

GENDER STUDIES

VI SEMESTER

CORE COURSE

B.A.HISTORY

(CUCBCSS 2014 Admn.Onwards)



UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
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Study Material

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GENDER STUDIES

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UNIT –I

Module I Key Concepts and Terminologies Sex –Sexuality Gender – Gendering – Parenting Patriarchy – Matriarchy – Matriliny – Patriliney Domestic Violence – Household management Wife – Widow Rape- Trafficking- Prostitution -Third Gender- Cross Dressers- LGBT

Sex and Gender Sex denotes biological difference that one is born either as male or female. It is natural and it is a fact. Gender is a social construction. It gives meaning to the fact of sex. Sex difference becomes pertinent only after meanings came to be attached. Gender based discriminations are rampant and the socio-culturally defined characteristics, aptitudes, abilities, desires, personality traits, roles, responsibilities and behavioural patterns of men and women contribute to the inequalities and hierarchies in society. Gender differences are man-made and they get legitimized in a patriarchal society. The difference is constructed historically and has legitimized by several ideologies, social practices and institutions such as family, religion, caste, education, media, law, state and society. "Male" and "female" are sex categories, while "masculine" and "feminine" are gender categories. Aspects of sex will not vary substantially between different human societies, while aspects of gender may vary greatly. It is a not a fixed category. Its meaning depends on the location, time, cultural frameworks within which it is performed. Simone de Beauvoir opines that society perpetuates gender inequality. Men and women are constantly engaged in subject-other relation where the man is the subject and the woman the other. It is based on this myth of the woman as inferior other that gender inequality perpetuated in society. Simone de Beauvoir states that 'One is not born a woman but becomes one'. In her opinion there is not 'essence' of a woman, a woman is constructed as such by men and society. Patriarchy makes use of sexual difference by arguing that biologically speaking women are unequal to men- an argument that naturalizes inequality as a preordained condition of biology itself. She espouses thus: While sexual difference is real and unalterable, it cannot be the grounds

for injustice and inequality. Some examples of sex characteristics: • Women menstruate while men do not • Men have testicles while women do not • Women have developed breasts that are usually capable of lactating, while men have not • Men generally have more massive bones than women Women are biologically capable of bearing children. This is not a disputable statement. But the following values associated with are social: a. Motherhood becomes a symbol of the true female b. No woman is complete unless she bears children c. Nurturing a child is the woman's natural job Biological determinism moots gender discrimination. It views:- a. A woman is made to be a mother. b. The lower wages are justified because woman is weaker and less efficient c. Women's writing is rejected because it deals with less important issues like home. Feminists argue that gender is an ideology because a. It naturalizes what is a social performance (the women's role) b. It naturalizes inequality between the sexes by proposing that the biological differences are the determining factors rather than economic, social or educational ones. c. It reinforces the difference in social performance (men's role, women's role) as natural, pre-ordained and unalterable

Third Gender- Cross Dressers- LGBT

Gender is a fluid term. Gender is continuous form ranging from either or. Challenging the conformist theories of either or individuals identifies themselves not as a male or female but rather the sexual orientation that people ascribe like lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer. These identities or different sexual orientations do not fall under the societal norms and values. Hence they become marginalized as they do not fall under the given social order. After third wave feminism these LGBT, queer identities gaining importance in various movements and the question is the individuals place in the society. These individuals have their own sub cultures and fall under the umbrella of human rights and dignity of living.

Patriarchy, Patriline Anthropological evidence suggests that most pre-historic hunter-gatherer societies were relatively egalitarian, and that patriarchal social structures did not develop until many years after the end of the Pleistocene era, following social and technological innovations such as agriculture and domestication. However, research has not yet found a specific event. Patriarchy manifests itself in various forms of discriminations, inequalities, hierarchies, inferior status and position of women in society. Patriarchy literally means rule of the father in a male-dominated family. It is a social and ideological construct which considers men (who are the patriarchs) as superior to women. Sylvia Walby views that it is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Patriarchy is based on a system of power relations which are hierarchical and unequal where men control women's production, reproduction and sexuality. It imposes masculinity and femininity character stereotypes in society which strengthens the unequal power relations between men and women. Patriarchy is not a constant as gender relations which are dynamic and complex have changed over the periods of history. The nature of control and subjugation of women varies from one society to the other as it differs due to the differences in class, caste, religion, region, ethnicity and the socio-cultural practices. Thus in the context of India, Brahmanical patriarchy, tribal patriarchy and Dalit patriarchy are different from each other. Patriarchy within a particular caste or class also differs in terms of their religious and regional variations. Gerda Lerner in *The Creation of Patriarchy* (1986) has opined that any single cause cannot explain the historical moment when patriarchy was established. Patriarchy has been conceptualized and analyzed by several feminist scholars in different ways. Feminists have challenged patriarchal knowledge, ideology, values and its practice. Despite a range of common themes within feminism, disagreements exist amongst the feminists in understanding patriarchy. All feminists do not like the term patriarchy for various reasons and prefer the term gender and gender oppression. Patriarchy has remained a relatively undefined concept and some feminist

scholars are at unease with the use of the concept of patriarchy when it involves the notion of a general system of inequality. Michele Barrett argues that the use of the term patriarchy assumes that the relation between men and women is unchanging and universalistic. The use of the term often involves confusion between patriarchy as rule of the father and patriarchy as men's domination of women. The term patriarchy necessarily implies a conception of women's oppression that is universalistic historic and essentially biologicistic and that it incorrectly leads to a search for a single cause of women's oppression.

Patriarchy is not assumed as male oppression on women in India because of the role that men have played in the emergence and growth of women question in India. In a hierarchical society often gender oppression is linked with oppressions based on caste, class, community, tribe and religion, and in such multiple patriarchies men as the principal oppressors is not easily accepted. Feminist historiography made radical breakthroughs in redefining patriarchies in the context of hierarchies of caste, class, community and ethnicity. Feminism is an awareness of women's oppression and patriarchy is a dominant means by which this oppression is executed. Despite the ideological differences between the feminist groups on many factors for women subordination Marxist feminist views that the subordination of women developed historically with the development of private property. Frederick Engels in *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) stated that with the emergence of private property, women's housework sank into insignificance in comparison to man in productive labour. The world historical defeat of the female sex with the establishment of capitalism based on private property ownership by men did away with inheritance of property and social position through female line. Thus maternal authority gave place to paternal authority and property was to be inherited from father to son and not from woman to her clan. The bourgeois families which owned private property emerged as

patriarchal families where women were subjugated. Such patriarchal families became oppressive as men ensured that their property passed on only to their sons. They argue that it is not women's biology alone but, private property and monogamous marriage, economic and political dominance by men and their control over female sexuality which led to patriarchy. Socialist feminists argue that women's subordination is rooted in the social and economic structure itself. Socialist feminists look at both relations of production as well as relations of reproduction to understand patriarchy. Gerda Lerner (1986) explains how control over female sexuality is central to women subordination. She argues that it is important to understand how production as well as reproduction was organized. The appropriation and commodification of women's sexual and reproductive capacity by men lies at the foundation of private property, institutionalization of slavery, women's sexual subordination and economic dependency on male. Juliet Mitchell believes that gender relations are a part of the super structure and patriarchy is located in the ideological level while capitalism in the economical level. She argues that patriarchal law is that of the rule of the father, which operates through the kinship system rather than domination of men. Mitchell stated that women fulfill four social functions (i) They are members of workforce and are active in production, (ii) they bear children and thus reproduce human species (iii) they are responsible for socializing children and (iv) they are sex objects. Therefore women can achieve emancipation only when they liberate from each of these areas. Eisenstein defines patriarchy as a sexual system of power in which the male possesses superior power and economic privilege. Patriarchy is not the direct result of biological differentiation but ideological and political interpretations of these differentiations. When the patriarchal mode of production articulates with the capitalist mode, women are prevented from entering paid work as freely as men and are reinforced by patriarchal state policies. The state is a site of patriarchal relations which is necessary to patriarchy as a whole as it upholds the oppression of women by supporting a form of household in

which women provide unpaid domestic services to male. Patriarchy is connected to both relations of production and relations of reproduction. Unconventional feminism challenges the traditional public/private divide and the influence of patriarchy not only in politics, public life and economy but also in all aspects of social, personal, psychological and sexual existence. This was evident in the pioneering work of radical feminists. Kate Millet (*Sexual Politics*) and Germaine Greer (*The Female Eunuch*), Simone de Beauvoir (*The Second Sex*), Eva Figes (*Patriarchal Attitudes*) drew attention to the personal, psychological and sexual aspects of female oppression. It is because of the patriarchal values and beliefs which pervade the culture, philosophy, morality and religion of society that women are conditioned to a passive sexual role, which has repressed their true sexuality as well as more active and adventurous side of their personalities. Radical feminists developed a systematic theory of sexual oppression as the root of patriarchy which preceded private property. They challenge the very notion of femininity and masculinity as mutually exclusive and biologically determined categories. The ideology of motherhood subjugates women and perpetuates patriarchy, which not only forces women to be mothers but also determines the conditions of their motherhood. It creates feminine and masculine characteristics, strengthens the divide between public and private, restricts women's mobility and reinforces male dominance. While sex differences are linked to biological differences between male and female, gender differences are imposed socially or even politically by constructed contrasting stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* pointed out that women are made and not born. She believed that greater availability of abortion rights, effective birth control and end of monogamy would increase the control over their bodies. Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* defined politics as power structured relationships, which is not only confined to government and its citizens but also to family between children and parents and husband and wife. Through family, church and academy men secure consent of the very women they oppress and each institution

justifies and reinforces women's subordination to men with the result that women internalize a sense of inferiority to men. Men use coercion to achieve what conditioning fails to achieve. She proposed that patriarchy must be challenged through a process of conscious-raising and women liberation required a revolutionary change. The psychological and sexual oppression of women have to be overthrown. Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex* believes that the basis of women's oppression lies in her reproductive capacity in so far as this has been controlled by men. She stated that patriarchy is not natural or inevitable but its roots are located in biology which has led to a natural division of labour within the biological family and liberation of women required that gender difference between men and women be abolished. Emancipation of women necessarily calls for challenging patriarchy as a system which perpetuates women's subordination. Several structures of society such as kinship and family, class, caste, religion, ethnicity, educational institutions and state reinforce patriarchy. The first lessons of patriarchy are learnt in the family where the head of the family is a man/father. Man is considered the head of the family and controls women's sexuality, labour or production, reproduction and mobility. In a patriarchal family the birth of male child is preferred to that of a female. The former is considered as the inheritor of the family. The Indian joint family is the "patriarchal family and it was constituted by a group of persons related in the male line and subject to absolute power of the senior most male member. According to Gerda Lerner, family plays an important role in creating a hierarchical system as it not only mirrors the order in the state and educates its children but also creates and constantly reinforces that order. Family is therefore important for socializing the next generation in patriarchal values. The boys learn to be dominating and aggressive and girls learn to be caring, loving and submissive. These stereotypes of masculinity and femininity are not only social constructs but also have been internalized by both men and women. While the pressure to earn and look after the family is more on the man, the women are supposed to do the menial jobs and take care

of their children and even other members of the family. It is because of these gender stereotypes that women are at a disadvantage and are vulnerable to violence and other kinds of discriminations and injustices. Systemic deprivation and violence against women: rape, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, female feticide, infanticide, witch-killing, sati, dowry deaths, wife-beating, high level of female illiteracy, malnutrition, undernourishment and continued sense of insecurity keeps women bound to home, economically exploited, socially suppressed and politically passive. Patriarchal constructions of knowledge perpetuate patriarchal ideology and this is reflected in educational institutions, knowledge system and media which reinforce male dominance. More subtle expressions of patriarchy was through symbolism giving messages of inferiority of women through legends highlighting the self-sacrificing, self-effacing pure image of women and through ritual practice which emphasized the dominant role of women as a faithful wife and devout mother. Laws of Manu insist that since women by their very nature are disloyal they should be made dependent on men. The husband should be constantly worshiped as a god, which symbolized that man is a lord, master, owner, or provider and the shudras and women were the subordinates. It legitimized that a woman should never be made independent, as a daughter she should be under the surveillance of her father, as a wife of her husband and as a widow of her son. While in ancient India (Vedic and Epic periods), women were by and large treated as equal to men, the restrictions on women and patriarchal values regulating women's sexuality and mobility got strengthened in the post-Vedic periods (Brahmanical and Medieval periods) with the rise of private property and establishment of class society. Patriarchal constructions of social practices are legitimized by religion and religious institution as most religious practices regard male authority as superior and the laws and norms regarding family, marriage, divorce and inheritance are linked to patriarchal control over property biased against women. A person's legal identity with regard to marriage, divorce and inheritance are determined by his or her religion, which laid down duties for

men and women and their relationship. Most religions endorse patriarchal values and all major religions have been interpreted and controlled by men of upper caste and class. The imposition of parda, restrictions on leaving the domestic space, separation between public and private are all gender specific and men are not subject to similar constraints. Thus the mobility of women is controlled. They have no right to decide whether they want to be mothers, when they want to be, the number of children they want to have, whether they can use contraception or terminate a pregnancy and so on and so forth. Male dominated institutions like church and state also lay down rules regarding women's reproductive capacity.

Matriarchy and Matriliney

Matriarchy can be described as a kind of social system where the mother figure and women have authority. The word matriarchy is coined as the opposite of patriarchy; from Greek mater "*mother*" and arche in "*to rule*". Gynecocracy is sometimes used synonymously to represent matriarchy. Matriarchy can be also defined as a form of social organization where women are the dominant gender, a female is the family head and title is traced through the female line. This system is also called as androcracy. It can be also called a system of government by females and another technical description attributed to matriarchy refers it as a gynocentric form of society. Matriliney is a system in which descent is reckoned in the female line. The children in matriliney belong to the mother's clan. Johann Jakob Bachofen and Lewis Henry Morgan argued that early societies were matriarchal. Some contemporary feminist theory has also suggested that a primitive matriarchy did indeed exist at one time. Morgan did research in the indigenous society of the Iroquois of his time. Claims for the existence of matriarchy rest on three types of data: societies in which women make the major contribution to subsistence, societies in which descent is traced through women (i.e., matrilineal), and myths of ancient rule by women. But myths of ancient female dominance invariably highlight

women's failure as rulers and end with men assuming power. Anthropologists believe that these myths function as a rationalization of contemporary male dominance. Women may have greater political power in matrilineal societies than in other societies, but this does not imply matriarchy. Thus, while Iroquois women could nominate and depose members of their ruling council, the members were male and enjoyed a veto over women. Crow women could take ritual offices, but their power was severely limited by menstrual taboos. Women may also have indirect influence through their involvement in material production. In many horticultural societies women produce the bulk of the group's dietary staples. Even so, men often devalue this vital contribution, and usually have the power to expropriate it. The universality of male dominance is not, however, natural or biological, because the form of, and reasons given for, patriarchy differ in most cultures. Through studying the various ways that male dominance is organized and justified, anthropologists have concluded that it is culturally constructed.

Domestic violence

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

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

Sexual Abuse: Coercing or attempting to coerce any sexual contact or behavior without consent. Sexual abuse includes, but is certainly not limited to, marital rape, attacks on

sexual parts of the body, forcing sex after physical violence has occurred, or treating one in a sexually demeaning manner.

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

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

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

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

UNIT-II

Module II Gender Studies As A Discipline Gerda Lerner – The Creation of patriarchy Simon de Bouver – The Second Sex Problem of Invisibility and Marginalisation

Women as property of Men

Gender Studies as a Discipline

Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary branch of knowledge and had link with wide range of disciplines in social sciences including media studies; and literature. It includes women studies, masculine and queer studies. It incorporates the approaches and methods of these disciplines. But each discipline differs in its approach to how and why gender is studied. Gender studies basically looks at how the historical, cultural, and social events shape the role of gender in different societies.

Gender Studies is developed from the Women Studies which came into being in late 1960's. Women's Studies developed as a discipline at the universities in 1970s and 80s. Following the strong second wave of feminist mobilization in this period, the pressure for the development of scientific teaching and research about women's position in society was growing. As late as the 1960s, university students in the social sciences did not receive any teaching about women's position and gender relations in society as part of their studies. The basis of this negligence was no doubt that 'women' or 'the family' were mostly seen as 'natural' phenomena without any interest for the (male dominated) universities. In the beginning, the opposition to Women's Studies as a university subject was severe. Women's Studies were accused of being '*political*' and '*un-scientific*'. Feminist scholars answered that male dominated science was itself biased and gender-blind. In the beginning, Women's Studies were accused of being 'political'. Feminist scholars answered, that traditional gender-blind research in itself is biased and unable to understand the complexity of society. The *Women's Studies Quarterly* and *Feminist Studies Journals* are founded as interdisciplinary forums for the

exchange of emerging perspectives on women, gender, and sexuality in 1972. 1980s: Women's studies undergoes an intensely self-reflective period in 1980s as it grappled with the issues of how to identify the concept of "women," which had largely been defined as white, middle-class, heterosexual, Christian, education women of privilege

Key areas on which women studies relied on -

- a. Critique of knowledge-Knowledge is seen as generated and controlled by men and which excludes women's knowledge.
- b. Recovery of women's texts, modes of knowing and experiences
- c. Shift from liberal feminist views to more socialist and radical views of gender roles and culture.

Of late, Women's Studies is engaged in the move to eliminate the term *women* and replace it *gender*. The change to *gender studies* suggests that the field needs to be paying attention to the relationships between men and women rather than focusing predominantly on women's experiences and knowledge itself. The main argument against the change to Gender Studies is the claim that this shift will undo the past forty years in bringing women and women's standpoints to the forefront in research, knowledge, and cultural production. But there are also many arguments *for* the change to Gender Studies. One is that it is a more appropriate title as it also includes gay, lesbian, and transgendered individuals. The title change would also make it possible to include Men.

Gender Studies is today well established as an interdisciplinary field of study which draws on knowledge from both the humanities, the social sciences, medicine, and natural science. The basis for the academic field of Gender Studies was in many countries laid in the 1970s, when women in Academia protested against the ways in which academic knowledge production made women invisible and ignored gendered power

relations in society. Interdisciplinary study environments started to mushroom, among others in many European countries and in North America, where so-called Women's Studies Centres were set up, gathering critical teachers and students who wanted to study gender relations, and women, in particular. A common denominator for the development was strong links to women's movements, activism, feminist ideas and practices. The research agenda was emancipatory, and the aim was to gather well founded scholarly arguments to further the political work for change in society, science and culture.

The aim of the academic project of Gender Studies was to generate a new field of knowledge production which could gain impact on science and scholarly practices and theories.

Against this background, a critical and innovative approach to existing science and academic scholarship is one of the characteristics of the subject area. The relationship between knowledge, power and gender in interaction with other social divisions such as ethnicity, class, sexuality, nationality, age, disability, etc. is critically scrutinized in gender research.

From the beginning, there has been a lively debate among those who identify with the field about its contents, conceptual frameworks and theories: What is Gender Studies? What is the "object" of study? Is a delimited "object" of study needed? Is it more interesting to ask critical questions about the role of the subject of scholarly knowledge production? What about the impact on research of the ways in which the subject "behind" the research is embedded in gendered, sexualized, class-defined, ethnically and nationally located power relations? Questions such as: Who is doing science? For which purposes? And who benefits? has been key issues in the unfolding of the academic project of Gender Studies.

Since the start in the 1970s, gender research has been inspired by and embedded in many different and sometimes partly overlapping scholarly traditions, such as empiricism, marxism, psychoanalysis, post structuralism, critical studies of men and

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

Gerda Hedwig Lerner (1920-2013) was one of the pioneers in the establishment of the branch of history called women's history, forerunner of Gender history. She developed it into an academic discipline by introducing degree programmes in women's history and developing curricula for it. The concrete works she did in Sarah Lawrence college in US where she taught from 1968 to 1979, included the publication of books and anthologies about women. It gave a strong foundation for women's history and rendered direction how to look at history from women's point of view. Her works at this time included anthologies *Black Women in White America* (1972) and *The Female Experience* (1976), which she edited, along with her essay collection, *The Majority Finds Its Past* (1979). Her article 'The lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson' (1969) discussed how women were placed in the society at a particular period of time. She was instrumental in conducting a 15 day seminar on women at the Sarah Lawrence College and it turned out to be a big success and inspired others to organize similar platforms of discussion. She initiated the first Ph.D programme in women's history in the University of Wisconsin in 1980s. Being the educational director of the Organization of American historians she made women's history accessible to teachers and activists alike. She brought in the contributions of black women to the purview of the study of history through her edited work *Black women in White America: A documentary History* (1972)

Her seminal work *The Creation of Patriarchy*(1986) , volume I of *Women and History* provided the theoretical framework to the discipline called women's history and

helped women historians to dig out women's role from his/story. Uma Chakravarti, one of the prominent historians in the field of gender history in India is influenced by the views of Gerda Lerner and applied the same in reclaiming Indian women's role from the past. Lerner explains in detail the historical evolution of patriarchy, the male dominated social structure, in the context of Mesopotamian civilization, Egypt and Assyria. It was an ancient system existed and operational from 2nd millennium BC itself. She unequivocally establishes patriarchy is a cultural construct. Women were objects of exchange in the society due to their sexuality and reproductive capacity. Men acquired women by abduction or through a system of sexual slavery in ancient societies. Control on women's sexuality leads to the possession of their off- springs too. Men's desire to safeguard the possession must have led to the rise of private property. The emergence of agriculture and subsequent formation of kingdoms along with the construction of legal structures perpetuated the interests of men and contributed to a male dominated/centred society. Possession and control of women led men to extend his sway over slavery and other modes of production. Women who had no accessibility to modes of production depended men based on their sexual ties. They were venerated in the ancient societies for their fertility or capacity to reproduce the human species though they had no control on modes of production. To make it more clearly, women became economically and sexually under the control of men, still they were continued to be worshipped because of their reproductive capacity. Therefore, one could come across women as priests, oracles and shamans in ancient society. Lerner observes that women cannot be seen as victims alone or chattels devoid of any role in power. Her mediation with power was through sexual ties however limited was her accessibility towards it. Her role in religion also indicates that her role in the society was complex and simple to be ignored by historians. Women were not able to come out of the world of restriction or limited possibilities as patriarchy tightened its control by systematically excluding them from acquiring all kinds of knowledge.

Lerner raises certain pertinent questions in the context of her study about women's biological power of procreation. It is a fact that women's biology that is her reproductive capacity, worked against her in the ancient societies as they were abducted by men for producing children, there is no need to consider it as a mark of vulnerability of women. Their reproductive capacity is always valued irrespective of time, culture or geography. Lerner presumably states her opinion that sometimes both men and women in ancient societies must have considered the reproductive role of women integral to the existence of mankind. The system must have run with the consent of women too. Cultural values assigned to the biological traits are the prime factor behind the degraded position of women in society- a point which scholars of gender history took up as a revelation to delve deep into reclaiming women from oblivion. 'Motherhood as the symbol of true female', 'no woman is complete unless she bears children' and 'child nurturing is woman's natural duty' –these cultural make-shifts on women's biological/natural gift of reproduction undermines her into second sex. Gender history started its toddling to establish itself in the academia.

The brilliant explanation of the historical evolution of patriarchy left the implication that all those constructed can be demolished. Thus patriarchy is proved to be a social construction evolved over years and centuries. It is not natural and can be subverted or changed. Since it did not give space to female species and inherently discriminatory and exploitative, there is a need to retrieve women's experiences, role and emotions from the past. Lerner asserts that it is important to bring women back to the stage of history, by making their lives and experiences, their submerged histories relevant and central to civilization.

Second Sex

It is a work written by French feminist theoretician **Simone de Beauvoir** and brought out in 1949. It is considered as a major work on feminist philosophy and

influenced women and women's movement world wide. It was criticized as pornography and Church included it in the list of forbidden books. The views expressed in the book were unheard of the time it got published. There were hardly any books on women from feminist perspective at the time. The profound insights on women's oppression were first of its kind and the book left ripples on society's attitude and treatment to women.

It discusses how women are treated historically and explained how women were oppressed in the society and continued to be the second sex. She examines the structures, attitudes and presuppositions which maintain the inequality between sexes. Woman all through history is defined as the 'other' of man who takes the privilege of being the 'self'. Woman "is the incidental, the inessential, as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute-she is the Other." Woman is treated as the other of man and the 'other' is defined by man himself. The 'other' is treated as inferior. Based on this myth of the woman as 'inferior other' that gender inequality perpetuated in society. Beauvoir argues that women must become 'subjects' in their own right. They need not be restricted to the roles imposed on them by the male dominated society.

The concept of the 'Eternal feminine' constructed on the mythical image of the mother, the virgin, the motherland and nature were portrayed as traps to tie women to impossible ideals and thereby to deny their individuality. Beauvoir pointed out that history disclosed many of these fantastic roles consist of contradictory ideals. For example, women as mothers are depicted as respected guardians of life and there are as many representations of mothers in history as harbingers of death. Thus woman as mother is both respected and despised.

She connects subordination of women with reproduction and explained that physiology should not be basis of values. Women are biologically capable of bearing children. This is an indisputable statement. Economical and social factors attribute to

biology and for that reason reproduction cannot be seen from purely biological point of view. The following values are associated with are social-

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

To make it clearer, while sexual difference is real and unalterable, it cannot be the grounds for inequality. Social and economic factors attribute to biological reality act as ground for injustice.

Reproduction made her an object to be possessed in the eyes of man and motherhood made women to be dominated by men. They oppress women to perpetuate the family and keep the inheritance in tact. She observed women had a subordinated status in Ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. Christianity also perceived women as menial creatures. Apostles like Paul commented on women thus 'of all the wild animals, none can be found as harmful as women'. Though Beauvoir found some changes in the position of women in the nineteenth century their legal status remained unchanged. Industrial revolution brought her from the seclusion of home to the public; but they were paid very little. She also critically looked at the birth control on Egyptian women.

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

how women, instead of transcending through work and creativity, are forced into monotonous existences of having children, tending house and being the sexual receptacles of the male libido.

She suggested ways and means to reclaim woman's self. Women should think, act, work and create on the same terms as men. Woman should declare herself as equal instead of despising her. Beauvoir wanted changes in social structures to ensure women's equality. She advocated universal childcare, equal education, contraception, legal abortion and economic freedom for women's emancipation. *The Second Sex* always maintains that each individual, regardless of sex, class or age, should be encouraged to define him or herself and to take on the individual responsibility that comes with freedom.

Invisibility of women, women in History History centred on men's lives, activities, and events does not represent a history for all. It is argued that only white, middle class, heterosexual men count in history and that non-white, non-middle- and upper-class/caste men as well as women have been removed from our view of the past. Women are either completely absent from historical narratives, or their presence is described in ways that are insignificant to the important events of history. The invisibility and marginalization of women in history is a problem keeping the study of history from realizing its full potential. Before 1970, women's history was rarely the subject of serious study. Two significant factors contributed to the emergence of women's history. The women's movement of the sixties caused women to question their invisibility in traditional history texts. The movement also raised the aspirations as well as the opportunities of women, and produced a growing number of female historians. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, one of the early women's historians, has remarked that "without question, our first inspiration was political. Aroused by feminist charges of economic and political discrimination. . . . we turned to our history to trace the origins of women's second-class status."

Women as property of Men

Women are considered as property of men in patriarchal society. They are considered inferior to men. How do women even begin to gain equality if they cannot control their own sexuality and bodies? Women should be able to freely exercise choices about who they want to be, what they want to look like, and who they want to love or not love.

Society is outraged and offended when women try to take control of their own bodies and minds. For example, when women choose a sexual orientation that is devoid of men, a woman loving another woman is quickly seen as an abomination and unspeakable. Homophobia and discrimination against gay men is deeply embedded in the Southern African region, but the African psyche also cannot even begin to comprehend women enjoying each other's bodies.

When women have no choice but to enter into commercial sex work to survive, again society begins to take the moral high ground and declares that the providers of this service, mind you not the clients, should be criminalized. What society finds most objectionable is that a woman should call sex work and be bold enough to demand payment for it. What we would rather not face is that expressions of sex in societies are often based on some material exchange or another. Even within what is considered 'acceptable' (marriage or partnerships) heterosexual relationships, a woman endures a man's sexual attentions and even bears children in exchange for being taken care of economically.

The right of a woman to choose to terminate a pregnancy—or again to make decisions about her life and take control of her body – is another minefield. In all the countries in Southern Africa, except South Africa, women do not have the right to freely choose to abort except in restricted circumstances. In fact, when one listens to the

arguments based on religion, culture or whatever against abortion, they finally boil down to the fact that in society's view, the unborn child is still far more important than the woman.

The sexual and reproductive rights of women are not only just violated, but they are not even recognized in the minds of many as being worth anything to talk about, complain about or even march about, since same sex relationships between women, the decriminalization of sex work and abortion are even shied away from in the African feminists movements.

How do women even begin to gain equality if they cannot control their own sexuality and bodies? The struggle for women's autonomy is at the base of women's freedom from the clutches of patriarchy. Women should be seen as more than beauty aids and sex objects who can be tossed around and violated violently. Women should be able to freely exercise choices about who they want to be, what they want to look like, and whom they want to love or not love.

Module III

Gender Studies – The Indian Scenario Altekarian Paradigm – Critique of Altekarian Paradigm – Brahmanical Patriarchy Uma Chakravarty Seed and Earth- Leela Dube Food and Caste- Leela Dube Ecological Feminism – Women as creators of Life- Green Revolution and destabilizing the life of Women– Contributions of Vandana Shiva The Subaltern Cannot Speak- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak Rights over Land– Bina Aggarwal Nature of Rape Trials- Pratiksha Baxi

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

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

women in public life, proprietary women, and the general position of women in society, it is the nationalist understanding of the women's question. Further overwhelming concern is with women in the context of the one almost gets the feeling that the status of women needs to in order to ensure the healthy development of the future race. In this he was reflecting the opinion of nationalist writers' second half of the nineteenth century who placed tremendous importance on the physical regeneration of the Hindus.

A survey of Altekar's work indicates the limitations inherent in his approach. According to him: One of the best ways to understand the spirit of a civilization to appreciate its excellence and realize its limitations is the history of the position and status of women in it . . marriage laws and customs enable us to realize whether regarded women as market commodities or war prizes or whether they realized that the wife is after all her husband's valued partner whose co-operation was indispensable for happiness success in family life. Altekar's own genuine commitment to reforming women's status sometimes made him making quaint statements which he intended positive and progressive. Thus he suggested that although Women have low fighting value they have potential military value. By giving birth to sons they contribute indirectly to fighting strength and efficiency of their community. Further, Altekar's programme for women, despite his apparent apparent liberality and sympathy for them, was to view women primarily stock-breeders of a strong race. This view is particularly noticeable his suggestions about women's education. In Altekar's programme reform women were to be educated enough but in doing so one had ensure that no undue strain was placed upon them. He expressed fears thus: As things stand today girls have to pass the same examinations as boys and to learn house-keeping at home as well, all the while having less physical strength than their brothers. This certainly puts too much strain upon them and is injurious to the future well-being of the race. Establishing the high status of women was the means by which 'Hindu' civilization could be vindicated. This

was the finished version of the nationalist answer to James Mill's denigration of civilization published a century ago; the locus of the barbarity Hindu civilization in James Mill's work (*A History of British*) had lain in the abject condition of Hindu women.. But easier to provide a general picture than to deal with a variety customs oppressing women that still obtained in the early twentieth century. Altekar was thus forced to provide explanations for biases against women. For example he attempts to explain the preference for a son over a daughter by advancing a psychological argument as in the passage below: If a cruel fate inflicted widowhood upon the daughter, calamity would break the parent's heart. Remarriage being longer possible parents had to see the heart-rending pain of their daughter wasting herself in interminable widowhood. Parents had often to pass through the terrible ordeal their daughters burning themselves alive on the funeral their husbands. To become a daughter's parent thus became of endless worry and misery. ... As a natural consequence... passages about the undesirability of the birth of daughter more numerous. Altekar is particularly weak in his attempts at relating the women at a given point of time with social organization Thus early Vedic society which did not as yet have concentration of power, or a well developed institution of the context for Altekar's unnecessary explanation for the queens.

Since Altekar is convinced about the high status the Vedic period he feels he has to account for why we do women as queens. Thus he is constrained to suggest that, Aryans were gradually establishing their rule in a foreign Aryans were gradually establishing their rule in a foreign surrounded on all sides by an indigenous hostile population considerably outnumbered them. Under such circumstances ruling in their own rights or as regents were naturally to defend the rivals . Similarly Altekar has a facile explanation for why women own property. According to him, Landed property could be owned only by one who had the. were obviously unable to do this and so could hold no property. In his inability to see women within a specific social and recognizing

patriarchal subordination of women Altekar unique. Like others he was reflecting a deeply internalized biological determinism and therefore in the physical inferiority women.

Very occasionally however Altekar shows flashes of insight into socio-economic context within which women's subordination was achieved. For example in his analysis of the causes for the 'fall' of the status of the Aryan women Altekar suggests a connection with subjugation of the Sudras as a whole. He argues that the Aryan conquest of the indigenous population and its loose incorporation members of a separate varna had given rise to a huge population semi-servile status. In such a situation Aryan women ceased to producing members of society and thus lost the esteem of society. Even as he made this broadly contextual explanation, Altekar was insensitive to the crucial distinction between the participation women as producers and participation in terms of controlling production. Thereafter, in the opinion of Uma Chakravarti, Altekar's semi-historical insight is unfortunately lost and popular prejudice takes over. Like the ancient Brahmanical law givers he appears to have a horror of Sudra women, as in this passage: The introduction of the non-Aryan wife into the Aryan household is the key [italics mine] to the gradual deterioration of the position of women. .. The non-Aryan wife with her ignorance of Sanskrit language and Hindu religion could obviously not enjoy the religious privileges as the Aryan consort [italics mine]. Association with her must have tended to affect the purity of speech Aryan co-wife as well. Very often the non-Aryan wife may been the favourite one of her husband, who may have attempted to associate her with his religious sacrifices preference to her better educated but less loved Aryan co-~~&~~**This must have naturally led to grave mistakes and anomalies the performance of the ritual which must have shocked orthodox priests.... Eventually it was felt that the object could orthodox priests.... Eventually it was felt that the object could gained by declaring the whole class of women to be ineligible gained by declaring the whole class

of women to be ineligible Vedic studies and religious duties. This facile argument was, in Altekar's view, the key factor decline of the status of women.

Altekar is completely obtuse to historical explanations. The possibility that the Sudra woman, he regards as a threat, could have contributed to a more dynamic active kind of womanhood for Hindu society would not even occur Altekar because his focus is on Aryan women (regarded then progenitors of the upper caste women of Hindu society) and in his view Sudra women counted for nothing. The most important consequence of Altekar's limited repertoire of biological and psychological explanations was that the logic of the distorted social relations between men and women is completely obscured. The kind explanations offered by Altekar might appear to be astoundingly trivial to us today but it is important to remember that, by and nationalist historians were content to restrict historical explanations to cultural factors while writing about ancient India. This was contrast to their focus on economic and social factors while discussing British rule in India.

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

quality of the blood through women is best demonstrated in the horror of miscegeny (varnasamkara). Most polluting are those castes which are the product of reprehensible unions between women of a higher and men of a lower caste. The ideologues of the caste system had a particular horror of hypogamy (pratiloma) and reserved highest punishment for it. The safeguarding of the caste structure is achieved through female seclusion. Women are regarded as the entrance into the caste system. The lower caste male whose sexuality is a threat to upper caste purity is prevented from having sexual access to women of the higher castes so women must be carefully guarded. When the structure to prevent miscegeny breaks down the Brahmanical texts consider that the whole elaborate edifice of social order that they built up has collapsed. Brahmanical texts viewed all women have the power to non-conform, to break the entire structure of Brahmanical social order. For when women are corrupted all is lost. To prevent such a contingency women's sexual subordination was institutionalized in the Brahmanical law codes and enforced by the power of the State. Women's co-operation in the system was secured by various means- ideology, economic dependency on the male head of the family, class privileges and veneration bestowed upon conforming and dependent women of the upper classes and finally the use of force when required.

The process of caste, class and gender stratifications is the three elements in the formation of Brahmanical patriarchy. Many of the myths of Rigveda reflect clear relationship of women with sexuality. Excluding the demoniac women and apsaras, the Aryan patriarchal families had established a certain degree of control over women. Their position in a pastoral economy with the household playing an important part in production requires them in the performance of rituals. But the custom of Niyoga which was the privilege of affinal male kinsmen indicates that control over female sexuality was firmly established. Post Vedic period witnessed two developments. Aryan women's roles in the sacrifice as well as in production were marginalized. Their labour was

restricted to household. The need for monitoring women's sexuality is viewed as a threat, particularly in relation to the sacrifice. The earliest references to the need to specially guard wives are also evident during this period. The Satapatha Brahmana expresses the fear that the wife might go to other men. It also states that Divine raja Varuna seizes the woman who has adulterous intercourse with men other than her husband. Women's 'essential nature' came to be identified with their sexuality in the post- Vedic period. The innate nature of women was represented as sinful. Satapatha Brhamana states that a woman, a sudra, a dog, and a crow are the embodiments of untruth, sin, and darkness. The sage Agastya states that it has been a woman's nature ever since creation began to cling to a man only when he prospers, and desert him in difficulty; their fickle natures are modeled on the flashes of lightning. Anasuya complains that normally women do not know right wrong, and even though they are dependent on their husbands for protection they wander about with their hearts subject only to their own desires. Tryambaka, the author of Stridharmapaddhati says that women are innately promiscuous, fickle minded, lacking in love, and unfaithful to their husbands even when closely guarded. It is difficult to deal with the innately overflowing and uncontrollable sexuality of women. Manu, the ancient lawgiver and the prominent ideologue of Brahmanical system dealt explicitly the notion of the essential nature of women that is sexuality. According to him women must be closely guarded day and night regardless of their age. By carefully guarding the wife a man preserves the purity of his offspring, his family, himself, and his means of acquiring merit. After conception by his wife, the husband becomes an embryo and is born again of her that is the wifeness of a wife. Husband should carefully guard his wife to keep his offspring pure and ensure his future. Women should be thoroughly restrained. The essential nature of women drives them into seeking satisfaction anywhere, anytime and with anyone. In the opinion of Uma Chakravarti women's uncontrolled sexuality was perceived as posing a threat and the narrative and normative literature of ancient India is thus full of references

to the wickedness of women and of their 'insatiable' lust. One of the devices by which the mechanism of controlling women is operated through the ideology called **stridharma/pativratadharm**a. It is the main instrument through which the patriarchal Brhmanical society subordinated women. They were given schooling in stridharma. This wifely codes/pativratadharm were internalized by women. Therefore women attempted to live up to the idealized notions of pativrata. Chastity and widely fidelity are some of the constituents of pativrata. They accepted stridharma and considered it as the highest expressions of their selfhood. In the opinion of Uma Chkavarti pativrathadharm can be considered as the most successful ideologies constructed by any patriarchal system. Women themselves controlled their own sexuality and believed that they gained power and respect through the codes they adopted. Women as biological creatures are representatives of a wild or untamed nature. Through the Stridharma the biological woman can be tamed and converted into woman as a social entity. The wicked and untamed nature of woman can be subordinated and conquered by the virtue of the ideal wife. Once the tension between nature and culture is resolved women can emerge as paragons of virtue. Uma Chakravati opines 'pativrata may be regarded as the ideological purdha of the Hindu woman.'"There are many instances of pativrata ideals in Hindu mythologies. Ramayana created the role models for men and women. There are idealized brothers and sons; but the most powerful and long lasting of these deals is that of Sita, the long suffering, patient, loving and faithful wife of Rama. Arundhati could stay the motion of the Sun. Savitiri could win back her dead husband from Yama. Anasuya could transform evil men with lustful desires into babies. Force by knismen is prescribed to keep woman firmly within the stridharma. If they are not guarded, stated Manu, they bring sorrow to two families, the one into which a woman is born and the one into which she is given. Special responsibility in guarding women is laid upon the husband who is represented as most vulnerable to the loss of his progeny through the infidelity of women. Law and custom must ensure that women are kept under the control of

patriarchy. The king was vested with the authority to punish errant wives. It shows that the scriptures advise the use of violence to punish women particularly wives, to make them conform to the requirements of wifely fidelity.

Food as a medium of proliferation of caste

Food is one of the means by which caste retained its hold in the society. Traditionally, each caste has developed its own food culture depending on their social, economic, environmental and other factors. Women are the upholders of caste taboos and rituals at home. Therefore, they give basic lessons of caste identity to the next generation. Though marriage and inheritance play an important role in maintaining caste identity, women do have a marginal role in them. But women as custodians of home decide what food to cook and eat. As each caste has its own food habits, women are expected to adhere to the particular food habit of that caste. Food is one of the integral constituents of caste identity determined and maintained through women. They have to safeguard caste purity through guarding purity in food. Women, compared to men are stricter in observing caste purity in food. They do not eat anything out when they go out of home. At the same time, men do not seem to follow such restrictions as do women. Women are very particular to have food prepared by themselves or of the same caste people. This retained the caste purity in the private realm that is within the family

Ecofeminism or ecological feminism is a branch of feminism explores women's association with nature. It examines how patriarchal society looks at and deals with women and nature. Men dominate both women and nature. This dominance was observed as unjust by the ecofeminists. Male dominated society associate women and nature with attributes like chaotic, irrational and in need of control. These characteristics which constitute the identities of women and nature are opposite to what men are constituted. Ordered, rational and capable to give directions are attributes of men. Men

with such characteristics are supposed to control the chaotic and irrational women and nature. It creates a hierarchy in which men are placed in the peak of the hierarchy and; women and nature occupies the bottom. Ecofeminists question this hierarchy which is formed of long term historical processes.

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

Ecofeminists focused their effort first on unpacking the historical connection between women and nature. They traced how women and nature are depicted in past societies and how both developed identical characteristics. Attention shifted to sever the connection of subordination shared by women and nature once the contexts under which both were connected had proved. Rosemary Ruether one of the early ecofeminists upheld the need to end the mankind's (male dominated) domination on nature and, women should work for it as it leads to their own liberation. It needs the collaboration between women and environmentalists against the

patriarchal structure which produced and propelled the subordination of women and nature for its interests. It led to the rereading of ecological theories which overlooked the unequal relationship between man and nature/woman. It also led to the critiquing of feminist theories which ignored the relationship between patriarchal structure and nature/woman. Ynestra King in her article 'what is Ecofeminism?' posits the concept of subordination of nature in the religious belief of people. Belief systems ask for the exploitation of nature by men and women alike. Ecofeminism acquired popularity by the late 1980s and grew out of the hands of the academicians to the activists.

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

Cultural ecofeminists, on the other hand, encourage an association between women and the environment. They contend that women have a more intimate relationship with nature because of their gender roles (e.g., family nurturer and provider of food) and their biology (e.g. menstruation, pregnancy and lactation). As a result, cultural ecofeminists believe that such associations allow women to be more sensitive to the sanctity and degradation of the environment. They suggest that this sensitivity ought to be prized by society insofar as it establishes a more direct connection to the natural world with which humans must coexist. Cultural ecofeminism

also has roots in nature-based religions and goddess and nature worship) as a way of redeeming both the spirituality of nature and women's instrumental role in that spirituality.

Not all feminists favoured the bifurcation of ecofeminism. Some women, for instance, worried that cultural ecofeminism merely enforces gender stereotypes and could lead to further exploitation. Others wanted a greater emphasis on nature-based religion, while still others insisted that a celebration of Western organized religions could accommodate nature-based worship. Those same groups also differed with regard to the romanticization of nature and the roles that various practices (such as vegetarianism or organic farming) ought to play in the application of ecofeminist principles. As a result, the movement continued to grow and expand in order to accommodate those variations, and most self-identified ecofeminists celebrate the myriad definitions and applications available under the general rubric of ecofeminism.

Many women remained unsatisfied with the limits of the movement. Of particular concern was the failure of women in developed countries to acknowledge the ways in which their own lifestyles were leading to further degradation of their counterparts in less-developed countries and of the Earth as a whole. Women from developing countries pointed to the effects of commercial food production, sweatshop labour, and poverty on their families and their landscapes. They accused white ecofeminists of promoting that exploitation by purchasing goods created as a result of inequity. They also took issue with the appropriation of indigenous cultures and religions for the purpose of advancing a philosophical position. Thus, contemporary ecofeminism must be developed to acknowledge the very real effects of race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality on a woman's social position. Women involved in environmental justice and women representing minority cultures have worked to establish their own sense of ecofeminism to include

local cultures and spirituality, a celebration of their roles as mothers and caretakers, and a recognition of the ways in which Western colonization compromised those beliefs.

Many ecofeminists were also concerned with what they saw as a heterosexual bias in the movement insofar as ecofeminism appeared to privilege the experience of heterosexual women over homosexual women. To correct that problem, an emerging school of ecofeminism emphasized the need to incorporate the tenets of queer theory into the precepts of ecofeminism. They contended that if ecofeminism is indeed committed to fighting against systems of oppression and domination, then the movement must also acknowledge the ways in which sexuality—and, more specifically, responses to that sexuality—also figure as oppressive mechanisms. Thus, the redemption of women's roles and opportunities must also include a valuing of sexual differences as well as differences in race, class, and gender.

Ecofeminist scholars often contend that the great plurality of beliefs within ecofeminism is one of the movement's greatest strengths. They note that the myriad definitions and applications, which sometimes complement and sometimes conflict with one another, demonstrate the liberating and inclusive aspects of the movement. They also point to the important commonalities shared within the various schools of ecofeminism. All ecofeminists, they say, work toward the development of theory and action that acknowledge the problems inherent patriarchal and hierarchical systems. They advocate the revaluing of science to acknowledge the role of subjectivity and intuition. They also support the creation of a new worldview that celebrates all biological systems as inherently valuable. Finally, they insist on solving those problems through affirming and nonviolent means.

Vandana Shiva(1952-)

She is an Indian scholar and activist of environmentalism. Born in Dehradun, she had her phd from the university of western Ontario in philosophy of physics. She later

shifted her focus to the interdisciplinary study of science, technology and environmental policy. In the face of the spread of globalization in the field of agriculture and food, she wrote extensively on the need to retain biodiversity. She argued for the wisdom and advantage of traditional agricultural practices existed in countries. Each region and country has its own common heritage of agriculture and it contains rare knowledge passed over to generations. The book *Vedic Ecology* explains her stance unequivocally about the need to sustain traditional agricultural practices and seed varieties. Introduction of seeds produced by the technology of genetic engineering poses threats to the indigenous agricultural practices. She is associated with the global solidarity movement known as *alter – globalization* movement. Her campaigns against advances in agriculture through genetic engineering spread across countries and continents like Africa, Asia, Latin America, Ireland, Switzerland and Austria.

She founded the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology in 1982. She challenged the bio-piracy of Neem, Basmati and Wheat on the ground of intellectual property rights and biodiversity. This led to a national movement called [Navdanya](#) in 1991, a national movement to protect the diversity and integrity of living resources, especially native seed, the promotion of organic farming and fair trade.^[12] In 2004 Shiva started Bija Vidyapeeth, an international college for sustainable living in Doon Valley in 2004.

What did she do for biodiversity? How does it benefit to the farmers? How does she connect nature and women, agriculture and women? She explained the close bond between women and agriculture in her work *Staying Alive* (1988). She observed that most farmers in India are women. She is critical of the impact of Green Revolution on Indian women. The chemical fertilizers depleted fertility of the soil, destroyed living ecosystems and had adversely affected peoples' health. She explained in her work, *The violence of the Green Revolution* that the use of pesticides lead to kidney failure, cancer and heart diseases.

She firmly stands against the corporate patents on seeds and for that reason opposed the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights sponsored by WTO. She called it as bio-piracy. She won legal battle against the bio-piracy of Neem and Basmati Rice. Basically she stood for Seed Freedom. She opposed the introduction and spread of genetically engineered agricultural products. Her opposition against the introduction of Golden rice, a genetically engineered rice variety was such an example of her stance against genetically engineered agricultural products. The creation of seed monopolies, the destruction of alternatives, the collection of super profits in the form of royalties, and the increasing vulnerability of monocultures has created a context for debt, suicides, and agrarian distress.

‘Vandana Shiva plays a major role in the global eco feminist movement at global level. She suggests that a more sustainable and productive approach to agriculture can be achieved through reinstating the system of farming in India that is more centered on engaging women. She advocates against the prevalent "patriarchal logic of exclusion," claiming that a woman-focused system would change the current system in an extremely positive manner. She believes that ecological destruction and industrial catastrophes threaten daily life, and the maintenance of these problems have become the responsibility of women.’

Women and the Green Revolution

The Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, with its package of improved seeds, farm technology, better irrigation and chemical fertilizers was highly successful at meeting its primary objective of increasing crop yields and augmenting aggregate food supplies. In Asia, where the Green Revolution package was the most widely adopted, food production increased substantially in those decades. Yet despite its success at increasing aggregate food supply, the Green Revolution as a development approach has

not necessarily translated into benefits for the lower strata of the rural poor in terms of greater food security or greater economic opportunity and well being.

Gender often played a role in the distribution of benefits that resulted from the Green Revolution. It is observed that women heads of households and women farmers gained less from the Green Revolution than their male counterparts. The transfer of technology focused on men rather than women and ignored women's social conditions and technology needs. Men were more likely than women to use certain Green Revolution practices such as fertilizer and insecticide. Women were shown to be just as effective as men when implementing the technology, but these women faced barriers to the resources needed. Women have always played a prominent role in the management of natural resources, especially in developing countries.

The Green Revolution has impacted the role of women within agriculture differently than it has affected the role of men. Food production and the shift to a market economy led to the displacement of women. Peasants in developing countries, who were often women, have made innovations in agriculture for centuries, but "the knowledge of agriculture which was acquired for over centuries began to be eroded and erased with the introduction of western model of green revolution". Although gender subordination has always existed, women continue to be oppressed through development and the implementation of Green Revolution technologies. Women have found their roles shifting as "Farming as a process of nurturing the earth to maintain her capacity to provide food has changed with a masculinist shift in looking at farming as a process of generating profits". It demonstrates that the conflicts in India between the marketization of food and the want to stick with traditional food crops, instead of the new crops of the Green Revolution.

One of the most dramatic macro-level consequences of modernization in agriculture has been the loss of wage labour opportunities for poor rural women due to

the introduction of technology that mechanises tasks they traditionally perform. The clearest example of this situation is found in the mechanization of post-harvest practices which has reduced the availability of wage work for women. The introduction of rice mills throughout Asia has made women labourers who were formerly involved with the winnowing, threshing and hand-pounding of rice redundant. In Bangladesh, where manual de-husking of rice is the most important source of female wage employment in rural areas' and often the only source, modern mills employ men. The introduction of a subsidised scheme for motorised rice hullers in Java (Indonesia) is estimated to have thrown 1.2 million landless women, who were employed in the hand-pounding of rice, out of work.

The rapid modernization of agriculture and the introduction of new technologies such as those which characterized the Green Revolution have had a differential impact on rural populations by both class and by gender. How the Green Revolution affected rural people depended on whether they are wage earners, cultivators, or consumers, whether they come from landed or landless, rich or poor, male or female headed households. However, two general trends are apparent: the wealthy have benefited more from technological change in agriculture than the less well off and men have benefited more than women.

Studies on the impact of the Green Revolution have shown that technological change can generate major social benefits but at the same time generate significant costs for particular categories of rural women that are different in kind and in intensity from those experienced by men. For example, the introduction of high-yielding varieties of rice in Asia has had a major impact on rural women's work and employment, most of it unfavorable by:

- increasing the need for cash incomes in rural households to cover the costs of technological inputs which has forced women to work as agricultural labourers;
- increasing the need for unpaid female labour for farming tasks thereby augmenting women's already high labour burden:
- and displacing women's wage earning opportunities through mechanization.

The effects of the adoption of high-yielding varieties (HYV) of rice and wheat in India provides a good example of how particular categories of rural women have been affected differently by technological change in agriculture. For the poorest women from landless or near landless households who rely on agricultural wage labor for survival, the data from India implies that although agricultural modernisation has increased the demand for agricultural labour, wage rates remained static or were depressed by supply an increasing supply of the work force. Not enough employment has been generated for all who are seeking work nor has the relative increase in employment opportunities necessarily resulted in an increased standard of living. Within this bleak employment scenario, women are paid lower wages than men and are often assigned the more labour-intensive tasks such as weeding, transplanting and harvesting. Moreover, women labourers have clearly lost out from mechanisation of post-harvest activities - a traditional area of female wage employment - which may have offset any gains made by increasing employment due to the introduction of HYV technology packages. Low wages and displacement from work means that the majority of rural women in South Asia have insufficient income to improve their diets by taking advantage of the substantial increases in output for irrigated rice and wheat.

Agricultural modernization in India appears to have had mixed effects on women in small-cultivator households. For many, the financial intensifies of adopting the HYV

package has increased the need for cash incomes with two effects on women; either forcing them to work as agricultural labourers or increasing their work burden for farming activities in an effort by the household to avoid the use of paid labourers. In households that have been able to take advantage of the technology package, women have generally benefited from the increased income to the household which means that they can withdraw from agricultural labour. The withdraw from field work, however, has often translated into heavier work in the household compound (for example, cooking for hired labourers) rather than leisure.

□

The major technological thrust of the Green Revolution was the development by agricultural research centres of high yielding varieties of rice and wheat which under favorable conditions increase grain yield considerably over indigenous varieties. But increase in grain yield is not the only desired criteria of preference for women farmers who also value biomass and other components of the crop or plant. To a small producer, rice is not just grain: it provides straw for thatching and mat-making, fodder for livestock, bran for fish ponds, and husks for fuel. These products not only have a role in the domestic economy but are often a valuable input to other income-generating enterprises which provide a livelihood for many of the rural poor, especially women.

Closing the gap between scientists' priorities and those of women farmers will need to be an essential strategy for a more equitable and sustainable Green Revolution in order to design technologies that match the realities experienced by the majority of poor producers in non-irrigated, environmentally fragile areas. This can be brought about by creating channels of communication through participatory research and extension so that farmers can signal their technical requirements to breeders and breeders can learn from the experience of farmers in the optimal management of local varieties under restrictive environmental conditions.

Agricultural research and technology development programmes can assure responsiveness to gender equality issues by:

- recognising women farmers as forming a constituency for agricultural research;
- recording from women the husbandry and utilisation, information on indigenous plant varieties which would provide insight into performance characteristics;
- giving due attention to the multiple uses of plants for food and other uses;
- studying domestic processing, storage and cooking technology and linking them to plant breeding programmes

Settlement schemes for irrigated rice production, which attempted to replicate the Green Revolution experience in Africa, rarely recognised the importance of women's independent farming and income-generating activities to meet family food requirements and cash for the purchase of goods vital to family well-being. Targeted at male household heads, these schemes introduced land reform and a heavy focus on cash crops which eroded female rights to land without easing their responsibility to feed the family or their need for cash income. The failure to perceive and/or respond to differential allocation of resources and responsibilities between men and women in farming households meant that women's labour requirements for cash crop production were increased although control of the income remained in the hands of men. Moreover, women were allocated small plots of marginal land for food production which resulted in insufficient food for the family and increased pressure on fragile environments. These examples illustrate that most of the negative effects of agricultural modernization on rural women are indirect consequences of the introduction of technologies which are rarely targeted at them or designed specifically for their needs. Rural women are rarely

considered as clientele for agricultural research and development programmes or users of improved technology. Technical training and extension programmes are almost exclusively targeted at men thereby denying women opportunities to improve their skills and access to important channels of communication and state-sponsored support services. Moreover, when fed through traditional systems which limit women's access to resources and impose a sexual division of labour that allocate to women the most tedious, labour intensive and poorly rewarded work, the introduction of technology has the tendency to increase the labour burden of some of the poorest rural women without necessarily increasing their gains. It is clear from an examination of the gender related impact of technological change in agriculture that one needs to bear in mind intra-household allocations of labour, income and access to land as factors constraining women or affecting their ability to benefit from change.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1942-) is a literary theorist, and feminist critic. Considered "one of the most influential postcolonial intellectuals", Spivak is best known for her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?,"

“Can the Subaltern Speak?” an essay first delivered in 1983, has established Spivak among the ranks of feminists who consider history, geography, and class in thinking woman. In all her work, Spivak’s main effort has been to try to find ways of accessing the subjectivity of those who are being investigated. The essay questions the notion of the colonial (and Western) “subject” and provides an example of the limits of the ability of Western discourse, even postcolonial discourse, to interact with the cultures of the colonised.

In “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, Spivak encourages but also criticizes the efforts of the subaltern studies group, a project led by Ranajit Guha that has reappropriated Gramsci’s term “subaltern” (the economically dispossessed), in order to locate and re-

establish a “voice” or collective locus of agency in postcolonial India. Although Spivak acknowledges the “epistemic violence” done upon Indian subalterns, she suggests that any attempt from the outside to ameliorate their condition by granting them collective speech invariably will encounter the following problems: 1) a logocentric assumptions of cultural solidarity among a heterogeneous people, and 2) a dependence upon western intellectuals to “speak for” the subaltern condition rather than allowing them to speak for themselves. As Spivak argues, by speaking out and reclaiming a collective cultural identity, subalterns will in fact re-inscribe their subordinate position in society. The academic assumption of a subaltern collectivity becomes akin to an ethnocentric extension of Western logos—a totalizing, essentialist “mythology” as Derrida might describe it—that doesn’t account for the heterogeneity of the colonized body politic

The basic claim and opening statement of “Can the Subaltern Speak?” is that western academic thinking is produced in order to support western economical interests. Spivak holds that knowledge is never innocent and that it expresses the interests of its producers. For Spivak knowledge is like any other commodity that is exported from the west to the third world for financial and other types of gain.

Spivak wonders how the third world subject can be studied without cooperation with the colonial project. Spivak points to the fact that research is in a way always colonial, in defining the “other”, the “over there” subject as the object of study and as something that knowledge should be extracted from and brought back “here”. Basically we’re talking about white men speaking to white men about colored men/women. When Spivak examines the validity of the western representation of the other, she proposes that the discursive institutions which regulate writing about the other are shut off to postcolonial or feminist scrutiny.

This limitation, Spivak holds, is due to the fact that critical thinking about the “other” tends to articulate its relation to the other with the hegemonic vocabulary.

In the latter part of the essay, she describes the circumstances surrounding the suicide of a young Bengali woman that indicates a failed attempt at self-representation. Because her attempt at “speaking” outside normal patriarchal channels was not understood or supported, Spivak concluded that “the subaltern cannot speak.” Her point was not that the subaltern does not cry out in various ways, **but that speaking is “a transaction between speaker and listener”**. Subaltern talk, in other words, does not achieve the dialogic level of utterance.

“Subaltern,” Spivak insists, is not “just a classy word for oppressed, for Other, for somebody who’s not getting a piece of the pie.” She points out that in Gramsci’s original usage, it signified “proletarian,” whose voice could not be heard, being structurally written out of the capitalist bourgeois narrative. In postcolonial terms, “everything that has limited or no access to cultural imperialism is subaltern — a space of difference. Now who would say that’s just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It’s not subaltern” .

Another misreading of the concept is that, since the subaltern cannot speak, she needs an advocate to speak for her, affirmative action or special regulatory protection. Spivak objects, “Who the hell wants to protect subalternity? Only extremely reactionary, dubious anthropologicist museumizers . No activist wants to keep the subaltern in the space of difference ... You don’t give the subaltern voice. You work for the bloody subaltern, you work against subalternity”. She cites the work of the Subaltern Studies group as an example of how this critical work can be practiced, not to give the subaltern voice, but to clear the space to allow it to speak.

Leela Dube was an anthropologist and feminist scholar. She was one of the pioneers of feminist scholarship in India. She broadened the discipline of anthropology by introducing the insights of women's studies and enriched women's studies as a discipline by bringing in the technical expertise of an anthropologist. Being a member of the Indian Sociological Society in the 70s, Leela Dube was responsible for introducing women's studies concerns in mainstream sociology. She played a crucial role in the 1984 World Sociological Congress in which women activists and women's studies scholars played a dominant role through the Research Committee of women in Society gave a historical overview of deficit of women in India throughout history of Census of India. s".

In a debate on sex selective abortions carried out in EPW during 1982-1986, her predictions about direct relationship of deficit of women and increased violence against women has proved to be true in the subsequent years.

Her work on Lakshadweep island's matrilineal Muslim community- Matriliney and Islam: Religion and society in the Laccadives (1969)- was an eye-opener so was her deconstruction of polyandry in Himalayan tribes in the context of women's workload of collection of fuel, fodder, water, looking after livestock and kitchen gardening in mountainous terrain, resulting into high maternal mortality and adverse sex ratio. She showed interconnections between factors responsible for social construction of women's sexuality, fertility and labour, rooted in the political economy.

Her book Anthropological Explorations in Gender: Intersecting Fields (2001) is a landmark contribution in feminist anthropology in India. It examines gender, kinship and culture by sourcing a variety of distinct and unconventional materials such as folk tales, folk songs, proverbs, legends, myths to construct ethnographic profile of feminist thoughts. She provides a nuanced understanding on socialization of girl child in a

patriarchal family, “seed and soil” theory propagated by Hindu scriptures and epics symbolizing domination-subordination power relationship between men and women.

Her meticulously researched piece *Construction of Gender: Hindu Girls in Patrilineal India* in the Economic and Political Weekly (1988), was used by women’s groups for study circles and training programmes. The volume Women, Work, and Family (1990) in the series on Women and Households, Structures and Strategies, co-edited by Leela Dube and Rajni Palriwala was extremely useful in teaching women’s studies in Economics, Sociology, Geography, Social Work and Governance courses. Her book, Women and Kinship: Comparative Perspectives on Gender in South and South-East Asia (1997) argued that kinship systems provide an important context in which gender relations are located in personal and public arena.

The co-edited volume Visibility and Power: Essays on Women in Society and Development by Leela Dube, Eleanor Leacock and Shirley Ardener (OUP 1986) provided international perspective on the anthropology of women in the context of socio-political setting of India, Iran, Malaysia, Brazil, and Yugoslavia.

Presents cross sectional analysis on gender and socialisation in India. She talked about detailed ethnographic studies of patriarchal, patrilineal, matriarchal and matrilineal societies across India. She studied the gender dimensions presented in the tribal, urban and rural societies of India. Further she gives detailed account of social institutions like marriage, family, divorce, inheritance of property in various traditional societies and how women are placed in them. Works are important because she presents the cross sectional data on how women were socialized and situated in the social matrix. For example Khasi tribe of Meghalaya the youngest daughter inherits the property. Mothers and grandmothers stay with the youngest daughters. Practices like bride price, dowry, ceremonial gift exchanges are vividly present in Dube’s ethnographic works. Kinship systems, how women takes important place in kinship system are discussed.

Bina Agarwal

She is a development economist writing extensively on women's right on land. The book she authored, *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia* explores how gender discrimination denies women from accessing the command on property and perpetuates the subordination of women. The work led to the formation of the concept that women's low status is due to lack of property rights. It inspired academic community and policy makers across the world.

She focuses on rural economy and applies interdisciplinary method to analyze how transformations in the economy do not benefit women and on the other hand perpetuate their subordinate status. She studied women placed in the South East Asian countries and concluded that women in these countries are excluded from right to hold land and in turn marred their progress. Hindu Succession Act 2005 which gives women equal rights with men in the ownership and inheritance of property is influenced by the findings of Agarwal. In her article 'Towards Freedom from Domestic violence', she explains the lack of women's property rights as the reason for the domestic violence against women.

Bina Agarwal's work *Gender Challenges* explores gender inequality embedded in practices related to agriculture, food security, property, land rights and the environment in south Asian countries. She analyses the issue from gender perspective and challenges the existing assumption in social sciences. It is a virtual guide to policy makers. She pointed out that women's role was ignored in the agricultural growth brought out by green revolution. She questioned the assumption that women are less efficient in farming than men and the low wage given to women is due to this inefficiency than to gender discrimination. These assumptions are also challenged by her using data from an experiment with potato-digging equipment which found that women are more efficient than men in doing the same job: they took 69 hours compared to 185 hours taken by

man. This fits her larger point that if women had the same equipment, land, and inputs they would get better results. She also writes about the undercounting of women's work in data and suggests new group approaches to farming.

She demonstrated the great importance of women having command over immovable property, especially land by analyzing the data related to property, family and the state. The right over land is important not just for their economic well being but also their social status and political position. She argues that gender inequality in land is linked to women's lack of bargaining power with families, society and the state. Owning property would increase that bargaining power. This discussion also highlighted the serious repercussions that would follow with continuing high gender inequality in property ownership. In this volume, Bina researched laws historically and currently across many countries and showed why despite progressive laws, social customs prevent gender equality. This analysis leads to the conclusion that access to and control over agricultural land is of high importance in determining rural women's economic well-being and also the well-being of their families.

She also challenges women's existing role in the environmental change and collective action. Bina Agarwal proposes that the lack of a gender perspective when analyzing sustainable development and environmental governance can mean the practices countries promote can be ineffective. One example is the community forestry programme launched in India and Nepal in the 1990's. This programme mostly excludes women who are the major users of forests. The bigger question she raises is: what impact would women's presence have on environmental governance? Bina shows, , that forest conservation would be substantially better with more women in governance. Criticism is also presented against eco feminism with Bina offering an alternative which she terms 'feminist environmentalism'. The problem with eco feminism is that it assumes a relationship between women and nature and doesn't analyze how women

actually live their lives. In her alternative perspective, women's and men's relationship with nature is understood as rooted in their material reality and their everyday use of forests and other resources.

Pratiksha Baxi and Public Secrets of Law: Rape Trials in India(2014)

Pratiksha Baxi teaches at the Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, University of Delhi. Her book *Public Secrets of Law: Rape Trials in India* (2014) brings together sociology of law, feminist theory and violence. The observations in the book gained a particular importance in the aftermath of the brutal gang rape in Delhi in 2012 and in the context of increasing violence against women. In its detailed analysis of rape cases, forensic medical practice, and the working of criminal courts, Pratiksha Baxi's *Public Secrets of Law* is a remarkable study of the public life of rape in Indian trial courts. As one of the first comprehensive studies of the working of criminal courts in contemporary India, *Public Secrets of Law* gives critical insights about the nature of the Indian criminal court that extend beyond cases of rape. The detailed ethnography demonstrates the contingent and highly subjective process of decision making by legal authorities in the adjudication of rape cases in local courts. She marks through her case studies the highly performative nature of power in courts in India today.

Baxi argues that the rape trials reinforce deeply violent "phallogocentric notions of 'justice'" in a performance of the "public secret" of rape in Indian trial courts. The study is based on extensive archival and ethnographic work conducted in the city of Ahmedabad, Gujarat from the late 1990s. The location of Baxi's study is key, the highly volatile city of Ahmedabad, defined by communal violence in 1992 and 2002 that resulted in horrific acts of sexual violence committed against minority communities in Gujarat. Baxi's introduction incorporates her own experiences of patriarchal hierarchy, sexual harassment. The judge expressed sexual excitement in his enactment of the rape

narrative to Baxi and implied that he himself was aroused by the "facts" of violated women's bodies.

Baxi focuses on the medicalization of victim's bodies and the way norms of forensic evidence medicalize consent and falsity. She critically examines the deployment of the "two-finger test" in case law, a "test" from the British colonial period where medical doctors test the elasticity of the victim's vagina to determine a woman's "habituation" to sexual intercourse. Medical jurisprudence in India imagines the victim's body as the primary site of truth, where evidence on the body reveals the possibility of the "truth" of sexual violence. Baxi demonstrates how medico-legal evidence becomes a primary mode through which the defense cross-examines victims and reinforces the idea that women in India often bring "false charges" of rape.

Throughout her study, Baxi is acutely conscious of the vulnerability of victims who declare acts of sexual violence and seek recourse in the law. She emphasizes how the question of childhood is key in the determination of the "truth" of rape, where courts sexualize children and force children to testify to sexual violence in language that inscribes blame on the body of the child.

Rape

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

Virtually all feminists agree that rape is a grave wrong, one too often ignored, mischaracterized, and legitimized. Feminists differ, however, about how the crime of rape is best understood, and about how rape should be combated both legally and

socially. Feminists challenged the notion that rape is rare and exceptional. In recent decades, this awareness led women to share their experiences of rape and other forms of abuse. Survey shows that many women suffer multiple rapes in their lives.

An accurate estimate of rape's frequency requires a clear understanding of rape itself and of the varied circumstances in which it occurs. Often contributing to the underestimation of rape's frequency is a narrow and stereotypical conception of what rape is: for instance, the image of a stranger jumping out from behind the bushes, brandishing a weapon at a woman he has never seen before. While such rapes do occur, the great majority of rapes are committed by a man or men known to the victim: dates, relatives, friends, bosses, husbands, neighbors, co-workers, and more..

Perhaps the most basic challenge that feminists have posed to traditional views of rape lies in the recognition of rape as a crime against the victim herself. For much of recorded history women were the property of men, with their value as property measured largely by their sexual “purity.” In this context, rape was regarded as a property crime against a woman's husband or father .A raped woman or girl was less valuable as property, and penalties for rape often involved fines or other compensation paid to her husband or father. The marital rape exemption in law, which survived in the U.S. into the 1990's, is clearly a remnant of this approach, assuming as it does that no crime is committed when a man forces intercourse upon his wife, since she is his own property; the property status of enslaved African-American women was also thought to entitle their owners to the women's unrestricted sexual use. A further corollary of this view was that women who were *not* the private property of any individual man—for instance, prostitutes—were unrapeable, or at least that no one important was harmed by their rape. Given this entrenched historical and cultural legacy, feminists’ redefinition of ‘rape’ as a crime against the woman herself is nothing short of revolutionary.

Module IV

Indian Society through Gender Perspective Brahmanical Patriarchy – Widowhood Three fold Oppression of Dalit Women Bhakti and Sainthood Caste and Gender

Widowhood Widowhood prevailed as malice in India till it was banned legally by Widow Marriage Act of 1856. It was a social evil in practice among the upper caste Hindus. It was a state of social exclusion underwent by a woman after the death of her husband. On the husband's death, a widow had to tonsure her head and remove the symbols of the married state i.e., bangles, mangal sutra –a necklace with black beads, and vermilion, a kumkum mark on the forehead. She was allowed to eat simple food and in small quantity. School of Distance Education Gender Studies 17 She was required to wear simple white saris and to sleep on a straw mat on the bare floor. Even the sight of her by others was regarded as a bad omen. Uma Chkravarti traces the reason for this rigid mechanism of social control on the widow to her sexuality, which was a source of immense attraction. Through her husband, a woman was considered capable of reproduction. As a wife, her sexuality was considered auspicious, but the very sexuality, which provided her, a place in the society, became a curse to her when she becomes a widow. Soon after her husband's death steps were taken under the name of ritual to deprive the widow of her sexuality. The most painful ceremony a widow underwent to mark her new status as a widow was the tonsure. Tremendous pressure was exerted on the widow to undergo the humiliating ceremony. Even if the family of the widow did not prefer the tonsure of their daughters or daughters-in-law, they were forced to do it under the compulsion of customary laws whose proponents were the Brahmins. Uma Chakravarti relates the forced tonsure of the widow with the material benefit derived out of it by the Brahmins. The major beneficiaries for dakshina in various ways were the Brahmins themselves since almost three fourths of the money spent was given to the Brahmins. In addition to the tonsure, a widow was subjected to a number of other rituals,

which were designed to restrain her insatiable sexuality. She was allowed to eat simple food and in small quantities. She had to observe vratas for which she had to abstain from food and drink. She was required to wear simple white saris and to sleep on a straw mat on the bare floor, the wearing of jewels and make up was forbidden. All these measures were to deprive a woman of her innate emotions and instincts. Indicating the futility of depriving women of her happiness in life, Tarabai Shinde, the Author of Mazipurani asks those who were responsible for the sad plight of the widows: “Women still have the same hearts inside, the same thoughts of good and evil. You can strip the outside till it's naked, but you can't do the same to the inside, can you?” The custom of child marriage produced child widows too. Since the concept of Pativrata was not applicable in the case of child-widows, premature death of the husband was attributed to her sinful existence in the previous birth. They were socially excluded when they become widows. This made their life miserable and lifelong household drudgery is the fate of those widows who have given the privilege of living at in-law's house. They were taken as burdens in their in-laws house and in several instances they were abandoned in crowded streets or holy places where they had to eke out their living by doing menial jobs. Many of them turn to prostitution and beggary. The trauma of widowhood as narrated by widows in their personal experience reveals that they showed considerable concern for the existential condition of widowhood. In the absence of a source of income, the widow has to depend upon the relatives of either affinal or natal homes. No respectable family even of a lower caste will have her for a servant. She is completely ignorant of any art by which she may make an honest living. She has nothing School of Distance Education Gender Studies 18 but the single garment, which she wears on her person. Starvation and death stare her in the face; no ray of hope penetrates her densely darkened mind. The only alternative before her is either to commit suicide or worse still, accept a life of infamy and shame. This bleak picture of widow's life as far as their material existence is concerned was well illustrated by the concern expressed by Haimabati Sen after her husband's unexpected

death. She says in distress, “my parents had finished their duty towards me. No one was responsible any longer for this child widow. If I needed a single pie, I would have to beg it from others. What about my husband – he had taken a third wife and thereby cut a child’s throat – what provision did he make? This description of the struggle of a widow for survival must be understood in the context of the unending life of drudgery that a widow had to undergo. This drudgery was mostly associated with the sonless widows especially child widows. Maintenance of childless young widows was considered as a burden by both the affinal and natal families as they had to be provided for their maintenance throughout life. Devoid of any means of existence, the widow was destined to take up the household drudgery and she had to bear the insults and humiliation of a life of ceaseless labour in return for the maintenance provided to her. In joint families, the frequent pregnancies, childbirths and subsequent childcare made the labour of widows much in demand. The life story of Godubai, a child widow and the first inmate of Sharadha Sadan, (widow Home opened by Pandita Ramabari in Maharashtra) illustrates how as a child widow in her in-laws’ house she managed ably the home and the farm – two large undertakings. Even if the household chores were unbearable to a widow she had no choice as cooking and household works were the only area in which she received some training. With the intention of starting a home for widows and orphaned girls, Karve, social reformers from Maharashtra, asked Parvati Athavale, a young widow, “If I start a home for widows, what works would you be willing to do in connection with it?” “If you start the Home I will accept the position of a cook. I do not think I know how to do anything else”, was the reply of the young widow. Dependence for physical existence, in the absence of any acquired skill except household work, made the life of widows an unending life of drudgery until they breathed their last. Sister Subalakshmi, social reformer from Madras Presidency, testifies that most widows, who had never been wives or who had failed to become the mothers of sons, were condemned to be mere household drudges, slaving away from morning till night, perpetually on the

verge of starvation and with never a word from anybody. Pandita Ramabai, social reformer from Maharashtra, was objective enough to recognize that the economic dependence of widows was one of the reasons for their lifelong drudgery. In the *High Caste Hindu Woman*, published in 1887, Pandita Ramabai outlines that it is idle to hope that the condition of her country women will ever improve School of Distance Education Gender Studies 19 without individual self-reliance. So, when she opened widow homes, she made provision to provide training to the inmates to become teachers, governess, nurses and home keepers and other types of skilled workers. Rasundari Debi, the author of *Mazipuram*, narrates that she was widowed only at the fag end of her life; still she found widowhood both shameful and sad. She comments on her widowed state thus “Even if a woman with a hundred sons is widowed, she is regarded as most unfortunate by the people. They always want to tell you that you have been widowed. A very objective opinion made out of her own experience as a widow provides an insight into women’s undisclosed displeasure towards widowhood. It reveals that women were not able to reconcile with widowhood even at an advanced age. This questions the veracity of the society’s notion that widowhood in the old age was a natural state in a married woman’s life and hence, they were destined to cope with it. It also indicates the fact that if an old widow like Rasundari Debi could feel the humiliation of being a widow, the degree of disgrace felt by young widows could be more in depth and magnitude. But the abolition of sati in 1829 naturally brought forward the question of widowhood into the forefront of debates related to gender. The widow Marriage Act of 1856 brought into effect by the efforts of Iswarchandra Vidysagar, a prominent social reformer from Bengal. A few widow marriages were conducted under the auspices and financial support of Vidhyasagar. Though it banned legally, the taboo on widowhood still not eliminated fully from Indian society.

Three fold oppression of Dalit women

Dalit women are positioned at the bottom of India's caste, class and gender hierarchies. It is the outcome of severely imbalanced social, economic and political power equations. Violence against Dalit women presents clear evidence of widespread exploitation and they are subordinated in terms of power relations to men in a patriarchal society, as also against their communities based on caste. Dalit women are thrice discriminated against - treated as untouchables and outcastes due to their caste, face gender discrimination as women, and also economic impoverishment due to wage disparity. Caste, class and gender discrimination prevent Dalit women from enjoying their basic human rights, particularly to dignity, equality and development. Atrocities and violence against Dalit women are means of sustaining systemic discrimination and a means to preserve the existing caste and gender disparities. The caste system declares Dalit women 'impure' and, therefore, untouchable, and hence socially excluded. This is a complete negation and violation of women's human rights. It was said that in the brahminical patriarchal system, Dalit women had greater space compared to dominant caste women. By 'greater freedom' they meant freedom of movement, interactions and work opportunities in the public sphere; but they do not necessarily enjoy freedom that is safe, secure, productive and progressive. This is due to limits and restrictions imposed on Dalit women's movement in the public spaces where men, and particularly dominant caste men, predominantly operate. These public spaces act for the dominant caste men as opportune places for exercising power and authority over Dalit women. Caste-wise, both forward castes and backward castes engage in violence against Dalit women, either as individuals or as a group. A study conducted by Women's forum shows that dominant caste men involve four forms of violence, namely physical assaults, verbal abuse, sexual harassment and sexual assaults, and rapes. This is particularly so where the Dalit woman is seen to transgress established caste norms, for example, defying untouchability. The

punishment may befall on Dalit women in the form of gang rape or forced prostitution. Sometimes, the punishment takes on the form of collective punishment that is both expressive of caste outrage as well as instrumental in teaching the woman and her community a lesson of 'obedience' to caste norms. Violence against Dalit women is triggered by petty reasons, for example, trying to cross a dominant caste's fields, asserting equal rights to access water from common taps, or asserting the right to own economic resources. Patriarchal caste system assumes that Dalit women are available for any form of exploitation and violence, as a result of their 'low' and 'impure' character of their caste that does not deserve honour and respect. The gender-caste-class axis, therefore, provides the base for violence against Dalit women. In view of their superior caste status, dominant caste men lay their hands on Dalit women's sexual or bodily integrity. They perceive that School of Distance Education Gender Studies 21 they have a right over Dalit women's bodies and they would be grateful for the sexual attention they receive from higher caste men. Thus sexual violence is understood in caste ideology. Economic exploitation plays a prominent role in Dalit women's oppression. Their landlessness combined with their dependence on dominant castes for work; wage and loans make their position vulnerable. Dalit hamlets are usually located at the end of the main village or on the village outskirts. The Dalits live in small huts, and even the few who may have slightly better housing are devoid of basic amenities such as sanitation, light and safe and clean drinking water. The women have to walk miles to collect not just water but also fuel and fodder for their domestic chores. The women work on construction sites, carrying heavy loads of construction materials. They also work in brick kilns for long hours, as casual labourers, to lay roads with hot tar in the burning sun, without sandals or any other protective gear. Manual scavenging continues as an occupation in India and most of the manual scavengers is Dalit women. The women are forced to do this humiliating and degrading work, which further results in discrimination and social exclusion. They have no protection or benefits that labour laws

should provide, since the majority of the women are in the unorganized sector. They do not even get the minimum wages that the state/country has specified, since they are unable to organize and demand decent wages. Dalit women undertake manual, low-paying, tedious, and time-consuming work. Dalit women are facing violence from male members in the family. Dalit men assimilate the patriarchal norms prevalent in the society with its notions of women's honour, purity and obedience and become the causal factor for violence. Gender inequality and norms of female subordination formed a major category of causal factors for violence meted out by natal and marital family members to Dalit women. Caste and Gender Caste and gender are closely related and the sexuality of women is directly linked to the question of purity of race. The caste system and caste endogamy retained control over the labour and sexuality of women. Anuloma and pratiloma marriage by definition denigrate women. Caste not only determines social division of labour but also sexual division of labour. Ideologically concepts of caste purity of women to maintain patrilineal succession justified subordination of women. The prohibition of sacred thread ceremony for both women and sudhra, similar punishment for killing a woman and sudhra, denial of religious privileges are illustrations which indicate how caste and gender get entrenched. Feminist writings as 'Gendering Caste through a Feminist Lens (2006) illustrates how caste system upholds the patriarchal values and ideology which is used to justify the dominant, hegemonic, hierarchical and unequal patriarchal structures. Therefore it is important to emphasize the substantive question of sub-ordination of certain sections of society and the structures that make their sub-ordination. For feminist scholars the issue is no longer whether the status of women was low or high but the specific nature and basis of their subordination in society. Hence the historical developments of patriarchies and how they have come to stay is important. Uma Chakravarti argues that the establishment of private property and the need to have caste purity required subordination of women and strict control over their mobility and sexuality. Female sexuality was channeled into legitimate

motherhood within a controlled structure of reproduction to ensure patrilineal succession. According to her the mechanism of control operated through three different levels. The first device was when patriarchy was established as an ideology and women had internalized through *stridharma* or *pativartadharma* to live up to the ideal notion of womanhood constructed by the ideologues of the society. The second device was laws, customs and rituals prescribed by the brahmanical social code which reinforced the ideological control over women through the idealization of chastity and wife fidelity as highest duty of women. Like Gerda Lerner she believes that patriarchy has been a system of benevolent paternalism in which obedient women were accorded certain rights and privileges and security and this paternalism made the insubordination invisible and led to their complicity in it. The relationship between women purity and caste purity was important and central to brahmanical patriarchy and women were carefully guarded and lower caste men were prevented from having sexual access to women of higher caste. The third was the state itself which supported the patriarchal control over women and thus patriarchy could be established firmly not as an ideology but as an actuality. Therefore gender relations are organized within the structural frame work of family, religion, class, caste, community, tribe and state.

Bhakti and Sainthood

The representation of female saints through the centuries offers an opportunity to observe cultural and historical changes in what is considered suitable images of gender. Although the usual trite perspectives present saints, particularly female saints, as submissive and unquestioning of authority, a careful reading of their lives and autobiographical writings reveals patterns of both resistance and accommodation to Church authorities. Accommodation was sometimes a matter of life and death.

Women's Studies scholarship recovered the stories of women's lives in history, literature, and anthropology. Many women raised on their stories share similar fantasies

evoked by these legendary figures. Indeed, some feminist scholars have been involved in recovering and reconstructing the meaning of women saints and their legends. Most of the narratives about saints, presented to little girls as role models, portray them as compliant, obedient, self-sacrificing, faithful to the dictates of authority, neglecting or denying the fact that their behavior frequently challenged the norms and expectations placed on them as women. One of the puzzles one encounters when studying women saints is how the story of their lives presents a perplexing mixture of compliance with stereotypes coupled with an ability to use or twist those same stereotypes to serve their own needs. In one form or another, all women saints transgressed the established norms of female virtue. By definition, had they not transgressed those established norms, they would have never been known by those who would make them the object of their devotion. Paradoxically, their hagiographers characterized them as examples of prescribed womanhood to encourage other women to follow the established norms obediently, making them seem more acceptable to the hierarchy and imitable by the faithful. But obedience is not the hallmark of their actual behavior. The content of their disobedience is less important than the subliminal message we can derive from their behavior.

Many women saints showed their indomitable resolve to achieve what they believed was important. It didn't seem to matter that they had rebelled against authority figures because they wanted to become cloistered nuns or self-mutilating fiends. Their rebellion was a way to get what they wanted rather than what others dictated. Indeed, their ability to resist while still fitting into culturally acceptable norms of behavior, ostensibly accepting those norms wholeheartedly, is one of their most notable achievements.

Bhakti is a structure of personal devotion. It is often a mode of dissent on patriarchal values. At one level the saint's life is a consensual and so socially legitimate

pattern which inherently contradicts the normative requirements of wifhood. Mira's transgression of the norms for a good Rajput wife and widow may have necessitated seeking protection in the alter-native norms of sainthood. The female body is the site of passion, suffering, the punitive operations of patriarchal power, but it is also the site of mortality and diffuse unnameable desire. Mira's bhakti belongs to a prolonged historical moment and marks an exhilarating shift in the relation between law, subjection and sexual desire. In the Rigvedic and Brahmana myths desire is represented as either a 'natural' part of creation or as disruptive. By the time of the smritis, law making is itself part of an obsessive construction of theoretical models for control, social order and salvation. It is now seen as necessary to contain female sexual desire within evolving orders of caste and patriarchy through prescribed methods of daily surveillance, and through rewards and punishments in this world and the next. It is seen as sinful for women to have their own desires and these are explicitly opposed to their dharma. At the same time woman is cast as the eternal temptress -the object and very form of sexual desire who can ensnare the wisest and most ascetic of men. Methods of containment and of extracting obedience and virtue from wives are coded as stridharma while the essentially disruptive nature of female desire, a part of their essential wickedness, is coded as strisvabhav. Both exist unreconciled in the smritis and the epics. The subjection of women, and the control of sexual desire is to be effected externally through a combination of Vedic and customary laws. The Manusmriti does, however, concede that some degree of internalization or self-control is necessary to keep a wife good: she must be guarded not only by the family/husband but also by her of these pre-existing structures, ideological in character, comes to constitute Mirabai's 'experience' for us. Her devotion to Krishna was a means to escape or transgress the rigid brahmanical dictates on women.(EPW)

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