MA in Sociology   Paper-X

<u>Gender Studies</u>

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UNIT-1

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Unit: 1

This unit gives an over view of how gender is socially constructed. It discusses how the biological basis to the differences between the sexes does not explain the inequalities faced by the sex groups in the society. In the society variations are marked in the roles, responsibilities, rights of and relations between sex groups depending on the social prescriptions relating to sex affiliations. The differences, inequalities and the division of labour between men and women are often simply treated as consequences of 'natural' differences between male and female humans. But, in reality the social norms, institutions, societal expectations play a significant role in deciding and dictating the behaviour of each sex group. So, gender is a social construct. The present unit looks at the debate on gender vs. biology , how gender differences are created though social norms and practices and how gender differences are institutionalised in the society through various social institutions and the way they override and negate gender equality, the discourses on public private dichotomy leading to sexual division of labour and the evolution and institutionalization of patriarchy as an ideology and practice.

1.0 Objectives: After studying this unit, you can
- Conceptualize what is "Gender" and what is "Sex" and draw a line of distinction between the two.
- Understand gender as a social construct.
- Note the difference in gender roles, responsibilities, rights and relations.
- Develop an idea about the discourse on public private dichotomy leading to sexual division of labour.
- Trace out the evolution and institutionalization of the institution of "Patriarchy".

1.1 Social Construction of Gender

Introduction:

The distinctions between men and women are more social than natural. The conceptual distinction between 'sex' and 'gender' seeks to capture this view of the matter. Gender became a key sociological concept owing to the impact of feminism. Thus, arguing that 'anatomy is not destiny' and that 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman', **Simone de Beauvoir** questioned the assumptions behind such formulations in her feminist classic The Second Sex. At least in the social sciences, there is now unanimity in accepting that distinctions between men and women are more social than natural. This clearly projects gender is a social construct, not an outcome of the biological difference. There is a conceptual distinction between 'sex' and 'gender'. They are not one and the same.

Margaret Mead, an American anthropologist, was one of the first to empirically ground the distinction between the biological and social characteristics of men and women. She did this rather dramatically through her study of the conceptions of masculinity and femininity among the Arapesh, Mundugamor and Tchambuli, three societies in the New Guinea Islands. On the basis of this study, she argued that masculinity is often equated with aggression on the one hand and femininity with nurturance on the other. This association of traits have no intrinsic relation with biological sex. Mead's study contributed significantly to the shaping of the concept of gender in the latter half of the twentieth century.

The distinction between 'sex' and 'gender', which came to dominate theorization in the sociology of gender in the 1970s, is founded on the idea of universality of 'sex' and variability of 'gender'. **Ann Oakley's** Sex, Gender and Society (1972) made the sex-gender distinction very popular in sociology. For Oakley, sex is 'a word that refers to the biological differences between male and female: the visible differences

in genitalia, the related difference in procreative function. "Gender", however is a matter of culture, it refers to the social classification into "masculine" and "feminine".'

1.1.1 Gender vs. Biology

Biologists and sociologists often contradict each other on the issue of sex and gender correlation. Often the Biologists say that gender differences are determined by biology. To them, primary sex characteristics and secondary sex characteristics define the physical distinctions between males and females. Puberty further defines the differences between males and females: males develop more muscles and a lower voice and gain more body hair and height, while females develop breasts and form more fatty tissue and broader hips. Also according to biologists, sex is inherited (fertilization determines our sex). Furthermore, socialization and social institutions merely reflect – and sometimes exaggerate – inborn tendencies. Biology leads males and females to different behaviours and attitudes. Thus ,gender has a biological root.

The biological stand point advances the argument that there are some natural differences in the physical, cognitive and emotional make up of men and women and accordingly, these are reflected in their self concept, attitudes, perceptions, relationship and activities. The fundamental biological/physical differences between the gender groups are:

- Genetic difference – girls "XX", boys "XY"
- Hormonal difference – testosterone (aggression) and androgen are higher in males while estrogen is higher among females.
- Gonadal difference – Ovaries in females and testes in males
- Genital difference – penis/clitoris
- Reproductive difference – women are loaded with reproductive capacity by nature.

The fundamental cognitive and attitudinal differences between males and females on the basis of biology are:

- Musculature – women are physically weaker than men.
- Brain function –Women are more verbal, where as men are action oriented.
- Style – women are more diplomatic, men are more direct.
- Affection – women are more sympathetic, caring and affectionate, while men are straight, task oriented.

It is commonly argued that biological differences between males and females determine gender by causing enduring differences in capabilities and dispositions. Higher levels of testosterone, for example, are said to lead men to be more aggressive than women; and left brain dominance is said to lead men to be more rational while their relative lack of brain lateralization leads women to be more emotional.

Sociologists, on the other hand, argue that gender is learnt through socialization. Every culture asserts the behaviours and attitudes that are appropriate for one's sex. The sociological significance of gender is that it is a device by which society controls its members. Sociologists reinforce that the types of work men and women do in each society are determined not by biology but by social arrangements. Biology "causes" some human behaviour , but they are related to reproduction or differences in body structure. Sociologists are of the opinion gender roles and gender identity are more fashioned by nurture. Conventional wisdom, culture create and sustain gender identity and gender roles in a society. Gender appropriate behaviours are learnt from the people around who play a significant role in gender socialization. Culture takes whatever difference that exists at birth and exacerbates them. Different cultures have different values and expectations placed on gender.

However it can be asserted that in determining gender differences, biology and sociology go hand in hand. This is because biology determines the inherent differences (such as the physical characteristics that separate human beings – i.e. different hormones that influence their emotions), but sociology determines their life stance, their behaviours, and the opportunities they are given. An example of this would be how close a woman is to her child. The woman has the ability to give birth to a child (which is a role assigned to us by biology) and since she carries her child for nine months, she is closer to their baby than the father and takes up a more care giving role spontaneously.

However, gender socialization in society determines how the child interacts with each parent in the future, and establishes the courses the child takes in life. Socialization teaches us the societal expectations from each sex group and directs our behavioural expressions.

1.1.2 What is Gender?

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles of and relations between men and women. Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/time, specific and changeable.

In simple terms, gender explains the differences between men and women. Gender is an analytical category that is socially constructed to differentiate the biological difference between men and women. The term gender is also used to describe the differences in behaviour between men and women which are described as "masculine" and "feminine". Feminist writings focus on this aspect and claim that these differences are not biological but are social constructions of patriarchal society. Some theorists suggest that the biological differences between men and women also result in their mental and physical differences. They argue that biologically, men are physically and mentally superior to women. Other theorists suggest that the biological difference between men and women are exaggerated. The differences are socially constructed by the patriarchal system of society by which men are described as superior to women. Therefore women become subordinate to men in the society.

Gender is defined by FAO as "the relations between men and women, both perceptual and material. Gender is not determined biologically, but is constructed socially. It is the central organizing principle of societies, and often governs the processes of production and reproduction, consumption and distribution. Gender issues focus on women & on the relationship between men and women, their roles, access to and control over resources, division of labour, interests and needs. Gender relations affect household security family well-being, planning, production and many other aspects of life. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context".

Ann Oakley in her book, Sex, Gender and Society written in 1972 explores the term gender. The author defines the concept "Gender" as a product of culture. It refers to the social classification of men and women into masculine and feminine. Gender has

no biological origin. Oakley says that in the Western culture women play the roles of the "housewife" and "mother". This is because women are made to play these roles because of their biology. The western culture also believes that any effort to change the traditional roles of men and women in the society can cause damage to the social fabric. Gender is not something we are born with, and not something we have, but something we do (West and Zimmerman 1987) –something we perform (Butler 1990).

1.1.3Theories on Gender

There are four major sociological theories on gender. They are the Functionalist Theory, the Symbolic Interaction Theory, The Conflict Theory and The Feminist Theory.

Functionalist theorists argue that men fill instrumental roles in society while women fill expressive roles, which works to the benefit of society. Instrumental roles comprise of the need for leadership and fulfilment of the task on the one hand and the expressive role refers to need for morale and cohesion on the other. Further, it is our socialization into prescribed roles that is the driving force behind gender inequality.

Symbolic interaction theorists look at gender from the micro perspective and examine gender stratification on a day-to-day level. For example, men are more likely to interrupt women in conversations and in their workspaces which generally reflect greater power possessed by the males. These theorists also focus on how gender roles are internalized by males and females.

Conflict theorists view women as disadvantaged because of power inequalities between women and men that are built into the social structure. For example, from this viewpoint, wage inequalities that exist between men and women result from men's historic power to devalue women's work and benefit as a group from the services that women's labour provides.

Feminist theory emerged out of the women's movement and aims to understand the inferior position of women in society for the sole purpose of improving their position in society**.** There are four major frameworks that have developed out of feminist theory: liberal feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, and multiracial feminism.

Liberal feminists argue that gender inequality results from past traditions that pose barriers to women's advancement. Socialist feminists, on the other hand, argue that the origin of women's oppression lies with the system of capitalism. Because women are a cheap supply of labour, they are exploited by a capitalist, which makes them less powerful both as women and as workers. Radical feminists see patriarchy as the main cause of women's oppression and argue that women's oppression lies in men's control over women's bodies. Finally, multiracial feminists examine the interactive influence of gender, race, and class, showing how together they shape the experiences of all women and men.

1.2 What is Sex?

In a very broad way," sex" refers to the biological and physiological differences between male and female sex. The term sex is a physical differentiation between the biological male and the biological female. Thus, when an infant is born, the infant comes to be labelled as a "boy" or a "girl" depending on his/her sex. The genital differences between male and female is the basis of such characterization. However, it has been argued that having been born into one sex or another, individuals are then socialized according to specific gender expectations and roles. Biological males learn to take on masculine roles. They are socialized to think and act in masculine ways. Biological females learn to take on feminine roles. They are socialized to think and behave in feminine ways. As the feminist writer Simone de Behaviour puts it "One is not born a man but becomes one, one is not born a woman but becomes one".

At birth, besides the basic biological differences in the genitals and reproductive organs, there is not much difference between the male child and the female child. Society makes the differences between boy and girl through gender constructions. The biological differences between the sexes do to some extent explain certain psychological and socially constructed differences. This view is criticized by some feminist writers like Judith Butler. Judith Butler argues that sex is natural and comes first. Gender is perceived as a secondary construct which is imposed over the top of this natural distinction. Viewed thus, Butler argues "sex" itself becomes a social category. This means that the distinction between "male" and "female" is a social distinction made by the society, that is, it is a social construction. It is a particular way of perceiving and dividing the differences between "male", "female".

Judith Butler further explains "sex" is not just an analytical category. It is a normative category as well. It stipulates what men and women are. It also stipulates what men and women ought to be. It formulates rules to regulate the behaviour of men and women.

Sex and gender are conceptually distinct from each other. Each is socially constructed in different ways. Gender is a major social status that organizes almost all areas of social life such as economy, ideology, polity, family and so on. For an individual, the components of gender are the sex category assigned at birth on the basis of the appearance of the genitalia. Each category provides a gender identity, gendered sexual orientation, marital and procreative status, a gendered personality structure, gender beliefs and attitudes, gender at work and family roles. All these social components of are supposed to be consistent and congruent with one's biology.

1.3 Difference between Sex and Gender:

The English language distinction between the words sex and gender was first developed in the 1950s and 1960s by British and American Psychiatrists and other medical personnel working with intersex and trans-sexual patients. Since then, the term gender has been increasingly used to distinguish between sex as biological and gender as socially and culturally constructed. The term sex, since classical times, has been used to designate matters related to biology. The term gender has generally been used in social or cultural contexts. Sex is a biological categorization based primarily on reproductive potential, whereas gender is the social elaboration of biological sex.

Sex is based in a combination of anatomical, endocrinal and Chromosomal features and the selection among these criteria for sex assignment is based very much on cultural beliefs about what actually makes someone male or female. Thus the very definition of the biological categories male and female, and people's understanding of themselves and others as male or female, is ultimately social.

The fundamental differences between sex and gender can be presented as follows:

SEX	GENDER
➢ Sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women. It also includes genetic differences. ➢ Biological sex is determined by genetic and anatomical characteristics. .	➢ Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behavior, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. ➢ Gender is an acquired identity that is learned, changes over time, and varies widely within and across cultures.
➢ From the aforesaid perspective sex is fixed and based in nature.	➢ From the aforesaid perspective gender is fluid and based in culture.
➢ Sex is a more scientific term that explains physical traits and sexual preferences.	➢ Gender carries a more social tone. It refers to the different clothing, activities, career choices, and positions people hold in society.
➢ Sex refers to biological differences; chromosomes, hormonal profiles, internal and external sex organs.	➢ Gender describes the characteristics that a society or culture delineates as masculine or feminine.
➢ Sex categories "male" and "female".	➢ Gender categories include "masculine" and

	"feminine".
➤ Aspects of sex don't vary substantially between different human societies.	➤ Aspects of gender vary with societies with varying cultures.
➤ Sex is imbibed identity; it is one's biological identity and is biologically assigned.	➤ Gender is acquired identity, socially learned expectations and behavior culturally transmitted.
➤ Some sexual manifestations can be found from the reproductive abilities of women and physical features.	➤ Some gender manifestations can be found through the activities women perform in the society.

Thus, Gender is not something we are born with, and not something we have, but something we do , something we perform. Sex is a biological categorization based primarily on reproductive potential, whereas gender is the social elaboration of biological sex. Gender builds on biological sex, but it exaggerates biological difference, and it carries biological difference into domains in which it is completely irrelevant. Sex is based in a combination of anatomical, endocrinal and chromosomal features, and the selection among these criteria for sex assignment is based very much on cultural beliefs about what actually makes someone male or female. Thus the very definition of the biological categories and people's understanding of themselves and others as male or female, is ultimately social. **Anne Fausto-Sterling** (2000) sums up the situation as follows: labelling someone a man or a woman is a social decision.

1.4 Gender Inequality and Difference:

Gender inequality refers to disparity between individuals due to gender. It is the process where there is differential treatment and dividends for both the gender groups. It is normally noted in the social structure that

the women are debarred, deprived, disadvantaged and marginalized in terms of their rights, reaches to the like resources and life opportunities. They are segregated and their visibility, voice is always low in comparison to their male counterparts. Gender differences are the typical differences between men and women. Gender differences are predecessors to gender inequalities and sometimes gender inequalities heighten gender differences. Culture, social processes, social institutions which are the components of the social structure largely stimulate gender inequality.

So far as the culture is concerned, uniformly and universally every culture provides a higher weight age to the males in comparison to the females. Females are stigmatized to avail opportunities and to prove their worth. Culture of silence is accepted as the standard ideal for the females. The social processes also permeate gender inequality. Right from the socialization process to stratification and communication, gender discriminations are quite discernible. So far institutions are concerned educational institutions, in health sector, family, in economy, in media, in political institutions, the unequal and inferior status of women is vividly manifested. Thus social structure through its components generates and upholds gender inequality.

1.4.1 Culture and Gender Inequality:

Culture is part of the fabric of every society. It shapes "the way things are done" and our understanding of why this should be so. Culture is the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. It includes arts, literature, and modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

Gender is a cultural construct. Expectations about attributes and behaviours appropriate to women or men and about the relations between women and men are shaped by culture. Gender identities and gender relations are critical aspects of culture because they shape the way daily life is lived in the family, in the wider community and the workplace.

Gender (like race or ethnicity) functions as an organizing principle for society because of the cultural meanings given to being male or female. This is evident in

the division of labour according to gender. In most societies there are clear patterns of "women's work" and "men's work," both in the household and in the wider community - and cultural explanations of why this should be so. The patterns and the explanations differ among societies and change over time.

Every culture prescribes its own expectations from the males and the females. Culture stipulates different norms of socialization and positioning the male and the female, defining their functions and interrelations. In most of the societies the culture expects men to be independent and women to be dependent, men as competent and women as complacent, men as bread winners and women as victims and sex objects, men as superior and women as inferior. Thus, the culture prescribes the dos and don'ts for the male and the females.

The culture not only delineates the expectations but also prescribes the norms of socialization. It brings a clear-cut distinction in the prescription and practice of socialization for the children on the basis of their sex. The parents right from the beginning call the boys in some names which are earmarked as boys names and so also the girls in some particular names which the culture prescribes as girls names. In the matters of providing dress the gender distinction is imposed, so also in providing toys, in decorating their bedrooms. The culture also intends the agencies of socialization to teach different manners to the children on the basis of their sex. The gender based manners required by a boy includes adventure, assertive, aggressive independent, task oriented while for the girls it is to become sympathetic, sensitive, sober, dependent, emotional and people oriented.

So far as the cultural prescriptions of the positioning of the gender groups are concerned, almost all cultures put the men at superior positions and women as subordinates. This syndrome is found in the family, in the community, in neighbourhood, in co-educational schools, in work places, in religious institutions. Even in the matters of politics, the culture refers a man to be a leader and a woman to be a follower. A man is expected to be the power wilder, while a female as powerless. Similarly according to the cultural norms, property remains in the name of males and the women are never the owners of property. Thus culture promotes gender inequality but the process of modernization is now changing culture to bring gender equity.

1.4.2Social Processes and Gender Inequality:

Social processes are the fundamental activities through which people interact and establish social relationships. To quote **Horton and Hunt,** "The term Social process refers to the repetitive form of behaviour which is commonly found in social Life". Thus, social process consists of sequence of events, repetition of events, relationships between the events, continuity of events and special result. The vital and universal social processes of the society include socialization, social stratification, communication and social change where instances of gender inequality are vividly noted.

Society expects different attitudes and behaviours from boys and girls. Gender socialization is the tendency for boys and girls to be socialized differently. Boys are raised to conform to the male gender role and girls are raised to conform to the female gender role. A gender role can be defined as a set of behaviours, attitudes, activities and personality characteristics expected and encouraged of a person based on his or her sex. Gender socialization is the process of learning the social expectations and attitudes accepted as appropriate for one's sex. Sociologists explain the significance of gender socialization by suggesting that males and females behave differently in the society because they are taught different gender roles. Gender socialization is often described as a more focused form of socialization where children of different sex groups are socialized into the gender roles they are expected to perform.

Gender socialization begins right from the birth of a child with the vital question posed "Is it a boy or a girl"? The agencies of socialization like family, peer group, schools, and media play a significant role in the process of gender socialization.

A good example of gender socialization is when a girl is asked to be sober and polite in her dealings and a boy is instructed to be smart and dashing. Sometimes gender socialization generates inequality in the society. However, it can be concluded that gender socialization is simply teaching the gender stereotypes to children right from the beginning. Stereotypes refer to the society's shared knowledge of customs, myths, ideas, religion. Social psychologists feel that the stereotype is an important

component of an individual's social knowledge. Stereotypes influence human behaviour. Stereotypes are thus the institutionalized knowledge that are learned, transmitted and changed through the process of socialization. A stereotype is defined as an unvarying form or pattern, specifically a fixed or conventional notion or conception of a person, group which prevent development of individuality and block the individual to get out of it. For e.g. the traditional role of women to cook, clean and care children and the men to earn a living and support their families are gender stereotypes which still continue to dominate the society. Stereotypes are rooted in cultural practices and are transmitted from one generation to the other.

Gender stereotypes are injected into our cognitive processes. Stereotypes create share "mental pictures" which perpetuate as dominant values reinforced by the society.

Gender socialization is not spontaneous. Certain institutions play a significant role in promoting gender socialization. The prominent institutions in gender socialization include the family, peer group, school and the media.

So far as stratification is concerned, it is again gendered in character. Men and women are polarized through stratification. Then they are ranked. Gender stratification refers to the ranking of the sexes in such a way that women are unequal in power, resources, prestige, or presumed worth. Gender stratification generates social inequalities and gender differential in the distribution of power, prestige and property. Due to gender stratification different rights, responsibilities, reaches and relationships emerge between men and women. The availability of opportunities, accessibility to such opportunities and affordability for such opportunities become variant for men and women. Life resources, life opportunities are better available, accessible to men and become better affordable by them in comparison to females.

So far as responsibility sharing and role performance are concerned, women though perform difficult, prolonged roles and have heavy responsibilities, they often go invisible and unrewarded. On the other hand male's works and responsibilities are highly valued and heavily paid.

Communication is the chief process that maintains social stability, order and inters connectedness. Language is the chief vehicle of communication. Language itself exhibits its gender bias and generates gender inequality. Language perpetuates male dominance by ignoring, trivializing and sexualizing women. Use of the pronoun he when the sex of the person is unspecified and of the generic term mankind to refer to humanity in general are obvious examples of how the English language ignores women. Common sayings like:

- ➢ "That's women's work" (as opposed to "that's men's work)
- ➢ Jokes about women drivers.
- ➢ Phrases like "Women and children first" or "wine, women and song" are trivializing.
- ➢ Women, more than men, are commonly referred to in terms that are sexual connotations.
- ➢ Terms referring to men (studs, jocks) that do not have sexual meanings imply power and success, whereas terms applied to women (broads, dogs, chicks) imply promiscuity or being dominated.
- ➢ In fact, the term promiscuous is usually applied only to women, although its literal meaning applies to either sex.

Social change is another social process which brings alteration in the existing social order. The process of social change is always assumed to be engineered by men. Stewardship in social movements leading to change is always taken by the males. Reformers are often males. The change always becomes eager to bring better conditions for the males while for the females they have a reservation to maintain the status-quo. Even-if changes are designed to cover both the sex groups; the women lag behind in the process of change.

1.4.3 Social Institutions and Gender Inequality:

Social institutions have their prototype gender treatment procedure which lay the foundation of gender inequality. Family is the first institution which the child encounters. In the family right from infancy through early childhood and beyond, children learn what is expected of boys and girls, and they learn to behave according to those expectations. Girls and boys are perceived and treated differently from the

moment of birth. Parents describe new born daughters as tiny, soft and delicate, and sons as strong and they interact differently with new born daughters and sons in the family. How parents treat their children may be the most important factor in the creation of sex stereotypes. When one compares the life of the young girl to that of the young boy, in the family a critical difference emerges:

➢ Girl is treated more protectively and she is subjected to more restrictions and controls.
➢ Boy receives greater achievement demands and higher expectations.
➢ Girl infants are more talked to.
➢ Girls are the objects of more physical contact such as holding, rocking, caressing, and kissing.

Fathers provide the strongest pressures for gender specific behaviour. They reward their daughters and give them positive feedback for gendered behaviour. With their sons they use more negative feedback and punish them for gender inappropriate behaviour.

Mothers are more likely to reinforce behaviour of bother boys and girls with rewards and positive feedback. Similarly the role performance of the father and mother in the family on gender basis has an implicit impact on the children. They find the mother within the domestic arena and the father in outdoor economic pursuits. They find the mother with them, in the kitchen, in discharging the household chores while they find the father deciding the family budget, disbursing the money, and staying outside the house for lingering hours. This brings the picture of gender differentiation in the child.

Further, gender inequality is created by the family when children of different sex groups are treated differently in their food, fashion, and provision of education.

Next to family, the child gets exposed to the school. School practices are also gender biased in character which strengthens gender inequality. The major areas associated with the school are class room transactions, dresses, teachers' attitude, curriculum, primers, sports and exposures in which gender differential practices are noticed.In the class rooms of almost schools separate sittings arrangements are made for the boys and girls. School choir groups are primarily dominated by girls. Teachers

frequently invite the boys to the black boards and teachers' tables, but girls rarely appear there. Teachers thus react differently to the girls and boys. They have different kinds of contact and expectations from boys and girls. Boys receive more attention from teachers and are allowed to talk in the class. More answers in mathematics and science are expected from the boys by the teachers while more answers in literature, social sciences are expected from the girls. Tasks like greeting the guests by escorting them to the stage or the venue are allotted to the boys, while garlanding the guests become the allotted tasks of the girls. Opening the keys of the class rooms, fetching water, dismantling and organizing the desks, boards fall into the domain of the boys works while cleaning, sweeping, decorating the class rooms are the regular duties of the girls. Teachers' provide heavy physical punishment to the boys while vocal rebuke is afflicted on the girls.

Society's expectation again gets reflected in the curriculum and primers. Business studies, Industrial drawings, Mathematics are optional subjects preferred for the boys while Home Science, Physiology, Home Economics; Crafts, Music are optional subjects which girls are encouraged to take. So far as vocational education are concerned boys are required to opt for woodwork, mechanics and taught skills while girls are taught cooking, gardening, sewing and secretarial skills. School primers are found to be lacking gender neutrality. Female figures are lesser visible in comparison to male figures. Boys' outdoor activities, outdoor economic pursuits and adventures are glorified in the stories while girls' indoor activities, passive nature are idealized. Men leading and women following, men at work and women as care givers are portrayed in many primers.

School sports clearly generate gender inequality. Playing with opposite gender groups is discouraged. Boys are encouraged to play outdoor games, in larger groups, competitive games, while girls are encouraged to play indoor games, in small homogenous groups, in collaborative games. Games are meant to promote toughness and aggressiveness in the boys while games are used to promote tolerance and accommodative qualities in girls. Horse riding, shooting are promoted among boys while chess, badminton are encouraged for girls. Exposure visits, school representations are encouraged for boys and discouraged for the girls. Thus, school practices silently but strongly promote gender inequality.

The economic institution of the society out and out generates gender inequality. Production system is male dominated; higher share of consumption is undertaken by males and the distribution system favours males. The employment market is male friendly and the entire organized sector is male dominated. While the informal sector accommodates more women, ownership of property and larger share of income goes to the males and women seldom have an ownership in their names. To quote **Eitzen** and **Baca – Zinn** (2003) "Women perform 60% of work worldwide, they earn 10% of income and own 10% of the land". Of late the ILO has noted most women are home based workers. They are often unpaid, underpaid, deferred paid and in many household economic activities they are the invisible hands which goes unrecognized. Women lack adequate skill and training, potentiality for mobility and they became the immediate victims of labour displacement. So, there is a "feminization of poverty".

Women are segregated from the decision making process. They suffer from political apathy and the rate of political participation among them is perceptibly low. Their voice in the political forum is limited due to under representation and lack of political knowledge. Thus, their visibility is nominal and vigilance is absent among them. Thus, political institutions generate gender inequality.

The mass media too reflect society's assumption about gender. Media defines the lives of women in terms of men. Advertisements portray women as beautiful, comfort seeking and luxury crazy while males as hardy, toiling. Media becomes more vociferous about male achievements and adventures and project women as low achievers and there is a feeble representation of female adventures. Stories about men adorn the media while women as victims of violence get media coverage.

Thus, social institutions through their operating mechanism create and perpetuate gender inequality. Most social institutions are male dominated and male driven which provide scanty space to the women and strengthen gender inequality.

Various development institutions have built on this concept to develop their own `working definitions` of the term gender equality, as part of the global ` gender mainstreaming` initiatives which have been taking place since the 1990. It is a priority area in the national agendas of different nations. Constitutions of different

nations make provisions for ensuring gender equality. Legal safeguards are created to secure better opportunities for women to bring them in par with men. Programmes are designed to promote gender equality and institutions are created to safeguard the interests of women and prevent the practice of gender difference. Some achievements have been made in this direction, yet lot is to be done to create a gender equal environment.

1.5 Public and Private Dichotomy

The Western tradition sees the world as composed of two spheres: the public, and the private. Public sphere comprises of the system of governance, power play, regulations and legal protections. Private sphere on the other hand, refers to the arena where domestic responsibilities dominate; there is the absence of power, lack of regulation and legal protection coverage. The public/private division originates from classical liberal political philosophy. The public political sphere is the realm of the government, while the private, apolitical sphere is that of family, home, and sexuality. According to the liberal tradition, the two spheres also correspond with the two sexes. The public is the realm of men. The justifications being the men are the traditional breadwinners and are assumed to be the rational and political sex. The private is the realm of women who are considered as the care givers and irrational and politically ignorant and incompetent. This, public private dichotomy has all throughout proved detrimental to the plights of women.

There is no clear record of the origin of this public/private division. It is sometimes claimed that it had its root in the primitive community itself. In the primitive society, the male-hunter-gatherer strolled along burdened with his spear and a throwing stick, his female mate trudged along after him carrying their infant, their shelter, their food supplies and her digging stick. It appears that, from the moment of the development of human interaction and language, women have always been associated with the private, and men with the public.

The liberal political origins of the public private concept lie in the writings of the social contract theorists. These theorists attempted to explain the new social order that emerged from social contract comprised two spheres : one, public and political and the other, private and away from politics. Only men were deemed to possess the capacities for citizenship and so the public realm was necessarily a masculine one. While women were beings whose sexual embodiment prevented them from

having the same political standing of men. Thus the men through their monopolization of public sphere were privileged than the women.

Feminist writers debating public –private dichotomy have undertaken historical or anthropological analyses of its origin and development. The concept of the public and private has also had a role in the development of theories of women's subordinated status. Some feminist writers propose Marx's theory also explain women's secondary status in the public sphere. Similarly theories of patriarchy explain the nature of women's subordination and her activities being confined to the private sphere. Since the Industrial Revolution in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, men have been defined as the money-making workers and women as the child-bearing emotional support for men.

These empirical studies on a range of issues reveal that the public and the private are not to be taken as separate realms, as binary opposites, but that the public and private are mutually interdependent set of social relations. Studies on gender, household work, and paid work have shown that men's advantaged position in paid work cannot be understood separately from the fact that women continue to perform the bulk of housework and childcare.

Research studies have analysed the effects that construction of the public and the private have on women's and men's experiences and opportunities. In a study by Lister in 1997 examines how the ideology of the public and the private has effectively served to exclude women from the category of citizen. This has got consequences for their political participation, created economic dependency, and increased the rate of domestic violence, rape or sexual harassment for women. Thus public private dichotomy or binary:

- Perpetuates gender hierarchy.
- Legitimizes male domination of the state and institutions.
- Perpetuates patriarchy.
- Strengthens sexist assumptions.
- Gives birth to gender inequality and social exclusion of women.

1.6 Sexual Division of Labour:

The sexual division of labour is a basic structural element in human social organization. Humans are the only primates who have evolved their sexual division of labour. Sexual division of labour is traditionally seen as a natural arrangement

that forms the basis of all economic specialization and social structure leading to the formation of kinship groups and the family. In the terminology of Talcott Parsons, it is a term referring to the specialized gender roles of male bread winner and female housewife. This sexual division of labour strengthens the public private dichotomy.

Ideology, biology and culture contribute significantly towards creating this gender based division of labour. Male and female have different biological make-ups. Chromosomal and hormonal differences make males and females physically different. This brings difference in their physical abilities. Males are taller, heavier and more muscular while females are shorter, lighter and are less muscular. Accordingly tasks are provided to them right from the primitive era. Murdock observes there are different tasks for men and women which have become mere universals. Males right from the nomadic era are allotted with tasks like hunting large animals, cleaning and tilling large patches of land, metal works, wood and bone works, boat building and trapping. Tasks accorded to the females include food production, cooking, collecting fruits, carrying water, caring infants. Reproduction is accepted as the specialization of women. While production is taken as the specialized skill of men and the use of plough pulled more men to agriculture, food processing is traditionally allotted to women.

Ideologically the common mindset remains that women have lesser cognitive ability in comparison to males. Therefore, the public works and activities involving the manipulation of power, property and prestige are delegated to them. They are taken as the sole prerogatives of the males. Decision making, creating and recreating consumable goods and commanding social prestige are only possible through male endeavour. So, public sphere is denied to the women and domestic sphere is assigned to them. It is believed that in domestic arena the tasks are more natural; routine bound which do not require much mental activities. So, the prevalent ideology assigns private sphere to the women and public sphere to the men.

Cultural explanations of sexual division of labour have been explained in the previous pages particularly the structural differences created by sex based socialization process, the role distribution mechanisms, the agencies of socialization, communication, and media reinforce the sexual division of labour.

1.7 Production and Reproduction Interfaces:

The production and reproduction dichotomy represents the double standard adopted in devising division of labour on gender basis. Paid works signify production (assigned to the males) while unpaid works such as rearing and care works assigned to the women represent activities associated with reproduction. The employment market is not gender neutral. It prefers and is supportive to the males. The normal notion of the society is that production activities generate an economic return. So, it is the privilege of the males. On the other hand, reproduction activities are biological in origin and don't have any economic yield. So, reproduction is the duty of the woman. Associated with reproduction activities is the role of mother, wife, and the ultimate caretaker of domestic life, which undermines the vital role a woman can play. Reproduction and feminity go hand in hand while production and masculinity are interchangeable with each other. This sources and conforms to the public private dichotomy.

This production, reproduction and role assignment at home determines the precise nature of women's economic and social experiences.

The reproduction ability of women is never glorified rather is used to arrest her production capacity. The ongoing practice of the society clearly suggests reproduction generates tenacity for home confinement of the women and brings limited representation in the production system. This becomes evident from certain parameters that can be discussed in the following lines.

The parameters are:

- Sex segregation in families.
- Sex segregation in workplace.
- Split labour market.
- Earning differentiation.
- Disparity in security coverage.
- Glass ceiling.
- Sectoral distribution.

1.7.1Sex Segregation in the Families:

The production reproduction dichotomy has its first manifestation in the family. The men are allotted with outdoor economic activities. Fulfilling the material needs of the family, taking vital decisions for the family are the unwritten duties of the males, while the women have a feeble role in this. The women's reproductive ability imposes them to become good wives, mothers, caregivers and family managers. Cooking, cleaning, carrying fuel, fodder, water are their earnest duties. Their physical power is glamorized in providing difficult jobs but within the four walls of their household. They lack bargaining power and are denied to demand for any economic return. This sex segregation in the families is a clear evidence of the public private dichotomy.

1.7.2Sex Segregation in the Workplace:

The production reproduction bifurcation or the public private dichotomy comes to limelight when women are systematically segregated in their workplaces. Women are found to be concentrated in stereo typed jobs. Gender segregation in occupations relates to the different work that men and women do as a consequence of their patterns of socialisation, identifying tasks traditionally seen as 'women's work' or 'men's work'. The occupational segregation is caused by gender bias based on stereotypical, biological and social differences between men and women. The concentration of men and women in different kinds of jobs is known as occupational segregation. Two kinds of gender segregation have been identified: horizontal segregation and vertical segregation.

Horizontal segregation is where the workforce of a specific industry or sector is mostly made up of one particular gender. An example of horizontal segregation can be found in construction, where men make up the majority of the industry's workforce, whereas childcare is almost exclusively a female occupation.

Vertical segregation is where opportunities for career progression within a company or sector for a particular gender are narrowed. Vertical segregation affects women far more than men.

Women till today dominate the pink collar occupations. There are certain jobs which are designated as female jobs and these are known as soft, pink collar jobs while the

male are positioned in hard, white collar jobs. Clerical jobs, sales jobs, front office jobs, sewing waitress jobs, domestic helps, nurses and primary school teachers are clustered by women while top executive jobs, management positions, technical occupations are monopolized by males in greater numbers.

1.7.3 Split Labour Market:

Labour market itself has its gender orientation. It takes the production, reproduction prescriptions to favour males on the pretext that they are economically more vibrant and contributing than the females. The labour market holds women's socialization is for child rearing, domestic management and they have a lower aspiration in comparison to the males. Women's commitment to family is an accepted value while males devotion to and innovations in workplace are given better weight age. So, the labour force accommodates more men, and men for heavy, non-traditional, technical activities. Further, women become the immediate as well as ultimate victim of labour displacement. Man's displacement is given a second thought with the idea that he is the breadwinner and upon his labour force participation depends the survival of the entire family.

1.7.4 Earning Discrepancies:

The sex based division of labour produces earning discrepancies between men and women. Men are conceived to be at the pivot of production while women as the centre of reproduction. Though mainstreaming efforts are on for women in the labour market, the traditional mindset has not been completely eroded. Till now, women are fitted into lower paid jobs, devote less time to production and concentrate more on domestic management and due to reproduction responsibilities lack adequate skill and training which fetch them lesser pay than men.

1.7.5 Disparities in Security Coverage:

Women are least covered by security measures. As women are less accommodated in organized sectors, they fail to enjoy social security. Women are accommodated in large numbers in informal sector where social security is absolutely absent. Further, hire and fire, vulnerabilities and exploitation are maximum for women which they accept because of their informal sector work. They have seldom a union for collective bargaining.

1.7.6 Glass Ceiling:

Glass ceiling becomes a common practice for the women in corporate professions. It refers to the practice by which women are prevented to go up in the corporate hierarchies. Job mobility is restricted for them on the grounds that they remain off the corporate ramp to build families and they fail to devote lingering time to their corporate profession. Again glass ceiling operates on the production reproduction contradictions.

1.7.7 Sectoral Distribution:

Women are pushed into the primary and tertiary sectors and secondary sector participation is low among them. In the same vein, in the organized sector, their visibility is low while in the unorganized sector, their participation is perceptively higher. Thus, division of labour in society is gender based. Reproduction and production stamps bring differentiation in labour force participation among men and women. Glorified reproduction ability of women undermines their production potentiality which ultimately casts an impact on their economic participation and benefit sharing. This results in "feminization of poverty" and relegates women into a secondary status.

However, feminists have long raised their voice against this production reproduction dichotomy and public private debate. Of late, the mainstreaming effort of the Government is trying to collapse such barriers. Yet, all women have not come across such barriers to take up vigorous public and production role. The society has to take up a new vision of women where women's reproduction role is to be combined with production and partnership roles to bring gender equality in division of labour.

From the beginning of first wave feminism and the fight for women's suffrage, women have been using politics to enter the public realm of men, thus challenging the stark division between public man and private woman. A goal of the feminist movement has been to create equality between the sexes, both in the public and private spheres of life. In doing so, the gendered spaces of men and women have become blurred. The mantra of second wave feminism, "the personal is political," signifies the first attempt to break down the gendered division between the private

sphere attributed to women and the public sphere of men. Carol Hanisch coined the slogan, "The Personal is Political". It suggests dominant positions of men are not confined to public life but all aspects of life represent the power relationship.

With the creation of the first international women's rights treaty, the public/private divide began to break down. The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) began to bridge the gap between the public and private, holding states parties accountable for rights violations committed in the private sphere, by private actors. The treaty, adopted in 1979, prohibits all forms of discrimination in all areas of life, including within the home. The treaty does not permit discrimination against women under the guise of culture or tradition. No doubt, due to the gender transformative policies the public- private dichotomy is in a process of transition now.

1.8 Patriarchy as Ideology and Practice:

Patriarchy is a form of society where power is deposited with the fathers. It is the opposite term of matriarchy. This form of social organization is universally found in most of the societies. It represents the men as supreme and women as subordinates so far as power, control and decision making are concerned. Under patriarchy form of social organization, the woman is not only subordinated to the man, but falls victim to myriad forms of disadvantages, deprivations, discriminations, exploitations and oppressions. Patriarchy legitimizes and institutionalizes male dominance. Thus, patriarchy is a social system in which a father is the head of the family. Ownership of property and surname are traced through the male line, and men have legal or social authority over women and children. It is a social organisation that grants power to men and oppresses women through political, social and economic institutions with the harmful effect of gender binary.

Patriarchy literally means the rule of the father in a male dominated family. It is a social and ideological construct that considers men, the patriarchs or the fathers as superior to the women. **Sylvia Walby** in "Theorizing Patriarchy" calls it "a system of social structure and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women". Patriarchy creates a hierarchical social structure on the basis of gender where the man is positioned higher than the woman. It creates unequal power relations where the man becomes the repository of power and controls women's production, reproduction and sexuality. Family, kinship network, state, religion and

media perpetuate the culture of patriarchy by promoting male domination and women's subordination. Patriarchy gives birth to double standards for men and women in different spheres of life.

Patriarchal societies champion the ideology of motherhood and visualise woman as the prime caregiver. These societies restrict women's mobility and burden them with the responsibilities to nurture and rear children. The traditionalist view accepts patriarchy as biologically determined and as the biological functions of men and women are different, the social roles and tasks assigned for women are also different.

Patriarchy is a universal phenomenon, but the degree of its operation is not uniform. Its magnitude varies in terms of class, caste, religion, region, ethnicity and the prophecy and practice adopted by a group. Patriarchy again exhibits intra group variations depending upon space, species and time. Within a class it varies on the basis of religion and region, within a caste it varies on the basis of the exposure and access of women to education, economic resources.

1.8.1 Origin of the Institution of Patriarchy:

It is believed patriarchy emerged from the biological differences between men and women. Particularly, the biological advantages of women to bear children created differential social tasks and assigned them the responsibilities like motherhood, nurturing, educating and raising children by becoming entirely devoted to families. To quote Sigmund Freud for women "anatomy is destiny" and it is women's biology which determines their psychology, productive ability and roles. In the same vein Heywood suggests the social differentiation between men and women basically emerge from their biological distinction. Feminists challenge patriarchy. They argue that the biological difference might lead to some difference in their roles, but the former should not become the basis of a sexual hierarchy in which men are dominant. The feminists propose patriarchy is man-made and has developed historically by the socio-economic and political processes in society.

Another view suggests invasion and expansion ventures strengthened patriarchy. Men were considered befitting for rough journeys and harsh conditions of war fields. Their physical prowess was recognized better to encounter enemies and

expand their territories. So, they were solicited to come out and women were asked to nurture families. These dichotomous tasks brought differentiation and hierarchies where the woman was pushed to lower ranks.

Further, dependence on agriculture and hunting for livelihood required male labour force. The male became designated as the "bread winners" and women as the care takers. Social cleavages based on gender promoted patriarchy.

However, all the differentiations emanate from the biological differences and differences in the psychological make ups of the women to be sympathetic and caring.

1.8.2 Features Arising Out of the Practice of Patriarchy:

Thus, the foregoing discussions clearly indicate that a patriarchal society is male dominated, male identified and male centred. Oppression of women and their subordination are central to the idea of patriarchy. The key features emerging out of the practice of patriarchy can be discussed as below:

- **Patriarchy generate public private dichotomy**:
  It simply implies private realm should be the operational area of women and public realm should be adorned by men.

- **Patriarchy promotes patrilineage and patrilocality**:
In a patriarchal society descent is traced through the Pater or father. The line of inheritance passes from the father to the son which is called patrilineage. Further, the patriarchal order is patrilocal where the wife and off springs stay in the father's home.

- **Patriarchy entails male's control over women's sexuality**:
  Men decide the dress code for women. Chores demanding flexibility in body movements are denied to women and her efficiency is derecognized and her employability in non-conventional occupations is restricted. Hostility is inflicted to the women operating machines or riding vehicles. Women are treated as the treasurers of customs, traditions and cultural practices. Their participation as devdasis, practice of fasting are highly valued and permitted

by cultures. In securities are created for her and she is made dependent on the patriarch.

- **Patriarchy controls women's fertility**:
  Women are treated as child producing machines by men. Customary practices demand the preference for male children and permit female feticide, female infanticide and negligence of girl children. Unwed mother are oppressed and excluded in the society and prostitution is looked down upon where the male does not figure though he is intensively involved in putting such stamps on the woman. A woman's wishes and decisions are seldom respected with regard to the time of conception, frequency of conception and the number of children the family desires to have. Her fertility is at man's command.

- **Patriarchy controls women's labour**:
  Patriarchy demands a male order, male supremacy and gender based division of labour. Commanding, controlling and yielding positions are rationed by men while the subservient, implementing and non paying positions are accorded to the women. Employment market favour men than women. Women are put into back breaking and unpaid labour force.

Thus, patriarchy provides centrality to men whereby command and control are cornered by men and women are relegated to subordinate positions in all aspects of life.

1.8.3FEMINIST CHALLENGE TO PATRIARCHY:
Feminists challenge patriarchy. They argue that the biological difference might lead to some difference in their roles, but the former should not become the basis of a sexual hierarchy in which men are dominant. The feminists propose patriarchy is man-made and has developed historically by the socio-economic and political processes in society.

Patriarchy is conceptualized and analysed by several feminist scholars in different ways. They challenge patriarchy. They argue that the biological difference might lead to some difference in their roles, but the former should not become the basis

of a sexual hierarchy in which men are dominant. The feminists propose patriarchy is man-made and has developed historically by the socio-economic and political processes in society. Feminists challenge patriarchy as an instrument to serve the interest of the males. To them patriarchal ideology manifests itself in knowledge, ideology, values and practices prevalent in the society. Some feminists oppose the use of the term "Patriarchy" and prefer it to be replaced by the term "Gender oppression". **Michele Barret** argues sometimes we make a hedonistic use of the term patriarchy indicating its unchanged nature. But with the present efforts at gender mainstreaming, the feminist attempt to ensure gender equity will soon challenge the continuity of patriarchy. Patriarchy is in a process of change though continuity of some features is still noted today.

1.9 Key words: Gender, gender Identity, Gender Role, Sex, Sexual Division of Labour, Patriarchy

1.10 References

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UNIT-I

Review Exercise

Essay Type Questions

1. Describe gender as a social construct.
2. Delineate the ways in which social inequality and differences are perpetuated in the society?
3. What is public–private dichotomy? How does it influence sexual division of labour in society?
4. Write a short essay on "Patriarchy".
5. Examine the gendered character of the social institutions.

Short answer type answers

1. Write a note on Gender vs. Biology.
2. Differentiate between "Sex" and "Gender".

3. Discuss how culture generates gender inequality?

4. Elaborate the theories of gender.

5. Describe the features of "Patriarchy".

UNIT-II

UNIT-2

1.0 OBJECTIVES

2.0 Status of Women through Various Ages

      2.1 Ancient Period:

      2.1.1 The Rigvedic Period

    2.1.2 The Age of the Atharva, Sama and Yajur Veda

    2.1.3 The Age of Upanishads

   2.1.4 The Status of Women in the Epics

   2.1.5 Women in Dharmashastras and Puranas

  2.1.6 Women during the Buddhist Period

  2.1.7 Jainism and Women

      2.2 Medieval Period

     2.2.1 Women during Bhakti Movement

  2.3 Women in Modern India

  2.3.1 Women in British India

  2.3.2 Social Reform Movements and Women in India

  2.3.3 The Nationalist Movement and Women in India

  2.3.4 Growth of Women's Organizations

  2.3.5 Enactment of Social Legislations

2.4 Status of Women in Post- Colonial Period

2.4.1 Women's Journey in India: From Preventions to Privileges

2.4.2 Socio-Religious Institutions and the Status of Women in India

2.5 India's Pluralism: A Challenge to the Status of Women

2.5.1 Status of Tribal Women in India

2.5.2 Status of Dalit Women in Modern India

2.6 Key Words
2.7 References

This unit centres on the discussion on the status of women in India in various ages. The status of women in India has not remained consistent all throughout history. Rather, it has undergone changes from time to time. The basic objective of the unit is to impress upon the readers how status of women is conditioned by the dominant religious, social and cultural traditions of different times. It also will focus on the fact how in a heterogeneous country in India the status of women varies from community to community and across region and religion. In this context, the entire Indian history is divided into three broad phases, i.e. The ancient period, the medieval period and the modern period. The ancient period refers to the period of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the epics and the period of Buddhism and Jainism. The medieval period basically refers to the period of Islamic invasion and Islamic regime. The modern period spans from the beginning of the colonial era to the present day. The status of women in the modern period will cover their status during the colonial and post colonial or post independence time.

1.0 Objectives:

After studying this unit, you can

- Have a broad idea about the position of women in Indian society in different ages.
- Develop an impression about the factors affecting the status of women in different periods of time.
- Assess the position of women in different groups or communities.
- Estimate the role of institutions in influencing the position of women.

2.0 Status of Women through Various Ages

The development of women in a society is always indexed by the status accorded to its women folk. The better the status of women, the better is their development. However, the status of women is not constant through the ages. Particularly in a country like India, which has witnessed many political upheavals and alien invasions, the status of women has always remained in a flux. Because, the socio political and cultural climate of the country has undergone changes depending upon the regime, religious traditions developed in different times. Therefore the status of women in India can be best described by depicting their positions and plights in different ages. In this context, it is worthwhile to mention here that the status can be delineated in three different eras. They are: the ancient age, the middle age and the modern age which includes the colonial period and the post colonial period.

2.1 Ancient Period:

The ancient period is said to be the period of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the epics. During this period, the Indian social structure was conditioned by the prescriptions made by the Vedas, the Upanishads and the epics which were considered to be guiding documents for functioning of the society and were prescribing the normative order of the society.

There were four Vedas like Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Artharva veda. The Rigveda was the first ancient document of the Aryans. According to the famous historian Max Muller the age of Rigveda approximately extends from 2500B.C. to 1500 B.C. Max Muller divides the Vedic literature in four periods. Those periods are:

- The Chhands Period
- The Mantra Period
- The Bhraman Period and
- The Sutra Period

2.1.1 In the Rigveda, women were described as spiritual and divine beings. The Rig Veda makes it quite clear that during this period child

marriage was not prevalent and girls were getting married after reaching puberty. This becomes evident through the frequent reference made to unmarried girls. During this period, marriage between brothers and sisters were prohibited. The girls had considerable freedom to choose their life partners. Bride price and dowry practices were tabooed. The woman was respected not only in her parental house but in her in-laws place and wielded some authority in her husband's family. She was taken as a part and parcel of the religious practices and her active participation in the sacrificial offerings was solicited. During this period, the practice of sati did not exist, remarriage of widows was permitted, and women enjoyed considerable freedom in economic activities like agriculture and manufacture of bows. Women moved around freely and attended public feasts and dances. These references are available from the works of Grammarians such as Katyayana and Patanjali.

According to different studies on position of women during the Rig Vedic period, it becomes apparent that women enjoyed considerable degree of freedom right from their childhood. This indicates that the Ridvedic period valued the women equally with the men. They were given absolute freedom to select their own husbands. So, it seems that the Rig-Vedic period valued women's choice, freedom and opinion. Marriage did not put an end to the freedom enjoyed by the women. Rather, according to the Rigvedic hymn, the status of daughter –in –law was equally an elevated one in her in- laws place. As per the text, she was treated as either an empress or a Samrajni and was given equal importance among the members of the husband's family including father-in-law, husband and brother-in-law. So, the male female discrimination in position, power and prestige did not figure during this period.

 The Rig Veda, considered the girl as auspicious. There was no gender consideration. So, the girl child was equally welcomed to the family. Girls were allowed to enjoy equal rights with the boys. The family had the responsibility to give her "Sanskaras" to make her a refined member of the society.
Educating the girl child was obligatory for parents. Girl's education was considered essential for her effective role performance not only in the family, but in the larger society. The girls were to attain education till

they attained the age of twenty five years which indicate the high value attached to women and their education.

In Rigveda, the importance of "Bhramhacharya" was quite significant. There were no gender biases in principle and practice. The girl child was allowed to participate in her father's funeral procession which was later on banned for her.

Girls were supposed to wear "Upanayana", the sacred thread that enabled them to acknowledge the divine knowledge and consciousness present within them. They had the privilege to perform religious rights under the guidance of their Guru.

The women were given the prerogative to choose their life partners. This system was known as 'Swayamvar'. No trace of girl-child marriage is available in the Vedic texts. The freedom accorded to the adult girls for selecting their life partners was to enable and empower them to lead a healthy family life. From this it is induced that the Rigvedic society was more or less a gender neutral society where there was no evidence of a "Patriarchal" culture.

Enough care was given when daughters were supposed to get married. Through mantras women were empowered equally as men do. To quote a verse from the Rigveda,

"O women these mantras are given to you equally as to men May your thoughts, too be harmonious. May your assemblies be open to all without discrimination." I (the Rishi) give you these mantras equally as to men and give you all equal powers to absorb (the full powers) of these mantras. (Rigveda, 10,191-3) The parental preference hovered around selecting a learned groom. As Vedas prescribed an educated girl should be married to an equally educated man. Uneducated daughters should also prefer men of learning to fill up the vacuum they suffer from.

After the marriage the bride took up the role of a 'Pathni' of her husband. The pathni was expected to lead her husband life long as a Dharmapathni .The Vedas provided a high position to the women in married life. According to the Vedas, the married woman becomes the virtual manager of the family and the society. In Rigveda, there is the mention of the concept of a Pati Vrata Pathni (devoted wife). A Pati Vrata Pathni (devoted wife) had a high esteem in the society. The Rigveda compared her with the dazzling and glowing "Fire-God". It is

said that when a woman enters in to the institutions of marriage and family, the process is compared with the river entering into the sea. It is indicative of the surrendering and the dedicated nature of the wife who after marriage loses self identity and gets recognition through her husband. But, it was not as matter of imposition, but spontaneous expression.

The married woman was considered as an integral part of the husband in the performance of the Dharma. Without her, the five Mahayagnas were disallowed for the man. She was taken as the core performer of the "Yagna" along with her husband. According to ancient Hindu Scriptures, no religious rite can be performed with perfection by a man without the participation of his wife. Married men along with their wives were allowed to perform sacred rites on the occasion of various important festivals. Wives were thus befittingly called "Ardhangani" (better half). They were given not only important but equal position with men, but were treated as complementary to the men. Mention of it are available in the Rigveda, the Samaveda, the Yajurveda, the Artharva veda. The Chhands Period, the MantraPeriod, the Bhraman Period and the Sutra Period too carried the same view of women so far as the religious activities were concerned. So, during the Vedic period, when the social structure was dominated by religious values and culture, women were given a high value by the society being treated as the chief or core partners of the performance of religious rites along with the men. This bears the clear testimony of the high status given to the women in the society. In the case of widows, Vedas never prescribed for their burning after the death of their husbands. The widows are given equal rights of inheritance as the recognised heir of their husbands' property and treasures. The practice of Sati is nowhere mentioned in the Rig-Veda. Dowry system was there. But it was not a social evil, was just a symbolic practice. During this period, a great honour was accorded to the women.

2.1.2 The Age of the Atharva, Sama and Yajur Veda (1500-600 B.C.):

During this period, freedom of marriage and remarriage of widows continued to be allowed. Son preference was continuing, the sale of a daughter was viewed with extreme disfavour and Sati was not prevalent. The marriage ceremony was the same as in the previous period; dowries were given as a token to the girls at

the time of marriage to enable them to start a new home. The picture of an ideal family life continued. However, during this period, the grip of rituals on society was increasing and so was the importance of the Brahmans. Female workers were involved in some skilled works like dying, embroidery and basket making and there was a gradual decline in their position in comparison to the Rig Vedic Period.

There has been a divided opinion regarding the position of women in the Vedic ages. According to many scholars the Vedas accorded a position of importance to women. There was considerable freedom enjoyed by them in matters of marriage, education etc. William Durant sums up the position of the Vedic woman thus:*"Women enjoyed far greater freedom in the Vedic period than in later India. She had more to say in the choice of her mate than the forms of marriage might suggest. She appeared freely at feasts and dances, and joined with men in religious sacrifice. She could study, and like Gargi, engage in philosophical disputation. If she was left a widow there was no restrictions upon her remarriage."*

But there are other scholars such as Wheeler, Prof. Indra etc., who opine that the Vedic woman was a slave, and the evils such as wife burning, child marriages, *purdah* system etc. had their seeds in the Vedic literature only. But the texts studied in whole, gives the impression that the early Vedic women enjoyed a position of dignity, honour and importance.

2.1.3 The Age of Upanishads:

During this period the marriage between the male of a higher caste and female of a lower caste (anuloma marriage) prevailed. The Griha-sutras give detailed information regarding the rules and rituals of marriage, qualifications of bride and bridegrooms. The rules of Panini regarding Abhi-Vadna (salutation as a mark of respect to elderly persons in the house) brought down the general level of womanly culture and led to deterioration in their status. Marriage was considered as a holy bond and not a contract. The woman held an honoured position in the household and was allowed to sing, dance and enjoy life. Sati was not generally prevalent, widow remarriage was allowed. Preference was given to women's education. Women were engaged in teaching profession, many of whom possessed highest spiritual knowledge. The famous dialogue between Yajnavalkya and his wife Maitreyi and Gargi Vachakhavi show the enlightened

character of the women of that age. The Brihadaranyakopanishat laid down the procedure to beget a learned daughter.

Panini distinguishes between a teacher's wife and a lady teacher while giving the sutras for acharya and acharyani, and upadyaya and upadhyayani. This reveals that there were women who took teaching as a profession. Similarly the words Kathi etc. denote that women had no restriction in studying the Veda. Women wore the sacred thread and performed rituals. Gargi, the famous composer of Vedic hymns was considered a brahmavadini as she requested for the highest spiritual knowledge from her husband instead of material wealth .

Gradually, during this period, the birth of a daughter was regretted and the importance was given to sons, because the conviction was ancestors were worshiped by sons. Purdah system was not prevalent. In the Post Vedic period, the professions open to woman in higher sections of society were teaching, medical healing and business. This shows the close equation and egalitarianism that was prevalent in the society. Though gender preference was taking momentum, yet a considerable degree of freedom was ensured to the women.

Thus, in a nutshell literary and historical researches have revealed and affirmed that women held a position of equality with men during the Vedic period. They never observed 'purdah' (veil) in the Vedic, in the period of the Upanishads and epic periods. They enjoyed freedom in areas such as education, marriage, economic production, spending money, religious activities which are considered as the vital institutions of the society. They enjoyed freedom in selecting their mates (Swayam vara). Love marriages (Gandharva Vivaha) were also permitted.

Widows were permitted to remarry. The custom of Niyoga was prevalent in which a brother or the nearest relative of a deceased husband could marry the widow with the permission of elders. Women were given complete freedom in family matters and were treated as 'Ardhanginis' (Better halves).

Though male children were preferred to female children, daughters were never ill treated. They received education like boys and went through the Brahmacharya discipline including the Upanayana ritual. Women studied the Vedic literature like men and some of them like Lopamudra, Ghosa and Sikata –Nivavari, figure among the authors of the Vedic hymns. Other women scholars of the age included

Vishwavara, Apala, Shashijasi, Indrani, Sasvati, Gargi, Sulabha, Maithreyee etc

In property matters there were disparities between men and women .Women enjoyed limited rights in inheriting property. Each unmarried daughter was entitled to one-fourth share of patrimony received by her brothers. They had control over their "Stridhan" (Gifts and properties received at the time of marriage).As a wife woman had no direct share in her husband's property. As a widowed mother, she had some rights. Thus it could be generalized that the social situation was not in favour of women posessing property, and yet protection was given to them as daughters and wives.

In the religious field, wife enjoyed full rights and regularly participated in religious ceremonies with her husband. Women actively participated in the religious discourses. They could even perform sacrifices by themselves in the absence of their husbands. Thus, access to life resources, social institutions were given to women. Equal opportunities were ensured to them. No visible discrimination was practised against them. Women enjoyed a good quality life with social security and dignity.

2.1.4The Status of Women in the Epics

Women in the epics also had given honorable positions like women of the Vedic age. The two classical epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata have given a respectable place for women. In both of these we find vast references of the expression of courage, strong will power, and valour of women, like Kaikeye, Sita, Rukmini, Satyabhama, Subhadra, Draupathi, Savithri and others.

Gradually,the Epic age witnessed a sharp decline in the conditions of women. Polygamy and polyandry were introduced. King Dasarath, Ravana, Draupadi exemplified polygamy and polyandry.In this way, the images of woman created by the Hindu lore became paradoxical and contradictory in the Mahabharata and Ramayana days. Later Vedic age denied to her reading Vedas and getting education.

There are many references in Mahabharata, according to which women were the origin of all male violence. However, there are also citations which speak about their elevated position and respect which they enjoyed in society. Queen Kaikeyi used to accompany king Dasarath to

the battles. The kings also consulted their queens on political issues. The character of a woman was very high and supreme. The examples of Sita, Savitri, Damayanti, Subhadra etc., demonstrates the perfect character of a woman of this age and their love and sacrifices for their husbands. The philosophical conversation between Yajnavalkya and Gargi in the court of king Janak of Videha and between Yajnavalkya and his wife, bear witness to the high education and status of women. Dr. R. C. Majumdar remarks, "These two incidents eloquently testify the high position, learning and mental equipments of women in ancient India, to which it would be difficult to find a -parallel in the history of the world".

2.1.5 Women in Dharmashastras and Puranas

During the period of Dharmashastras, the position of women underwent a major change. Daughters were regarded as second class citizens. Freedom of women was curtailed. The discontinuance of upanayanam, neglect of education, and the lowering of age at marriage declined the position and status of women.

In the social field pre puberty marriages came to be practiced, widow remarriage was prohibited; husband was given the status of God for a woman, education was totally denied to women, custom of Sati became increasingly prevalent. Purdah system came into vogue and practice of polygyny came to be tolerated. In the economic field, a woman was totally denied and the saying was "a wife and a slave cannot own property". In the religious field, she was forbidden to offer sacrifices, prayers, practice penance, and undertake pilgrimages.

The Puranas also did not look down on women. Whereas the Devi Purana eulogises the Shakti aspect of women, the Brahmavaivarta Purana makes Radha the Conscious Magnetic Force of Krishna. When we turn to the Puranas for such evidence we find in the story of Savitri, the freedom given to her by her father in choosing her husband. And when Narada says that Satyavan will die within a year, Savitri doesn't change her mind. And her father accepts her decision. These incidents amply prove that the Purana women made their own decisions, and were as independent as their men were. If they seemed to play second fiddle to their husbands, it was more by choice than by decree.

During the period of smrutis, a great honour was accorded to the women. Manu, the great law – giver, long ago said, "Where women are honoured, there reside the Gods'. To quote the verse of Manu, *"yatr naryasto pojyantay, ramantay tatr devta [3/56]* .Manu Smriti emphasized that during those time, widows were allowed to marry their husbands' brothers. The honoured status that women enjoyed in the family and society began to undergo radical changes, particularly since the pronouncement by Manu the Hindu law-giver, regarding a woman's changing position through her life cycle. Manu later on proposed that a woman is never independent throughout her life and as such she is never liberated. At every stage of her life cycle she is under the clutch of a male. In childhood she is subject to her father's control, in youth to her husband's dictates and when her husband is dead to her son's directions. This subordinates the position of a woman. Thus, the championing of patriarchal culture had its origin in Manu's writings.

Women started getting deprived of the Upanayana ceremony and thereby of education. Manu relegated her to an entirely subservient position. He preaches self-negation as the highest ideal of a wife. She is asked to serve and worship her husband even if he is not a person of all virtue and character. Since service and worship of the husband are the primary duties of a wife, by so performing she can hope to attain heaven. Manu deprived women of her economic rights also. He said, "A wife, a son and a Slave, these three are declared to have no property, the wealth which they earn is for him to whom they belong".

It appears that Manu had a very poor opinion about women. According to him women should be guarded against her evil inclinations. Otherwise she will bring sorrow to both the families. He also observed that if a woman is chaste, it is because she has not found a proper man, place and opportunity. He, therefore, calls her a 'Pramada, atemptress'.

Thus, in a nutshell literary and historical researches have revealed and affirmed that women held a position of equality with men during the Vedic period. They never observed 'purdah' (veil) in the Vedic and epic periods. They enjoyed freedom in areas such as education, marriage, economic production, spending money, religious activities which are considered as the vital institutions of the society. They enjoyed

freedom in selecting their mates (Swayam vara). Love marriages (Gandharva Vivaha) were also permitted.

Widows were permitted to remarry. The custom of Niyoga was prevalent in which a brother or the nearest relative of a deceased husband could marry the widow with the permission of elders. They however were not able to divorce. Even men did not enjoy that right. Women were given complete freedom in family matters and were treated as 'Ardhanginis' (Better halves).The practice of Sati is nowhere mentioned in the Rig-Veda Dowry was there but it was not a social evil , was just a symbolic practice.

Though male children were preferred to female children, daughters were never ill treated. They received education like boys and went through the Brahmacharya discipline including the Upanayana ritual. Women studied the Vedic literature like men and some of them like Lopamudra, Ghosa and Sikata –Nivavari, figure among the authors of the Vedic hymns. Other women scholars of the age included Vishwavara, Apala, Shashijasi, Indrani, Sasvati, Gargi, Sulabha, Maithreyee etc

In property matters there were disparities between men and women .Women enjoyed limited rights in inheriting property. Each unmarried daughter was entitled to one-fourth share of patrimony received by her brothers. They had control over their "Stridhan" (Gifts and properties received at the time of marriage).As a wife woman had no direct share in her husband's property. As a widowed mother, she had some rights. Thus it could be generalized that the social situation was not in favor of women processing property, and yet protection was given to them as daughters and wives.

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2.1.6 Women during the Buddhist Period

During the period of Buddhism, the status of women improved a little, though there was no tremendous change. Buddha preached social equality and tried to improve their cultural, educational and religious status in the society.Buddhism did not consider women as being inferior to men. Buddhism, while accepting the biological and physical differences between the two sexes, considered the worth of both men and women equal and useful for the society. To the Buddhists, the role of the women is vital as a wife, a good mother in making the family life a success. In the family, Buddhism advocated the equal distribution of responsibilities and the success of a family is dependent upon the dedication and sincerity of both the partners equally. The husband was to consider the wife a friend, a companion, a partner, but not as a subservient member. In family affairs, the wife was expected to be a substitute for the husband when the husband happened to be indisposed. In fact, a wife was expected even to acquaint herself with the trade, business or industries in which the husband engaged, so that she would be in a position to manage his affairs in his absence. This shows that in the Buddhist society the woman occupied an equal position with the husband. Lord Buddha's advice to the King Pasenadi of Kosala, who was a close devotee of his, clearly shows that Buddhism did not consider the birth of a daughter as a cause for worry and despair. Thus the Buddhist religious ideology was pro women and professed for a gender neutral society.

Buddhism did not restrict either the educational opportunities of women or their religious freedom. Buddha unhesitatingly accepted that women are capable of realizing the Truth, just as men are. This is why he permitted the admission of women into the Order, though he was not in favour of it at the beginning because he thought their admission would create problems in the Sasana. Once women proved

their capability of managing their affairs in the Order, Lord Buddha recognised their abilities and talents, and gave them responsible positions in the Bhikkhuni Sangha. The Buddhist texts record of eminent saintly Bhikkhunis, who were very learned and who were experts in preaching the Dhamma. Dhammadinna was one such Bhikkhuni, Khema and Uppalavanna were the two others.

Buddhism never regarded marriage as an inescapable thing for women. Widowhood was not considered disrespectful. Women could pursue education and they were permitted to become "Sanyasis" (saints). The bhikshuni sangha opened new avenues of cultural activities for women. Their political and economic status however remained unchanged.Thus Buddhism tried to lay the foundation of an egalitarian gender culture in the society where the abilities of women was well recognised.

2.1.7 Jainism and Women

In the time of Mahavira, Jainism brought a more enlightened attitude to Indian religious culture. Jainism was a religion of equality. It accepted that women are able to play their part on the road to liberation. But although Jainism is in many ways dedicated to equality, for some Jains a woman's very femaleness creates spiritual inequality.

Women in Jainism are treated within the same code of ethics as that is prescribed for men. However, the status of women in Jainism differs between the two main sects, Digambara sect and Swetambara sect. Svetambaras maintained that women could attain liberation, whereas Digambaras said they could not. Points that support the Svetembara position include: Mahavira ordained many female ascetics, establishing a strong tradition of nuns (though there are few in the Digambara tradition today).Malli, the 19th tirthankara (fordmaker), was a women (though Digambaras say "she" was a man).Marudevi (mother of the first jina, Risabha), was the first person in this time-cycle to attain liberation.

In Jainism, women were banned from being nude in public. The belief was that if women go without clothing, men would experience sexual desires, thus diverting them from divine liberation. In turn, women would feel ashamed, and they would also be denied holy deliverance.Women were believed to be harmful by nature. Their

menstrual blood was considered to be impure in several important Jain texts. The bleeding that occurs in menstruation is thought to kill micro-organisms in the body, making the female body less non-violent than the male body.

Finally, members of the female sex are obliged to take care of children and other dependents such as the aged according to the Jain advocacy. Because by discharging these obligations, women   had more earthly attachments than these men. Thus, to some extent Jainism traced less spirituality in women and treated them as members with more earthly attachments and not suited for liberation.

2.2 Medieval Period:
 Medieval India refers to the postclassical era, i.e. 8th to 17th century CE in the Indian subcontinent. It is divided into two periods: The 'early medieval period' which lasted from the 8th to the 13th century and the 'late medieval period' which lasted from the 13th to the 17th century. The medieval period gave a further set back to the Status of women in India.

The status of women in India deteriorated during the medieval period with the entrance of the Muslims. Several evil practices such as female infanticide, sati and child marriage were practiced during this period. 'Purdah' was introduced to the Indian society. Women were also forced to practice 'zenana.' Polygamy was also common during this period. Women also excelled in literature, music and arts. In the fear of Muslim invaders kidnapping the Hindu girls, the practice of child marriage came into being again. The seduction or kidnap of young girls by the Muslims compelled the parents to arrange their daughters to marry in an early age. This kept the women away from education, and had to suffer from burdened family life in an earlier age.

The glorification of the ideal "pathivrata" made the society prohibit widow remarriage. Child widows had a miserable life. They were denied education and public life. Prohibition of sex-life made a few of them

lead immoral life and some even became prostitutes. To prevent sex offences, child widows were forced to forsake all types of beautification to make them unattractive. The glorification of Pathivrata and the miserable life as a widow made many women to go for Sati. Sati refers to a practice in which the married women used to jump into the funeral pyre of their husbands with the hope of attaining "sadgathi" or "moksha". There were instances were married women are forcibly pushed into the funeral pyre of their husbands. This inhuman practice was imposed on the women and the women even if without their desire were at the receiving end. There was also the horrible practice of "Jauhar" in which the Rajput women used to immolate themselves collectively with a view to protect their chastity.

After the Muslim invasion the Hindu women also forced to wear Purdah (veil) like Muslims women to protect themselves from the sexy look of the invaders. The purdah system led to the complete seclusion of women from education and public life. Devadasi system is another social evil which caused the degradation of Indian women. It is a custom that denies marital opportunity to women in the name of religion insisting them to become devadasis or basavis to serve the God in the temple as dancers and singers. The devadasis and basavis were compelled by circumstances to become prostitutes. This system spoiled the prospects of many young girls in the medieval period.

Muslim women also were in an equally poor position in India. The Muslim community which believes in male dominance could hardly give equal rights to women. Muslim men could marry four women and divorce any wife at will by giving her talaq. Women did not have similar rights. They were restricted from public life, education, cultural and religious activities.

Due to Muslim influence, the position of women went on deteriorating during this period. The feeling of dejection on the birth of a daughter led to female infanticide. Purdah system was introduced and women were compelled to keep themselves within the four walls of their houses with a long veil on their faces. The Islamic custom of Purdah (veiling of women) forced the public world to be separated from the private world, with women confined to the latter. Following its

subjugation by the Muslims, and fearing adverse outcomes for its women, a large part of the Hindu India accepted the practice of veiling.

Monogamy was gradually getting over shadowed by the practice of polygamy. During this period marriage between the same caste was preferred although inter caste marriages were prevalent, and the Arsha form of marriage was most popular, in which the father gave his daughter after receiving a cow and a bull or two pairs from the bridge groom. Extreme emphasis was laid on the physical chastity of women which discouraged widow remarriage, divorce and encouraged the practice of sati. There was a lowering of the age of marriage, girls were not entitled to get educated as before and there was a sharp decline in the position and status of women. Available literature seems to indicate that married women in higher families did not usually appear in public without veils. Repeated invasions by the Muslims further pushed the Indian women towards inhuman "traditions" such as child marriage, the dowry system, purdah and sati (the immolation of the widow on the dead husband's pyre).

The gradual lowering down of the status of women was acute between 500 BC – 500 AD. Several factors contributed for such a trend. These factors are as follows.

➢ **The Introduction of Slavery**: The introduction of slavery not only remained confined to Greece but became adopted in other countries including India. In India the lower caste Sudras became the slaves of the higher castes. So inter caste marriage was strictly banned during this period. But as a matter of practice some Non Aryan Sudra women got married to Aryan higher caste members. But their unfamiliarity with the customs, rituals of the higher castes prevented them from participating in the Vedic rituals. It was decided thereafter to declare the class of women as in-eligible for studying Vedic texts and to undertake Vedic religious activities. This proved detrimental to the status of women in Indian society.

➢ **Complexity of the Vedic Tradition**: Gradually the Vedic tradition was made more complicated and demanded the study of Vedic text for lingering

years. As early marriage for the girls was the tradition of the time, the girls were not allowed to devote such a long period to study the Vedas. This prevented them to undertake Vedic rituals and made them inferior to their male counterparts.

- **Frequent foreign Invasions**: The period of 500 years i.e. 200 BC to 300 AD is considered as a very dark period for northern India. During this period the alien rulers made frequent attacks on India to drain the prosperity and riches of the country. During their attack when they were defeating the kings and capturing the kingdoms, they tried to capture the women and exploit them. So the women were put within the four walls of their households and were not exposed to the outside world. This also restricted the freedom of the women and lowered their status.

- **Sati:** Conquests and its consequences were getting deep on the women. To preserve the dignity of the women, Sati which was confined to the warrior class started became wide spread for other groups. Thus the women's life was tied to the life of her partner and was terminated by self emollition on the funeral pyres of her husband. This limited her freedom, imposed barbaric practices on her and declined her status.

- **Denial of Widow Remarriage**: At one point of time the customary practice of the society became so rigid that it denied widow remarriage. Many widows with or without children had a precarious life and had to depend on the male folk for their survival and sustenance. This increased the female dependency on males and made the women subservient of men.

Thus, during the medieval period, Indian women lost their earlier status and were at the lowest ebb. However, women like Razia Begum rose to become a ruler, Chand Bibi, Tara Bai and Ahaliya Bai Holker, left their great imprints for their ruling capabilities. In Bhopal also, Begums or princesses ruled. With the advent of Islam, once again, women like Jahanara, Begum Mumtaz and Noor Jahan enjoyed respectable positions in the country. These remarkable ladies though strict Muslims, publicly administered justice with their faces covered by veils or burkhas.

2.2.1Women during Bhakti Movement

During this period, 'Bhakti Movement' also spread all over the country. Bhakti movement was an indigenous protest movement.The Bhakti movement originated in seventh-century Tamil Nadu and spreaded northwards. Women like Mira Bai, Mukta Bai, Jana Bai and others contributed to the spiritual life of the country. Sikhism, which emerged during this period, also believed in the equality of women and men. Guru Nanak the founder of Sikhism says: "Within a woman is a man conceived, from a woman he is born, he is married to a woman and with her goes through life.... Why call her bad, she gives birth to kings. None may exist without a woman. Only the one, true God is exterior to woman." Thus the Bhakti cult gave a high position to the women by glamorising her reproductive role.

2.3Women in Modern India:

Modern India spans from British raj in the country and extends up to the present date. So, the status of women during this period can be conveniently discussed under two heads, i.e. women's position during the colonial era and women's position in the post colonial period or in the post- independent India.

2.3.1 Women in British India

British occupation of India began in 1772, and the British crown assumed charge of administering the colony from the British East India Company in 1858. During this period, there was no spectacular change in the status of the common women. They continued to face male domination and atrocities. However, a marked change was noted in the position of higher class women. Particularly, the women from the ruling class could become a ruler or regent of their children at the death of their deceased ruler husband. They were made empowered being imparted with training in war craft and state craft. The lead role played by Maharani Laxmi Bai in the 'First War of Independence' in 1857 bears the testimony of this.

During the British raj, the Indian society was exposed to western influence and was witnessing rapid socio economic transformation. These transformations

attacked the traditional stratification system of Indian society based on gender, ethnicity, estate system and caste system. Substantial progress was made in eliminating inequalities between men and women in matters of education, employment, social and political rights. Industrialisation, urbanisation, spread of education, and social movements, enunciation of social legislations were some of the important forces which affected the status of women in various ways.

During the British period, the process of industrialisation was introduced in India. Industrialisation was followed by the process of urbanisation. Transport and communication revolution was initiated by the British administration to smoothen the process of governance of the country. These triplicate processes of industrialisation, urbanisation and transport and communication revolution started attacking the traditional institutions of the Indian society. There was a diversification in the occupational roles and the status structure underwent a process of change. All these greatly affected the traditional status of women.

The British Government took active initiatives to introduce education for the women which proved to be a powerful force for providing a new outlook to the Indian women during the colonial period. After the Bhakti movement, the Christian Missionaries took interest in the education of girls and geared their efforts to spread education among the women to change their deplorable conditions. A girl's school was started for the first time in Bombay in 1824. The Hunter commission too emphasised on the need for female education in 1881. However, till1875 women's access to higher education was denied. Till that period, the universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras did not permit admission to girls. After 1882 girls were allowed to go for higher education.

During British period there were two major movements which affected the position of women. These were the Social Reform Movement of the nineteenth century and the Nationalist Movement of the twentieth century.

2.3.2 Social Reform Movements and Women in India

Around the end of the nineteenth century, it was realised that women in India suffered from myriad forms of disabilities like, child-marriage, practice of polygamy, sale of girls for marriage purposes, severe restrictions on widows, no-access to education. They were restricted to domestic and child-bearing functions. The Indian National Conference started in 1885 by Justice Ranade

criticised these disabilities. The issues which attracted the attention of the nineteenth century social reformers were the system of Sati, the ban on the widow remarriage, polygamy, child marriage, denial of property rights and education to women. Reformist organizations such as the Brahmo Samaj founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1828, the Arya Samaj set up by Dayanand Saraswati in 1875, and Ramakrishna Mission created by Vivekananda in 1897 and individual male reformers like Eshwarchandra Vidyasagar, Ramakrishna Paramahans, Keshab Chandra Sen, Maharishi Kare, Mahadev Ranade and Gopal Krishna Gokhale led the fight against women's oppression by condemning the evil social practices of polygamy, early marriage, enforced widowhood and made an advocacy for female literacy to emancipate the women from oppressions and to change their plights in the society.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy played an important role in abolition the of Sati system. He raised his voice against child marriage and Purdah system. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar also made pioneering efforts for the upliftment of the status of women. His efforts culminated in the passing of the Widow Remarriage Act in 1856. He also pleaded for education of women. Maharshi Karve took up the problems of widow remarriage and education of women. He established SNDT Women's University in Maharashtra in 1916. Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Annie Besant and Mahatma Gandhi also took interests in the social and political rights of women.

The British administration supported the cause of the Indian social reformers. Thus, in order to raise the status of Indian women, the British rule led to number of socio religious reforms in the country.

2.3.3 The Nationalist Movement and Women in India

Another very powerful force which helped to change the attitude towards women in the country was the Nationalist Movement. In 1887, the National Social Conference was formed. This organization intensified the social reform campaign to further support women's emancipation. It created a separate entity known as the Indian Women's Conference. Gandhiji openly held that sacred texts and customs, which rationalized injustices to women or advocated female subservience, deserved neither respect nor compliance.

Gandhiji advocated for women's induction into public life. At the same time he valued their domestic role. His tools of mass agitation politics served him well in getting women out of the private into the public sphere. Thus during the freedom struggle no distinction was made in the participation of either women or men and the rigid public- private dichotomy for women was challenged. This gave equal status to both the gender groups. In recognizing the contributions of women, the principle of "Gender Equity and Equality"" was later on enshrined in the Constitution of free India in 1950.

Gandhi's clarion call to the women community to join the freedom struggle was a landmark attempt to bring women in mass scale from the private to the public and political domain. Gandhiji opposed the evil social practices of child marriage, the prevention of widow remarriage, the crippling system of purdah, the dowry system. He was an advocate of women's liberation. Gandhi encouraged women's active participation in the freedom struggle. He had tremendous faith in women's inherent capacity for non-violence.

With Gandhi's inspiration, the women got heavily mobilised and took the struggle right into their homes and raised it to a moral level. Women organized public meetings, sold Khadi and started picketing shops of liquor and foreign goods, prepared contraband salt, and came forward to face all sorts of atrocities, including inhuman treatment by police officers and imprisonment. They came forward to give all that they had - their wealth and strength, their jewellery and belongings, their skills and labour-all with sacrifices for this unusual and unprecedented struggle. Thus, women's moral and physical support was well observed during the nationalist movement.

Gandhi's call to women to involve themselves in the freedom struggle had far-reaching results in changing their outlook. The cause of Swaraj swept all taboos and old customs practised against the women. Many women in their individual lives shed their age-old prejudices against the caste system. They had no hesitation in leaving the boundaries of their protected homes and going to the jail. Women's participation in the freedom struggle feminized nationalism and the nationalist struggle helped them to liberate from age-old traditions.

Women's struggle entered a new phase with the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi on the Indian political scene. Women had been associated with the freedom struggle before that too. They had attended sessions of the Indian National Congress and taken part in the swadeshi movement in Bengal, 1905-11 and in the Home Rule Movement. But the involvement of really large number of women in the national movement began when Gandhi launched the first Non Co-operation Movement and gave a special role to women. Peasant women played an important role in the rural satyagrahas of Borsad and Bardoli. Women participated in the Salt satyagraha, in the Civil Disobedience Movement, in the Quit India Movement and in all the Gandhian satyagrahas. They held meetings, organized processions, picketed shops selling foreign cloth and liquor and went to jail. It transformed the lives of many young widows such as Durgabai Deshmukh or Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya. Women won respect for their courage and the large numbers in which they participated in the freedom struggle and at the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress in 1930, the resolution on Fundamental Rights gave equal rights to women.

One of the note worthy results of Gandhiji's efforts has been the awakening of women, which made them shed their deep-rooted sense of inferiority and rise to dignity and self- esteem. For Gandhi,"When woman, whom we all call abala becomes sabala, all those who are helpless will become powerful". Women like Sarojini Naidu, Lakshmi Menon, Sushila Nayyar and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur rose to prominence and became the role models for the common women.

2.3.4 Growth of Women's Organizations

Some women organizations like the Banga Mahila Samaj, and the Ladies Theosophical Society functioned at local levels to promote modern ideas for women. These organizations took up issues like women's education, abolition of social evils like purdah and child marriage, Hindu law reform, moral and material progress of women, equality of rights and opportunities, etc. Some women's organisations such as Bharat Mahila Parishad (1904), Bharat Stri Mahamandal (1910), Women's Indian Association (1917), National Council of Women in India (1925) and All India Women's Conference (1927) took up issues like women's education, abolition of social evils, Hindu law reform, equality of rights

and opportunities and women's suffrage. It can be said that, the Indian women's movement worked for two goals during the freedom movement. They were:
(i) Uplift of women.
(ii) Equal rights for both men and women. Both these goals contributed significantly towards providing a changed status to the women.

2.3.5 Enactment of Social Legislations

During the British period, the Government enacted some progressive legislation that impacted on the women. These legislations include:

1. Abolition of Sati Act,1829

2. Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 popularly known as the Sarda Act

3. Child Bearing Restraint Act of 1929

4. Hindu Law of Inheritance, 1929
5. Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1939

2.4 Status of Women in Post- Colonial Period

However the major effort to promote the situation of women came in the post independence era when the constitutional protections, legislative promulgations, programme initiations and creation of institutions gave a concrete shape to women's development in the country. During this period, "equality" became the much avowed goal of the Government and the Government made concerted efforts to ensure gender equality through safeguards and welfare measures. Right from the fag end of the twentieth century, "empowerment" approach to women's development became the dominant strategy for ensuring development to the women in the country. (All these are discussed in elaborate terms in Unit-IV of this module.) These Constitutional provisions, legal measures and institutional supports have played a significant role in changing the position and plights of women in the country in the post independence period.

2.4.1 Women's Journey in India: From Preventions to Privileges

Women have always held a certain paradoxical position in a country like India. On one hand, the country has seen an increased percentage of literacy among women, women positioned in higher professions and on the other hand, the country has failed to free itself from the ugly practices of female infanticide, dowry torture, trafficking, poor health conditions and lack of education among a sizable number of women. The patriarchal culture and the conventional role expectations from the women have not been eroded.

When our country got its independence, the participation of women in the national freedom struggle was widely acknowledged. The Indian Constitution guaranteed equal rights to women, considering them legal citizens of the country and as equal to men in terms of freedom and opportunity. India was a premier and pioneering country to reflect gender justice through its Constitution. However, these noble intentions of the Constitution could not make much head way in providing an elevated status to the women, because of the continuation of the traditional mind sets, attitudes and culture in the country.

At the time of independence, the developmental parameters were not in favour of women. The national female literacy rate was alarmingly low being 8.9 per cent. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for girls was 24.8 per cent at primary level and 4.6 per cent at the upper primary level (in the 11 – 14 years age group). There existed insoluble social and cultural barriers to education of women and access to organized schooling. Only women from the elitist group were allowed to occupy a public space, which they were expected to manage along with their domestic role as homemakers. The occupations like teachers, nurses were earmarked for the women taking their traits into account. The practice of child marriage continued which brought early motherhood and health impairs to innumerable number of girls. Dowry system was an accepted practice. Sprawling inequalities persisted in women's access to education, health care, physical and financial resources and opportunities, and enjoyment of basic rights in political, social and cultural spheres.

The practice of Dowry not only brought torture to girls in their marital life, but due to the custom the birth of a girl child was considered as inauspicious and undesirable. Till today the sentiment continues to exist. This gives birth to the practice of female foeticide, infanticide and neglect of girl children at homes. The United Nations Children's Fund, estimated that up to 50 million girls and women are 'missing' from India's population because of termination of the female foetus or high mortality of the girl child due to lack of proper care. This indicates the gender considerations dominating the minds of parents and negating an equal position to a female child. Though a number of constitutional amendments were made for women's social, economic and political benefits, yet they were never effective to bring a radical change in the situation. Women in India suffered from rampant malnutrition and an extremely poor health status. Around 500 women were reported to die every day due to pregnancy related problems due to malnutrition, early child bearing age and repeated pregnancies.

2.4.2Socio-Religious Institutions and the Status of Women in India
 India is a heterogeneous country .The plurality of language; religion, ethnicity, and culture play a significant role in influencing women's position in the community. So,   women's status in various socio religious institutions becomes worth mentioning here.
Religion
Each religion has different Personal Laws relating to women and each religious group has its own law of Dharma (conduct). Indian women's domestic and extra domestic spheres are largely derived from religious prescriptions. Religious norms and values define her role, relations and rights in the society.
Religious personal laws govern family relations in India. Traditionally, religious laws place men at higher stage. There are certain features common in all personal laws, including the reformed Hindu personal law, which perpetuates inequality between women and men:
- Under all the personal laws it is the man who is the head of the family in all circumstances.
- The line of succession is through the male line.
- The woman's residence after marriage is the husband's house.
- The right to divorce is far more lenient with the man.
- Women often do not get equal right to property.
     Thus, personal laws of each religion state categorically that the main aim and objective of a woman's life is marriage and

begetting progeny. Each religion has made rather rigid laws in respect of women's position, marriage, married life, widowhood, maintenance, divorce, remarriage, unchastely, guardianship minority, adoption and succession. The social institutions too exert pressure on women in India. These social institutions include Kinship, Marriage and Family, which are deep rooted in history, religion and culture of the nation.

Kinship, Marriage and Family

India has a predominantly patrilineal system of descent. In the Patrilineal kinship system, a son is the father's natural apprentice, successor, and supporter of the parents in old age. Sons are supposed to build up family prestige and prosperity. All this imparts a special value to the son to continue the family name. As per religious customs, a son is necessary for performing the prescribed rituals for his parents when they die. Traditionally, this right was not given to women. All these traditions and practices accord a low status to the women.

Marriage

Marriage as an institution is accepted as the be-all and end-all of a woman's life. The institution of marriage forces a women to give up her independent identity and to search her identity through her husband. The institution of marriage expects an ideal woman to be dedicated and sacrificing in nature. It overlooks her independent identity, fails to recognise her contributions. Thus, marriage gives her roles without status, duties without rights which are detrimental to her status.

Family

Besides her kinship status, her husband's social position and his contribution to the family economy influence a woman's status in the family. The parental family controls the women's rights of education, choice of employment and right of decisions and finally marriage- with which both the women and the power to exercise control over her are transferred to the husband's family. In cases, where there is an attempt on the part of women to deviate from clearly defined conduct, tensions arise often resulting in serious threats, including physical violence, to the women from their families. Thus, the social institutions in India have their typical gender orientation and are unfavourable to the women.

Irrespective of so much noble efforts, till today the development of women in the country is not spectacular, which is quite indicative from

the reality check made from time to time on the situation of women. The reality check or the stocktaking on the development of women is done taking some parameters in to account which is discussed below.

Demographic composition of women is an indicator of their development. So far as the demographic composition of the women is concerned, women present a skewed sex ratio in comparison to males. In the Population Census of 2011, it is revealed that there are 940 females per 1000 of males. The Sex Ratio 2011 shows an upward trend from the census 2001 data. Census 2001 revealed that there were 933 females to that of 1000 males. Since decades India has seen a decrease in the sex ratio. But since the last two of the decades there have been in slight increase in the sex ratio. Since the last five decades the sex ratio has been moving around 930 of females to that of 1000 of males. This sex ratio is much below the world average that is 990 females. Sex selected deaths through feticide are becoming frequent in the country, infanticide, maternal mortality, higher incidence of child mortality in case of girls, honour killing and violence are taking the lives of the girls and women in the country.

In the educational sphere women too lag behind in terms of their male counterparts. This becomes traceable through the low literacy rates, low enrolment, and high rate of dropout among them. The higher becomes the grade; the lower becomes the representation of women. Quality education and technical education are still the monopoly of males. Gender bias, the tradition of socializing the girls in domestic chores, the cultural practice of early marriage are some of the reasons which keep girls out of the ambit of education. As per Census 2011, 65.5% female in India are literate as against 82.14%males. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for females at the primary level stood at 115.39. At the middle classes level, the GER for females was 78.30. The Drop-out Rates were observed to be 27.25 for females, in the classes I-V in 2009-10. These were 44.39 in classes I-VIII and 51.97 in classes I-X in the same years. In 2005-06, the U.G.C. estimated women's share in higher education to be 40.5% and in professional education it was 29.5%. All these statistics reveal out the poor progress of the

women in education which is worldwide accepted as the most powerful development indicator.

Health status again signalizes the position of the population. The better the health status, the better is their development and vice versa. The health status of women in India remains extremely bleak. The government is taking all necessary steps to perk up their lot in the form of compulsory education for girl child, regular and free medical check-ups and medical aid for pregnant women and many such schemes. But, little is the achievement in this direction. Undernourishment, malnourishment, food insecurity and starvation are common among the women in the country. Anaemia is frequent among the women of lower economic status. Mal nutrition is common among women belonging to poor households. 52% of married women suffer from anaemia. One of the major causes for malnutrition in India is gender inequality. Due to the low social status of Indian women, their diet often lacks in both quality and quantity. India recorded around 57,000 maternal deaths in 2010, which translate into a whopping six every hour and one every 10 minutes. The current Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) of India is 212 per one lakh live births. It is estimated that 23.9 lakh people are infected with HIV in India, of whom 39% are females. Early marriage, repeated child births, under nourishment contribute for poor health status of women and higher rates of maternal mortality. Availability of health services is poor for the women, accessibility to health facilities is limited and there is absolute absence of affordability capacity among them. Institutional deliveries are still a mirage for the women in the rural areas of the country.

The economic position of women is very sordid in nature in India. There remain strong cultural obstacles in India to women's economic emancipation. The

workforce participation rate of females in rural sector was 26.1 in 2009- 10 (NSS 64th Round) in Urban sector, it was 13.8 for females. In the rural sector, 55.7% females were self-employed, 4.4% females had regular wage/salaried employment and 39.9% females were casual labourers. A total of 20.4% women were employed in the organized sector in 2010 with 17.9% working in the public sector and 24.5% in the private. The labour force participation rate of women across all age-groups was 20.8 in rural sector and 12.8 in urban sector respectively in 2009-10 (NSS 64th Round). In 2009-10, the average wage/salary received by regular wage/salaried employees of age 15-59 years was Rs. 155.87 per day for females in rural areas and for urban areas; it was Rs. 308.79.

Despite rapid economic growth, the inability of women to play a part in the Indian economy remains as deep and persistent as ever. Women in India have of course always worked, but their work is undervalued. Women are also at a disadvantage when it comes to inheriting property. Although the Hindu Succession Act of 1956 gave women the right to own property, it was not implemented until 2005. In2005, the law was amended to give daughters the same inheritance rights as sons. Census of India reveals that only 11 percent of agricultural landowners are women. Women work longer hours than men and carry the major share of household and community work that is unpaid and invisible.

Women are under-represented in governance and decision-making positions. At present, women occupy less than 8% of the Cabinet positions, less than 9%of seats in High Courts and the Supreme Court, and less than 12% of administrators and managers are women. In June 2009, out of 40 Cabinet Ministers, there were only three female Cabinet Ministers. There were only 4 female Ministers of State (MOS), out of 38 MOS in 2009. Women's share is only 11% in the Indian Parliament at present.

The problem of gender-based violence is getting worse in the country. National Crime Record Bureau statistics show crimes against women increased by 7.1 percent nationwide since 2010. There has been a rise

in the number of incidents of rape recorded too. In 2011, 24,206 incidents were recorded, a rise of 9 percent from the previous year. A total of 2, 28,650 incidents of crimes against women were reported in the country during 2011. Kidnapping and abductions are up by 19 percent and trafficking rose by 122 percent in the same period. Crimes that include the Indian term "eve-teasing" or harassment and heckling and sexual innuendoes against women in public places including streets, public transport, cinema halls, along with the rape of minors and women in tribal and villages often go unreported and unrecorded.

2.5 India's Pluralism: A Challenge to the Status of Women

India is pluralist nation. Our Constitution has laid down in Articles 25 to 30 the rights of religious, cultural and linguistic minorities. There is, however, a big gap between noble intentions and actual realisation. The minorities continue to face several problems. The status of Indian women can be viewed in terms of the status women in individual communities.

In India each community is governed by the Personal Laws of the community in matters relating to family, inheritance, and adoption etc. India consists of one of the largest Muslim populations in the world. According to the 2011 census the share of the Muslims in India's population is 13.4%. The country houses the third-largest Muslim population in the world.

Muslim women in India constitute one of the most deprived groups who are unable to fully enjoy their equal rights. Their deprivation and vulnerability derives from the following sources:

- Cultural and Religious sources
- Legal sources
- Socio-Economic and Educational sources
- From violence inflicted on them.

Muslim women are triply marginalised: as Muslims, as women and as members of a community that, taken as a whole, is economically disadvantaged. After six decades of independence majority of Muslim women is one of the most disadvantaged, least literate, economically

impoverished and politically marginalized sections of Indian society. E.H. White (1978) reports illiteracy, ignorance, male domination and traditional beliefs have hindered the progress of the Muslim women in India. The subordination of Muslim women owes to a host of factors, including the social, economic, political and educational marginalisation of the Muslim community as a whole, as well as the indifference of agencies of the state as well as Muslim 'leaders' to the question of Muslim women's subordination and the need for their substantive empowerment. On all-India basis, 66 per cent Muslim women are estimated to be illiterate. The findings of the Sachar committee show that Muslims are at double disadvantaged with low level of education combined with low quality of education. Muslim women are educationally backward, and the dropout rate is significantly high among Muslim women as compared to Hindu women and their Muslim male counterpart.

Less than 17 per cent of Muslim women (enrolled in schools) complete eight years of schooling; less than 10 per cent complete higher secondary schooling, which is below the national average. The proportion of Muslim women in higher education is only 3.56 per cent. The average rate of work force participation for Muslim women is 14 per cent, the work participation for urban Muslim women is 11.4 per cent, while it is only 20 per cent for Muslims in rural areas. Sixty per cent of Muslim women are married by the age of 17. The Muslim Women's Survey reported that approximately 20 per cent of respondents experience verbal and physical abuse in their marital homes; over 80 per cent of this is at the hands of their husbands. The NCAER survey indicates 31 percent of Muslim households are below poverty line and the burden of poverty is maximum on women.

Tahir Mahamood (2006) writing on Muslim personal law vis-a-vis the status of Muslim women says that Muslim women are being treated as secondary members in the Muslim community because of distorted and misinterpretation of Muslim law by its own scholars and elites.

Salima Jan (1998) in her study `Women's studies in Islamic perspective' concluded that Islam has given women the rights which no other religion has given. Due to lack of proper knowledge of Shariat (Muslim Law) as well as wrong practices largely deviating from the true Islamic teachings

wrong notions exist about Muslim women. An ideal Muslim matrimonial law has not been used prudently but misused and Muslim women are made to suffer and discriminated. So, Salima feels that it is necessary to have adequate knowledge about the Islamic view point and this knowledge will help us to reassess women's role in the light of new changes and new situations. Muslim women in India are governed by the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act 1937 (popularly known as the Shariat Act), but not by the Uniform civil code which is a very pro women in character.

.2.5.1Status of Tribal Women in India

Tribal or adivasis, comprise of around 8.6 per cent of the national population according to the2011 census. There are 11.3 percent tribal who are as rural dwellers and 2.8 percent tribal are urban dwellers. The sex ratio is better among the tribal compared to the general sex ratio being 990 which indicates a better status of the tribal women.The tribal are concentrated mostly in the central belt of India, and parts of the North-East.

The status of tribal women is defined by their culture, social and economic practices. Mitra and Singh write that discrimination against women, occupational differentiation, and emphasis on status and hierarchical social ordering that characterise the predominant Hindu culture are generally absent among the tribal groups which allow the women to have an equal status with their male counterparts. Bhasin (2007) also writes that though tribes too have son preference, they do not discriminate against girls by female infanticide or sex determination tests. These contribute towards better sex ratio among the tribal and is indicative of the better status accorded to women in the tribal society.

The status of tribal women can be judged mainly by the roles they play in society. Their roles are determined to a large extent through the system of descent. Most of the tribes in India follow a patrilinear system. There are exceptional cases like the Khasi, Jaintia, Garo and Lalung of Meghalaya in the North-East who follow the matrilinear system. The Mappilas of Kerala too are a matrilineal community. There are very rare cases of bilinear descent. Whether patrilinear or

matrilinear the tribal women are considered as economically vibrant groups contributing significantly to the family economy and are accorded with a better status.

Since women in the tribal communities toil hard, they are considered to be assets. The practice of bride price during marriages is quite common among them. In recent years as the capitalist economy is setting in and women are being deprived of their traditional role, their economic value is decreasing and the practice of 'bride-price' is giving way to the system of dowry which is responsible for declining their status in the society.

The status of the tribal women usually depends on the economic roles they play. The tribal in the past were usually forest dwellers and their livelihood to a great extent depended on the food-gathering economy. More than the men, the women walked long distances to fetch wood and fodder. Besides, they also collected fruits, roots and tubers, lac, gums and leaves for self-consumption and sale. As there has been large scale deforestation, the role of tribal women in economic pursuit is increasingly getting affected which has a negative impact on their status.

In traditional tribal societies, the economic roles of men and women were sharply divided. In the nomadic hunter-gatherer tribes, men were engaged in hunting while women collected fruits, edible roots, tubers, firewood and other household necessities. In some of these tribes, women are involved in supplementary occupations, like rope-making. In the pastoral tribes, looking after the cattle was the exclusive duty of men folk. The economic roles of tribal women are more significant in certain parts of the central and western Himalayas.

In many parts of the country, swidden cultivation or slash and burn cultivation or jhum cultivation, as it is called in the North-East, was in vogue. Easter Boserup calls swidden cultivation as a women's enterprise since it is they who almost entirely managed the show. While the men mainly felled the trees and spread them around on the ground to dry before collectively kindling fire, it is the women who were engaged in sowing the seeds, weeding and harvesting. However, of late the status of tribal women is in a state of transition. The process of modernization has heavily impacted on the tribal culture, economy

and society which in turn have contributed towards a decline status for the tribal women. Taboos too prevent women from certain types of ventures. For example in the Toda tribe of the Nilgiris, women are not even allowed to enter the dairy as they are considered impure.

In recent years, due to the population explosion and in-migration, the jhum cultivation is gradually losing its viability. Besides, due to the capitalist policies of the state jhum cultivation is giving way to permanent terraced wet-rice cultivation. Multi-cropping practices too are getting lost and the emphasis on mono-cropping is being laid. Cash crops and horticulture are also being preferred. In the process women are losing their labour work and in many places of the North-East like Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, migrant male labourers are being employed. Apart from the hill areas, tribal have also in present days opted for settled cultivation in place of the forest-based economy. They also prefer to raise cash crops and exotic high-breed crops. In the process the women are getting displaced from their work.

Christianity has brought about a significant emancipation of the tribal women. While earlier the women were restricted from attending schools, it is the missionaries who opened schools and encouraged the girls to attend them. They also opened up church forums where women could participate and also take the lead. Thus, with the introduction of the missionary activities changes were noticed in the status of the tribal women.

So far as the social customs are concerned, there is no child marriage, no stigma on widowhood in the tribal community. A tribal woman enjoys the right to decide about her marriage, etc. Instead of dowry there is bride price indicating high social status of the tribal woman. Bride price makes the girls assets for the families rather than liabilities. A tribal woman can divorce and remarry easily. She earns and is, therefore, to a great extent economically independent. The customs on the one hand promote the status of the tribal women and in many respects they impose taboos on her degrading her position vis-a vis her male counterpart.

 A tribal woman is prevented to inherit property in a patrilineal society. The customary laws do not permit them to own land and home. In matrilineal societies like the Khasi and Garo tribes of Meghalaya,

property is transmitted from mother to daughter. Property ownership becomes a key factor in deciding the status of tribal women.

She is paid less as wages than her male counterpart for the same work. Several taboos discriminating against tribal women exist in certain tribal groups implying impurity and low status. The tribal women cannot hold the office of a priest. There are taboos related to menstruation as in non-tribal communities. The Kharia women, cannot touch a plough nor can she participate in roofing of a house. The Oraon women are also prevented from touching a plough. The Todas of Nilgiri Hills do not touch menstruating women for fear of destruction of harvest. In certain tribes only the males can participate in ancestor worship (Satyanarayana and Behera, 1986). The Toda and Kota women in southern India cannot cross the threshold of a temple. The Santal women cannot attend communal worship. All these instances bear the clear testimony of the inferior status accorded to the tribal women.

The tribal women hardly inherit land, particularly in the patrilineal societies. The customary laws do not permit them to own land and home. In matrilineal societies like the Khasi and Garo tribes of Meghalaya, property is transmitted from mother to daughter. Property ownership becomes a key factor in deciding the status of tribal women.

The tribal women in India have virtually no role to play in the social and political spheres. In traditional tribal communities, women have no political role at all. They substantially contribute to the decision-making process in the family and home,. However, they have no direct say in matters relating to common concerns in the village.

In most patrilineal societies women do not have an important role in religious activities. They are not allowed to officiate in any of the ceremonies, whether at birth, death or marriage, or in other occasions or festivals.

In terms of the modern indicators of development, the tribal women are no better. According to the NSS 66th round, 2009-10 literacy among the tribal women in the country is recorded to be 54.4 percent. The gross enrolment ratio for the tribal girls goes on decreasing with the advancement in grades. For Classes I -V (6 -10 Years) while it is 136.7, it becomes 87 in classes VI -VIII (11 -13 Years), 49.1 in Classes IX -X (14 -15

Years), 24.8 in Classes XI -XII (16 -17 Years). The dropout rates for ST girls are very high. The dropout rate goes on increasing with the increasing age and level of education. It is estimated that the dropout rates (DOR) for tribal girls in class I –V is 33.925.Between classes I –VIII it is 55.441, between classes I –X , it is estimated to be 71.3.

The health situation of the tribal women is quite dismal. Only, 32.8 percent tribal women receive medical care from doctors according to the National Family Health Survey-3 Report. The maternal mortality rate between the age group of 15-49 among the tribal in India as estimated by the Sample Registration System in 2007- 2009 was 212 per 1,00,000 live births. Under 5 mortality rates among the tribal girls was estimated to be 128 in 2001 per 1000 live births which is a high figure. The tribal women suffer from high morbidity rates. 10119 tribal women in the age group of 15-49 per 100,000 are reported to have diabetes, asthma, goitre or any other thyroid disorders (2005-06, NFHS). Mal nutrition and under nutrition are common features of tribal women. 68.5% tribal women are reported to be anaemic.

The labour force participation rate is comparatively high among the tribal women. It was estimated to be 34.9 percent in 2009-10. 362 tribal women in rural areas and 212 in urban areas participate in labour force. However, tribal women are basically, self employed and casual labourers which do not bring them much economic yield to change their position. Poverty is rampant among the tribal women in the country. A major cause of poverty among India's tribal women is the lack of access to productive assets and financial resources. High levels of illiteracy, inadequate health care and extremely limited access to social services are common among poor tribal women in the country pushing them into the circles of poverty. Thus, all these facts and figures indicate that the tribal women in India are in a state of neglect. Their plight is quite deplorable and needs immediate attention.

2.5.2 Status of Dalit Women in Modern India

Dalits are also known as untouchables. They are members of the lowest social status group in the Hindu caste system. Dalits are 'outcastes' falling outside the traditional four-fold caste system consisting of the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra castes. They are considered as impure and polluting and are therefore physically and are socially excluded and isolated from the rest of society. They were previously known as Untouchables, Depressed Classes, and Harijans. Mahatma Jyotirao Phule (1827-1890), a Marathi social reformer belonging to the backward caste, was the first to use the term Dalit to describe the outcaste untouchables as the oppressed and the broken victims of Hindu Society. Dalits constitute seventeen percent of India's total population.

Dalit women suffer unimaginable oppression. Dalit women experience triple discrimination based on their caste, their economic situation and their gender. Their dignity, human rights and freedom are frequently violated. They are economically marginalized, politically alienated and socially oppressed. No doubt, because of the rising consciousness among the Dalits, protective Constitutional provisions and legislative measures their status is undergoing some transformation in Independent India.

In India the constitutional and legislative safeguards to protect dalit women from discrimination and violence, have proved to be ineffective due to the deep rooted caste and gender biases within the enforcement agencies. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in its concluding comments on India noted concern about "the ongoing atrocities committed against Dalit women and the culture of impunity for perpetrators of such atrocities". It also calls upon the State party to increase Dalit women's legal literacy and improve their access to justice in bringing claims of discrimination and violation of rights.

It is estimated that 70% of Dalit women are illiterate in rural India. According to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes 2000, approximately 75% of the Dalit girls drop out of primary school despite the strict laws of the Government of India, which hold reservations for Dalit children. The early drop out from the education system is caused due to poverty or to escape humiliation, bullying and isolation by classmates and abuse by teachers. Only 27 percent of Dalits women give institutional deliveries in India. Dalit women encounter immense atrocities in the society. Every day 3 Dalit women are raped. Thousands of dalit girls are forced into prostitution before they reach puberty. According to India's Ministry of Labour, 85% of the Dalit women have the most formidable occupations and work as agricultural labourers, scavengers, sweepers, and disposers of human waste. Many of these women work for minimal wages under the upper caste landlords. Dalits women enjoy no land rights. When the Dalit women refuse to work for low wages or fail to follow their harsh orders it results open violence, humiliation, beatings, rape, and jail. There are also a number of cases where the houses of Dalit women have been burnt down.

The 1992-93 Annual report from the Ministry of Welfare shows 1,236 reported cases of rape on Dalit women and the National Commission for SC/ST shows that approximately 10,000 cases of human right violations on Dalits are reported every month. But when only one out of ten of the cases are reported annually, nine go unreported.

After fifty-five years of India's independence and despite the excellent laws in place to protect Dalit women, they are still suffering unimaginable atrocities from the high caste Hindus. It is believed that thousands of these cases go unreported and unpublicized because the poor Dalits that live in rural areas, who are the worst victims, have no control on power, wealth, justice, police and the media .

The only way these Dalit women can escape the viscous cycle of poverty, abuse and oppression is through education. Through education more Dalit women can come to know their basic human rights and they can then raise an even stronger voice against abuse and exploitation from the upper castes. Many Dalit Non-Government Organizations try to bring the plight of Dalit people to the attention of the International community and to document and publicize human right violations.

Thus, the foregoing discussions clearly generate the impression that women in modern India have not come in par with the men. Till now they lack opportunities and lag behind the men. Development is more elite centric and remain confined to the urban educated and affluent sections. Uneducated women in the rural areas are still in a marginalized and are in an under developed state. Further India's plurality is a major challenge to ensure a uniform status to the women in the country. Caste based, religion based and ethnicity based differences bring gross disparities in the development of women. Laws, Constitutional provisions though struggle hard to provide a better status to the women of the country but, traditional stratifications based on caste and religion still tussle with them and prevent them to be fully effective. Still much has to be done to improve the status of the women in the country. Education, skill development, capacity building can ensure economic self sufficiency to the women and enable them to raise their voice against oppression. They can escape them from the traps of deprivation, denial and exclusion.

Key words: Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Artharva veda,The Upanishads, the Puranas, the Manusmruti, the Dalit

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UNIT-II

Review Exercise

Essay Type Questions

1. Examine the status enjoyed by the women in India during the Vedic age.
2. Do you feel that the status of women in India declined during the medieval period? Give justification for your answer.
3. "Colonial period initiated transformation in the status of women in India". Comment.
4. Discuss the provisions made by the Government of independent India to protect and promote the position of women in the country.
5. Critically evaluate the status of women in modern India.

Short answer type answers

1. Write a note on the status of women during the Rigvedic period.
2. Evaluate the status of Muslim women in India.
3. "Tribal women enjoy a better status than their male counterparts in the country." Give your views.
4. Estimate the position of Dalit women in contemporary Indian Society.
5. Write briefly about the legal provisions that attempt to ensure justice to Indian women today.

Unit-III
Issues Affecting Women

UNIT-3

3.0 OBJECTIVES

3.1 Women and Education

3.1.1 International Declarations on Spreading Education among the Women

3.1.2 State of Women's Education: The World Scenario

3.1.3 India's Commitment to Women's Education

3.1.4 Women and Education: the Present Indian Scenario

3.1.5 What Ails Girls Education In India?

3.1.6 Interventions Needed to Improve Education among Girls in India

3.2 Women and Health

3.2.1 International Declarations on Ensuring Good Health to Women

3.2.2 Women's Health: the World Scenario

3.2.3 India's Commitment to Improve the Health Status of Women

3.2.4 Situation of Women's Health in India

3.2.5 What Prevents Better Health Status to Women in India?

3.2.6 Interventions Needed to Improve Health among Women in India

3.3 WOMEN AND WORK

This unit provides an impression to the students about the issues faced by women in India. The basic aim is to analyse the position of women with regard to education, health, work and security, the basic necessities of life. Education is not only an instrument of enlightenment, but an agency of empowerment. Health that is good health can not only promote productivity but can ensure a long dieses free life to the women. Work opportunities will ensure livelihood support and empower the women economically. Freedom from violence has much to do with a peaceful life and it signifies equal power relation between men and women. Access to and availability of these four opportunities can increase the quality of life of the women and can ensure them a better status. Government has made enormous efforts through Constitutional provisions, legislations, and programmes to bring the women in par with the men in these areas or to provide opportunities for the enjoyment of basic rights to the women in the country. But, still the women lag behind. Therefore, the present unit reflects upon the International commitments, provisions made by the Government of India to ensure equality to the women in the areas of education, health, employment and security, the actual scenario and to detect the preventing forces and to suggest remedies to overcome them.

3.0 Objectives:

After studying this unit, you can

- Develop an idea as to what extent education, health workforce participation and freedom from violence have an impact on the status of women.
- Gain a detailed impression about the international commitments to ensure education, health among women. You can also get an idea about the international efforts to integrate women in the workforce and commitments to end violence against women.
- Estimate the situation of education, health scenario, workforce participation scenario and violence committed against women in the country.
- Identify the factors that prevent education, health, workforce participation among women and lead to increasing violence among them.

- Get knowledge about the required interventions that can remove the challenges and change the educational, health, employment and violence scenario noted among the women and contribute to place them in a better position.

3.1 Women and Education

Education is said to be a great gender equalizer.   It is one of the most important means of emancipating women from the conservative, rigid taboos and enlightening them. It can generate in them a sense of creativity and can allow them to look things critically. It has the ability to empower women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process.

The educational achievements of women ripple very positive effects within the family and across generations. Education is the catalyst which changes women's roles in society. From the point of view of the society, it is an accelerator of economic growth and is a significant contributor to the process of nation building. Education of women can tap the potentialities ingrained in the women population who constitute almost half of the human resource of the world. Taking such considerations into account education was declared as a basic human right. Education of girls and women is a human right and an essential element for the full enjoyment of all other social, economic, cultural and political rights. The Millennium development goals (2000), the EFA and Dakar goals (2000), and the Beijing Platform have consistently placed emphasis on the importance of education in promoting gender equality and the advancement of women. Spreading education among the women has become a world commitment to reduce gender gap and ensure healthy and balanced development.

3.1.1 International Declarations on Spreading Education among the Women

From time to time, the World has expressed its commitment to spread education among the women. A few important declarations are mentioned below.

The first International Declaration is the **"The International Declaration of Human Rights", 1948.** Article 26 of the Declaration spells out:

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

- Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
- Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

  Thus, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights tries to make education gender free and rather insists for its availability and accessibility for every one which includes the girls.

  The Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women adopted at the World Conference of the International Women's Year Mexico City, Mexico.[On 19 June-2 July 1975] also declared the need for promoting education among the women to allow them to enjoy opportunities, rights and to build an international community based on equity and justice. For this it recommended, women, like men, require opportunities for developing their intellectual potential to the maximum. National policies and programmes should therefore provide them with full and equal access to education and training at all levels, while ensuring that such programmes and policies consciously orient them towards new occupations and new roles consistent with their need for self-fulfilment and the needs of national development.

The World Conference on Education for All, assembled in Jomtien, Thailand, from 5 to 9 March, 1990 recalling that education is a fundamental right for all people, women and men, of all ages, throughout the world; insisted for universalizing access and promoting equity which made girl's education a national priority throughout the globe.

The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women Beijing, China - September 1995 observed that education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality. Equality of access to and attainment of educational qualifications is necessary if more women are to become agents of change. Literacy of women is an important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and to empowering women to participate in decision-making in society. Investing in formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women, with its exceptionally high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth that is both sustained and sustainable. So, it insisted upon

- Ensuring equal access to education.
- Eradicating illiteracy among women.
- Improving women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education.
- Developing non-discriminatory education and training.
- Allocating sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms.
- Promoting lifelong education and training for girls and women.

The World Conference on Higher Education, assembled at **UNESCO** Headquarters in Paris, from 5 to 9 October 1998 in Article 4 - Enhancing participation and promoting the role of women clearly spelt out

- Although significant progress has been achieved to enhance the access of women to higher education, various socio-economic, cultural and political obstacles continue in many places in the world to impede their full access and effective integration. To overcome them remains an urgent priority in the renewal

process for ensuring an equitable and non-discriminatory system of higher education based on the principle of merit.

- Further efforts are required to eliminate all gender stereotyping in higher education, to consider gender aspects in different disciplines and to consolidate women's participation at all levels and in all disciplines, in which they are under-represented and, in particular, to enhance their active involvement in decision-making.
- Gender studies (women's studies) should be promoted as a field of knowledge, strategic for the transformation of higher education and society.
- Efforts should be made to eliminate political and social barriers whereby women are under-represented and in particular to enhance their active involvement at policy and decision-making levels within higher education and society.

The UN Millennium Declaration was agreed by 191 governments at the September 2000 UN Millennium Summit. Goal 3 calls for gender equality and women's empowerment. In this context, the declaration called for meeting the education goal therefore requires that the distinctive conditions preventing girls or boys from attending or completing primary school is to be addressed. Reducing education costs, improving quality, tackling parental concerns about female modesty or safety and increasing the returns to families that invest in female schooling are factors that can overcome social and economic barriers to girl's education. Eliminating gender disparities in education is one of the most effective poverty reduction strategies.

The Dakar Declaration on Accelerating Girls' Education and Gender Equality, assembled in Dakar in May 2010 called for urgent action in support of girls' rights to education, gender equality and empowerment opportunities.

- It noted that powerless and poor girls make up the most disadvantaged group in education. Achieving equity in education will entail putting in place a rights-based empowerment framework that will target the most vulnerable and transform power hierarchies in learning spaces, communities and policy

structures in order to give poor and vulnerable girls a voice and ensure that their right to quality education is sustained.

- Gender equity is at the centre of transformative, quality education. Attention to the physical, social and academic aspects of multiple learning environments is necessary to enhance opportunities, especially for adolescent girls, and to move beyond basic education. Recognition of teachers as professionals, supported by gender-responsive curricula, is the key to ensuring gender equality.

- Gender-based violence remains an obstacle to the full achievement of girls' rights to education. The members called for effective strategies and for enforcement of legislation and policies to ensure safe and secure learning environments for girls.

In January 2011, **The Education International** convened the *On the Move for Equality* **Conference**, the first EI World Women's Conference. A key outcome of the Conference was the adoption of Resolutions on [Gender Equality](#) and on [Education and the Elimination of Violence against Women](#) by the EI 6th World Congress in July 2011. The EI Gender Equality Resolution provided the mandate for the development of the EI Global [Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP)](#).

3.1.2 State of Women's Education: The World Scenario

Irrespective of several commitments and declarations, the world falls back on the track of ensuring equal education to its women population. The UNESCO data reveals despite the gains in literacy, 774 million adults (15 years and older) still cannot read or write and two-thirds of them (493 million) are women. Among youth, 123 million are illiterate of which 76 million are females. Even though the size of the global illiterate population is shrinking, the female proportion has remained virtually steady at 63% to 64%. According to the World Literacy Foundation, 2011 even today, in most countries women and girls are the last to get the opportunity to learn.

54% of children out of school are females. Out of school girls are far less likely to enter primary school education than out of school boys. Girls' primary school completion rates are below 50

percent in most poor countries. The current picture for secondary school completion is bleak. Even if girls are in school, they are the first to leave when needed for domestic chores or to be caregivers, and are often forced to leave due to child marriage or pregnancy. 66 million girls out of school globally . There are 33 million fewer girls than boys in primary school (2013 Pearson Foundation). The Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2013 estimates millions of girls world are still being denied an education in primary school. There are still 31 million girls of primary school age out of school. Of these 17 million are expected never to enter school. Three countries have over a million girls not in school. In Nigeria there are almost five and a half million, Pakistan, over three million, and in Ethiopia, over one million girls out of school. There are also 34 million female adolescents out of school, missing out on the chance to learn vital skills for work. Almost a quarter of young women aged 15-24 today (116 million) in developing countries have never completed primary school and so lack skills for work. Young women make up 58% of those not completing primary school. Two-thirds of the 774 million illiterate people in the world are female. Higher education till today is a monopoly of the males and women's share in it is quite negligible. Technical education though is gaining popularity among the girls, is more confined to girls of higher economic and social classes.

3.1.3 India's Commitment to Women's Education

India is a signatory to all the International Declarations on women. So, right from the beginning, the Government of India has geared efforts to spread education among women. Education has been a priority area in the national agenda. The Government's commitment to spread education among women is reflected in the Constitution, plans and programmes. The Constitution of India included a number of articles that had a direct or indirect bearing on the education of women. For instance**, Article 15 (3**) empowers the State to make special provisions for welfare and development of women and children – which was invoked to justify special allocations, personnel and relaxation of procedures/ conditions to expand girls' access to education at different levels. **Article 45** makes provision for free and compulsory education for children. The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and

compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years which includes the girl children of the country. **Article 46** prescribes to promote the educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections. The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Thus, this article focuses on making special efforts for including the excluded women in the ambit of primary education.

The **86th Constitutional amendment** making education a fundamental right was passed by Parliament in 2002. After that Article-21 of the Constitution, Article-21-A was inserted which states: "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine". The Right of children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, a law to enable the implementation of the fundamental right, was passed by Parliament in 2009.This right to education is a milestone which provides enormous right to a child to get educated. The girl child is not exempt from this.

The various Committees studying the issue of women's education in the country include the **University Education Commission**, headed by Prof. S. Radhakrishnan**,** 1948-49, the **Secondary Education Commission** headed by A. Mudaliar, 1953, the **Durgabai Deshmukh Committee** set up in 1959, the **Hansa Mehta Committee** , the **Education Commission**, 1964-66, also known as the **Kothari Commission**. All these committees and commissions emphasised on equalisation of educational opportunities. The Kothari Commission's recommendations came into force in the form of education policy, known as the **National Policy of Education,** 1968. On the issue of women education, the policy document clearly mentioned… "The education of girls should receive emphasis, not only on grounds of social justice, but also because it accelerates social transformation…" **The National Policy on Education**

(NPE), 1986 revised in 1992, focussed on education for women's equality and empowerment. In 2005, the government of India set up the **CABE Committee** on Girls Education and Common School System to examine existing schemes, incentives and special measures aimed at reducing gender disparity and increasing the participation and retention of girls, in all sectors of education. It recommended free and compulsory education for girls up to the age of 18 years and emphasized that there should be 'no hidden costs' in girls' education. The committee gave thrust to initiate measures to promote girls' education of such nature, force and magnitude that will enable girls to overcome the obstacles posed by factors such as poverty, domestic/ sibling care responsibilities, girl child labour, low preference to girls' education, preference to marriage over education etc.

The Government of India has designed different strategies, interventions, schemes and programmes with specific objectives that can improve on girls' education. Foremost among these, is the programme for the Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE), called **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan** (SSA), launched at the beginning of the century (2001). This national flagship programme has a clear focus on bridging and eliminating gender differences in enrolment, retention and quality of learning. There is a thrust and special focus on girls' education in the planning and provisioning for UEE, in SSA. Some of these are listed below:

· Free textbooks to all girls up to class VIII

· Separate toilets for girls

· Back to school camps for out-of-school girls

· Bridge courses for older girls

· Recruitment of 50% women teachers

· Early childhood care and Education centres in/near schools in convergence with ICDS programme etc.

· Teachers' sensitization programmes to promote equitable learning opportunities

· Gender-sensitive teaching-learning materials including textbooks

· Intensive community mobilisation efforts

· 'Innovation fund' per district for need based interventions for ensuring girls' attendance and retention.

A range of strategies and interventions have been evolved that are designed to improve girls' participation in education, at building systemic responsiveness, motivating girls and their parents and forging partnerships with community based groups for girls' education. Efforts are also made to address issues within the classroom to create a positive learning environment and monitor progress along key indicators in girls' education. **The National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level** (NPEGEL) has been formulated for providing additional support for education of underprivileged/disadvantaged girls at elementary level. NPEGEL is a part of SSA and will be implemented under its umbrella but as a distinct and separate gender component plan   of   SSA.

 Kasturba   Gandhi   Balika   Vidhyalaya   (KGBV): The Government of India has approved a new scheme called Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) for setting up to 750 residential schools with boarding facilities at elementary level for girls belonging predominantly to the SC, ST, OBC and minorities in difficult areas. The scheme will be coordinated with the existing schemes of Department of Elementary Education & Literacy viz. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) and Mahila Samakhya (MS). The objective of KGBV is to ensure access and quality education to the girls of disadvantaged groups of society by setting up residential schools with boarding facilities at elementary level.

 In order to promote education among the disadvantaged groups and to encourage the girls of such communities, G o v e r n m e n t   a t   t h e

national and State Levels have been implementing, from time to time, a number of programmes so as promote their education among them. The major ones including:

• Post matric scholarship to students
• Provision of free school uniform and textbooks.
• Provision of free reading writing materials
• Establishment of residential Schools
• Relaxation in the minimum qualifying marks for admission for SC/ST candidates.
• Career Orientation to students to ensure that the graduates have knowledge, skills and attitudes for gainful employment in the wage sector in general and self-employment in particular
• Financial assistance for remedial coaching. It provides financial assistance to the existing coaching centres to prepare SC/ST candidates for the National Eligibility Test (NET) conducted by UGC/CSIR.
• Remedial Coaching scheme at UG/PG level

3.1.4 Women and Education: the Present Indian Scenario

With the various ambitious programmes of the Government of India to increase availability, accessibility, ensure quality and expand education among its girl children, though the state of women's education has made some progress in the country, yet it is not very spectacular.

The female literacy rate has also increased from 8.86% in 1951 to 65.46 percent in2011 census which is a great leap for the women in the country. The rural female literacy rate is 58.8 percent while the urban female literacy rate is 79.9 percent. This indicates that there are still regional disparities in women's education in the country and availability, access and expansion are not only gender oriented, but location centric in nature.

Gender disparities in education persist with far more girls than boys failing to complete primary school according to the UNICEF Report. The national literacy rate of girls over seven years is 54% against 75% for boys. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for females at the primary level stood at 115.39. At the middle classes level, the GER for females was

78.30. The Drop-out Rates were observed to be 27.25 for females, in the classes I-V in 2009-10. These were 44.39 in classes I-VIII and 51.97 in classes I-X in the same years. In 2005-06, the U.G.C. estimated women's share in higher education to be 40.5% and in professional education it was 29.5%. According to the District Information System for Education (DISE) (2011-12), report, girl's enrolment at the primary level (Class I-V) stands at 48.35. Also, at the higher education level, the gross enrolment ratio for male population is 20.8 while that for female it is 17.9 respectively. According to All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2010-11, at higher education level, 55 percent of male are enrolled in under graduate and post graduate courses while only 45 percent of female are enrolled in the same. Also, 62 percent of male are enrolled in PhD while only 38 percent of female are enrolled in the same.

All these statistics reveal out the poor progress of the women in education which is worldwide accepted as the most powerful development input and indicator.

3.1.5 What Ails Girls Education In India?

Girls' education in India is still in a dismal state. Infrastructural deficiencies, deficit of teachers, non-yielding curriculum, poverty stricken households, cultural barriers, gender role stereotypes, social stigmas and practices, growing insecurities are some of the principal reasons that ail girls' education in the country.

Till the date, there are many inaccessible areas which lack a primary school in the vicinity. So, parents hesitate to send their daughters to schools taking into consideration the far off nature of the school which causes security concerns, concerns about physical exertion. There are areas where physical barriers like streams, forests and hills also prevent parents to enrol their daughters in schools. There many schools in the country which lack adequate number of class rooms and special toilet for girls. 72.16 percent of all schools in India have girl's toilet according to DISE 2011-12 which causes inconvenience for the girls to spend

lingering hours in the schools. Lack of required number of class rooms makes school education irregular and messy. Lack of fences creates the apprehension of attack of wild animals and girls are withdrawn on that pretext. Many schools lack provisions for safe drinking water. All these infrastructural deficiencies discourage parents to enrol and continue their daughters in schools.

Many schools in the country run without adequate number of teachers. There is a short fall of female teachers which disappoints the parents who expect female teacher's presence in the schools as the custodian of their daughters. According to DISE 2011-12, at the elementary level, only 46.27 percent of all schools have female teachers as on 2011-12. Also, at all India level, at the higher education level, there are merely 59 female teachers per 100 male teachers according to AISHE (2010-11). Teachers' absenteeism is a common feature due to other preoccupation of the teachers and sometimes it is self propelled. Lack of monitoring encourages this. But teacher's absenteeism is a potential cause that plagues girl's education.

In many countries the language of instruction in primary schools is a national or regional language, even though large shares of the population speak a different mother tongue. Rule regarding the language of instruction often disproportionately affect girls particularly in communities that seclude women. In the Indian context, particularly in the tribal areas the impact of an alien language as the medium of instruction in the schools discourages the school attendance of the girls. The girls who are hardly exposed to the outside environment and who are mostly confined to their domestic surrounding fail to comprehend this foreign language. They themselves become apathetic to schools when they fail to comprehend the class room transactions. This leads to drop out among them.

The uniform curriculum introduced by the Government often has no link with the culture of the community and fails to guarantee adequate livelihood to the girls. Parents expect a different way of socialization of their daughter in productive and community management traits which is not fulfilled by the curriculum. So, they prefer to withdraw the girls from the schools.

Poverty is the biggest hurdle for girl's education in India. Girls' productive abilities are potent resources for poor households. Girls shoulder the domestic responsibilities of cooking, fetching water, collecting fire wood and undertake sibling care responsibilities in the absence of their mothers who are engaged in outdoor economic activities to supplement to the family economy. Girls are also engaged in semi productive activities and in subsistence wage labour. So, in poor households their physical contributions are highly valued which undermine their schooling and getting formal education.

India has a patriarchal culture. Gender bias and son preference grapple the minds of parents. Boys are always preferred over girls if a choice for an opportunity has to be made. Educating a daughter, especially in a poor family, is perceived not only as an unnecessary luxury but also as a liability. As dowry is still a widely practised cultural norm, the birth of a daughter in the family is, in the first place, a huge financial burden. Secondly, a girl by virtue of her female status is expected to marry a man who should be in a better social position and level of education than her. This phenomenon is lucidly explained by Dreze and Sen (1995): 'If an educated girl can only marry a more educated boy, and if dowry payments increase with the education of the groom, then, given other things, an educated girl is likely to be more expensive to marry off'. For a poverty-stricken family, it is unthinkable to meet the dowry demand of an educated groom. This phenomenon of poverty contributing to non-participation of girls in education is

more prominent in north Indian states, where there is a strong feudal agrarian culture, subordination and oppression of girls and women.   Again the girls are disallowed to attend schools after they attain puberty. This is a common cultural practice throughout rural India which prevents thousands of girls from attending educational institutions.

India has long witnessed the 'dominant Brahminical tradition. This tradition carries the hidden value of male chauvinism. Male chauvinism is reflected mainly in the attitudes and behaviours of male social elites belonging to the so-called upper caste. The so called Dalits and particularly girls belonging to Dalit groups are systematically excluded from the institution of education. In India the institution of education is rationed by male chauvinism and upper caste dominance which segregate the girls from the ambit of education. The practice of child marriage in still in continuation in the country. This negates education to the girls.

Unconscious discrimination, stereotypes, and expectations affect opportunities, motivation and interpersonal behaviour. These factors have particularly strong effects on student performance in heterogeneous schools and classrooms. To be a Dalit girl is to remain doubly deprived. As Rampal (2005) has aptly portrayed: Dalit girls suffer the multiple burdens of poverty, caste and gender. Caste discrimination from peers and teachers continue to obstruct their social access to education. Their dignity and self worth' are often hurt. The Dalit girls are systematically harassed, dehumanized and pushed to submit to the 'culture of silence'. This de motivates them from attending schools.

 In India child marriages are still in continuation. According to the UNICEF Information Sheet there has been a decline in the incidence of child marriage nationally and in nearly all states from 54% in 1992-3 to 43% in 2007-8, but the

pace of change remains slow .Investing in girls' education is perceived as a waste of resources by families. Since families believe that a girl's education will only benefit her husband's household, and not the family of origin. As a consequence they drop out of school. In urban areas of India, only half of girls between 15-17 years of age attend school. The situation is even more acute in rural areas, where less than a third of the girls in the same age group attend school.

5.8 % of girls in the age group 6-17 years in rural areas dropped out of school as they got married (NFHS 2005-2006). Insecurities loom large for girls in the schools. The growing abuses of girls and sexual harassments in schools prevent parents to send their daughters to schools. Thus multiple factors play a role to deny girls school attendance.

3.1.6 Interventions Needed to Improve Education among Girls in India

No doubt India has a wide range of Constitutional provisions, legal frame-works and a plethora of polices and plans to provide primary/basic education to both boys and girls as well as to promote gender equality in education. However, the gap in translating these policy initiatives and plans into actual implementation retards education of girls in the country. So there is an urgent need of developing the vision, articulating a firm commitment to demonstrate concrete results on the ground. A strong sensitization, supervision and monitoring are the need of the hour to improve gender parity in education.

Poverty and socio-cultural barriers impede girls' education. Serious attention is to be focussed to change the traditional practices, mind sets. Social communication programmes and awareness-raising campaigns are likely to break

down barriers in the longer term. Policy initiatives, programmes and scheme are to address the issue of opportunity cost of sending the girls to school.

Innovative gender-focused initiatives and programmes, even those which include positive gender discrimination, are needed to be implemented to combat the issue of gender disparity in access and quality of education and address the low gender equality perceived in the sector of education. Public-private sector collaboration as well as involvement of NGOs and non state agencies working in the education sector can prove effective in addressing a variety of socio-economic and cultural barriers.

The fear among girls and parents/families of potential molestation, harassment and discrimination both on their way to and from school and within school is widespread in country. It acts as a barrier to school access, sustained attendance and learning and achievement for girls. Strong measures are to be undertaken at the policy and management/administration level to address these issues to remove these major hindrances to girls' education.

The idea of setting up satellite campuses, feeder schools and recruitment of local female teachers can prove effective in arresting the problem of non enrolment, drop out, non attendance of school problems for girls to a great extent.

The country needs to initiate reforms in the curriculum. The curriculum should address the issues of gender parity, gender equality and gender equity leading to women's empowerment in the social, economic and political spheres. In this way, issues of social discrimination and social status, participation in the labour market and playing effective roles by women in policy-making, planning,

management and decision-making at various levels of authority and institutional mechanism may be addressed. This will solicit more girls' participation in education.

Visionary infrastructure planning can be made for the schools to address the issues overcoming the lack of essential facilities in the school such as classrooms, latrines, facilities for managing menstruation, drinking water and school wall boundaries also act as barriers to girls' education.

The laws like ban on child marriage, Child labour abolition law and right to education should be stringently implemented to bring the girls into the fold of education. Gender sensitization among the teachers, bringing gender neutral approach in class room transactions will create a positive environment for girls education.

3.2 WOMEN AND HEALTH

Health is both an indicator of and an instrument for women's development and progress. So, investment in promoting health of women is a major input for providing a good quality of life to the women and to ensure better productivity to the women. In this context, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) insisted to prioritise the improvement of the health status of women. According to the ICDP, improved health status can ensure empowerment of women. However, women's health is globally impeded by poverty, limited access to educational and economic opportunities, gender bias and discrimination, unjust laws, and insufficient state accountability. The lack of enjoyment of the right to health has deprived women from having a good quality of life.

The World Health Organization defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Health includes prevention of illness, development of individual potential. Health is a life opportunity that determines the quality of life and life chance. So, it should be affordable, accessible, effective, efficient and convenient to all individuals including the women. Health depends on the availability to all people of basic essentials: Food, safe water, housing, education, productive employment, protection from pollution and prevention of social alienation. Health depends on protection

from exploitation without distinction of race, religion and political belief, economic or social condition. However, all these basic requirements of health are not available to the majority of women and therefore women's health is always challenged.

3.2.1 International Declarations on Ensuring Good Health to Women:

The concern of the International agencies for the protection and promotion of the health status of women has been reflected in various international declarations. A few important declarations are mentioned below.

The first International Declaration is the **"The International Declaration of Human Rights", 1948**. Article 25(1) of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights propounds that

> Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, and housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. The Universal Declaration makes additional accommodations for security in case of physical debilitation or disability, and makes special mention of care given to those in motherhood or childhood.
>
> It clearly indicates that the declaration also gives coverage to the women whose health and well being is a matter of concern for the world community.
>
> Health is briefly addressed in the United Nations' International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which was adopted in 1965 and entered into effect in 1969.The Convention calls upon States to "Prohibit and to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, colour, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law," and references under this provision is made to "The right to public health, medical care, social security and social services." Thus, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination makes public health and medical care available to all world citizens without any bias and discrimination. This is applicable for women of all racial groups, colour, nationality and ethnic origin.
>
> The United Nations further defines the right to health in Article 12 of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which states:
>
> The States parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. This cannot exempt the women.

In September 1978, the **International Conference on Primary Health Care was held in Alma-Ata**, USSR (now Almaty, Kazakhstan). The Declaration of Alma-Ata, co-sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO), is a brief document that expresses "the need for urgent action by all governments, all health and development workers, and the world community to protect and promote the health of all the people of the world." It was the first international declaration stating the importance of primary health care and the role of world governments in catering to the health needs of the world citizens.It goes on to call for all governments, regardless of politics and conflicts, to work together toward global health. These fundamental tenets guide the work of the WHO today. Those who ratified the Declaration of Alma-Ata hoped that it would be the first step toward achieving health for all by the year 2000. Although that goal was not achieved, the Declaration of Alma-Ata still stands as an outline for the future of international healthcare. "Health for All" no doubt clarifies that health programmes and care services should reach all people including the women.

The next important declaration is the declaration of the **CEDAW** made in 1979. CEDAW stands for Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. CEDAW seeks to end discrimination against women in health care, and to ensure that prenatal and obstetrical care is made available to all women who need it(Art.12).Through these broad provisions, CEDAW seeks to improve women's health throughout their life spans, from birth to old age. Improving women's health requires not only access to good medical care, but also access to education, good nutrition, and the elimination of violence against women, both in the home and in armed conflict areas, The assumption being these serve as the means to secure better health status for women. In making recommendations to ratifying countries, the CEDAW Committee has accordingly expressed concern about the barriers to good health ranging from a general lack of adequate health care for women and girls, to the increasing number of women HIV/AIDs, and to high maternal mortality rates.

Women's health also got reflection in the discussions of the World Conferences on Women. **The first World Conference on women** organised by the United Nations in Mexico City in 1975 gave a call to

the signatory nations to look into the reproductive health of women on the eve of the International decade for women. This was a historic effort to sensitize the nations to protect the reproductive health of the women which though vital for the lives of millions of women was in a deplorable state.

The Second World Conference **on women** organised by the United Nations in Copenhagen in1980 stated that special actions needed to be taken in areas such as employment opportunities, adequate health care services and education. Though it singled out health of women as an area of concern, its recommendations were more generic than being specific.

The Fourth World Conference **on women** organised by the United Nations in Beijing, 1995 adopted the **Beijing Platform for Action** which made explicit recommendations to secure the health status of women. The strategies suggested are:

- To increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and quality health care, information and related services.
- To strengthen preventive programmes that promotes women's health.
- To undertake gender-sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health issues.
- To promote research and disseminate information on women's health.
- To increase resources and monitor follow-up for women's health.

Promoting health, one of the fundamental aspects of primary health care, has been addressed independently by successive conferences, the first in **Ottawa, Canada**, in 1986 and in **Jakarta, Indonesia,** in 1997. The Declaration of Jakarta includes an updated conceptualization of health and identifies the requirements for its attainment as we head into the next century. These include "peace, housing, education, social security, social relations, food, income, women's empowerment, a stable ecosystem, the sustainable use of resources, social justice, respect for human rights, and equity. Above all else, poverty is the greatest threat to health."

Other relevant international initiatives in recent years related to health are the **Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994),** which insists upon reducing infant and maternal mortality, and guaranteeing universal access to reproductive health and family planning services.

The **Millennium Development Goals** (**MDGs**) are eight international development goals that were established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000, following the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. Goal 3, 4 and 5 are committed to the health of the world population and goal 4 specifically talks about women's health. These three goals read as follows

- To reduce child mortality
- To improve maternal health
- To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

The outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled **"Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"** called for, inter alia, policies and measures to address, on a prioritized basis, the gender aspects of emerging and continued health challenges, such as malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and other diseases having a disproportionate impact on women's health, including those resulting in the highest mortality and morbidity rates. It also called for the allocation of the necessary budgetary resources to ensure the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, so that all women have full and equal access to comprehensive, high-quality and affordable health care, information, education and services throughout their life cycle.

In 2004, the **World Health Assembly** adopted its first strategy on reproductive health, intended to sensitize the countries about the serious repercussions of reproductive and sexual ill-health. It also formulated strategies targeting at five priority aspects of reproductive and sexual health. These are improving antenatal, delivery, postpartum and newborn care; providing high-quality services for family planning, including infertility services; eliminating unsafe abortion; combating sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, reproductive tract infections, cervical cancer and other gynaecological illness and disease; and promoting sexual health.

During the 2005 **World Summit**, heads of states and governments committed themselves to "achieving universal access to reproductive health by 2015, as set out at the International Conference on Population and Development. It also tried to integrate some avowed aims like reducing maternal mortality, improving maternal health, reducing child mortality, promoting gender equality, combating HIV/AIDS and eradicating poverty."

3.2.2 Women's Health: the World Scenario

Irrespective of the International Declarations on women's health, the general health scenario of the women throughout the world is in a very deplorable state. Women face greater health risks in comparison to the men in different age groups. The following fact sheet supplements the observation.

In 2011, about 820, 000 women and men aged 15-24 were newly infected with HIV in low- and middle-income countries out of which more than 60% of were women. Globally, adolescent girls and young women (15-24 years) are twice as likely to be at risk of HIV infection compared to boys and young men in the same age group. In sub-Saharan Africa, more women than men are living with HIV, and young women aged15–24 years are as much as eight times more likely than men to be HIV positive.

Although progress has been made in reducing the birth rate among adolescents, more than 15 million of the 135 million live births worldwide are among girls aged between 15-19 years.

An estimated three million unsafe abortions occur globally every year among girls aged 15-19 years. Unsafe abortions contribute substantially to lasting health problems and maternal deaths. Complications from pregnancy and childbirth are an important cause of death among girls aged 15–19 in low- and middle-income countries.

Women and girls are most vulnerable to anaemia.

Maternal deaths are the second biggest killer of women of reproductive age. Every year, approximately 287 000 women die due to complications in pregnancy and childbirth, 99% of them are in developing countries.

Disability which affects 15% of the world's population is more common among women than men. A disabled woman is at more danger than a disabled man. Older women experience more disability than men.

Cardiovascular diseases account for 46% of older women's deaths globally, while a further 14% of deaths are caused by cancers.

3.2.3 India's Commitment to Improve the Health Status of Women:

Protecting and promoting the health status of women is an avowed goal of the Government of India. It is reflected through the Constitutional provisions, policies and programmes of the Government. **Article 47** of the Constitution of India directs the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health which includes the women. The Constitutional mandate gets reflected through the policies. Some of the important policies of the Government of India pertaining to women's health are mentioned below.

The National Population Policy 2000 recognised the poor health situation of women and made suggestions to resolve these concerns.

- Women's risk of premature death and disability is highest during their reproductive years. Maternal mortality is not merely a health disadvantage; it is a matter of social injustice. Low social and economic status of girls and women, limited access to education, good nutrition, as well as money to pay for health care and family planning services contribute significantly to their poor health status.
- Under-nutrition and micronutrient deficiency paralyse woman's well-being. Interventions for improving women's health and nutrition are critical for poverty reduction.

India's National Health Policy 2002 focuses throughout on the health of the poor, and dedicates a section to the health of women and related it to socioeconomic and cultural issues. The document acknowledges the importance of women's health as a major determinant of the health of entire community. The National Health Policy (2002) pointed out "social, cultural and economic factors continue to inhibit women from gaining adequate access even to the

existing public health facilities. The policy endorses the need to expand the primary health care infrastructure to increase women's access to care. The policy also recognizes a need to review staffing in the public health service, so that it may become more responsive to specific needs of women.

India's National policy for the empowerment of women, 2001 makes some important recommendations for ensuring a better health status to the women. The most important of them include:

- A holistic approach to women's health which includes both nutrition and health services will be adopted and special attention will be given to the needs of women and the girl at all stages of the life cycle. The reduction of infant mortality and maternal mortality, which are sensitive indicators of human development, is a priority concern. This policy reiterates women should have access to comprehensive, affordable and quality health care. Measures will be adopted that take into account the reproductive rights of women to enable them to exercise informed choices, their vulnerability to sexual and health problems together with endemic, infectious and communicable diseases such as malaria, TB, and water borne diseases as well as hypertension and cardio-pulmonary diseases. The social, developmental and health consequences of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases will be tackled from a gender perspective.

- The policy desires the women to have access to safe, effective and affordable methods of family planning of their choice and the need to suitably address the issues of early marriages and spacing of children. Interventions such as spread of education, compulsory registration of marriage and delaying the age of marriage are to be put into operation vigorously to save women from maternal mortality problems.

- Women's traditional knowledge about health care and nutrition will be recognized through proper documentation and its use will be encouraged. The use of Indian and alternative systems of medicine will be enhanced within the framework of overall health infrastructure available for women.

- In view of the high risk of malnutrition and disease that women face at all the three critical stages viz., infancy and

childhood, adolescent and reproductive phase, focussed attention would be paid to meeting the nutritional needs of women at all stages of the life cycle. Special efforts will be made to tackle the problem of macro and micro nutrient deficiencies especially amongst pregnant and lactating women as it leads to various diseases and disabilities.

Intra-household discrimination in nutritional matters for girls and women will be sought to be ended through appropriate strategies. Widespread use of nutrition education would be made to address the issues of intra-household imbalances in nutrition and the special needs of pregnant and lactating women.

So far as the programmes of the Government are concerned, the *Special Nutrition Programme* (*SNP*) was launched in the country in 1970-71 to improve the health and nutritional status of children in the age group of 0-6 years, along with that of pregnant women and lactating mothers.

The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme was initiated in 1975.It aims at providing supplementary nutrition, immunisation, health check-ups, and referral services to children below six years of age which gives coverage to the girls in the early years of their lives as well as expecting and nursing mothers.

The Reproductive and Child Health Programme (RCH) Phase -I was launched in October 1997. The RCH program incorporated the earlier existing programs i.e. National Family Welfare Program and Child Survival and Survival & Safe Motherhood Program (CSSM) and added two more components one relating to sexually transmitted disease and the other relating to reproductive tract infections. The broad objectives of the programme which impact upon the women include:

- Promotion of MCH to ensure safe mother hood and child survival.
- Reduction of maternal and child morbidity and mortality.
- Attainment of population stabilization.

The **National Rural Health Mission launched in 2005** is a promising programme aiming at improving the health status of the women. The goals of the NRHM that have a bearing on the health of the women include:

- Reduction in Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) and Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR).
- Universal access to public health services such as women's health, child health, water, sanitation & hygiene, immunization, and nutrition.
- Prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases, including locallyendemic diseases.
- Access to integrated comprehensive primary healthcare.

3.2.4 Situation of Women's Health in India

Irrespective of the promising prescription of the Indian Constitution and the visionary policies, the health situation of the women is not very appealing. The alarming health condition of the women in the country is reflected in the declining sex ratio. With some improvements, the sex ratio of the country is noted to be 940 in 2011 which is indicative of the high death rate among them.

Starvations are more common to the women. Gender disparities in nutrition are evident from infancy to adulthood. In fact, gender has been the most statistically significant determinant of malnutrition among young children and malnutrition is a frequent direct or underlying cause of death among girls below age 5.

Food insecurities loom large around the women because of their economic impoverishment and gender practices of the society. This is becoming more acute in the new millennium when agricultural productivity is getting sharply affected.

The increasing rates of migration, desertion, divorce has brought new burdens on the women and has created health hazards of a high magnitude. Migration limits their access to the health care system in the area of destination. Desertion burdens them economically and being single, they fail to venture to access health services.

Infant mortality rates are higher for the females. The female Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) was 49 while the IMR among the males was 46 in 2010.

Women in India suffer from malnourishment and under nourishment. Nutritional deprivation and deficiency have two major consequences

for women: they never reach their full growth potential and suffer from anaemia. Both are risk factors. 57.4% women in rural areas and 50.9% women in urban areas suffered from anaemia during 2005-06. The share of anaemic women across the age-groups 20-29 years centred on 55% during the same period.52% of married women suffer from anaemia. Mal nutrition is common among women belonging to households which are below poverty line. The average nutritional intake of women is 1400 calories daily. The necessary requirement is approximately 2200 calories. Gender inequality significantly contributes for malnutrition and under nutrition of girls.

Indian women have high mortality rates, particularly during childhood and in their reproductive years. India's maternal mortality rates in rural areas are among the world's highest. From a global perspective, India accounts for 19% of all live births and 27% of all maternal deaths. The current Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) of India is 212 per one lakh live births. In its 2009 report, UNICEF came up with shocking figures on the status of new mothers in India. The maternal mortality rate of India stands at 301 per 1000, with as many as 78,000 women in India dying of childbirth complications in that year according to the UNICEF Report. It is estimated that 23.9 lakh people are infected with HIV in India, of whom 39% are females.

3.2.5 What Prevents Better Health Status to Women in India?

The right to good health is of paramount importance. But the health care in India is inequitable. Gender considerations constrain women's access to quality health care in India. Within the overall institutional setting, social institutions and cultural practices — i.e. laws, norms, traditions and codes of conduct — often are the main sources of persisting discrimination against women. Examples include unequal inheritance rights, unequal power relations in the family between the man and the women obstacles to free movement and early, family-imposed marriages of teenage girls. All these prevent education of girls and serve as impediments for developing health consciousness among them.

The health of Indian women is intrinsically linked to their status in society. Women are considered as economic burdens. Their contribution to the family economy is over looked as they are mostly

unpaid. This impacts their access to health care system. There is a heavy son preference in the country. Families take the health of the males and sons seriously paying least attention to that of the mothers and daughters. High levels of infant mortality combined with the strong son preference motivate women to bear high numbers of children in an attempt to have a son. Numerous pregnancies and closely spaced births increase the health risk for mothers. Thus, women's low socioeconomic status and reproductive role expose them to the risks of poor health and premature death.

Many of the health problems of Indian women are related to or exacerbated by high levels of fertility. Blind adherence to customs, traditions, non institutional deliveries bring enormous risks to women.

The low level of education and low formal labour force participation of the women restrict their health consciousness and access to health care services. It also determines their nutritional status. Because they are not economically self sufficient they fail to spend money for their health and nutrition. Lack of control on economic resources is a major reason of their health neglect.

Indian families are patriarchal. Violence is common in Indian families. So the woman is always powerless and voiceless. Indian women are secluded, shy and de-valued which restrict them from asserting for their right to good nutrition and health care. Women's lack of autonomy in decision making or movement is also an important constraint on women's health seeking behaviour.

Child marriages are still in vogue in the country. Early motherhood impairs the health of women and contributes significantly for an upward stride of Maternal Mortality rate.

3.2.6 Interventions Needed to Improve Health among Women in India
Women's health is a key means to her empowerment. So, a time has come to look into women's health issues in a careful manner. For this innovative interventions are to be introduced.
As deeply rooted social institutions – societal norms, codes of conduct, laws and tradition – cause gender discrimination, they are to be changed with a change in the attitude of the individuals. For this people

are to be sensitized. Overexploitation of the women's reproductive ability is to be put an end through regular sensitization and campaign.

 The Government often opts for quick fixes or blueprints of reforms which become redundant without follow up actions. So, strategies need rigorous implementation. For this dedication,commitments are needed which should not only include motivating women or consciousness building among women, but concurrently on lowering men's resistance against reforms and changing men's attitude towards women.

The flagship programmes for promoting women's health should not remain confined to records, but should be translated into action. Rigorous and vigorous implementation of the programmes designed to cater to the needs of women can prevent many health hazards for women and protect them from health risks. Anganwadi workers and Asha Karmis are to become more active and responsive to the needs of the women.

Improving female's access to education is a bare necessity to improve the health status of women. Increasing female education, especially literacy rates and basic education, is the key to consciousness and awareness building among women. Without education, women have no access to paid employment Once women are educated are entitled for paid employment, there will be a betterment in their status and improved health care can come within their reach. So, women should be given formal education which should have life skill education as a component.

Family planning and sexual counselling can empower women and give them more control over their lives. Education of girls, access to microfinance, training, and employment opportunities for women can empower them to take independent decisions and transform them into actions. Particularly, women can assert their choice with regard to deciding child birth, child spacing and child care which will protect their health and reduce the rate of maternal and child mortality rates.

Consciousness about nutritional intake for women has to be developed both among the women and the men to protect the women from preventable diseases. In this regard the culture of neglecting women's food intake needs a change.

Better access to the factors of production: land, credit, technology and information can tailor to the needs of women better. They will not only improve women's access to resources, but to knowledge and information to health opportunities.

Efforts are needed by the government and nongovernmental organizations to expand health services to the poorest women, especially reproductive health services. The industrial corporate social responsibility should take up health as an area of concern and can gear investments and efforts to promote it. Communication programs are also needed to inform poor women and their families about women's health problems and the importance of seeking care.

User fee free health services, mobile health care services, free medical checkups can make health care reach the common and the poorest of the poor women where their monetary investment will be zero. Zero cost, door step medical services can bring some changes in the health status of women. Promoting effective client-provider interaction is the key to improving quality of health services for women. This requires skilled staff, an adequate supply of drugs, and sensitivity to cultural factors. Appointment of lady doctors can address to the cultural taboos that prevent women to access health care services.

3.3 WOMEN AND WORK

The concern for women economic empowerment and ensuring equality has been a priority in the agenda of many national, nongovernmental as well as international agencies. Empowerment and equality can be achieved when women's productive role gets due recognition through their integration into paid employments. But the over emphasis on the reproductive roles of women has undermined their role in the labour market. No doubt, women contribute significantly to the economy. But their contributions often go undervalued and unrecognized. The common notion that goes is the "Bread winner man and the Home maker woman". This becomes the foundation of the public private dichotomy and sexual division of labour and the preventing force for recognising the productive role of woman .The sexual division of labour

and undermining of the productive role of women have stunted women' participation in the work force.

Women's work participation is beneficial for the woman as well as the society. Women's full integration into the economy is a desirable goal for equity and efficiency considerations. The equity aspect implies that labour market participation of women will improve their relative economic position. It will also tap the productive power of women who constitute almost half of the world's population and by that increase overall economic efficiency and improve development potentials of the country. Apart from that, women's participation in the labour force can be seen as a signal of declining discrimination and increasing empowerment of women. It necessarily has a yield for the overall well being of the women. According to the ILO, women's work, both paid and unpaid, may be accepted as the single most important poverty-reducing factor in developing economies.

Women make up a little over half the world's population, but their contribution to measured economic activity, growth, and well-being is far below its potential. Women are often estimated as the unproductive members of the society and their labour input goes undervalued. Despite significant progress in recent decades, labour markets across the world remain divided along gender lines, and progress toward gender equality seems to have stalled. Female labour force participation (FLFP) has remained lower than male participation, women account for most unpaid work, and when women are employed in paid work, they are overrepresented in the informal sector and become the most vulnerable to poverty. They also face significant wage discrepancies. In many countries, distortions and discrimination in the labour market restrict women's options for paid work, and female representation in senior positions and entrepreneurship remains low. Thus, women remain the excluded ones in the labour market.

3.3.1 International Declarations on Women's Integration into the Work force

Keeping in view the long segregation of women from the workforce and its bearings on the status of women, the feminist activists have always demanded to end discrimination against women in work force. In response to such demands, the international community and

organisations have made sincere efforts from time to time to mainstream the women in the employment market.

Promoting decent and productive employment and income opportunities equally for women and men is one of the key priorities of the **ILO's (International Labour Organisation)** Decent Work Agenda. The ILO has geared massive efforts for integrating gender concerns into employment promotion. The ultimate end is to boost productivity and economic growth; human resources development; sustainable development; and reduce poverty. International laws protecting women's rights as workers exist through the efforts of various international bodies.

The International Labour Organization ratified the Equal Remuneration Convention **in** 1951, which came into force in 1953, and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention**,** which came into force in 1960.Both these conventions recognized the productive power of women and were vociferous to provide space to the women in the labour market and to treat them equally with their male counterparts. In 1966, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**,** which went into force in 1976.This covenant recognised the right to work as an economic right of the women as human beings.

The Home Work Convention, adopted by the ILO, came into force in 2000.The Convention protects the rights of persons doing paid work out of their home, which is frequently women workers. It offers equal protection regarding working conditions, safety, remuneration, social security protection, access to training, minimum age of employment, and maternity protection. **The** International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families**,** adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, came into force in 2003. Human trafficking often targets young women who are abducted and sent outside their own country to work as domestic workers, often in conditions of extreme exploitation. A number of international laws have been ratified to address human trafficking of women and children.

The ILO implements a gender mainstreaming strategy in employment promotion in line with the relevant **International Labour Standards and** Global Employment Agenda (GEA)**, and as called for by** 2008 Social Justice Declaration**,** 2009.All these strategies are of vital significance for integrating women in work in a descent manner.

On June 16, 2011, the [International Labour Organization](#) (ILO) passed **C189 [Domestic Workers Convention, 2011](#)**, binding signatories to regulations intended to end abuses of migrant domestic workers. It was anticipated that the Convention would put pressure on non-ratifying countries to support changes to their own laws to meet the change in international standards protecting domestic workers. Domestic workers basically comprise a large majority of women and as such the Convention has an important bearing on reducing risks and vulnerabilities for the women in work.

3.3.2 Gap between Prophecy and Practice

Despite some progress made over the last few decades in increasing women's labour force participation and narrowing gender gaps in wages, gender equality in the world of work still remains an elusive goal. While millions of women have become successful entrepreneurs, women are still grossly underrepresented in the world's board rooms. In particular, in the developing world, women continue to form a large majority of the world's working poor, earn less income, and are more often affected by long-term unemployment than men. There is a deficit of descent work condition for the women.

All these situations arise due to women's socio-economic disadvantages caused by gender-based discrimination, cultural norms and expectations and their double roles of being a worker and a care taker for the family as well as the society. Women often have less access to productive resources, education, and skills and labour market opportunities than men. Largely, this is because of persistent social norms ascribing gender roles, which are often, slow to change. Furthermore, women continue to undertake most of unpaid care work, which has become an increasing challenge in their efforts to engage in productive work, both in subsistence agriculture and market economy.

The incidence of poverty increases on the women due to their nature of employment. Women are mainly engaged in the unorganised sector where the vulnerability rate is very high and degree of uncertainty is spectacular. According to the Global Trends in Employment Report prepared by the ILO among women, 50.5% are in vulnerable employment, a rate that exceeds the corresponding share for men

(48.2%). The World Bank estimates about 90% percent of women work force are engaged in the informal sector. Women are in many instances out of the ambit of Governmental records due to the invisible character of their work. They are basically engaged in subsistence agriculture where jobs are limited and securities are totally absent. The demise of state welfare in the post-globalisation period has put the women in more precarious state. Women suffer from wage discrepancies. Wall notes even in the most advanced countries there is about 62% wage discrepancy, which indicate that women are still not empowered. The low paid, unpaid, underpaid and sometimes deferred paid and never paid syndromes become frequent with the women due to their low educational attainment, lack of skill, low bargaining capacity, limited propensity for migration and due to the gender bias that permeates the employment market. This leads to the flexibilization of the female work force. To quote President Bill Clinton's address to the annual meeting of the Clinton Global initiative (September 2009) women perform 66 percent of the world's work, and produce 50 percent of the food, yet earn only 10 percent of the income and own 1 percent of the property. All these situations arise due to the lack of recognition given to the women's work.

Globally, women's participation in the labour market remained steady in the two decades from 1990 to 2010, hovering around 52 per cent. In 2010, women's labour force participation rates remained below 30 per cent in Northern Africa and Western Asia; below 40 per cent in Southern Asia; and below 50 per cent in the Caribbean and Central America. The gap between participation rates of women and men though has narrowed slightly in the last 20 years but remains considerable.

Employment levels in the services sector continue to be female dominated. This sector accounts for at least three quarters of women's employment in most of the more developed regions and in Latin America and the Caribbean. In contrast, agriculture still accounts for more than half of the employment of women and men in sub-Saharan Africa (excluding Southern Africa) and of women in Southern Asia. In those regions, the majority of workers – women to a greater extent than men – are in vulnerable employment, being either own-account

workers or contributing family workers. In Southern Asia, Western Asia, and Africa, only 20% of women work at paid non-agricultural jobs. Worldwide, women's rate of paid employment outside of agriculture grew to 41% by 2008.

Over the years, women have entered various traditionally male-dominated occupations. However, they are still rarely employed in jobs with status, power and authority or in traditionally male blue-collar occupations. Relative to their overall share of total employment, women are significantly underrepresented among legislators, senior officials and managers, craft and related trade workers, and plant and machine operators and assemblers; they are heavily overrepresented among clerks, professionals, and service and sales workers. Horizontal and vertical job segregation has resulted in a persistent gender pay gap everywhere. Gender pay gaps, glass ceiling and encountering role conflicts are common features in women's employment scenario. Gender pay gap implies the discrepancy in wages received by men and women due to their gender affiliations. Glass ceiling refers to the unseen, yet unbreakable barrier that keeps women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements. Role conflicts refer to the counter role expectations for the women from the home front and the work front which often mismatch with each other.

In spite of the changes that have occurred in women's participation in the labour market, women continue to bear most of the responsibilities for the home: caring for children and other dependent household members, preparing meals and doing other housework. In all regions, women spend at least twice as much time as men on unpaid domestic work. When unpaid work is taken into account, women's total work hours are longer than men's in all regions.

Like their adult counterparts, girls are more likely than boys to perform unpaid work within their own household. In the less developed regions, many young girls aged 5-14 take on a large amount of household chores, including care-giving, cooking and cleaning, and older girls do so to an even greater extent.

3.3.3 Women's Work in India: a Situational Analysis

According to the **ILO's Global Employment Trends 2013 report**, India's labour force participation rate for women fell from just over 37 per cent in 2004-05 to 29 per cent in 2009-10. Out of 131 countries, India ranks 11th from the bottom in terms of female labour force participation. Only, 22.5 percent women are in labour force. In 2009-2010, women were 26.1% of all rural workers, and 13.8% of all urban workers. Women are an estimated 30% of all economically active individuals. Women earn 62% of men's salary for equal work.

As per the 2011 census, when there are 343.8 million male workers, there are only129.1 females in the work force. This is indicative of the gender gap in work force participation. Further the sectoral participation of women clearly projects their low share in different sectors of employment. Table no.3.1 exhibits the share of women in different sectors in India.

Table No. 3:1

Sectoral Distribution and Status of Women in Workforce

Sector	Percentage	Status	Percentage
Agricultural	62.8	Self employed	56.1
Industrial	20.0	Regular wage	12.7
Service	17.2	Casual workers	31.2

Source: Census, 2011, Government of India.

Thus the women mainly dominate the agricultural sector. Their share is perceptibly low in the industrial and the service sector. Similarly, a major chunk of the working women are self employed. As regular wage earners their share is low. They are mainly casual workers. These scenarios clearly spell out the poor work status of women in India.

In 2009-2010, the rural sector, 55.7% females were self-employed, 4.4% females had regular wage/salaried employment and 39.9% females were casual labourers. A total of 20.4% women were employed in the organized sector in 2010 with 17.9% working in the public sector and 24.5% in the private. In 2009-10, the average wage/salary received by regular wage/salaried employees of age 15-59 years was Rs. 155.87 per day for females compared with Rs. 249.15 per day for males in rural

areas. For urban areas, it was Rs. 308.79 and Rs. 377.16 per day for females and males respectively.

Women are just 3% of management, and senior official positions. In 2010, Women held only 5.3% of board directorships of 100 companies. 22.6% of women are employed in business and they make up 14% of senior management roles. 54% of companies on the Bombay Stock Exchange have no women board directors. According to Gender Diversity Benchmark, 2011, India has the lowest national female labour force. 28.71% of those at the junior level of the workplace14.9% of those at the middle level, 9.32% of those at the senior level.

3.3.4 Challenges to Women's Workforce Participation in India

Women in India face enormous challenges for their participation in the economy. A few important of them can be discussed below.

 A woman is said to be having three roles. They are the reproductive role, productive role and the community management role. Reproductive role includes bearing and rearing of children, productive role includes extending her support services to her husband working at agricultural fields or in household productions like cottage industries and community management role includes managing the community resources like forest, land, water resources. But, all these activities of the woman go uncounted as economic activity, and do not get reported in the national income statistics. This is unlike the case of services by a paid domestic help, which is considered an economic activity and is counted in the national income. However, society undervalues these immense contributions made by women. And, to some extent, official statistics reproduces the prejudices in the society.

In rural areas, women periodically enter and exit from agricultural work. Quite often, women's participation in agricultural activities is self-employed in nature. They perform agricultural activities in their own fields as a routine activity to ease the burden of their husbands. When they act as wage earners in other's fields in rural areas, they are not paid equal wage with the men. Because there are a surplus of women agricultural labourers their bargaining power is restricted. This leads to the marginalization of women.

In India, social factors play a significant role in reducing wowomen's labour participation. Husbands and in-laws often discourage women from working, while, in many parts of the country, restrictions are imposed even on their movements outside the household. In this context, it is notable that labour participation is particularly low in India among urban, educated women. Social variables play a significant role in this direction. It is noted that labour force participation is more among the middle aged, lower caste and low educated women from low income families. Thus, social norms and atriarchal values restrict women' entry into the labour market.

Amartya Sen has written about the 'missing women' in India, highlighting the low female-male ratio in the country's population. The issue of the missing women in India's population has a parallel in the problem relating to the missing women in India's workforce. That is, the staggering numbers of women who have withdrawn from the labour force and attend to domestic duties.

The labour market itself is gender ridden in India. It is hostile to the women. It denies equal wage for equal work to the women and positions of prominence for the women. This discourages women's participation. Women's share in the organised sector is distinctly low and in the unorganised sector they become vulnerable to various types of exploitations. This becomes a preventive factor for their entry into the labour market.

Lack of propensity to migrate due to family and household burdens women's participation in the labour market becomes feeble.

Lack of education, training and skill formation also become the preventing forces for women's entry into the job market which value these factors a lot.

High fertility rates among women in India affect their joining in the employment market. Due to recurrent child births and due to the lack of spacing women in India not only become physically weak but also over burdened with child care responsibilities which disallow them to enter into the work force.

The gradual decline of the agricultural and the handicraft sectors, have closed down the employment opportunities for women in rural India.

Low level of access and control over resources among women also keep them disempowered and they fail to join the labour force.

3.3.5 How can the women be better integrated into the labour market?

Creating more jobs and ensuring better working conditions for women will encourage greater female participation in the economy. But for this the supply side should be strengthened. Women's education can have spectacular effect on their employment. Education can bring for them a new wave of consciousness, by which they can be enlightened and empowered to take some vital decisions. They can avoid child marriage and adhere to small family norms that can liberate them from domestic burdens to participate in labour market.

Women are in need of skill and training. Arrangements of training programmes can enable them to equip themselves with occupational knowledge and techniques to get skilled positions.

The advent of technology and the transfer of technology to the women can reduce their household drudgery and the time devoted for it. They can free themselves for outdoor economic pursuit.

The social norms, general attitude of the people needs a reformation to bring the women into the ambit of paid employment. The patriarchal values are to be replaced by a gender neutral value and the productive and the community management role of the women should get due attention to integrate them in greater numbers in the job markets. This requires the community to give due recognition to the productive role of the women and to value and price their labour input and use of skill.

 Making provisions for flexi time work and allowing home based work for women will allure more and more women to blend their domestic roles with their productive roles.

Strengthening anti-discrimination legislation in employment across all occupations will be essential for expanding employment opportunities for women. In addition, reducing the large gaps in wages and working conditions, often observed between women and men, could help provide a boost to the number of women seeking employment.

Finally, sound labour market information is essential for developing well-informed policies. Further work is needed to sharpen the measurement tools used to analyse women's participation in the labour market.

3.4 WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is a common issue affecting the lives of millions of women across the countries and cultures. Domestic violence occurs in every country, in every neighbourhood, among people of all races, cultures, religions, and income levels. It is noted in all economic, ethnic, and social backgrounds. It happens irrespective of age, gender, or sexual orientation.

3.4.1 Defining Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a crime. It is a pattern of abusive behaviour that occurs between family members and/or intimate partners to gain power and control. It can be described as a pattern of abusive and threatening behaviour that may include physical, emotional, economic and sexual violence as well as intimidation, isolation and coercion. Domestic violence is also known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, battering, family violence, dating abuse, and intimate partner violence (IPV).It is a pattern of behaviour which involves the abuse by one person against another in an intimate relationship such as marriage, cohabitation, dating or within the family. It can be experienced by persons in heterosexual or same-sex relationships.

Domestic Violence is defined differently in the different state constitutions. According to Washington State Law, domestic violence is physical harm, bodily injury, assault, the infliction of fear of imminent physical harm, sexual assault, or stalking. The UK Law defines Domestic Violence as "Any incident of threatening behavior, violence, or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality" The UNICEF accepts Domestic Violence as violence perpetrated by intimate partners and other family members and manifested through physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse.

3.4.2 Forms of Domestic Violence

Violence against women can be physical, sexual, and psychological. Physical violence includes acts of physical aggression such as slapping, hitting, kicking and beating. The common sexual abuses women endure are forced intercourse, and other forms of sexual coercion. Psychological abuse includes acts like intimidation, constant belittling, humiliating, nagging and various controlling behaviours such as isolating a person from their family and friends, monitoring their movements, and restricting their access to information or assistance. When abuse occurs repeatedly in the same relationship, it reduces into an act of "battering".

3.4.3 Impacts of Domestic Violence on Women

Domestic violence brings multiple damages for women. It has a significant impact on the health and well-being of women both in the immediate and longer term. Its psychological effects are far reaching. Mental health is affected by the trauma received through domestic violence. Depressions, stress, chronic stress, low self esteem are some of the outcomes of domestic violence on women. The social consequences of domestic violence are equally devastating. It affects the human rights of the women. It prevents equal treatment and empowerment of women. Domestic violence increases women's vulnerability to trafficking; women who experienced violence at home become more willing to look for and accept an uncertain and potentially risky job abroad. Losses of opportunity, isolation from family/ friends, loss of income or work, homelessness become the common manifestations for the women who experience domestic violence. Children become the worst sufferers in case of domestic violence. Physical impacts of domestic violence can be noted through death, disability and illness. Domestic violence often proves to be fatal for the victims.

Thus, violence against women can have a myriad of devastating consequences on women's short and long-term health and wellbeing. Along with the immediate physical and emotional impacts of violence, women's overall quality of life, security can be adversely affected over an entire lifetime, which can, in turn, impact their participation and engagement in various aspects of life and society. These consequences to the individual women, along with the violent act itself, can have ripple effects on society as a whole.

3.4.4 Domestic Violence in the International Legal Framework

The United Nations has developed legal frameworks to arrest domestic violence. Some regional organisations like the European Union and the Council of Europe have also framed various legal measures to combat domestic violence. Today the international laws recognise that domestic violence against women grossly violates the human rights of women. So, the international legal instruments and policy statements make clear that states have a duty under international law to prevent domestic violence and punish domestic violence offenders.

 The declarations against domestic violence are included in all the major United Nations Treaties and Conventions and are reflected in the United Nations' Conference Documents. Added to them specific mentions are noted in The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, The Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and the State Responsibility for Private Acts of Violence.

The International Bill of Human Rights consists of **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, and its implementing covenants, the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**, which entered into force in 1976. While these documents do not explicitly address domestic violence, they, along with the Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, articulate a state's duty to protect fundamental human rights that are commonly violated in domestic violence cases. Those rights include the right to life, the right to physical and mental integrity, the right to equal protection of the laws and the right to be free from discrimination. All these rights make it obligatory for the state to provide protection to women against all forms of violence which also gives coverage to domestic violence.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which came into force in 1981, does not explicitly include language on violence against women or domestic violence but guarantees the human rights to women. In 1992, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted General Recommendation Number 19. This recommendation addresses the Women's Convention's silence on violence and states that gender-based violence is a "form of discrimination which seriously inhibits

women's ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men." This recommendation became the first human rights treaty or convention to prohibit violence against women. The recommendation included domestic violence within its purview.

The issue of domestic violence has got a frequent reflection in the United Nation's Conference documents. **The Report of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Copenhagen, July 1980**, U.N. was the first document to explicitly mention domestic violence in an official document of the United Nations. Domestic violence is referred to several times in the document. The Legislative measures section states "Legislation should also be enacted and implemented in order to prevent domestic and sexual violence against women. All appropriate measures, including legislative ones, should be taken to allow victims to be fairly treated in all criminal procedures."

At the **1985 Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi,** Kenya, domestic violence received significant attention. The final conference report called on governments to "undertake effective measures, including mobilizing community resources to identify, prevent and eliminate all violence, including family violence, against women and to provide shelter, support and reorientation services for abused women and children."

The final conference document from Second World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in June 1993, was **the** [Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action](#) **1993**. The Vienna Declaration stated: In particular, the World Conference on Human Rights stresses the importance of working towards the elimination of violence against women in the public and private life . . . the elimination of gender bias in the administration of justice and the eradication of any conflicts which may arise between the rights of women and the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices.

Violence against women, including domestic violence, was a major focus at the **Fourth World Conference on Women 1995** in Beijing, China. The conference document, the [Beijing Platform for Action](#), identifies domestic violence as a human rights violation. The Platform states: "Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental

freedoms." It addresses violence against women as a separate "Critical Area of Concern" and includes it under the "Human Rights" section. The Beijing Platform outlines many specific actions governments, nongovernmental groups and others should take to confront and combat violence against women, including strengthening legal systems' response to domestic violence.

Five years later, at **the United Nations' conference, Beijing plus 5: A Special Session on Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century**, the [final document](#) detailed obstacles for women and included domestic violence. The document mentions a lack of comprehensive programs dealing with the perpetrators, discriminatory socio cultural attitudes towards women, their subordinate position in the society make them vulnerable to many forms of violence, such as physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family. In many countries, a coordinated multidisciplinary approach to responding to violence which includes the health system, workplaces, the media, the education system, as well as the justice system, is still limited. Domestic violence, including sexual violence in marriage, is still treated as a private matter in some countries. Insufficient awareness of the consequences of domestic violence, how to prevent it and the rights of victims still exists.

The [Programme of Action](#) from the 1994 **International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo**, Egypt, articulates the need for government attention to all forms of violence against women. This need was emphasized again in the "**Cairo plus 5" document, the** [Programme for Action](#)**, from the second International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1999. The** [Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development](#) **1995** calls on governments to take effective measures to combat and eliminate all forms of violence against women.

The [Durban Declaration and Program of Action](#) **from the 2001** World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, recognizes that the intersection of gender and race, ethnicity or other status can make women particularly vulnerable to certain kinds of violence and calls on governments "to consider adopting and implementing immigration policies and programs that would enable immigrants, in particular women and children who are victims of spousal or domestic violence, to free themselves from abusive relationships."

In 1993, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the [Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women](#) **(DEVAW).** The DEVAW states, "Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men." DEVAW condemns the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position as compared with men" and defines violence as that occurring both in "private or public life." Importantly, DEVAW provides specific steps member states should take to combat domestic violence, including legal system reform. DEVAW provides that states should investigate and punish acts of domestic violence, develop comprehensive legal, political, administrative and cultural programs to prevent violence against women, provide training to law enforcement officials and promote research and collect statistics relating to the prevalence of domestic violence.

The [United Nations General Assembly](#) has designated November 25 as the **International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women**.

3.4.5 Domestic Violence: Global Fact sheet

The plethora of International legislative efforts to end domestic violence against women seems to be quite promising. But their performance seems to be poor because of the wide spread practice of domestic violence prevalent in the globe even today.The U.N. Report mentions according to a 2013 global review of available data, 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence. However, some national violence studies show that up to 70 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime from an intimate partner. More than 64 million girls worldwide are child brides. Approximately 140 million girls and women in the world have suffered female genital mutilation/cutting. Worldwide, almost one third (30%) of all women who have been in a relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner. Globally 38% of all murders of women are committed by intimate partners. Women who have been physically or sexually abused by their partners report higher rates of health problems. For example, they are 16% more likely to have a low-birth-weight baby. They are more than twice as likely to have an abortion, almost twice as likely to experience depression, and, in some regions, are 1.5 times more likely to acquire HIV, as compared to women who have not gained such

experience. Globally, 7% of women have been sexually assaulted by someone other than a partner.

Studies suggest that up to 10 million children witness some form of domestic violence annually.

3.4.6 Domestic Violence Measures Undertaken by Government of India

In 1983, domestic violence was recognised as a specific criminal offence by the introduction of section 498-A into the Indian Penal Code. This section deals with cruelty by a husband or his family towards a married woman.

India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993.

The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) spells out to make maximum efforts to eliminate discriminations and all forms of violence against women and the girl child As the policy states "All forms of violence against women, physical and mental, whether at domestic or societal levels, including those arising from customs, traditions or accepted practices shall be dealt with effectively with a view to eliminate its incidence. Institutions and mechanisms/schemes for assistance will be created and strengthened for prevention of such violence, including sexual harassment at work place and customs like dowry; for the rehabilitation of the victims of violence and for taking effective action against the perpetrators of such violence. A special emphasis will also be laid on programmes and measures to deal with trafficking in women and girls."

The Government of India passed the, **Domestic Violence Bill** in 2001, "To protect the rights of women who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto."

However the most promising legislative measure formulated in the country to end domestic violence is the **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005.** The act aims at protecting the women

from domestic violence. The [Act](#) was passed by the [Parliament](#) in August 2005 and assented to by the [President](#) on 13 September 2005. It was brought into force by the [Indian government](#) from October 26, 2006. As of November 2007, it has been ratified by four of twenty-eight state governments in India; namely [Andhra Pradesh](#), [Tamil Nadu](#), [Uttar Pradesh](#) and [Odisha](#). But by now it is being enforced by all the states and union territories of India.

The salient features of the Protection from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 are as follows:

- The Act seeks to cover those women who are or have been in a relationship with the abuser where both parties have lived together in a shared household and are related by consanguinity, marriage or a relationship in the nature of marriage, or adoption; in addition relationship with family members living together as a joint family are also included. Even those women who are sisters, widows, mothers, single women, or living with are entitled to get legal protection under the proposed Act.

- "Domestic violence" includes actual abuse or the threat of abuse that is physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and economic. Harassment by way of unlawful dowry demands to the woman or her relatives would also be covered under this definition.

- One of the most important features of the Act is the woman's right to secure housing. The Act provides for the woman's right to reside in the matrimonial or shared household, whether or not she has any title or rights in the household. This right is secured by a residence order, which is passed by a court. These residence orders cannot be passed against anyone who is a woman.

- The other relief envisaged under the Act is that of the power of the court to pass protection orders that prevent the abuser from aiding or committing an act of domestic violence or any other specified act, entering a workplace or any other place frequented by the abused, attempting to communicate with the abused, isolating any assets used by both the parties and causing violence to the abused, her relatives and others who provide her assistance from the domestic violence.

- The Act provides for appointment of Protection Officers and _{NGOs} to provide assistance to the woman for medical examination, legal aid, safe shelter, etc.

- The Act provides for breach of protection order or interim protection order by the respondent as a cognizable and non-bail able offence punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year or with fine which may extend to twenty thousand rupees or with both. Similarly, non-compliance or discharge of duties by the Protection Officer is also sought to be made an offence under the Act with similar punishment.

Thus the provisions made by the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 are quite stringent in their letter and spirit.

3.4.7 Domestic Violence: The Indian Situation

Domestic violence in India is endemic. Around 70% of women in India are victims of domestic violence, according to the statement of the Ministry for Women and Child development.

National Crime Records Bureau reveal that a crime against a woman is committed every three minutes, a woman is raped every 29 minutes, a dowry death occurs every 77 minutes, and one case of cruelty committed by either the husband or relative of the husband occurs every nine minutes. This all occurs despite the fact that women in India are legally protected from domestic abuse under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act.

A recent G20 survey ranked India as the worst place for a woman. Female foeticide, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and other forms of gender-based violence constitute the reality of most girls' and women's lives in India. However, domestic violence in India and globally goes grossly underreported. Nationally, 8% of married women have been subject to sexual violence, such as forced sex, 31% of married women have been physically abused in a way defined as 'less severe', such as slapping or punching, while 10% have suffered 'severe domestic violence', such as burning or attack with a weapon. Also, 12% of those who report being physically abused also report at least one of

the following injuries as a result of the violence: bruises, injury, sprains, dislocation or burns, wounds, broken bones or broken teeth and/or severe burns. 14 percent Indian women are victimized by emotional abuse.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) of India; 89,546 cases of cruelty by husband and relatives; 21,397 cases of rape; 11,009 cases of sexual harassment and 5,650 cases of dowry harassment were reported in India during the year 2009.

India's National Family Health Survey-III, carried out in 29 states during 2005-06, has found that a substantial proportion of married women have been physically or sexually abused by their husbands at some time in their lives. The survey indicated that, nationwide, 37.2% of women "experienced violence" after marriage. Bihar was found to be the most violent, with the abuse rate against married women being as high as 59%. Strangely, 63% of these incidents were reported from urban families rather than the state's most backward villages. It was followed by Madhya Pradesh (45.8%), Rajasthan (46.3%), Manipur (43.9%), Uttar Pradesh (42.4%), Tamil Nadu (41.9%) and West Bengal (40.3%).

The trend of violence against women highlighted by the India's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) stated that while in 2000, an average of 125 women faced domestic violence every day, the figure stood at 160 in 2005.

A recent United Nation Population Fund report also revealed that around two-thirds of married women in India were victims of domestic violence. Violence in India kills and disables as many women between the ages of 15 and 44 years as cancer and its toll on women's health surpasses that of traffic accidents or any other health hazard.

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) Report for the year 2011 further highlights some staggering statistics about the domestic violence against women. The percentage share of domestic violence against women in the cognizable crime has grown from 3.8% in 2007 to 4.3% in 2011.

3.4.8 Factors Perpetuating Domestic Violence

The above factors substantiate the fact that domestic violence is an ongoing phenomenon. Instead of getting a declining trend it exhibits an increasing trend which violates the human rights of the women in the country and makes their plight deplorable. There is no one single factor to account for violence perpetrated against women. Recent research has focused on the inter-relatedness of various factors that contribute toward the perpetuation of domestic violence in the country. These factors are presented in Table No.3.2

Table No.3.2
Factors Perpetuating Domestic Violence

Cultural	Political
- Gender specific socialization - Cultural specification of appropriate sex roles - Expectations of roles within relationships - Belief in the inherent superiority of males - Values that give men proprietary rights over women and girls - Notion of the family as the private sphere and under male control - Customs of marriage (bride price/dowry) - Acceptability of violence as a means to resolve conflict	- Under-representation of women in power, politics, the media and in the legalprofessions - Domestic violence not taken seriously - Notions of family being private and beyond control of the state - Risk of challenge to status quo/religious laws - Limited organization of women as a political force - Limited participation of women in organized political system
Economic	Legal
Women's economic dependence on men	Lesser legal status of

• Limited access to cash and credit • Discriminatory laws regarding inheritance, property rights, Use of Communal lands • Maintenance after divorce or widowhood • Limited access to employment in formal and informal sectors • Limited access to education and training for women	women either by written law and/or by practice • Laws regarding divorce, child custody, maintenance and inheritance • Legal definitions of domestic abuse and rape • Low levels of legal literacy among women • Insensitive treatment of women and girls by police and judiciary

The foundations for stereotypes in gender roles are laid through early gender socialization. Gender socialization is the process by which people learn to behave in a certain way, as dictated by societal beliefs, values, attitudes and examples. Children start facing norms that define "masculine" and "feminine" from an early age. Boys are told not to cry, not to fear, not to be forgiving and instead to be assertive, and strong. Girls on the other hand are asked not to be demanding, to be forgiving and accommodating and "ladylike". These gender roles and expectations have large scale ramifications on inflicting and accepting domestic violence. The concept of ownership legitimizes control over women's sexuality, which in many law codes has been deemed essential to ensure patrilineal inheritance. Women's sexuality is also tied to the concept of family honour in many societies. Violence is learnt as a means of resolving conflict and asserting man-hood by children who have witnessed such patterns of conflict resolution. The practice of dowry as well as bride price proves male ascendancy over the females. The males think themselves to be economically more powerful which lead them to establish their authority over the females through domestic violence. Excessive consumption of alcohol and other

drugs has also been noted as a factor in provoking aggressive and violent male behaviour towards women.

Lack of economic resources underpins women's vulnerability to violence. Women's limited access to cash and credit, discriminatory laws regarding inheritance, property rights, use of communal lands, maintenance after divorce or widowhood, limited access to employment in formal and informal sectors, limited access to education and training for women increase women's economic dependence on men. The unequal access to economic privileges and resources keep her at the mercy of her male partner and without any means of independent economic livelihood she accepts domestic violence without protest.

The isolation of women in their families and communities is known to contribute to increased violence. The unequal power equation between the male and female is an accepted norm of the society. Lack of legal protection, particularly within the sanctity of the home, is a strong factor in perpetuating violence against women. Until recently, the public/private distinction that has ruled most legal systems has been a major obstacle to women's rights. Even though several countries now have laws that condemn domestic violence, when committed against a woman in an intimate relationship, these attacks are more often tolerated as the norm than prosecuted as laws. Alienation of women from organized institutions like community organizations, women's self-help groups, or affiliated to political parties render them helpless and compel them to tolerate domestic violence without raising their voice.

The legal system is not highly supportive to the women. Though inspirit it is proactive for women in practice it remains under the carpet of a patriarchal culture. Lesser legal status of women either by written law and/or by practice, laws regarding divorce, child custody, maintenance and inheritance still give precedence to the men. Legal definitions of domestic abuse and rape is quite fluid. Low levels of legal literacy among women do not empower them to report against the domestic violence encountered by them. Further, insensitive treatment of

women and girls by police and judiciary discourage them to take the help of such institutions meant to fight against domestic violence and to give protection to the women.

3.4.9 Interventions Needed To End Domestic Violence

Domestic violence should be taken seriously as a national issue needing urgent attention of the state, law enforcement agencies, social service agencies, the courts and the correction agencies. These agencies are to be given specialised training and coordination has to be secured among them to deal with the issues of domestic violence and the post management of the victims and the perpetrators. There should be the **stringent implementation of laws with follow up monitoring. Accountability has to be fixed for any omission and commission.**

NGOs are to spread awareness amongst women regarding the legal rights they have in hand for fighting against the atrocities they are subjected to. They are to encourage the women to report any case of domestic violence so that proper action may be taken against the culprits. Police is needed to be sensitized to treat domestic violence cases as seriously as any other crime. Special training to handle domestic violence cases should be imparted to police force. Further women should be provided with information regarding support network of judiciary, government agencies/departments. Engagement of the civil society and the private sector in ending violence against women and girls, working with survivors to empower them can do wonders in raising resistance against violence and in the rehabilitation of the vulnerable women.

 Domestic violence can be reduced when women's rights are well protected. When it comes to protecting rights of the women, the Government is to review national legislations, practices and customs and abolish those that discriminate against women. Laws, policies and programmes that explicitly prohibit and punish violence must be put into place, in line with international agreements. Further women's accesses to organisations are to be promoted and they should be given better political representation. This will change the power equation among the females and their male counterparts and contribute significantly for putting an end to domestic violence.

Responses to domestic violence complaints lodged should be timely and efficient to end a culture of hopelessness and impunity and foster a culture of justice and support. This will encourage women to report cases to get justice and reduce the rate of domestic violence. Provisions are to be made to improve access of women to services like police, courts regardless of their location, race, age or income.

Promotion of a culture of equality between men and women through institutional and legal reform, education, and awareness-raising are the need of the day to end the practice of domestic violence.

Educational programs both for women and men can sensitize the society against domestic violence and create an environment of equality.

Thus these interventions if introduced and implemented can translate the aims of the Domestic Violence Act into a programme of action and improve the situation of women in India.

3.5Key Words: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan**,** Gross Enrolment Ratio, the World Health Organization, Millennium Development Goals, Labour market, the 'missing women', CEDAW

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UNIT-III

Review Exercise

Essay Type Questions

1. Explain the major issues faced by the women in India.

2. Delineate the educational scenario of women in India. Mention the causes of their educational neglect.

3. Critically evaluate the health status of women in India.

4."Women's workforce participation in India is perceptibly low."Do you agree with the statement? Substantiate your argument with suitable facts.

5. Define domestic violence. Explain the causes of domestic violence victimizing the women in India.

Short answer type answers

1. **Write the provisions made by the Government of India to improve the educational scenario among women in the country.**

2. **Examine the causes of poor health status of women in India.**

3. **Write a note on the scenario of women's work in the country.**

4. **Mention briefly the International Protocols to end domestic violence.**

5. Write down the cultural explanations of domestic violence.

UNIT-4

4.0 OBJECTIVES

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 History of Women's Rights Movement

4.1.2 International Protocols on Rights of Women

4.1.3 Rights of Women: A Reality Check

4.1.4 Women Rights in India

4.1.5 Constitutional Safeguards for Women in India

4.1.6 Legal Provisions

4.1.7 Institutional Supports for Women in India

4.1.8 Schemes for Women in India

4.2 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AMONG WOMEN IN INDIA

4.2.1 Women's Organizations Started by Men

4.2.2 Women's Organizations Started by Women

4.2.3 Votes for Women

4.2.4 Reform of Personal Laws

4.2.5 Women in the National Movement

4.2.6 Women in the labour movement

4.2.7 Women's Liberation Movement of the Seventies

4.2.8 Women Social Movements in the Eighties

4.2.9 Women Social Movements in the Nineties

4.3 Key Words

4.4 References

The present unit delineates on women rights, laws and women movements in the country. In the context of women rights, attempt has been made to trace its root, to reflect on women's rights movement in the world context which had profound impact on the consideration about women's rights in all nations both large and small. It tries to bring into the discussion all the international protocols on women's rights which have influenced the Indian Government to made adequate provisions to ensure rights to the women. In this context, the unit puts the thrust on the rights ensured to the women in India. To bring clarity, the Constitutional safeguards, the legislative protections, the institutional support created by the Government, the programmes designed and the schemes introduced and the reflection of women issues that can play a catalyst role to ensure rights to the women in different plans are elaborately described. Further, attempt has been made to provide a historical description of the social movements among women in India and its impact on women's status.

4.0 OBJECTIVES: After studying this unit, you can

- Get an impression about the roots of women rights movement in the world.
- Have a clear picture about the important International Protocols that spell about women's rights.

- Assess Government of India's commitments and efforts to ensure rights to the women of the country.

- Have knowledge about the Constitutional safeguards, legislative protections, institutional supports created to protect women's rights, schemes and programmes that try to make women's rights enjoyed by them.

- Develop knowledge about the genesis, growth and trends in women's social movements.

UNIT-IV

4.1 WOMEN RIGHTS, LAWS AND WOMEN MOVEMENTS

4.1 Women's right around the world is an important indicator for estimating women's equality with men, their emancipation from taboos and the degree of their empowerment. Women's rights are the entitlements claimed for women and girls to have a descent life worldwide. In some places, these rights are institutionalized or supported by law, local custom, and behaviour, whereas in others they are under estimated and ignored. Tradition, prejudice, social, economic and political interests have combined to exclude women from prevailing definitions of general human rights and to relegate women to secondary positions. However, it has to be remembered that women have achieved their rights through a long drawn out struggle and through a lot of protest through movements.

4.1.1 History of Women's Rights Movement

The Women's Rights Movement has a long history back in time. It started in the 1800s when women weren't able to exercise their right to vote. It started with the

demand for the right to suffrage. In 1848, in Seneca Falls, New York, the first convention on the theme of women's rights took place. Those were the beginnings of the Women's Rights Movement. Back in 1848 the Declaration of Sentiments was signed, in which some women and men asked for equal rights. A group of women and men drafted and approved the Declaration of Sentiments, an impassioned demand for equal rights for women, including the right to vote. The declaration was modelled after the language and structure of the Declaration of Independence of 1776. Many of those gathered at Seneca Falls, including early women's rights leaders Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, had been active in the abolitionist movement, seeking an end to Slavery. However, these women realized that they were second-class citizens, unable to vote and possessing few legal rights, especially if they were married. Some leaders, like Lucy Stone, saw parallels between women and slaves: both were expected to be passive, cooperative, and obedient. In addition, the legal status of both slaves and women was unequal to that of white men.

After the Civil War ended in 1865, many of these reformers fully committed their energies to gaining women's suffrage. Stanton and Anthony established the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) that sought an amendment to the U.S. Constitution similar to the Fifteenth Amendment, which gave non-white men the right to vote. In 1872, Anthony was prosecuted for attempting to vote in the presidential election. Stone, on the other hand, helped form the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA). AWSA worked for women's suffrage on a state by state basis, seeking amendments to state constitutions. The Women's Rights Movement went from asking the right to vote for women to supporting them in problems like birth control, abortion, rape, divorce, discrimination at work or even at school and homophobia.

The modern women's rights movement began in the 1960s and gained momentum with the development of the scholarly field of Feminist Jurisprudence in the 1970s. The

quest for women's rights has led to legal challenges in the areas of employment, domestic relations, reproductive rights, education, and Criminal Law.

4.1.2International Protocols on Rights of Women

Some landmarks in the recent history of women's rights, at the global level, include:

UN Organization's founding Charter. Article 1 of its Charter declare "To achieve international co-operation … in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."This clearly reflects the UN's commitment to ensure equal rights to women without any distinction on the basis of gender.

In 1946, the UN Commission on the Status of Women established with mandate to set standards of women's rights, encouraged governments to bring their laws into line with international conventions and to encourage global awareness of women's rights. This was a landmark attempt to sensitize Governments to make laws proactive to secure equal rights for the women.

The landmark Declaration, adopted by the **General Assembly on 10 December 1948,** reaffirms that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" and that "everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, … birth or other status." This had enormous contribution towards securing equal rights for women.

As the international feminist movement began to gain momentum during the 1970s, the General Assembly declared **1975 as the International Women's Year** and organized **the first World Conference on Women, held in Mexico City.** At the urging of the Conference, it subsequently declared the years **1976-1985 as the UN Decade for Women**, and established a Voluntary Fund for Decade. This decade created a

worldwide campaign for women's rights and pressure was built up for all nations to safeguard the rights of women.

In 1979, the General Assembly adopted the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) **(CEDAW),** which is often described as an International Bill of Rights for Women. In its 30 articles, the Convention explicitly defines discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. The Convention targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations, and it is the first human rights treaty to affirm the reproductive rights of women. CEDAW is often referred to as the Women's Convention because, unlike conference declarations, it sets legally-binding principles and standards for realizing women's rights.

Five years after the Mexico City conference, a **Second World Conference on Women was held in Copenhagen in 1980.** The resulting Programme of Action called for stronger national measures to ensure women's ownership and control of property, as well as improvements in women's rights with respect to inheritance, child custody and loss of nationality.

In 1985, the World Conference was convened **in Nairobi** to review and appraise the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. It was convened at a time when the movement for gender equality had finally gained true global recognition. It realized that the goals of the Mexico City Conference had not been adequately met. The 157 participating governments adopted the **Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies to the Year 2000**. It broke ground in declaring **all** issues to be women's issues and women's right was put in the priority of the agenda.

In 1993 with the adoption of **the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women**; women successfully promoted the message that women's rights are human rights at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna.

In 1994 another major step forward for women's and girl's right to control their own lives and bodies were adopted at **International Conference on Population & Development in Cairo.**

The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, went a step farther than the Nairobi Conference. The Beijing Platform for Action asserted **women's rights** as **human rights** and committed to specific actions to ensure respect for those rights. According to the UN Division for Women in its review of the four World Conferences:

> "The fundamental transformation that took place in Beijing was the recognition of the need to shift the focus from women to the concept of gender, recognizing that the entire structure of society, and all relations between men and women within it, had to be re-evaluated. Only by such a fundamental restructuring of society and its institutions could women be fully empowered to take their rightful place as equal partners with men in all aspects of life. This change represented a strong reaffirmation that women's rights were human rights and that gender equality was an issue of universal concern, benefiting all."

> **In 2009** the UN commits to completely overhauling the systems and structures through which it supports women's rights.

> Thus, the United Nations has taken enough attempts to ensure equal rights to the women as members of the world community and to end discriminations against them.

> ### 4.1.3 Rights of Women: A Reality Check

> However, there exists a gap between governments' commitments and the reality when the question of enjoying rights comes to the forefront. Till the date women are not in a position to enjoy their full rights as citizens in many parts of the world. Women's rights are violated right across the world. Regardless of nationality, culture, religion and social standing, women are discriminated against and are subjected to

violence of myriad forms. Violence against women knows no boundaries. Women are traded across the world as cheap labour, catalogue brides and forced prostitutes. Socially speaking, the consumerist culture and era of advertisement have put the women in new types of bondages. Every year, 60 million girls are sexually assaulted at, or on their way to school. Women and girls 80% (640.000) of the estimated 800,000 people are trafficked across national borders annually with the majority (505.600) trafficked for sexual exploitation. At least 60 million girls are 'missing' from various populations - mostly in Asia - as a result of infanticide, neglect or sex-selected abortions. Between 100 and 140 million women and girls alive today have been subjected to Female Genital Mutilation. In six African countries over 80% of women have been subject to this practice. Over 60 million girls worldwide are child brides: 31.3 million in South Asia, 14.1 million in Sub-Sahara Africa.

Women's right to education is grossly violated. This becomes evident when the UNESCO Report clearly portrays that the proportion of illiterate women is increasing in the world in the new millennium. Today, the world houses about 900 million illiterates and 2/3 rd among them are the women.

The reproductive rights of women are very limited. In many countries, women are refused the right to contraception. The genitals of 150 million women and girls have been mutilated. Each year, this number increases by two million. Tens of millions of girls have been aborted, killed, undernourished, or terribly neglected due to their gender.

Women and girls are refused the right to take part in public life by law, be it legal or religious. In career terms, women and girls are at a disadvantage in every nation on earth. Women are discriminated in the employment market.

Nutritional deficiencies still continue to take lives of thousands of women in African, Asian and Sub-Saharan countries.

The World Bank estimates about 90% percent of women work force are engaged in the informal sector. Even in the most advanced countries there is about 62% wage discrepancy, which indicates that women are still not enjoying equal rights with their male counterparts. Women account for 70% of the

population living in absolute poverty (on less than $1.00 a day). Approximately 600 million women 53% of the world's working women – are in vulnerable or informal employment, as own-account workers or as unpaid-workers in family businesses or forms, jobs that are insecure and typically not protected by labor laws. 311 million working age women continue to live and work in countries without legal protection.

The political rights of women remain confined to suffrage only. Women have a low share in the leadership roles and decision making processes. A 130 country survey by the IPU suggests that only15.4% of women occupy elected seats.

This is largely due to the backlash against women's human rights that is taking place in many different forms today, including:

- religious or cultural fundamentalisms of different kinds
- power of ultra-conservative forces within governments and their influence on foreign and domestic policies
- an increase in violence, conflict and war
- The current global economic crisis and climate change are also responsible for current erosions of women's rights.

4.1.4 Women Rights in India

The share of women is more than 48 percent in the country's population. But in the development parameters women rank lower in comparison to their male counterparts and in comparison to women of other advanced nations. India ranks 132 out of 148 countries in Gender Inequality Index — that captures "the loss of achievement due to gender inequality in dimensions of reproductive health, empowerment and labour market participation". This is quite indicative of the fact that women are still under developed in India and still fail to avail equal opportunities and enjoy their rights in the society. This makes women development a myth in the country. However, India stands at the front line in making adequate provisions in its Constitution and making women specific legislations to protect and promote the interests of women and to allow women to enjoy their basic rights. A thorough discussion of the attempts of the government to ensure rights to the women in the country can be made in the following lines.

4.1.5CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS FOR WOMEN IN INDIA:

The principle of gender equality which is a pre condition of ensuring rights to the women is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles**.** The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993.

The Constitution of India through the Fundamental Rights, ensure equality before the law and equal protection of law; prohibit discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment. Article 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c) and 42 of the constitution are of specific importance in this regard. All these are vital instruments to ensure rights to the women in the country.

➢ Article 14 spells out equality before law for all which also includes the women.

➢ Article 15(i) states, the state not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.

➢ Article 15(3) empowers the state to make any special provision in favour of women and children.

➢ Article 16 lays down equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state.

➢ Article 39(a) states that, the state to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood.

➢ Article 39(d) spells out equal pay for equal work for both men and women.

- Article 39(A) empowers to promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities.

- Article 42 empowers the state to make provisions for securing just and humane condition of work and for maternity relief.

- Article 46 directs the state to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

- Article 47 directs the state to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people.

- Article 51(A)(e) prescribes to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

- Article 243 D (3) lays down not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

- Article 243 T (3) states that not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.

- Article 243 T (4) states that Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in Municipalities for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a state may by law provide.

Thus, the Constitution of India makes adequate and explicit provisions to eradicate gender discrimination in the public sphere and to provide equal opportunities as well as rights to the women for their development.

4.1.6Legal Provisions:

To uphold the constitutional mandate, the Government of India has enacted various legislative measures to ensure equal rights, to prevent social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities against women which make the enjoyment of rights by women a myth. The laws that are supportive to the causes of women can be categorized into two types i.e. The Criminal Laws under Indian Penal Code and the Special Laws.

The Indian Penal Code (IPC) admits crimes against women are detrimental to their status, rights and development. The IPC recognizes the following "Crimes against women" and lays down for stringent punishment to put a check on them and make their rights available to the women. The crimes against women recognized under IPC are:

- Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Death or their attempts (Sec.302/304-B IPC).
- Molestation (Section. 354 IPC).
- Kidnapping and Abduction for different purposes (Sec. 363 – 373).
- Rape (Sec. 376 IPC).
- Torture, both mental and physical (Sec.498-AIPC).
- Sexual Harassment (Sec.509 IPC).
- Importation of girls (up to the age of 21 years).

The acts which have special provisions to safeguard the rights of women and their interests under special laws include:

- The Employees State Insurance Act 1948.

- The Plantation Labour Act 1951.

- The Family Courts Act, 1954.

- The Special Marriage Act 1954.

- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

- The Hindu Succession Act 1956 with amendment in 2005.

- Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956.

- The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 Amended in 1995.

- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.

- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971.

- The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1976.

- The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.

- The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983.

- The Factories (Amendment) Act, 1986.

- Indecent Representation of women (Prohibition) Act, 1986.

- Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987.

- The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006.

Along with such acts, mention can be made about the73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, the National Plan of Action for the Girl child and the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001 which have significantly contributed for increasing the visibility and voice of women in the Indian society and thereby given ample opportunity to the women to enjoy their rights.

- The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act passed in 1992 by the Indian Parliament reserves one-third of the total seats for women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas. This was introduced to bring the women into the ambit of the decision making process where their share was almost negligible. This also made provisions for women to assert their voice in the process of decision making thereby safeguarding their political rights.

- The National Plan of Action (1991-2000) for the Girl Child aims at ensuring survival, protection and development rights of the girl child who were heavily neglected due to the gender bias prevalent in the Indian Society.
    - National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001 was prepared by the Department of Women and Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. This policy intended to empower the women economically, socially and politically by building capacity and developing their skill, making them economically self sufficient and politically participating. This policy intended to protect the rights of women through their empowerment.

4.1.7 Institutional Supports for Women in India:

To facilitate the development of women and to safeguard the rights of women, the Government created certain institutions.The prominent among such institutions are :

- The National Commission for Women and State Commissions for women.

- The Central Social Welfare Board.
- The Mahila Police Stations.
- The Mahila Banks

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN:

The National Commission for Women (NCW) is a statutory body for women established in 1992 by the Government of India. In 1990, the National Commission for Women Act was passed by the Indian Parliament. The basic objective of the NCW is to protect the rights of the Indian women and to launch campaigns to ensure equality to the women right from the labour market to the Parliament. The NCW has no doubt played a catalyst role in protecting the interests and rights of the women and echoing their voice in the national forum. Prototype Commissions have been instituted at the state level to reach the women and to safeguard their rights.

CENTRAL SOCIAL WELFARE BOARD:

The Central Social Welfare Board was set up by a Resolution of Government of India on 12th August 1953 to promote social welfare activities and to implement welfare programmes for women. In 1954, the State Social Welfare Advisory Boards were set up in the states and union territories to implement the programmes of the Board and to assist the Central Social Welfare Board in the expansion and development of welfare services. The Board has the responsibility to see women enjoy their rights. For the purpose it expedites welfare services to them, so that they can rise up to enjoy their rights.

MAHILA POLICE STATIONS:

To deal with the crimes against women, Mahila Police Stations are conceived of. There were about 442 women police stations across India on 1st January, 2011. Tamil Nadu has the maximum number of women police stations, followed by Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. Mahila Police stations put a check on the crimes against women which substantially prove to be detrimental to the enjoyment of their rights. They ensure right to safety to the women.

MAHILA BANKS

The government's recent pledge of $370 million to start a women's bank is a welcome and major step forward to promote women rights in the country. There are recent moves, through the provision of credit and subsidies, to encourage women to start their own small and medium enterprises. It can ensure economic rights to the women.

4.1.8 Schemes for Women in India:

Many welfare schemes for women are implemented by Government of India, State Governments and Union Territory Administrations with a view to allow women enjoy their basic rights in the society. The details of major schemes under implementation by Ministry of Women and Child Development for the welfare of women are as under:

(i)   **SUPPORT TO TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME FOR WOMEN (STEP):**

- **RASHTRIYA MAHILA KOSH (RMK) – NATIONAL CREDIT FUND FOR WOMEN**
- **WORKING WOMEN HOSTEL AT JASOLA, NEW DELHI**
- **RAJIV GANDHI NATIONAL CRECH SCHEME: (RGNCS)**
- **RAJIV GANDHI SCHEME FOR EMPOWERMENT OF ADOLSCENT GIRLS (RGSEAG) – SABLA**

- **INDIRA GANDHI MATRITVA SAHYOG YOJNA (IGMSY) – CONDITIONAL MATERNITY BENEFIT (CMB) SCHEME**

- **NATIONAL MISSION FOR EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN (NMEW)**

- **SWADHAR SCHEME**

- **UJJAWALA**

- **NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH MISSION**

- **SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR GIRLS UNDER SARVA SIKSHA ABHIJAN**

All these schemes significantly contribute towards protecting and promoting the rights of women in the country. They aim at generating an enabling and empowering environment for women through which they can realize their rights in the best possible manner.

4.2 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AMONG WOMEN IN INDIA

Women in India have launched movements from time to time. From an unorganized character women's movement is gradually taking an organized shape in the country. From an elitist orientation, it is becoming mass based in character, from localized forms it is becoming extended and the ideologies and leadership of women's movements in India are becoming better shaped and sharpened day by day. Indian women's movement can be phased into three time periods. They are the movements spearheaded during the 19th century, the freedom movement geared by women in the first part of the 20th century and the right based movements launched in the last quarter of the 20th century.

The roots of the Indian women's movement dates back to the nineteenth century. During this period, male social reformers played a significant role in raising issues concerning women and started women's organizations. This gave an impetus to the women to start forming their own organization from the end of the nineteenth century. The formation of such organizations was originally local in character and gradually they assumed a national character. Two main issues figured important in the platform for action of these organizations. They were demanding political rights and to bring a reform in the personal laws. Women's participation in the freedom struggle broadened the base of the women's movement and gave it a national character.

In the 19th century, the male social reformers, influenced by western liberal democratic values initiated the process of fight against certain social evils grappling the women like female infanticide, widow-burning, child marriage, segregation of women from the public life, prostitution and destitution of women. They also launched vigorous campaigns and efforts for widow-remarriages to rescue the women suffering from early widowhood and getting stigmatized in the society. These reformers devoted their time and resources to interact with the power-structures to bring about legal reforms and establish educational institutions, shelter homes, training centres for women from where the first generation of teachers, nurses, skilled workers came out. Reformers like Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), condemned sati, kulin polygamy and spoke in favour of women's property rights. Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar made an advocacy for widow remarriage. Thus they laid the foundations of the Indian social reform movement. The prime objective was to improve the conditions of women in the country. Women's inferior status, enforced seclusion, early marriage, condition of widows and lack of education were the common issues taken up by the social activists of the movement all throughout the country.

During that period, the Indian social reformers produced enormous literature in Marathi, Hindi, Gujarati, Malayalam, Tamil, Bengali to create mass awakening.

4.2.1 Women's Organizations Started by Men

Men who belonged to the socio religious reform associations began the first organization for women. In Bengal, Keshab Chandra Sen, a prominent Brahmo Samaj leader, started a woman's journal, held prayer meetings for women and developed educational programmes for women. Members of the Brahmo Samaj formed associations for women of their own families and faith. The Prarthana Samaj in Maharashtra and Gujarat did similar work. Narayan Ganesh Chandavarkar, Madhav Govind Ranade and R.G. Bhandarkar in Pune and Mahipatram Rupram Nilkanth and his associates in Ahmedabad started organizations for prohibition of child marriage, for widow remarriage and for women's education. The male-inspired and male-guided organizations for women did valuable work in educating women and giving a foundation to women social movements. During this period countable number of women was brought to public life. But later on these women became the stewardess of organised movements among women.

4.2.2 Women's Organizations Started by Women

The first generation of English educated empowered women became pioneers of the women's movement in the pre-independence period. One of the first to do so was Swarnakumari Devi, daughter of Devendranath Tagore, a Brahmo leader, and sister of the poet Rabindranath Tagore. She formed the Ladies Society in Calcutta in 1882 for educating and imparting skills to widows and other poor women to make them economically self reliant. She edited a women journal, Bharati, thus earning herself the distinction of being the first Indian woman editor. In the same year, Ramabai Saraswati formed the Arya Mahila Samaj in Pune and a few years later started the Sharda Sadan in Bombay. The National Conference was formed at the third session of the Indian National Congress in 1887 to provide a forum for the discussion of social issues. The Bharat Mahila Parishad was the women's wing of this and was inaugurated in 1905. It focused on child marriage, condition of widows, dowry and other "evil" customs. This became the first organisation of the women, by the women and for the women. By this time there was a rising consciousness among women leaders and Indian women were getting drifted to public forums and were making their issues visible and voices heard.

The early women's organizations had been confined to a locality or city. In 1910, Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, daughter of Swarnakumari Devi formed the Bharat Stree Mandal (Great Circle of India Women) with the object of bringing together "women of all castes, creeds, classes and parties... on the basis of their common interest in the moral and material progress of the women of India."It planned to open branches all over India to promote women's education. It started operating in the cities of Lahore, Amritsar, Allahabad, Hyderabad, Delhi and Karachi. Purdah was regarded by Sarala Devi as the main obstacle for women's education. The organization took interest to send teachers to women's homes to educate them. She noted that male domination was the preventing force to enable women to organize themselves for their cause. To her the male domination could be challenged and collapsed through the spread of education among the women.The Bharat Stree Mahila Mandal however proved to be a short lived venture.

During this period, pioneering women's organisations such as All India Women's Conference (AIWC,1927), Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) and Anjuman-e-Islam took their birth. The political agenda of AIWC was to fight against child marriage, mobilise public opinion in favour of voting rights for women, impart basic skills (such as tailoring, embroidery, cookery, hair-style, childcare, folk and classical music and dance, letter-writing etc) to women to become efficient home-makers. Cultural ambiance of AIWC suited the needs and aspirations of the high caste Hindu women. YWCA was multi religious in terms of its areas of activities and beneficiaries, though its decision-makers happened to be the Christian wives of politicians, bureaucrats, professionals and managerial cadre who were in the close proximity of the British rulers. YWCA provided vocational training courses to groom nurses, typists, secretaries and teachers, classes in bakery products, flower arrangements, Western and Indian classical dance and music classes. Anjuman Trust was committed to the cause of women's education and skill formation, which would enable them to be home-based workers. They had to work within the matrix of *purdah*. YWCA women had to face outside world with nominal male protection. AIWC women had their male family members as facilitators. Women leaders from Anjuman Trust interacted only with the Muslim community.

4.2.3 Votes for Women

In the inter war years, between 1917 and 1945, there were two main issues that the women's movement took up-. They were the political rights for women and reform of personal laws. In 1917 Annie Besant, Margaret Cousins and Dorothy Jinarajadasa, all three Irish women Theosophists, who had been suffragettes in their own country founded the Women's Indian Association (WIA). They were joined by Malati Patwardhan, Ammu Swaminathan, Mrs. Dadabhoy and Mrs. Ambujammal. WIA was the first all India women's association with the clear objective of securing voting rights for women. A Memorandum signed by 23 women from different parts of the country, demanding votes for women on the same terms as men which would enable them to have a say in political matters was submitted to Montague and Chelmsford. It also stated other demands such as for education, training in skills, local self- government, and social welfare.

The Indian National Congress at its session in Calcutta in 1917, over which Annie Besant presided, supported the demand of votes for women and so did the

Muslim League. A women's delegation led by Sarojini Naidu met the Secretary of State and the Viceroy to plead their case personally. Women's organizations held meetings all over India to express support for women's franchise. Behind the scene, Margaret Cousins and a few other women worked hard to make their case. Sarojini Naidu and Annie Besant went to England to present evidence before the joint Parliamentary Committee while local branches of WIA held meetings, passed resolutions and forwarded them to London. A delegation was sent to England to plead their case.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee of Parliament finally agreed to remove the sex disqualification but left it to the provincial legislatures to decide how and when to do so. Travancore-Cochin, a princely state, was the first to give voting rights to women in 1920, followed by Madras and Bombay in 1921. The process was followed by other states. Franchise was of course extremely limited. Ten years after the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms, the Simon Commission was appointed in 1927. This led to the second round in the battle for female enfranchisement. When the Commission visited India, the Indian National Congress boycotted it on the ground that there were no Indian members on the Commission. The WIA joined the boycott, while the All India Women's Conference was divided and some of its members met the Commission. AIWC prepared a Memorandum to be submitted to the Franchise Committee of the Second Round Table Conference demanding universal adult franchise, mixed general electorate and reservation of seats for women. The Government of India Act of 1935 increased the number of enfranchised women and removed some of the previous qualifications. All women over 21 could vote provided they fulfilled the qualification of property and education. Women had to wait till after independence to get universal adult franchise. Thus, the women movements during the pre independence period were successful in getting political rights for women, considered as a pre condition of women's empowerment and equality.

4.2.4 Reform of Personal Laws

The All India Women's Conference was established in 1927 at the initiative of Margaret Cousins to take up the problem of women's education. Women from different parts of India belonging to different religions, castes and communities attended the first session in Pune. It was a great success to bring women from different regions and diverse groups into an organised forum. The AIWC waged a

vigorous campaign for increasing the age of marriage which led to the passing of the Sarda Act in 1929. AIWC took up the cause of reform of personal law. As there was some opposition to a common civil law, it demanded reform of Hindu laws to prohibit bigamy, provide the right to divorce and for women to inherit property. These reforms were finally obtained with the passing of the Hindu Code Bills in the 1950s.

4.2.5 Women in the National Movement

The next phase of movements among women in India is noted through their participation in the National freedom Struggle. Women had been associated with the freedom struggle by attending sessions of the Indian National Congress and taking part in the Swadeshi movement in Bengal between 1905-11 and in the Home Rule Movement. But the involvement of really large number of women in the national movement began when Gandhi launched the first Non Co-operation Movement and gave a special role to women. Gandhiji gave a clarion call to the women to become the political comrades of the males to give a real shape and direction to the freedom movement. Peasant women played an important role in the rural satyagrahas of Borsad and Bardoli. Women participated in the Salt satyagraha in the Civil Disobedience Movement, in the Quit India Movement and in all the Gandhian satyagrahas. They held meetings, organized processions, picketed shops selling foreign cloth and liquor and went to jail.

Non-violent means of protest actions under the leadership of Gandhiji, ensured massive participation of women in the national liberation movement. Women family members of the Congress leaders gave up *purdah* participated in public functions, rallies, demonstrations and experienced prison-life. Families, which allowed women to take political risks, emerged as powerful politicians. Some of the highly educated women joined educational institutions, diplomatic crew, public service boards, and public and private sector industries. The rest became enlightened home-makers with a strong commitment for their daughters' education.

Women participated in the freedom movement being inspired by patriotism. They seriously wanted to see the end of foreign rule. Being the political comrades of men, women picketed shops, marched in processions or went to jail or threw bombs did not question male leadership or patriarchal values. It did

generate in them a sense of self-confidence and a realization of their own strength. Many returned to their homes but others continued their activities in the public arena. It transformed the lives of many young widows such as Durgabai Deshmukh and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya.

Thus, women's movement in India was intensified with the Freedom Struggle. This movement was more mass based, aroused consciousness among women about their plights and potentialities. Women transgressed their domestic boundaries. Women began to become visible in the public and simultaneously, this movement could break some of the traditional taboos for women and spearheaded reform demands for women.

4.2.6 Women in the labour movement

In 1917 Anasuya Sarabhai had led the Ahmedabad textile workers' strike and in 1920 under her leadership the Majoor Mahajan, the Ahmedabad textile mill workers union was established. By the late 1920s, the presence of women in the workers' movement was noticeable. In the Bombay textile mill workers' strike of 1928-29, women played a leading role and they did the same in the Calcutta. But, a realistic check indicates that most of the labour movements in India are men led and women seldom have taken a stewardship role.

4.2.7 Women's Liberation Movement of the Seventies

The radicalization of Indian politics in the late sixties laid the foundations of the new social movements among the women. This was more or less impacted by the mass movements that were emerging in the country. Macro political processes were witnessing the rise of protest movements of the subaltern masses guided by different political ideologies. The Naxalbari movememt in Kerala and the prototype movements in West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab started reflecting dissatisfactions among the peasants. In the meantime, women dissatisfied with the status quo joined struggles for the rural poor and industrial working class such as the Tebhaga movement in Bengal, the Telangana movement in Andhra Pradesh and

the Naxalite movement. As women's militancy developed, gender-based issues were also raised. Women also became an integral part of national political parties with all the major political parties establishing their women's wings.

Middle class mass upheaval in Gujarat (popularly known as Navnirman movement) against corruption, price rise, unemployment, speculation, hoarding and black-marketing in 1974 was replicated in Bihar in the name of Sampoorna Kranti Movement under the leadership of a Gandhian leader, JayPrakash Narayan. Unprecedented strike of the railway workers manifested the collective strength of the working class. Tribal people's struggles against destructive and affective development which served the interests of the *kulaks*, moneylenders, contractors, bootlegger sand indigenous industrialists was getting intensified in Chhatisgarh, Singhbhoom, Bhojpur, Srikatulam, Chandrapur, Dhulia and in the pockets of the North Eastern states .

 The Chipko movement got its name from the Hindi word 'chipko' which means to cling. The movement began in 1973 in the small hilly town of Gopeshwar in Chamoli district when representatives from a sports factory came to cut trees. Women joined the movement in 1974 and with their united strength prevented the contractor from cutting trees. Women evolved creative method to protect the trees from the axes of contractors' henchmen. This movement was popularly known as Chipko because women hugged the trees when their adversaries made ferocious efforts at felling the trees. This movement became a major indication of the growing consciousness among women to protect the environment that provide livelihood to thousands of women.

In Ahmedabad, the first attempt at a women's trade union was made with the formation of the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) at the initiative of Ela Bhat in 1972. Its aim was to improve the condition of poor women who worked in the unorganized sector by providing training, technical aids and collective bargaining. Based on Gandhian ideals, SEWA has become an iconic institution for the women throughout the country.

In Maharashtra, women activists and women intellectuals got involved in progressive movements and took initiative in forming a united front called Anti-price rise Women's Committee in 1973 and organised direct action against the culprits who created man-made scarcity of essential goods. Thousands of poor and lower middle class women joined the struggle under the leadership of seasoned and able women from the left and socialist background. Mrinal Gore, Ahalya Ranganekar, Manju Gandhi and Tara Reddy made their special mark in the eyes of the masses as a result of their unique ability to reach out to the women of different class backgrounds. The anti price rise agitation grew rapidly becoming a mass movement for consumer protection. So many housewives got involved in the movement with a new form of protest coming out in the streets and beating thalis(metal plates) with rolling pins. The Nav Nirman movement, originally a student's movement in Gujarat against soaring prices, black marketing and corruption launched in 1974 was soon joined by thousands of middle class women. Their method of protest ranged from mass hunger strike, mock funerals and prabhat pheris.

In Delhi, new leadership among women evolved from the radical students' movement and the democratic rights movement. Individual women in different political groupings all over India were feeling discontented about patriarchal biases in their organisations but they came out openly against it only after the emergency rule got over. These were independent, self-determining and democratic movements, which questioned all hierarchical structures. Faced with multiple crises – economic, social and political, along with corruption, drought, inflation, unemployment, pauperization of the rural poor – the disenchanted youth responded with protest.

The UN Declaration of 1975 as an International Women's Year coincided with the Emergency Rule in India. By the time the Emergency was lifted in 1977, several women's groups had developed around democratic rights issues. The press swung into "action" after the imposed silence of nearly two years. Atrocities committed against women during the Emergency were openly documented and reported

in the press. These atrocities struck a chord in most women's own experience of life in the family, in the streets, in the workplace and in political groups.

Widespread, open discontent was expressed in action and consolidation of the action developed into powerful organisations throughout the country. These movements raised a number of diverse issues-land-rights, wages, employment, security at work-place, water availability, destruction of nature, oppression and exploitation of the Dalits (the untouchables) and the working masses. Many women participated in these struggles with enthusiasm, responsibility and creativity.

The POW in Hyderabad organized new and fresh protests against dowry. In the late 1970s, Delhi became the focus of the movement against dowry and the violence inflicted on women in the marital home. Groups which took up the campaign included "Stree Sangharsh" and "Mahila Dakshita Samiti". Later, a joint front emerged under the banner of 'Dahej Virodhi Chetna Mandal. Women's organizations also succeeded in getting the dowry law changed.

Between 1977 and 1979 new women's groups emerged in the cities like Delhi, Banglore, Hyderabad, Bombay, Ahmedabad, Patna, and Madras. They organised protest actions against dowry murders, beauty contests, sexist portrayal of women in media, pornographic films and literature imported from abroad, introduction of virginity tests by the U.K. immigration authorities, custodial rape and pitiable condition of women in prison. These groups were multicultural in their composition and worldview. As a result, their political agenda reflected the contemporaneous handling of the complex reality of women constructed by interplay of class, caste, religion, ethnicity and globalisation. Launching of *MANUSHI*, the journal in January 1979 was a qualitative leap in this direction.

4.2.8 Women Social Movements in the Eighties

The decade following 1980s witnessed the growth of numerous women's groups that took up issues such as dowry deaths, bride burning, rape, sati and focused on violence against women. They stressed the sexual oppression of women. They questioned the patriarchal assumptions underlying women's role in the family and

society. Some of the earliest autonomous women's groups were the Progressive Organization of Women (POW, Hyderabad), the Forum against Rape (now redefined as Forum against Oppression of Women), Stree Sangharsh and Samata (Delhi). Among the first campaigns that women's groups took up was the struggle against rape in 1980. This was triggered by the judgment of the Supreme Court to acquit two policemen who were accused of raping a minor tribal girl, Mathura, despite the fact that the High Court had indicted them. Several other rape cases became part of this campaign. They culminated in changing the existing rape law. The amended law was enacted in 1983 after long discussions with women's groups. Since then, women's groups have lobbied to make rape laws more stringent and to implement it religiously. The recent protests in the Nirvaya case and the subsequent cases signalise the seriousness of the women's organisations in launching movements against rape cases.

Women's groups rose in protest at the sati of, Roop Kanwar, a young widow, who was forcibly put on the funeral pyre of her husband and burnt to death in a village in Rajasthan in 1987. Women protest groups declared this to be a cold-blooded murder. They demanded a new Sati Prevention Bill.

The culmination of this process was reached in 1980 when many women's groups took to the street to protest. During the 1980s, the issue of women's oppression was depicted not only in discussion forums, seminars and `serious' articles but also in the popular media. Women, who had on their own identified the sources of their problems and indignity, began to acquire a language, an organisational platform, a collective identity and legitimacy they did not have earlier. There were several campaigns in the eighties relating to women's rights. Among them was a campaign, in 1985, in support of the Supreme Court judgment in the divorce case where Shah Bano, a Muslimwoman, had petitioned the Court for maintenance from her husband under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Act and the Court granted her demand. The orthodox Muslims, however, protested against interference with their personal law. In 1986, the government introduced the Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights in Divorce) Bill denying Muslim women

redress under Section 125.Women's associations protested against this outside Parliament.

4.2.9 Women Social Movements in the Nineties

From the early nineties economic reforms ushered in India. During this period, peasant movements, Dalit movements and environmental movements launched their protests against capitalist based globalization. Food insecurities, loss of livelihood opportunities, equal rights and representations, gender based discriminations, became the main focus of women's social movements of the country. Gender based violence was heavily protests by women groups. In 2000 at the initiative of six national level women's organizations, ninety women groups and organizations became signatories for Global March,2000.The document 'Women Speak" united voices against Globalization, Poverty and Violence in the country. Bachao movements against development induced displacements, dalit women's representation in political bodies and ending violence against women, providing rights of all kinds to the women adorned the agenda of the women social movements in the country. Women became more vigilant, visible and made their voices heard through organised local and national movements.

Thus, the history of women's movement in India though not very long, yet is very meaningful for raising the status of women, in bringing policy changes and in consciousness building. Gradually, social movements among women in the country are getting strengthened and it has a decisive role to play to in shaping the future of women in the country.

4.3 **Key words:** Constitutional safe guards, legislative provisions, institutional support, Trafficking, Genital mutilation, Liberation movements, reform movements, food securities, dalit movements

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UNIT-IV
Review Exercise
Essay Type Questions

- Mention the International protocols signed to ensure rights to women.
2. Make a critical estimation of the rights enjoyed by the women in the contemporary world.
3. Write a note on women rights in India.
4. Examine the efforts made by the Government of India to ensure rights to the women in the country.
5. Write a short essay on Social Movements among Women in India.

Short Type Questions

1. Write the history of women's rights movement in the world.
2. Examine the Constitutional provisions that protect the rights of women in India.
3. Discuss briefly about the early phase of women's social movements in India.
4. Assess the trends in women social movements in the seventies.
5. Evaluate the present state of women social movements in India.