To enlarge its spectrum gender studies should include the issue of oppression of other subaltern, minority groups like, Dalits, Handicap, etc. within its territory. To achieve fuller development it has to shed its exclusivist tendencies and indifferent attitudes towards issues concerning 'male'.

The recommendations for curricular revision, therefore, focused on the need to incorporate basic material and question regarding continuation of women's inequality within the existing major courses in the Social Sciences as well as Natural Sciences rather than relegating them to the status of optional courses. Though the latter is important to assert the very presence of the issue and could be tried at an advanced level but the former promises much greater, long-term impact on minds of the students and faculties.

To realize this goal we need much more cooperation and meaningful interaction between different disciplines especially since university departments operate in a compartmentalized manner. The development of multi-disciplinary research in the field of gender study will require a major shift in teaching and research in the social sciences in Indian Universities. Jawaharlal Nehru University's experience itself is affirmation of this statement.

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<sup>3</sup> [Seminar on 'Perspective and Organization of Women's Studies units in the Indian Universities.]. In V. Majumdar's Article **Women Studies as a Strategy for Educational Change**, CWDS, 1985. July.

## Appendix – I

### **Gender Study Course in Various Universities of India**

#### **Andhra Pradesh**

***Centre for Women's Studies. College of Arts, Commerce and Law, Andhra University, Waltair 530003***

At the post-graduated level in the psychology course, women's studies as a topic have been proposed and is yet to be implemented. The topic includes causes of women's subordination, overview of women's movement in India and women's studies in India.

***Centre for Women's Studies. Nagarjuna University, Nagarjuna Nagar 522510***

An optional paper at the post-graduate level is being offered in Telugu. A proposal for starting an M. Phil programme in women's studies has also been submitted to the UGC.

***Department of English Literature. University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad 500134***

A paper on 'The Images of Women in Victorian Literature' is being offered at the post-graduate level.

***School of Social Sciences/School of Humanities. University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad 500134***

A course on 'Women in Indian Politics' was offered as an optional course for two years during 1986-87 and 1987-88 in the Political Science Department at the post-graduate level.

The School of Humanities/School of Social Sciences have jointly developed an interdisciplinary course in women's studies entitled 'Social Construction of Gender'.



The course will concentrate on five main themes, viz., women, patriarchy, property, women and the legal system, culture, ideology and femininity, women in the educational system, capitalism, industrialization and women, colonialism, nationalism and women.

***Women's Study Cell. Post-Graduate College, ICSW, A.P. Branch, affiliated to Osmania University, Hyderabad 500004.***

For the under-graduate level a model paper 'Women and Development' has been prepared in collaboration with Anveshi, a Research Centre for Women's Studies and University of Hyderabad. The paper includes topics like historical perspective of the position of women in India, violence against women, law, health employment for women.

***Assam***

\* North Eastern Hill University. P.O. Lower Lachmiere, Shillong 793001

***Bihar***

\*Ranchi University, Ranchi 834008

***Delhi***

***Indira Gandhi National Open University. Maidangarhi, IGNOU P.O., New Delhi 110068.***

Under its sociology course, at the undergraduate level, the university has incorporated topics relating to women's status, education, current issues and women's movement. It has produced course units for the same.

***Jawaharlal Nehru University. New Delhi 110067***

The JNU has courses at post-graduate and M. Phil level under various centres. The Centre for Study of Social Systems has a course entitled 'Women and Society in India: A Comparative Perspective' at the Master's level which covers various issues under four papers, viz., methodology: becoming 'visible' in the

social sciences; the construction of gender identity the political economy of gender; and women and development: some contemporary issues. Since 1990 at M. Phil level an optional course has been introduced under 'Themes in Gender, Culture, and Society,' and 'Time Female Body and Gender identity'.

The Centre for Study of Regional Development has at the M.A. level a course entitled 'Regional Dimension of Female Labour Force' with the objective of familiarizing the students with the spatial/regional concerns in the explanatory framework of research on female labour force with special reference to India.

The Dr. Zakir Hussain Centre for Educational Studies has prepared tow optional courses at the M.A. and the M. Phil level on 'Women in Education'.

***University of Delhi. Chhatra Marg, Delhi 110007.***

The Delhi University has courses at undergraduate, post-graduate and M. Phil level in its various departments. The Women's Studies and Development Centre in collaboration with other departments has contributed in syllabus restructuring and changes in the course content to include women's studies. The nature of curriculum broadly falls into two categories: separate courses introduced in the department of education, sociology, English and political science and components of women's studies in the courses of applied psychology, political science, social work, LLB. And LLM.

The M.Phil in education is called 'Women and Education' and covers topics, viz., educational status in India, Socialization and education, women's education and social change and equality and education with special reference to women.

The English department has papers at post-graduate and M.Phil levels consisting of 'Studies in Early Nineteenth Century Women Novelists'.

In sociology, the optional paper in M.Phil cover the significance of women's studies, women and social structure, and cultural perception of women's movement and organization.

At the Master's level, the course in sociology department consists of 'Gender and Society', covering gender in sociological analysis, reproduction, sexuality and ideology, family work and property and the politics of gender,

### **Goa**

***Centre for Women's Studies. Goa University, Dabolim, P.O. Santacruz, Goa 403005***

A topic 'Position of Women in Modern India' is included in the paper 'Sociology of Indian Society' at the post-graduate level.

### **Gujarat**

***Department of Child Development. Faculty of Home Science, M.S. University, Baroda 390002.***

Two credit courses at post-graduate level are being taught. These contain topics on 'Role and Status of Women', Women and Development Programme and Policies, and 'General Issues Related to Women and Development'.

***Department of Rural Studies. South Gujarat University, Post Box 49, Surat 395007.***

The department has one paper related to women at the post-graduate level. At the undergraduate level three papers on 'Rural Social Problems', 'Rural Development Policies' and 'Area Planning and Community Development' in relation to women are being offered.

***University School of Social Science. Gujarat University, Navrangpura, Ahmedabad 380009.***

The courses on women related politics have been introduced at graduate and post-graduate levels.

### **Karnataka**

***Centre for Women's Studies.. Gulbarga University, Jnana Ganga, Gulbarga 585106.***

A course within sociology called 'Fundamentals of Women's Studies' is being organized at the Master's level. It offers four papers on scope and definitions of women's studies, status of women, education and political status, women and law and programme and policies for women's development and their economic participation.

### **Kerala**

***Centre for Women's Studies. University of Kerala, Kariavattam P.O., Trivandrum 695581***

The Centre has planned to offer a Master's degree course in women's studies in the near future.

### **Madhya Pradesh**

***Women's Studies Cell. Department of Sociology, Barkutullah University (formerly Bhopal University), Bhopal 462026.***

An optional paper in M.Phil Course is offered in sociology. The paper is called 'Women in Indian Sociology' and covers women's position in scriptures, changing position after Independence through legislations, problems of women in terms of religions, castes, education and occupations, impact of employment on socialization, child rearing and family, women in politics, women's organization and movements.

A special paper within the sociology discipline is being offered at graduate and post-graduate levels.

## **Maharashtra**

### ***Department of Humanities and Social Sciences. Indian Institute of Technology, Powai, Bombay 400019***

The department offers an elective paper for undergraduate students , which covers different aspects related to women – ‘Psychology of Sex Roles’. At the doctoral level a self-study course on ‘Women and Achievements’ is available which includes topics such as need for achievement in women, women in the workplace and women and performance.

### ***SNDT Women’s University. Juhu Road, Santacruz (West), Bombay 400049***

The different faculties of SNDT Women’s University offer courses in women’s studies within their undergraduate or post-graduate programmes as topics, as separate examination paper or a semester course.

In history. B.A. (third year) a paper entitled ‘Role and participation of women in Indian history – 1800-1975 with special reference to Western India’, has been introduced. At the Master’s level, women’s history was incorporated with the paper ‘Economic and social history of Europe in the nineteenth century’.

In political science, women’s studies was introduced as a sub-topic History of Women’s Franchise Movement in India, England and America’ within the paper on government machinery at B.A. (second year) level. In 1989, the Department of Political Science proposed a full paper for B.A (third year), there is one paper on psychology of women is included.

As early as 1968, sociology department of SNDT Women’s University became the first department in the country to introduce a paper on ‘Women in India’ at the graduate level. In 1980, after some changes it was named as ‘Sociology of Women’ with special reference to India. The paper aims to make the students aware of women’s problems and various ‘models of action that have been attempted and are available for improvement of the status of women. In 1981, women’s studies was introduced at the M.Phil level in this department.

The Home Science College in 1984 introduced 'Women in India' at B.Sc (third year) for child development specialization. At M.Sc. level, in 1985 a more theoretical course was given.

English literature introduced 'Feminist Criticism' and 'Women Writers' as an elective course in mid – eighties.

The 'Women and Development' section was put in as a part of a paper on Industrial Economics at M.Phil level in 1986. A full optional paper on the 'Economics of women's studies' was proposed in 1989 by the economics department.

The Extension Department of Continuing and Adult Education had also slowly begun to experiment with a women's studies input. In its population education course at B.A. (second year) level, a women's perspective is used on the sub-topic 'Responsible Parenthood'. The Department of Continuing Education runs many programmes immediately relevant to women: legal literacy, health, nutrition, family planning, sex education, income generating projects, etc.

***Sophia College for Women. Bhulabhai Desai Road, Bombay 400026***

The college started open classroom course for women in 1983-84. One of the course is 'Women: Image and Reality' and has 8-10 sessions. It gives insight into the position of women in different cultures and religions, women and work, media, feminism and images of women.

***Women's Studies Centre. Department of Sociology, University of Poona, Pune 411007***

An optional paper at B.A., M.A., and M.Phil levels has been introduced. The course outline includes topics on changing status of women through the ages, forces generating change in the position and role of women in India; agencies of social change; present role of women in India, changes in attitudes towards women? And international trends.

**Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Sion Trombay Road, Deonar, Bombay 40008**

There optional courses at the post-graduate level in social work are offered. These are Women and Work; Women and Health; and Women and Law.

#### **Orissa**

**Women's Studies Research Centre. Berhampur University, Berhampur 760007**

A paper 'Economics of Women and Work' at M.Phil (economics) level is being offered. It covers topics relating to economic backwardness of women; the family as an economic unit; allocation of time between the household and the labour market by women; general difference in occupation and earning economics of housework; women and economic development; and women's programmes in the five year plans of India

**Utkal University. Vani Vihar, Bhubanewar 751004**

#### **Punjabe**

**Centre for Women's Studies. Punjab University, Chandigarh 160014**

Women's studies is included as a topic in the disciplines of sociology, political science, law, history, English, general studies and public administration.

#### **Rajasthan**

**Centre of Women's Studies. University of Rajasthan, Old NRSC Building, Jaipur 302004**

The Centre is planning to start a short term course for the teachers. This would include topics relating to the conceptual framework of women's studies, historical perspective, the female body, women and society, women and economic development, political participation, law, mass media and Indian literature.

The Centre is also planning to introduce M.Phil programme in women's studies.

**Women's Studies Cell. Department of Sociology, University of Jodhpur, Jodhpur 342001**

A plan is being prepared for a foundation course in women's studies to be included in a new three year degree course.

### **Tamil Nadu**

#### ***Department of Women's Studies. Alagappa University, Karaikudi, 623004***

The department offers a two year post-graduate programme in women's studies. It offers 16 papers with the main thrust of feminism and entrepreneurship. The papers are on topics related to various aspects of women's lives. Papers on feminist theories and movements, methodology in women's studies, programmes and policies for women, are included. This is the only university in the country awarding a post-graduate degree in Women's Studies.

#### ***Lady Doak College. Madurai 625002***

The paper on 'Status of Indian Women Through Ages' is taught in Tamil at the graduate level.

#### ***Mother Teresa Women's University. 3 Race Course Road, Guindy, Madras 600032***

In 1983, the university introduced women's studies at the M.Phil level in different subjects, e.g., economics, sociology and education. The syllabus for education covers women's status and education, issues in women's education while in sociology it covers women and society, polity, economy, law, education, health, and women's movements. Under population studies also population structure with reference to women is taught. In home management there are two papers: 'women's studies in family living management' and 'family resource management'. Under history the paper is called 'women of the world- theory and history' and 'women in India in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.' Under M.Phil in English literature, the course is on 'Women in literature'.

### **Uttar Pradesh**

#### ***BNKB Post – Graduate College. Akbarpur, Faizabad 224122.***

It is proposed to include papers relating to women in the syllabus of Awadh University, Faizabad, at different levels. At the post-graduate level, these will be women's education, political science and sociology respectively.



At the under-graduate level topics on women's studies in various subjects are to be introduced.

***Centre for Women's Studies and Development. Faculty of Social Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi 221005***

At M.Phil level in sociology a paper has been introduced. Women's studies as a topic has been included in particular papers in disciplines of sociology, history, economics education, political science, and law.

***Priyadarshini Women's Studies and Development Centre. Acharya Narendra Dev mahapalika Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Harsh Nagar, Kanpur 208072***

At the under-graduate level a certificate course has been introduced. The course outline includes topics like why we need women's studies in India status of women in the historical perspective, multidimensional roles of women, profiles of rural, urban, slum, tribal, scheduled caste and hill women and also topics relating to employment, law, religion, health, education, and literature.

### **West Bengal**

***School of Women's Studies. Jadavpur University, Calcutta 700032***

The School is planning to introduce a course in women's studies at the M.Phil level.

Source: Jyotsna Sanjawala, Women Studies in Indian Universities, A Directory of U.G.C. supported Centres/Cells (1984-1989).

## Appendix II

### Special Reference

The incorporation of women's in various mainstream discipline as evident in curricular changes made in different departments of Jadavpur University in recent years:

#### Subject: Economics

##### M.A.

1. Development Economics (Compulsory Paper). A topic on Development and Race/Caste/Gender.
2. Demography II (optional Paper). A topic on Gender Issues.
3. Population Studies (optional Paper). A topic on Gender Issues.

##### M. Phil

A course is offered on "Women's studies". This is one of the papers from which the student has to chose.

#### Subject: English

##### M.A.

1. Feminist criticism is included English Theory Paper.
2. In other compulsory papers concerned with the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries a number of women writers (poets, novelists and analysts) are now included.
3. An optional course (a half-paper of 50 marks) on gender and Literature, in the new M.A. syllabus.

#### Subject – Comparative Literature

##### M.A.

1. Feminist Theory
2. Various women writers not taught previously, have, been introduced in the M.A. course in 90s, from Sappho and Virginia Wolf to C.S. Lakshmi and Luisa Valenzuela

## **M. Phil.**

1. Feminist Theory
2. An increasing number of M. Phil and Ph.D. dissertations to do with women's writing and feminist theory.

## **Subject: International Relations**

1. Gender as a concept – its evolution
2. Woman as a Constituency in Development: International Dimensions
3. Women and Human Rights
4. Gender needs in the Third World – Policy Perspective
5. Gender and Theory – building in International Relations.

**Source :** A. Chands. Building women's studies into Mainstream National workshop on Building women's studies curriculum in India. Issues and challenge. Lucknow, 1999

## **Subject: History**

### **M.A.**

1. Modern India (Compulsory Paper). A topic on women in Indian politics, 1885-1971.
2. Life and Thought of Bengal (Compulsory Paper). Women's questions in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
3. Industrial Revolution in Europe (Compulsory Paper). A topic on the position of women. [Family-Divorce-Towards a new pattern]
4. Modern European Political Thought (Compulsory Paper, Topic 1) A topic on women in western political thought which deals with:
  - (a) The English Civil War,
  - (b) Locke
  - (c) Rousseau,
  - (d) Marie Wollstonecraft, Mill and Taylor.(Topic II) Feminism in Western Political Thought

## **M. Phil**

1. Historiography and Historical Methodology (feminist Critique, of Conventional History-writing and its Methodology)
2. The optional papers i.e. History of Early India, and History of Modern India – the syllabi has been recently updated in the light of feminist social theory and researches on women's participation in the processes of History.

Source : Anuradha Chanda, Building Women's Studies into Mainstream Disciplines, National Workshop on Building Women's Studies Curriculum in India: Issues and Challenges, Lucknow 1999.

### **Appendix III**

#### ***Seminars/Conferences/Workshops held in the centre for the Study of Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University, on gender related Areas of issues since 1993.***

1. One day workshop on "Gender and Kinship: Perspective from South Asia" held on April 14, 1994. organized by Tiplut Nongbri.
2. A seminar on "Dalit and Gender Challenges to Hindu Nationalist Thought" was organized by Dr. Avijeet Pathak on April 5-7, 1997.
3. Prof. Helena Halperin: " Marriage, Polygany and pride in Contemporary Kenya". 1996.
4. Prof. Qui, Yonghui:- "Women's Education, work and marriage in China, 1996.
5. Dr. Riflat Hassan:- Womens in Islam. 1997.
6. Dr. Emma Tarto:- "Married to the Mahatma Predicaments of Kasturba Gandhi.
7. Dr. G. Arunima:- " Matrilinyam the malyali Imagination, 1998.
8. Prof. E. Segal:- " Gender, Race Ethnicity, 1998.
9. Ratna Raman:- " Interpreting Gender And Race in Dori Kessings Novel the Grass is singing". 1998.
10. Dr. Joanna Liddle:- " Representation of Illrd World Women in Western Feminist Writings, 1998.
11. Tiplut Nongbri:- "Gender, Tribe and Democracy", 1998.
12. Nivedita Menon:- "The Strange Case of the Women's Reservation Bill".

## Appendix IV

### ***Gender Related Books Available in CSSS/JNU, Library***

1. "Female Studies":- Learning to speak. The Feminist Press.
2. "A Modern Introduction to Family". Bell and Vogel.
3. "Sex Crimes". Holmes. Sage.
4. "The Endangered Sex". Miller. Oxford.
5. "Hindu Women of India". Jogeshchandra Ghosh.
6. "Household and Kin". Swerdlow. Bridesthal, Kelly. Vine. The Feminist Press.
7. "Hindu Women and Power of Ideology". Druvarayan vistaar.
8. "Women worker in Srilanka Plantation Sector". ILO.
9. "The Indian Women". J.P.Singh. Gyan.
10. "Indian Women". Jasodhara. Bagchi (ed).
11. "Women and Islam". Mernissi.
12. "Modernist Feminism in a Postmodernist Age : Enlightened Women". Alison Assiter. Routledge.
13. "Indian Women Today", (Vol.1,2,3) ed by Uma Shankar Jha and premlata Pujari (Kanishka).
14. "Women at Work in India". Anant, Rao Kapur Sage.
15. "Rights. Wrong". Nicholas, Price Rubin.
16. "Modernizing Women". Moghadam, Richner.
17. "Indian Women Through the Ages". Ghosh. Ashish.
18. "Marriage and kinship among Muslims in South India". C.G. Hussain Khan. Rawat.
19. "Indian Women:- An inner Dialogue". Parikh Sage. Garg.
20. "Indian Women: In a Changing Industrial Scenario". Bannerjee, sage.
21. "Heterosexual Women Changing the Family: Refusing to be a Wife" ? Jo Van Every.
22. "(Hetero) Sexual Politics". Many Mayhard. and June Purvis. (ed).
23. "Shaping Tomorrows Family". Scanzoni (Sage).
24. "Women Physicians Nigar Familia" Abidi, manak.
25. "Working Women. in Socialist Countries". The Fertility connection. ILO.

26. "Women and Family Law Reform in India". Parashar, Sage.
27. "State Policies and Women Worker in Democratic Yemen". 1967-77, ILO.
28. "The women of Reason". Green, Polity.
29. "Sex Inequalities in Urban Employment in the Third World", Richard Ankur catherin Hein (ed).
30. "Two Faces of Protest Contrasting Mode by Activism in India", Oxford, Basu.
31. "Women in Local Govt".
32. "Women's Health, Public Policy and Community Action". Swapna Mukhopadhyay.(ed).
33. "Women and Nutrition in India", Gopalan and Kaur (ed).
34. "Don't Marry Me to a Plowman". Jeferry Jefey Vistaar.
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