



## Department of Distance Education Punjabi University, Patiala

**Class : B.Ed.-II**

**Semester : 4**

**Paper : XIX (Gender, School and Society) Unit : I**

**Medium : English**

### ***Lesson No.***

- 1.1 : Gender: Concept, Social, Psychological and Cultural Constructs of Gender
- 1.2 : Gender Role of Perception: Masculinity and femininity, feminism and patriarchy.
- 1.3 : Gender Equity, Gender Equality & Gender Roles, Gender Biases and Gender Stereotyping.
- 1.4 : Gender Identity: Concept and Development, Gender Issue in Indian Society.

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**Gender: Concept, Social, Psychological and Cultural Constructs of Gender**

- 1.1 Objectives of the lesson
- 1.2 Concept of Gender
- 1.3 Social Construction of Gender
- 1.4 Cultural Construct of Gender
- 1.5 Psychological Construct of Gender
- 1.6 Suggested Questions
- 1.7 Suggested Readings

**1.1 Objectives of the lesson:**

**After going through the lesson, the students will be able to:**

- Write the concept of gender.
- Define Gender.
- Differentiate between the terms “Sex” and “Gender”.
- Describe social construct of gender.
- Define Gender as a Social Construct.
- Give examples of Social constructs of Gender.
- Explain cultural construct of gender.
- Give examples of a cultural construct.
- Discuss psychological construct of gender.

**1.2 CONCEPT OF GENDER:-**

The terms “Sex” and “Gender” may appear to be similar. “Sex” and “Gender” words are used to replace each other. But, in fact they have very clear distinctions. “Sex” is decided biologically while gender is constructed on the basis of social roles of men and women. Let’s first try to understand the meaning of Sex.

**A) MEANING OF TERM “SEX”:- Capitalise each first letter**

The term “Sex” refers to the differences in the biological characteristics of males and females whereas term “Gender” refers to the differences in the role of a male and

female in the society Sex represents the biological characteristics which are acquired through genetic constitution. It shows that males and females have different physiological and reproductive capabilities. Sex is determined by birth. It is not changed throughout life except in cases where individuals take the help of medical facilities. Sex is universal. The term "Sex" is used to show the differences that male and females have in their physiological and anatomical structures. Sex of an individual is decided by his or her genetic constitution. Humans have an additional pair of sex chromosomes for a total of 46 chromosomes. The sex chromosomes are referred to as X and Y, and their combination determine a person's sex. Typically, human females have two X chromosomes while males possess on "XY" pairing.

It is the "Y" chromosome in men, which is responsible for male characteristics. Male characteristics do exist in male due to male hormones released by activity of "Y" chromosome. In females, "X" chromosome is responsible for female hormones and thereby produces female characteristics' in child.

There can be a case of a child born with Intersex. It happens rarely i.e. 1: 1500 cases. That can be the case when there is abnormality in pairing of XX or XY combination.

### **B) Concept and Meaning of Gender:-**

Gender is always defined in terms of economic, political, social and cultural context. The meaning of the term "Gender" is not universal. It means it varies across societies and time period. Gender represents the particular characteristics and roles, in a socio cultural context that are specific to a certain group of people in relation to their sex and sexuality. Gender is not synonymous to women or sexual differences. It signifies the social and cultural role of a particular sex within a particular society. Gender means culturally and socially constructed roles, responsibilities, privileges, relations and expectations of women(girls) and men(boys). Its assignment to a particular individual is done not on the basis of genetics, but on the basis of their gender roles in their social interactions in their surroundings with their family members, media, peers and education. Gender is defined in context to the roles and responsibilities that the men and women carry in their families, societies and cultures. The Concept of Gender may be explained in reference to the presumptions which do exist about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviors of both females and males.

### **C) Definitions of Gender**

1. **A working definition of Gender** : People are born female or male or transgender, but are forced to learn to be girls and boys who grow into women and men. They are taught appropriate behaviour and attitudes according to defined gender roles

and activities. This learned behaviour is what makes up gender identity, and determines gender roles.

2. **According to Merriam-webster dictionary:** Gender is a subclass within a grammatical class (such as noun, pronoun, adjective, or verb) of a language that is partly arbitrary but also partly based on distinguishable characteristics (such as shape, social rank, manner of existence, or sex) and that determines agreement with and selection of other words or grammatical forms.
3. **Gender is defined by Food and Agriculture Organisation of UNO (FAO)** as 'the relations between men and women, both perceptual and material. Gender is not determined biologically, as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially. It is a central organizing principle of societies, and often governs the processes of production and reproduction, consumption and distribution' (FAO, 1997).
4. According to **Kishor (2006)**, there are three aspects of gender as given below:-
  - 1) Gender tends not to be value neutral: It means that there are differences and inequalities in roles, rights and obligations assigned to males and females.
  - 2) Gender involves differences in power

It implies that there are two aspects of power differences:- i) Power to and ii) Power over

- i) Power to: the meaning is that there is more power with a particular gender in various fields like legal, rights, resources, knowledge, personal goals and decreased role in all domains of human activity.
  - ii) Power over:- One of the genders has more control over social and family resources, more control over decision making, cultural and religious beliefs and one's own and other's body.
  - 3) Gender is varied:- Gender roles are constructed in social context. Thus, gender roles tend to change with change in geographical areas, societies and cultures.
5. **The concept of gender can be generalized as :-**
- i) It is not interchangeable with term "Sex".
  - ii) It is not determined biologically.
  - iii) It is determined socially.
  - iv) It is assigned on the basis of roles and responsibilities expected from either men or women and thus differentiates between both genders.

- v) It refers to individual's perceptions of sexuality and malleable concepts of masculinity and femininity.
- vi) It is the commonly shared expectation and norms within a society about appropriate male and female behavior, characteristics, roles and responsibilities.
- vii) It specifies the manners in which females and males interact with each other.
- viii) The roles and expectations for males and females are taught and learnt.
- ix) The concept of gender can change over time and across cultures.

#### D) Differences between the terms "Sex" and "Gender"

The following points will clarify the differences between the terms "Sex" and "Gender".

1. The term "Sex" represents biological differences which are natural whereas "Gender" represents social differences.
2. The meaning of term "Sex" refers to physiological differences whereas the meaning of term Gender refers to social, cultural roles.
3. An individual born with sex Male or female finds it difficult to change whereas there is possibility of Change in Gender identity as it is ascribed by the society.
4. Sex differences have been found to exist since the existence of humans but gender roles have been different at different time spans and in different societies.
5. The policies for sex differences are also framed by keeping in mind the physical body while the same are prepared keeping in view the gender biases, Gender stereotypes and Gender roles.

On the whole, it can be generalized that, "sex" refers to biological characteristics and "gender" refers to the individual's and society's perceptions of sexuality and the malleable concepts of masculinity and femininity.

### 1.3 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER:

#### A) Meaning of Social Construct:-

A construct is an idea or theory which is subjective and not based on empirical evidence. Social means in society. Thus social construct is an idea which does not exist in objective reality, but it exists because of the interactions of people in the society. It does not exist there independently in the natural world. It is created by the society. Social constructs in the society are created by cultural

practices and norms. These social constructs, in turn, govern the practices, customs and rules concerning the ways we use, view and understand them. These appear to exist in social context and that also because of our subjective thoughts.

### **B) Gender : A Social Construct:**

Many sociological and philosophical theories highlight the fact that gender is socially constructed. Most of the social constructivists are of the view that there is no built-in truth to gender. Gender is constructed by the social responsibility expected and role performed by a group belonging to a particular gender. The society and culture prescribes certain gender roles as appropriate for a group of people belonging to a specific gender. Each one belonging to a particular gender is expected to perform those ideal roles. It is true that the behavior or acts performed by men and women in society are different due to the norms of the society. Some are still of the view that the gender roles performed are influenced by biological factors as well. The philosophical principle which is the ground for considering gender as a social construct is that gender is ascribed by the society or assigned by the society. It should also be considered that society assigns the gender roles based on biological sex differences. Gender as a social construct affects the behavior patterns, roles, responsibilities and attitudes of men and women in all societies. Gender also defines the social and cultural role of men and women in a society. Gender ascription are not genetical but are social. These occur as the members of a particular group react in their social institutions like family, school, friends and media. The members, i.e. the men and women, perform as per the prescribed norms of the society. Therefore gender is considered as a social construct.

### **C) Sex category to Gender Construction in Society:-**

- 1 When a child is born, that is given a sex category i.e. boy or girl.
- 2 The parents dress them according to the societal norms for a particular sex category. For example, the boys are made to wear a shirt and shorts whereas girls are made to wear skirts and frocks etc. in our present Indian society.
- 3 Even the other gender markers and naming etc. is done in a way that is expected from a particular sex category.
- 4 People in the society react or behave towards the child by recognizing his/her sex category. Slowly child also starts adapting to that behaviour, he

receives as being a boy or a girl and starts behaving as per the expected norms of the society.

- 5 When the children learn to speak, they start referring themselves as members of their gender.
- 6 Even the mother and father are expected to behave in a particular manner.
- 7 As adults, the people of different genders are expected to do different kinds of jobs.
- 8 Their job makes them to have different experiences, at work as men and women and develop different feelings, consciousness, relationships and skills. This leads them to have different gender roles i.e. muscular or Feminine.
- 9 All the above given steps lead to construction of gender in society or make gender as a social construct.

**D) Reasons for Gender Construction in Society:-**

1. In every society human beings live their lives as per the gender and its related roles and responsibilities. Each society works on various principles such as vision of labour, allocation of available resources, assigning responsibility for rearing children, older and other dependents, preservice and maintenance of common culture and values, vital leadership and other cultural and symbolic products.
2. Every social system works efficiently and keeps it maintained because of interdependence of its elements in the society. The interdependence of the elements in the society assigns a particular role to its elements after classifying them. This classification of its people in the society is done according to their age and gender. The social system or society then constructs similarities and differences in these groups to base assigning of different roles and responsibilities to them.
3. The assignments are given either on the criteria of capabilities, abilities and talents or on the basis of cast , gender , race and ethnicity of a group of members . Members of a particular gender group are also expected to do certain prescribed roles and responsibilities. These members of that particular group get a particular kind of experience as per the work allotted to them and thus derive personality characteristics peculiar to that group.
4. Thus it can be safely said that it is not that the “Sex” assigned to child by birth, genes, hormones and other biological features to that lead to particular gender roles in society. These factors are just to act as rough

indicators. It can be said that characteristics related to a particular gender are socially constructed imitation, teaching learning and implications. It is the social practices of social norms that lead to gender construction.

**E) Definitions of Gender as a Social Construct:**

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** defines gender as:

“Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men, such as norms, roles, and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed.”

According to **International Labour Organisation (ILO)**, “ Gender refers to the social differences between men and women, which are learned, which vary widely among societies and cultures and change over time.”

**F) Examples of Gender as a social construct and change across in it across societies and time**

Gender roles in some societies are more rigid than those in others. The degree of decision-making and financial responsibility expected of each gender and the time that women or men are expected to spend on homemaking and rearing children varies between cultures. Within the wider culture, families too have their norms. Gender roles are not set in stone.

**1. High heels for men or women?**

In many societies, men are increasingly taking on roles traditionally seen as belonging to women, and women are playing the parts previously assigned mostly to men. For instance, high-heeled shoes, now considered feminine throughout much of the world, were initially designed for upper-class men to use when hunting on horseback. As women began wearing high heels, male heels slowly became shorter and flatter as female heels grew taller and thinner. Over time, the perception of the high heel gradually became seen as feminine. There is nothing intrinsically feminine about the high heel. Social norms have made it so.

**2. Pink for a girl and blue for a boy?**

In many countries, pink is seen as a suitable color for a girl to wear, while boys are dressed in blue. However, infants were dressed in white until colored

garments for babies were introduced in the middle of the 19th century. The following quote comes from a trade publication called *Earnshaw's Infants' Department*, published in 1918: "The generally accepted rule is pink for the boys and blue for the girls. The reason is that pink, being a more decided and stronger color, is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl." Move forward 100 years and it is rare to find a baby boy dressed in pink in many countries.

#### 1.4 **CULTURAL CONSTRUCT OF GENDER:**

**A) Cultural Construct:** A Cultural construct means the idea that the characteristics people attribute to such social categories as gender, illness, death, status of women, and status of men is **culturally defined**. Cultural construct is anything that is determined arbitrarily by one's cultural background, rather than something universally rooted in biology or some other unyielding aspect of human nature.

#### **B) Examples of Cultural Construct:**

1. Sexual reproduction is biological in origin. On the other hand, the gendered idea that male babies have blue-colored toys and nursery decoration, but female babies have pink-colored toys and nursery decoration, is a cultural construct.
2. The inevitability of death and human mortality is biological in origin. The ideas that you wear black to the funeral in the west (but white to the funeral in Japan) are cultural constructs.
3. The ability to see color is biological in origin, related to the rods and cones of the eye. On the other hand, the idea that we categorize colors by hue in one language, or by reflectivity in another, or by intensity of shade in another language, is a human construct. (Likewise, the idea that "blue" is one color, and "green" is another, as opposed to so-called "grue" languages like Welsh in which blue and green share one word for the same color, is a cultural construct. Colors are real, but the way we divide them up and label them is artificial.)
4. Math is abstract but real. However, the use of Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4) versus Roman numerals (I, II, III, IV) is a cultural construct.
5. It's a cultural construct that people drive on the right side of the road in America, but the left side of the road in Britain.
6. It's a cultural construct that women wear skirts and men don't in America (but that men *do* wear skirts called "kilts" in Scotland).

The above given are conventions, rules, laws, ideas, or expectations and stereotypes are cultural constructs as these are constructed in different cultures.

C) **Gender: A cultural Construct**

Gender is a cultural construction which creates an environment where an adolescent's performance in high school is related to their life goals and expectations. Because most young women know they want to be mothers and wives, the choice of professions and future goals can be inherently flawed by the gender constraints. Because a girl may want to be a mother later, her academics in high school can create clear gender differences because "higher occupational expectations, educational expectations, and academic grades were more strongly associated with the expected age of parenthood for girls than for boys".

To understand Gender as a cultural construct, Lets short with three terms: Sex, gender and sexuality. Sex is takes to refer primarily to biological characteristics. In that sense, human beings everywhere have only two sexes , except for a few rarely occurring genetic or hormonal anomalies, a few of which are clearly understood, a few of whom are not. However, every culture also contains a set of norms, describing the "Proper" use of sexual physiology . For example" who constitute proper sexual partners, when sexual activity should take place and what clothing is "proper" for which biological sex. From this point of view, we can discuss culturally constructed Gender.

Cultural construct of Gender is taken to refer to a culturally based complex of norms, values and behavior that a particular culture assigns to one biological sex or the other and whereas sexuality is considered a more individualized concept which refer to the ways in which ;individualized concept which refer to the ways in which individuals structure their sexual and gender performances, individualized concept which refer to the ways in which individuals structure their sexual and gender performances , and the partners towards whom they direct their behavior and emotional attachments.

**1. Intersexuality:**

To understand the cultural construct of gender, easily. Let's first consider the case of intersexuality, a variety of genetic and hormonal anomalies which occasionally occurs i.e. , when biological distinction of a child into male or female is not clear at the birth of a child. In India, these so called transgenders, are not allowed to live in the family. They are made to live in and broughtup by the group transgenders . They are not allowed to marry masculine and feminine gender.

In Kenya, there are people called pokots, they call these intersexed individuals as an extremely unfortunate occurrence and kill these at the time of birth and even if they are allowed to survive, they are made to live as marginalized people. Most segments of middle class, U.S. culture tend to see such people as “mistakes of nature” and seek to correct the “error”. Such people adopt the surgical treatment for being categorized into masculine or feminine category . This is done so as to transform such anomalies individuals fit for the society and culture. On the whole, it can be said that the culturally accepted gender is masculine and feminine.

## **2. Bipolar Construct:**

Now, we will discuss the culturally accepted genders i.e. girls and boys or women and men or masculine or feminine. Let us take the example of pre-adolescent boys who avoid some activities or modes of behavior because they are said to be “girlish”. Or when pre-adolescent girls are snubbed for engaging in outdoor activities said to be “Boyish” , we are witnessing something a culture’s division of labour. House hold domain is described as feminine space and is associated with motherhood, childcare and wife roles .Men who are good household managers and parents are often thought to be disturbingly feminine. Women who are good income earners or highly trained professionals are considered disturbingly masculine.

Let us consider the case of India, it is considered customary to perform certain tasks by women only like singing songs on marriages, and wearing dresses specifically prescribed for women, child nurturing and motherhood role. Girls are taught to speak in a low tone voice and come home before the sunset. Usually there are no such restrictions on boys. Let’s take example of a particular dress called as ‘salwar’. It is traditional dress for women in India where as it is traditional dress for men in Pakistan.

We can observe that every culture makes some distinction between the positions, roles and responsibilities of women and men. So it can be generalized that Gender is culturally constructed.

## **1.5 Psychological Construct of Gender:-**

Gender is considered to be an important factor for understanding for many behavior related aspects. In psychology, ‘Gender’ is generally used without much

of its social and conceptual importance . Generally, psychologists use gender in empirical research in different ways:-

- (a) To signify gender differences within sex variability
- (b) Gender related power relations that structure many social institutions and interaction.

### **A) Psychological Aspects of Gender**

According to the ‘ Sex differences approach’, the psychologists mainly consider the differences in the behavior, personality, ability and the performances of the two sexes with a presumption that these differences arise from the pre-existing ‘essential’ differences between males and females.

The psychologists have an approach that not only will there be differences in key traits but also in the non-overlapping distribution like ejaculation, pregnancy, childbirth and lactation. Psychologists have tried hard to account in for such wide ranging biological differences.

However, some psychologists have noted that while focusing on sex differences, we ignore the sex differences within the sex. And therefore, there are many exaggerations about sex differences which have been reinforced in the mind of people. For example, it has been observed that the ‘Mathematics Performance’ is usually a gendered i.e. boys are considered to perform better as compared to the girls. And mainly, its related to the rigid idea of the person about mathematical ability of their children.

Gender not only operates on the sex differences but also on the SOCIAL CONSTRUCT. Society has set many norms which are different for both the genders.

Hence, from the above mentioned aspects, we can conclude that the biological, social, cultural and psychological constructs affect the gender. Other aspects of gender related to psychology are the personality differences, the identity crisis which both of the gender face.

### **1.6 Suggested Questions**

- 1 Define Gender. Explain the concept of Gender.
- 2 Write the meanings of the terms “Sex” and “Gender”. Differentiate between these.
- 3 What is a social construct? Explain gender as a social construct giving its definitions also.
- 4 How sex category becomes gender category in society?

- 5 Justify gender as a social construct highlighting the changes taking place in it across various societies and with time.
- 6 What is a cultural construct? Give Examples.
- 7 Explain Gender as a cultural construct.

### 1.7 Suggested Readings

1. Goyal, S. (2017). Gender, School and Society. Twentyfirst Century Publications, Patiala.
2. [www.google.com/search?q=gender+meaning&rlz=1C1CHBD\\_enIN905IN905&oq=Gender+me&aqs=chrome.0.012j69i57j015.10557j1j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](http://www.google.com/search?q=gender+meaning&rlz=1C1CHBD_enIN905IN905&oq=Gender+me&aqs=chrome.0.012j69i57j015.10557j1j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)
3. [https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1CHBD\\_enIN905IN905&sxsrf=ALeKk03KnsZBTNrAEQ\\_dcRyooWJeEoBChw%3A1598373397932&ei=FT5FX8bIOLLfz7sPuoOogAc&q=gender+concepts+and+terminology&oq=gender+concept&gs\\_lcp=CgZwc3ktYWIQARgEMgIIADICCAAyAggAMgIIADICCAAyAggAMgIIADICCAAyAggAMgIADoHCAAQsAMQQzoJCCMQJxBGEPkBOgQIIxA nOgQIABBDogUIABCxAzoHCC4QJxCTAjoFCAAQkQI6CAgAELEDEJECUJ CaB1jguwdgjfIHaAJwAHgAgAHzAogBohaSAQgwLjEwLjMuMZgBAKABAao BB2d3cy13aXrAAQE&sclient=psy-ab](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1CHBD_enIN905IN905&sxsrf=ALeKk03KnsZBTNrAEQ_dcRyooWJeEoBChw%3A1598373397932&ei=FT5FX8bIOLLfz7sPuoOogAc&q=gender+concepts+and+terminology&oq=gender+concept&gs_lcp=CgZwc3ktYWIQARgEMgIIADICCAAyAggAMgIIADICCAAyAggAMgIIADICCAAyAggAMgIADoHCAAQsAMQQzoJCCMQJxBGEPkBOgQIIxA nOgQIABBDogUIABCxAzoHCC4QJxCTAjoFCAAQkQI6CAgAELEDEJECUJ CaB1jguwdgjfIHaAJwAHgAgAHzAogBohaSAQgwLjEwLjMuMZgBAKABAao BB2d3cy13aXrAAQE&sclient=psy-ab)

**Lesson no. 1.2**

**Gender Role and Perception: Masculinity and femininity, feminism and Patriarchy**

**Structure**

- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Concept of Gender Role and Perception
- 2.3 Patriarchy
- 2.4 Important Characteristics of a Patriarchal System
- 2.5 Indian Patriarchal Traditions Masculinity
- 2.6 Concept of Masculinity (M) and Femininity (F)
- 2.7 Male Gender Roles Masculinity
- 2.8 Harmful Effects of Rigid Male Gender Roles
- 2.9 Different Types of Feminism
- 2.10 History and Theory of Feminism
- 2.11 Suggested Questions
- 2.12 Suggested Readings

**2.1 Objectives**

**After going through this lesson you will be able to know**

- 1. The concept of gender role and perception.
- 2. The concept of Patriarchy
- 3. Important characteristics of a Patriarchal System
- 4. Indian Patriarchal Traditions
- 5. Concept of Masculinity (M) and Femininity (F)
- 6. Male gender roles Masculinity
- 7. Harmful effects of rigid male gender roles
- 8. Different types of Feminism
- 9. The history and theory of Feminism
- 10. The definitions of Gender Bias
- 11. The meaning of Gender stereotypes
- 12. The most Common Gender Stereotypes

In common parlance, the terms gender and sex are often used interchangeably; however, they are distinct concepts. Whereas, sex of individuals is largely determined by biology, Gender is not determined biologically, as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially and comprises the roles, rights, and obligations that attach to them on the basis of their sex. Gender issues focus on women and on the relationship between men and women, their roles, access to and control over resources, division of labour, interests and needs.

## 2.2 Concept of Gender role and perception.

### 1. *According to Traditional concept of Gender*

“the state of being male or female (typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones).”

### 2. As in *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*-

a subclass within a grammatical class (as noun, pronoun, adjective, or verb) of a language that is partly arbitrary but also partly based on distinguishable characteristics (as shape, social rank, manner of existence, or sex) and that determines agreement with and selection of other words or grammatical forms

3. **According to Unger (1979)** “The term gender may be used to describe those non-physiological components of sex that are culturally regarded as appropriate to males and females”. Gender in its psychological sense is a multi-component construct, its reflections being palpable on various traits, roles and attitudes.

4. **Kishor (2006)** identifies three important aspects of gender namely:

a) *Gender tends not to be value neutral.*

The roles, rights, and obligations assigned to each sex are not just different, but also unequal with male roles and rights generally being valued more highly than female roles and rights.

b) *Gender involves differences in power, both power to and power over.*

(i) The concept of power to encompasses legal and informal rights, access to resources, and pursuit of knowledge and personal goals, and cuts across most domains of human functioning, including familial, cultural, and institutional domains.

(ii) Power over refers to control over societal and household resources and decisions, cultural and religious ideology, and one's own and others' bodies. Importantly, men tend to have greater power than women, and, in some domains, even have power over women.

c) *Gender is not static or immutable.*

Being socially constructed, gender roles, rights, and expectations can change over time and across geographical space as societal needs, opportunities, and customs change.

5. **Bravo-Baumann (2000)** defined gender as ‘the relations between men and women, both perceptual and material. It is a central organizing principle of societies, and often governs the processes of production and reproduction, consumption and distribution’. Despite this definition, gender is often misunderstood as being the promotion of women only. Gender relations affect household security, family well-being, planning, production and many other aspects of life

Gender pervades our lives in every possible way. It is manifested in how we act, behave, what clothes we wear and the norms and values that we emulate. Gender gets manifested through different kinds of controls on women – on their production, reproduction, sexuality and mobility. Gender is embedded within other social stratifies that mediate different outcomes for men and women. Women’s position in the entertainment and leisure all are implicated in the social construction of masculine and feminine sexuality. Gender inequality reflects and serves to maintain subordination. Gender intersects class and caste as well as ethnicity and tribe in significant ways. In understanding gender we need to see its relation with each of these since they shape each other.

### **2.3 Patriarchy**

A **patriarchal social system** can be defined as a system where men are in authority over women in all aspects of society. A patriarchal system involves men being in authority over women.

#### **Definitions of Patriarchy**

- a family, group, or government controlled by a man or a group of men
- a social system in which family members are related to each other through their fathers
- A system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it. It is a system of society or government in which the father or eldest male is head of the family and descent is reckoned through the male line.
- Social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of

descent and inheritance in the male line; *broadly* : control by men of a disproportionately large share of power.

## 2.4 Characteristics of a Patriarchal System

Some characteristics of a patriarchal system include:

- **Male Dominance:** In a patriarchal system, men make all decisions in both society and in their family unit, hold all positions of power and authority, and are considered superior.
- **Male Identification:** Men are concerned with identification that includes qualities of control, strength, forcefulness, rationality, strong work ethic, and competitiveness. Each of these qualities contribute to male identification in a patriarchal system.
- **Male Centeredness:** In a patriarchal system, the center of activity and progression is on men and what they do to move the society forward. In any patriarchal system, men will be the focus and developer of all events and inventions, men will be the heroes in all situations, and men will be the center of social engagement, fun, and entertainment.
- **Obsession with Control:** Men living in a patriarchal system or society must be in control at all times. They have a desire to control all social and family situations and must make all decisions regarding finances and education.

## 2.5 India's Patriarchal Traditions

### 1. Dowry Traditions

Much of the discrimination against women arises from India's dowry tradition, where the bride's family gives the groom's family money and/or gifts. Dowries were made illegal in India in 1961, however the law is almost impossible to enforce, and the practice persists for most marriages. Unfortunately, the iniquitous dowry system has even spread to communities who traditionally have not practiced it, because dowry is sometimes used as a means to climb the social ladder, to achieve economic security, and to accumulate material wealth. The model used to calculate the dowry takes the bridegroom's education and future earning potential into account while the bride's education and earning potential are only relevant to her societal role of being a better wife and mother. The bridegroom's demand for a dowry can easily exceed the annual salary of a typical Indian family, and consequently be economically disastrous especially in families with more than one or two daughters

### 2. Women as a Liability

The Indian constitution grants women equal rights to men, but strong patriarchal traditions persist in many different societal parts, with women's lives shaped by customs

that are centuries old. Hence, in these strata daughters are often regarded as a liability, and conditioned to believe that they are inferior and subordinate to men, whereas sons might be idolized and celebrated

There are a couple of reasons, why men might be regarded an asset for a family:

- Considered capable of earning money
- Carry on the family line
- Able to provide for their aging parents
- Bring a wife (and with this a capable domestic helper) into the family
- Play an important role in death rituals in Hindu religion, which ensure, that the soul is released from the body and can go to heaven.

On the other hand, there are a couple of reasons why women might be regarded more of a liability for a family:

- Not considered capable of earning money
- Seen as economically and emotionally dependent on men
- While they help with domestic duties during childhood and adolescence, they go to live with their husband's family after marriage, which means less help in the household of their originating family, and most importantly loss of money due to the dowry tradition.

This might explain why the birth of a daughter may not always be perceived as equally blissful as the birth of a son, and why “*May you be blessed with a hundred sons*” is a common Hindu wedding blessing.

### **3. Discrimination against Women**

It should be noted that in a vast country like India - spanning 3.29 million sq. km, where cultural backgrounds, religions and traditions vary widely - the extend of discrimination against women also varies from one societal stratum to another and from state to state - some areas in India being historically more inclined to gender bias than others. There are even communities in India, such as the Nairs of Kerala, certain Maratha clans, and Bengali families, which exhibit matriarchal tendencies, with the head of the family being the oldest woman rather than the oldest man. However, many Indian women face discrimination throughout all stages of their life, beginning at (or even before) birth, continuing as an infant, child, adolescent and adult. The stages can be divided in following sections:

- Before Birth / As an Infant
- As a Child
- After Marriage

- As a Widow

#### **4. Discrimination against Women: Before Birth / As an Infant**

India is one of the few countries where males outnumber females; the sex ratio at birth (SRB) – which shows the number of boys born to every 100 girls - is usually consistent in human populations, where about 105 males are born to every 100 females. There are significant imbalances in the male/female population in India where the SRB is 113; there are also huge local differences from Northern / Western regions such as Punjab or Delhi, where the sex ratio is as high as 125, to Southern / Eastern India e.g. Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, where sex ratios are around 105. Though “prenatal sex discrimination” was legally banned in 1996, the law is nearly impossible to enforce and is not even familiar to all Indian families. Hence, the preference for a male child persists, quite often out of mere practical, financial concerns, because the parents might not be able to afford the marriage dowry for (another) daughter. This leads to some of the most gruesome and desperate acts when it comes to gender discrimination:

- Selective abortions
- Murdering of female babies
- Abandonment of female babies

Prenatal tests to determine the sex of the fetus were criminalized by Indian law in 1994, but the above mentioned imbalances in the sex ratio at birth, clearly point to gender selective abortions. While abortion is officially illegal in India there are some exceptions to this rule such as the failure of contraceptive device used by a couple; if the woman was raped; or if the child would suffer from severe disabilities. In total 11 million abortions take place annually and around 20,000 women die every year due to abortion related complications.

#### **5. Discrimination against Women: As a Child**

##### Nutrition and Health

As a child, girls are often treated differently from male children in terms of nutrition and health care; where limited food or financial resources are available, the insufficient means are prone to be allocated unevenly in favour of the male offspring. This imbalance results in insufficient care afforded to girls and women, and is the first major reason for the high levels of child malnutrition. This nutritional deprivation has two harmful consequences for women:

1. They never reach their full growth potential
2. Anaemia Both consequences are risk factors in pregnancy, complicating childbearing and resulting in maternal and infant deaths, as well as low birth weight infants.

## 6. Education

India's constitution guarantees free primary school education for both girls and boys up to age 14. This has been repeatedly reconfirmed, but primary education in India is not universal, and often times not seen as really necessary for girls. Social sector programmes e.g. "Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan" (Education for Everyone) are promoting girls' education to equalize educational opportunities and eliminate gender disparities, but these initiatives will take time to unfold their whole effect.

Their parents might consider it more important, that they learn domestic chores, as they will need to perform them for their future husbands and in-laws. Another disincentive for sending daughters to school is a concern for the protection of their virginity. When schools are located at a distance, when teachers are male, and when girls are expected to study along with boys, parents are often unwilling to expose their daughters to the potential assault on their virginity, that would ultimately result in an insult to the girl's family's honor.

This results in one of the lowest female literacy rates in the world.

- Literacy Rate for Women: **54%**
- Literacy Rate for Men: **76%**

As a comparison, female literacy per 2009: Pakistan: 60%, Peru: 89%, Indonesia: 93%. Mothers' illiteracy and lack of schooling directly disadvantage their young children. Low schooling translates into poor quality of care for children, consequently in higher infant and child mortality and malnutrition, because mothers with little education are less likely to adopt appropriate health-promoting behaviors, such as having young children immunized.

## 7. Child Marriages

The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006 bans marriage below age 18 for girls and age 21 for boys, but some 80 % of Indians live in villages where family, caste and community pressures are more effective than any legislature. According to UNICEF's "State of the World's Children 2009" report, 47% of India's women aged 20–24 were married before the legal age of 18, with 56% in rural areas. The report also showed that 40% of the world's child marriages occur in India.

### *The consequences*

Girls between 15 and 19 are twice as likely to die of pregnancy-related reasons as girls between 20 and 24. Girls married off as children sometimes stay in their parents' house until puberty, but it is just as common, that they move in with their husband and in-laws

right after marriage. In that case, many child wives are inclined to experience domestic violence, marital rape, deprivation of food, and lack of access to information, healthcare, and education. Thus, the vicious cycle of illiteracy and abuse is likely to be continued and passed on to their own daughters.

### **8. Discrimination against Women: After Marriage**

There is mainly a bias towards men and their superiority in marital relationships: while women ought to be respected, protected and kept happy by their husbands – their happiness being vital for the prosperity, peace and happiness of the whole family – they should also be kept under constant vigilance, since they cannot be completely trusted or left to themselves. Whereas as a child a girl is supposed to remain in the custody and care of her parents, after marriage she becomes the property and responsibility of her husband, who is supposed to take care of her and keep her in his custody. Under the existing cultural and social ethos of India a married girl / woman is no longer considered to be part of the family of her birth, instead she has become part of the family of the groom. Hence, after marriage the woman leaves her parental home and lives with her husband's family, where she is required to assume all household labour and domestic responsibilities.

In certain parts of Indian society, women are conditioned from birth to be subservient not only to their future husbands, but also to the females in their husband's family especially, their mother-in-law. Accordingly, the surrounding society mandates a woman's obedience to her husband and her in-laws. Any disobedience would bring disgrace to both, the wife herself and her originating family, and might lead to the woman being ostracized and neglected by her very own family and in her own home.

There is no cultural or religious tradition behind one of the most ghastly incidents of female oppression, but the prevalence of the dowry tradition has supposedly lead to “Bride *Burning*” (or other form of murdering) of the newly-wed wife by the husband and his family, who would claim, that she died in a domestic accident, so that the widowed husband would be free to marry again and collect another dowry. Indian law demands a formal criminal investigation when a newly married woman dies within the home within 7 years of marriage. According to Indian National Crime Record Bureau, there were 8,239 dowry death cases, 1,285 cases of attempted dowry deaths, and another 4,890 cases with pending investigations in 2009. The punishment for dowry deaths is a term of 7 years, which may extend to life imprisonment. Indian law clearly

distinguishes the offence of dowry deaths from the offence of murder, for which a death sentence might be declared.

### **9. Discrimination against Women: As a Widow**

Indian government has enacted numerous laws to protect widow's rights, including prohibitions against traditional practices for which India has been discredited, such as the burning of widows (Sati). Whereas in India's contemporary culture, especially in the modern urban middle-class, these societal norms have given way to a more righteous conduct, the enforcement of the law continues to be challenging, where there are regional, religious or caste variants of family law, which tend to escape government jurisdiction. Hence, a widow is still seen as a liability in some part of the Indian society, which might result in her being abandoned by her in-laws. As her originating family is often unable or unwilling to take her back as well, she might be left on her own, without any education, skills, or financial assistance. Instead, she is subjected to many restrictions, and might be required to shave her head permanently, or to wear white clothes for the rest of her life; thus, stigmatized, she is not allowed to enter in any celebration e.g. weddings, because her presence is considered to be inauspicious. Moreover, a widow might face trouble securing her property rights after her husband's death, nor be allowed to remarry, disregarding at what age she became a widow. As the described discrimination against widows is likely to occur in the same societal surroundings as the above mentioned child marriages, this might lead to child or teenage widows, who are bound to be isolated and ostracized for the rest of their lives.

### **10. Discrimination against Women: For Inheritance**

While in the educated, urban middle class women's rights continue to improve, there remains a strong bias against gender equality in those societal parts of India, where patriarchal traditions prevail. Consequently, in these strata any inheritance of a deceased husband or father would be passed down to the oldest son, while his wife or daughters would not receive any financial benefit. There are laws in place to ensure legal protection for women's right to inheritance, but the enforcement of the law is challenging, when the woman is refused her right by the family, and when she is not confident or educated enough to claim her right

Sustainable and long-term development is not possible without the participation and empowerment of women, only if they participate in the economic and societal development, the full potential of a society of India's society will be unfolded.

In modern developed culture and society, the idea of patriarchy is not as accepted or practiced as it once was decades ago. e.g. In today's more progressive American society, women work in executive positions, maintain leadership roles in organizations, and are often decision-makers in their households and communities. In the past, men were more often the established gender of authority and exhibited control in all situations.

## 2.6 Concept of Masculinity (M) and Femininity (F)

*Masculinity* however was traditionally defined as what men usually are / do and *femininity* as what women usually are/ do.

The early conceptualization of gender role identity was based on two assumptions:

- (1) masculinity for men and femininity for women is normative, and
- (2) femininity and masculinity are mutually exclusive.

**According to Constantinople (1973) masculinity and femininity are not contrary, but co-existent. This was an epochal concept so far as it was the first step to recognize the complexity of psychological variations in gender construct.**

**Gender role** is generally defined as a set of attitudes, behaviors, and self-presentation methods ascribed to members of a certain biological sex. Gender role identity has two components, namely Masculinity (M) and Femininity (F).

Age, race, and social class further define individuals' roles, which influence how men and women interact and the attitudes and behaviors expected of each. Masculine and feminine roles are not opposite ends of the same continuum but are instead two separate dimensions. A person may be described as "masculine," as "feminine," as "androgynous," i.e., having characteristics of both, or as "undifferentiated," that are, having neither strong masculine nor strong feminine characteristics. These include prescriptions for ways to act (be tough, stay in control, etc), attitudes to hold (work is very important, women should be primary caregivers to children, etc), and ways to look (wear pants and suits, wear hair short, etc). It also includes prescriptions for ways *not* to act (don't cry, don't be a wimp, etc.) attitudes not to hold (want to be a stay-at-home dad, it's OK for my wife to earn more money than me, etc.) and ways not to present oneself (don't wear a dress, don't have long hair, etc).

Similar to sex differences, there are many debates about the nature and nurture of gender roles. Some believe that these attitudes and behaviors naturally flow from biological sex and personality traits, whereas others see them as complete cultural constructions.

### **Androgyny**

People who express masculine and feminine traits equally are sometimes called androgynous. Among androgynous people, neither masculine nor feminine traits dominate.

People who are androgynous are believed to be more effective because they can perform both the “instrumental,” directive, or masculine roles and the “expressive,” nurturing, or feminine roles (Powell and Butterfield, 1989).

## 2.7 Male Gender Roles Masculinity

*"Real men don't cry, only wimps(weak) do!"*

*"Kya ladkiyon ki tarah sharma rahe ho!"*

Males have all been subjected to such comments since childhood. Every time expectations are more from them. What are they going to be, how are we going to dress, what hobbies are we going to take up, what attitudes are they going to have, what behaviours are they going to adopt are messages that they keep absorbing from the social environment around them.

These social do's and don'ts for men are known as male 'gender' or 'social' roles or 'social masculinity roles'. The crucial ones decide whether a man has the social right to call himself a man.

Here is a list of expectations from a person because he happens to be a man:

1. Men are expected to be strong, aggressive, tall, handsome, bold, courageous, rough, tough, emotionless, insensitive, fearless and practical. They should not be soft, submissive or weak.
2. They are not supposed to have weaknesses or vulnerabilities. They must not show feelings as these would make them appear weak or vulnerable.
3. They should always be prepared to fight their way. They should never retreat from a physical fight. Others should fear them. They should physically defend their family and work hard to earn to support it. They should choose careers considered 'manly' --- engineers, doctors, military, managers, etc.
4. A real man is expected to have hobbies such as smoking, drinking, fast driving, chasing girls, and playing outdoor sports like cricket, football, etc. They should not have 'girlie' hobbies like cooking, decorating, sewing (*silai-kadhai*), dancing, etc.
5. Some of the other messages that male get are that real men:
  - Don't cry
  - Don't feel pain
  - Are not shy

These messages are transmitted to them explicitly and implicitly, from time to time, especially when they are growing up.

## 2.8 Harmful Effects of the Pressure to Appear Strong and Suppress Emotions

*"Mard ko dard nahin hota"* (a real man does not feel pain) ~ a dialogue from a Hindi Movie

Under continuous pressure to appear strong, a boy learns that it is not acceptable to let other people know of his weaknesses and vulnerabilities. He is unable to accept defeat or rejection. For example, saying 'sorry' is difficult for most men.

1. Boys pretend that they are born 'perfect', with all the qualities required to fulfill the social masculinity roles. Their masculinity roles give them huge egos. This pressure to be always strong, perfect and flawless makes a boy keep all his internal issues to himself, which makes life extremely stressful.
2. This also means that for most of his 'real' problems, they cannot seek guidance or help, and has to find his own way, through trial and error.
3. Thus boys make many mistakes in their youth, about which they repent later on. These mistakes could be avoided if only they could just talk to someone.
4. Men are also human beings, with feelings, and they need to cry and share their inner pain with people they consider close. They need to love and be loved.
5. Social masculinity roles make no concessions for emotions. The pressure to suppress emotions is a key social mechanism of male oppression.
6. However, emotions play an important part in our lives. They are our only contact with our inner voice. When boys suppress emotions, they lose touch with their inner voice, the voice of our true nature, needs and desires. Consequently, men end up not knowing what they really need deep down. Therefore, true happiness often evades them.
7. From an early age, men learn to distrust their feelings, their inner voice. They become scared of their inner feelings and desires, as these always seem to get them into trouble and invite people's wrath or ridicule. For instance, when they get hurt and cry, someone may tell them it is not proper for a boy to cry. Or when they feel scared, they may be told that a boy should never feel scared. Or that he should not dance or wear pink or be seen with dolls.
8. Such injunctions affect a boy's psyche, and he starts seeing these acts as unbecoming. He hates the feelings that prompt him to do these things. Slowly he learns to use only his brain, and do only what he is trained to do: like a dog.
9. Due to prolonged suppression of feelings, most men lose the ability to identify their own emotions and express them. This is a frightening situation.

Because they suppress their emotions so fiercely, men become insensitive and hardened. This results in their inability to fulfil the emotional needs of people they have relationships with --- whether as sons, brothers, friends, lovers or husbands. They end up not caring for other people's feelings.

10. Men sacrifice a lot of their real self to become what the society wants them to be. But they cannot suppress all feelings and needs forever, as that causes deep pain within.

11. When men are unable to suppress a particular feeling, they learn to lead double lives, by expressing those feelings secretly, but on the outside maintaining a 'clean' image. This is extremely stressful.

12. Modern societies propagate male emotionality as an unmanly quality. It encourages men to be unemotional, logical and practical, as if they are computers. However, in most traditional societies, male emotions were celebrated as masculine, often through prose and poetry and men were encouraged to be emotional. Then men become great poets and philosophers.

Today men have become very distanced from their emotions. They have lost the capacity to feel. They don't use the 'emotional' side of their brain much. Some people claim that men are naturally not emotional. But this is not true. Men are trained to become emotionless, so that society can continue to oppress them. It is illogical to think that nature would deprive men of emotions and feelings, which are an important source of connection with their true nature.

### **How do these Roles or Exclusive Masculinity harm Men?**

*"Life (for boys) is not about learning how to be, it is about learning how not to be, what we are" ~ Neale Donald Walsch*

The gender (Masculinity) of men act as a series of unending pressures on them. They force men to live, think and behave in strict predetermined ways. There is no escape from these pressures. Non-compliance has severe consequences.

Every man has qualities that the society does not deem fit for men. Survival instinct prompts men to suppress these qualities, or fulfil them secretly, with guilt/shame.

What would a man do if he is cleaning utensils at home, and suddenly his friends turn up? Won't they immediately wipe your hands and try to conceal the fact that he was cleaning utensils? Otherwise others will be critical saying you're doing a woman's thing.

### Case study

Naveen has aptitude for music. With proper training and encouragement, he can become a good singer or musician. There is a feminine boy in his class named Anil, who is teased by everyone as *ladki*, including by Naveen himself.

As Naveen passed on to the 11th class, he was looking forward to take music as a subsidiary subject. The only boy who had joined the music class till now was Anil. The others teased Anil by saying that he had opted for a 'girlie' subject. Naveen is now afraid to join the music class because he does not want to be compared to Anil. Therefore, he takes up electronics, even if his interest lies in music.

In most middle class Indian families, boys cannot work on their talent and creativity, as they are required to earn as soon as they finish their studies. They cannot even opt for a subject of their choice as they are pressurized to select those subjects perceived to offer maximum security and financial prospects. Science is the subject for boys, followed by Commerce, while Arts is not considered fit for them.

The hobbies that boys are supposed to pursue also have a negative effect on their lives. Fast driving, smoking, drinking, fighting, eve teasing can harm their health and safety. But boys do these so that they can be called 'men'.

Gender roles restrict the fluidity in a boy's behaviour by restricting his ability to act according to the situation. Gender roles have fixed in advance what is expected of him in all situations.

Men have been made so insecure about their (social) masculinity by the society that they will do anything propagated as 'what men do', and avoid anything propagated as what men do not do, even if it goes against their nature.

Under the pressure of social masculinity roles, men suppress their basic nature. Male roles require them to be what is often not possible without tampering with nature.

## 2.9 Feminism

**Feminism** is support of equality for women and men. Feminism is theory that men and women should be equal politically, economically and socially. This is the core of all

feminism theories. Sometimes this definition is also referred to as "core feminism" or "core feminist theory."

### A) Basic Feminist Ideas

Both females and males who identify themselves as feminists agree on five basic principles:

- **Working to increase equality:** Feminist thought links ideas to action, insisting we should push for change toward gender equality and not just talk about it.
- **Expanding human choice:** Feminists believe that both men and women should have the freedom to develop their human interests and talents, even if those interests and talents conflict with the status quo. For example, if a woman wants to be a mechanic, she should have the right and opportunity to do so.
- **Eliminating gender stratification:** Feminists oppose laws and cultural norms that limit income, educational and job opportunities for women.
- **Ending sexual violence and promoting sexual freedom:** Feminists feel that women should have control over their sexuality and reproduction.

### B) Types of Feminism

There are four basic forms of feminism: liberal, social and radical and cultural feminism.

1. **Liberal feminism** is rooted in classic liberal thought and believes that individuals should be free to develop their own talents and pursue their own interests.

This approach sees gender inequalities as rooted in the attitudes of our social and cultural institutions. Liberal feminists do not see women's equality as requiring a reorganization of society, but they do seek to expand the rights and opportunities of women.

They focus mainly on protecting equal opportunities for women through legislation. Passage of the **Equal Rights Amendment in 1972** was a big step forward for liberal feminist agenda.

2. **Socialist feminism** evolved from the ideas of Karl Marx, who blamed capitalism for promoting patriarchy by concentrating power in the hands of a small number of men.

Socialist feminists believe that the traditional family is based upon a capitalist system, where women stay home and men work. It is the main source of women's inequality, this system and traditional family can only be replaced by a socialist revolution.

3. **Radical feminism** believe that men not only benefit from the exploitation of women but are also responsible for it as well.

4. **Cultural Feminism** According to this theory there are fundamental personality differences between men and women, and that women's differences are special and should be celebrated. This theory of feminism supports the notion that there are biological differences between men and women. For example, "women are kinder and more gentle than men," leading to the mentality that if women ruled the world there would be no wars.

## 2.10 HISTORY AND THEORY OF FEMINISM

The term feminism can be used to describe a political, cultural or economic movement aimed at establishing equal rights and legal protection for women. Feminism involves political and sociological theories and philosophies concerned with issues of gender difference, as well as a movement that advocates gender equality for women and campaigns for women's rights and interests. Although the terms "feminism" and "feminist" did not gain widespread use until the 1970s, they were already being used in the public parlance much earlier; for instance, Katherine Hepburn speaks of the "feminist movement" in the 1942 film *Woman of the Year*.

According to Maggie Humm and Rebecca Walker, the history of feminism can be divided into three waves. The first feminist wave was in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the second was in the 1960s and 1970s, and the third extends from the 1990s to the present. Feminist theory emerged from these feminist movements. It is manifest in a variety of disciplines such as feminist geography, feminist history and feminist literary criticism.

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

During much of its history, most feminist movements and theories had leaders who were predominantly middle-class white women from Western Europe and North America. However, at least since Sojourner Truth's 1851 speech to American feminists, women of other races have proposed alternative feminisms.

Feminists and scholars have divided the movement's history into three "waves". The first wave refers mainly to women's suffrage movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries (mainly concerned with women's right to vote). The second wave refers to the ideas and actions associated with the women's liberation movement beginning in the 1960s (which campaigned for legal and social rights for women). The third wave refers to a continuation of, and a reaction to the perceived failures of, second-wave feminism, beginning in the 1990s.

#### **A) First Wave**

First-wave feminism refers to an extended period of feminist activity during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century in the United Kingdom and the United States. Originally it focused on the promotion of equal contract and property rights for women and the opposition to chattel marriage and ownership of married women (and their children) by their husbands. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, activism focused primarily on gaining political power, particularly the right of women's suffrage. Yet, feminists such as Voltairine de Cleyre and Margaret Sanger were still active in campaigning for women's sexual, reproductive, and economic rights at this time. In 1854, Florence Nightingale established female nurses as adjuncts to the military.

In Britain the Suffragettes and, possibly more effectively, the Suffragists campaigned for the women's vote. In 1918 the Representation of the People Act 1918 was passed granting the vote to women over the age of 30 who owned houses. In 1928 this was extended to all women over twenty-one. In the United States, leaders of this movement included Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony, who each campaigned for the abolition of slavery prior to championing women's right to vote;

#### **B) Second Wave**

Second-wave feminism refers to the period of activity in the early 1960s and lasting through the late 1980s. The scholar Imelda Whelehan suggests that the second wave was a continuation of the earlier phase of feminism involving the suffragettes in the UK and USA. Second-wave feminism has continued to exist since that time and coexists with what is termed third-wave feminism. The scholar Estelle Freedman compares first and second-wave feminism saying that the first wave focused on rights such as suffrage, whereas the second wave was largely concerned with other issues of equality, such as ending discrimination.

The feminist activist and author Carol Hanisch coined the slogan "The Personal is Political" which became synonymous with the second wave. Second-wave feminists saw women's cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked and encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and as reflecting sexist power structures.

### C) Third Wave

Third-wave feminism began in the early 1990s, arising as a response to perceived failures of the second wave and also as a response to the backlash against initiatives and movements created by the second wave.

#### 2.11 Suggested Questions

1. Discuss the concept of gender?
2. Define the concept of Patriarchy?
3. What are the important characteristics of a Patriarchal System?
4. What were the Indian Patriarchal Traditions?
5. Describe the Concept of Masculinity (M) and Femininity (F)?
6. Discuss the male gender roles Masculinity?
7. What are the harmful effects of rigid male gender roles?
8. What are the different types of Feminism?
9. Explain the history and theory of Feminism?

#### 2.12 Suggested Readings

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**GENDER AND SOCIETY: GENDER EQUITY, GENDER EQUALITY  
&GENDER ROLES, GENDER BIASES AND GENDER STEREOTYPING**

- 3.1 Objectives of the lesson**
- 3.2 Concept of Gender Equity**
- 3.3 Concept of Gender Equality**
- 3.4 Concept of Gender Roles**
- 3.5 Gender Biases**
- 3.6 Gender Stereotyping**
- 3.7 Suggested Questions**
- 3.8 Suggested Readings**

**3.1 Objectives of the Lesson:**

**After going through the lesson, the students will be able to:**

- Define Gender equity, Gender equality and gender roles
- Differentiate the concept of gender equity and gender equality
- Explain the meaning of gender biases
- Discuss Gender stereotypes and their kinds

**3.2 Concept Of Gender Equity:-**

A look back at history tells that men and women have been denied equal access to rights and privileges. To bring the equality in men and women, we need to have equity. Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men according to their respective needs. It does not mean that both genders are to be treated in the same manner rather their rights, roles, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend upon their birth as male and female. They may be given equal or different treatment, but it should provide them equivalency for the rights, benefits, responsibilities and opportunity. Gender equity refers to correction in Gender biases by taking corrective measures for bringing improved outcomes for all.

**A) Need For Gender Equity:-**

There is no country where men and women are equal. According to **World Economic Forum Projects**, more than 170 years are required to reach gender equality worldwide. That means, gender equality will be achieved after next five generations. It will not only impact our daughters, but sons too, because gender equality has impact on all of us.

The concepts of equality and equity are often used interchangeably, but are quite distinct concepts. International human rights treaties refer it to as “equality”, but in other organisations, the term used is “Equity”. The use of term “Gender equity” needs much carefulness. If it is used for the “Fair” treatment to women with reference to the stereotype roles of women, it will further promote stereo type roles of women in society. It will further lead to unequal gender relations and strengthen harmful gender stereotypes for women. The term should be used with caution to ensure that there is no hesitation to talk very clearly about discrimination and inequality.

**B) Definition of Gender Equity:-**

Gender equity can be defined as “fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities” (International Labour Office [ILO], [2000](#)). It is distinct and different from the concept of gender equality, which is the effective equality between men and women, that entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypical views, rigid gender roles, and prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behavior, aspirations, and needs of women and men are considered, valued, and favored equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same but that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female (ILO, [2000](#)).

According to the oxford dictionary, word Equity means fairness, righteousness and justness. It means fairness, righteousness in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between two genders regardless of any gender discrimination of man and woman.

**C) Hurdles for Gender Equity:**

In fact, in equality and discrimination which exist in family, society, culture are the big hurdles to achieve gender Equity. According to Gender Equity report, 2018, the three main barriers to equity include systematic bias in politics, lack of

awareness in the community and poor community health. The hurdles for gender equity are:-

- 1 Traditional patriarchal societies.
- 2 Poverty
- 3 Unequal distribution to opportunities.
- 4 Unequal access to education
- 5 Lesser social benefits
- 6 Violence against women
- 7 Lesser employment opportunities

**D) Measure for Gender Equity:-**

Gender equity is a worldwide need. Various movements have been there to achieve gender equity. These include

- Universal declaration of Human Rights, UN, 1949.
- Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against women(CEDAW).
- Gender and Development Model(GAD)
- United Nations Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Strategy, 2006.

Many steps can be taken up which can help to achieve gender equity such as involving balanced approach in sustainable development decision-making processes, providing equal economic opportunities making gender equitable policies, providing equitable access to sufficient food, providing equitable access to personal safety measures, equitable power structures between men and women, bringing change in ideologies and restrictions on institutions that promote gender disparities.

- Gender Equity achievement expects for personal physical safety
- Non-violence against other gender
- Ensuring lawful identity
- Providing for equitable access to resources.
- Providing for equitable control over resources.
- Providing access to economic security by providing safe work opportunities
- Guarantee of access to public services
- Providing access to information
- Ensuring access to information
- Providing access to justice
- Providing for social inclusion
- Guarantee of access to Rights

- Giving importance to social unity and variety.

“ If gender equality is the end, gender equity is the means”.

### **3.3 Concept Of Gender Equality:-**

#### **A) Gender Equality in India:-**

Indian constitution provides for equality in terms of gender as a fundamental right. In addition to it, several laws and policies are framed and implemented by state governments also to achieve gender equality. There has been a marked shift in the approach, i.e. from welfare to development, to women's issues. Women have been provided a platform for participation in decision making by reserving the seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities. India had followed various international conventions and human rights policies such as convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) in 1993, The Mexico plan of action (1975), the Nairobi Forward looking strategies(1985), the Beijing Declaration and so on. However, there yet exists too many gender inequalities showing a broad gap between the policies, plans, laws and programmes implemented on one side and situation in reality on the other hand. It has been a biggest challenge for India to achieve gender equality in spite of social, political legal and constitutional efforts. Women still face, humiliation, exploitation, valence, discrimination and indignity in the family and other social institutions. India needs to make sincere efforts to fill the gap that exists between the plans, policies and legal measures and actual situation.

#### **D) Concept Of Gender Equality:**

Gender equality can lead to a gender equal society where women and men will be given the regard as equal members. They will be given the status of equal patrons and will give equal rights and opportunities to participate in all spheres and all aspects of society and of life at large. They will have equal share of benefits of social, economical, political and cultural benefits. There will be no discriminations to anyone on the basis of gender. In spite of different behaviors of men and women their expirations and needs will be taken care off.

#### **E) Role Of Various Stakeholders to Achieve Gender Equality:**

##### **a) Role of Schools:-**

Gender inequalities have been seen in the schools also. These inequalities exist in the school environment due to lack of awareness about the gender needs and aspirations among some of the teachers . These are present in many components of the school system like school campus and building, pupil-teacher relationship, teaching - learning materials, teaching learning process and school administration.

Schools need to create gender equality specific environment and strategies in the school. The following components should be made a part of school programme.

- Sensitization towards gender issues:-  
Teachers , parents and students including boys and girls and community needs to be sensitized towards gender issues by creating awareness through activities like lectures, seminars, skits, dramas, poetry and so on.
- Training of teachers:  
Teachers need to be trained for teaching their students in such a way that boys as well as girls feel that their gender needs and aspirations are being met with.
- Enabling girls through education to overcome gender- disparities:- Girls should be enabled through education to express themselves with full confidence, to be a part of decision-making , to have self-belief and to deal with matters related to them in an effective manner.
- Enabling boys to accept gender equality positively:- Boys should be taught to have respect for other gender, to avoid male ego and harsh attitude towards the female members.
- Training the school personnel:- School personnel should be trained in order to deal effectively with gender equality and promote it.
- Guidance and Counseling:- Teachers need to be prepared for guiding and counseling their students as to solve their problems related to gender issues.  
Counselling and guidance programmers should be organized in the schools to create awareness among students about gender equality and to solve gender inequality problems.
- Schools can take up certain other steps to bring gender equality such as creating awareness through plays, creative writing, competitions, poster making, creating audio and video on digital media and organizing races and other activities on themes related to gender equality.
- Schools can honour and award people from the school and even outside who promote gender equality and provide special scholarships for promoting gender equality.
- Schools can keep a check on gender biased activities, conduct workshops related to gender equality to make schools a safe place for education and work for both the genders.

**B) Role of Peer-group in gender equality:-**

The gender bias at home is transmitted to school atmosphere when students from gender biased homes enter the school. Gender differences can be observed in case of

peer selection of the same sex by students. Children prefer to sit, play and go around with the same sex peers. Peers also promote gender inequality by passing remarks on personality and behavior of a child who do not conform to societal norms in these aspects. Gender differences and inequalities among peers start at the stage when the child enters the school and go on throughout the school stage. Schools must teach children to treat their peers as individuals and not only as “Boys” and “Girls”.

**C) Role of Teacher in Gender Equality:-**

The role of teachers is most important as they have the maximum interaction with students in the classroom for teaching learning processes. Their behavior and personality impacts a student's life the most. The teacher thus can teach their lessons prescribed in the curriculum by bringing essence of gender equality into it. Teachers need to undergo gender awareness and sensitization programs provided by the government and other authorities. Classroom activities must be carried out in such a way so as to reflect gender-equality. The teaching-learning materials, methods and approaches should also selected and carefully so as to promote gender equality.

**d) Role of Curriculum and Text Books in Gender Equality:-**

School curriculums are generally over burdened with so many school subjects. Therefore there is not much possibility to incorporate or add gender equality as a subject. Framing of curriculum is done in such a manner that these do not have any scope for any more additions of gender equality. If more of the women members from different backgrounds are involved in curriculum framing processes as decision makers, then there can be element of gender equality in curriculum. The curriculum content should be such which can boost confidence and create awareness among girls especially from the poor and weaker sections of the society. Even the teaching learning materials such as text books should display the gender equal content. Medium of instruction in mother tongue or local language, as has been recommended in National Education policy, 2020 will help in Educating girls. National curriculum framework, 2005 suggested for continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE). It can be better for evaluation purposes rather than examinations. Teachers can use CCE for providing more opportunities to award girls for their achievements and thereby help to promote gender equality.

It can be said that if school, teachers and students do not strive for gender equality, then the purpose of providing education in its true sense will be defeated. That's not all curriculum framing and its content need to be selected carefully so as to cater to the specific needs of boys and girls.

The major role of government for gender equality can never be ignored. It is the government which has to take initiatives for beginning gender equality. Government had to frame policies, legislations, provide funding, set standard norms, provide legal measures and develop supervision procedures so that there are no gender differences and every man and women or girl and boy has equal access to education and their development. Government must take steps to promote gender equality, not only at school level, but at higher education institutes also.

### **3.4 Concept of Gender Roles:-**

Gender roles are the result of interactions between individuals and their surrounding society. Gender roles teach individuals of each sex about the kind of behavior they are expected to do in the society. The Gender roles are based on the beliefs prevailing in the society about the differences is between males and females. According to Wikipedia, Gender roles can be defined as the behaviors, values and attitudes that a society considers appropriate for both male and female. **“For example, in traditional societies the role of men is as bread earner and women as care taker of the home and family”** or **“A gender role, also known as a sex role, is a social role encompassing a range of behavior and attitude that are generally considered acceptable, appropriate or desirable for a person based on that person’s biological or perceived sex”**. Gender roles in society means how we are expected to act, speak, dress, groom and conduct ourselves based upon our assigned sex. For example, girls and women are generally expected to dress in typically feminine ways and be polite, accommodating and nurturing. The boys and men are expected to dress in typically masculine ways and be hard, tough and rude. Gender roles are cultural and personal. Gender roles are learnt. These gender schemes are deeply embedded cognitive frameworks regarding what defines masculine and feminine. Gender roles are socially determined change over time and space and are influenced by social, cultural and environmental factors characterizing a certain society.

#### **A) Prospectives on Gender Roles:-**

The four perspectives are given below on gender roles:-

- a) **Traditional perspective:-** According to traditional perspective, there are expects two gender roles:-
  - i) Masculine gender role
  - ii) Feminine Gender role.

Masculine Gender role, according to traditional perspective, is that men are always good leaders. They are therefore assigned the role of family head and take the role of decision maker and make the livelihood for the family. According to this perspective, feminine gender role, assigns women the characteristics of a nurturer. They are to nurture the family. That means they are to look after children and those members of the family, who are incapable of looking after themselves. They are expected to take the household work where as men as masculine gender role are assigned the work out of the home.

**b) Biological perspective:-**

Biologically the individuals are not gendered they are born as males or females. Females and males have certain biological or physiological features which make them inclined naturally towards feminine and masculine gender roles respectively.

**c) Ecological perspective:-**

Ecological perspective on gender roles works on the principles of a branch of biology i.e. Ecology. Ecology is the science that deals with the relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings. Ecological perspective on gender roles also states that the gender roles are outcome of relations of individuals to each other and to their physical surroundings i.e. their environment.

**d) Sociological perspective”-**

Sociological perspective on gender role is derived from the sociological concepts. In sociology, we study that roles are learnt. Moreover, gender roles are constructed in the society by imitation, observing and learning. According to this perspective, there is no role of biological characteristics of the individual in learning gender roles. Sociological perspective considers that gender roles vary from one society to another and these keep on changing with time as these are always learnt and can be unlearned and relearned.

**B) Gender Roles : Masculine and Feminine**

Gender roles are usually center edon conceptio off emininity and masculinity, although there are exceptions and variations. The specifics regarding these genere dexpectations may vary substantially among cultures, while other character istics may be common through out arange of cultures.

**Masculinity**, also called **manhood** or **manliness**, is a set of attributes, behaviors, and roles associated with boys and men. **Traits** traditionally viewed as **masculine** in Western society include strength, courage, independence, leadership, and assertiveness. Machismo is a form of **masculinity** that emphasizes power and is often associated with a disregard for consequences and responsibility. The **Traits** traditionally cited as **feminine** include gentleness, empathy, humility, and sensitivity, though **traits** associated with **femininity** vary across societies and individuals, and are influenced by a variety of social and cultural factors.

**a) Some traits that are considered masculine**

- Dominant
- Strong
- Independent
- Assertive
- Brave
- Innovative

**b) Some traits that are considered feminine**

- Emotional
- Collaborative
- Nurturing
- Vulnerable
- Caring
- Humble

These roles are not natural but acquired in society.

### 3.5 Gender Biases:

**A) Meaning of Bias:** **Bias** means a cause to feel or show inclination or prejudice for or against someone or something. Bias is a tendency to lean in a certain direction, either in favor of or against a particular thing. To be truly biased means to lack a neutral viewpoint on a something particular. We tend to think it's a bad thing but that's not always true.

If you're biased *toward* something, then you lean favorably toward it; you tend to think positively of it. Meanwhile, if you're biased *against* something, then you lean negatively against it; you tend to think poorly of it. For example If someone is biased toward a political affiliation, they will tend to speak more positively of politicians belonging to the same party. If that same person is biased against a different political affiliation, he or she might show their bias by quickly

dismissing or disagreeing with anyone who aligns with that opposing political view.

There are many forms of biases that exist in the society which are related to religion, community, caste, class and so on. Gender Bias is one of these biases.

Let us learn about Gender Bias from this example. If someone has a bias about women, they can take two different approaches. If they're biased toward women, they might hire only women because they feel they make better employees for some gender-related reason. Conversely, if they're biased against women, they might hire a man over a more-qualified female candidate.

So Gender Bias means having belief about superiority of a gender to another and discriminating with the other gender on this basis. Gender bias exists in our society even now-a-days though it has been declared illegal by law. We observe divorce cases where males are at a disadvantage of having child custody.

**B) Definitions of Gender Bias:-**

According to Longman Dictionary Contemporary English, "Gender bias is when men and women are treated differently in a way, that is unfair".

According to Hill and Hill(2000), "Gender Bias is Unequal treatment in employment opportunity ( such as promotion, .pay, benefits and privileges) and expectations due to attitudes based on the sex of an employee or group of employees. Gender bias can be legitimate basis for a lawsuit under anti-discrimination statutes".

**C) Gender biases in India:**

Gender bias is an inseparable part of Indian society till now. Girl child in India has always been treated as the second citizens. Female feticide is a gender bias in India which starts before the birth of child. Dowry deaths and female infanticide are also the worst gender bias existing in Indian society. Various causes of Gender biasness in India are low literacy rate, traditional family system, lack of guidance and awareness and so on. The Girl children in India are made to work for the family at home instead of sending her to school. They are many times forced to marry at an early age and thus they become immature mothers. Therefore they are even not able to nourish their children well as being uneducated, they are not aware of the health and nutrition. Such issues of gender bias which exist in India need to be done away by law, by education of women, providing employment opportunities to women and making them a part of decision making processes in the country.

### 3.6 Gender Stereotyping

**A) Meaning of Gender Stereotyping:-** Gender stereotyping is the practice of arbitrarily assigning characteristics and roles to an individual male and female based on preconceived ideas and notions about the characteristics and roles of a certain group based on their gender.

Stereotyping is an assumption that a person has whole range of characteristics and abilities that we assume all members of the group have. This assumption may or may not be true for a particular member of that group.

Stereotyping is any commonly known public belief about a certain social group or a type of individual. For example, if someone says, "Women cook good food". He or she is stereotyping women. If someone says, "Men are good at mathematics". He or she is stereotyping men. We know that all men may not be good at mathematics. The above given two examples of stereotyping having positive connotation but some stereotyping may have negative connotation also. For example, if someone states, "Boys do nothing". it might not be true for all the boys.

#### **B) Definition of Gender Stereotype**

According to Cardwell(1996), "A stereotype is a fixed overgeneralized belief about a particular group or a class of people. For example, "a hell's Angel" biker dresses in leather.

According to the High Commissioner, United Nations human rights define gender stereotype as a generalized view or perception about attributes or characteristics or the roles that are ought to be possessed by or performed by men and women. It is the practice of ascribing to individual woman and man specific attributes, characteristic or roles by reason only of her or his membership in the social group of women or men.

#### **C) Basic Classification of Gender Stereotypes:**

Basic categories of gender stereotypes are of four types:

- 1. Personality traits:** Women are thought to be soft spoken, fragile and adjustable whereas men are thought to be sturdy, harsh and dominant.
- 2. Domestic behavior:** Women are thought to be good at cooking, rearing children and managing the household whereas men are thought to be good at

other activities like repairing household equipment, driving and managing the finances.

**3. Occupation:** Women are thought to work as nurses, cleaning woman and custodian, teachers and receptionists. Men are supposed to be at jobs like politicians, engineers, doctors, mechanics and accountants.

**4. Physical appearance:** It is assumed that women are slim and smaller in height yet graceful whereas men are expected to have tall and broad body shape.

### 3.6 Suggested Questions:

1. Explain the concept of gender equity. Differentiate it from the concept of gender equality.
2. Describe the various ways to bring gender equality in society.
3. What do you understand by the term “Gender Roles”?
4. Elaborate the concept of gender bias giving its definitions. What are the various gender biases which exist in Indian society.
5. Discuss the concept of Gender stereotypes. Give different kinds of gender stereotypes.

### 3.7 Suggested Readings

1. Goyal, S. (2017). Gender, School and Society. Twentyfirst Century Publications, Patiala.
2. [https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=soc\\_fa\\_cpub](https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=soc_fa_cpub)
3. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/gender-roles>
4. <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/gender-identity/sex-gender-identity/what-are-gender-roles-and-stereotypes>
5. <https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/gender-equality>
6. [https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F978-94-007-0753-5\\_1131](https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F978-94-007-0753-5_1131)

**GENDER IDENTITY: CONCEPT AND DEVELOPMENT, GENDER ISSUES IN INDIAN SOCIETY**

**4.1 Objectives of the Lesson**

**4.2 Concept of Gender Identity**

**4.3 Development of Gender Identity**

**4.4 Factors affecting Gender Identity**

**4.5 Gender Issues in Indian Society**

**4.7 Suggested Questions**

**4.8 Suggested Readings**

**4.1 Objectives of The Lessons:**

**After going through the lesson, the students will be able to:**

- Explain the concept of Gender Identity
- Define the concept of Gender Identity
- Describe the process of Gender Identity
- Explain the gender issues in Indian Society

**4.2 Concept of Gender Identity**

The dictionary meaning of identity is “The fact of being whom or what a person or thing is or it may be called as a close similarity or affinity. Identity is defined as who you are, the way you think about yourself, the way people around view you and the characteristics that define you. It may also be called as the relation established by psychological identification.

Thus, the meaning of gender identity may be taken as one’s own perception of having a particular gender which may or may not match with their biological sex. It may be defined as a personal view or self-identification of a person himself or herself as male or female.

For Example, if one considers himself or herself as Female and is convenient to be called in feminine terms , then her/his gender identify is female.

**Difference In Gender Identity aAnd Gender Role:-**

Let’s continue with the example given above, the gender identity of the person mentioned in the example is female. However, her gender role is referred to female only in case he shows typically female characteristics in behavior, dress and Mannerings.

Actually gender role is outcome of manifestations within the society. It is decided on the basis of characteristics like outlook and behavior observed by other people.

Gender identity usually starts its formation at very early stages in life. For example, a child born with biological male sex is assigned the gender identity as a boy and as a man at maturity. A child born with biologically female sex is assigned the gender identity as a girl and as a woman at maturity. These individuals who are born with neither biological male sex nor biological female sex are termed as trans-gender. These trans-genders, even if assigned, gender identity as a girl but inwardly they feel that they are neither a boy nor a girl.

In such cases, if their economic conditions allow, they try to avail changes in their bodies through medical treatment, so as to match the gender, they feel they are. Thus they try to achieve a particular gender identity of a man or women.

#### **4.3 Gender Identity: Development**

It is very natural feeling for most children to be identified as a boy or a girl. Babies are assigned a male or female gender based on their physical and biological features. This is how the process of gender identity is initiated.

New born babies since the ages from 0 to 2 years are not aware of their gender identity.

It is important to note here that though the gender identity in most children, starts to form their third birthday. However,transgenders are unable to perceive their proper gender identity, even at very late stages of life. It happens so because of the social stigma and pressure associated to the transgender identity.

Most of the children start learning about features and social aspects of gender since their third birthday. They become aware of the physical differences between boys and girls. They are able to label themselves as either a boy or a girl.

Most children have a fixed sense of their gender identity by the age of 4-6 years. This process is known as consolidation.

Then Gender fluidity stage follows after the stage of “Peak of consolidation and rigidity”. At this stage, gender identity becomes fluid again.

According to Barbara Newmann, there are four stages of gender identity development:-

- i) Understanding the concept of gender
- ii) Learning gender role standards and stereotypes
- iii) Identification with parents
- iv) Forming gender preference

#### 4.4 Factor Influencing Gender Identity:-

There are not many clear cut theories about the formation of gender identity. But various factors which have been found to impact gender identity are explained below:-

**i) Biological factors:**

These are pre and post natal hormone levels which are present at the time of birth and after the birth of the child. Genetic constitution also influences the gender identity.

**ii) Social factors:**

Socialization process of the child also influences gender identity formation. The social factors influencing child identity are the thoughts regarding gender roles expressed by the family members, dominant members, school authorities, mass media and other people present in the child's surroundings. Children get much influenced by all these factors and form their gender identity.

**iii) Observation and imitation:-**

Children observe and imitate whatever happens around them in the society. In this process, they closely observe the gender-related behavior of those people who are around him they try to copy their behavior. Child is motivated to follow the behavior of members of same gender but is reprimanded in case he follows the behavior of members of other gender. For example, a girl child is motivated if she tries to provide domestic help like her mother, but discouraged, in case she tries to drive a car like her father. This is how the child will start learning her gender identity by observation and imitation.

**iv) Language:**

In the process of language learning, children learn to differentiate between male and female characteristics and thus start behaving according to their same gender group members. That is how language learning plays an influential role in gender identity.

**v) Socio-Economic structure:-**

Gender differentiation exists in every society. One of the two gender i.e. male or female is powerful and the other is subdued. So it is the competitive spirit for social and economic powers which plays an important role in gender identity formation.

#### 4.5 Gender Issues in Indian Society:-

India is a country where traditional patriarchal system is prevailing for centuries. It has become a male dominated society. Females are not given a status equal to men in such a country where women once more worshipped in the form of goddess. Thus

inequality for women in various aspects like power, health and nutrition, education, employment opportunities had raised many gender issues employment opportunities had revised many gender issues which are given below :-

i) **Health and Nutrition:-**

The females in India had received less attention to their health as compared to males. Women are supposed to have food only after the male members have taken their food. Nutritious and fresh food is served to the male members in preference to female members.

ii) **Economic Conditions:**

Women in India have less participation in Economic activities as they have lesser exposure to economic opportunities, resources and lesser economic independence. (Poverty Data) Women in India are married at an early age without having their own earning resources Family responsibilities, further early age without having their own earning resources. All these reasons cause gender discrimination in economic conditions in Indian society. Female labour force participation calculated as the share of women who are employed or are seeking work as a proportion of the working age female in population stands distressingly low at 23.4 percent (2019) as per the World Bank. Only 13 percent of farm land is owned by women. About 41 percent households headed by India do not own land and make a living through casual manual labour.

iii) **Educational Backwardness:**

Gender-based discrimination in education is both a cause and a consequence of broader forms of gender inequality in society (Pulugurtha, 2008). In India, the overall literacy rate is 64.8%, the male literacy rate is 75.3% and that for females is 53.7%. It shows a huge gap of 21.6% between the literacy rate of female and males. As per 2011 census in India, Gross enrollment rates in higher education in 2015-16 was 25.4% for male whereas 23.5% for females which is comparatively lesser. Females have never been at par with males. The student enrolment at the undergraduate level has been 51% boys and 49% girls. Child rights and you(CRY) organization states that out of every three girls enrolled in education are able to complete class 12<sup>th</sup> at on appropriate age. These figures are enough to highlight the plight of female education in India.

**iv) Social Set up :-**

Indian society has a traditional matrilineal joint family system. Therefore, women are confined to their domestic duties and have subdued roles, status and power as compared to their male counterparts. Only males are considered to have the main role in earning for the family whereas females are considered to play an additional economic role in supporting the family. Decision making power also lies with the family. The male and female child are reared and brought up with different expected roles as adults. Anti-female social set up, preference to sons in comparison to daughters, celebration of sons birth only, longing for a male child in comparison to female, dowry system, bride burning, female feticide and infanticide are bad practices of Indian social set up and culture which are strong indications of social biasness.

**v) Social Attitude:-**

Indian society has transformed a lot due to development, technological advancement, change in policies and social reforms. The mind set and social attitude of people have not still changed towards women. They are still not having any right to give voice to their identity. They are still made to face in human behavior, social atrocities, exploitation and defame not only at home but at other institutions the society also. There have not been any changes in social attitude towards women in Indian society.

**vi) Unawareness About Laws and Rights:-**

Women in Indian society lack education which itself is a cause of their lack of awareness about laws and fundamental rights. They are not aware of the functioning of social, economic and political setup in the society. Even they are ignorant of justice and discrimination being done to them. Women being ignorant and unaware become a part to promote gender discrimination. Moreover, uneducated women promote injustice to their women companions or women family members. Women must be aware of many reforms and laws which have been implemented by the government for their upliftment and remove gender biasness. Government had taken steps for women like article 243-D which promotes 33% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and 33% of the office of chairperson. They need to help themselves by coming on the forefront to fight for their rights and of course, the basic instrument to there is education of women i.e. higher literacy and more formal education which will lead to greater employment opportunities.

**4.6 Suggested Questions**

1. Define Gender Identities. Differentiate between gender identity and gender role.
2. Discuss the process of development of Gender Identity.
3. What are the factors influencing Gender Identity development? Describe in detail.
4. List various Gender issues existing in Indian society? Discuss these in detail.

**4.7 Suggested Readings:**

<https://emedicine.medscape.com/article/917990-overview> reported crimes against women.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender\\_identity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_identity)

<https://www.mentalhelp.net/sexuality/gender-identity/> aidvolunteers.org/en/gender-issues-in-india/

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender\\_inequality\\_in\\_India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_inequality_in_India)