

Facilitating Gender Debates in the Classroom

Module 1

Understanding Gender and Patriarchy

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Contents

Foreword by Dr. A. L. Sharada	i
Introduction	1
Instructions	3
Part 1: Conversational Essay with Brainstorming Activities	5
Part 2: List of References	16
Part 3: Audio Visual Material	18
Part 4: Exercises and Games	20
Part 5: Suggested Projects and Assignments	21
Acknowledgement	22
Appendix - Session Plan	23

*In terms of feminist pedagogy, the authority of the feminist teacher as intellectual and theorist finds expression in the goal of making students themselves theorists of their own lives by interrogating and analyzing their own experience - **Kathleen Weiler***

FOREWORD

Since 2005, Population First through its Girl Child Campaign – *Laadli* has been engaging actively with the college youth through a number of innovative activities like the Flash Mobs (2006), song development and puppet making workshops, street theatre competitions, discussion forums, change makers clubs and gender workshops. However, we realized that intervening as an outsider had its own limitations – funding constraints, coordination problems, limited outreach and more importantly, sustainability.

We also have come to believe strongly that gender should become part of the class room experience and should be handled by the teachers in an interactive and innovative manner within the class room context. However, the current model of teacher-student equation, we realized in our interactions with the students and teachers, did not allow much scope for that. The challenge, therefore, is to find spaces and contexts within the syllabus and class rooms to initiate a debate, dialogue and discussion which would open up the minds of the students to understand and question the deep rooted gender stereo types, biases and violence in society. To create such critical thinking in students it is imperative that the teachers equip themselves with facilitation skills which are based on the principles of inclusiveness, respect for divergent views and equality. Facilitation is an empowering process as the facilitator helps the participants explore their mindsets, prejudices and requirements in a non-threatening, non-judgemental and open space.

We were lucky to have UNFPA supporting us to go ahead and work on the idea. We had long discussions with Prof. Veena Poonacha and Dr. Vibhuti Patel and Dr. Gita Chadha of SNDT University before firming up the project strategy. It was agreed that gender should not be a special subject or paper but should be mainstreamed into teaching, irrespective of the subject that is being handled. Colleges provide a number of contexts in which gender could be addressed – the cultural activities, fests, exhibitions, seminars, debates, and the content of the text books. If the teacher is sensitive and possesses the facilitation skills, gender could be made an integral part of college education. It is not necessary to apportion large chunks of time for this purpose but asking the right questions at the right time and providing mind space to the students to explore the same could help in changing attitudes. Any incident, comment and a film/advertisement/web campaign could be a spark for such conversation.

The project was, thereafter, taken up as a joint initiative of Population First, RCWS and PGDSR of SNDT University.

It was agreed that teachers would be able to perform the role of facilitators only when they have a sound understanding of the subject and when they understand that facilitation is a completely different set of skills as compared to teaching and training. Apart from the basic concepts on gender two topics were selected which we thought would be relevant to the youth – Gender Based Violence and Gender and Media. A fourth topic Critical Pedagogy was also included as it forms the theoretical basis of what is being attempted in the project. Dr. Gita Chadha, Dr. A.L.Sharada, Prof.Veena Poonacha and Prof.Vibhuti Patel prepared the four modules which were peer reviewed by Ms.Bishakha Datta, Dr. Jeroo Mulla, Dr.Nasreen Fazalboy, and Ms.Sonal Shukla. My sincere thanks to Gita, Veena and Vibhuti for writing the modules and Sonal, Jeroo, Bishakha and Dr Fazalboy for their candid comments that helped us make the modules so interesting.

The first pilot workshop was organized on August 25-26, 2011 with about 15 teachers from colleges of Mumbai University and SNDT Women's University which was conducted by the authors in an interactive manner. This was followed by a communication and facilitation skill workshop by theatre exponent Mr.Manjul Bhardwaj. The participants of the two workshops then conducted the third workshop for a new set of people in the presence of the core team who provided feedback to the presenters. Based on the response and feedback from the three workshops the modules were revised and a final workshop was organized by the core team before the modules were finalized.

The modules are being published in collaboration with RCWS and I am grateful to Usha Lalwani for the painstaking editing and designing of the modules.

The publication includes a set of four modules. Each module is self contained with an analytical essay followed by proposed games, activities, session plan, resources and reading list. It is up to the teachers to use the contents of the modules as per their requirement. The resources and readings listed are indicative and a lot more can be accessed from the web and other resources listed.

I hope teachers using the modules have an enriching experience with the students and have the satisfaction of initiating a much needed change process in class rooms.

Dr. A. L. Sharada
Director
Population First
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INTRODUCTION

Due to the development of Information and Communication Technologies, there is a vast and diverse material available on every issue, including gender and patriarchy. Yet it has been observed that teacher facilitators at the undergraduate level often struggle to locate simple, lucid, suitable and usable pedagogical material that would help address these issues amongst the youth - both boys and girls - in a manner that would lead to self reflection and social transformation. More importantly, teacher facilitators also struggle in the process of utilizing the available material either in the classroom or in special extra curricular sessions.

This module is based on the premise that in order to effectively communicate with the youth, it is important to use the cultural idiom familiar to them. Also, the module is based on the assumption that empathy with the youth is important in the process of communication. It is important to see the issues from their perspectives and locations so that we may achieve the goal of gender sensitization in a more effective manner

This kit is an effort to provide a variety of materials that can be used in the classroom or in special extra curricular sessions.

The module and the kit have been designed within a humanist gender studies perspective.

To reflect feminist values in teaching is to teach progressively, democratically and with feeling - Nancy Schniedewind



Understanding Gender and Patriarchy

Aims and Objectives:

- To sensitize teachers, across disciplines, to the concepts of gender in order that they can make it relevant for male and female students.
- To keep the focus on the inequality and the power question in patriarchies.
- To provide perspectives and resource material for the classroom and in other extra curricular sessions that will work with young people

Every time we liberate a woman, we liberate a man.
Margaret Mead



INSTRUCTIONS

The UGP module is divided into five parts consisting of:

- A perspective essay
- List of references
- Audio-visual material
- Exercises and game
- Suggested projects and assignments.

While the parts of the UGP module have been arranged in a progression, each part can also be used individually or in any combination suitable to a specific situation.

Depending upon the availability of time and infrastructural resources, the entire UGP module can be delivered as a whole. For this, we suggest that the teacher facilitator delivers the UGP module in five sessions devoted to the five parts.

Each session can be conducted for one to three hours depending upon the depth that the teacher wishes to go into.

The first session can be a lecture session that deals with the perspective essay. The second session can be a pre reading tutorial based on one or more of the suggested readings. The third session can be a workshop session using theatre and/or other exercises. The fourth session can deal with one or more of the suggested audio visual materials. The last session can be student presentations of assignments and projects.

It is also possible for the teacher facilitator to intermix the tools and materials in order to make the sessions more engaging for young people. For example, while dealing with the concepts of transgender issues, facilitators could use the documentary called 'Between the Lines' based on the life of Lakshmi.

It is quite possible for the facilitator to extract a portion from the perspective essay as their focus for a session and use related audiovisual resource material and assignments. For example, if the facilitator wishes to focus on the section on patriarchy and hierarchy they could prescribe a pre-reading on Kamla Bhasin's *What is Patriarchy* before the session, conduct activities suggested in the section in class followed by screening of audiovisual resources listed as patriarchy and follow it up with assignment number 5.



Understanding Gender and Patriarchy

It is important that the facilitator clearly sets out the aims, outcomes and tasks for each session in advance.

It is important that the teacher facilitator feels committed to the need for understanding and addressing the issues of gender and patriarchy from the perspective of the youth

It is also necessary for the teacher facilitator to gain feedback from the students as the unit progresses and modify it according to the situation.



PART 1: CONVERSATIONAL ESSAY WITH BRAINSTORMING ACTIVITIES

Note: This is a brief essay for the teacher facilitator, from any academic discipline, on how to approach the concepts in the sessions with suggested brainstorming exercises. The aim of the essay is to introduce the concepts of gender and patriarchy in a simple and lucid manner and to facilitate an interactionist mode of delivery in the classroom session. The essay is written in a quasi academic conversational style, posing simple polemical questions but suggesting balanced answers.

Puppets or Agents?

Gender and Patriarchy are concepts in the social sciences. Like all concepts, these are tools used to describe and analyse our lives and the world around us. By trying to study these concepts through this module, we are actually aiming at understanding ourselves as individual persons and as members of a society.

While describing the relationship between the individual and society, Peter Berger, the phenomenologist sociologist, in his book *An Invitation to Sociology* suggests that human beings may be perceived as puppets in a puppet theatre where the strings pulling them could be perceived as the pulls of society. But does that mean that human beings are totally determined by the society around them? Are you? How determined are you and how free are you?

(Activity 1) Ask the students to jot down two instances from their life when they felt totally powerless to social pressures and when they felt that they could exercise their freedom. Students are likely to come up with decisions regarding careers and life styles. Discuss some of these with the class and aim at arriving at the idea that in some ways we are determined and in other ways we are free.

Berger argues that human beings, individually or collectively, while being shaped by their psychological, social, cultural, political and economic backgrounds, also have the ability to question, challenge and change the way they are shaped. He argues that when informed by critical reflection, human beings can actively transform themselves and the world around them. This perspective is developed by many social scientists involved in understanding the relationship between the individual and society. Such an understanding, often known as belonging to what is known as the humanist perspective, looks at people as active agents of social transformation. It also looks at the world as being dynamic and changing through human agency. It posits a two way relationship between people and the world, between the individual and society. In many ways, it is an optimistic world view. The present module is located within these perspectives.



Understanding Gender and Patriarchy

(Activity 2) Form pairs of students in the class with the person sitting next to them. Ask the pair to come up with one instance of large scale social change that they have witnessed in their lifetime which can be attributed to collective action. Discuss some of these in class and aim at arriving at the idea that it is possible to change society for the betterment of our lives.

Homogenous or Differentiated?

Let's look at the human world around us. Does it appear to be homogenous or would you say it is differentiated? The human world around us, as we all know, is socially differentiated on the basis of age, sex, caste, class, region, nationality, and ethnicity. On the social map, people are located according to these categories. Each one of us has a nationality, an ethnicity, a caste group, a religious identity, a neighborhood, an occupation which gives us our identity and a position on the social map. Sociologically speaking, this is our social status. Often, this position could be perceived as "high" or "low" in comparison to others. Who and what decides what is "high" and what is "low"? Let's hold this thought for a moment in our minds. What is important to understand is that the human world is not a homogenous one, it is heterogeneous. We live in a world of differences. When we try to understand these differences, we tend to perceive them as fixed and given, ordained either by nature or by God. We often fail to recognize our own role in shaping these differences. Undoubtedly, some of the categories like age, sex and race seem to have more of a biological basis while others like class, ethnicity and caste seem to have a social basis.

(Activity 3) Ask the group members to put down one category that they feel is biologically determined and one which they feel is socially determined. Have a brief discussion to show that things like caste, class, religion, nationality can be changed.

Nature or Nurture? Biology or Culture?

Let us begin our deliberations on the focus of this module i.e. gender. In the common sense world, some people associate the word gender with physiological sex i.e. male or female. Others think of gender in terms of gender issues like gender bias or gender inequity, as something to do only with women. But the academic understanding of the term and its usage is somewhat different. Let's pay attention to the academic understanding of the difference between sex and gender. Broadly speaking, sex is a term that denotes the biological and physical aspect of the human being and gender is used to describe associated notions of masculinity and femininity given to us by society. Often sex is used a stand in for gender. Male children are assumed to be 'masculine' and therefore socialized likewise. Female children are assumed to be feminine and socialized likewise.

Etymologically, it is difficult to trace the root of the term gender. It has been suggested that gender as a term has its root in the old French term *gendre* i.e. race, species, kind or type which



stems from the Latin word *genus* with the same meaning. The term gender also has its roots in the Latin word *generara* meaning to produce or beget and is linked to terms like generate and generation which refer to the act of producing something. One of the earliest and most common usages of the term gender has been in grammar where things and words associated with them have been assigned a gender. In Sanskrit, the term *ling* meaning mark or sign is also used to designate male and female genders.

However, gender as a concept for critical analysis was introduced by feminists to 1) describe the social construction of men and women 2) to understand the relationship between men and women and 3) to explain how social institutions and mind sets are based on the idea of accepted gender in a community of people. According to the feminist understandings and usages, gender is therefore a concept used to describe and analyze the ideas of masculinity and femininity that exist in society. These ideas, feminists argue have less to do with our biological sex and our physical potential but more to do with social expectations and norms that surround us. Ideas of masculinity and femininity i.e. our gender, feminists argue, is assigned to us at birth, as if it is something we arrive with. Let's take the example of names. Most cultures give a set of names given to girls and another set of names to boys. Have you ever wondered about this? This categorization of names into male and female is the beginning of gendered socialization whereby individual human beings are made into 'men' and 'women'. This socialization into our appropriate gender continues till the end of our lives. Through this process, societies begin to underscore the difference between the sexes.

Let's look a bit more closely at the process of gender socialization. Feminists argue that while there is a part of us which is determined by nature and our biology which can be denoted as our sex i.e. male or female; there is a whole lot which is determined by society. The concept of Gender was therefore introduced to distinguish it from the concept of Sex. Let's take the classic example of the reproductive function of bearing children which is supposed to make women more caring. Is this really true? And how much? Are all women caring and equally so? Are all men uncaring? Don't men like to play the nurturing role? The question to also ask is: just because women bear children, do they have to rear them too? How much of all this is biologically determined and how much is culturally determined?

(Activity 4) Get the group to make a list of activities, eg. cooking, washing, typing, cleaning, running a business, etc. Then ask them to put M or F if only one gender can do this activity. Or put both if both can. Usually, we end up with an F next to reproduction, since there is a biological basis for that. Then ask the group why, even though both men and women can do all the listed activities, these are associated usually with either?

Alternatively, exercises – Daily Cycle (pp. 139) and Gender Stereotypes (pp. 135) from the UNICEF Games and Exercises booklet can be used.

It is true that men and women have different reproductive functions. But does this mean that



Understanding Gender and Patriarchy

they are different in every way? Isn't it biologically natural for boys to cry when they are hurt or not? Physically or emotionally when little boys feel the hurt and cry, they are told "don't cry like a girl". Is that good for their development? If they suppress their natural expressions what kind of impact will it have on them? What kind of adults will they become? Won't they get too hardened? Conversely, when girls are hurt why are they not asked to stand up for themselves and also to get a hold over their emotions? If they try to do that why are they told "not to be too aggressive"? Won't it help the girls to get a bit tough? This pattern of socialization cements the idea that boys behave or are expected to behave in a way that girls do not or must not behave. The converse is also held. What do these ways of constructing men and women into social expectations do to men and women and what do they do to the world around us?

Gender therefore is constructed by the people and society around us. It is not a "given". Simone de Beauvoir, the well known French feminist of the twentieth century argued that "we are not born women, we become women". Do you agree?

(Activity 5) Ask the group members to list some of the expected behavior of young girls in their communities. Lead a discussion on how these expectations are ensured or communicated to the girls? Through whom? By what means? Also, lead the discussion into what happens if these behavior expectations are violated? What happens if they are followed? Through this discussion draw out the idea of how men and women are socialized into becoming masculine and feminine respectively? To supplement this discussion, you could use exercise named "I am a Man, I am a Woman" (pp.138) and "Daily Cycles" (pp. 139) from the UNICEF Games and Exercises booklet.

Two Sexes, Genders and Sexualities? Or Are There More?

An important idea in the social construction of gender is the idea of the binary. Common sense wisdom in most communities is that there are only two sexes and only two genders. But is that true? Have you considered the fact that there are people in the world who do not belong to either of the sexes or genders? Anne Fausto Sterling, biologist and feminist, in fact has provided the argument that human beings, based on anatomy and chromosomal patterns, can be classified into five sexes. In addition to males and females, she included "herms" (named after true hermaphrodites, people born with both a testis and an ovary); "merms" (male pseudohermaphrodites, who are born with testes and some aspect of female genitalia); and "ferms" (female pseudohermaphrodites, who have ovaries combined with some aspect of male genitalia).



It is societies that push them into fitting into the categories of male and female. Often, the other combinations of sex are looked at as “abnormal”. Who decides this? E.g., why is it that societies treat intersexed and transgender persons as if they are “outsiders” to the normal circle of life?

Before we move on, let us understand some of the issues and concepts involved in the questions we are raising. Intersexed people are those who have of intermediate or atypical combinations of physical features that make them neither male nor female. This can be congenital, involving chromosomal or genital anomalies, such as diversion from typical XX-female or XY-male presentations, e.g., sex reversal (XY-female, XX-male), genital ambiguity, or sex developmental differences. An intersex individual may have biological characteristics of both the male and the female sexes. It must be noted that medical science began using the term intersex to describe humans who could neither be classified as male or female but it is activists working for the rights of intersex people that challenged the conventional and accepted idea that only there are only two 'normal' biological sexes in the human species.

Transgender people, on the other hand, are not defined by a biological or physical difference. They are persons who go against the given gender roles and the associated expectations with these roles. Transgender persons experience their gender identity in opposition to their assigned sex. Transgender persons often 'feel' like a man when they have been assigned the sex of being female. Further, transgender" persons do not indicate any specific form of sexual orientation; Transgender people may identify as being heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual. The precise definition for transgender remains in flux.

Now, let's come back to our initial question in this section: why are persons of unconventional sexual characteristics and those of ambiguous gender treated as if they were aberrations? Anthropologists have argued that it is the survival anxiety of our species that makes societies focus too much on the reproductive function and marginalizes all other forms of sex, gender and sexualities which do not lead to the biological reproduction of the species as “abnormal”. What do you think?

(Activity 6) Present some of the queer narratives from the resource material to the class and arrive at the possibility of looking at these as normal, even if they are in the minority. You might counter a fairly high amount of discomfort on these discussions but persist and make the discussion as empathetic as possible. Encourage the students to put themselves in the shoes of people with a difference and urge them to challenge some of their own views). You could refer to <http://www.ilga.org/ilga/en/index.html> for narratives and look through <http://www.sangama.org> for an Indian context. This activity could be followed up with assignment number 8.



Understanding Gender and Patriarchy

Now, let us address another important issue which has been posed by many feminists—is gender independent of other constructions like age, class, caste, nationality, religion? Which is to ask—is there only one universal notion of masculinity? Is there only one kind of femininity? Or do these vary? For example, what we see as acceptable behavior for men of the upper classes might not be acceptable behavior for men of the lower classes. Similarly transgender people from lower classes are treated differently from those in the upper classes. Feminists have argued that while there is a dominant and hegemonic gender norm cutting across stratification patterns, gender is also situated in its particularity within the contexts of specific class caste nationality and religious contexts. In this sense gender is defined as an intersectional concept.

Only Women Critique Gender Construction. Really?

We often assume that only women—and that too only feminist women—critique gender constructions and challenge stereotypes that affect their lives. While it is true that women have argued collectively and across cultures that gender constructions often limit their potential to grow to their fullest potential as human beings, men have also begun to recognize that gender constructions of masculinity limit their potential. Men recognize that hegemonic notions of masculinity hamper their holistic development. They are standing up for their rights to be nurturing fathers, to cry, to stay at home, to challenge conventional notions of masculinity which expect them to be disciplinarians, aggressive and competitive. R. W Connell argues that cultures have set up a normative idea of masculinity which casts men in very “macho” terms. Connell argues that most men deeply internalize and accept this notion of masculinity but there are some who struggle against it, often in painful ways.

(Activity 7) At this stage it might be a good idea to brainstorm with the group on what are the characteristics they associate with masculinity and what are those they associate with femininity. After the list has been put up, you will recognize the gender binary of men-women, bread earner-home maker, reasonable-emotional, public-private so on and so forth. It will help to let the class blur these boundaries them selves by coming to the point where they realize that men are emotional and women are rational, where they articulate the need to be different from what they are expected to be.

Are Things Gendered Too? And Social Institutions?

Let us now use the gender lens more sharply to critique not just how men and women are constructed but also how social institutions like marriage, family, law, education, government etc. get gendered. The law of any country, supposedly neutral can be deeply reflective of cultural practices. Family as a social institution can be biased against women. Ask yourselves how. Let us take the extreme example of science as neutral value free system of making



objective knowledge. Feminists who have critiqued modern science as being gendered have argued that not only do few women find entry into the stream of science but also that the assumptions of modern science reflect a very masculine approach to the understanding of nature where the relationship between the knower and the known is devoid of connectivity, a prime principle of feminist world views. Feminists have also shown that scientific research is often biased in its design and results against women. For instance, research on sex differences has been critiqued for taking only the male of the species as a sample and generalising for the human on that basis. More importantly feminists have demonstrated how scientific language tends to reproduce existing cultural stereotypes. Emily Martin, the feminist anthropologist, argues that the scientific language used to depict the reproductive process is steeped in the cultural notions of masculinity and femininity. She suggest that use of words like “passive” for the egg and “active” for the sperm serve to reproduce existing gender ideologies.

(Activity 8) The class can be asked to discuss on how some professions/institutions are gendered in their assumptions. Law is a classic example. Even the institution of marriage or family is gendered. Fashion is. Language is. One can ask the simple question why the earth is feminine and the sun is masculine? Does this reproduce any ideas of gender? Could it be that because the earth does not have any light of its own and lives in the reflected light of the sun, it is considered to be feminine? Or is it because the earth is seen as the mother/ nurturer of the seed which is again considered to be masculine? These discussions must be tentative and only suggestive which can be taken up again after some reading of works of Emily Martin and Bina Agarwal)

Patriarchy and Hierarchy

If we have understood the meaning and usage of the term gender and, we can begin looking at how gender has been used to critically analyze the unequal relations between men who adopt hegemonic – given, dominant and normative-masculinity as their gender role and the others, particularly women. As we said earlier, gender not only defines how men and women are constructed but it also sets out the expected relationships between the two. We also discussed how notions of the “difference” between men and women is important yet problematic. What we need to ask ourselves is: does difference imply hierarchy? Does “difference” have to lead to power imbalances? Does it have to mean subjugation of one over the other? In order to challenge this idea, we need to exercise a great intellectual rigour and a fine understanding of the notions of justice and human rights. Let's focus on the theme on hand.

(Activity 9) Ask the students to look at the household as a unit. The sex role differentiation is taken to be a “given” in households. How is this difference perceived? Equal or not? Ask them to look at it from the point of view of the women. Do the women feel equal or have they internalized their inequality as natural?



Understanding Gender and Patriarchy

Unequal power relations between men and women are the basis of patriarchy. It was Max Weber, the German sociologist who first introduced the concept of patriarchy to describe the social structures where the eldest male member is the head of the group and has both power and control over the rest of the members of the group. Feminists have sharpened the use of the term to critically analyze the subjugation of women in the social world. Feminists have argued that it is not only the eldest male member who exercises power over the female members but it is the males of a group who exercise power and control over the women, across age and status. For instance women change their names and their homes at the time of marriage and often that defines their dependent status on all members of their marital family. As daughters, wives and mothers, they occupy less power and have less control in the group be it family or community. It is the sons, husbands and the fathers who enjoy more social privileges and opportunities. Feminists have argued that patriarchy is the system of legitimizing unequal distribution of social resources and social opportunities between men and women. They have suggested that while gender constructions often oppress men too, it is patriarchy which subjugates the women and disadvantages them structurally.

(Activity 10) Ask the students to offer explanations for the inequality between men and women. The discussion should also lead the group to offer possible ways of solving the issues of injustice. There will be those who will come back to the role of biology in the making of sex roles i.e. male as bread earner and female as home maker. The facilitator will have find means of countering this augment and asking the students to look for social and cultural reason. More importantly, this exercise can be used to pave the way for the coming section on theories that explain gender inequalities.

Academic Explanations and Feminism

Academic explanations of any social phenomenon differ from lay perspectives in the questions academics ask and in the methods they use to arrive at some definitive statements. Like all of us, several social scientists too have tried to give explanations for the unequal status of women. They suggest explanations from varied positions. These explanations and solutions are called theories.

Fredrich Engels, the German philosopher who developed a critique of modern capitalism with Karl Marx, for instance explained women's subjugation historically. He argued that with the development of the institution of private property and the development of the understanding of the role of the father in conception, it became imperative for women's sexuality to be controlled so that a man's heir to his property could be identified. Engels therefore argued that women's subjugation is deeply tied with the development of capitalism. Emile Durkheim, the French sociologist who was a structure functionalist aspiring to how systems avoid conflict and chaos, suggests that women's role as home makers is legitimized because it helps to maintain social order, however unequal it might be.



Feminists have critiqued many of these explanations. First, they have argued that most of these theories miss out on one most important empirical aspect in making any theories of patriarchy i.e. women's own experiences and choices. Second, feminists have not only tried to explain patriarchy but have also tried to suggest ways of transforming it rather than maintaining it. . The difference between common sense explanations and the explanations of male stream social science on the one hand and feminist theory on the other is that the latter use the gender lens critically to examine the social worlds we live in.

*(Activity 11) Ask the students what is a theory? Find out if they shy away from theory. If they do, try and lighten your task by suggesting that we all use theory in life like we did in the previous activity but academic theory is a specific kind of theory, based on research. It would be a good time to indicate that feminist theories emerge out of praxis i.e. the need to explain and the need to transform society. Students can learn more about this from **Feminist Research Methodology and Techniques as Pedagogic Tools**, Facilitating Gender Debates in the Classroom, Module 2. Mumbai : Population First & Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University, 2012.*

Many Theories but a Common Agenda

There are four classical feminist theories; liberal feminist theories, socialist feminist theories, radical feminist theories and finally, an effort to integrate these are dual feminist theory. While no one theory is complete, each offers a possible explanation and compelling arguments and evidence to support it

It is neither possible nor necessary to go into the details of each of these theories but let us look at basic assumptions and tenets of each briefly. Liberal feminist theories locate the 'cause' of patriarchy in bias and prejudice against women. They argue that equality under the law and equal opportunities in education and employment are the solutions. They argue that if men remove their bias against women, inequalities will be removed. Socialist feminist argue that the cause of patriarchy is deeply embedded in economic structures and relations. They argue that the problem lies in the nature of how women's work is structured in patriarchy. They argue that women's household labour is not economically valued and they are not allowed easy entry into the market labour force. Given this, women's economic status is the cause of patriarchy which can be altered only if women's work is valued as productive labour. Radical feminists take the argument further and state that neither education nor employment shields women from violence. They argue that it is the nature of men –and the culture they produce--to be aggressive and violent towards women and therefore women have to fight their battle of independence against men, even if it means at times, to be “anti men”

The following table gives you a user friendly representation of the tenets of three theories.



Understanding Gender and Patriarchy

Difference	Liberal feminism	Radical feminism	Socialist feminism
Cause of sexism and oppression	Socialization and gender conditioning, irrational prejudice	Male domination, patriarchy, men's control over women's bodies	Multiple oppressions based on gender class, race distinctions; male domination embedded in economic institutions
Goal	Individual freedom, dignity, autonomy, self-fulfillment and equality	Transformed gender relationship, women's culture, sexual and procreative self-determination	Transformed social and gender relationships and institutions
Solutions	Reform, equal opportunity, legislation of rights education, rational argument	Formation of autonomous women's communities ; separatism; celebration of women's achievements, culture and spirituality	Restructuring of education, work, parenting, economic structures and sexuality (reproductive freedom) in order to eliminate male domination and other oppressions
Key issues	Educational reform, affirmative action, reproductive rights	Violence against women through birth technology, rape, battering war, sterilization, intimate relationships and pornography	Race/class/gender interactions, feminization of poverty, comparable worth issues, maternity / paternity leave
Methods	Legislation of equal rights under the law, legislation that breaks up power structures, creation of gender-neutral policies	Collective action, anti-violence organization, expression of anger through writing and creative expression, activism centred outside of traditional political structures	Collectives action; elimination of public-private distinctions (e.g. wages for housework); redistribution of resources, so adequate schools, work and childcare are available to all

Source: Enns (1992)

Cited in Mcleod, John. 1993. 'An Introduction to Counselling'.



In order to synthesise the tenets of these theories, emerged the dual feminist perspective which combines the socialist and the radical perspectives. Sylvia Walby, a dual feminist, offers a scheme of understanding patriarchy. She suggests that patriarchy operates within six sites. These are

- Household
- Work
- Law
- Violence
- Sexuality
- Culture

(Activity 12) Give a copy of the introduction of *Feminist Thought* by Rosemarie Tong to each student. Ask them to read and prepare a content summary. Read the summaries in class.

Challenges to Classical Theories: Towards Anarchy or towards Rigour?

In recent years, these theories have been critiqued as being blind to the fact that patriarchies manifest differently in different cultures and locations. The idea of one single universal category of woman and patriarchy has been challenged. Women of colour have argued that these theories do not take into account the experiences of black women. They argue that while patriarchy oppresses all women, black women are more oppressed due to racism; this has led to the emergence of a black feminist perspective in feminist theory. A similar argument is made by feminists from post colonial and less developed societies. Lastly, post modernist feminists have challenged the classical feminist theories as being located within the project of western modernity and its emphasis on a core self. Post modernist challenge this idea of a core self and suggest that like all other signs of self and identity, gender too is not fixed--either biologically or culturally. They argue that gender is performed by individuals and can be changed.

Given this wide range of theories, we often wonder what is the correct explanation, don't we? We think that the presence of so many perspectives can lead us towards anarchy. In order to address this question, we must recognize the fact that there cannot be a single explanation for a very complex social phenomenon like patriarchy. The explanations have to be multiple and diverse. That makes the academic exercise to understand it more rigorous. Also, one must pay attention to the fact that there are some issues on which all feminist understandings of patriarchy come together. Violence against women is one such issue of which you will learn more in ***Violence against Women*** by Vibhuti Patel, Facilitating Gender Debates in the Classroom Module 4, Mumbai : Population First & Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University, 2012.

In conclusion, it would be important to say that while gender and patriarchy are related phenomena which have been critically analysed by feminists everywhere, the subjugation of women which continues in most societies--developed and less developed--still needs special attention.



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*When available, internet sources for these references are provided



PART 3: AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIAL

Gender and Patriarchy: Online Audio Video Resources

Gender

Anne Fausto Sterling's work on "Two Sexes are not Enough" challenges the binary division of sex into male and female. According to her argument there are 5 sexes, which accommodate those born as intersex. This 8 minute video explores her debate

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWqMnE4wmqQ>

Hijras in India are physiologically male but have a female identity. Hijras have a long recorded history in India right from the Mughal Era. They don't fit into the male/ female binary and an acceptance of transgender identities is a way to understand their role in Indian society. "Between the Lines" is a documentary made about the lives of Hijras in India, particularly Mumbai. The link is of the last scene of the documentary with the narrative of Lakshmi, a transgender activist. This documentary is a useful resource towards understanding the issues of transgender.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOqqhe1z1zw>

Masculinity

Ideas of 'Hegemonic Masculinity' are entrenched into us right from childhood. The current video explores images from Disney movies that show how most stories revolve around a hero that subscribes to the notions of hegemonic masculinity.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8CWMct35oFY>

A project done among youth in Delhi by Must Bol, an organisation that works with gender and the youth has created videos using images that the youth relate to depict and challenge stereotypes about masculinity and femininity. The next set of videos can be use to trigger a discussion on perceptions of masculinity and how (if at all) it is changing in society.

<http://www.mustbol.in/video-blog/must-click-masculinity>

<http://www.mustbol.in/video-blog/mardanagi-kya-hai>

<http://www.mustbol.in/video-blog/kitchen-and-men>

Betty Friedan talks about how women's liberation has also led to the liberation of men from the notion of hegemonic masculinity.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfgxHKli9CU&feature=related>



Patriarchy

This viewing is to show the division of labour in households between men and women and how women's work in the household is just as taxing. This video from the 1960s gives an idea of lifestyles and perceptions of women's work over 5 decades ago. It can be used to trigger a discussion on how much is relevant today and the way women's work in the household has evolved over the years.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KsqPWvFj2To>

On the other hand, from an Indian context, the following videos show how women are now on the same level as men and some even earn more than men. This show talks about the implications of these changes. It can be used to trigger discussions on changing gender roles.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CM8zLyAArSo&feature=relmfu>

Women's Movements

Muriel Fox discusses the origins of the modern women's movement, her role in the formation of the National Organization for Women (NOW), and her collaboration with feminist activist Betty Friedan. Ms. Fox is a media expert and activist who has remained a leader in the movement

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjVoqZJc5mY>



Understanding Gender and Patriarchy

PART 4: EXERCISES AND GAMES

Games and Exercises, UNICEF is a good source book. Section IX on Gender Analysis and Sensitisation has a set of 11 exercises. These can be adapted to for a specific situation.

http://www.unssc.org/home/sites/unssc.org/files/games_and_exercises.pdf



PART 5: SUGGESTED PROJECTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

1. Students can be asked to maintain a diary/scrap book. In this diary, they can put down their reflections and memories, their ideas and thoughts on the issues raised in the essay. These diaries might or might not be shared with the teacher facilitator. If shared, they can be compiled and put on the net.

2. Students can be asked to watch and write their reactions to popular films like *Boys Don't Cry* or *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*. The film can be a suggestion from the group. The facilitator can show how these films reinforce gender stereotypes and discuss how we need not reproduce these in our lives. **Culture, Pop Culture and Gender** by A. L. Sharda and Nita Shirali, Facilitating Gender Debates in the Classroom, Module 3. Mumbai : Population First & Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University. 2012 will be a good reference.

3. Students can be asked to look at matrimonial advertisements in papers or do an analysis of sites like shaadi.com to see how gender expectations are unequal.

4. Students can be asked to look at Social Networking Sites to see how gender identities are reproduced and constructed.

5. Students can be asked to write a script for a short play on how gender stereotypes are reinforced in any context around them and what happens when you break them.

6. Students can be asked to take up any of the events in the women's movement from Radha Kumar's book and plan, execute too if possible, an awareness campaign around it in their college.

7. Students can be asked to look at the video on gender roles on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWc1e3Nbc2g&feature=related> and make a similar video in the Indian context

8. Assign the students to look at the historical evolution of Section 377 and locate it within the context of the LGBTI Movements in India. Students can be asked to participate in a debate. The introduction from *Sexualities* edited by Nivedita Menon provides a good overview to the sexual minorities in India.



Understanding Gender and Patriarchy

Acknowledgement

Thanks to:

Prof. Veena Poonacha, for including me in this initiative at the RCWS
Apeksha Vora, for assisting me with locating the resource materials and for discussions.

Ms. Bishakha Dutta, the reviewer of the kit , for valuable suggestions

My students over the years for helping me sharpen my pedagogic narrative

K Sridhar and Ira Chadha Sridhar for being there, always, with their suggestions



SESSION PLAN FOR TRAINING TEACHERS / FACILITATORS

[Note : This module was tried and tested over four workshop sessions with undergraduate and post graduate teacher facilitators from colleges and university departments in Mumbai. The teachers came from different disciplinary locations. The following session plan was made for these workshops. Necessarily, over the workshops, this plan was modified to suit the needs and profiles of the teachers attending these sessions. We recommend that this session plan may be imaginatively used by teacher trainers.]

Session Title :

How to use the Understanding Gender and Patriarchy Kit

Session Duration : 3 Hours

Objective of the session :

- Introduce and orient the teacher facilitator to the concepts and tools in the UGP Kit designed by Population First and RCWS

Outcome expected of the session :

- The teacher facilitator will be equipped to use each part of the kit.

Methods for the session:

- Lecture
- Tutorial
- Role play

Structure for the Session

Hour 1: Lecture Style

What is in the conversational essay?

- Participants will be asked to skim through the essay and understand its purpose-15 minutes



Understanding Gender and Patriarchy

- Participants will be introduced to the themes of the essay while using the activities given-45 minutes

Hour 2: Tutorial Style

How to use a reading.

- A short excerpts will be given from one of the readings
- Students will be given 20 minutes to read this.
- A discussion will follow for 20 minutes.
- Participants will now be asked to write a short abstract like summary of the extract They will be given 10 minutes
- Some summaries will be read out in class for the last 10 minutes

Hour 3 –Workshop style Role Play

- The participants will be divided into groups
- Each group will receive a situation/theme
- Each group will be asked to discuss the theme and perform a five minute skit on the theme
- Each group will respond

Facilitating Gender Debates in the Classroom

Module 2

**Enriching Teaching-Learning Experiences:
Feminist Research Methodology and
Techniques as Pedagogic Tools**

Veena Poonacha

**Population First
&
Research Centre for Women's Studies
SNDT Women's University
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Contents

Foreword by Dr. A. L. Sharada	i
Introduction	1
Unit 1 : Impact of Gender on Social Science Research	3
Unit 2 : The Theoretical Links of Feminist Research	6
Unit 3 : Principles of Feminist Research	9
Unit 4 : Doing Qualitative Feminist Research	13
Key Concepts	20
Teaching-Learning Exercises	23
Suggested Reading List	28
Selected Readings	30
Session Plan	50

FOREWORD

Since 2005, Population First through its Girl Child Campaign – *Laadli* has been engaging actively with the college youth through a number of innovative activities such as Flash Mobs (2006), song development and puppet making workshops, street theatre competitions, discussion forums, change makers clubs and gender workshops. However, we realized that intervening as an outsider had its own limitations – funding constraints, coordination problems, limited outreach and more importantly, sustainability.

We have also come to believe strongly that gender should become part of the class room experience and should be handled by the teachers in an interactive and innovative manner within the class room context. However, we realized in our interactions with the students and teachers, the current model of teacher-student equation, did not allow much scope for that. The challenge, therefore, is to find spaces and contexts within the syllabus and class rooms to initiate a debate, dialogue and discussion which would open up the minds of the students to understand and question the deep rooted gender stereotypes, biases and violence in society. To create such critical thinking in students it is imperative that the teachers equip themselves with facilitation skills which are based on the principles of inclusiveness, respect for divergent views and equality. Facilitation is an empowering process as the facilitator helps the participants explore their mindsets, prejudices and requirements in a non-threatening, non-judgemental and open space.

We were lucky to have UNFPA supporting us to go ahead and work on the idea. We had long discussions with Prof. Veena Poonacha and Dr. Vibhuti Patel and Dr. Gita Chadha of SNDT University before firming up the project strategy. It was agreed that gender should not be a special subject or paper but should be mainstreamed into teaching, irrespective of the subject that is being handled. Colleges provide a number of contexts in which gender could be addressed – the cultural activities, fests, exhibitions, seminars, debates, and the content of the text books. If the teacher is sensitive and possesses the facilitation skills, gender could be made an integral part of college education. It is not necessary to apportion large chunks of time for this purpose but asking the right questions at the right time and providing mind space to the students to explore the same could help in changing attitudes. Any incident, comment and a film/advertisement/web campaign could be a spark for such conversation.

The project was, thereafter, taken up as a joint initiative of Population First, RCWS and PGDSR of SNDT University.

It was agreed that teachers would be able to perform the role of facilitators only when they have a sound understanding of the subject and when they understand that facilitation is a completely different set of skills as compared to teaching and training. Apart from the basic concepts on gender, two topics were selected which we thought would be relevant to the youth – Gender Based Violence and Gender and Media. A fourth topic Critical Pedagogy was also included as it forms the theoretical basis of what is being attempted in the project. Dr. Gita Chadha, Dr. A.L. Sharada, Prof. Veena Poonacha and Prof. Vibhuti Patel prepared the four modules which were peer reviewed by Ms. Bishakha Datta, Dr. Jeroo Mulla, Dr. Nasreen Fazalboy, and Ms. Sonal Shukla. My sincere thanks to Gita, Veena and Vibhuti for writing the modules and Sonal, Jeroo, Bishakha and Dr. Fazalboy for their candid comments that helped us make the modules so interesting.

The first pilot workshop was organized on August 25-26, 2011 with about 15 teachers from colleges of Mumbai University and SNDT Women's University which was conducted by the authors in an interactive manner. This was followed by a communication and facilitation skill workshop by theater exponent Mr. Manjul Bhardwaj. The participants of the two workshops then conducted the third workshop for a new set of people in the presence of the core team who provided feedback to the presenters. Based on the response and feedback from the three workshops, the modules were revised and a final workshop was organized by the core team before the modules were finalized.

The modules are being published in collaboration with RCWS and I am grateful to Usha Lalwani for the painstaking editing and designing of the modules.

The publication includes a set of four modules. Each module is self contained with an analytical essay followed by proposed games, activities, session plan, resources and reading list. It is up to the teachers to use the contents of the modules as per their requirement. The resources and readings listed are indicative and a lot more can be accessed from the web and other resources listed.

I hope teachers using the modules have an enriching experience with the students and have the satisfaction of initiating a much needed change process in class rooms.

Dr. A. L. Sharada

Director

Population First

Mumbai

INTRODUCTION

This module is aimed at enriching/teaching-learning experiences through feminist research methodologies. It is premised on the understanding that effective learning takes place when the student is an active participant in the process of knowledge creation through research. As a pedagogic tool, this process of “learning by doing” has many advantages: Apart from sensitizing students to the core concerns of Women's Studies scholarship, namely raising critical consciousness about gender discrimination, it develops intellectual skills of deductive and inductive reasoning. Moreover, the self reflexivity required by Women's Studies research generates self understanding and awareness about the infusion of power/ powerlessness in every aspect of human existence--even everyday speech and communication.

Women's Studies has its incipient roots in the various consciousness-raising sessions organized by the women's liberation movements in the 1960s and 1970s. This political link suggests that a minimal requirement of “doing” Women's Studies is commitment to social change--to question the existing social structures/institutions/ideologies that reinforce women's subordination.

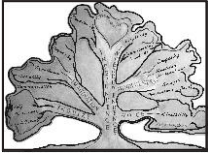
Feminism is the theoretical underpinnings of Women's Studies. Feminism is an ideology, a system of political philosophy and action that consciously opposes all expressions of misogyny and sexism. Examples of misogyny/sexism range from sexist jokes, language and values that denigrate women, to culturally and legally sanctioned denial of women's rights in the home and society. Feminism comprises several currents of political thought and actions. Such diversity in feminist thought has grown out of conscious efforts to accommodate the experiences of women of colour, third world women and other dispossessed groups. It also arises out of the ideological/theoretical orientation of the researchers.



Acknowledgment :
"WONDER WIMBIN", Cath Jackson, 1984. UK : Battle Axe Books

Organization of the Module

Aimed at the teachers/trainers involved in sensitizing college students, this module is divided into the following teaching/learning units:



Feminist Research Methodology

Section 1: Feminist Research: Assumptions, Principles and Models

1. Is there a feminist research methodology
2. Interface between theory and method
3. Post empirical crisis of knowledge
4. Feminist critique of dominant epistemology
5. Principles of feminist research
6. Changing trajectories of feminist research
7. Models of feminist research
8. Doing qualitative research
9. Summary
10. Suggested learning activities

Section 2: Class Room Exercises / Assignments

1. Suggested class-room exercises

Section 3: Audiovisual and Reading Materials

1. Documentary films which best depict Women's Studies research methods
2. Additional Readings

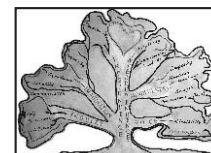
Expected Learning Outcomes

Section 1 seeks to provide the teacher/trainer with the necessary knowledge and skills to deal with the questions, debates and discussions on research methodologies that may arise in the classroom. Sections 2 and 3 (comprising additional readings, research exercises and list of audio-visual materials) seek to enrich the classroom experiences in order to sensitize students about the material and ideological silencing of women.

Teaching/Learning Objectives

The teacher-trainers:

- 1) Acquire knowledge of feminist research methods
- 2) Understand the epistemological basis of feminist research and its difference from mainstream research methods/techniques
- 3) Appreciate quantitative and qualitative research techniques in Women's Studies
- 4) Develop skills in the use of some key feminist research methods such as oral traditions, oral histories, life histories, case studies and life writings
- 5) Apply feminist research as pedagogic tools in the class-rooms



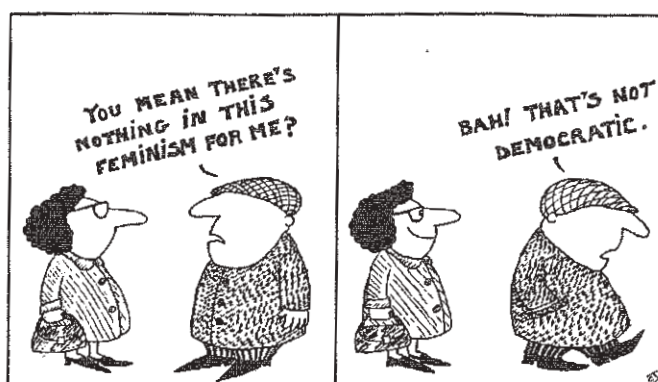
UNIT I

IMPACT OF GENDER ON SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Gender as an analytical category has revolutionized contemporary social science and humanities theories. Apart from underscoring the diverse ways in which people's lives are modified by their gender identities, it has questioned the taken-for-granted assumptions in each discipline. Such critical interrogation of various disciplines from the standpoint of women's experiences has grown out of the contemporary feminist struggles for gender equality. Feminist attempts to understand the roots of women's subordination and the reasons why their knowledge/experiences are not reflected within established theories have indicated that knowledge is not value-neutral. It has indicated that those who have the socio-economic and political hegemony also have power to shape ideologies and validate "truth claims". Such "truth claims" do not necessarily represent the lived realities of women or other subaltern groups. This process of privileging dominant discourses is described as the "politics of knowledge generation".¹

The underpinning of feminist research is critical theory. "Doing" feminist research requires critical questioning of the taken-for-granted received theories, sciences and research process. It is an emancipatory process for the researcher and the participants, for it deepens understanding of prevailing inequities, sexism and powerlessness on the basis of women's experiences. It consciously challenges socio-cultural practices, as well as economic and political systems, that ignore, displace and silence women.

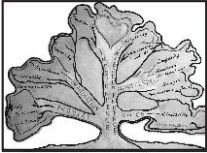
Based on this political agenda, feminists have pointed out that the prevailing male power in society and control over the process of knowledge generation has generated theories, perspectives and understanding of social realities from the standpoint of men of certain classes and nationalities. The consequence of this male



Acknowledgment :
"WONDER WIMBIN", Cath Jackson, 1984. UK : Battle Axe Books

¹Barrett, Michele and Philips, Anne, (Eds). 'Introduction.' *Destablizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 1992 (Reprint 1993). Pp.1-9.

Poonacha, Veena. 'Recovering Women's Histories: An Enquiry into Methodological Questions and Challenges.' *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*. September-December 2004. Vol. 11. No. 3.



Feminist Research Methodology

domination in the process of knowledge creation is that the current understandings of lived human experiences are partial and culture specific. The exclusion of women and other groups from the process of formal theorizing and knowledge-building has produced a skewed picture of reality. It has also helped to rationalize and justify the existing socio-economic hierarchies and denied the contribution of women and other subaltern groups to growth and development of human society and civilization. The non-recognition of women's domestic work at home in Economics creates an image that women are unproductive members of society.²

To develop a holistic understanding of lived human experiences, research processes and methods must take into account women's daily experiences and their informal theorizing. This idea that the process of knowledge construction should be democratized and empowering to all the participants of the research is the basis of feminist approaches to building theory and knowledge.³ It assumes that all individuals make choices and decisions based on their understandings or theories about the world. Therefore the formal mainstream (or 'male' stream)⁴ approaches to theorizing, that do not acknowledge the possibilities of diversity in theorizing and the many layers of realities, is limited.

Feminist scholars have interpreted the basic premise and purpose of feminist research and women's emancipation differently based on their theoretical locations and understandings. These differences have informed methods/techniques of research. But the core concern of all these attempts involves the acknowledgement that research is not value neutral and should empower women. All women have their own unique perspectives to bear on issues, which affect their lives on a daily basis. These new perspectives can be used to deconstruct existing knowledge bases and to build new ones. Feminist research has contributed significantly to the reconstruction of knowledge, influenced policy and action related to the lives of women.⁵

Is There a Feminist Research Method⁶

The felt-need in feminist scholarship to capture women's agency/powerlessness has led to a search for new methods. These efforts resonate with other subaltern struggles to demystify knowledge and reclaim it. An on-going debate within feminist scholarship is, whether there is a

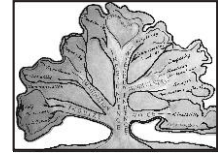
² Farnham, Christie (Ed.). 'Introduction: Same or Different?' *Impact of Feminist Research in the Academy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1987. Pp. 1-11. And Poonacha, Veena. *Understanding Women's Studies*. Contributions to Women's Studies, Series 11. Mumbai: Research Centre for Women's Studies. SNDT Women's University. 1999.

³ Fricker, Miranda 'Feminism in Epistemology: Pluralism without Postmodernism' in Miranda Fricker and Jennifer Hornsby (eds). *The Cambridge Companion to Feminism in Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2000. Pp. 146-65.

⁴ The term 'male' stream has been in currency in feminist scholarship for some time. It refers to disciplines that do not adequately integrate women's perspectives in knowledge.

⁵ Spender, Dale (ed.) *Men's Studies Modified: The Impact of Feminism on Academic Disciplines*. Oxford: The Pergamon Press. 1981.

⁶ This is a fundamental question raised by Sandra Harding in 'Is there a Feminist Method?' in *Feminism and Methodology*, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press. 1987. Pp.1-14.

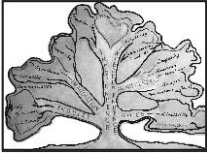


research method that is uniquely feminist? Some argue that feminist research cannot be different from the mainstream social science/humanities methods. There is no research method that is exclusively feminist--rather methods come from quantitative or qualitative research tag adjusted to meet feminist principles. Therefore, while theories are different, there is a scientific method that is common to all sciences. Contradicting such a position, others suggest that as the dominant research paradigm fails to capture women's lived experiences, feminist research has evolved (through struggles to establish gender equality and recover women's knowledge/experiences) appropriate tools/techniques to capture the muted voices of women. In doing so, feminist research has impacted conventional research techniques in the same way that feminist knowledge has posed questions to mainstream social sciences.

These debates indicate that while feminist research has emerged as a legitimate and popular research model, its methods and techniques of data collection is still evolving and developing. The methodological differences in feminist research may not be easily recognizable; it may lie in its theories and politics. Feminist research has provided significant guidelines not only to the development of social policies, but also social science theorizing. Its scope is wide and its methodological principles broad based. Feminist research is undertaken as follows:

- 1) Through survey research, experimental research and field research within the positivist framework, after eliminating andro-centric bias in the formulation of the problem, the design of the study, in data analysis and arriving as suitable conclusions.
- 2) By adapting conventional qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews, participant observation and document analysis, ethnographic, deconstruction and other techniques to feminist needs.
- 3) Through interpretations of women's reports of experiences, or cultural products (such as films, texts and writings), on the basis of assumptions shared by qualitative or interpretive researchers.
- 4) By using distinctly feminist methods that reflect feminist political commitments and the realities of women's lives, such as consciousness raising, group diaries, oral histories, conversations, and dialogues. ⁷

⁷Naples, Nancy A. *Feminism and Method: Ethnography, Discourse Analysis and Activist Research*. New York:Routledge. 2003. Pp.3-33.



UNIT 2

THE THEORETICAL LINKS OF FEMINIST RESEARCH

It is necessary to understand the basic methodological principles -- the political and epistemological reasons for their use -- before learning the different kinds of feminist research methods. The discussion here begins by locating the interface between theory and research method, understanding the scientific method, feminist criticism of the scientific method, and subsequently exploring feminist research methods.

Interface between Theory and Method

Theories inform research (in the selection of the problem, methodology and research process) and provide the framework for the observed realities. There is no one uniform definition of theory. A broad understanding of theory (which is a flexible and dynamic construct) suggests that it is a logically unified framework for generalization and explanations. It is a “device for interpreting, criticizing and unifying established laws, modifying them to fit data, unanticipated in their formation, and guiding the enterprise of discovering new and powerful generalization.”⁸

A method is a procedure by which we arrive at certain conclusions. The distinctive features of the modern scientific method are rationality and empiricism. Rationality is a combination of deductive and inductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning is an attempt to make a co-relation between the phenomena and the cause. Deductive reasoning is based on logical deductions. It does not necessarily correspond to observed reality. Deduction is used to formulate the problem and induction is used to test it. Diagram 1 indicates the research process using deductive and inductive reasoning.

⁸ Linton, Roda. 'Towards a Feminist Research Method' in Alison Jaggar and Susan Bordo (eds.) *Gender/Body/Knowledge*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. 1992. Pp. 273-93.

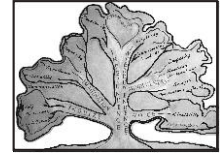
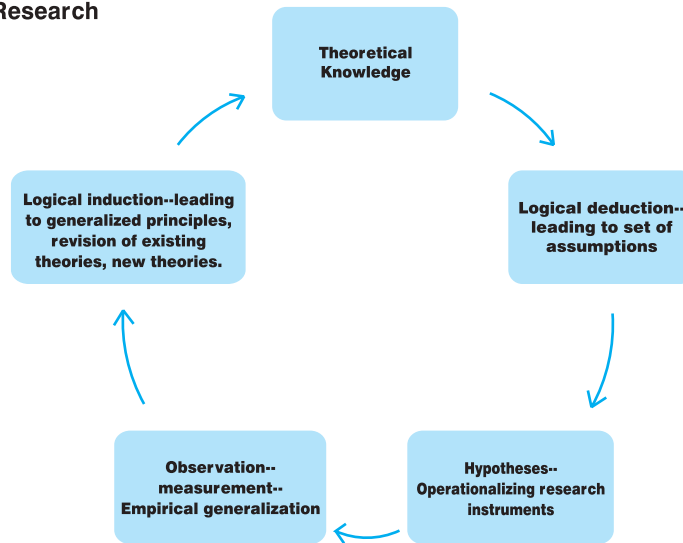


Diagram 1: Stages in Research

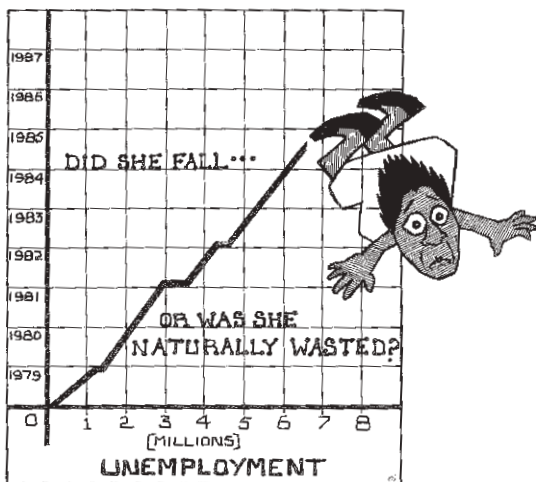


The need for a combination of deductive and inductive reasoning is brought about by the limitations in knowing reality. This suggests that the scientific method comprises the following components: 1) empirical evidence; 2) experimentation (i.e. manipulation of the study; and 3) the use of deductive and inductive reasoning.

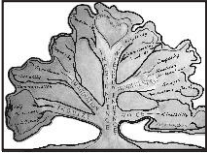
The Post Empirical Crisis of Knowledge

Challenge to social science research that adhered to models of natural science research came from two important traditions of thought--the interpretive and the critical: 1) the interpretive/hermeneutic tradition is concerned with meaning in social interaction. It states, that limiting research to observable human action, misses the most important part of the study. Therefore, we need to understand the meaning attached to the act by the people themselves. This tradition however endorses the subjective-objective distinction. Max Weber, for example, whose work initially inspired the development in this tradition, argues that studying social phenomena involves studying conscious human agents who attached sense or meaning to their action.

2) Drawing from the struggles of the new Left movement, the critical/standpoint epistemology begins with the idea that the less powerful members of society have the potential for a more complete view. That in order to survive (socially and sometimes even physically), subordinate persons are attuned to and attentive to the perspectives of the dominant class and also have their own ways of knowing. The danger of this kind of perspective is that it assumes the more oppressed you are the greater is your knowledge. This does not necessarily happen because without conscious effort to interpret their reality, the



Acknowledgment : "WONDER WIMBIN", Cath Jackson, 1984. UK : Battle Axe Books



Feminist Research Methodology

oppressed could accept their oppression.

These theoretical challenges bring us back to the perennial issue of absolute knowledge versus relativism. Is it possible to arrive at absolute truth through research? Or is truth relative? Additionally, can truth exist apart from the knower? From the relativist position, even common sense knowledge can be false. Our perception of reality is partial and limited, influenced by inter-subjectivity. What is perceived is also part of the external world. Hidden factors exist which are missed in our construction of reality. Relativism thus indicates that all knowledge is culture-bound, theory-bound and/or historically specific.

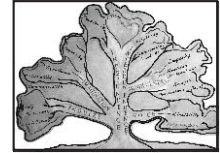
Feminist Critique of Dominant Epistemology

Feminist critique of the dominant epistemology draws from these epistemological and ontological questions. Feminists display a relativist aversion to empirical positivistic methodology and reject the idea that research can be value free, objective, dispassionate and disinterested. Some of the problems that they perceive with this model of research are as follows:⁹

- Unrecognized and value laden assumptions based on the male researcher's bias
- Over emphasis on empirical/quantitative data
- Denial of the validity of qualitative data
- Lack of involvement of the researcher with the subject of research
- An impersonal and detached process
- The supposed objectivity of the researcher and the knowledge produced

The failure to recognize the ways in which the socio-political locations of the researcher can influence research process, can allow bias to enter the research at any stage of the research: In the identification of the problem, the formulation of hypotheses, design, testing, collection and interpretation of data.

⁹Eichler, Margrit and Lapointe, Jeane. *On the Treatment of Sexes in Research*. Canada: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. 1985. Pp.5-23.



UNIT 3 PRINCIPLES OF FEMINIST RESEARCH

Following the powerful insight of the women's movement in the 1960s the “personal is political” feminist scholars called for research methods that could challenge the dualities between theory and praxis and the researcher and researched. Feminists seek to minimize the exploitation of the research subjects through research.¹⁰ Feminist theories seek to uncover and contextualize women's experiences so as to highlight the prevailing structures of inequalities. It is aimed at realizing social justice for women. Box 1 given below encapsulates the fundamentals of feminist research:

Box1: Feminist Research: the Quest for Emancipation and Change¹¹

Feminist research...

Assumes

—That the powerful dominate social life and ideology—Research is owned by the powerful men at the expense of women—That men and women differ in their perceptions due to their social status

Employs:

—Engaging value-laden methods and procedures that bring the researcher closer to the subject—Subjective principles of research, encouraging taking sides and personal commitment to feminist cause—A political stance to research topics and procedures

Aims to:

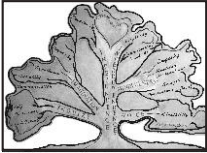
—Expose the structures and conditions that contribute to the present situation—Enlightens the community to the factors that generate this phenomenon and proposes ways that can help alleviate the problem—Empower women and give them voice to speak about social life from their perspective—Ultimately contribute towards social change and reconstruction

Changing Trajectories of Feminist Research

In the 1970s the research questions were straightforward, though politically charged. These focused on the absence/ invisibility of women in the public domain. Concerned about the

¹⁰ Naples, Nancy. A. *Feminism and the Method: Ethnography Discourse Analysis and Activist Research*. New York: Routledge. 2003. P. 13.

¹¹ Sarantakos, S. 'Feminist Research' in *Social Research*. London: Macmillan. Chapter 3. 2004. Pp. 54-71.



Feminist Research Methodology

inequities derived from male dominance, investigators critically examined contexts, such as medicine and law, to explain women's absence. These studies led to the recognition that in female-free contexts, inequity could not be redressed by adding women and stirring. Inequities were much deeper and revealed interactions and structural problems. For instance, the oppressiveness of women's care work is embedded in the political economy of domesticity.

The growing awareness within feminist theories/praxis about the intersection of class, caste ethnicity and gender identities has sharpened and differentiated theories. The earlier held assumptions about women lives and subjectivities are no longer valid as women do not constitute a homogenous category. The majority of women engaged in domestic work or work in the unorganized sector are women who suffer additional disadvantages of their class/caste locations. Feminist research requires that the researcher interrogate her relationship to the participants in the various stages of the research and in the writing of the report. It must also critically articulate her philosophical location.¹²

Further the need to emancipate women has led to experimentation with research methods that involve women as participants and researchers. It motivated feminist enquiries into the influences of “consciousness raising” as the basis of feminist methodology and the impact of treating research participants as co-creators of knowledge. The efforts indicate that feminist research differ from standard sociological enquiry for it has problematized the question of what can be known and who can know. It questions the interpretation of the research data generated from the male point of view.¹³

Models of Feminist Research

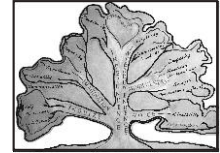
The feminist research paradigm discussed so far is reflected in the research models systematically used by feminists.

Feminist Empiricism

These researchers' work adhere to standards of the current norms of quantitative/qualitative inquiry within each discipline. However, their work proceeds on the assumptions of inter-subjectivity and commonly created meanings and realities between researcher and participants. Feminist empirical studies self-consciously create new but rigorous research practices, rather than

¹² Op cit.

¹³ Andrew, Caroline (ed.) *Getting the Word Out: Communicating Feminist Research*. Ottawa: Ottawa University Press for Social Science Federation. 1989.



mechanically apply research standards. It believes that the context of discovery is just as important as the discovery.

This contrast with the traditional empiricism which insists that the social identity of the observer is irrelevant to the goodness of the results of the research. It is not supposed to make a difference to the explanatory power, objectivity of the research results. Feminist empiricism suggests that feminists (i.e., women and men who are sensitive to gender issues) are more likely to produce unbiased data than non-feminists. It argues that the authors of the dominant theories are not anonymous at all: they are clearly men from a certain dominant social location. While it argues that the scientific method is not adequate to eliminate social bias, it also extols the researchers to follow the prevailing research norms more rigorously.¹⁴ (See Box 2)

Box 2: Feminist Empiricism¹⁵

Employs a realistic ontology; an objectivist epistemology; a concern for hypothesis testing, explanation, prediction, cause-effect linkages and conventional benchmark of rigour, including internal and external validity

Accepts objectivist principles of knowledge creation

Employs traditional social research, modified to avoid bias, sexism, etc. and to meet feminist standards

Employs quantitative and qualitative methods

Accepts empiricism critically

Challenges the notion of the adequacy and validity of empirical rules and norms

Challenges the notion that science and politics should be kept apart

Employs traditional research methods

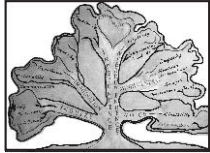
Employs a post-positivist jargon of validity, reliability, credibility and multi-method research strategies

Follows primarily more rigorously the existing rules and principles of the sciences

Criticizes not so much the foundations of science but its practice

¹⁴ Module collaboratively developed by the University of West Indies and the Summer Institute of Gender and development—a Project by St. Mary's and Dalhousie University Canada: N.D.

¹⁵ Op cit.Pp.54-71.



Feminist Research Methodology

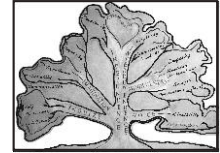
Feminist Standpoint

Closer to feminist tradition are the standpoint theories of knowledge. This reflects the longstanding feminist criticism of the absence and marginalization of women in research accounts. Research done from the perspectives of standpoint theories stresses a particular view that builds on and from women's experiences. This research model works on the theoretical proposition that women, due to their personal and social experiences as females are in a better position than men to understand gender issues such as division of labor, mother-child relationships, etc. This deeper feminist understanding is possible even in areas of class race, education and so on.¹⁶

Feminist Postmodernism

Postmodern feminism is a newer development within feminist theory and research and has received diverse and contradictory responses within and outside the feminist domain. Rejecting the epistemological assumptions of modernism, postmodern feminists view truth as a destructive illusion. Postmodernist feminist research views the world as endless stories or texts (many of which sustain the integration of power and oppression). Their focus is therefore narrative and on the nebulous distinction between text and reality. It is based on the recognition of the difficulties of ever producing more than a partial story of women's lives in oppressive contexts. They focus on the endless play of signs, the shifting strands of interpretation and language that obscures.

¹⁶ Stanely , L and Wisse, S. 'Feminist Epistemology and Ontology. Recent Debates in Feminist Social Theory'. *The Indian Journal of Social Work*. (Special Issue: Sexism in Research). 1992. Pp. 343-365.



UNIT 4

DOING QUALITATIVE FEMINIST RESEARCH

A review of feminist research indicates that feminists have preferred qualitative methods of oral histories, life histories, case studies, focussed group discussions, etc. This is partly because quantitative methods fail to capture the texture of women's lives and the need to lend voice to the powerless. Therefore, even when a research project requires the use of quantitative methods dealing with large samples, feminist researchers seek to incorporate qualitative techniques.

Folklore

Folklore, songs, poetry, stories, proverbs are rarely recorded in folklore studies. Folklore is situated in the communicative practices of society and serves to reproduce a social order or to undermine/critique it. Some writers see them as “stratified pieces of social history” although it may be difficult to place these glimpses of history in a time frame.¹⁷ An analysis of the structure and content of folklore show that apart from the power differences between the speaker and the listener, there are differences in men and women's use of them. Therefore, folklore analysis is rarely de-contextualized and depoliticized.

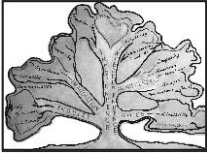
Women's speech and oral traditions have been dismissed as powerless and ineffective because they are seldom unambiguous oppositions to male discourse and practices. Examining voices of resistance is the key to feminist research in folklore. It makes evident the internal cleavages in communities on class, caste and gender lines. Through recovery of voices of women's resistance, it is possible to deconstruct colonial and post-colonial recordings of the community. All women in the community do not necessarily speak in one voice.¹⁸

Oral History

Oral history is a method of data collection that places the tools of research and analysis in the hands of the researched. It is particularly useful in recovering the voices of the downtrodden and in recording their struggles. It requires creativity on the part of the researcher to skillfully record the socio-economic context of the lives and struggles of poor women. Doing oral history requires the researcher builds a rapport with the researched. It may take several interviews to

¹⁷Poonacha, Veena. 'The Use of Folklore in the Reconstruction of Women's History: A Case-study of Coorg'. In S.P Gupta and K.S.Ramachandran (eds.). *Dimensions of Indian History and Archaeology*. New Delhi: Indian History and Culture. 1993. Pp.47-72.

¹⁸ Rajeha- Godwin, Gloria. *Songs, Stories, Lives: Gendered Dialogue and Cultural Critiques*. New Delhi: Kali for Women. 2003.



Feminist Research Methodology

record the story. The time and location of the narration has a bearing on the recording. In a formal work environment, the narration may reveal one kind of recall, but in a more private and informal setting the story may have other details. The story might also be stilted, if there are listeners. In doing oral histories it is necessary to recognize that time and space determines the version. Similarly, cultural practices and notions of family/community honour may make a woman gloss over incidents and events in her life.¹⁹

Life History

Closely allied with the oral history method is the life history method. This method is best understood as a mode of investigation that blends history with biography in order to explore the effects of social structures on people and to portray the ways in which people themselves create culture. This method recovers in-depth material on the course of an individual's life over a period of time and within his/her historical context. Life histories are autobiographical, based on oral and written documentation. It involves participant observation, in-depth interview strongly supported by historical and documentary histories.²⁰

Doing Oral/Life Histories

Doing oral/life histories requires that the researcher knows the language, understands the socio-cultural ethos and the levels of meaning in relationships. Writing oral/life histories require several considerations. This is because lives are rarely recounted chronologically and information necessary to understand the story may be taken for granted or omitted by the informant. The writing of oral history calls for judgment in assessing the material for writing. Some of the editorial decisions to be taken are as follows: Whether to recount the story in a chronological sequence of differently? What information to add to make the text meaningful? There is no single ways to portray lives. It also calls for stylistic decisions such as should the narrative be written in the first person or third. Doing oral/life narrative is a process of self transformation: for by reflecting on the lives of others, we become aware of our own lives.²¹

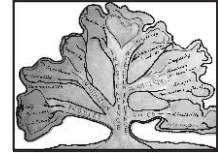
Participatory Action Research

This is a community based method, aimed at transforming the status quo. This research

¹⁹ The following are a few important examples works in oral histories: 1) Bhave, Sumitra. *Pan on Fire: Eight Dalit Women Tell Their Story*. New Delhi: Indian Social Institute. 1988; 2) Vasantha, Kannabiran. "That Magic Time: Women in the Telangana People's Struggle". In *Recasting Women Essays in Colonial History*. Ed. Sangari, Kumkum and Vaid, Sudesh. New Delhi: Kali for Women. 1989; 3) Committee on Women's Studies in South and Southeast Asia. *Women's Studies Women's Lives: Theory and Practice in South and South East Asia* (New Delhi: Kali for Women. 1994) wherein individual Women's Studies scholars share the impact of the discipline on their lives and work; 4) Chowdhry, Prem. *The Veiled Women: Shifting Gender Equations in Rural Haryana (1880-1990)* Delhi: Oxford University Press. 1994, which reconstructs women's histories through the documentary sources and folk culture; 5) Butalia, Urvashi. *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of Indian*. New Delhi: Penguin Books. 1998, which uncovers the hidden histories of the partition.

²⁰ Sheridan, Mary & Salaff, W. Janet. *Lives: Chinese Working Women*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1984. Pp.1-22.

²¹ Op.cit.

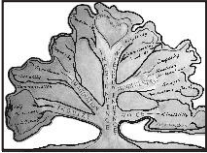


sees the respondents as co-creators of knowledge and is potentially empowering to the community. It places the research tool in the hands of the researched and minimizes the hierarchy between the researched and the researcher. It enables the community to identify their wants, their strengths and initiate change with the support of the researcher. The targeted community is involved in the identification of the problem, the planning and execution of the project. Such research can begin with consciousness raising discussions, identification of available resources to initiate change and initiating change through strategic planning and action.

Innovative Applications²²

- *Consciousness raising methods:* This is a strategy within autonomous women's groups that has grown out of feminist attempts to understand women's lived experiences. Because of feminist disdain for hierarchies, there are no leader.
- *Group diaries:* It draws from the psychological/literary techniques aimed at un-folding of streams of consciousness. Anonymous entries are made in the dairy of the group. These recordings of stories, anecdotes, recollection written by the group may be discussed in group interviews and documented.
- *Dramatic role-play:* This is an effective method that can trigger discussions in a group. By presenting the issue under discussion in the form of a drama, the researcher can get the group members to reflect on their attitudes and express them. The process helps to generate consciousness on issues and enable participants to introspect on their values and ideas.
- *Genealogy and network tracing:* Used in biographical writings, this involves locating the history of a woman's life within the context of her relationships, friendships and origin.
- *Non-authoritative and neutral research:* This technique is useful in research that has to empower the community. This involves gathering data on issues that affect the community and then presented to the targeted community, to make sense of the evidence. Emphasis is placed on the respondents and on subjectivity.
- *Conversation, dialogue:* This technique could be a face to face group discussion or on the internet. It involves conversations and discussions across a wide spectrum of e-group members. The division between the researcher and the researched is minimized. Based on

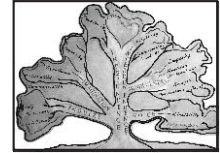
²²From Brayton, J. *What Makes of Feminist Research? The Structure of Feminist Research within Social Sciences.*
<<http://unbc.ca/web/Parel/win/Feministmethod.htm>>



Feminist Research Methodology

the topic at hand discussions may be triggered through the impersonation of historical persons or through focussed discussion on events or issues. In the research process the lines between the researcher and participants are blurred. Questions asked and ideas expressed are free floating.

- *Using intuition or writing associatively.* These are techniques that seek to uncover streams of consciousness. This uses a way of blending dreams, readings and thoughts in which the writer appears in a deep non-chronological, non-topical intuitive process. It is premised on the understanding that language is male centred. It cannot express women's experiences. Therefore to uncover the many layers of experiences in women, it is necessary to break accepted norms of writing and allow for a free flow of consciousness
- *Identification instead of keeping distance:* Based on the feminist critique of the notion of objectivity in research, this technique calls for empathy with the subject. It requires that the researcher sees reality from the standpoint of the researched, make evident her bias in her writing so that the readers appreciate the point of view of the researched. This is particularly useful in studying marginalized groups whose viewpoints have rarely entered our theoretical frameworks.
- *Studying unplanned personal experiences:* Personal experiences, for example, of illness or operation (alone or with additional data), is used as a basis of study.
- *Photography or talking-picture techniques:* This involves a collection of pictures taken at certain intervals to be used in an interview kit. These duly categorized pictures used with the questionnaire are useful to jolt memory. This technique has varieties of use. It can be part of awareness generation activities (which can be documented and presented as groups diaries) or it could be used in oral history/life history narratives. Family albums for instance could elicit anecdotes and recollections. There can be other forms of analyses of these pictures in themselves.
- *Speaking freely into a tape recorder or answering long essay-type questionnaires:* This technique involves a set of questions sent to the respondent with instructions to record the answers on tape.



Response to Criticisms against Qualitative Research

These techniques have been critiqued as subjective, focussing on relationships/ interactions and bias. It has also been questioned on the grounds of its credibility and on the basis of research ethics. The fundamental criticism is that these qualitative techniques cannot be used to study large-scale structural problems.²³

Subjectivity and Bias

The criticism that qualitative feminist research is subjective, biased and useful for micro-level data that reflect on personal and relational issues is flawed. These techniques can be used to elicit data relevant to social policy and to indicate the problems in the prevailing socio-economic and political structures. For instance, feminist research shows that there are real structural reasons why women do not leave violent homes. Similarly it is the lack of employment options that force women to remain in dangerous occupations. To overcome accusations of bias in feminist research, feminists insist on self-reflexivity to uncover their theoretical and political locations. This process of self-reflexivity uncovers the unacknowledged or unrecognized bias embedded in the researcher.

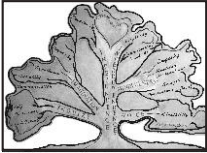
Adequacy and Credibility

Feminist research is particularly useful in revealing relationships and interactions through dialogues, group diaries and other forms of oral narratives. The pervasiveness of sexual harassment or the gendered hierarchies in workspaces, social movements and trade unions cannot be revealed through standard questionnaires or interview schedule. It can only emerge through techniques that seek to break the barriers between the researcher and the researched. The process should not be disempowering to women.

A corollary criticism is the adequacy of these techniques to enable generalizations and initiate policy change. To overcome this criticism on the adequacy of the sample size and the credibility of the technique, feminist empiricists use multiple techniques: for instance, consciousness raising techniques and dramatic role play may be used in the initial process; subsequently the data is quantified through quantitative techniques. It is only through these qualitative techniques that it is possible to understand the daily indignities that poor women suffer—data that cannot be revealed through statistics.

Quantitative techniques also require that the findings are taken back to the research participants and finalized with their participation. In this feminist qualitative research shares with

²³ Op. cit.



Feminist Research Methodology

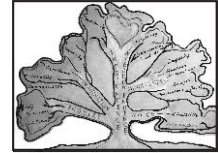
interpretive works in general, the assumption of inter-subjectivity between researchers and participants and the mutual creation of data.

Ethical Concerns

There are many ethical concerns in feminism. It is important that the researcher does not in any way disempower vulnerable women by disbelieving her story. The research participants have a right to the feedback of the findings. There may be conflicts arising out of the involvement of the researcher with the respondents.

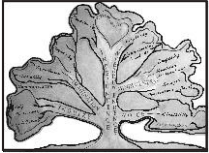
Summary

The discussions so far indicate that the need to empower women is the basis of feminist research. The central concern of feminist research however is political just as feminist theories (whatever their political roots) seek to change the existing gender inequalities. Feminist research can be defined as all research informed by a feminist perspective. This suggests that it is not the subject matter that makes for feminist research. It is the approach or the perspective that is taken that makes research feminist. Therefore it suggests that it is possible to undertake research on men or anything else from a feminist perspective. A feminist perspective is characterized by the desire to improve the situation of women. To summarize feminist research (See Box 3):

**Box 3**

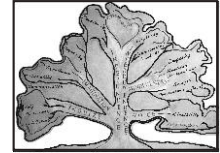
- It is contextual, inclusive, experiential, involved, socially relevant, complete but not necessarily replicable, open to the environment and inclusive of emotions and events as experienced.
- It involves an ongoing criticism of non-feminist scholarship, is guided by feminist theory, may be trans-disciplinary, aims to create social change, strives to represent human diversity, includes the researcher as a person, frequently attempts to develop special relationships with the people studied and finally defines a special relationship with the reader.
- Puts gender in the centre of social inquiry; making women visible and presenting women's perspectives are a major part of feminist crucial research.
- Places emphasis on women's experiences, which are considered a significant indicator of reality and offers more validity than does conventional research method; in a wider context feminist research involves primarily the development of women's history, for example by recasting history to take account of women's roles and reconstructing it in terms of women's rather than men's concerns; or by writing the history of women's realms of experiences. It discloses distortions related to women's experiences.
- Sees gender as the nucleus of women's perceptions and lives, shaping consciousness, skills, institutions and the distribution of power and privilege
- Is preoccupied with social construction of 'knowing and being known'
- Is politically value-laden and critical and as such is not methodic but clearly dialectical. This implies that it is an imaginative and creative process which engages oppressive social structures.
- It is not solely about women but primarily about women, taking up an emancipatory stance. It entails an anti-positivistic orientation.
- Employs multiple methodologies and paradigms
- Includes methods used (a) in research projects by people who identify themselves as feminists or as part of the women's movement; (b) in research published in journals that publish only feminist research or in books that identify themselves such as; and (c) in research that has received awards from organizations that give awards to people who do feminist research.

(From Brayton, J. *What Makes of Feminist Research? The Structure of Feminist Research within Social Sciences*. <<http://uncb.ca/web/Parel/win/Feministmethod.htm>>)

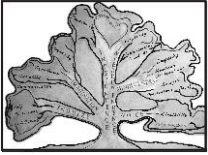


KEY CONCEPTS

1. **Andro-centric:** Male centred.
2. **Consciousness:** Awareness of one's spiritual or mental existence. This term is understood in widely differing ways by philosophers but generally interpreted as the capacity to imagine objects. It comprises the total content of sensory perceptions, sensations and thought.
3. **Critical Consciousness:** is the political awareness that enables one to question the taken-for-granted "truth claims" in the existing socio-economic order. For instance, the ideological construction of sexuality and the taken-for-granted assumptions that all men are sexually aggressive underplays the impact of sexual harassment on women's lives. Women do not even have the language to express disgust or challenge it. Once they recognize that the ideology is aimed at condoning unacceptable male behaviour, they would question the prevailing ideas of male sexuality.
4. **Deductive reasoning:** Drawing inferences of particular instances by reference to general laws or principles in contrast with inductive reasoning.
5. **Discrimination:** Overt or covert action of differentiation against an individual or group of human beings based on the negation of their intention and freedom. This is always in contrast with the special attributes, virtues or values that those who discriminate claim for themselves. This behaviour corresponds to a look, a sensibility or ideology that objectifies human reality.
6. **Empiricism:** The theory that all knowledge is derived from experience and observation. It is regarded as the basis of scientific knowledge. Empirical evidence—the assumption that knowledge has to be validated by experience and observation.
7. **Epistemology:** The theory of knowledge. It is concerned with questions of the origins of meanings, principles, methods and limitations of knowledge. It seeks to understand how do we know what we know. Philosophically, epistemology (in contrast to the philosophy of science) necessarily questions the validity of existing scientific knowledge. Following the Cartesian philosophy; a distinction has always been made between the knower (the scientist) and the known.

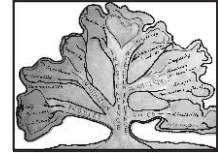


8. **Ethno-centricism:** The tendency to judge other cultures by the standards of one's own.
9. **Experimentation:** A scientific procedure undertaken to make a discovery, test a hypothesis or demonstrate a known fact.
10. **Gender:** it refers to the cultural concepts of masculinity and femininity that a society creates around the biological fact of maleness and femaleness.
11. **Humanism:** The view that stresses distinctly human values and ideals. Humanist attitudes places the human being at the centre. It affirms the equality of all human beings and acknowledges both personal and cultural diversity. It upholds freedom of thought and belief and repudiates violence. Outside any theoretical consideration, humanist attitudes can be understood as a type of sensibility--as a way of placing oneself before the human world, where the intention and freedom of others is recognized and where one undertakes the commitment to struggle against discrimination and violence.
12. **Hypothesis:** in general an assumption, a statement or theory of explanation of the truth of thesis under investigation.
13. **Ideology:** A set of beliefs that justifies the interests or supposed interests of those who own it. The dominant ideology in any societies legitimates the existing social order.
14. **Inductive reasoning:** The inference of a general law from particular instances in contrast with deductive reasoning.
15. **Minority Group:** A group of persons who because of their physical or cultural characteristics are different from others in society and are treated differently. Although women constitute 50 per cent of the human population, because they are treated differently may be seen as a minority group.
16. **Misogyny:** Hatred of women.
17. **Objectivity:** Strictly speaking, it is a mode of interpreting reality in a way that personal subjective judgment is eliminated. In practice, objectivity refers to thought sufficiently disciplined to minimize distortion caused by personal bias.
18. **Ontology:** a subdivision of metaphysics; the theory of the nature of being and existence.



Feminist Research Methodology

- 19. Postmodernism:** This concept denotes recent theoretical positions in present day philosophy. Postmodernist philosophers reject the notion of objective epistemology and regard human knowledge as historically conditioned and random. Examples of postmodernism include the works of Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida. Feminist Postmodernists include: Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva.
- 20. Power elite:** It comprises a small network of powerful and influential individuals who are alleged to make the most important political decisions in society.
- 21. Qualitative method:** The process of drawing research conclusion by describing the qualities of the subject of study.
- 22. Quantitative method:** The process of drawing scientific inferences on the basis of the measurement of numbers.
- 23. Reason:** The capacity for thinking reflectively and making inferences, the process of following relationships from thought to thought and of ultimately drawing conclusion.
- 24. Reality:** That which exists independent of thought. Social construct of reality--the process by which definitions of reality are socially created, objectified, internalized and then taken-for-granted.
- 25. Representation:** The images of an object in consciousness which can be produced even in the absence of the object and which is based on sensory experiences and memory. Husserl distinguished these from the object of representation.
- 26. Scientific method:** a way of investigation based on collecting, analyzing and interpreting sense data to determine the most probable explanation.
- 27. Self Reflexivity:** It requires that the researcher is critically conscious of his/her own bias, attitudes, beliefs location in society. The researcher introspects on the process of research and the power inequalities between the research subject and his/herself. It requires an empathetic understanding of the respondent's standpoint.
- 28. Sexism:** An ideology or belief system that legitimizes sexual inequality by assuming that these inequalities are based on inborn characteristics.
- 29. Value Neutral :** Non-judgmental—the assumption that truth arrived through the right use of reason can be uncoloured by personal beliefs and cultural conditioning of the researcher



TEACHING –LEARNING EXERCISES

Given below are a few class-room exercises that will create gender sensitivity and also facilitate the development of research skills

Exercise 1: Locating women's situation¹

Activity: Drawing a scenario—draw a picture depicting women's lives

Time: 35 to 45 minutes

Teaching Aids: Flip charts

- **Objectives:** 1) To portray situation/condition of women in India
2) To identify problems and resources
- **When to use:**
At the beginning of a session on situation analysis and problem identification

Steps:

- 1) Divide the participants into groups of three or four
- 2) Ask each group to draw a picture of an area or situation (e.g., situation within a locality, condition of women, etc.)
 - Encourage them to draw spontaneously and tell them they will have the opportunity to explain. They should start with the idea that comes into their mind immediately.
 - Allow each group ten minutes to discuss their drawing and to draw a common picture
 - After ten minutes bring them back to the plenary
 - Invite each group to present their drawings with their explanation. Capture common and uncommon points on cards as they describe their drawings. You can also ask other groups to capture the points
 - Pin up the cards, discuss and summarize

Exercise 2: Developing conceptual clarity on development²

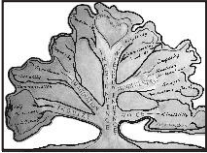
Time: 60 to 90 minutes

Teaching Aids: Flip chart paper and markers

- **Objectives:** 1) To arrive at a group definition of development
2) To identify development indicators
3) To introduce gender differences in development

¹UNICEF. *A Manual for Facilitators & Trainers Involved in Participatory Group Events*. New York 1998.

²Op. Cit.



Feminist Research Methodology

When to Use: In group sessions on development

Steps:

- Ask the participants to form small groups of five to six persons
- Ask each participant to write three words that come to mind when he/she hears the word “development”
- Use all the words that have been suggested to arrive at a definition of development
- Brain storm and list indicators that show that development has happened
- Display each group definition and discuss the definition in plenary
- Agree on a definition that reflects the view of all the participants
- Put up the list of indicators on the wall and with the total group discuss clarify and summarize
- Compare them with the definition of development they originally agreed upon.
- Brainstorm on possible differences in understanding development from the standpoint of men and women

Exercise 3: Gender stereotypes³

Time: 45 minutes

Teaching materials: Flip charts markers and masking tapes

Objective: To increase awareness of gender stereotyping

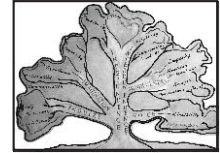
When to Use: During session on gender roles

Steps:

- Ask participants for examples of stereotypical male and female characteristics
- Have them list them on cards
- Divide the participants into small groups of the same gender. Have the female group discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the male gender and vice versa
- List the advantages and disadvantages on cards or flip charts. After 10 minutes, bring the group together and ask each group to put their ideas on the board

De-briefing: Which gender has the most advantage, why? And how?

³Op. Cit.



Exercise 4: Sensitizing students to gender issues through oral histories

Activity: Creating awareness on women's life experiences through oral histories

Method: The importance of oral history is that there is so little awareness on women's everyday experiences. Oral history is, therefore, an excellent source for discovering and reconstructing the lives lived by women within the homes.

The oral history method is also useful to recover valuable historical data and to increase gender sensitivity among students. Talking to the older people in the community also helps to bridge the existing intergenerational gaps increase understanding and tolerance.

Teaching Aids: Voice recorders and writing materials

- Objectives:**
- 1) Sensitize students on gender issues
 - 2) Recognize how gender stereotyping affects women's opportunities/life choices

Possible Assignments:

Undertake three generational studies on education or child rearing practices or women's work. The project could be assigned as an individual or group exercise

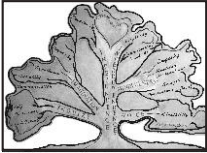
Steps:

- Library research in the areas suggested above
- Preparation of interview schedules regarding the topic selected
- Undertaking the interviews that are taped
- Transcription of the interviews
- Plenary discussion on the various oral histories prepared by the group.

Note: The students are briefed on conducting interviews.⁴

The interview is best conducted in the respondent's home where she feels at ease. Ideally only the interview and respondent should be present. It is important to tape the interview since it is not possible to remember the conversation, actual words used, nuances, hesitations, reactions if the interview is not taped. Background reading about the topic is necessary before conducting the interviews. One of the most interesting ways of discovering the educational

⁴Deirdre Beddoe. *Discovering Women's History: A Practical Manual*. London : Pandora Press. 1983.



Feminist Research Methodology

experiences of girls under past educational systems is to interview older women on the subject of their school lives. If the topic is on the education of girls the following questions could be asked?

Where did you live when you were a young girl? What was your parent's attitude towards girls education? What kind of school did you go to? Who managed the school? What was the medium of instruction? What kind of subjects did you have? What kind of co-curricular activities? Was there any difference in the curriculum for boys and girls? What kind of games did you play? Did you have moral science or religious instruction given to you in school? What did they teach you about women's roles? How different was the instruction given to boys? What subjects did you take in high school? Who influenced your choices? What kind of games did girls play in school? What was the school's emphasis on your future role--to be a wife a mother, a career woman? Was it possible to be wife and a woman with a career when you were young? What influenced you to take a particular career-- your family, friends, school or things you read?

Similarly if the topic is on family life and gender relationships in the family, the following questions could be asked: Where did you live? What was your family size? Did your grandparents and other members of the extended family live with you? Describe your house? How many rooms were there? Did you share a bedroom? Bed? What washing and cooking facilities were there? Were there servants? Who cleaned the house? Cooked? Made and repaired clothes. went shopping? Did you have new or second hand clothes? What was your father's occupation?

What did your father do in the house? Did he look after the children? What activities did your mother do outside the house? Did she go out in the evenings? Did your father go out in the evenings? Where? Were your parents strict towards you? Did they punish you? Did all of you sit together and eat? What did they bring you up to regard as important? Did their ideas influence the sort of person you have become?

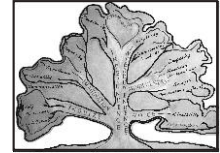
De - briefing: Presentation of the oral histories followed by discussion

Exercise 5: Women's magazines

The aim of this particular exercise is to try and get some indication of the impact of certain images and stereotypes as projected by the media on women's lives. Women's magazines are an interesting source of contemporary images of women. Unfortunately older ones are not that easy to locate. The students could be asked to do a content analysis of the images and issues in the magazines and present a note on gender stereotyping.

Exercise 6: Myths, legends, folk stories and proverbs

The students are asked to talk to the members of their respective communities to tell some of the stories, myths and legends that they know of. Ask them to specifically collect stories about women and girl characters in the tales. The plenary discussion could then focus on why so few women and girls are in the tales.



Exercise 7: Identifying sexism in research studies

The students are asked to read specific research studies and identify sexism. The following questions may be asked to guide the discussions:

1. What research methods have been used in this study?
2. Identify the sources of data for this study?
3. Define the gaps in the study from the standpoint of women's experiences
4. Suggest the methods you would use to study women.

Exercise 8: Research studies

Social Science research generally proceeds on the following steps with slight modifications made by the researcher to suit the study in hand:

1. Identification of the research question
2. Identifying key concepts and developing conceptual clarity to suit the study
3. Planning the scope of the study and assessing resources/feasibility
4. Developing hypothesis
5. Identifying suitable methodology and sources of data
6. Developing research tools
7. Pre-testing
8. Data collection
9. Data analysis
10. Report writing

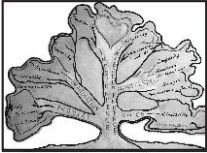
Each group is requested to develop a brief outline for the study one of the following topics

1. Group A: Declining sex-ratio in the city of Mumbai
2. Group B: Surrogate motherhood
3. Group C: Recovering the early-20th century history through women's lives.

Documentary Films

The films suggested here are indicative of experimentation with feminist research methodology

1. **LAKSMI and ME**
Director : Nishita Jain
Time- 59 mins
2. **BHITAR BAHE MUKTIDHARA (Stream Within)**
Time - 80 Mins
3. **UNLIMITED GIRLS**
Director : ParomitaVohra
Duration : 96 Mins
4. **BAI**
Director – Sumitra Bhav
Time – 31 mins
5. **SAFIA KHAN KI TALASH MEIN (In Search of Safia Khan)**
Director - Nischint Hora / Utkarsh Mazumdar



SUGGESTED READING LIST

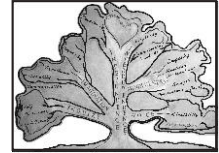
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2. Desai, Neera & Thakkar, Usha (Eds.). *Women and Society*. New Delhi. National Book Trust, 2000
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9. Tong, Rosemarie. *Feminist Thought - A Comprehensive Introduction*. Routledge, London. 1989 (Reprint 1992). also see Second Edition. Westview Press, Colorado. 1998.
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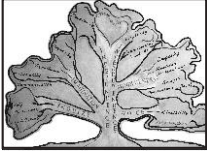
Research Methodology

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Background Reading



2. Bhave, Sumitra: *Pan on Fire : Eight Dalit Women Tell Their Story*. Translated by Gauri Deshpande. New Delhi: Indian Social Institute. 1988. 196p.
3. Beddoe, Deidre. *Discovering Women's History: A Practical Manual*. London: Pandora Press. 1983. 232p.
4. Karlekar, Malavika. *Voices from Within: Early Personal Narratives of Bengali Women*. Delhi: Oxford University Press. 1993. 227p.
5. Pawar, Urmila, *The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs*, (Translated from Marathi by Maya Pandit) Kolkata: Stree. 2008.
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SELECTED READING

Importance of Concepts ¹

Neera Desai

[In research, it is very important to be clear, precise and explicit about concepts used. Women's Studies begins by re-examining old concepts because they were unable to or inadequate to describe reality – Editor.]

In Women Studies there have been two kinds of discussions going on – (1) mainstream research methods i.e. quantitative methods and (2) new ways of looking at women's problems, i.e. case histories, oral histories and other qualitative methods.

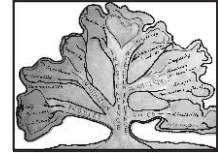
Role of Perceptions and Concepts

While working in Women Studies it is absolutely necessary to know and understand the concepts involved. While doing empirical research we cannot restrict ourselves to one method only. While using folk songs and oral history we must remember that these are only supportive evidences and they cannot supplant other more direct inquiries. Social survey research was a sort of reaction to library work and research based on secondary data. Survey research is an American legacy to India. However, in spite of being popular, it was done in a slipshod manner. Nowadays not much emphasis is based on survey research. Insights can be had from a few detailed case histories, but from which, it is difficult to generalize. Some sort of combination of research methods has to be made. We, in Women Studies have reached an impasse which has to be resolved.

...There is a temptation to start immediately with questions, and data collection after which one is going to write the report. In Women Studies we do not always use mainstream concepts; adaptations have to be made. Between 1965– 67 a project was conducted on married women students in the SNDT and Bombay Universities. Their multiple roles and resulting conflicts were to be examined. It was found that there were many external students. Co-operation from family members was very essential for a woman to study. A question in the schedule was – “what kind of co-operation are you getting from your husband?”

He (i) prepares notes (ii) takes leave (iii) minds children and (iv) creates a congenial atmosphere. Many of the answers were for the last alternative. This was because the concept of

¹This is an extract of the lecture at a workshop organized in 1988 at the Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University. The lecture is part of a volume titled *Evolving New Methodologies in Research on Women's Studies*. Contribution to Women's Studies. Maithreyi Krishnaraj and Joy Deshmukh (Edit) Mumbai: Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University, 1988.



“congeniality” was not clear to both the investigators and the respondents. The latter interpreted it as the husband's allowing them to sit for the exam and that their free time could be used for study. Congeniality would actually imply more than mere permission. Also the women were expected to first fulfill their roles of housewife, wife and mother, and then study. All the roles had to be carried out efficiently. This is different from the dual role conflict faced by women from lower classes. Hence the mere concept of a “dual role” is not enough to explain situations which are different from each other.

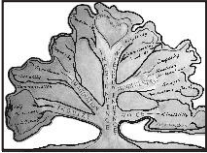
If a direct question was asked to a middle class woman as to whether she feels a role conflict, she would say “no” But if she were asked – If you do not fare well, do not attend classes, do not look after your children, how do you feel? She would say it worried her. This was because it is difficult for a middle-class woman to accept the existence of a conflict. She thinks that she ought not to feel any conflict.

Similarly a lot of thinking has to be done about the concept of a “family”. The earlier idea about the family – its ties, expectations etc., were all those of the upper and middle classes. Also they were from a man's point of view. The notion of the sanctity of the family, the mother-in-law--daughter-in-law relationship, were all a middle class urban phenomenon, it has nothing to do with the large masses of people.

This comes out clearly in a study I had undertaken with Alice Thorner in the slums, chawls of Bombay. It was found that, in the chawls many women were concerned with middle class norms of the family, husband, etc. The women's participation outside the home was very little. This was not so in the slums. Normally, women help in the socialization process of children. In slums women were not able to do this. They did not pass on values to the next generation through stories. Mythology was not a common fund of knowledge for the mass of people. There was a very big gap between parents and children – the socialization equipment was inadequate. The children often had more exposure through school than that of the parents. Many mother-in laws were found to be the exact opposite of the stereotype that is often portrayed and believed in.

The support role of the family in the life of a poor woman should be recognised. She has no option but to stay in the family. She finds it better to face one wolf in the guise of her husband than many others if she leaves the shelter of her family. The absence of any other alternative to a woman in distress, is very important. In such cases the family is not romanticized. She avoids the husband and gets closer to the children, even if they do not respond.

Our perception leads to a concept, which is used in a questionnaire. Upon getting different results a new perception arises leading to a new concept.



Feminist Research Methodology

Similarly in different classes the manifestations of power relations, the coping mechanisms are different. There are comparative differences in middle class and in poorer families. In a middle house a woman would find the family as a support but she would also have other alternatives which the poorer woman does not have. Why is it, a woman sticks to a family? Why is so much nostalgia for the parental family? Why is it so irrespective of class? All these are questions which can be investigated. The family as portrayed in text-books and novels is very different from the one in reality.

...A project was conducted to study **neighbourhood** in New Bombay. The **neighbourhood** concept by Westerners, which implied as an ideal, a closed locality, with religious centre, shopping centre, play-ground, school within walking distance, etc. In other words it was a planner's concept. However for purposes of this study definitions had to be evolved and 16 kinds of neighbourhoods were found. Playgrounds were the dens of bootleggers in poor localities. Also in slums, people did not **want** playgrounds. They preferred to keep a watch on children while they played in front of the hut. Preferences of neighbourhood were according to caste and regions.

We have to alter the applicability of a concept to fit our own study. There is danger of established concepts acquiring the proportions of a norm. This should be avoided. It is very important to have a clear cut notion of a concept before translating it into survey. Otherwise methodology and conceptualization can go wrong.

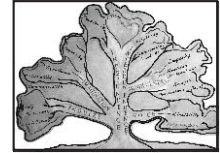
Methodology for Historical Research: Explorations in Economic History of Women²

Nirmala Banerjee

[In Women Studies, apart from following the basic precepts of scientific research, there is great need for historical research. We cannot make sense of the present unless we know something of the past. Much of the past in the case of women is not readily available; if available, it is partial or incorrect. How do we reconstruct history? What precautions do we take? What kind of sources can be used to make estimates, to fill gaps? Here Nirmala Banerjee illustrates these from her own work on the impact of colonialism on women workers in Bengal – Editor]

Historiography is rapidly developing branch and has tremendous potential for study. History is not a subject where controlled experiments can be done. All kinds of factors contribute to change. Scholars know only a part of the past. It is a partial view of the past. To

²This is an extract of the lecture at a workshop organized in 1988 at the Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University. The lecture is part of a volume titled *Evolving New Methodologies in Research on Women's Studies*. Contribution to Women's Studies. Maithreyi Krishnaraj and Joy Deshmukh (Edit) Mumbai: Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University, 1988.



comprehend the past we need a multidisciplinary approach to the study of history.

In historical research, it is important to understand the rules by which a society is governed at the point of time one is focussing on. History, let us not forget, is recorded by someone, for his or her purpose, which is unlikely to be identical with our purposes. There is rarely going to be ready made data available in exactly the form in which we want it. Women's history is invisible because historians have been male and their purposes, their world view are reflected in the history they wrote. For instance, if we want to find out answers to questions like, were women working in those times we will probably not get any answers because the historians might have had no interest in such a question and would therefore have not bothered to record anything about it. Women's problem did not get addressed because gender was not seen as an issue.

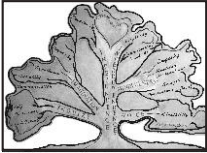
Usually, history gives accounts of exceptional women. The average women's lives did not concern the interest of male writers. Some women who were exceptional for the times in which they lived naturally stood out and were noticed. Even though such women were noticed, we must also realize that these women's lives were cast within a male frame work and male values of the male historian.

The interest and motivation of the person recording events is important. Take the Marathi travelogue of 1855 set in the period of the Indian Mutiny. If one is looking for material on the Mutiny, one will be sorely disappointed. The author was seeking alms and he eulogises various people who gave him charity. There is nothing much on the momentous political turmoil of the time. He mentions very cursorily the sack of Jhansi.

When men wrote about women, generally they cast women in their ideal of the perfect woman. Accordingly women are either 'good' or 'bad'. Women never appeared in male versions of history except in idealized form. History about women is either a total absence or accounts of exceptional women. In addition, history of the colonial period is replete with European bias.

Historical research involves an interdisciplinary approach. One needs to know something of the society, its economy, its polity, its value systems, its beliefs, its culture before one can begin to infer anything from a given text of a period. To interpret any text or document we must know first, who wrote it and for what purpose.

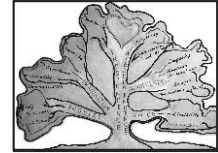
I would like to illustrate the problems involved in historical research and the kind of biases, gaps, distortions and misunderstandings one had to contend with through my study on women's work. We have the controversy over the nature of economic development of the colonial era known popularly as the de-industrialisation debate. Several economic historians such as Amiya Bagchi and others have presented data indicating the rapid decline of industries



in India between the end of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

During the eighteenth century, Bengal was a major exporter of cotton yarn. The major ports through which the yarn trade was channelized were in Calicut in Kerala, Calcutta in Bengal and Surat in Gujarat. Exports of cotton textiles to Europe were substantial. With the growth of the textile mills in England, England stopped buying yarn and textiles from India. This crippled the spinning industry India. Machine spun yarn being cheaper, English yarn began to flood India. Buchanan has documented the damage this did to the Indian economy. In 1811 there were, something like nine lakh spinners in just 4 districts of Bengal. By 1911 in the whole of Bengal only 60,000 spinners remained. Buchanan mentions how cotton spinning was a widespread occupation for women, not restricted by caste. What he fails to mention is the tragic elimination of jobs for millions of women. Men were engaged in cotton-yarn trade, collecting and distributing yarn to village weavers but spinning was the women's function. The yarn market in Bengal was sizeable – called “Soothhatha”. The yarn women spun, was purchased by weavers. Today hand spinning as an independent household industry has disappeared. In weavers' families, two women spin yarn at least 5 hours to meet weaving needs. A hundred years ago, every household had women spinning yarn; they were women from all castes. There are references in literary sources of the period to 16 year old Brahmin women spinning the finest Dacca yarn. De-industrialisation of Bengal really was de-industrialisation of the women.

Could one estimate how many women there were in spinning? For Bengal, I calculated this by making the assumption that all cloth used in Bengal at that period was produced in Bengal. The minimum per capita, per annum consumption of cloth in India by our plan estimate is 8 meters. Based on this I calculated the yarn needed. Export figures were available from East India Company records, customs office records, etc. Next, it was necessary to know how much yarn one woman could produce per day. This information I gathered from women's letters which have references to this. Through these techniques, I arrived at a figure of 2-1/2 million women spinners in Bengal which was equal to 25% female population in Bengal. Even in the 1980's after three decades of industrialization we have nowhere reached this level of female participation in industry, the present level being around 11%. With the decline in spinning activity, women either fell out of the labour force or got pushed into agriculture or domestic service. There is this touching complaint by a Bengali woman spinner in a Bengali newspaper: “I used to think the English people are prosperous but here they are selling yarn cheaper than us. We work so hard and earn so little but they seem to earn less than us”. The poor lady was unaware of the real reason for the cheaper English yarn, but her plea attests the fact of the substantial economic contribution of women to their household and the national economic. While historians talk of de-industrialisation, they fail to take cognizance of the female part of the labour force, usually dismissed as being engaged in domesticity.



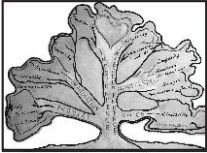
It is a challenge for Women Studies scholars to unearth important historical truths like the above. Once this understanding exists we will not turn a blind eye to women's economic contribution in contemporary times. Every weaver is helped by the women of his family, who spin yarn for him. Yet in our data only the weaver is treated as economically active.

It is fallacious to conclude anything about the status of women by basing one's interpretations solely on the sacred texts. The status of women in India, it is declared was "high" in the Vedic Age. What is the evidence for this? That there were a few outstanding women like Maithreyi and Gargi? There are lots of slokas in the very same Vedas that denigrate women and equate them with Shudras and dogs. In the Hitopadesa women appear as sexually deviant, jealous of other women. Would we on the strength of this text conclude that women of that period were hyper sexed? Women's roles and description of women given in many of the texts reflect male opinions and male needs of a male world. We must re-examine these sources more critically than we have done so far. This does not mean that we should replace the male bias with a female bias. Any statement about women must be made with reference to the situation of women vis a vis men in order to comprehend where women really stood. Would the veneration of women as goddesses in religious practice/texts give proof of high status in the absence of other indicators?

We have to formulate hypotheses about women's condition historically by projections from out present knowledge, experience and imagination. One hypothesis that Women Studies scholars have proposed is that the status of women appears to be higher when women are needed by the economy. It may deduced that the deterioration in the status of the Aryan women set in, when non-Aryan women became available for agriculture, animal husbandry and allied activities. We may extend this hypothesis to the contemporary situation. When the economy needs women's labour outside the house as in rice cultivation, where land is not fertile and hard labour is required, women's labour becomes necessary. Thus in South and South West India and South East Asia practices like purdah are absent. (Incidentally, it is not true that the advent of Islam alone is responsible for purdah.) The non participation of Bengali women in rice cultivation was made possible by migrant labour from Bihar and Orissa.

An important caveat in interpreting any historical document is to realize that the document represents one aspect of society, at a particular point of time and from a particular person's point of view. As we saw earlier, in the case of the Brahmin traveller who has little to say about the Indian Mutiny.

History is usually history from above written by the literates in society, by the privileged sections and by officials committed to the ruling group. When we interpret women's history from known sources we get very little information on how ordinary women lived. The evidence of scriptures is of limited value in understanding social history.



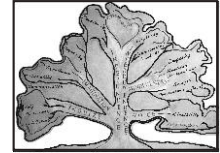
Feminist Research Methodology

Another problem is the need to understand the parameters of a given discourse: who said what and why. Take the Sati debate of the nineteenth century. Ram Mohan Roy who initiated the debate was well versed in Persian. His views of Sati were first formed by his acquaintance with Islam. Because he needed to convince Hindu society, he later resorted to Sanskrit sources. When the British consulted the pandits, they tried initially to please the British by saying that Hindu Shastras did not sanction Sati, but as the debate widened the pandits switched their stand. We thus see how answers depend on who asks the questions and for what purpose. It is noteworthy that throughout this stormy debate on women's issue, we have no record of a single women's voice! What did the women have to say on Sati? Nobody knows.

An area where Women Studies scholars must work is to analyse changes in symbol systems that take place over time. Why has Sati staged a come back in India? What are the conditions today that have led to the revival of an obnoxious custom? Any custom that persists over long periods of time must perforce have links with other structures in society. In Bengal, the Dayabagha system of inheritance and the introduction of permanent settlement vested inheritable rights in widows. Sati presumably is linked to this as the practice was prevalent mainly among the landed, who disposed of widows to gain control of her property. Sati is often interpreted as upholding women's honour in the Johar-custom. Johar in reality upholds whose honour? It is for the honour of men that women die.

Women Studies scholars could refute many myths about women if they consult the right sources. One standard myth is that women never did anything besides housekeeping and rearing children. We see right before us, everyday that women are engaged in economic activity. If it is so today, how could it be otherwise in yester years? How would one go about establishing this? Autobiographies can yield a hypothesis, not data. Folk songs and proverbs may provide hints. These lack periodisation to be treated as historical material. The collective memory of a community cannot be relied upon. There are photographs in the industry, monographs produced by British historians which show women as exclusively responsible for silk weaving. Yet people have forgotten this. Though vast changes have taken place, popular myth sees our society as unchanging and 'traditional', women's domesticity is thought to be traditional yet what was traditional was the opposite!

There are detailed records available for the British period. The district surgeon meticulously recorded everything about his district -- the people, their occupations, their dwellings, their trade, transport tools, flora fauna, etc. If we get a definitive piece of document historically dated such as this we can get some idea of the society the document portrays. Many rituals that prescribe what women can do, tell us something. The best source is the Census. The early censuses went into great detail in recording various activities and facts about the Indian people. The 1911 Census gives a detailed classification of 55 occupations. The categories under these occupations run to



170. Through these classifications of occupations we learn something about the wide range of jobs women did –hair cutting, nail cutting, tattooing and what not. Dehusking of rice was entirely a woman's occupation. In 1881, the Census mentions over 12 lakhs of women in Bengal engaged in dehusking for which they were paid in cash or kind. There were also in 1881 over 1.2 million female agricultural workers.

Through the study of Census we can understand the changes in India society. During the first few decades of the twentieth century many women's occupations disappeared (e.g. silk spinning, paddy husking). Right from 1881 the British Census authorities had noticed the adverse sex ratio in India, (i.e. number of female being less relative to male). They have tabulated the data caste-wise. The lower sex ratio appeared to affect the upper castes only. This eliminated poverty as a possible cause.

These are some of the trails one can follow through in historical research. The methodology is basically to ask oneself, “If I am going to look into this area, what else, should I know about it, what else has been written about it? Why is it that the work I am looking at does not talk of things I want to know?” The transition points in social change are important. It is the turning points that give us a glimpse of underlying conditions – they also tell us why changes took place. Whatever hypothesis one formulates, one has to put it on the context of today and relate it to the past.

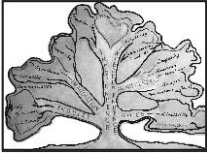
Sources of Data for Women and How to Use Them—(1)³

Nirmala Banerjee

[We have so far talked of general guidelines in approaching history for Women Studies. There are national data sources which we must learn about. The most important is the Census. We must know what it contains, what information it gives about women and in what form and how to use the Census. The National Sample Survey is another important source – Editor]

It is important to remember that the Census data is not tailored to our requirement. Material will be scattered and found in a piecemeal way. The problem is to find the sources and adapt it to our requirement. All Census data are based on certain concepts and are dependent on relevant theories and assumptions. Women's Studies is a challenge to all knowledge in the sense while making use of the data we have to look at all the relevant theories, concepts and assumptions which have gone into the kind of material collected.

³ This is an extract of the lecture at a workshop organized in 1988 at the Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University. The lecture is part of a volume titled *Evolving New Methodologies in Research on Women's Studies*. Contribution to Women's Studies. Maithreyi Krishnaraj and Joy Deshmukh (Edit) Mumbai: Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University, 1988



Feminist Research Methodology

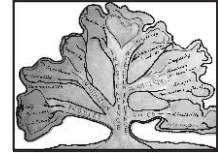
The neo classical economic theories have certain built in assumptions on the 'economic man' neutrality, etc. These assumptions are based on the industrial westernized society; when applied to Indian society it is found that the categories and concepts like employment, economic activity, entrepreneur, etc., are not clearly marked. The definition of employment of worker as payment or return to labour emphasises only wage labour to the exclusion of other forms of labour prevalent in our society.

In India the factors of production are not clearly demarcated. The artisan has a loom in his house and can therefore be considered an entrepreneur; his earnings can incorporate the rent of the house; labour is his own. Therefore the factors of production cannot be separated. The categories usually utilized for determining wages are therefore meaningless, in this context. In addition, we also have the unpaid wage worker in the house – for example in Bengal the preparation of handloom sarees requires 2 women working 4 to 5 hours a day to provide enough yarn for one day's work for the weaver, who is a man on the loom. Yet Census reports do not list what women do as work. This is partly because of lack of conceptual clarity on what is work. This is compounded by perceptions of the men in the household and the way women perceive themselves. Men do not talk of women's work because their status is involved. Women may perceive themselves as primarily housewives helping in domestic work. These complications are not taken into account by those involved in tabulating the Census data because of the prevalent middle class images of women.

This can be seen from 1961 and 1971 data. There is a steep decline in women's participation in the labour force from 1961 to 1971. The 1971 census changed the definition of a worker. This affected the counting of who were “workers” whether men and women but the effect was sharper for women. Millions of economically active women became 'non-workers' by a definitional change. In 1961 the Census enumeration began with the question 'do you work inoccupation?' In 1971 Census the enumerator begins with the question, “Are you a worker?” Women do not regard themselves as workers. The question required the respondent to perceive herself/himself as a worker; if he or she failed to so see himself or herself, the next set of questions that listed actual activities were not asked at all. The experience of the employment guarantee schemes in Maharashtra has been that when work is available women will work.

Census data up to 1931 is fairly accurate. Even when the workers did not earn wages they were listed as workers as long as they were engaged in agricultural operations.

The N.S.S. (National Sample Survey) since the early 50's has attempted to collect information on the Indian economy with regards to consumer expenditure etc. The poverty line is based on the consumer expenditure level the NSS has arrived at the norm. NSS also conducts surveys on household enterprises non-household enterprises, etc. NSS is more sensitive to the suggestions



by researchers on improvement of data.

The N.S.S. Committee Chairman pointed out that the standard industrialised concept of employment is not applicable to India. The 1972, 27th round of N.S.S. took the definition of the worker closer to the 1961 definition of work and was closer to definition needed to capture women's work. In industrial countries household work consists of mainly cooking and child care and is not defined as work but in India very few women do only this. They collect forest produce, have kitchen gardens, take care of cattle and poultry, obtain fuel and fodder daily by collection. There is real income added by these activities of women's work. They help to maintain families at subsistence level. This work **adds** to the G.N.P, hence the definition of the extended work force now adopted by the ILO is more relevant to non-industrialised countries.

N.S.S. surveys in 1977-78 and in 1988, reflects changes in official position regarding women's work by changing the concepts of what is work. Census authorities stick to narrow definitions mainly because of the need to conform to international standards and to retain comparability between censuses over time and over space.

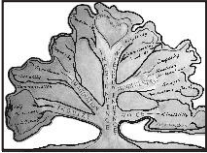
Despite the fact the Census sources may be defective it is still the best available source. We can acquire a fairly reliable picture if we understand the concepts and frameworks used in the census, when we use this data source. The N.S.S. is quite meticulous about its sampling design and hence its sample is a fairly reliable indicator of the overall economic picture. Other sources for economic data are the State Economic Bureaus which periodically conduct consumer and economic surveys.

In one instance I found while using the consumer and economic survey data of Calcutta, that the eastern part of Calcutta was ignored. It turned out that this was because the schedules were lost! We should be alert to spot the defects in the data and correct the picture accordingly. Anthropological studies are useful in formulating hypothesis but they used to be substantiated by larger carefully selected sample studies. Anthropological studies are good mainly as supportive evidence.¹

Kate Young² in her Mexican study has been able to go back into history. This kind of exploration has to be done with caution – we should be careful with our sources and comparisons.

¹Buchanan Francis: A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar, London, 1807; An Account of the district of Bihar and Patna 1811-12 Patna, 1922.

²Kate, Young: "Domestic Out-work and the Decentralization of Production: A New Stage in Capitalist Development?" (Paper for the ILO regional meeting on women and rural development, Mexico, August 24-28, 1981).



Feminist Research Methodology

Lyn Bennet³ shows how standard statistical calculations do not reveal women's work. She lived in a village to find out the time allocation of women's work. The problem here is that as long as it is not wage work it is not time bound. There is no behaviour standardization of work. Rural work is also seasonal. Peak agricultural work is also the period of low craft work.

An interesting finding from another Indian study⁴ recently concluded is that the most powerful woman in the household is in charge of cooking. The allocation of work between women and between men and women in these rural households was interesting. Older women do house work while middle aged women work outside the house. Women were usually involved in household based craft work while men resorted to wage work. Only when wage work was unavailable did men participate in the craft.

Gita Sen's and Chiranjeb Sen's⁵ path breaking analysis of N.S.S., reported in 1985 (*EPW*, April 1985) clearly brings out the concept of extended worker. Most women then can be seen to be self employed and working on family assets. The policy implication is that women do not want to compete with men for meagre wage work but would rather be self employed.

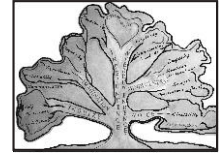
Secondary data source provides greater scope for innovative ideas. But data can be used only when you are certain about concepts. Women's work cannot often be calculated in terms of cash economy. There are problems in valuation of women's work. A cumulative effect of work is different from a mere simple addition of parts. In Bengal during the famine, it was found that tribal women in later stages of deprivation after exhausting available forest products would collect a bitter root, traversing long distances through dry land. This root had to be boiled thrice before it became barely edible. This cost fuel, water and precious reserves of the already scarce energy of the starved woman. The market value of the roots will not reflect this cost. Similarly in a choice between bringing steel mills or water pipes to the village, the former is likely to be chosen because the effort (i.e. cost) of the women to bring water by walking miles, carrying it etc., is not valued at all in economic terms. For the planner and the men, it is zero cost.

The CSO data are another important source for data on women. So also annual surveys of industries, population estimates from the Sample Registration System (SRS). No doubt, population Census data is biased in terms of age, recording a bias that becomes quinquennial. There is a tendency to under report boys below 5 and girls over adolescence. Poor women often do not know their age and because they age grow faster, enumerators over estimate their age.

³Bennett, Lynn: *The Parbatiya Women of Bakundol, Nepal* : Tribhuvan University, Centre for Economic Development and Administration, 1981. (The Status of Women in Nepal, Volume II; Field Studies, Part 7).

⁴Krishnaraj Maithreyi and Pandey Divya: *Women's Work and Family Strategies among Cane-bamboo Artisans of South Ratnagiri, Maharashtra*, Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University, Bombay 1988.

⁵Sen, Gita and Sen Chiranjeb: "Women's Domestic Work and Economic Activity: Results from National Sample Survey", in *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 20, No. 17 April 27, 1985.



Interpretation In Oral History Methods⁴

C. S. Lakshmi

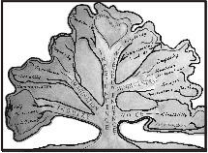
Silence and Language

In the process of utilizing oral history sources one comes to understand more and more the quality of silence. By silence I don't mean the absence of sound. I mean the silence that results from abstaining to put into language events, experiences, opinions, ideas and thoughts. It is silence that is the result of non-mention. Whatever is put into language has to be constantly understood in terms of this absence of languages. In oral history sources there are a lot of unsaid things. Whatever is spoken is in constant dialogue with the silence. Like the musical notes in a raga. Even if a raga is composed of 5 notes or 6 notes the missing note exercises the power of absence on the raga. I once interviewed a musician who spoke to me for six hours without once mentioning her husband. But I understood the silence as a positive one for further direct questioning revealed that her married life had been a happy one and she felt no need to make any specific mention of this. Her husband was absent in her interview, but it was an absence that was present. In order to understand the spoken word one has to understand silence....

To understand oral history material one has to remember that concepts like pain, suffering and power are not fixed concepts. They change according to the process of life and according to history. The nature of the material will also vary according to the time, place and period one has chosen to intervene into a person's life. What seemed unbearable and oppressive can change its nature at a later interview. Likewise, what constituted happiness can also change. Often suffering is woven into one's life and creeps into it without any calamitous beginning, and one does not then remember the causes of the suffering itself. Like the reactions to labour pains immediately after and over the years would present a variety of responses not still fully reflecting the truth of the labour pains. Memories have to be put in the context of the entirety of one's life and life in general. This would make it clear that some events and persons are central and some are marginal in a personal life. It is important for the researcher to understand where the events or persons or feelings have figured in a person's life.

While interviewing a woman, often she is asked what she feels as a woman. It is because it is assumed that a woman has to have certain qualities and feelings. It is presumed that if one is biologically born a woman certain qualities come along with this physical event. But in actuality the concept of a woman with all the so called feminine qualities is a socially constituted one. It will be more fruitful to the researcher to try and understand the social construction of the female

⁴ This is an extract from Dr. C. S. Lakshmi's lecture at a workshop organized in 1988 at the Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University. The lecture is part of a volume titled *Evolving New Methodologies in Research on Women's Studies*. Contribution to Women's Studies. Maithreyi Krishnaraj and Joy Deshmukh (Edit) Mumbai: Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University. 1988. Pp.53.

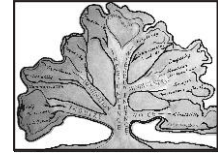


Feminist Research Methodology

personality. In other words, what it is to be a woman to live as a woman and to experience the world as a woman. Truth is not something that stops at a point and remains unaltered for all times to come. Therefore one cannot be definite about the meaning of a particular construction. Consequently when working with oral history sources one has to be careful about coming to definite conclusions. In order to understand general concepts like pain, suffering oppression and so forth one has to leave the doors open to the absence, the silence....

In oral history, there is a tendency of the subject to present herself from the point of view of her husband or other members of the family. It should be remembered that what is important to the researcher may not be important to the subject....

All these raise the question of whether we can draw boundaries of the self-identify and social-identity. If one can perceive one's self as related to the others and perceive the construction of self, this perception can help transform the way we can relate to the world and again the power to lead non-debased life.



Case Studies- How to Do Them⁵

Leela Gulati

(Quantitative methods we saw were useful in understanding macro trends. They are also useful in establishing some linkages between different factors. We should be aware that they have limitations. Women Studies has relied rather more heavily on qualitative methods because in the frame work of large surveys and data collection, crucial areas of women's lives get ignored. Editor)

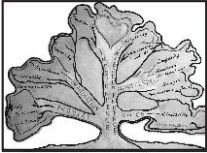
..... Before taking up a case study you must look at the macro data on the issue you want to study (say census data). I studied the census figures on occupational distribution of Kerala State with respect to 5 areas. Since I found more women in agriculture and household industry, my focus was on agriculture. The women I chose to study were from construction, coir, fish vending and brick making as a household industry.

There are reasons for a micro study. A macro study which uses a large sample size and depends on questionnaires to collect data has certain difficulties. The questions are formulated by one person and asked by another person. Investigators are not really interested in the research findings. They first have a job to do. Also at time the investigators find it difficult to even ask questions. This difficulty is often encountered in issues related to Women's Studies. Investigators can feel nervous or embarrassed (e.g. questions relating to family planning, cultural practices, regarding defecation, etc.). Questions have to be answered at one go, hence sensitive information on which some thought may be required cannot be asked. A questionnaire in essence is only a fact finding machine. At times questions do not have clear cut answers (e.g. How is income shared? Who takes decisions?) The answer lies in some grey area which has no place for itself in a questionnaire where both understanding and time is limited.

It is for all these reasons that one has to progress from the macro to the micro. In a micro study one does not face problems like those faced in a macro study. Often answers are not got as per requirements because there is no privacy or else everyone, but the respondent wants to answer. The survey method also cannot use the intuitive factor required to judge between what the respondent says and what she/he means. The survey method has other difficulties, for instance the entry point. People cannot be confronted or doors be knocked at. A long questionnaire can be tedious and prompting on the path of the investigator can push answers into preconceived paths.

The main concern of the anthropological field is to put the respondent/subject in the macro

⁵ This is an extract of the lecture at a workshop organized in 1988 at the Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University. The lecture is part of a volume titled *Evolving New Methodologies in Research on Women's Studies*. Contribution to Women's Studies. Maithreyi Krishnaraj and Joy Deshmukh (Edit) Mumbai: Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT Women's University, 1988. Pp.42-43



Feminist Research Methodology

picture. The macro picture must be women around her. For a micro study, human relationships have to be built. A support has to be established. Don't go by rules. Allow the conversation to flow. Any sort of recording instrument, be in machine or a paper and pen can inhibit the answers. It is difficult for both parties (investigator/subject) not to get emotionally involved. If the respondent is from the poor strata, mere visits from the investigator add to her status. If the researcher subject wants money or help you have to be careful that you do not arouse the jealousy of others. Try doing something for the whole community rather than for particular persons. There are crucial questions such as how do we re-enter a community studied before; how do we tackle emotional involvement; what really are the responsibilities of the fieldworker?

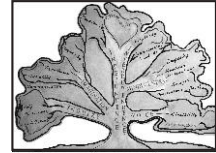
The entry point is the most important. Most often for macro studies the entry point is from the top. But for a micro study it is preferable to make the entry from the level of the respondent. Go as a friend; not as a privileged person. A network has to be first created and then the choice has to be made.

Often the respondent also asks the investigator questions. She tries to test the latter's sincerity. Visits are also made by the investigator to the subject's house and vice versa. The latter type of visits facilitates questioning since the subject comes to your house and you have the psychological advantage of being a host. You have to put yourself in her place and think like her. This is not always possible since you carry the baggage of your culture in your perception. This should be avoided. You should try to be as neutral as possible.

The image of the investigator should be kept as natural as possible. A respectable appearance is needed as also skill in investigation. You should be able to relate to the other person at her level. She should be convinced about your sincerity. Do not overdo the attempt at familiarity or your hypocrisy will be seen.

You have to have an objective stand. We all have our own secrets, which we do not want to reflect on, but we have to train ourselves to be objective about ourselves too. Questions should be clearly articulated. You should use a series of steps carefully worked out. Make preparations and know how to introduce the subject. Questionnaires can be used to record facts like date of birth, name, etc. Ration card provide valuable data. Interviews are no doubt an integral part to capture the totality of the subject but sharp observations are also required.

One tends to select the subjects on two bases—one is, the most eloquent and prepared to talk or those with whom a rapport has been built. The subject should be representative of the sample she is chosen from. It is an absolute must for the researcher to be in direct contact with the respondent. Time must be taken to check double check and recheck Case studies can be used as



part of preparatory study for further research. Your research objectives dictate what you would record. Suppose you are interested in how female labour is used, their wages, occupational mobility, income, etc., the answers to these will be within the narrative. One can test common notions, e.g. that casual workers do not eat well, but in case studies I found that what happens is there are fluctuations in their consumption level depending on their wage receipts. [The author goes on to discuss the ways in which micro studies can provide a counter point to macro studies]. Micro studies reveal that many people do not cook, they eat out in Kerala. If the measurement of poverty depended on consumption of food prepared at home, this overestimates deprivation.

Difficulties Perceived in Case Studies

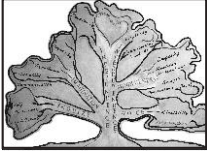
When the respondent is from the poorer strata and the researcher is middle class or above, the psychological effect of the study on the respondent must be considered. The researcher makes friends with her, makes her reveal all her secrets but also bestows a sort of privilege as compared to her peers, by the association with her. This can have various repercussions. The friendship is difficult to maintain after the study is over. The trauma of revealing oneself brings no tangible rewards to the respondent. She can get alienated from her peers because of jealousy. No doubt while the study is going on the researcher can help her in small ways.

It can happen that talking about herself can change the perceptions of the respondent. But the researcher must aim to study her as she is. It is enough to report history as it is. These stories have something classical in them. Each one carries all the shades and criteria a researcher requires.

If a respondent does not want to answer one must respect her wishes. The researcher must always keep a humble attitude since the respondent is the giver and not the taker.

How to Write Up the Case Study

Do not postpone writing. Start writing early. Transcribe notes immediately. Write about all minute details and observations. These fill in to give the whole picture. Note the point of entry. Note your immediate perception of the person. It will be useful to keep an independent diary. Begin your paragraph writing with how does the house look; what is the space available; what is happening in the kitchen; where money is kept, where do different members sit, etc.



Feminist Historiography and the Politics of History ⁶

Veena Poonacha

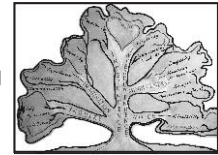
Feminist historiography has challenged the prevailing monolithic understanding of past events. It points out that such omissions in the writing of official history are not inadvertent but rather politically motivated: For it helps to rationalize women's exclusion from the public domain. These attempts by feminist historiography to make visible women's lived experiences and to indicate the socio-political, economic and cultural factors that circumscribe their lives have challenged the claims of objectivity in the writing of history ...

The Politics of History

A product of the colonial interlude in India, historical narratives remains a contested site in post colonial India, wherein various interest aggregation groups seek to legitimize their claims to political power through the appropriation of history. Aimed at justifying the enlightening mission of British rule, 19th century colonial writers (such as James Mill, Collin Mackenzie and Alexander Dow) created an image of Indian past that was static and unchanging, wherein people were defined in terms of mutually hostile, monolithic religious communities; and historical events were placed in a neat chronological sequence, based on the dynasties that ruled the country at those given points of time. This colonial version of Indian history was (with marginal changes) reinforced by Orientalist scholars like Max Muller, who glorified the ancient Vedic Aryan civilization in India as arising out of the Aryan migration into the sub continent. These attempts at “knowledge management” of India's past lent credence to certain historical events over others. Further, focusing entirely on the political events enacted in the public arena the discourse not only ignored social history, but also legitimized certain sources of historical knowledge over others. Discussions on social history revolved around the caste system and notions of village communities, while studies of the political economy seem to confirm the prevalence of an endemic society that was governed by oriental despotism. As affirmed by Cohn, colonialism was as much a project mediated through the control of knowledge as by military strength.

To counter the blatant criticism of Indian customs and traditions (particularly customs, such as sati, child marriage and ascetic widowhood) evident in the colonial history of India, cultural nationalism in India borrowed from those strands of Orientalism that glorified India's ancient past and attributed these practices to the impact of medieval invasions on indigenous societies. The political equations of the nationalist struggle, legitimized this kind of romanticism of Indian history—a romanticism which continues to colour mainstream history as well as the struggles for

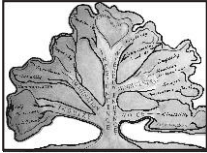
⁶ Poonacha Veena. Extracted from “Writing Women's Lives: Some Methodological Questions for Feminist Historiography”. The paper was presented as a special invitee to the 25th year celebration of the *Australian Journal of Feminist Studies*. 2005. It was subsequently published by Nariwava: Gender, Culture and Civilization Network. New Delhi. 2007



political and cultural hegemony by various religious communities since the early 20th century. In essence the history of India represented the European view of Indian history.

The unfreezing of Indian history can be traced to the protest politics that emerged in the political landscape since the 1960s. Encoded in the struggles for distributive justice were attempts to claim historical legitimacy for their struggles; the process of recovering history from the standpoint of various marginalized groups challenged the claims of objectivity made by the dominant construction of Indian history. The emergent subaltern historiography decisively shifted the focus of history as a narration of past politics to the lived experiences people. Underscoring the politics of knowledge generation, it raised serious theoretical and methodological questions regarding the interpretations of historical events and the legitimate tools of its enquiry. The central argument was that dominant history was elitist; it not only made invisible the voices and experiences of the ordinary population but also was politically motivated to maintain elite hegemony. Thus reconstructing history from below had the dual purpose of extending historical knowledge and empowering people's struggles. In the process, it created a rich mosaic of historical consciousness to challenge a monolithic understanding of past events. Thus moving out of the indological framework, history became more interdisciplinary. Actions and events were seen as arising out of multiple causes and priorities. Additionally it initiates a search for alternative sources of historical knowledge. It has increasingly emphasized the need for seeking alternative sources of evidence through the use of oral sources borrowed from anthropology and sociology (such as proverbs, oral histories, folk songs, etc.) as well as literary sources (such as fiction, autobiography, letters, diaries and even private letters). This idea of using alternative sources to reconstruct the past is not new; it has been emphasized in the writings of D.D. Kosambi, who has critiqued attempts to reconstruct Indian history, on the basis of evidence garnered from the Dharmashastric sources.

It would perhaps not have been unreasonable to expect that the development of subaltern history would sympathetically accommodate women's quest for their past. This failure to do so led to the crystallization of a distinct feminist historiography. Rooted in the political agenda of gender justice that characterized the growth of the new women's movement in the late 1960s, feminist historiography is committed to the recovery women's history. The rationale for the reconstruction of the past from the vantage point of women's lived experiences is because their current invisibility in mainstream history serves to justify their continued exclusion from the public arena. Feminist historiography posits that this exclusion of women from the focus of historical enquiry (as is evident in the construction of mainstream history) is not inadvertent; it creates the erroneous image that women have always remained passive in the process of history making (without indicating the socio-economic and political constraints in their lives), in order to enforce their subordination. Further, it makes evident that insofar as women have not had the power to control the construction of historical knowledge, their contributions to the growth of human civilization must inevitably seem trivial. To sum up, feminist historiography makes evident the socio-political, economic and cultural factors that denied women access to the public domain; as well as the



Feminist Research Methodology

patriarchal conspiracy of silence over women's contributions to the making of history. It thus plays the dual role of restoring women to history and recovering women's history.

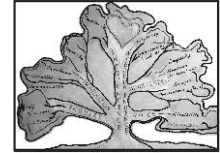
At the outset, this process of recovering women's history entailed the rediscovery of the foremothers of the feminist movement, whose voices of protest against the mistreatment of women were lost in oblivion. This necessitated the recovery of biographies, autobiographies and writings of women, such as Pandita Ramabai, Tarabai Shinde, Lakshmibai Tilak, etc., to underscore the unbroken history of feminist resistance to patriarchy. The effort made evident that women's protest against patriarchy was not the outgrowth of the new women's movement; there was a long history of resistance and subversion of patriarchy.

Such initial attempts to recover the lives of great women (with the idea of creating role models for women) underscored the politics of knowledge generation, leading to a critical re-reading of history. This re-examination of history in turn questioned notions of objectivity in the writing of history; it indicated that history writing was not uninfluenced by the dominant ideology of the period. Such theoretical insights, for instance, led to the questioning of the basis on which nationalist history laid claims to the high status of women during the Vedic Aryan period. Uma Chakravarti's study: *Whatever Happened to the Vedic Dasi*, points out the rather flimsy evidence on which nationalist historians, such as Altekar, R.K. Mukherjee, etc., made such assertions about the high status of women during the Ancient Indian period. They do not at the same time examine the evidence to the contrary also found in the same texts. Thus, she argues, by not paying attention to the evidence to the contrary also found in the texts, these writers give greater evidence of their patriotism than their objectivity. (10) It has also led to a search for alternative sources of data.

Apart from this critical re-reading of established history, attempts to recover voices—of protest and subversion, have revolutionized our conceptualization of the past, and have serious theoretical implications for the construction of history. For the process transforms our understanding of conventional history as follows: 1) periodization; 2) the categories of social analysis; 3) theories of social change. Underlying this conceptualization is the assumption that the notion that the relationship between the sexes is a social and not a natural one. This perception forms the core idea that upsets traditional thinking in all three cases

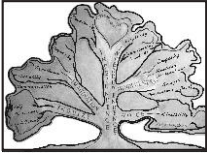
Methodological Challenges of Feminist Historical Consciousness

This development of feminist historical consciousness poses serious theoretical and methodological questions about the interpretation of historical events and the legitimate tool of its enquiry. It requires that historiography goes beyond documentary sources to search for women's voices through biographies, autobiographies, fiction, private diaries, letters photographs and even documentaries. As Geraldine Forbes writes, recovery of documents would be the first step to the writing of women's histories. Nonetheless, given the cultural complexity of India, the kinds of



sources suitable for the study of women's history are necessarily determined by the class/caste/regional dimensions of the study. The reconstruction, for instances, of the history of women from a rural community in India would require the use of anthropological sources, such as proverbs, folk songs, and genealogies. While such experimentation with alternative sources of history challenges the prevailing disciplinary boundaries, it also raises questions about periodization and authenticity. Such attempts may require that oral sources are carefully interwoven with documentary sources. Located within this broad quest for methodological tools for the writing of women's history, this paper seeks to write the lives of three generations of women reconstructed through oral histories and private papers of a mother, daughter and granddaughter from a small kin-based rural community in south India. This study delineates the process of social change that occurred between 1860 to 1950. This period was marked by the rise of British political power and later by the nationalist response to it. Looking at these developments through the eyes of these three women, this paper locates the trajectories of their lives within the process of socio-cultural and economic change. The story that unfolds is a study of migration, changing opportunities and individual choices. Indicating the ways in which private choices are circumscribed by the macro process of change, the story also delineates some of the methodological challenges of writing women's lives.

This kind of research does not begin at the level of abstraction and is experiential. Taking women's experiences as central, the process of inquiry (in order to draw out how women articulate their experiences) seeks to empower them. It does not (as would happen in a court of law) attempt to arrive at an objective through, but rather to conceptualize truth as subjective (influenced by the perspectives of the researcher and the researched as well as their socio-cultural economic and political location). Feminist research methodology suggests that the context of discovery is as important as the content. To eliminate social biases that contribute to partial and distorted explanations and understandings, the researcher must consciously identify his/her locations. This is in contrast with the standard research practice that assumes that the social identity of the observer is irrelevant to the discovery or that it is not supposed to alter the objectivity of the research. This is not to imply that feminist research does not maintain any norms of objectivity. The norm of objectivity in feminist studies is maintained by its insistence on explicating the locations of various participants in the research process. Feminist scholarship argues that the process of knowledge construction is as important as the discovery. It is necessary to interrogate the researcher's world view, bias and life experiences to consciously maintain the norms of objectivity. Feminist theory argues that the prevailing socio-political and historical theories are not anonymous; they are clearly produced by men from the dominant class, race and culture. The people who identify, and define scientific problems leave their social fingerprints on the study. Such andro-centric and elitist biases are evident in the inquiry process from the very outset (i.e., in the identification and definition of research problems, its design hypotheses and findings.....



SESSION PLAN

[Note: This module has been prepared with two sets of users in mind—teachers and undergraduate students. It was developed through a series of workshops with college teachers using the session plan given here. Therefore, it must be noted here, that while the main text of the module address the teachers, it also contains class-room exercises that will facilitate gender sensitivity and critical thinking among students.]

Teaching/Learning Objectives

The teacher-trainers:

- 1) acquire knowledge of feminist research methods
- 2) understand the epistemological basis of feminist research and its difference from mainstream research methods/techniques
- 3) appreciate quantitative and qualitative research techniques in Women's Studies
- 4) develop skills in the use of some key feminist research methods such as oral traditions, oral histories, life histories, case studies and life writings
- 5) apply feminist research as pedagogic tools in the class-rooms

Time Frame: 3 hours

Participants: College teachers who will be involved in gender sensitization programmes in their respective institutions.

Lesson Plan

This module is divided into the following: 4 Units:

Unit 1: Impact of Gender on Social Sciences

Time: 1/2 Hour

Objectives:

- 1) To recognize the impact of gender on people's lives
- 2) To understand the limitations of mainstream disciplines in understanding women's lived experiences
- 3) To appreciate feminist criticism of research methods

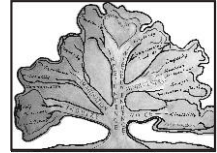
Content:

Feminist scholarship has questioned the taken-for granted assumptions of each discipline. It has pointed to the limitations of the prevailing models of research in understanding women's lives. Feminist scholarship gives a more complete picture of social reality insofar it takes into account the different groups of people and is self-reflex in its approach to knowledge creation. It then poses the question if understanding women's lives would require separate methods.

Learning Activities:

First Exercise:

The participants will be asked to examine their respective disciplines for gender bias and absence in



theory (written exercise). This data will be summarized by the Moderator

Second Exercise:

The moderator will introduce the discussion on the purpose of Women's Studies and whether Women's Studies research needs separate research methods/techniques

Summing up:

The key points emerging through the three exercises will be summarized by the moderator through a lecture. **(Time 30 Min)**

Unit 2: The Theoretical Links of Feminist Research

Objectives:

1. To understand political and epistemological justification of methodology
2. To appreciate the reasons for feminist criticism of dominant epistemology

Content:

Theories inform research in the selection of the problem, methodology and research process. The modern scientific method seen as fundamental to social science is critiqued by the standpoint epistemology and the interpretive traditions. These traditions have influence feminist research. The feminist critique of the dominant epistemology is then highlighted.

Learning Activities

The moderator makes a brief presentation of the unit.

Third Exercise:

The group will be divided into 3 groups and each group will be given summaries of research studies. The participants will identify the bias in each of the study and report on their findings.

Learning Activity 5:

Guided discussion--based on the responses of the groups, the feminist critique of dominant epistemology will be listed on flip charts to sum up the unit.

(Time: 40 Min)

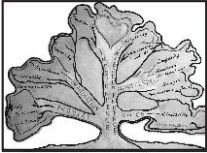
Unit 3: Principles of Feminist Research

Objectives:

- 1) To understand the principles of feminist research, kinds of research and models of feminist research
- 2) To appreciate why feminist research adopts different approaches to research

Content:

Following the insights of the women's movement in the 1960s, feminists have called for research methods that challenge the dualities of theory and praxis, the researcher and the researched. Feminist scholarship



Feminist Research Methodology

has also discarded its initial assumptions to accommodate the questions raised by different categories of women. Fundamental to feminist research is also its self-reflexivity.

Learning Activities

The moderator will make a brief presentation of the unit followed by discussions

Fourth Exercise:

The participants will be divided into groups and will be asked to prepare research proposals based on a few research topics. **(Time: 40 Min)**

Unit 4: Doing Qualitative Feminist Research

Objectives:

- 1) To appreciate the theoretical basis for different kinds of research
- 2) To develop skills of doing different kinds of research

Content :

A review of feminist research indicates that the feminists have preferred qualitative methods of oral histories, life histories focused group discussions, etc. This is because quantitative methods have failed to capture the texture of women's lives. Feminists therefore use qualitative methods even when dealing with large samples. Different techniques of feminist research will be presented.

Learning Activities :

Exercises in undertaking oral histories, etc.

Recapitulation :

The key ideas of the module will be recapitulated

Time: 1: 10 Hour

Facilitating Gender Debates in the Classroom

Module 3

Culture, Pop Culture And Gender

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Population First

&

Research Centre For Women's Studies

Sndt Women's University

2012

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Contents

Foreword by Dr. A. L. Sharada	i
Introduction	1
Session Plan	2
Media & Gender : Background Essay	3
Exercises / Discussion Points	18
Selected Readings	20

FOREWORD

Since 2005, Population First through its Girl Child Campaign – *Laadli* has been engaging actively with the college youth through a number of innovative activities such as Flash Mobs (2006), song development and puppet making workshops, street theatre competitions, discussion forums, change makers clubs and gender workshops. However, we realized that intervening as an outsider had its own limitations – funding constraints, coordination problems, limited outreach and more importantly, sustainability.

We have also come to believe strongly that gender should become part of the class room experience and should be handled by the teachers in an interactive and innovative manner within the class room context. However, we realized in our interactions with the students and teachers, the current model of teacher-student equation, did not allow much scope for that. The challenge, therefore, is to find spaces and contexts within the syllabus and class rooms to initiate a debate, dialogue and discussion which would open up the minds of the students to understand and question the deep rooted gender stereotypes, biases and violence in society. To create such critical thinking in students it is imperative that the teachers equip themselves with facilitation skills which are based on the principles of inclusiveness, respect for divergent views and equality. Facilitation is an empowering process as the facilitator helps the participants explore their mindsets, prejudices and requirements in a non-threatening, non-judgemental and open space.

We were lucky to have UNFPA supporting us to go ahead and work on the idea. We had long discussions with Prof. Veena Poonacha, Dr. Vibhuti Patel and Dr. Gita Chadha of SNTD University before firming up the project strategy. It was agreed that gender should not be a special subject or paper but should be mainstreamed into teaching, irrespective of the subject that is being handled. Colleges provide a number of contexts in which gender could be addressed – the cultural activities, fests, exhibitions, seminars, debates, and the content of the text books. If the teacher is sensitive and possesses the facilitation skills, gender could be made an integral part of college education. It is not necessary to apportion large chunks of time for this purpose but asking the right questions at the right time and providing mind space to the students to explore the same could help in changing attitudes. Any incident, comment and a film/advertisement/web campaign could be a spark for such conversation.

The project was, thereafter, taken up as a joint initiative of Population First, RCWS and PGDSR of SNDT University.

It was agreed that teachers would be able to perform the role of facilitators only when they have a sound understanding of the subject and when they understand that facilitation is a completely different set of skills as compared to teaching and training. Apart from the basic concepts on gender, two topics were selected which we thought would be relevant to the youth – Gender Based Violence and Gender and Media. A fourth topic Critical Pedagogy was also included as it forms the theoretical basis of what is being attempted in the project. Dr. Gita Chadha, Dr. A.L. Sharada, Prof. Veena Poonacha and Prof. Vibhuti Patel prepared the four modules which were peer reviewed by Ms. Bishakha Datta, Dr. Jeroo Mulla, Dr. Nasreen Fazalboy, and Ms. Sonal Shukla. My sincere thanks to Gita, Veena and Vibhuti for writing the modules and Sonal, Jeroo, Bishakha and Dr. Fazalboy for their candid comments that helped us make the modules so interesting.

The first pilot workshop was organized on August 25-26, 2011 with about 15 teachers from colleges of Mumbai University and SNDT Women's University which was conducted by the authors in an interactive manner. This was followed by a communication and facilitation skill workshop by theatre exponent Mr. Manjul Bhardwaj. The participants of the two workshops then conducted the third workshop for a new set of people in the presence of the core team who provided feedback to the presenters. Based on the response and feedback from the three workshops, the modules were revised and a final workshop was organized by the core team before the modules were finalized.

The modules are being published in collaboration with RCWS and I am grateful to Usha Lalwani for the painstaking editing and designing of the modules.

The publication includes a set of four modules. Each module is self contained with an analytical essay followed by proposed games, activities, session plan, resources and reading list. It is up to the teachers to use the contents of the modules as per their requirement. The resources and readings listed are indicative and a lot more can be accessed from the web and other resources listed.

I hope teachers using the modules have an enriching experience with the students and have the satisfaction of initiating a much needed change process in class rooms.

Dr. A. L. Sharada

Director

Population First

Mumbai



INTRODUCTION

India is at the threshold of being an economic super power and yet it has some of the worst gender indicators. It is disconcerting to note that gender violence and discrimination are increasing in the country and that education and economic status have little impact on gendered values. This is even more apparent when one considers that pre-birth sex selection is rampant among the educated and affluent people.

Young people in colleges are important stakeholders in our campaign for gender equality. Unfortunately the curriculum of the colleges provides little scope for innovative, interactive engagement of teachers and students on gender issues. There is an urgent need to create open, non-judgmental and critical spaces in colleges to make the youth understand the social construction of gender and to provide them with the skills to negotiate better gender space in their homes, communities and work places.

Media plays a major role in shaping the mindsets of the youth and if we wish to change the gendered mindsets, we need to enable the students to critically analyze the media, reflect on how it is shaping their attitudes and be more discerning consumers of the media.

This module is for teachers and focuses on the facilitation skills rather than on academic content, which most of them are already very well versed with. How do we make the serious issue of gender relevant to the students? How do we use the curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities available to focus on understanding gender? How do we communicate with students? How to be innovative and imaginative while dealing with the subject? These are some of the questions that we would be addressing through this module.

The module has a background essay titled “Culture, Pop Culture and Gender” which broadly touches upon the concepts and discusses linkages between the three concepts with interesting examples. It also has a list of activities that can be undertaken with the students on media and gender. A detailed reference list and a compilation of reading material complete the module. One training session of 3 hours duration is presented to enable teachers attending the workshop understand, reflect and internalize the facilitation process.

We need more catalysts to bring about change. Please send us your suggestions and comments. We await your response.



Culture, Pop Culture and Gender

Session Plan

Session	Objective	Activity	Outcome	Time required
Introduction of participants	Introducing the participants and helping them to get to know each other.	Each participant is asked to share his/her name. Then each student talks about his/her personal experience of being a boy/girl. Also what they could do because they were boys/girls and what they could not do because they were boys/girls. If the group is large it may be taken up as a group work with each group writing their experiences and challenges faced on a flip chart which will be displayed and participants would be given 5 minutes to go around the room and have a look at the charts. More ice breaking exercises: http://www.drexel.edu/OCA//tipsheets/Teambuilders.pdf	The participants get introduced and a rapport is established which would promote interaction between them.	25 min
Lecture on Gender and Media	To clarify the concepts of culture, pop culture, gender and globalization and hegemonic identities	Lecture/presentation on the theme: Gender and Media by the resource person followed by discussion	Participants understand pop culture as an integral part of the process of globalization: brought about by capitalist, consumerist neo-colonial economies. They also understand how gender images as they are projected in the media are part of the larger process of commodification and stereotyping under globalization	60 min
Group Work: Gender and Media	To understand pop culture as reflected in the Media	Participants would be divided into five groups. Each group would be asked to choose any one media - news papers, magazines, radio, television, advertisements, internet or mobile phones. The discussion would focus on what are the topics that dominate in the programmes in the chosen media, what are the gender images that are conveyed through these media, how they impact the way we perceive men and women and their relevance to existing reality. The resource person would provide copies of magazines, newspapers, advertisement story boards, URLs of some important web portals and mobile based campaigns. Participants would be given 25 minutes for discussion and 20 minutes for presentation	Pop culture and gender stereotypes as promoted in each media is assessed, understood and reflected upon by participants	45 min
Reflection and summation by the resource person				
Film Screening on Gender in Advertising	To familiarize the participants on how to analyze media from a gender perspective	Screening of presentation on portrayal of girls in advertising followed by discussion	Participants understand the gender nuances in advertising	30 min
Group Work: Integration of Gender in College Activities	To explore the opportunities available in the colleges to engage students on gender issues	Participants would be divided into three groups and asked to focus on any one of the three activities: curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular. Each group discusses the communication opportunities available in each of those and identifies a set of activities that could be taken up on the issue of gender and media.	A rough activity plan for integrating gender in college activities is prepared	30 min



MEDIA AND GENDER

Gender and Culture

In all societies the biological differences between men and women are socially interpreted to create a set of social expectations that define behaviours "appropriate" for men and women. Such definitions also determine their differential access to rights, resources, and power in society. They also determine the access of men and women to spaces, institutions and services. Although societies vary in the degree of differentiation, the fact is that such differences exist in all societies and invariably favour men who are accorded higher status, greater access and more power than women. Such differentiation is called gender as opposed to sex which indicates biological difference between male and female of the human beings.

Gender being a social construct, it varies from place to place and within the same society from one period to another. In other words, everything that men and women do and everything expected of them changes over time according to differing social and cultural factors.¹ The factors that influence change could be technological developments, change in economic processes and institutions, or change in political ideologies.

However, unlike biological sex, gender identity is conceived and constructed by society over a period of time -- through the process of socialization in families, educational, economic, religious and political institutions, through social customs and practices, cultural art forms and media .

Sex	Gender
Sex is natural	Gender is socially constructed
Sex refers to the biological differences between men and women	Gender refers to the socially defined roles and characteristics of men and women-femininity and masculinity
Sex is constant	Gender changes from time to time, place to place
Sex has no hierarchy	Gender is hierarchical; it refers to differential access to resources, institutions and determines their access to spaces and mobility
Gender differences are supported and promoted by patriarchal values which make women subservient to men's needs and control her reproduction, sexuality, labour and mobility.	

¹Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Penguin, 1968.



Culture, Pop Culture and Gender

Gendering is thus a lifelong process which takes place within the broader ideological framework called patriarchy which promotes the superiority of men and subordination of women. Through patriarchy the sexuality, reproduction and labour of women is controlled by the men. Patriarchy is defined as “a social system where power is primarily held by men and represents a social system that is oppressive to women.”² Thus gender definitions are not just different for men² and women. They are unequal.

Gender, therefore, is supported by social structures which determine roles and status, social institutions such as marriage, family and kinship and ideologies such as patriarchy. All these broadly fall in the realm of culture which is variedly defined. While 19th century humanists described it as an “ideal of individual human refinement”, Kroeber and Kluckhohn³ identified 164 definitions of culture. This shows the varied perspectives and understanding of the concept of culture which have been engaging the attention of sociologists and anthropologists for more than two centuries.

The term “Culture” is used in common parlance to denote:

- Good taste in fine arts and humanities. (e.g. She is a very cultured person)
- An integration of knowledge, belief and behaviour as a part of social learning.
- A set of shared attitudes, values and goals that characterizes an institution or group⁴ (e.g. Indian Culture)

Anthropologists on the other hand define culture as collective phenomena and analyze it at two levels:

- The evolved human capacity to classify and represent experiences with symbols, and to act imaginatively and creatively; and
- The distinct ways that people living in different parts of the world classified and represented their experiences, and acted creatively.

Culture represents learned behaviour and collective behaviour. Though learned and community behaviour is observed among animals, human culture is different and more evolved as it is mediated by the use of symbols and ability to make and use tools. A symbol is defined as anything that carries a particular meaning recognized by members of a group and language with standard meanings that allows members of a society to communicate with one another. Thus many

²Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, Oxford University Press, 1986.

³Clyde Kluckhohn and Alfred Kroeber *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, Vintage Books, 1952.

⁴Michael Tomasello, 'The Human Adaptation for Culture', *Annual Review of Anthropology*. Vol. 28: 509-529 October, 1999.



of the gendered behaviours are learnt by observing and indirectly imbibing the values from the behaviour of others one is directly in contact with such as the family, peers and others as well as through the images and messages conveyed by art, literature, media, etc. Since the learning takes place at a sub-conscious level, often the gendered perceptions go un-noticed and unquestioned.

Language uses a complex system of symbols through spoken words, scripts, gestures, etc., to facilitate communication and interpretation of experiences. Language helps in codifying experiences and enables acquiring and transmitting new knowledge, skills and values within the group and across generations for people to draw from, modifying and adding to the learning. The use of language is deeply entrenched in human culture and, apart from being used to communicate and share information, it also has social and cultural uses, such as signifying group identity, social stratification and for social grooming and entertainment.⁵ Language reflects the gender stereotypes and inequalities in society. For instance words like Chairman, Sarpanch, Rashtrapati, etc., all denote men and across languages the swear words are directed at the sexual and reproductive functions of the women. In a society where women are considered the property of men, such abuses are used to provoke the men. So are the many proverbs which reinforce the subordination of women in society and their dependence on the men.

“Culture” thus encompasses the beliefs, values, behaviour, and material objects of a particular people and is categorized into: 1) The Non-Material culture: consisting of thoughts and behaviours that people learn as part of the culture they live in. It includes politics, economics, languages, rules, customs, family, religion or beliefs, values, and knowledge - the intangible creations of human society and 2) The Material culture representing the tangible products of human society – technology, arts, crafts etc. Both feed into each other. For example the gender roles of men and women are reflected in the toys produced for girls and boys, which in turn influence the way they are socialized in to gendered roles.

Since all societies are stratified and hierarchical it is but natural that the values, behaviours, and beliefs should vary among the different groups. It is important to note that while culture through ideologies and values justifies the inequalities and differentiation in society, the very hierarchical structures ensure that various strata of people have differential access to the cultural resources, be it education, religious teachings, arts, crafts or technology leading to distinctions like high culture – the culture of the dominant and powerful groups and pop culture – folk cultures or sub-cultures.

An interesting development that has influenced cultures across nations in the last few decades is the mass culture or pop culture, which is blurring the cultural boundaries ushering in a world of mass or global culture propelled by mass media, mass production and consumption of

⁵Michael Tomasello, *Origin of Human Communication*, MIT Press, 2008.



Culture, Pop Culture and Gender

goods, services and arts and the emergence of new information and communication technologies.

In short, pop culture represents the cultures of the people such as folk culture and subaltern cultures – the arts, crafts, music, the values and ideologies that are practised by the non-dominant and /or oppressed classes which may at times be an attempt to question the dominant ideologies.

Mass culture is seen in the context of the globalization of the consumerist, capitalist economic system, a culture which survives on mass production and consumption of goods and services through the use of media and communication technologies and the aggressive marketing of aspirations, images and needs.

While pop culture in the form of folk and sub cultures has always existed, pop culture as mass culture is what is dominating the world today and needs to be understood as its influence is all pervasive in influencing our life styles, ideologies, and the emerging gender equations and perceptions. In the following section we focus exclusively on pop culture as mass culture.

Pop Culture

Mass culture is based on a production system which is characterized by mass production and consumption of goods and services. It is a consumerist culture which commodifies every aspiration, need and relationship. E.g. Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day etc., are mass market expressions of love, affection and gratitude creating huge marketing opportunities for the producers of goods and services. Similarly, while creating insecurity regarding their body image, a consumerist culture provides myriad opportunities to women to package themselves as sexy and desirable people through various cosmetic products and services. Simultaneously, it creates insecurity among women regarding their body image and their status in society. They are made to feel that by aspiring for a particular brand of refrigerator or a washing machine they are redefining themselves; interestingly, these choices remain within the framework of domesticity.

Another important element of mass culture is the scale of operation. Because the goods are mass produced there is a need to reach out to markets beyond local populations by creating a need for the products and by building aspirations and images which reflect the ideal of being “Modern” i.e. subscribing to certain life styles, values and behaviours. It thus wipes out the cultural differences creating a world that lives, consumes and thinks alike.

Mass culture is thus a global culture which is propelled by the new developments in communication – films, cable television, internet, and mobile phones. “Friends” and “Simpsons” are watched by youth across the world while cable television and internet make access to information and news possible at the click of a button. These technologies are breaking the time



and space barriers ironing out cultural differences across nations. Print, electronic and web media selectively dish out stuff for mass consumption which meets the interests of the capitalist and consumerist ideologies.

Pop Culture influences every aspect of our lives at every stage of our lives. It determines what we eat, where we eat, how we live, how we define our relationships, how we invest and spend as well as how we pursue art and creative engagements. Since mass media drives the consumerist culture it focuses excessively on life styles, entertainment and when it comes to news and information, it focuses on those developments that have the power to appeal, shock or amaze. The media filters the information, creates news and shapes our perceptions and understanding. It also caters to the lowest denominator, what is called the dumbing of the media.

The media, advertising and communication industry often claims that it only reflects the reality and it is not its business to reform society. This is particularly the case with reference to gender and portrayal of women who are the biggest consumers of mass culture and entertainment. The advertisements, reality shows, soaps, lifestyle based programmes like food channels, telemarketing programmes, religious programmes, music and comedy serials, project and promote gender stereotypes and patriarchal perception of a woman as an object of desire, and as one who exists to fulfill the needs and desires of the man.

Popular culture shapes the public opinion, the mindsets and attitudes of people in any society. And this is true in our country as well where popular magazines, newspapers, television programs, films and advertisements convey gendered and sexist message to the public about women.



As the ad shows, at home women are expected to do endless chores, yet housework is never recognized as work

There have been several studies of media with regard to women which have found the media guilty of sexism, distorting the image of women, encouraging stereotypes, projecting them as passive consumers of information and messages and glorifying their roles as mothers, housewives and dependents. They are rarely shown as working women—capable professionals, labourers or farmers. Rather, the predominant image is that of the self-sacrificing housewife or a super woman/Mom.



Culture, Pop Culture and Gender

The media never projects the image of a woman as a serious partner in decision making or economic activities. For instance in spite of a large number of rural women being engaged in farming and other productive activities we hardly ever find their views on issues being highlighted in the media and understandably in the government programmes. Wives of farmers who commit suicide are treated merely as widows deserving of compensation and not as farmers who need technical support.



Women are never shown in ads for tractors

It's a fact that women are impacted differently by conflict, natural disasters, ecological changes; yet one finds very little coverage in the media which addresses these issues from a gender perspective. However, whenever such issues are highlighted in the media we find the administration responding and bringing in changes. For instance, the media focus on the hygiene and sanitation requirements of women during the Tsunami actually led to the distribution of sanitary kits to women as part of the relief.

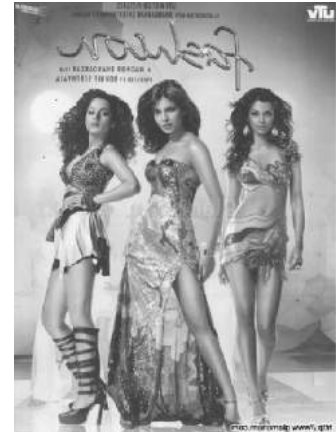
A glaring example of marginalization of women is seen during the budget session where the participation of women in budget discussions is limited to their response to increase in food or LPG prices; even on the panel discussions one rarely finds women corporate representatives in spite of the fact that many women head banks and financial institutions. An analysis of children's text books, adult literacy primers and even literacy primers shows that they negate the economic contribution of women. (Kamala Bhasin, 1984)

The amount of coverage women get is also much less. Research reveals that men are provided more space to present their views and they are also shown in diverse roles in administration, law business, science and technology. As for women, only those in accepted professions are interviewed and talked about. When expert opinion is sought on a topic, 90 per cent of those interviewed are men.

Advertisements are no different. Domesticity is the theme of all commercials involving the image of woman as a housewife in a traditional role. The role of the wife is always glorified and motherhood is projected as the most desired occupation for women. Women in ads are shown to be tradition-bound and dutifully serving members in the house and efficiently running the household or as selfless mothers. This reinforces the myth that the woman should lead the life of a drudge. Another image that has grown in the recent years is that of a show piece or an icon of glamour. These women are shown outside the domain of the home and often treated as the objects of the male gaze, with the camera focusing on her body. Belgian feminist Luce Irigaray (1985) has



argued that this kind of commodification is inherent in a patriarchal system. This phenomenon, however, is not unique in the Indian context but typical in advertising in a capitalist system (Abhik Roy, 1988). Advertisements therefore reinforce dominant ideologies and values to sell products. An analysis of Advertisements by Population First showed that gender stereotyping happens even while presenting girls and boys in the advertisements. While most had boys very few ads had girls. When a girl was shown she was always promoting her mother's product, and never shown getting dirty, playing, exploring wilderness, being alone or with celebrities.



Poster of film 'Fashion'

An exception to this is the Hero Scooter advertisement, where the girl says “ why should boys have all the fun?” There are hardly any ads which show two girls in a family reflecting the prejudice against girls. They are always shown as fair complexioned, good looking and well groomed, thus shaping the body images and self perceptions of the girls which makes the transition into the so called “ideal” womanhood almost natural.

Representation of women in films and TV serials tell a similar story. Here again the stereotypical image is of a woman as wife and mother who is nurturing and selfless, on the lines of Sita, whose life is less important than her husband's. Such stereotypes also divide women into “good” and “bad”. Good women are those who perform their duties silently bearing violence and discrimination while bad women are highly educated, ambitious or rational. There is also an unrealistic image of the modern woman who juggles her career and family, almost always prioritizing her family. Women's work is trivialized and the phenomenon of the double burden ignored. If a woman is glamorous, she is legitimately an object of sexual



Women portrayed in a typical saasbahu serial

desire, who can be targeted for rape and violence. The so called 'other woman', who is a threat to a stable home and therefore society, is always a vamp. The comedy shows as well as the reality shows reinforce many stereotypical images of women, often portraying them as dumb, emotional, scheming, gossiping and vicious.

In the last few decades films have moved away from social issues with increasing focus on crime, comedy and family dramas based on the big fat Indian wedding. It would not be wrong to say that the emergence of marriage industry has a lot to do with films like *Hum aap ke hai kaun* and *Hum dil de chuke sanam*.

Jyoti Punwani,⁶ has come out with some generalizations about women portrayed in films

⁶Jyoti Punwani, *Women in Indian Society: A Reader*: edited by Rehana Ghadially, Sage, 1998.



Culture, Pop Culture and Gender

and TV serials. According to her most women in serials are home based. Women work not by choice but because of circumstances. Marriage is a natural state for women. If single, she is not happy. In relationships she is always supportive and dependent.

Under the market driven media which is governed by the viewership rates and the accruing revenues, everything boils down to its entertainment value. E.g., when Pooja walked in her inner wear to protest against police inaction on her complaints of domestic violence, the media focused on the act of stripping, repeatedly showing the video while completely ignoring the cause. It could have held meaningful discussions about the issue of domestic violence, the laws pertaining to women and administrative response to the same. A serious incident was turned into voyeuristic reporting.⁷

Susan Sontag (1961) argues that in our culture, the most "...intelligible, persuasive values are [increasingly] drawn from the entertainment industries", which is "undermining of standards of seriousness." As a result, "the tepid, the glib, and the senselessly cruel" topics are becoming the norm. "Newspapers that once ran foreign news now feature celebrity gossip, pictures of scantily dressed young ladies... television has replaced high-quality drama with gardening, cookery, and other "lifestyle" programmes [and] reality TV and asinine soaps," to the point that people are constantly immersed in trivia about celebrity culture.⁸

The TV shows and films cater to the lowest denominators by producing formula based plots, stereotyped characterizations, inane dialogues and special effects with senseless violence and cruelty. The *saas-bahu* serials of the Indian Television soaps exemplify this with the portrayal of women as the wronged, vulnerable damsels in distress to the offensive, cruel, plotting and scheming shrew. The concerns and images of women as they exist in society are not reflected in the serials. Even the supposedly socially conscious productions like *Balika Badhu* bow to the compulsions of TRPs and glamorize and glorify the ever sacrificing, silent, and suffering women. Many of the programmes also have very little educational or artistic value.

Music videos are an example of the mass production of culture where the dumbing down is complete. The focus is women's bodies accompanied with sexually explicit gestures by the women and postures of aggression from the men. They also reflect the total lack of creativity and imagination with most videos being the remixes of old melodies.

⁷A.L. Sharada and Pallavi Bandodkar, *Gender-based Violence: Can Media Make a Difference in Gender-based Violence and Sex and Reproductive Health*, editors Balaiah Donta, Iqbal Shah and Chander Puri, National Institute for Research in Reproductive Health and WHO and Indian Society for Study of Reproduction and Fertility, 2010.

⁸Susan Sontag, *Notes on Camp*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1961.



World Wide Web or internet has emerged as yet another powerful media which is promoting a global culture by increasing the access to markets through e-commerce and advertising. It is no longer impossible for a non-resident Indian in America to order a wedding saree from one of the show rooms in India while it has become a matter of routine for many in India to order branded products online. While internet is opening up the world to people by providing access to information and people, it is also spawning the business of pornography, cyber stalking and abuse which are emerging as new forms of violence against women.



From a very young age girls are encouraged to have an hourglass figure like Barbie dolls

Video and internet games and toys industry are other forms of pop culture which are churning out gender stereotypes. GI Joes, Barbie dolls are the role models. They sell not only the concept of masculinity and femininity but a whole lot of cosmetic products and beauty and body building products to attain that image thus creating certain aspirations and needs which support the economic interests of the transnational companies. It is also interesting to note that the messages are reinforced across media with films, TV programmes, internet sites, mobiles, music videos creating a buzz over a programme or film or a product influencing the viewer's choice.

It is often said that presence of women in leadership positions in media would ensure greater sensitivity and a better portrayal of women. However, in reality presence of women per se does not make much difference as women are as much victims of the dominant ideologies as men and they make their choices within the compulsions of the business interests of the media houses.

Pop Culture, Globalization and Hegemonic Identities

Pop culture is a part of the larger process of globalization and the emerging hegemony of the neo-colonial capitalist western economies and needs to be understood within such a context.

'Globalization', 'global interconnectedness', 'global world', 'global village', etc., are the buzz words which have come to dominate the development discourse since the 1980s, assuming a feverish pitch in the last two decades. Inter-linkages between countries is not something new; for instance the world has seen trafficking in slaves, trade, colonization, establishments of churches in foreign lands, and industrialization in different phases in its economic history. Such inter-linkages were facilitated by developments in transport systems, mass production technologies and tele-communications. All the above phases were characterized by exploitative social relationships and had adverse impact on the local arts and crafts, economies and social practices, widening the gap between the so called developed and underdeveloped nations.



Culture, Pop Culture and Gender

The same process continues today at an accelerated pace. The difference is that it is now seen and promoted as a panacea for all the evils in the world, something which would usher in a world filled with peace, prosperity and equality. It is seen as an ultimate culmination of the market forces, power of the mass media and the reach of emerging communication and information technologies particularly the worldwide web transforming the world into a “Global Village”. It is estimated that global production of technology and international trade in high-tech multiplied six and nine times respectively in 1975-1986”⁹ (Ruinrok and Tulder, 1991).

Globalization encompasses a number of processes.

1. Pursuit of free market policies through economic liberalization.
2. Westernization of societies through political, economic, and cultural influences like media.
3. The proliferation of new information technologies through the World Wide Web and
4. The grand notion of “one world” devoid of any conflict

The roots of the economic liberalization could be traced to the 1944 World War II economic conference in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire. At this conference, representatives from forty-five nations established the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), both based in Washington, DC, which have served as primary engines of a globalized world order and globalization. “With the end of the war, world trade exploded with a vengeance. National trade barriers were systematically dismantled and eroded, global economic forces penetrated local economies, and a global consumer and media culture traversed the globe. It facilitated the largely unfettered flow of capital across continents and it has often entailed the dominance of giant transnational corporations”.¹⁰The newly formed international organizations (the World Bank, International Monetary fund), weakened National States, government offices in distant capitals, old and new institutions, universities and research centres in developed countries, and, increasingly with the passing of time, institutions in the Third World were privy to this process. This led to the dominance of the “Expert” in addressing issues ranging from poverty, insufficient technology and capital, rapid population growth, inadequate public services, archaic agricultural practices to cultural values and practices that hinder globalization. Thus, western countries turned the rest of world into a field to produce knowledge, experiment and exercise power over the people of those countries.

The cultural and economic hegemonic agenda of the west is promoted through economic development and cultural uniformity. The IT revolution characterized by the widespread reach of

⁹Ruinrok and Tulder, *The Logic of International Restructuring*, Routledge, 1995.

¹⁰Takis Fotopoulos, *Globalisation: The Reformist Left and the Anti-globalisation Movement*, 2001.



the internet, e-commerce, cable TV, and modern transportation are breaking the cultural and geographical boundaries influencing the polity, society, culture, and every-day lives of people all over the world in ways unimagined. The media shapes the perceptions, aspirations, dreams of ordinary people across the globe giving the illusion of a unified world. Not just the geographical and cultural boundaries but even the time differences are compressed by the new technologies, influencing the daily lives of people in myriad ways.

Globalization signifies the triumph of market forces and the hegemony of capital over the non-western countries of the world. The emergence of global culture or Pop Culture, side by side to the development of a new global market economy, is an especially salient feature of contemporary globalization. Global culture involves promoting life-styles, consumption patterns, mass production of products, and global identities. Advertising, by transnational companies, plays a crucial role in penetrating the local markets, creating a demand for the products and to overcome local resistance. The global spread of capitalism entails the spread of commodities that, while-fine tuned to local markets, carry messages and advertising slogans that deliberately reach out to as wide a market as possible.¹¹

The growth of consumerism has been heavily reliant on the growth of a transnational mass media conglomerates such as SONY, Sky TV, CBS and so on. Ammu Joseph(2007) writes:

When Rupert Murdoch finally won his bid to take over Dow Jones and The Wall Street Journal earlier this month, the Australian media baron added one of the oldest, most respected and widely circulated newspapers of the United States to his vast media empire. Murdoch's News Corp media conglomerate already owns over 175 other newspapers in addition to the Fox Television network, 21st Century Fox film studios, several satellite networks, MySpace.com, HarperCollins, and much more.

In 1983 the principal global media were owned by 50 corporations, most of them US-based. By 2002 this had fallen to just nine corporations. Today the figure is about five. Murdoch has reportedly predicted that there will eventually be just three global media giants and that his company will be one of them.¹²

The power of such media conglomerates is immense as they can together with the powerful political leaders, business tycoons and activists determine the ideologies, policies and international relations of the world. A similar trend is visible in India as well with many of the

¹¹Tony Bilton and others, *Introductory Sociology*, Palgrave and Macmillan,1996, Pp.15.

¹²Ammu Joseph, *Whose Media is it Anyway?* <http://www.indiatogether.org/2007/aug/ajo-mediaown.htm>



Culture, Pop Culture and Gender

politically ambitious leaders owning media channels / publications to promote their political interests. Media business requires large capital investments and involves long gestation periods, which make the coming together of political power, business interests and media barons a good tactical move.

A key feature of globalization is that it requires the existence of globalized media corporations which not only “package” the world for us in certain ways but “package” in such a way that it promotes the values of consumerism, gender stereotypes that play on men's and women's insecurities, as well as identification with a global image that results in the consumption of goods and services being promoted by them. The new cable TV, mobile, and internet marketing facilities further synergize such advertising campaigns which create the illusion of a global or Pop Culture influencing people's perceptions regarding what is stylish, desirable, good and bad. The media scene, no wonder, is dominated by mergers and acquisitions to control these technologies.

Considering the scale and the financial inputs required to control the new media – advertising and print and electronic media - only a few major players determine the content as well as the messaging. For example, across the nations, local television stations produce programmes which are imitations of the programmes of the western TV programmes. *Kaun Banega Karorpati*, *Bigboss*, *Indian Idol* and others are all adapted from the American shows. Superficial news broadcasts, quiz shows and, of course, advertisements dominate the television content making TV program across the world resemble each other more and more and so do the products in the field of music, films and publishing companies.

Under the phenomena of globalization and consumerism, goods, services, the body, and culture can become objects of consumption or commodities. Nowhere is it more pronounced than in the commodification of women's bodies.

Thus globalization of culture also turns into the commercialization of culture. “Culture-whether it is music, food, clothes, art, sport, images of age or youth, masculinity or femininity-has become a product, sold in the market place. The commercialization of culture has a disturbing impact on people. What once was an element of their way of life becomes a product, rather than something unique they had made to suit their own specific needs and circumstances. At the same time, people are bombarded with new images, new music, new clothes and new values. Local culture's role as a spontaneous and integral part of people's life is eroded and it ceases to serve as the means of constructing social values, reproducing group identity and building social cohesion. The end

¹³Wole Akande, “The Drawbacks of Cultural Globalisation”, *Yellow Times*, 2002.



result becomes global integration at the expense of local disintegration”.¹³

Globalization claims to offer an equal and universal progress of human society and homogenization of human culture, economic prosperity, a more equitable and peaceful society through homogenization and promotion of universal principles and structures of economy, polity and social institutions. However, the hegemonic control of the west has impacted the cultures, traditions, economies, environmental concerns, and the politics of many countries adversely. It has also resulted in the emergence and resurgence of sub-cultures which voice the real concerns of the people.

The web provides space for the expression of individual opinions, mobilization of alternate choices, and launching of campaigns against policies, programmes exerting influence on the dominant political and administrative systems. The change in communication technologies like the emergence of multiplex culture, improvements in mobile photography and videography as well as the developments in visual media like digital cameras are enabling people to tell stories the way they want. The spurt in video blogging sites, the community radio and video groups as well as the non-formula films which are gaining success (eg. *Tare Zameen Par*, *Stanley ka Dabba*, *Chak de India*, *Khosla ka Ghosla*, to name a few) reflect the few attempts to deviate from the formula and address issues with a fresh approach.

While the influence of popular culture is all pervasive, it is important that all of us have the capacity to stand aside and understand it critically for what it is, to become discerning consumers.

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FILMS

Beyond Women's Stereotypes by Bindu Nair, PSBT (www.psbt.org)

Freedom before 11 by Radhika Menon, Pukar

Hai Dupatta by Tess Joseph, PSBT

Idiot Box or Window of Hope, by Paranjy Guha Thakurta, PSBT

It's a Boy, by Vani Subramaniam, PSBT

Legacy of Malthus: Deepa Dhanraj, D&N Production

Made in India: Directed by Madhushree Dutta, produced by Majlis

Morality TV and the Loving Jihad by Paromita Vohra, PSBT

Nataley Tumchayasathi: Savitri Medhatul

She's My Girl by Meera Dewan, PSBT

Something Like a War: Deepa Dhanraj, D&N Production

Taaza Khabar: directed by Bishakha Dutta, produced by Point of View

The Plot Thickens: directed by Anjali Monteiro and KP Jayashankar and produced by TISS.

Time Pass by Sunita Thakur, PSBT

Women in Media: Directed by Vishnu Mathur, produced by Sparrow

When Women Call the Shots by Charu Gargi, PSBT



EXERCISES/DISCUSSION POINTS FOR GENDER AND MEDIA SESSION

1. What do ads say about men and women? How do you think these ads can affect our attitudes and our expectation of gender roles? (Group discussion)
2. Give examples of ads that portray sex role stereotypes (women are always shown as mothers, as if to say they do not have any other role to play in society and always serving other members in the house; and also as sex symbols, trying to sexually provoke a man). Ask students if they could come up with a more gender sensitive story board. (Group Work)
3. Give participants some women's magazines and some general ones (*Femina*, *Savvy*, *India Today*) and then have a discussion on the portrayal of men and women in print media.....(Group work)
4. How are you influenced by advertisements and other forms of popular culture?
Give examples of gender influences of popular culture and the way in which you think and act? (Group discussion)
 - Given that Draupadi, Shiva and Krishna were dark in Indian mythology, why is skin colour given so much importance in India? [The facilitator could bring calendar posters to emphasize this point.]
 - What message do ads on fairness creams give to the youth? Why is it necessary that such messages be passed on? [Vested interests – cosmetic industry]
 - Today when women of colour like Naomi Campbell, Bipasha Basu, Oprah Winfrey, etc. have made it big in the media, does it speak of a shift in the way women perceive themselves?[The facilitator could point to the effect of colonization and globalization on the body image]
 - Is marriage still the ultimate goal of girls/women? Why is it so, given the economic opportunities that are today available to them?
 - Why do women need to be shown as self sacrificing and only living for others?[The aim here should be draw out that the family is still considered the unit of stability in society and women are the custodians of passing on the culture to the next generation]
 - In a mosquito repellent ad, a woman is showing single handedly taking on the pest control while keeping her husband and children out in relative safety. What does this have to say about the role of the woman in the family?
 - Why is it that only women are shown in ads on consumer goods, household appliances? Do these ads say anything of women's purchasing power?
 - When women are shown as working at an economic activity, is she shown as feeling guilty about it? How? [Compensates by buying gifts for the children?]
5. Group discussion on any of the saas-bahu TV serials....(maybe *Kyunki saas bhi kabhi bahu thi*, or *Kasam se*). Screen one or two episodes.
 - If women are always shown as manipulative and scheming, what does it say of a

Exercises/discussion Points



society which will not give her the rights which make such actions redundant?

- Most serials uphold family values and depict stereotypical roles for women. Do globalization, recession and general insecurity have anything to do with these regressive values?
- Woman is often shown as another woman's worst enemy. What does this speak of the woman's role in the family and society? How does a woman get power in her own right [Issues of power should come out of this and how a woman has to depend on informal sources of power to get what she wants]



6. Are newspapers in our country gender-sensitive? Ask students to go through a bunch of newspapers and magazines and address the following issues: (Group work)
 - How are women portrayed? (Facilitate discussion and ask them if they think women are often shown as victims or as sex objects and very rarely as worthy newsmakers)
 - Also give examples of certain terms used like “fairer sex”, also “eve teasing” which almost trivializes and normalizes sexual harassment.
 - Mention that blame is often shifted on to the women in cases of violence by discussing about the clothes she was wearing as if indirectly saying 'she asked for it'.
7. What about our Bollywood films? Women-oriented films are very few. And even otherwise women are not often shown to be strong characters but only to add to the glamour quotient and romantic element of the story. (Group discussion)
 - Screen a film and facilitate discussion.
 - Discuss a new release.
 - Could participants come up with names of some films which seemed progressive and have strong women characters?
 - Also names of some films they think are gender insensitive?
8. We could end with a 15-minute documentary film called “The Plot Thickens” which has been produced by TISS and directed by Anjali Monteiro and KP Jayashankar. This has a series of videos which encourages us to think critically about the world around us. One of the videos explores the construction of gender in a TV commercial while another looks at advertising. Others deal with aspects of racism in the media. This could be followed by a discussion on the film and views from the audience.



SELECTED READINGS

1. *The Woman: Vamp or Victim* by Aruna Vasudev; taken from *Gender and Censorship* (ed.) by Brinda Bose, Women Unlimited, 2006. Pp. 37, Pp. 40

The example of Sita, the perfect woman, the perfect wife, acquiescing unquestioningly to her husband's rejection of her in what is nothing more than an abject surrender to the prejudice of male-dominated society, has been held up as the ideal for all women to follow. Taken in conjunction with the rules of Manu the Law giver, the average woman in India has had no opportunity to become anything more than daughter, wife, mother. 'In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead, to her sons; 'a woman must never be independent', wrote the great Manu and with these few lines condemned women to a life of eternal subjection for two thousand years. Tradition required it, today the cinema enthusiastically uphold it. In film after film one sees these values reiterated, underlined, reinforced.

...The mother figure has a prominent place in the cast of characters of most films, none of which ever talk of a relationship between a mother and daughter. Even with sons it is not so much a relationship that is explored or portrayed; it is the deification of the mother. Self sacrificing, martyred and victimized by the husband (or by fate) she is shown as indestructible when it comes to protecting her sons. The strong mother-son tie underlies most films and frequently manifests itself in the ill treatment of the young daughter-in-law- in real life as in cinema. The implication is that a woman's only hope of salvation lies in becoming the mother of sons.....

Despite the transformation that has taken place in society in the last two decades and the quite remarkable way in which women have emerged from the doubtful shelter of their homes into a wide variety of jobs at all levels, most films show even educated women with no occupation. When they do work it is as secretaries, typists, school teachers and occasionally as doctors or lawyers. She is invariably a young girl doing a job while waiting to get married. This modern miss is almost always shown as the temptress, dresses provocatively and laces her vocabulary with English words. In contrast and in conflict with the working woman is the traditional literate, sari clad damsel, a model of conservative virtue who always wins out. The modern girl is either defeated or made to reform.....

2. *Portrayal of Women on Television* by Jyoti Punwani : taken from *Women in Indian Society: A Reader* by Rehana Ghadially, Sage 1998. Pp. 225, 231

The sudden growth of television has made it the most influential medium of mass communication in India...How are the women portrayed in these programs? Do these programs reflect the myriad aspects of women's lives in contemporary Indian society? What stands out is both the presence of women in significant numbers as well as their importance to the theme. Unlike Hindi films where women are decorative pieces, on television women play important roles. However, this does not



mean that one can get to see in these programs the complexities which form part of women's lives today.The government must at the earliest formulate clear-cut guidelines regarding the positive portrayal of women on television. This portrayal must take note of women in all facets of their lives: as workers and significant contributors to family survival and the national economy. Women must not be portrayed in stereotyped images that emphasise passive, submissive qualities and encourage them to play a subordinate secondary role in the family and in society. Both men and women should be portrayed in ways that encourage mutual respect and spirit.

3. Obscenity, Media and the Law by Shahnaz Anklesaria, taken from *Gender and Censorship*, edited by Brinda Bose, 2006. Pp. 49

Expressions of obscenity in Indian media have hit women hard, for obscenity, as I understand it, includes the depiction of gender violence, the abuse of one sex by another, the treating of a person's body as cheap merchandise or as a target for sexual abuse. Almost always, it is women who provide the subject material for such expression.

Besides being so packaged for male consumption, women are also the worst victims of the effect such obscene material has on the human mind. They are portrayed in such material, not as persons but as objects which provoke specific responses from the viewer or reader. Besides undermining the woman viewer or reader's self esteem, the debasing of women into sex objects results in obscenity spilling over from the screen or book into reality, and in the perpetration of crimes like bride burning, sexual harassment and rape.

Yet nowhere does the Indian legislation acknowledge the impact of obscenity on women. Nor is gender violence clearly incorporated into the legal definitions of obscenity. Our laws and their subsequent legal interpretations are concerned with preserving public morality which it is feared will be affected by obscenity.

4. Women, Development and Media by Kamla Bhasin, Kali for Women, 1994. Pp. 9, 13-14

There have been several studies of media with regard to women (in various countries) which have found the media guilty of sexism, distortion of the image of women and propagation of sex stereotypes: mothers, housewives, dependent, passive, etc. The other side of such misrepresentation is that in most popular media women are seldom shown as working women—capable professionals, labourers, farmers. Rather the predominant image is that of the self sacrificing housewife.

It is often held in defense of media that it reflects current social reality. But this is only partially true. Media has a two-way relationship with social reality. On the one hand it reflects what exists but on



Culture, Pop Culture and Gender

the other it affects social reality. By being selective in what it shows, it interprets and creates its own reality. A part of this is the selective reinforcement of values, attitudes, behavior. Thus, by always perpetuating the view that the male is in every way superior to the female, media misrepresents the roles women play....One does not need more than a quick glance at our media to realize that this kind of social reality does not find a reflection in it. All farmers and most workers depicted in the media are male. Most media reports are about male farmers and workers. The biases are found not only in the popular media but also in educational media and development communication media....

Statistics tell us that women and girls are more undernourished, underfed, uncared for than men and boys. Our media provides the necessary ideology to the society (women the eternal sufferers; women the rejoicers in self sacrifice and self denial; women the mother earth) to calmly accept this blatant discrimination against half its people. By reinforcing sex stereotypes and constantly glorifying motherhood and subservient wifedom the media makes it difficult for women to break out of these prescribed roles, norms and behavior patterns. Such conservative depictions reduce the few statements about sex equality and equal participation of women contained in the Constitution to a mere window dressing. The resultant conservative thinking justifies the decision of parents who don't educate their daughters, or give them freedom, or let them take up jobs, and who discriminate between sons and daughters. Are these not real hurdles in the way of women's development? Are not these attitudes partly responsible for the lagging behind of women in literacy, education, vocational training as also for the neglect and consequent higher mortality rates of girls and of the declining sex ratio in India?

Media does not only influence the social image of women but also their self image. Most women are themselves uncritical consumers of anti-women media. Media affects their socialization process, it influences their choices regarding what they wear and consume, how they behave, what they learn, dream, aspire to and what they ultimately become. Media has therefore not only helped women and society to redefine their own and men's roles; it has ignored, even trivialized whatever attempts women have made to redefine their roles, to create alternative behavior patterns and life styles. By doing so media has clearly discouraged the emergence of a new woman, a new man and a new relationship between them. Such treatment by the media instead of reducing their isolation, increases it further. Instead of empowering women, it weakens them. Women remain unheard, unrepresented and more uncommunicable than before. They continue to blame either their fate or themselves for their plight, often they turn to religion for their salvation. Media succeeds in depoliticizing women's miseries and issues. Women's oppression remains a personal and a family matter and the misery and marginalization continue.



5. *Missing: Half the Story*, edited by Kalpana Sharma, Zubaan, 2010. Pp. xi-xii

...So where and when do we need a “gendered lens”? At all times, in all kinds of reporting, or only when you cover an issue relating to women alone? We suggest that a gendered lens allows you to gain deeper insight into all issues that we cover as journalists because events, policies, politics, business etc impact men and women differently, just as they do the poor and the rich. Hence, understanding what determines the difference can help us to see the dimension of a story that would otherwise be overlooked.

Take a mundane subject like agriculture covered routinely by those assigned the agriculture ministry at the Centre, or by reporters sent out to cover a drought or a massive crop failure. Can there be a gender dimension to this? Apparently there can be as women do over 60% of agricultural work. Hence policies and programs as well as disasters have a specific impact on women that might be missed out if we assume, as most do, that the farmer is usually a man.

Or take business. The business pages of most major newspapers are monochromatic- they depict men in suits from the corporate sector, they carry stories about men achievers- or sometimes as crooks- and they analyse business and the economy as if women do not exist. Yet millions of women are involved in a variety of formal and informal businesses- from home based work to export, IT, engineering and more. If they are featured, they appear in the magazine sections as exceptions to the rule. Their work, their problems as businesswomen or as women professionals, the difficulties they face accessing finance, the discrimination they face at work, the jobs they are denied by virtue of being women or their achievements despite all that is ranged against them are rarely accorded the same status as that of men. In fact women are largely invisible from business pages.

What contributes to this invisibility? It is not necessarily deliberate. It happens because journalists do not understand how patriarchal systems work, how they determine what women can and cannot do, and how patriarchy reduces the value of women's work to such an extent that it appears to have no value at all. This deliberate downgrading of women's work results in it not being acknowledged as significant, or important and therefore ignored by the media.

6. **Women are Still Read Less, Seen Less, Heard Less** by Sonal Kellogg (Women's Feature Service) www.thehoot.org.
7. **Women and Negative Stereotypes: An End before a Start** by Divya Bhargava: www.countercurrents.org.
8. **Media: Stereotyping Gender in India**, by Dr Rainuka Dagar: South Asian Journal, 5th Issue, July-Sept 2004. www.southasianmedia.net/magazine/journal



9. **Global Media Reinforces Gender Stereotypes**, by Ammu Joseph: One World South Asia: www.indiatogether.org.

10. *Selling Stereotypes: Images of Women in Indian TV Commercials* by Abhik Roy, 1998. Pp. 49, 53, 57, 59

Domesticity was the dominant ideological theme of commercials involving images of women as housewives. A plethora of commercials reflected the Hindu tradition of pativrata. In keeping with this tradition an Indian woman was depicted in the commercials as subservient, home-bound wife who was happily engaged in her domestic chores, serving her husband and family, with the advertised product "crowning" her role. ...In portraying Indian women in the domain of domesticity, there were three discernible trends: demarcation of social spheres between public and private, predominant use of the male voice-over, and evidence of a hegemonic process in the presentation of married and unmarried women.

All the commercials involving domesticity reflected a distinct separation of the public and private social spheres. The demarcation of the two social spheres was particularly emphasized in the Surf detergent commercial, where the husband threw his soiled shirt at his wife. In this ad, the wife proudly told the viewers that her husband was the GM at work, while she was the PM at home. By showing the woman as being proud of her authority at home, the commercial not only valorized and affirmed the traditional role of Indian women but also made the domestic role of women appear "natural" to the viewers. In keeping with the separation of the two spheres, women were shown alone in their involvement with domestic chores; men were absent or peripheral. In the few instances where husbands were seen in the private sphere of the household, they were often shown relaxing, getting their wives to clean their clothes, or otherwise being served by their wives.In addition to the separation of the social spheres, domination of the male voice in the commercials was another recurring trend in the commercials...Although a majority of the commercials were aimed at women, the male voice-over dominated in 70 % of the commercials, even though the products were for women. Through the use of an authoritative male voice, patriarchal ideology worked to directly hail the female audiences.

A close examination of the commercials also revealed a third trend: a subtle working of a hegemonic process in the representation of married and unmarried women. While a majority of married women were featured as homebound wives/mothers who were engaged in domestic activities, unmarried women, especially teenagers and college students were shown outside the four walls of the home. If the unmarried female in her Western clothes emanated a certain level of sexuality, the married woman was always modestly dressed, not exuding any overt sex appeal. In keeping with the Indian values married women were portrayed as the bastions of virtue and



decorum, limited to the confines of the home.

Another frequent portrayal of an Indian woman was purely decorative, without any functional relationship with the advertised product. Her sexuality was exploited not only to sell a variety of products but also to provide visual pleasure to the viewers. In these commercials the woman as a sign/signifier was wrenched from the concrete socio-historical context and was attached to these commodities in order to lend meaning to them. The superimposition of a woman onto these products made the two interchangeable, making the woman equivalent of the product....As a decorative object a woman was frequently depicted as a brainless body, almost a piece of equipment, singing vacuous jingles, dancing provocatively, or posing as a mannequin for a wide variety of products. A woman's body was exploited to sell products even if the product did not have any relation to a woman's body or need. Dosanj and Bathla (1991) pointed out that Indian advertisements featured women in "different stages of undress or suggestive poses to sell many kinds of products". Similarly Xavier (1992) observed the gratuitous and irrelevant use of women's physical appearance in Indian advertisements.....



Newspaper/Journal Clippings Collection of the Documentation Centre,
Research Centre for Women's Studies
(Compiled by the DC Librarians)

Cashing in on 25/9/91 E.T. 55 woman power

More and more marketers are targeting cash-rich women consumers with advertising that projects the 'new woman'. In the process, a lot of old stereotypes are crumbling.

THEY are advertisements that reflect the changing face of society. See the girl in the NIIT ad who is eager to get a good job and return the money spent on her education to her father. Or, who would have dreamt a few years ago of an exotic creature called the 'Rin manager'.

We are all familiar with the stereotypes of the Indian woman: demure, home-loving, devoted to home and family. In advertisements she was the super-efficient mother who washed their clothes whiter than white, shopped discerningly and did everything in their power to ensure that the home and family were well cared for.

As the stereotypes crumble and women move to the fore in society, the advertising industry has gradually changed its whole attitude to them. On one hand their purchasing power has been acknowledged with—to give a few extreme examples—products like Today or Ms, aimed only at women, both unthinkable only a few years ago.

And then there is the acknowledgement of the new roles played by women both inside and outside the home. Take a product like Rin, which used to show a stereotyped woman shopper and which has now changed tack dramatically and now talks about the 'Rin manager'. Says Syeda Imam, associate creative director, Contract Advertising, Delhi: "The most welcome thing is that advertising is getting out of the rut of stereotypes. There is a new subtlety that can be traced in ad campaigns today."



The Garden and Lakme ads: focusing on the 'ne

It hasn't happened overnight. But slowly and surely, women are growing beyond the role that advertising had for long slotted them in: that of decorative props. Suddenly product categories like scooters, computers, holiday packages and other durables are addressing campaigns to women.

Hotels, for instance, design packages aimed both at men and women where businessmen can take their wives along on business trips; a product like LML Vespa tries to appeal to women by harping on safety. Says Amitava Mitra,



focusing on the 'new woman'

Delhi branch director, Everest Advertising: "Even consumer durables advertising that's aimed at the man very often appeals to the woman even though the target audience is essentially the man. That's because in most buying decisions, it's no longer just the man's decision that counts."

The changes are not without reason though. Women constitute 49 per cent, nearly half, of the adult Indian population. And among them, as much as 42 per cent belong to the 25-44 years age group or the prime target audi-

ence for most advertisers. Add to this the fact that the percentage of working women in the four zones—7 per cent in the north; 12 per cent in the east, and 16 per cent and 20 per cent respectively in the west and south—has been growing at a steady pace.

Their new-found purchasing power has fuelled the growth of many product categories. Cosmetics, toiletries, food and beverages, which have traditionally been targeted at women consumers have grown in leaps and bounds. Take, for instance, cosmetics. According to a survey done by the Operations Research Group (ORG), the market for cosmetics grew six-fold. The index of growth jumped

How would I ever get thru' the day without my compact?

Do up your face in a minute with Lakme's Compact. At work. At the office. Before a lunch date. Or a movie. In a car. Or in an elevator. This fine, silky smooth face powder blends naturally with your complexion without blocking your pores. It comes in five shades to match your skin tone. Making your complexion brighter and more beautiful. So if you're still using ordinary powder on your face — get smart. Switch to Lakme Compact.

Lakme
COMPACT

from 258 points in 1985 to 590 in 1990.

It's no wonder that advertisers have found a prime target for their brands. But the one factor that has catapulted women into the spotlight in the marketing arena is television. Says G.V.L. Narasimha Rao, manager-development of ORG: "The print medium has a much lower reach among women than it does with men. But TV has helped bridge that gap."

ORG's Demographics '90, gives an idea of what he is talking about. ORG found that the print



The NIIT campaign: exploring a new dimension

medium had a reach of 67 per cent and 12 per cent among men in urban and rural areas respectively but this percentage dropped to 45 and 6 per cent among women. In contrast, television had a reach of 41 per cent among women—almost on par with the male viewership reach of 44 per cent.

Besides that the changing social scenario has also contributed to woman power. Says Rao: "Even in conservative towns in the south, there is a large women work force. That plus growing literacy, changing consumption patterns and the changing status of the woman are factors that no marketer can no longer ignore."

THE breakdown of the joint family system and the emergence of the nuclear, multi brand family only gave a fillip to this trend. Says Nakul Chopra, branch director, Trikaya Grey: "It is not as if women didn't play a role in a family's purchase decisions earlier. The difference is that now there is an overt recognition of that role. So, more and more ad-have begun talking to women."

What's more, advertising for products that are exclusively aimed at women too have changed dramatically. For instance, for long Carefree had set the thumb-rule for sanitary napkins advertising. Along came Libra and turned the old from-mother-to-daughter theme on its head and its ad had a teenager claiming that her mother had switched to the new brand! Says J.K. Dhaundiyal, creative direc-

tor, HTA: "Personal care products advertising has changed in a big way. The message is more direct." Adds Imam: "The fact that the Fiesta condom ad campaign and the Today ads can co-exist shows that a lot of unexpected images are being presented."

A spillover of this is that advertising has started creating personalities instead of stereotypes. So, if there is the zippy Binnie's teenage girl mouthing 'Humko

The spread of television and growing purchasing power have catapulted women into the spotlight in the marketing arena

Binnie's Mangta' on the one hand, there is also mama's-girl in the Carefree campaign. Similarly, in detergents there is Lalitaji, with her I-know-what-is-best-for-my-family attitude plugging for Surf, and the Harridan-like Wheel woman who, in contrast, knows what she doesn't want: a detergent that makes her hands burn.

Among the first agencies to do it was Rediffusion for the Garden campaign. "Textile marketing was very fashion oriented with the focus being on looks and not personality," says Rediffusion's creative director Kamlesh Pandey. "We realised that women

were growing out of their inhibitions and hence created the Garden woman."

Lakme, claims Pandey, was another breakthrough campaign. This was the age when women still not lost her inhibitions about using make-up and Rediffusion ran a social awareness campaign alongside a product campaign aimed at the 'emerging new woman'. And Rediffusion's successor, Trikaya Grey's campaign for Lakme has only driven home the point that the 'new woman' is here to stay. Says Imam: "Today's home-maker is breaking out of the all-too familiar mould of the crisp cotton sari, the bindi, the mangal-sutra...in the image of the know-all dad and the do-all mum."

Of course, stereotypes haven't quite been banished from the advertising scene. And there are still plenty of marketers who play it safe with well-worn images. Says Dhaundiyal: "The only difference is that stereotypes are getting out of fashion faster than before. In the mid-80s it was hep to pay lip-service to women's liberation. And so, there was the Duncan's tea campaign cashing in and creating a song and dance about the aaj ki naari. Now, it seems too frivolous, so agencies are being more subtle."

Whether it's subtlety, or the need to appeal to discerning women with advertising that is true-to-life, model casting is playing a critical role in the advertising business. While earlier there used to be an Anna Bredemeyer or a Nandini Sen taking on different roles for different products—from housewife to glamour girl—today "non-standard, unexpected faces tend to create surprising, subtle and more potent effects in creating brand personalities", says Imam.

And whether it's the NIIT girl (who wants to pay her dad back what he's spending on her education) or the Wills Filter wife (sharing a joke with her husband), women in advertising today are slowly coming into their own, more as personalities and not merely plastic creatures. Perhaps, that's the only way the wizards of the advertising world have figured of wooing the real women with the bulging purses?

Adite Chatterjee, NEW DELHI with Nandini Lakshman, BOMBAY



THE NAKED TRUTH

The furore over an advertisement featuring two leading models in the nude points to the growing concern within society over vulgarity and obscenity



It may be news to us, but it's just nudes to them. The newly-elected Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Maharashtra has set new records in its crack down on what it sees as obscenity and vulgarity.

The latest in a long series of actions was the banning of an ad for Tuff shoes from Phoenix. The advertisement in question showed two of India's top models (Milind Soman and Madhu Sapre) hugging each other in the nude, while a python draped itself inelegantly over their embracing torsos.

The Maharashtra government seized copies of *G* and *Cine Blitz* magazines in which the ad appeared and both Soman and Sapre were summoned to the police headquarters to confirm that they had in fact been photographed in the buff.

Milind Soman and Madhu Sapre coming out of the police station; (above) the Tuff ad: getting the boot





Afterwards Inspector Vijay Arote, who interrogated them said that they had admitted to not wearing any clothes and that had conceded that the ad was carried with their full knowledge. The police did not immediately file a complaint but confirmed that they would collect further evidence after which Soman and Sapre could be arrested under the Indecent Representation of Women Act, 1986 and Section 292 (A) of the Indian Penal Code which deals with obscenity.

To add insult to injury, a wildlife organisation announced that it intended to sue them for cruelty to animals because of the things they made the python do.

Soman and Sapre are unapologetic. Sapre told a Bombay afternoon paper, "Milind has styled the pictures. He is not repentant at all. He says he will do it again if he has to."



is more explicit than the Phoenix advertisement." Agrees another copywriter, Subha Menon, "The Tuff ad was very tasteful. Why doesn't somebody ban Ila Arun or even magazines like *Debonair*?"

Others have not been as understanding. The Agnishikha Manch, a group of activists, demonstrated outside Sapre's house in Bombay and burnt copies of the magazine in which the ad appeared. Sapre says that she has been shocked by the abuse directed at her: "People just walk up to me and shout 'shameless' and words even worse than this."

The uproar over the Sapre-Soman ad reflects many things. For one, it is part of the new government campaign against what it considers obscenity of any kind. For another, it is significant that both models are Maharashtrians. The



Shiv Sena is particularly exercised when Maharashtrians let the side down and outraged when they also let their knickers down.

This explains some of the anger over starlet Mamta Kulkarni's suggestive poses: "How can a sweet Maharashtrian girl do this?" asked the Sena. And now, *Samma*, the party's official organ, has taken to referring to Sapre and Soman as 'besharam Milind-Madhu'.

Like many organisations of its kind, the extended *sangh parivar* has decided that it is easier to crack down on vulgarity than on crime (the basis of its election platform).

Pramod Navalkar, the culture minister in the Maharashtra government, first objected to *Debonair* in 1974. Ever since he assumed office, he has conducted a crack-down against soft porn magazines, as a consequence of which two have failed to appear this month and *Debonair* has not carried the usual quantity of nudes.

Gopinath Munde, home minister and deputy chief minister, has done his bit for the clean society. When he was on a

And within the advertising agencies, there is some support for their stand. Says Nandu Narasimhan, a copywriter with Lintas, "Why doesn't anyone file a case against Khajuraho? That

The Kama Sutra ad (above) and the Pantaloon Bare Necessities campaign: shocking people for the maximum impact



C O N T R O V E R S Y

a whirlwind tour of Pune, he found the time to make an unscheduled stop at a pub and demand its closure. Munde justified this on the unexceptional grounds that, "pub culture is alien to India". Not alien to the Shiv Sena, however: one popular Bombay pub is owned by a Shiv Sena leader.

The Sena is also against waitresses or barmaids. It intends to resurrect an obsolete municipal corporation ruling to the effect that women in some jobs can't work after 6.30 pm. This will have the effect of forcing all the barmaids to go home before the bars open.

Navalkar is particularly proud of the popular support for his anti-obscenity crusade. "I don't want the government to take the lead," he says. "Such a campaign should be initiated by the masses. The police too are doing their job, and in the very first raid conducted in the Fort area, the squad seized 26,000 pornographic books and 8,000 obscene video cassettes and pamphlets."

Not all of these schemes will come to fruition. There are 286 bars in Bombay that employ 1,486 barmaids and 1,277 dancers. If the government had its way, all of them would close down ("alien to Indian culture") while the women employees would sit at home and watch TV.

But it hasn't worked that way. No bar has closed down and the dancers still sway late into the night. Apparently, the combined might of the restaurant-bar business has kept the Sena vigilantes at bay. The dancers have been reclassified as 'artistes' and the government has cheerfully accepted this distinction.

There is, of course, a cynical explanation for the unwillingness of the police to crack down on such establishments. Last year, the authorities collected a total of Rs 1,72,800 as fines. There is no estimate of how much was paid up as bribes.

Nevertheless, the Shiv Sena, despite its obvious sincerity, however misguided, is unable to answer certain basic



There is a growing feeling among the Indian middle class that levels of vulgarity within society have reached unacceptable heights. For instance, one can hardly ignore the obscene implications behind the average Hindi film song sequence that is full of lewd pelvic gyrations or for that matter Mamta Kulkarni's suggestive poses

questions about the contradictions in its stand. Marathi tamasha, a native performing art, survives on vulgarity, suggestive gestures and lewd puns. The Sena has no desire to crack down on tamasha.

Then, there is the problem of Marathi cinema. The leading director is Dada Kondke, who has made a living out of vulgarity and *double entendres*. Naturally, there are no plans to crack down on him. Says Navalkar, somewhat defensively, "People have a choice in films.





C O N T R O V E R S Y

They can stay away if they think they will be too obscene."

And no doubt, the people are forced to read *Debonair* or buy pornography.

However much liberals may disapprove of the Shiv Sena and its posturings, it is undeniable that there is a growing feeling among the Indian middle class all over the country that levels of vulgarity within society have reached unacceptable heights.

Critics usually point to the advertising industry which tends to use naked women when fully-clothed ones would do as well. Says Brinda Karat, general secretary of the All India Democratic Women's Association, "The Phoenix shoes advertisement is an extreme manifestation of something that has been going on in our society for a long time. It is part of a larger issue: the need for an advertising code. None of the existing councils work."

Within advertising, some people agree that the urge to shock has gone too far. Says Gopika Chowfla, creative director of Enterprise, "The Phoenix ad is not going to make anybody buy shoes. When you have nothing to say, the easiest thing is to strip someone. Even 20 years ago, they used women's breasts to promote paints and motor oils. Now it's just slightly more arty. The idea is to use nudity to shock people."

Others argue that if an ad uses nudity or sex to sell a product such as condoms, then there may be some justification. Says Tarun Rai, client services director at Hindustan Thompson, "The important thing is relevance. The *Kama Sutra* people argued that their brief was to make condoms sexy and to dispel the notion that condoms interfere with the act of sex. So, the ad was relevant. But if you use women to sell tractors and gensets, then I'm not sure that it is relevant."

Agrees Sajid Peerbhoy, "I'm not against using the nude human body, but

it should have some relevance to the product. Where is the relevance between MR coffee and sex? What was the need to use a nude body to display a pair of shoes?"

The Phoenix shoes ad may be at the centre of the current uproar, but there are many that have provoked comment. MR coffee used a couple making out to promote a hot beverage. Mexx, a chain of clothing stores, gratuitously uses a naked woman. Sera footwear uses two women

sexy words as the copywriter could think of that afternoon: Porn shops, the G spot, lesbian rights, phone sex, sensual aids, etc. The slogan says it all: Sex and Bare Necessities.

It is easy to laugh at the Shiv Sena or to argue that Soman and Sapre have a perfect right to hug each other in the nude for the benefit of cameras. But to do so is to ignore the growing concern within society over vulgarity and obscenity.

At one level, it is satellite television that adds to the concern. At another, it is vulgar film songs that agitate parents. And at a third, it is the ready availability of pornography.

Some of this is inevitable. India is a much less conservative society today than it was ten years ago. And ten years ago, it was less conservative than 20 years ago. This is part of the process of change.

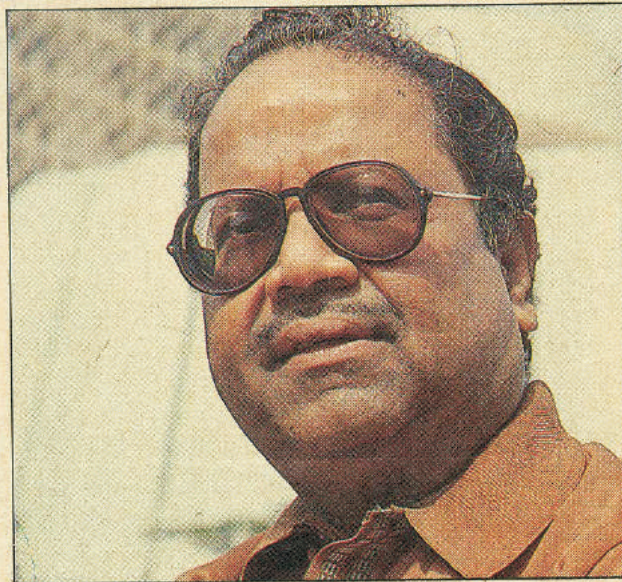
But what concerns many people is that while pornography may serve a certain purpose, obscenity and vulgarity have become so much a part of life that it is difficult to avoid them. Films and television are mainstream media. Parents may be able to stop children from watching a pornographic movie, but what are they to do when the average Hindi film is full of pelvic gyrations and suggestive lyrics?

That explains the concern with vulgarity and

obscenity in advertising. When things get to the stage where you can't pick up a copy of *Cine Blitz* without having to stare at two narcissists trying to make a quick buck by posing in the altogether on the dubious grounds that they are flogging shoes, then it is time to get worried.

Thus, Navalkar and the Shiv Sena may be selective and even ridiculous in their approach to the issue. But that doesn't mean that the issue does not exist. •

Lyla Bavadam/Bombay and Priya Sahgal/New Delhi



Pramod Navalkar, the culture minister in the Maharashtra government, is proud of the popular support for his anti-obscenity crusade. "I don't want the government to take the lead," he says. "Such a campaign should be initiated by the masses"

in romantic poses that suggest lesbianism. The same note reappears in the ads for Chelsea jeans in which two lesbians, one with her knee thrust between the other's legs, stare defiantly into the camera, and the copy reads, 'F___ off, leave us alone'.

The Pantaloon Bare Necessities ads have already caused an uproar because model Sheri Meher-Homji claimed that a computer was used to strip her of her panties. Another ad in the same series shows a naked man lying on top of a 'naked' Meher-Homji while the body copy consists of a recitation of as many

Facilitating Gender Debates in the Classroom

Module 4

Violence Against Women

Vibhuti Patel

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&
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Contents

Foreword by Dr. A. L. Sharada	i
Background Essay : Violence Against Women- Core Content	1
Selected Readings	14
Session Plan :	
<i>Films</i>	32
<i>Brainstorming</i>	35
<i>Myths and Facts about Domestic Violence</i>	38
<i>Poems</i>	40
<i>Story Telling</i>	43
<i>Case Studies</i>	48

FOREWORD

Since 2005, Population First through its Girl Child Campaign – *Laadli* has been engaging actively with the college youth through a number of innovative activities such as Flash Mobs (2006), song development and puppet making workshops, street theatre competitions, discussion forums, change makers clubs and gender workshops. However, we realized that intervening as an outsider had its own limitations – funding constraints, coordination problems, limited outreach and more importantly, sustainability.

We have also come to believe strongly that gender should become part of the class room experience and should be handled by the teachers in an interactive and innovative manner within the class room context. However, we realized in our interactions with the students and teachers, the current model of teacher-student equation, did not allow much scope for that. The challenge, therefore, is to find spaces and contexts within the syllabus and class rooms to initiate a debate, dialogue and discussion which would open up the minds of the students to understand and question the deep rooted gender stereotypes, biases and violence in society. To create such critical thinking in students it is imperative that the teachers equip themselves with facilitation skills which are based on the principles of inclusiveness, respect for divergent views and equality. Facilitation is an empowering process as the facilitator helps the participants explore their mindsets, prejudices and requirements in a non-threatening, non-judgemental and open space.

We were lucky to have UNFPA supporting us to go ahead and work on the idea. We had long discussions with Prof. Veena Poonacha and Dr. Vibhuti Patel and Dr. Gita Chadha of SNDT University before firming up the project strategy. It was agreed that gender should not be a special subject or paper but should be mainstreamed into teaching, irrespective of the subject that is being handled. Colleges provide a number of contexts in which gender could be addressed – the cultural activities, fests, exhibitions, seminars, debates, and the content of the text books. If the teacher is sensitive and possesses the facilitation skills, gender could be made an integral part of college education. It is not necessary to apportion large chunks of time for this purpose but asking the right questions at the right time and providing mind space to the students to explore the same could help in changing attitudes. Any incident, comment and a film/advertisement/web campaign could be a spark for such conversation.

The project was, thereafter, taken up as a joint initiative of Population First, RCWS and PGDSR of SNDT University.

It was agreed that teachers would be able to perform the role of facilitators only when they have a sound understanding of the subject and when they understand that facilitation is a completely different set of skills as compared to teaching and training. Apart from the basic

concepts on gender, two topics were selected which we thought would be relevant to the youth – Gender Based Violence and Gender and Media. A fourth topic Critical Pedagogy was also included as it forms the theoretical basis of what is being attempted in the project. Dr. Gita Chadha, Dr. A.L. Sharada, Prof. Veena Poonacha and Prof. Vibhuti Patel prepared the four modules which were peer reviewed by Ms. Bishakha Datta, Dr. Jeroo Mulla, Dr. Nasreen Fazalboy, and Ms. Sonal Shukla. My sincere thanks to Gita, Veena and Vibhuti for writing the modules and Sonal, Jeroo, Bishakha and Dr. Fazalboy for their candid comments that helped us make the modules so interesting.

The first pilot workshop was organized on August 25-26, 2011 with about 15 teachers from colleges of Mumbai University and SNDT Women's University which was conducted by the authors in an interactive manner. This was followed by a communication and facilitation skill workshop by theater exponent Mr. Manjul Bhardwaj. The participants of the two workshops then conducted the third workshop for a new set of people in the presence of the core team who provided feedback to the presenters. Based on the response and feedback from the three workshops, the modules were revised and a final workshop was organized by the core team before the modules were finalized.

The modules are being published in collaboration with RCWS and I am grateful to Usha Lalwani for the painstaking editing and designing of the modules.

The publication includes a set of four modules. Each module is self contained with an analytical essay followed by proposed games, activities, session plan, resources and reading list. It is up to the teachers to use the contents of the modules as per their requirement. The resources and readings listed are indicative and a lot more can be accessed from the web and other resources listed.

I hope teachers using the modules have an enriching experience with the students and have the satisfaction of initiating a much needed change process in class rooms.

Dr. A. L. Sharada

Director

Population First

Mumbai



Background Essay

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women (VAW) is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women, preventing their growth and self-fulfilment. VAW is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men. VAW constitutes a violation of the rights and fundamental freedoms of women and impairs or nullifies their enjoyment of those rights and freedoms. VAW is an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace, as recognized in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women in 1985, in which a set of measures to combat violence against women was recommended.

Definition of Gender Based Violence

VAW prevents the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), a landmark international agreement that affirms principles of fundamental human rights and equality for women and girls initiated by the UN and adopted by the member countries. According to CEDAW, the term gender-based violence “GBV” includes actual or threatened physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family or community. VAW is understood as

- I. Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, widow burning, female infanticide, pre-birth elimination of girls, crimes against women and girls in the name of honour, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
- II. Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;
- III. Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

Women's Studies Understanding on Gender Based Violence

Women's Studies has drawn on the collective wisdom of the women's movement and from the UN covenants to devise analytical tools to understand and examine VAW. Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women



Violence Against Women

(CEDAW) has aptly defined discrimination as being any distinction, exclusion or restriction which has the intention or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of all rights in the social, cultural, political and economic spheres. Whether intended or unintended, whether direct or indirect, if any act results in the deprivation mentioned as above, we can say that discrimination has occurred. Discrimination creates a fertile ground for marginalisation, stigma and violence. It perpetuates itself and so has to be actively removed. People with multiple discriminations are more vulnerable to violence (Kudchedkar and Sabiha al-Issa, 1998).

Violence on the other hand is intentional; it is inflicted in order to break the body and the mind, to keep a person or group "in place" or to "teach someone a lesson". It is rarely a randomly committed act, even if it may seem so. It is based on power and control, perpetrated by those in power over those who are under their control in order to put down those who dare to oppose norms or threaten to disrupt the status quo of an unequal system. It occurs among all classes, castes, races, religions and nationalities. Violence creates terror: for example if a girl is raped in a school or college, it often results in the immediate termination of education of many other girls. The consequences are borne not only by the victim but by her sub-group too. For the individual who is constantly subjected to violence the damage can be life-long. Thus it serves as a deterrent to all who dare to digress from social norms. Violence may occur when a person or a party within a relationship (children, women, elderly people, people who are physically or mentally challenged, a junior at work, younger sibling and so on) is economically, physically or emotionally vulnerable or dependent on the other. For this reason, often it is near impossible for the victim to resist or report the act; the perpetrator is thus able to function with impunity. In a few cases, violent acts can also occur as a reaction to constant exploitation and abuse. Here however, the backlash can be more severe than the act of violence itself. Violence cannot be normalised or justified - a culture that believes in resolving its problems or disagreements through violence is not very cultured (Mathur, 2004).

Violence on minorities, witch-hunting, rape, disinheriting widows, 'honour' related killings and a number of crimes against women are related to political economy as well. Many of them involve dispossessing a woman from her inheritance and resorting to killing in order to get rid of a woman who comes in the way of men's appropriation of property and assets. Further, women's bodies become battlefields during war, riots, conflict and occupation. With neo-liberal globalisation, we also see a backlash against women who are expected to be the traditional harbingers of culture (Manchanda, 2001). Rising conservatism and fundamentalism amongst most religious groups in the world, place restrictions on women by curtailing their rights and freedoms, monitoring their dress, mobility and right to choose their partners (Kannabiran, 2005).



Both psychologists and feminists believe power is an important and ubiquitous concept, yet its definition and scope eludes both groups. In this introduction to a special issue on women and power, we suggest three points to help organize and interpret research in the area. First, definitions of power should center on the distinction between “power-over,” the domination and control of one person or group over another, and “power-to” or personal empowerment. Second, power can be analyzed at different levels—societal, organizational, interpersonal, and individual—and, importantly, these levels interact. Third, power differences frequently underlie what appear to be gender differences in behavior; as society is currently configured; power and gender are never independent.

Sociological work on violence has profited from the varied insights of feminist theorists about both the pervasiveness of violence against women and the impact of this violence on the lives of individual women. The field has also been enriched by efforts to describe particular kinds of violence against women as being linked to wider structures and as being embedded in gendered patterns of social control.

Women's studies has developed its policy recommendations on violence against women from intervention strategies evolved by women's rights organisations on rape, other sexual offences, domestic violence, child abuse and protection as models of good practice.

Overview of Violence against Women and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children

Gender violence has become a central issue in the discourses of the women's movement in India in the 21st century. Women's networks in the country have taken up a wide range of issues concerning gender violence in personal lives as well as systems and structures perpetuating it. The term “the personal is political”, which was a slogan coined by Carol Hanisch in 1969 is popularised by three decades of women's movement in the last century; it signifies consistent campaigns against all forms of gender violence in intimate/personal and public/societal spheres. Indian women experience a wide range of gendered violence at different stages of their lives, from inception to the grave, as a result of modernisation and commercialisation of subsistence economies, family-ties becoming less supportive, increasing migration, demanding work (shift from '**just-in-case** approach' to '**just-in-time**' approach of the production processes), inhuman labour processes in predominant informal economies and resultant sectarian vested interests manifesting through identity politics, trafficking of women and girls for as cheap labour, sex slaves and forced marriage and various forms of misogyny in print and electronic media (Patel 2002). Honour killing of young lovers and married couples by their near and dear ones brings to the fore undemocratic family structure that is stifling, suffocating and mercenary. Persecution of sexual minorities has been challenged by the LGBT movement (Menon, 2007).



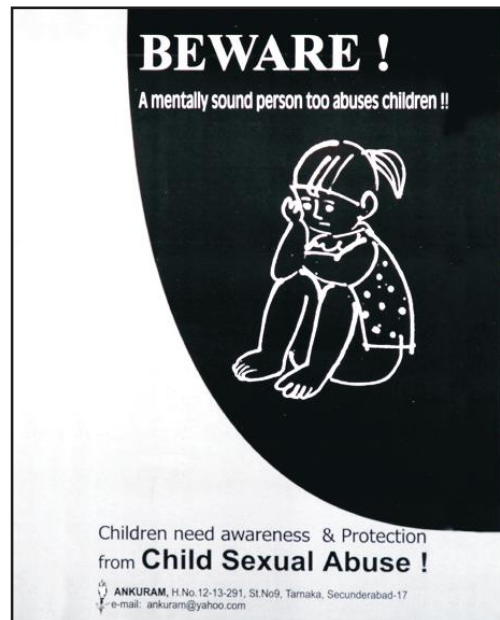
Violence Against Women

During the eighties, women's rights organisations mushroomed all over the country and focused their attention on gender violence. They organised rallies and demonstrations, sit-ins and conventions, seminars and conferences, which culminated into the politics of protest movements and petitioning. In the 1990s, the women's groups consolidated their base by finding their allies in the state apparatus and created an institutional base and shelter homes of women and children survivors of violence (Datar, 1992). In the new millennium, they managed to get Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (Lawyers Collective, 2002).

Social Paradigms

Women's status in the family is determined by *panchmahabhoota* (five omnipresent factors) of patriarchy (PPs), namely the caste/ kinship network, religion, economic status, media and the state. PPs draw their strength from male chauvinism and women's subjugation. Patriarchal control over women's sexuality, fertility and labour takes a barbaric turn due to commercialization of human relations in a capitalist drive for profit. Economic globalization thrives on unpaid care work and poorly paid work of women and girls in the informal economy. Economic subordination of women and girls makes them prone to covert and overt, psychological, emotional, sexual and physical violence (Patel, 2009).

The lifecycle of a woman is governed by a patriarchal value system, which promotes preferential treatment for men and neglect of women. Ante natal sex - determination tests, female infanticide and neglect of daughter in terms of food, health care and educational facilities and personality development stunt the growth of women. Nearly 40 per cent of marriages in India are child marriages (NFHS, 2006). Teenage pregnancy takes place both within marriage and among unmarried girls due to rape, seduction, incest and child prostitution. Discrimination and violence faced by women, as a child and adult, leads of low self- esteem and psychological dependence (Burte, 2008).



Linking Female Infanticide & Female Foeticide in India to Adverse Juvenile Sex Ratio

A historical legacy of strong son-preference and neglect of daughters has taken a dangerous turn where scientific technologies for sex-determination such as amniocentesis, chorion-villi-biopsy, foetoscopy and sonography are abused for selective abortion of female



fetuses by money-minded medical professionals (Patel, 2009). New reproductive technologies of pre-selection of unborn babies have prevented the birth of the girl child and facilitated patriarchal genocide of girls (Patel, 2006). Several Asian countries have a 'deficit of women' in their populations due to declining sex-ratio i.e. the number of women as compared to 1000 men is less than 1000. Noble Laureate, Prof. Amartya Kumar Sen, calls this phenomenon the "missing women" (Sen, 1992). This is a manifestation of discrimination and stigmatization of women delivering daughters. Sex selection in society occurs in the context of entrenched values, interests and cultural beliefs and practices. Their eradication requires investment in long-term strategies and economic and social development and educational and cultural empowerment. It is a matter of deep regret that even the states in Asia perceive this phenomenon as an indicator of population stabilization, the logic being that the fewer the number of women, the lower the rate of reproduction. The women's movement has emphasized this through slogans such as:

Eliminate Inequality, not Women

Destroy Dowry, not Daughters

Say No to Sex-determination, Say Yes to Empowerment of Women

Say No to Sex Discrimination, Say Yes to Gender Justice

Daughters are not for Slaughter

Economic Development and VAW

Women from South Asia are supposed to be relatively timid, obedient, disciplined and meticulous to handle skilled, monotonous jobs and easy to control. New International Division of Labour intensified by globalisation depends on super-exploitation of poor Asian women, especially young unmarried girls who are recruited in the Free Trade Zones (FTZ), Export Processing Zones (EPZ) and the latest, Special Economic Zones (SEZ). During the last two decades, in the absence of any democratic rights in these labour concentration camps, these young girls had only one way of expressing their anger, latest, Special Economic Zones (SEZ). During the last two decades, in the absence of any democratic rights in these labour concentration camps, these young girls had only one way of expressing their anger, fatigue and alienation i.e. mass hysteria. Now, the heads of ASEAN countries are negotiating to create more and more EPZs, SEZs, FTZs. Human and women's rights groups need to ensure that the horrible past of back-breaking, hazardous, highly labour intensive workload for women workers in the region, is not repeated (Patel, 2009).



Violence Against Women

Industrial pollution and occupational health risks also take a heavy toll of Asian women's reproductive health. Carcinogenic and mutagenic effects of industrial pollution, incidents like the Bhopal Union Carbide gas tragedy and radio-active nuclear waste have raised danger signals. Commercialisation of forest and natural resources have enhanced rural women's plight, as they are responsible for collection of fuel, fodder and water.

Population Control Policy

A paradigmatic shift in the discourse on population stabilisation in the South Asia is connected with racist and sexist biases of population control policies that dumps the burden of population control on women. The targeting of poor Bangladeshi or Indian women for forced sterilisation and unsafe-hormone based contraceptives and pro-natalist policy for educated Asian women in a bid “to enhance the quality of population” are two sides of the same coin. “Severe side effects of Net-O-en and Depo Provera include menstrual disorders, cessation of the monthly cycle or irregular bleeding, general weakness, migrain, headaches and severe abdominal cramps.” (SAMA, 2000). In South Asia, a large percentage of women in the reproductive age group suffer from anaemia, irregular and heavy bleeding. Long acting hormone-based contraceptives can have catastrophically damaging consequences (Sarojini & Murthy, 2005).

Here we must highlight the sexist implications of eugenics. All these efforts violate the bodily integrity of women and rest on the presumption that penetrative sex is the be all and end all of women's existence. After the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), states in the region have reduced the social sector budget for women's development that comprises health and nutrition, education, employment, empowerment. The two categories for which the states are pumping in massive amount of funds is population control programmes and military expenditure.

Globalisation and New Forms of Gender Violence

In the absence of any safety-net provided by the multinational and transnational corporations or the governments, globalisation has enhanced control over sexuality, fertility and labour of women migrants in the region. Illiterate rural girls as well as high-school educated adolescent girls are inducted into the workforce. Cross country migration of girls and women for domestic work, industrial and professional work and services like nursing, secretarial practice, tele-working and business process outsourcing (BPO) has increased.

The organ trade of destitute women, children and foetuses from the poor Asian communities has gained demonic proportions. Soft porn as well as hard-core pornography and cyber sexual



violence are used for used for terrorisation, humiliation and intimidation of women and girls. Cyber stalking in the computer labs of offices, colleges, universities and commercially run cyber-cafes has invited attention of the decision makers who are divided in their opinions. Some scholars believe that it reduces actual violence against women as people derive psychological satisfaction through voyeurism. Others see it as an extension of verbal and physical violence. Policy interventions are needed to deal with online sexual violence. The use of SMS to send scary messages to girls, is another important area that demands urgent attention. In cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Chandigarh and Hyderabad, an increasing number of women are reporting harassment by online sexual violence through spam mail, cyber porn and SMS messages.

Smut parties for executives of TNCs, MNCs and indigenous corporate barons have become routine affairs, so much so that the states in the region do not take any action in spite of prima-facie evidences provided by the newspaper coverage (Shyam, 2002).

Jingoism, Militarisation and Gender Violence

The implications of jingoism: The psychological effects of war are dire on women and children. Rape as a political tool has been used against women in Kashmir, in the North East frontier, against Tamil women in conflict zones, during insurgency in Nepal and in refugee camps, have all evoked extreme indignation from the human rights organisations all over the world (Manchanda, 2001). In Myanmar and Nepal, the military rulers use rape as a means of social control and use torture for women deemed dangerous to the regime. Jingoism in South Asia has enhanced insecurity for women in the border regions of the sun-continent. Women's groups of SAARC countries have demanded peace and have launched several programmes and campaigns for public awareness.

Women used as carriers for smuggling, women in border regions and women in the refugee camps of conflict-ridden areas need civilian interventions for safety and security. In regions constituting the "killing fields" in the North East, women constitute two-thirds of the population. The development programmes supported by the UN are inadequate. International NGOs need to take lead in this direction. The mass rape of women in Manipur where soldiers are also owners of brothels needs to be condemned by the international community. Institutionalisation of sex-slavery in the region demands collective efforts of women's networks in the region. Objectification of women and denial of her personhood in the media has reached such a proportion that humiliation of womanhood is complete.

Power relations between men and women based on subordination of women and male domination are a result of interplay of forces such as class, caste, race, religion, ethnicity with gender.



Violence Against Women

Domestic Violence: A Violation of Human Rights of Women

“Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation. And it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace.”
(Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations)

The harms suffered by women at the hands of private individuals or within the family had been placed outside of the conceptual framework of international human rights. Feminists have argued that the failure in international human rights norms is in not recognizing the 'gendered' consequences of their application they render invisible, particular problems suffered by women.

Moreover, in addition to holding states responsible for taking action against the human rights abuses occurring in the private sphere, feminist human rights thinkers argued that domestic violence should be conceived as a form of torture. They aver that though torture with cases of disappearance and murder are widely recognized as a core violation of human rights and are widely condemned, why is torture on basis of sex in the form of rape, domestic battering and pornography not seen as a violation of human rights?

The feminist analysis examines characteristics of domestic violence in the light of international legal understanding of what constitutes torture and cruelty and the inhuman and degrading treatment it entails. They affirm that process, purposes, and consequences of torture and that of domestic violence are startlingly similar (Bhattacharya, 2004). Whether torture is committed in the domestic context or whether it is inflicted officially, it does not reduce the intensity of violence, nor does it demand different standards of judgments and actions on the part of the state.

The existing international human rights instruments, has both a separate provision for women's rights (i.e. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW), and other general mechanisms which stresses formal equality of women and men. While this development is important, it is not adequate to address the issue of women's subordination. Recently, non-governmental organizations have begun to document women's abuse within the context of traditional human rights law (Mathur, 2004).

These efforts are based on and addressed within that framework of whose 'very structure is built on the silence of women'. The fundamental problem women face is not discriminatory treatment vis-à-vis men. Rather it is necessary to raise a larger problem: that, women are in inferior position because they have no power either in public or private worlds, or in international human rights law. Thus the problem of domestic abuse as a human rights issue will have to be seen as a part of larger reality of subordination of women -- their powerlessness in terms of defining the human rights discourse.



What are the Signs of Domestic Violence?

- **Destructive criticism and verbal abuse:** shouting/mocking/accusing/name calling/verbally threatening.
- **Pressure tactics:** sulking, threatening to withhold money, disconnecting the telephone, taking the car away, commit suicide, taking the children away, threatening to report you to welfare agencies unless you comply with his demands regarding bringing up the children, lying to your friends and family about you, telling you that you have no choice in any decisions.
- **Disrespect:** persistently putting you down in front of other people, not listening or responding when you talk, interrupting your telephone calls, taking money from your purse without asking, refusing to help with childcare or housework.
- **Breaking trust:** lying to you, withholding information from you, being jealous, having other relationships, breaking promises and shared agreements.
- **Isolation:** monitoring or blocking your telephone calls, telling you where you can and cannot go, preventing you from seeing friends and relatives.
- **Harassment:** following you, checking up on you, opening your mail, repeatedly checking to see who has telephoned you, embarrassing you in public.
- **Threats:** making angry gestures, using physical size to intimidate, shouting you down, destroying your possessions, breaking things, punching walls, wielding a knife or a gun, threatening to kill or harm you and the children.
- **Sexual violence:** using force, threats or intimidation to make you perform sexual acts, having sex with you when you don't want to have sex, any degrading treatment based on your sexual orientation.
- **Physical violence:** punching, slapping, hitting, biting, pinching, kicking, pulling hair out, pushing, shoving, burning, strangling.
- **Denial:** saying the abuse doesn't happen, saying you caused the abusive behaviour, being publicly gentle and patient, crying and begging for forgiveness, saying it will never happen again.

Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 defines “Domestic Violence” as anyone who:

- *(a) harms or injures or endangers the health, safety, life, limb or well-being, whether mental or physical, of the aggrieved person or tends to do so and includes causing physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse; or*
- *(b) harasses, harms, injures or endangers the aggrieved person with a view to coerce her or any other person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any dowry or other property or valuable security; or*
- *(c) has the effect of threatening the aggrieved person or any person related to her by any conduct mentioned in clause (a) or clause (b); or*
- *(d) otherwise injures or causes harm, whether physical or mental, to the aggrieved person.*



Violence Against Women

Domestic Violence in India

NFHS II data on domestic violence are quite revealing.

India / State	Percentage beaten or physically mistreated since age 15 by:		
	Husband	In-laws	Other Person
India	18.8	1.8	3.1
Andhra Pr.	21.2	2.8	2.0
Kerala	7.5	0.2	3.2
Uttar Pr.	20.8	1.9	2.2
Bihar	24.9	2.4	3.1
Rajasthan	9.8	1.5	0.9
Madhya Pr.	19.7	1.9	1.6
Orissa	22.9	3.0	7.9
Punjab	11.7	1.3	4.4
Haryana	10.8	2.3	3.4
J & K	15.4	4.8	7.1
Tamil Nadu	36.0	0.5	9.0

Source: NFHS, 1998-99, IIPS, Mumbai, 2000.

A nationwide survey in 2004 showed that 52 per cent of women suffer at least one incident of physical or psychological violence in their lifetime (ICRW, 2004).

VAW in the personal life—manifested in the form of pre-birth elimination of girls, female infanticide, dowry murders, forced polyandry, trafficking of girls and women and incest is increasingly accepted as a serious social problem (Mathur, 2004).

The Indian feminists have asserted that the pillars of patriarchy—namely family, kinship and community organizations, religious and cultural organizations and state—covertly and overtly glorify widow burning and witch hunts of widows, divorcees and deserted women, all in an effort to exercise total control over women's sexuality, fertility and labour, and also to usurp their property and land rights (Agnes, 1988).

A study by the Centre for Women's Development Studies says every hour five women face cruelty at home (CWDS, 2002). Other studies reveal that every six hours, somewhere in India, a young married woman is burned alive, beaten to death, or driven to commit suicide (ICRW, 2004). The NFHS (II) reported one in five married women in India experiences domestic violence from the age of 15. It is estimated that more than 15,000 women suffer from dowry-related violence ever year. According to the Indian National Crime Records Bureau's unique 'crime clock 2005' which



tracked criminal activities over 2004, the country reported one molestation every 15 minutes; one crime against women every 3 minutes; one dowry death every 77 minutes; one rape every 29 minutes; one murder every 16 minutes; and one sexual harassment case every 53 minutes. Recent studies show that even in the most progressive state in the country, Kerala, crimes against women has risen four-fold in the past seven years. Foeticide is on the rise -- there were 967 girls for every 1,000 boys in the 0-6 age group in 2001 as opposed to 976 in 1971 (Patel, 2009). 75 per cent of women who are victims of domestic violence do not seek help due to concern for family 'honour' (ICRW, 2004). Data from NFHS (II) show that 56 per cent women justified beatings by husbands.

Dowry Deaths – A term unique to India came to mean the killing of young married women for the 'dowry' or money/goods they brought with them at the time of marriage. This was also the beginning of a process of learning for women: most protests were directed at the State. Because women were able to mobilise support, the State responded, seemingly positively, by changing the law on rape and dowry, making both more stringent (Dave and Solanki, 2001). This seemed, at that time, like a great victory. It was only later that the knowledge began to sink in that mere changes in the law meant little, unless there was a will and a machinery to implement these. And that the root of the problem of discrimination against women lay not only in the law or with the State, but was much more widespread (Deosthali, Maghnani and Malik, 2005).

In the early campaigns, groups learnt from day to day experiences that targeting the State was not enough and that survivors also needed support (Patel, 2002). So a further level of work was needed: awareness raising or conscientisation so that violence against women could be prevented, rather than only dealt with after it had happened. Legal aid and counseling centers were set up, and attempts were made to establish women's shelters (Dabir, 2000).

Nearly 55 per cent of Indian women and a little over half of Indian men think that wife-beating is okay, according to the latest National Family Health Survey, reflecting widespread social acceptability of domestic violence across genders. Over 40 per cent of Indian women have experienced domestic violence at some point in their married lives, and nearly 55 per cent think that spousal abuse is warranted in several circumstances, according to the newly-published findings of India's third National Family Health Survey (NFHS-III, 2006).

NFHS-III, which interviewed 1.25 lakh women in 28 states and the national capital, during 2005-06 found that just over a third of women who had been married at any point in their lives said they had been pushed, slapped, shaken or otherwise attacked by their husbands at least once.

Slapping was the most common act of physical violence by husbands. More than 34 per cent of women said their husbands slapped them, while 15 per cent said their husbands pulled their hair or twisted their arm. Around 14 per cent of the women had things thrown at them.



Violence Against Women

The NFHS also states that an overwhelming majority of women who reported domestic violence were first assaulted by their husbands in less than two years into their marriage. According to the figures, 62 per cent experienced physical or sexual violence within the first two years of marriage, while 32 per cent experienced violence in the first five years.

Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace

Sexual harassment at the workplace is a universal problem. Even though the occurrence of sexual harassment at the workplace is widespread in India and elsewhere, this is the first time that it has been recognised as an infringement of the fundamental rights of a woman, under Article 19(1) (g) of the Constitution of India “to practice any profession or to carry out any occupation, trade or business”.

In India, Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Indian Constitution provide safeguards against all forms of discrimination. In recent times, the Supreme Court has given two landmark judgments - Vishakha vs State of Rajasthan, 1997, and Apparel Export Promotion Council vs A K Chopra, 1999— in which it laid down certain guidelines and measures to ensure the prevention of such incidents. Despite these developments, the problem of sexual harassment is assuming alarming proportions and there is a pressing need for domestic laws on the issue.

India is rapidly advancing in its developmental goals and more and more women are joining the workforce. It is the duty of the state to provide for the wellbeing and respect of its citizens to prevent frustration, low self-esteem, insecurity and emotional disturbance, which, in turn, could affect business efficacy, leading to loss of production and loss of reputation for the organisation or the employer.

A Bill to Prevent Sexual Harassment at the Workplace, 2005 has already been introduced in the Indian Parliament. Women’s groups have begun lobbying with parliamentarians to get it passed as an Act in the winter session of Parliament.

In any civilized society, it is the fundamental right of people to be able to lead their lives with dignity, free from mental or physical torture. To ensure this, transgressors must pay for their unsolicited sexual advances. At the same time organisations such as Men against Violence and Abuse, that conduct gender-sensitisation programmes and self-defence classes to combat sexual harassment at the workplace, must be encouraged.

To effectively prevent SHW we need both a top-down initiative by the state and employers and Civil Society Initiatives from Citizens’ Groups, Women’s Organisations and Trade Unions.



Conclusion

There is a need for an affirmative action to protect girls, young and elderly women from violence and establish human rights for women. It must address the following areas of intervention.

- 1. Improve Women's Economic Capacities:** Improve women's access to and control of income and assets, recognize her shared right to the family home, and incorporate the principle of division of community property in divorce laws. Productive assets and property are critical to strengthening the economic and social status of women, providing income opportunities and improved respect for women outside marriage and family.
- 2. Strengthen and Expand Training and Sensitization Programmes:** Programmes designed to train, sensitize and inter-link those working at critical entry points to identify and treat abused women should be a priority, and should be aimed at increased accountability across institutions. Such programmes should be tailored for medical personnel, the judiciary, counseling and other support service providers.
- 3. The Dilaasa model of one stop crisis centre housed in the public hospital (Bhabha Hospital) to facilitate collective intervention of medical staff, police and NGO must be replicated throughout the country.**
- 4. Effective Use of the Media to Build Public Awareness:** Mobilisation of communities around campaigns such as that for "Zero Tolerance of Violence" requires improved skills and capacity among NGOs to enter new forms of dialogue with journalists and media personnel to heighten awareness of human rights and their significance for addressing domestic violence.
- 5. Programmes Designed for the Batterers:** must be introduced in both the state and voluntary sectors. In order to promote a holistic approach to prevention as well as intervention, the deficiency in programmes designed for men needs to be addressed.
- 6. Addressing VAW through Education:** Prevention of domestic violence ultimately depends upon changing the norms of society regarding violence as means of conflict resolution and traditional attitudes about gender. To achieve this, there must be introduction of gender and human rights in the curricula of schools, universities, professional colleges, and other training colleges. Along with this, there must be recognition and commitment to the principle of free compulsory primary and secondary education for girls.



Violence Against Women

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Violence Against Women

SELECTED READINGS

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN INDIA

Responses to Domestic Violence in Karnataka and Gujarat

Veena Poonacha and Divya Pandey. Mumbai : Research Centre for Women's Studies. 1999.

The focus of the SNDT University study by Veena Poonacha and Divya Pandey is on the interventions and responses being implemented in the states of Gujarat and Karnataka. The study provides a comprehensive examination of the range of responses through in-depth case studies of organizations. Some of the factors that are considered critical to the content and implementation of the responses are: a) the philosophy of the organization with regard to social change and gender relationships; b) the organizational history; c) decision-making processes within the organization; d) the organizational structure; e) the quality of services and f) staff morale. A finding of the study is that the prevailing types of response or intervention strategies, among both state and nongovernmental sectors, are in essence reactive to individual complaints and are, therefore, short-term in their impact. The study, however, also points to the emergence of a variety of innovative, grassroots efforts to address domestic violence more proactively.



Women2000. Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict: United Nations Response Published to Promote the Goals of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, April 1998.

UNITED NATIONS, Division for the Advancement of Women Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

(This issue of Women2000 was compiled by the Women's Rights Unit, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, with Michelle Jarvis, Consultant)

Source: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/cover.html>

Excerpts:

Introduction

Sexual violence during armed conflict is not a new phenomenon. It has existed for as long as there has been conflict. In her 1975 book *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, Susan Brownmiller presented stark accounts of rape and other sexual atrocities that have been committed during armed conflict throughout history. While historically very few measures have been taken to address sexual violence against women committed during armed conflict, it is not true to say that there has always been complete silence about the issue. Belligerents have often capitalized upon the abuse of their women to garner sympathy and support for their side, and to strengthen their resolve against the enemy. Usually, the apparent concern for these women vanishes when the propaganda value of their suffering diminishes, and they are left without any prospect of redress. It is true to say that the international community has, for a long time, failed to demonstrate a clear desire to do something about the problem of sexual violence during armed conflict. The turning point came in the early 1990s as a result of sexual atrocities committed during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, and it seems that finally, the issue has emerged as a serious agenda item of the international community.

Towards the end of 1992, the world was stunned by reports of sexual atrocities committed during the armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Newspaper headlines decried: "Serbian'rape camps': Evil Upon Evil" and "Serben vergewaltigen auf obersten Befehl" (Serbs rape on highest orders)¹. The media reported that rape and other sexual atrocities were a deliberate and systematic part of

the Bosnian Serb campaign for victory in the war. A perception was generated that detention camps had been set up specifically for the purpose of raping women, and that the policy of rape had been planned at the highest levels of the Bosnian Serb military structure. Strong and persistent demands for a decisive response to these outrages came from around the globe.



Violence Against Women

Many of the steps taken to address sexual violence against women during armed conflict have occurred within the framework of the United Nations. This issue of *women 2000* focuses upon some of these developments. Two points must be made at the outset. First, sexual violence during armed conflict affects men as well as women. However, it is clear that women are more likely to be subjected to sexual violence than men. Women are also targeted for different reasons than men, and they are affected by the experience in very different ways to men. For a woman, there is the added risk of pregnancy as a result of rape. In addition, women occupy very different positions in society to men, and are treated differently as a result of what has happened to them. Women are frequently shunned, ostracized, and considered unmarriageable. Permanent damage to the reproductive system, which often results from sexual violence, has different implications for women than for men. Thus, while it is imperative to acknowledge and redress the trauma suffered by both men and women, it is important to recognize their different experiences when responding to the problem. Secondly, it must be emphasized that sexual violence is only one of the issues that arise when considering women's experience of armed conflict. For example, more women than men become refugees or displaced persons during conflict, and women's primary responsibility for agriculture and water collection in many societies renders them particularly vulnerable to injury from certain types of weapons used in conflict, such as land-mines. Further, women's overall position of disadvantage within the community means that the general hardships accompanying armed conflict frequently fall more heavily upon women than upon men. Women who serve as combatants experience armed conflict differently to male combatants, and the culture of militarism impacts upon women in particular ways.² Although not within the scope of the present issue, the many other ways that armed conflict affects women warrant serious attention and concern.

Sexual Violence During Armed Conflict: A Hidden Atrocity?

The Nature of Sexual Violence During Armed Conflict

The term "sexual violence" refers to many different crimes including rape, sexual mutilation, sexual humiliation, forced prostitution, and forced pregnancy. These crimes are motivated by a myriad of factors. For example, a commonly held view throughout history has been that women are part of the "spoils" of war to which soldiers are entitled. Deeply entrenched in this notion is the idea that women are property -- chattel available to victorious warriors. Sexual violence may also be looked upon as a means of troop mollification. This is particularly the case where women are forced into military sexual slavery. Another reason that sexual violence occurs is to destroy male, and thereby community, pride. Men who have failed to "protect their women" are considered to be humiliated and weak. It can also be used as a form of punishment, particularly where women are politically active, or are associated with others who are politically active. Sexual violence can further be used as a means of inflicting terror upon the population at large. It can shatter communities and drive people out of their homes. Sexual violence can also be part of a genocidal strategy. It can inflict life-threatening bodily and mental harm, and form part of the conditions imposed to bring about the ultimate destruction of an entire group of people.



Sexual Violence and World War II

Historical records are largely silent about the occurrence of sexual violence during World War II. This is not because sexual violence did not occur, but for a variety of other reasons. Part of the problem is that sexual violence was perpetrated by all sides to the conflict. Consequently, it was difficult for one party to make allegations against the other at the conclusion of hostilities. Moreover, sexual violence had long been accepted as an inevitable, albeit unfortunate, reality of armed conflict. This was compounded by the fact that in the late 1940s sexual matters were not discussed easily or openly, and there was no strong, mobilized women's movement to exert pressure for redress.

"..memorable experiences are when I speak to victims, especially when I spoke to the comfort women in Korea. I don't think I have ever heard such horrendous tales...[Special Rapporteurs] are not supposed to cry, but it is terribly difficult." Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Interview in Libertas, International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, Dec 1997, Vol 7:2, p. 7.

Only in recent years have writers and others begun to reconsider the issue of sexual violence during World War II. At the centre of this has been the belated recognition of crimes committed against many thousands of Asian women and girls who were forced into military sexual slavery by the Japanese Army during World War II. They have become known as "comfort women". In 1992, the Japanese Government officially apologized for compelling these women into military sexual slavery, and has

written to each surviving "comfort woman". The UN's Special Rapporteur on violence against women has reported that these women and girls endured

Post-World War II War Crimes Trials

Following World War II, two multinational war-crimes tribunals were established by the Allies to prosecute suspected war criminals, one in Tokyo, and the other in Nuremberg. Despite the fact that rape and other forms of sexual violence had been prohibited by the laws of armed conflict for centuries, no reference was made to sexual violence in the Charters of either the Nuremberg or the Tokyo tribunals. Although some evidence of sexual atrocities was received by the Nuremberg Tribunal, sexual crimes committed against women were not expressly charged nor referred to in the Tribunal's Judgement. Indictments before the Tokyo Tribunal did expressly charge rape, evidence was received, and the Tokyo Judgement referred to rape. ...

Additional war crimes trials were held pursuant to Control Council Law No. 10, which was adopted



Violence Against Women

by the Allies in 1945 to provide a basis for the trial of suspected Nazi war criminals who were not dealt with at Nuremberg. This document represented an over the Charters of the Nuremberg and Tokyo Tribunals in that rape was explicitly listed as one of the crimes over which the Control Council had jurisdiction. However, no charges of rape were actually brought pursuant to Control Council Law No.10

The Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols

Although not a UN initiative, the four Geneva Conventions adopted in 1949 are to the present discussion. Following the horrors of World War II, these Conventions were initiated by the International Committee of the Red Cross in order to improve the situation of war victims. In 1977 two Additional Protocols were adopted to extend and strengthen the protection provided in the Geneva Conventions. These treaties form part of the law of armed conflict, and contain certain provisions that apply specifically to women. Many of these provisions seek to protect women in their capacity as expectant mothers, maternity cases and nursing mothers; others regulate the treatment of female prisoners. There are also provisions dealing explicitly with sexual violence.

What is the "law of armed conflict"?

The body of international legal principles found in treaties and in the practice of States, that regulates hostilities in situations of armed conflict. "Armed conflict" is the preferred legal term rather than the term "war" because the law applies irrespective of whether there has been a formal declaration of war. Other terms with the same meaning include: "international humanitarian law", "the humanitarian laws of war" and "jus in bello". Different rules apply depending upon whether a conflict is internal (i.e. a civil war) or international (i.e. a war between two or more states or state- like entities). Internal conflicts are regulated by fewer laws than international conflicts.... Does the law of armed conflict deal

explicitly with sexual violence?

Yes, the relevant provisions are: Geneva Convention IV Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons; Article 27: "Women shall be especially protected against any attack on their honour, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault." Additional Protocol I of 1977; Article 76(1): "Women shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected in particular against rape, forced prostitution and any other form of indecent assault." Additional Protocol II of 1977; Article 4(2)(e) prohibits: "Outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment, rape, enforced prostitution and any form of indecent assault."



UN Responses to Sexual Violence

One of the first major references within the UN system to women and armed conflict was in 1969 when the Commission on the Status of Women, began to consider whether special protection should be accorded to particularly vulnerable groups, namely women and children, during armed conflict and emergency situations. Following this, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) States to comply with their obligations under international instruments, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions that offer important guarantees of protection for women and children.⁵ There is no explicit reference to women's vulnerability to sexual violence during armed conflict. Yet, as the Special Rapporteur on violence against women has reported, there is evidence that in 1971, rape was committed on a massive scale during the conflict in Bangladesh.⁶ In light of this, the omission of any explicit reference to sexual violence in the Declaration just a few years later is notable. ...

Throughout the 1980s, the UN continued to refer to the particular vulnerability of women during armed conflict, but still without any explicit reference to the prevalence of sexual violence. The practice of considering women and children as one category demonstrated a continuing preoccupation with women as mothers and care-givers.

For example, commencing in the 1980s the ECOSOC agreed a series of resolutions on the situation of Palestinian women and children in the occupied Arab territories, as well as the situation of women and children in Namibia, and women and children living under apartheid. These resolutions recognized the poor living conditions of women but did not refer to their vulnerability to sexual violence. It seems unlikely that, in contrast to the majority of other conflicts throughout history, sexual violence was not a feature of these particular conflicts.

At the end-of-decade Conference held in Nairobi in 1985, the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, adopted to provide a blueprint for the advancement of women to the Year 2000, referred to the especially vulnerable situation of women affected by inter alia armed conflict, including the threat of physical abuse. The general vulnerability of women to sexual abuse and rape in everyday life was recognized, but sexual violence was not specifically linked to armed conflict.⁸ Even in the mid-1980s, sexual violence during armed conflict largely remained unrecognized.

The 1990s: International Concern Over Sexual Violence During Armed Conflict The Gulf War and the Creation of the United Nations Compensation Commission

Some of the first steps towards progress on the issue of wartime sexual violence taken by the UN have gone almost unnoticed. As in the case of other conflicts, when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, sexual violence was a frequent occurrence during the ensuing hostilities.



Violence Against Women

A UN report documented the prevalence of rape perpetrated against Kuwaiti women by Iraqi soldiers during the invasion.⁹

Although the UN Security Council did not expressly refer to sexual violence against women in its resolutions relating to the Gulf conflict, it did create the United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC) to compensate victims who suffered damage as a result of Iraq's unlawful invasion of Kuwait. ...

The Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia

It was not until sexual atrocities were committed during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia that consistent references began to appear throughout the UN to the problem of sexual violence during armed conflict. Security Council resolution 798 of 18 December 1992 referred to the "massive, organized and systematic detention and rape of women, in particular Muslim women, in Bosnia and Herzegovina." Similar resolutions followed. As part of its response to the conflict, the Security Council established a Commission of Experts (Yugoslav Commission), to investigate violations of international humanitarian law committed in the former Yugoslavia. In its Interim Report, the Yugoslav Commission listed systematic sexual assault as one of the priority areas in its ongoing investigations,¹¹...

The Vienna Conference on Human Rights, 1993

The 1993 UN World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna was a watershed for women's human rights. Of particular significance was the recognition that violence against women, such as domestic abuse, mutilation, burning and rape, is a human rights issue. Previously, these acts had been regarded as private matters, and therefore not appropriate for government or international action. Even the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Women's Convention), adopted in 1979, has no specific provision on violence against women. In 1985, the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies had acknowledged the problem of violence against women, and urged governments to respond, but there was no explicit recognition that violence against women is a human rights issue. In the years following Nairobi, the issue of violence against women received consideration within the ECOSOC, particularly by the Commission on the Status of Women. In addition, in 1992 the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the body created to monitor the Women's Convention, adopted a general recommendation on "Violence against Women."²⁵

These developments were due in part to intensified efforts by women's NGOs to draw attention to the problem. The International Women's Rights Action Watch, established to monitor the Women's Convention and the activities of CEDAW, was particularly active on the issue, as was the International League for Human Rights.²⁶



At the Vienna Conference in 1993, a number of women's NGOs, including WILDAF (Women in Law and Development in Africa), the Asian Women's Human Rights Council, and CLADEM (Latin American Committee for Women's Rights), coordinated their action under the umbrella of the Center for Women's Global Leadership, and were responsible for highlighting the issue of violence against women.²⁷ ...

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women

Developments regarding the problem of violence against women coalesced in December 1993 when the UNGA adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. The Declaration identifies three main categories of violence against women, namely physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, within the general community, and that perpetrated or condoned by the State. It explicitly recognizes that women in conflict situations are especially vulnerable to violence.³⁰

The Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women

In 1994 the Commission on Human Rights appointed a Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and Radhika Coomaraswamy of Sri Lanka was named to fill the position... .

The Fourth World Conference on Women at the Fourth World Conference on Women

At the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in November 1995, sexual violence against women during armed conflict was a major theme. This is reflected in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which identifies women and armed conflict as one of the 12 critical areas of concern to be addressed by Member States, the international community and civil society.³⁶...



A LONG BATTLE FOR THE GIRL CHILD*

Vibhuti Patel

The Forum against Sex Determination and Sex Preselection began its campaign in Mumbai against discriminatory abortions of female fetuses in April 1986. In the 25 years since then, laws have been enacted against the practice but female foeticide continues. It is a major challenge to fight the use of pre-selection techniques for son preference without jeopardizing women's right to safe abortion.

The 2011 Census of India data has revealed that the child (0-6 age group) sex ratios have been steadily declining from 971 in 1981 to 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001 to 914 in 2011. This deplorable scenario is the result of the widespread use of sex determination (SD) and sex pre-selection (SP) tests throughout the country. Advances in medical science resulted in SD and SP techniques such as sonography, fetoscopy, needling, chorionic villi biopsy (CVB), amniocentesis and ultrasound.

These tests were well known not only in urban India but also in the villages. The metros were the major centres for SD and Sp tests with sophisticated laboratories. However, amniocentesis and ultrasound were used even in the clinics of small towns and cities of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan in the late 1970s. Science in Service of Femicide In 1972, when Amul Dairy introduced CVB to determine the sex of the foetus among cows and buffaloes, it was for sex selective abortion of the male foetus. Bullocks were generally not needed for agrarian chores since agricultural mechanisation and tractorisation had replaced them. My caste members, the Patidars of Kheda and Mehsana districts quickly started using the CVB for identification of the sex of the human foetus and aborted the female fetuses.

Women members of my clan from Anand and Vidyanagar would share stories about selective abortion of female fetuses in their families with me. In 1975, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) conducted a sample survey of amniocentesis to find out about foetal genetic conditions and easily managed to enrol 11,000 pregnant women as volunteers for its research.¹ The research team found that the main interest of these volunteers was to know the sex of the foetus.

Once they learnt the sex of the foetus, the women carrying female fetuses demanded an abortion.² The newly formed Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS) led by Veena Mazumdar met the health minister and demanded an immediate ban on the use of SD tests for abortion of female fetuses. But during the Emergency (1975-77), the State was interested in



population control and saw the SD tests as effective tools to attain population stabilisation.³ In the post-Emergency period, when women's studies scholars connected sex selective abortions with the continuous trend of declining sex ratio as revealed by the census, the Union Health Minister, Raj Narain decided to ban SD tests for sex selection in all government-run hospitals in 1978. However, this did not stop private health facilities that were rapidly expanding in the early 1980s from offering amniocentesis and other sex-selection tests that became the “bread and butter” (as told to me by a gynaecologist in Amreli, Gujarat in 1979) for many gynaecologists. A justification for this was aptly put by a team of doctors of Mumbai's Harkisandas Narottamdas Hospital (a pioneer in this trade) in these words, “...in developing countries like India, as the parents are encouraged to limit their family to two offspring, they will have a right to quality in these two as far as can be assured. Amniocentesis provides help in this direction.”⁴ Here the word “quality” raises a number of issues that we discussed with those doctors when they shared their paper with us in 1982.

Campaign

The Forum against Sex Determination and Sex Pre-selection (fasdsp) began its campaign in Mumbai against discriminatory abortions of female fetuses in April 1986. Its first action was a demonstration in front of a reputed hospital that boasted of performing 8,000 amniocentesis (sex selection) tests on pregnant women. It claimed that only one pregnant woman with three sons wanted a daughter and 7,999 pregnant women wanted only sons. As the hospital was against abortion, it advised those women whose tests had shown female fetuses to go for abortion elsewhere but the women were told to bring back the aborted fetuses to the hospital for further research. Our placards had slogans in English, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati that said: “Eliminate Inequality, Not Women”, “Destroy Dowry and Dehumanisation, Not Daughters”, “Say 'No' to Sexdetermination, Say 'Yes' to Empowerment of Women, Say 'No' to Sex Discrimination, Say 'Yes' to Gender Justice”, “Daughters Are Not for Slaughter”, “Stop Femicide, Promote Equity”, “Girls Are the Equals of Boys, All They Need Is Opportunity”, “Sex Selection is a Crime against Humanity”, “Respect Bodily Integrity of Women”, “Women Are Not Son-Producing Machines”, and so on. After we spent four hours slogan shouting, distributing leaflets and collecting signatures against selective abortion of female fetuses, the dean of the hospital called a delegation from amongst the picketers (that included me) for discussion. He asked each of us, “How many children do you have?” When one picketer said, “Two sons”, he said, “So you are happy with your sons! Why don't you allow others also to be happy by use of sex selection tests?” When he asked me the same question, I replied, “One daughter”. He sniggered, “Now I understand why you are picketing. You are jealous of those who have sons or are making efforts to have a son.” The difference in perspectives that we encountered then continues till today. The medical fraternity by and large does not see this as violence against women.



Violence Against Women

During the 1980s, in other countries, the SD tests were very expensive and under strict government control, while in India the SD test could be done for between Rs 70 and Rs 500 (about \$6 and \$40). Hence, people across economic classes could avail themselves of this facility. A survey of several slums in Bombay (Mumbai) showed us that many women had undergone the test and after learning that the foetus was female, had got an abortion done in the 18th or 19th week of pregnancy. Their argument was that it was better to spend Rs 200 or even Rs 800 than to give birth to a female baby and spend thousands of rupees on her marriage later.

We were approached by the social welfare officer of Larsen and Toubro, a multinational engineering industry in 1984 as the popularity of this test attracted its young employees aspiring for upward economic mobility and wanting only sons. As a result, medical bills showing the amount spent on the test were submitted by the employees for reimbursement by the company. The welfare department was astonished to see that these employees were treating sex determination tests so casually. They organised a two-day seminar in which doctors, social workers, representatives of women's organisations as well as the Family Planning Association of India (FPAI) were invited. One doctor who carried on a flourishing business in SD stated in the seminar that from Cape-Comorin to Kashmir people phoned him at all hours of the day to find out about the test. Even his six-year-old son had learnt how to ask relevant questions on the phone such as, "Is the pregnancy 16 weeks old?".⁵

Anecdotal Information

Every time we approached the government, they told us that we were sharing only anecdotal information; it would take action only when our arguments were supported by hard data. Many of us started doing self-sponsored research on SDs and SPs in the community. We were supported by trade unions, the Medico Friends Circle, People's Science movements and the Association of Nurses. As a result of such research, many FASDSP members began presenting papers at the Indian Association of Women's Studies (1981), International Sociological Association (1984), International Anthropological Association, Feminist International Network of Resistance to Reproductive and Genetic Engineering (FINRRAGE), 1985 and National Conferences of Women's Movements (1985, 1988, 1990).

A sociological research project in Punjab in 1982 selected in its sample 50% men and 50% women as respondents for their questionnaire on the opinions of men and women regarding SD tests. Among the male respondents were businessmen and white-collar employees in the income group of Rs 1,000 to Rs 3,500 per month, while the female respondents were mainly housewives. All of them knew about the test and found it useful.⁶ Punjab was the first state to start the commercial use of this test as early as in 1979. The advertisements in newspapers regarding the New Bhandari



Ante-Natal SD Clinics in Amritsar first persuaded the press and women's groups to denounce the practice. A section of the media too helped by covering our campaign against the sex determination tests.

Roger Jeffery, a medical anthropologist from Edinburgh University, UK attended FASDSP meetings in Mumbai. Micro-research in Bijnor district of Uttar Pradesh by his team revealed that clinical services offering amniocentesis had existed in the region from 1974.⁷ According to the 1981 Census, the child sex ratio of Uttar Pradesh and Bijnor district respectively, were 886 and 863 girls per 1,000 boys. They also discovered that female infanticide practiced in Bijnor district until 1900 had been limited to Rajputs and Jats who considered the birth of a daughter as a loss of prestige. By contrast, the abuse of amniocentesis for the purpose of female foeticide was prevalent in all communities in Bijnor district in 1983.

Doctors against Sex Determination and Sex Pre-selection (DASDSP) in Mumbai was formed at the initiative of FASDSP member Sanjeev Kulkarni, a member of Medico Friends circle, Amar Jesani and Indian Medical Association member Bal Inamdar.⁸ However, they were clear that the ban on sex selective abortion should not curb abortions that are permitted through the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971.⁹ The DASDSP focused on medical malpractices and the ethical dimensions of SD and SP.

A committee to examine the issues of sex determination tests and female foeticide, formed at the initiative of the Maharashtra government in 1986, appointed Sanjeev Kulkarni to conduct a study. To be done under the Foundation of Research in Community Health (FRCH) it was to investigate the prevalence of this test in Mumbai. Forty-two gynaecologists were interviewed by Kulkarni, himself a gynaecologist. His findings disclosed that about 84% of the gynaecologists interviewed were performing amniocentesis for SD tests.

In March 1987, the Maharashtra government appointed an expert committee to propose comprehensive legal provisions to restrict sex determination tests for identifying genetic conditions. The committee was appointed in response to a private bill introduced in the assembly by a member of the legislative assembly (MLA) who was persuaded by the forum to do so. In fact, the forum approached several MLAs and MPs to put forward such a bill. In April 1988, the Maharashtra government introduced a bill to provide for the regulation of the use of medical or scientific techniques of prenatal diagnosis solely for the purpose of detecting genetic or metabolic disorders or chromosomal abnormalities or certain congenital anomalies or sex-linked conditions and for the prevention of the misuse of prenatal sex determination leading to female foeticide and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto (LC Bill No VIII of 1988). In June 1988, it became an Act. Its purview was limited only to SD tests; it did not say anything about the SP techniques.



Violence Against Women

It admitted that medical technology could be misused by doctors and banning of SD tests had taken away the respectability of these tests. In the eyes of law both the clients and the practitioners of the SD tests were culprits and it forbade the advertising of these tests.

By 1990, private members' bills to regulate antenatal sex selection tests were introduced in Karnataka, Goa, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan. By 1991, FASDSP had been active nationally. The central government formed a committee in 1991 to formulate a central law on this issue. The Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act was enacted in 1994 by the central government. But there was gross violation of this legislation.

Initiatives by the State and NGOs

In 1997, Sabu George, the Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT), Mumbai and Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsh Mandal (MASUM), Pune filed a public interest litigation (PIL) that was fought on their behalf by the Lawyers Collective (Delhi).¹⁰ After consistent campaigning around the PIL, the Supreme Court directed all state governments on 4 May 2001 to make an effective and prompt implementation of The Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) (pcpndt) Act. Most of the state governments lacked political will to implement the PCPNDT Act. Budgetary allocation for the implementation of the Act was grossly inadequate. Members of women's groups who were in the State Appropriate Authority and State Vigilance Committee were dejected due to the lack of response from the authorities even after the culprits had been caught red-handed by using decoy patients. self-help kits for sex selection that can be ordered for pregnant women on the internet from abroad were impossible to monitor. In 2003, the PCPNDT Act was amended but the challenges of implementation continue.

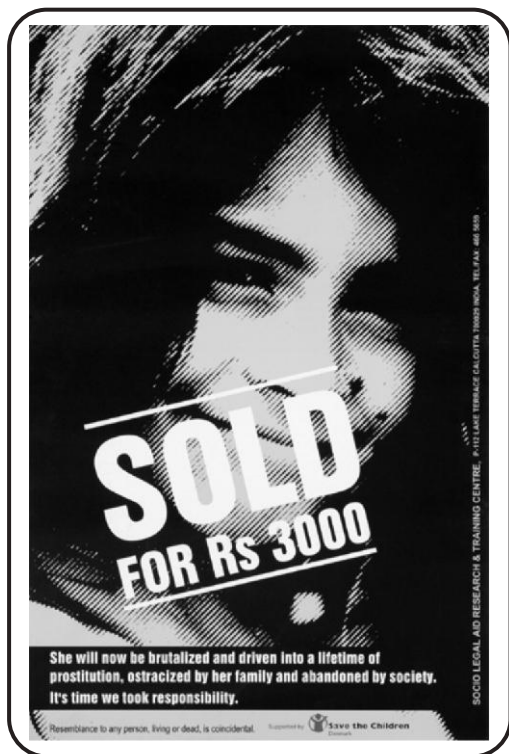
In this context, it is imperative to change the mindset of people and introduce affirmative action to increase the value of girls. Organisations like Men against Violence and Abuse (MAVA) have taken the initiative to provide a platform for all like-minded people who want to save the girl child.

Civil society initiatives on this issue use symbols, imagery, and slogans that at times convey anti-abortion messages. Common use of terms such as “foeticide”, “murder”, “genocide”, “slaughter” of daughters have a dramatic effect but threaten women's right to safe abortion as a backup service on demand by women. It is a major challenge to fight against discriminatory abortions of female fetuses and use of pre-selection techniques for son-preference within the matrix of gender justice and without jeopardising women's right to safe abortion.



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 - 10 . Asmita Basu (2003), "Sex Selective Abortions", *Lawyers Collective*, Vol. 18, No 11, November, pp 20-23.
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Violence Against Women

(Excerpt from *Gender Violence in India-- A Prajny Report. 2009*)

Honour killings

What is “honour killing”

An honour killing or crime is presumed to be committed to salvage the 'honour' of a clan, community or family that has somehow been 'violated'

- Usually the violation occurs through the actions of a woman in the community choosing a husband, lover or boyfriend, against her family's wishes.
- Honour, however, can be perceived to be breached in other ways: if a meal is not served on time, if a woman is raped, if she is seen talking to a man, if she refuses to marry a man chosen for her, if she chooses to marry a man of another or “lower caste”, or if she spurns a man's affections.

The central notion behind these 'violations' is that a community's or family's 'honour' is inextricably linked with a woman's behaviour, and specifically her chastity. Prior to 1998, the world knew little about crimes that were committed in the name of honour, Thanks to the untiring work of activists and organisations in several countries, these crimes began to gain the attention of the media and later the United Nations.

In 2002, the UN adopted a resolution on 'working towards the elimination of crimes against women committed in the name of honour.' It took India several more years to even begin to accept that such crimes occurred here. In 2002, a High Court Judge implied in his statement that while such crimes were not unusual in Pakistan, they did not quite belong in a 'secular' nation like India:

'The barbaric practice of “honour killings”js frequently reported to take place in Pakistan which is a State based on feudal and communal ideology. However, this court has been shocked to note that in our country also, which boasts of being a secular and liberal country 'honour killings' have been taking place from time to time..'

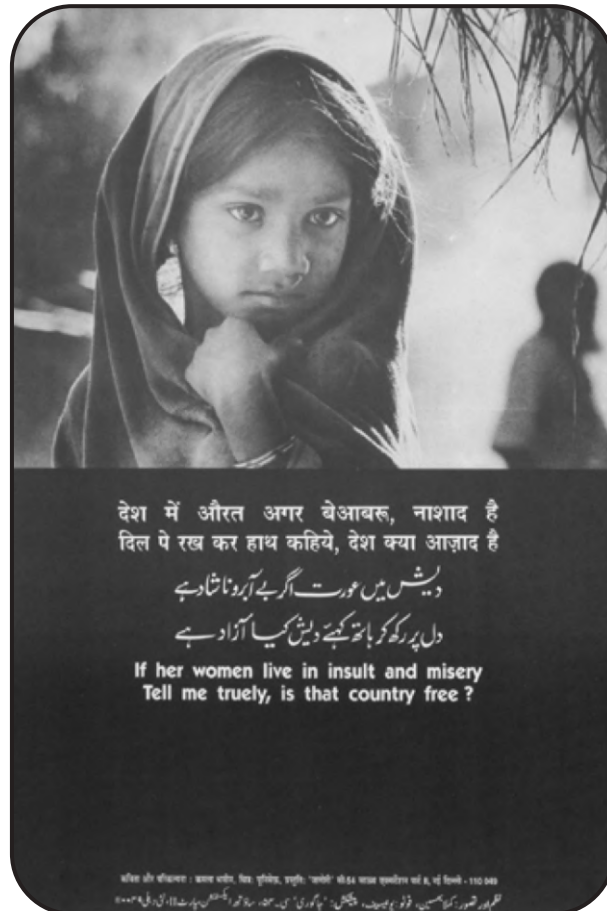
In July 2009 however, Union Home Minister P.Chidambaram denounced such crimes in Rajya Sabha and announced the government's intention of punishing the perpetrators of these acts. While this is indeed a step in the right direction, the non-classification of such crimes in Indian records, the patriarchal lens under which they are viewed by those in authority and the fact that the perpetrators are rarely brought to justice ensure that these crimes, which occur more often 'from time to time' are severely under-reported, In fact, the National Crime Records Bureau does not have a classification for 'honour killings' and does not therefore, have any records or data on the number of such killings in the country.



Counting the losses

The All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) conducted a survey and found that in cases where the girl belonged to an 'upper' caste, it was her family that initiated that violence. AIDWA also estimates that Haryana and Punjab alone account for around 10 percent of all honour crimes in the country. However, other non-governmental organizations state that while attention has been focussed on the north of the country, honour killings are not unheard of in the South. In the last three years, according to one NGO working the field, there have been at least 0 such crimes in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu alone

While increasing attention has been focused on such crimes in the recent past by both the media and human rights activists, there are still no records of such crimes. They also continue to be classified under the general sections of the Indian Penal code as assault, battery or homicide. Moreover, as many of these crimes have to do with cases of love or marriage between a caste Hindu woman and a Dalit man, they are generally filed under the SC/ST Act as a cast –based crime and not recognized as an honour killing. In fact, there is no “honour killing” category under which cases can be filed or complaints can be registered; there is also no specific legislation to prevent this crime or enforce punishment.





Violence Against Women

SESSION PLAN

[Note : This interdisciplinary module was tried and tested over four workshop sessions with undergraduate and post graduate teacher facilitators from colleges and university departments in Mumbai. The teachers came from different disciplinary locations. The following session plan was made for these workshops. Necessarily, over the workshops, this plan was modified to suit the needs and profiles of the teachers attending these sessions. We recommend that this session plan may be imaginatively and creatively used by teacher trainers.]

Possible Exercises for Group Work- Brainstorming, Films, Poems, Story Telling, Song, Poster Making

Objective

- To understand different forms of VAW and their impact on girls and women
- To explain the link between VAW and subordination of girls and women
- To discuss and analyse myths about VAW
- To critically examine legal safeguards to prevent VAW and punish the culprits.
- To analyse the impact of VAW on mental health on the victims

Screening of Films Followed by Discussion

Several films have been made about **sex-determination tests** leading to selective abortion of female foetuses:

(1) **Samadhan**, a twenty-eight-minute dramatized treatment with well-known Hindi filmstars. Available for U.S. \$20.00 from M.K. Shankar, Aditya Creative Film Makers, 3/206 Manish Darshan, J.B. Nagar, Andheri (East), Bombay 400 059, India.

(2). **Ajata**, a documentary of interviews with women who have had the tests, doctors who have performed them, women's rights activists, feminists, and members of the Forum against Sex-Determination (SD) and Sex-Preselection (SP), and Doctors against SD and SP. Available from Director, Centre for Development of Instructional Technology (CENDIT), D-1, Soami Nagar, New Delhi 110 017, India.

(3) **A Cry Strangled**, a documentary with about the same content as the previous film except that there are scenes of the hospitals and clinics where the tests are conducted. Also available from CENDIT (see previous listing).



(4) ***Children of Desired Sex***, made in Bombay in 1984 by Mira Nair and released in 1987, this film might be available from the Canadian International Development Agency, and there are reports that it might be shown on the Public Broadcasting System (TV) in the United States.

Films on Domestic Violence

Chaar Diwari

Directed by Rinki Bhattacharya

A documentary film ***Char Diwari*** by Rinki Bhattacharya -- a survivor of domestic violence herself -- shows how educated and financially independent women suffer physical and mental abuse at the hands of their husbands. Some of them did not have the courage to either separate from them or seek divorce. It exposed the myth that violence exists only in the lower strata of society. Rinki Bhattacharya is the daughter of the legendary filmmaker Bimal Roy of ***Do Beegha Zameen*** and ***Devdas*** fame. The film exposes how wives in affluent homes were beaten by educated men from liberal backgrounds. It also explored the isolation and terror of women trapped in violent marriages and the social response to domestic violence. The film chronicled the saga of four courageous women, who resolved to put an end to the violence and reinvented their lives. Women's organizations all over the world observe November 25 as the 'International Day for Elimination of Violence against Women.' This year in India, women's groups have reasons to celebrate because Parliament has enacted a law to protect women against domestic violence, which also include live-in relationships.

Film on Protest Movements against VAW

Unlimited Girls

Directed by Paromita Vora

Produced by Sakshi

94 mins, English and Hindi with English sub-titles, 2002

Unlimited Girls itself stands as the inheritor of a long and vociferous tradition of feminist documentary filmmaking in India. Women have been making political films in India since the 1970s but the real flowering of the phenomenon was in the 1980s. Sadly, the impetus for the hundred flowers to bloom in this arena were the increasing atrocities against women (sati, bride burning, the Shah Bano case), systemic as well as personal. Even as Vora's film explores the Big Issues and makes reference to all that has galvanised us over the decades, it is also an extremely personal journey for the filmmaker. The film is driven as much by her quest for personal answers as it is by the issues of the movement and the positions and experiences of the women around her. Vora skillfully avoids editorialising in her own voice, as the chat room conversations take over that role.



Violence Against Women

Another major achievement of the film is that it ends with a blank slate, one that we are free to write upon as we begin or continue our own journey along those paths that have been walked before. Nearly 25 five years after the Mathura rape case which concretized the Indian women's movement, it is time, indeed, for introspection and self-examination. *Unlimited Girls* gives us all an opportunity to do that.

Film against Child Sexual Abuse

Colour Black

Directed by Madhushree Dutta

30 minutes, in Hindi and English

*Produced by **Majlis**, a feminist organization working against VAW.*

This film provides an insight into the mind boggling issue and taboo subject of child sexual abuse (CSA). To protect children from sexual abuse and punish the culprits has been the crucial challenge for women's movement in India.

Film Profiling Experiences of VAW by the Survivors

Memories of Fear

Directed by Madhushree Dutta

60 minutes, in Hindi

This film deals with VAW and CSA through experiential narratives and interviews it unfolds construction of fear informed by patriarchal control over sexuality.

Film on All Forms of VAW : From Womb to Tomb

Nasreen O Nasreen

Produced by the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi

31 minutes

The film talks about violence on women and its grave implications on physical and psychological health of women. It has touching narratives by survivor--victims of violence on how to combat violence and demand one's rights. The film includes key issues such as Domestic Violence, Dowry, Sex Selective Abortion of Female Foetuses, Child Sexual Abuse and marital rape.



Film on Struggle of Rural Women against VAW

Doghi

Directed by Sumitra Bhave

156 minutes

Doghi is a story about two sisters in a poor rural family in India as their family struggles to come to terms with compromises that they have to make in order to survive. Their father's illness forces one sister to go to the big city to work as a prostitute, allowing her to send money home so the rest of the family can live in relative ease. The return of that sister to the village home to attend the younger sisters wedding results in a showdown in the family, bringing to the surface the struggles and double standards of the parents in their willingness to accept money from the elder sister but at the same time wanting her to go away so as not to "spoil" their name and remind them of their guilt in forcing her into her city life and the moral compromises that they have made. When Krishna the younger sister insists that they accept the elder sister for who she is and indeed respect her for the sacrifices she has made, the mother realizes her mistake and in an emotional realization of her love for the elder sister, embraces her, welcoming her back into the fold with promises to bear all hardship but to never let her return to the difficult, amoral life of the city. - I am summarizing here and not really doing enough justice to this beautiful heart warming tale of the two (*doghi*) sisters.

BRAINSTORMING

Exercise 1:

Steps:

- Ask the participants to brainstorm on what they perceive as sexual harassment. Eg. What kind of sexual harassment is one likely to face at a workplace?
- Ask the participants to read out the commonly held beliefs about sexual harassment. Do they agree or disagree?
- Give the participants the feminists' understanding of sexual harassment and why it is unacceptable behaviour. Ask them if they can see differences between their understanding and what is given in this manual

Myths versus Facts: Sexual Harassment at Workplace

Myth: 1. Women enjoy 'eve-teasing'/sexual harassment

Fact: Eve-teasing/sexual harassment is humiliating, intimidating, painful and frightening.



Violence Against Women

Myth 2: 'Eve-teasing' is harmless flirtation. Women who object have no sense of humour.

Fact: Behaviour that is unwelcome cannot be considered harmless, or funny. Sexual harassment is defined by its impact on the woman rather than the intent of the perpetrator.

Myth 3: Women ask for SHW. Only women who are provocatively dressed are sexually harassed.

Fact: This is the classic way of shifting the blame from the harasser to the woman. Women have the right to act, dress and move around freely without the threat of attack or harassment.

The most popular slogan of the women's rights movement of the last three decades has been:

However we dress, where ever we go

'Yes' means 'Yes' and 'No' means 'No'.

Myth 4: Women who say NO actually mean YES.

Fact: This is a common myth used by men to justify sexual aggression and one-sided sexual advances.

Myth 5: Sexual harassment is not really an issue. It doesn't hurt anyone.

Fact: Persons subjected to sexual harassment experience a wide range of physical and psychological ailments. There are economic consequences for the victim's physical and mental well being and the organisation's productivity, efficiency and work ethics.

Myth 6: Sexual harassment! It's only natural male behaviour. A man is a hunter and a woman is a prey.

Fact: Men are not born knowing how to sexually harass others. It's learned within the context of a sexist and patriarchal environment that perpetuates control over women's sexuality, fertility and labour.

Myth 7: Women keep quiet: that means they like it.

Fact: Women keep quiet to avoid the stigma attached and retaliation from the harasser.

Women are afraid that they will be accused of provoking it, of being victimised, of being called liars and made the subject of gossip.

Myth 8: If women go to places where they are not welcome, they should expect sexual harassment.

Fact: Discriminatory behaviour and abuse is unlawful. Women have equal access to all work facilities. Safe work place is women's legal right.



Explain some of the noteworthy complaints of SHW that acquired national level limelight were filed by:

- IAS officer in Chandigarh Rupan Deo Bajaj against the super cop K.P.S. Gill
- An activist of All India Democratic Women's Association against the Environment Minister in Dehradun
- An airhostess against her colleague Mahesh Kumar Lala in Mumbai
- An IAS officer in Thiruvananthapuram against the state minister

Exercise 2:

Reflect on these 4 perspectives on SHW as explained below:

Feminists	Legal	Organisational	
		View A	View B
1. Power-relation, male over woman	1. Exploitative	1. Inter-personal	1. Inter-personal
2. Constitutes economic coercion	2. Involves both implicit &	2. Consists of misinterpretation	2. Improper use of
3. Threatens women's livelihood	explicit terms of employment	or misunderstanding of	power to extort
4. Reflects women's subordinate status in society	3. Used as a basis of employment decisions	person's intentions.	gratification.
5. Asserts women's sex roles over her work role.	4. Produces consequences ranging from submission to/or refusal of advances.	3. "Love affair gone sour".	3. Treats women as sex objects.
6. Parallels rape	5. Promotes intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.	4. Personal matter. Why should organisation get involved?	4. Coercive, exploitative, improper
		5. Can hurt reputation of the accused.	5. Asserts the woman's sex roles over work roles
			6. Aberrant behaviour



Violence Against Women

Myths and Facts about Domestic Violence

Myth: Women Don't Tell the Truth about Domestic Violence

Fact: Women experiencing domestic violence are more likely to deal with the issues themselves or talk to family and friends rather than seek outside support due to barriers such as fear, isolation, lack of support and shame. This is supported by findings in the report *Against the Odds: How Women Survive Domestic Violence* (Keys Young 1998) which found that:

- Less than 20 per cent of women interviewed had contact with domestic violence crisis services while they were in the abusive relationship.
- About 25 per cent of women had contact with the police while they were in the abusive relationship.

Women are also more likely to minimise their experience of domestic violence as opposed to exaggerating it. The commonly held perception is that she must have in some way provoked the violence.

Myth: Domestic Violence only Occurs within Poor or Working Class Families

Fact: Numerous studies show that domestic violence occurs across all socio-economic and cultural groups. (Agnes, Flavia, 1982; Lawyers Collective, 1990)

Families from middle socio-economic backgrounds with access to more resources may be better able to hide the abuse.

Myth: Violent Men Cannot Control Their Anger

Fact: Violent men often believe this is true. The large majority of men who use violence against their partners are able to control their anger and use of abuse around others, i.e. work colleagues, friends and neighbours. They are also able to control the ways in which they abuse their partners, including limiting the physical assault to certain parts of the body where the bruising and injuries don't show. Domestic violence is not an argument that gets 'out of hand' and is frequently the premeditated use of violence.

Myth: Domestic Violence is Caused by the Abuse of Alcohol

Fact: Even though alcohol is involved in about 50 per cent of cases, these same offenders also beat their spouses when sober (Flavia, 1990). Alcohol has been shown to be a risk factor that does not cause domestic violence but can contribute to greater frequency and severity of abuse.



Myth: If Women Do Not Like it They Can Leave. Leaving a Violent Partner Means the Abuse Will Stop

Fact: Women often believe it is impossible to escape the violence and abuse. They are often threatened with death if they leave. In some cases, violence, harassment and intimidation can escalate during separation and can result in serious injury and sometimes death.

They often believe they and their children will be destined to a life of poverty if they leave. Obtaining suitable accommodation for themselves and their children is often difficult, particularly in regional and remote areas.

Myth: Women Provoke Men to be Violent by Nagging and Other Annoying Behaviours

Fact: Most abused women try to do everything they can to please their partner and avoid further violent episodes. Victims of domestic violence are vulnerable to further episodes of abuse regardless of their behaviour.

Myth: They Put Up With It - It's Their Culture

Fact: This argument is simply a variation on 'learning to live with it', and it is generally attributed to women from linguistically or culturally diverse backgrounds. The argument is that women from various 'ethnic' cultures are brought up within value systems which uphold a united family and family honour. The truth is that, globally, the socialization of women emphasizes these values. Women from diverse cultures find it difficult to leave; for instance, women in Australia find it difficult to leave due to systemic and institutional barriers in obtaining assistance.

Myth: Domestic Violence is Not a Widespread Problem

Fact: The private nature of domestic violence has resulted in it remaining a hidden problem. However, it is one which has damaging effects on many victims each year. Over 1 in 5 women presenting to the Accident and Emergency Department of the Royal Brisbane Hospital, had at some stage of their lives been subjected to domestic violence (Roberts, 1993). Over 1 million Australian women have experienced violence by an intimate partner (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996).

Myth: Violent Men are Mentally Ill or Have Psychotic Personalities

Fact: Clinical studies of men who abuse their partners do not support this view. The vast majorities of violent men are not suffering from mental illness and could not be described as psychopaths.



Violence Against Women

Myth: She Needs the Violence, Enjoys It or is Addicted to It

Fact: Beliefs about women's masochism, submission and suffering as a way of life seek to lay the blame on the victim, rather than hold the perpetrator responsible. Arguments that present the combined effects of physical violence, mind games and isolation as the shortcomings of the victim herself have not adequately addressed the difference between the causes of violence against the effects of violence.

Exercise 3: Have you experienced, observed or intervened in cases of domestic violence? How did you find Myths versus facts exercise in understanding domestic violence?

POEMS

“She is a battered woman”

Breasts bruised, brains battered,
Skin scarred, soul shattered,
Can't scream – neighbours stare,
Cry for help, no one's there.
In the intervening silences,
I gather up the jagged fragments,
Try to re-arrange them into some semblance of
The jig-saw puzzle I once called 'me'
In the vacant voids, I finally see
I'll be lost forever, chasing isolated
Pieces of fantasy, unless I go out to
Find new pieces of another 'me'
I see you've got some fragments too,
If we put them together, can we start a new
There are lots of pieces every where,
But the picture we make is one we'll share.

- By Neena Nehru



Battered Women

Someone in the crowd of a hundred
 Is a badly battered woman.
 Someone in the crowd of a hundred
 Is a widely relishing man
 Even if you don't believe this theory
 You are supposed to know,
 Every second of an hour
 A woman is battered sore.
 Some women in the crowd of a hundred
 Are killed as soon as they are born
 No one cares for her future
 For her life is only torn.
 You might not believe me surely
 You might as well be informed
 A man is given more importance
 Than women when they are born.
 One woman in the crowd of a hundred
 Is respected when she is at birth
 ONLY one man in the crowd of a hundred
 Takes a woman out of deep dirt.
 You don't need to believe what I say
 But you must surely be shown
 How for a ninety-nine women
 The future of one man is glown
 One woman in the crowd of a hundred
 Is not a victim of this injustice
But all men in the crowd of a hundred
 The honour of women in all ways, dismiss.

-Lara Jesani

Exercise 4: Are you familiar with a similar scenario? Express yourself through a short story or skit.

LEGAL AWARENESS ABOUT VAW

Legal literacy about VAW is extremely important. We must know that in India, the following legal provisions are made to tackle VAW. What are your views on the following legal provisions?



Violence Against Women

Exercise 5:

On the basis of the following legal instruments to combat VAW, can the participants come out with a Gender Security Index and Welbeing Index?

- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.
- Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 to take action against sexist portrayal of women in the audio-visual print and electronic media, pornography and cyber-porn.
- Prevention of Immoral Traffic (in women and children) Act, 1987 to crack down on prostitution.
- Commission on Sati Prevention Act, 1987 to fight widow burning and its glorification.
- Supreme Court Directive against Sexual Harassment at Workplace, 1997.
- The Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Amendment Act, 2002 to stop sex selection at pre-conception stage as well as of an unborn foetus.
- **Police Station VAW** is a cognisable offence against the state. If you face VAW or see it happening in the neighbourhood, public place or at the workplace, you can immediately contact police demanding police inquiry and get the First Investigation Report filed. You should make three copies-one for the victim, one should be submitted to the police station and don't forget to take an official stamp and signature of the police officer in-charge on the third copy. These documentary proofs are extremely important in the court of law.
- **Court Proceedings:** Provide moral support to the victim and brief her to provide accurate details in chronological order about violence. She must stick to the same version; changing position during cross-examination may go against her.
- Many cases of VAW also get resolved in the neighbourhood committee, community organisations and *lok adalats* (**People's Court**). We must remember that VAW is a manifestation of unequal power-relation between men and women. If women are empowered by the community and official support, we can tilt the balance in favour of "VAW free society".

Under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the following sections are applied in cases of VAW:



IPC Section	Nature of Offence
304 B	Dowry death/ murder
354	Criminal assault of women to outrage women's modesty
366	Kidnap, abduction and marriage of a women by force.
366 A	Procurement of a minor girl
366 B	Import of girl from a foreign country
374	Rape
376 A	Intercourse by a man with his wife during judicial separation
376 B	Intercourse by a public servant with woman in his custody
376 C	Intercourse by superintendent of jail, remand home with women in his custody.
376 D	Intercourse by any member of the management or staff of a hospital with any woman in that hospital
498 A	Husband or in-laws subjecting a woman to cruelty
509	Word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman

STORY TELLING

CASSA's Crusade against Female Infanticide and Pre Birth Elimination of Girls

The Campaign against Sex Selective Abortion is a national level effort to stop pre-birth elimination of girls. A legacy of continuing declining sex ratio in India in the history of Census of India has taken new turn with widespread use of new reproductive technologies (NRTs) in urban India. NRTs are based on principle of selection of **the desirable** and rejection of **the unwanted**. In India, the desirable is the baby boy and the unwanted is the baby girl. The result is obvious. The Census results of 2001 have revealed that with sex ratio of 933 women for 1000 men, India had deficit of 3.5 crore women when it entered the new millennium.

Noble Laureate, Prof. Amartya Kumar Sen calls this phenomenon the "Missing Women".¹ This is a manifestation of discrimination and stigmatization of women delivering daughters. "Sex selection in society occurs in the context of entrenched values, interests and cultural beliefs and practices. Their eradication requires investment in long-term strategies and economic and social development and educational and cultural empowerment".²

It is a matter of deep regret that even the states in Asia perceive this phenomenon as an indicator of population stabilization, logic being less number of women means less reproduction. The women's movement has produced posters which emphasized:

¹Sen, A.K. (1992). "Missing Women", *British Medical Journal*, No.304, March.

²Contractor, Qudsiya (2002). "Sex Selection and the Law", *Combat Law*, Vol.1, No. 1, April-May.



Violence Against Women

“Eliminate Inequality, not Women”,

“Destroy Dowry & dehumanisation, not Daughters”,

Say “No” to Sex-determination, Say “Yes” to Empowerment of Women,

Say “No” to Sex Discrimination, Say “Yes” to Gender Justice.

CASSA counters those who believe that it is better to kill a female foetus than to give birth to an unwanted female child; this logic eliminates the victim of male chauvinism, it does not empower her. The techno-doctors do not challenge anti-women practices such as dowry, instead display an advertisement, “Better Rs. 5000 now than Rs. 5 lakhs later” i.e. better spend Rs. 5000 for female foeticide than Rs. 5 lakhs as dowry for a grown up daughter. By this logic, it is better to kill poor people or third world masses rather than let them suffer in poverty and deprivation. This logic also presumes that social evils like dowry are God-given and that we cannot do anything about them. Hence victimise the victim. Investing in a daughter's education, health and dignified life to make her independent are far more humane and realistic ways than brutalising a pregnant mother and her would-be daughter. The recent series of incidents in which educated women have got their grooms arrested at the time of the wedding ceremony for demanding and harassment for dowry is a very encouraging step in the direction of empowerment of girls. Widespread and supportive media publicity has empowered young women from different parts of the country to cancel marriages involving dowry harassment. They have proved to be the new role models.

It is encouraging to notice that in last two years, several large corporate houses have come forward to take up this issue in a big way under the banner of **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**.

In the petition filed by CEHAT-MASUM in the Supreme Court of India and supported by the women's rights groups, Dr. Sabu George, the petitioner's demand of expansion of the scope of the Pre Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act to include sex pre-selection techniques and effective implementation of the PNDT ACT³ has not only been accepted but also rules have been formulated for its implementation. The state governments are also organising state level seminars for doctors from the government and private sectors to focus on raising awareness to the fact of sex selective foeticide as a discriminatory practice. They are also trying to deal with the issue from the point of view of responsibility of science towards gender justice, medical ethics and human rights. A recent publication of CEHAT “Sex Selection- Issues and Concerns” selected important writings of spokespersons, who have examined the problem of “missing girls” from these angles.

We have a great task in front of us i.e. to change the mindset of doctors and clients, to create a socio-cultural milieu that is conducive to the survival of the girl child and monitor the activities of commercial minded techno-docs thriving on sexist prejudices. Then only we will be able to halt the process of declining sex ratio resulting into the phenomenon of missing girls. To stop a gender imbalanced society we will have to convince doctors and clients, state and civil society that **“Daughters are not for slaughter”**.

Courageous Efforts by Irom Sharmila, Manipur

A fast is going on at PDA complex, next to Jawahar Lal Nehru hospital in Imphal, where Irom Chanu Sharmila is under arrest in a hospital ward. She is charged with attempt to commit suicide.



It is now the 11th year continuous fast by of Irom Sharmila's! Her demand is very simple - 'repeal armed forces special powers act'. But the government has now even stopped talking to her. Recently in protest she even gave up nasal feed, which has kept her alive, but later the doctors and jail staff convinced her to resume nasal feed. One can only imagine how she can go on being fed through nose every day for 11 years.

Women's organizations in Manipur, coordinated by 'Meira Paibee' (Mothers' Organization), have come together as 'Sharmila Kanba Lup' (Save Sharmila Group) to launch an indefinite hunger strike this year (2011) starting December 10, the international with the slogan 'Save Sharmila, repeal AFSPA'. Hundreds of women from nearby areas arrive every morning and sit for the entire day; the next day it is the turn of the women from another locality. With a strong network of Meira Paibeers in Manipur the movement is self-propelling. Reading about the protest in local newspapers, new groups of women are coming in. Women from Meira Paibi also patrol the streets at night to protect their men folk from detention.

Sharmila has become paler - because of lack of nutrition and sunlight. But, she is determined to continue her struggle. She has tremendous faith in God and is certain that she will succeed one day. In her interview to the *Times of India*, 5-10-2009, she stated, "My struggle is for changing the state of Manipur. In this field of war, I am crying for peace. First, there must be justice for the people, who have suffered so much."

Songs from the Women's Movement in India

HE JI RE

Breaking shackles of domesticity, restrictions imposed by tradition,

Rejecting mindset of slavery,

WE HAVE COME.

To abolish women's oppression, to get rid of women's exploitation,

To stop wife beating

WE HAVE COME.

To destroy dowry, rape, atrocities of the dictators,

Casteism, communalism, chauvinism & hierarchical order,

WE HAVE COME.



Violence Against Women

TO COMBAT THE TYRANNY,
From villages and cities, from fields and mines,
Offices and factories,
WOMEN'S GROUPS COME.

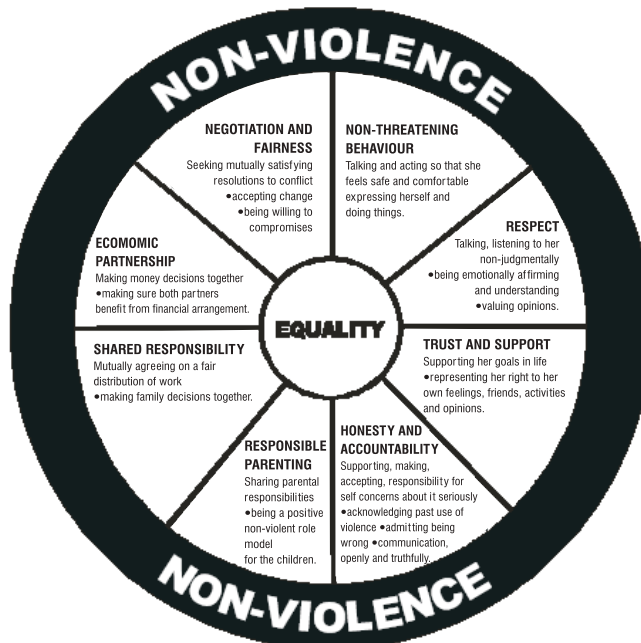
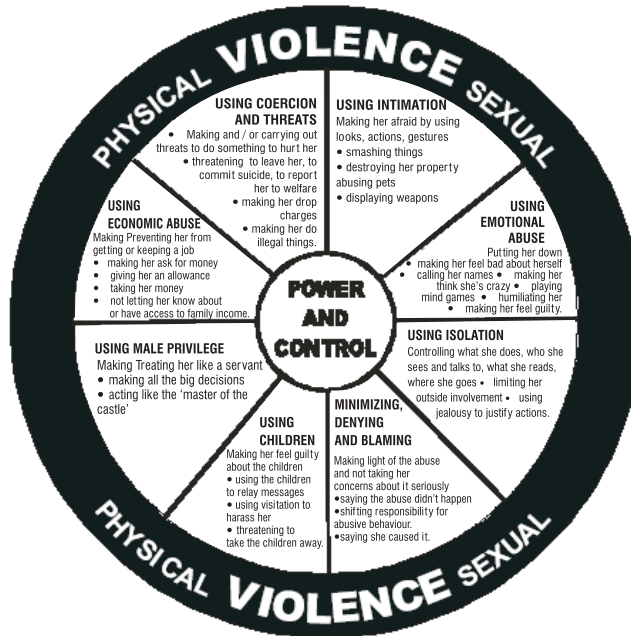


Poster Making: Material required will be markers of different colours, poster papers, and bottle of glue, board to hang posters, pins, and old news papers for making of collage of news paper clippings depicting violence against women.



Exercise 6 : Make a poster on “Perpetuating Violence against women”.

Exercise 7 : Discuss the Circles of “Power & Control” and “Equality”.⁴



⁴Courtesy: Dilaasa, CEHAT, Mumbai, 2000.



Violence Against Women

Case Studies of Best Practices for Empowerment of Women and Girls Experiences of Prerana, an organisation based in the red light area of Mumbai

Prerana is battling prostitution in Mumbai through an aggressive multi-pronged attack that combines service provision, policy advocacy, and legal activism directed at cutting off supply. Prerana works with those in the trade to provide them with life choices enabling them to quit. It also challenges the inevitability of generational prostitution by enabling the children of prostitutes to opt for other professions. And by engaging an ever-expanding circle of national-level stakeholders, Prerana is placing formidable obstacles to trafficking operations. This concerted blitzing of supply points is designed to deal a body blow to a lucrative trade. BMC has provided all facilities to Prerana in terms of administrative support and huge space to run school, counseling centre and shelter to BMC for effective functioning.

India's Constitution may condemn it as slavery and the law may deem it illegal, but prostitution in India is a flourishing industry. Almost everyone's a winner in this business except the prostitutes themselves, the majority of whom are bonded sex slaves. The profoundest impact of their disenfranchised status is on their children who grow up in vitiating environs, without access to proper education or healthcare. Inevitably, they internalize their victim status and cannot even conceive of a future outside the flesh trade, many making their "professional" debut when barely adolescent. The increased inequities brought in by globalization are also heightening the vulnerability of women and children to sexual trafficking, but laws and policies remain critically incapacitated to deal with the issues.

The starting point for Prerana's interventions was the thumping consensus among prostitutes that their children should not enter the trade. Yet, they don't want to yield their right as guardians. Working in partnership with mothers and children, Prerana has designed a number of services that are rooted in the kids' current reality but intended to equip them to transition to a very different one. To counter the destructive influences of their environment, Prerana works with low-cost residential schools to secure admission for these kids. For toddlers, there are daycare and night-care centers to keep them away when their mothers entertain clients. Simultaneously, counselors instill self-esteem in the kids.

To counter sex trafficking, Prerana works on several fronts with multiple partners including CSOs, lawyers, and women and child welfare state agencies, focusing on rescue and rehabilitation of trafficked victims and sensitization workshops for lawyers and public officials. Successful results of Prerana-instigated class action suits include crucial clarification of laws meant to protect minors. Most recently, Prerana is campaigning against beer bars to expose how these legal enterprises are a venue for solicitation. Prerana's efforts have put trafficking on funding agency agendas and its approach has gained government recognition.



Exercise 8 : Why don't visit these centers?

**Dilaasa - Crisis Intervention Department
 Joint initiative of CEHAT and the Public Health Department,
 K. B. Bhabha Hospital, Bandra**

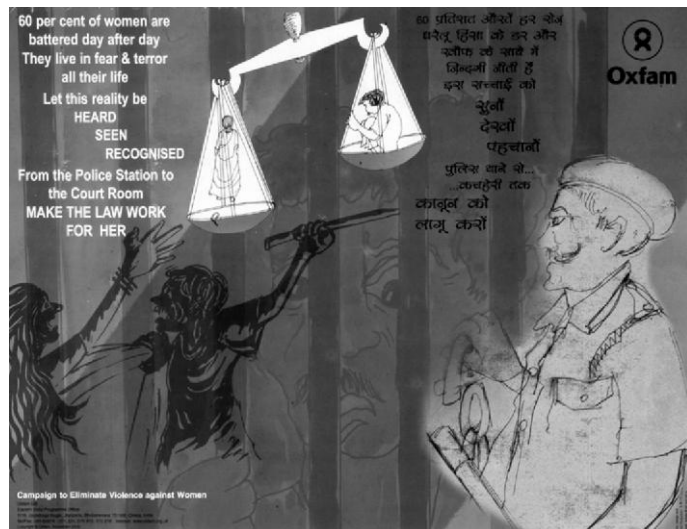
Dilaasa is the first hospital based crisis centre in India designed to respond to the needs of women facing violence within their homes and families. It is a joint initiative of the Public Health Department of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and the Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT), research centre of Anusandhan Trust. Dilaasa is the first attempt in India to sensitise the public health system to domestic violence. The goals of this partnership between CEHAT and the BMC are - (1) institutionalize domestic violence as a legitimate and critical public health concern within the public hospital system and (2) build capacity of hospital staff and systems to adequately and sensitively respond to the health needs of the victims. Dilaasa provides social and psychological support to women survivors of violence and helps them rebuild their lives. In the last five years, Dilaasa has supported over 1200 women. Through its ongoing training activities, it has trained over 80 hospital staff as trainers on gender and violence issues, out of which 35 have formed a training cell. In 2006, the BMC has set up another crisis centre at Bhabha Hospital Kurla which also has trained counsellors who provide the required counselling services to survivors.

Dilaasa

Department No.15,
 K.B. Bhabha Municipal Hospital,
 Belgrami Road, Kurla (W),
 Mumbai - 400 070.

Dilaasa

Department No. 101,
 K. B. Bhabha Municipal Hospital,
 R.K. Patkar Marg, Bandra (W),





Violence Against Women

I RESPECT WOMEN

DO YOU ?

**TOWARDS
A
SEXUAL HARASSMENT FREE
WORKPLACE**

ISSUED BY :
Bailancho Saad - Goa
SF-4, Goa Hsg. Board, Res. & Comm. Complex, Journalist Colony,
Porvorim, Bardez - Goa. Ph.: 0832 - 2410864 email: saad_goa@sancharnet.in

DON'T GO OUT ALONE AT NIGHT THAT ENCOURAGES MEN.
DON'T GO OUT ALONE AT ANY TIME ANY SITUATION ENCOURAGES SOME MEN.
DON'T STAY AT HOME INTRUDERS AND RELATIVES CAN BOTH RAPE.
DON'T GO WITHOUT CLOTHES THAT ENCOURAGES MEN.
DON'T GO WITH CLOTHES ANY CLOTHES ENCOURAGE SOME MEN.
AVOID CHILDHOOD SOME RAPISTS ARE TURNED ON BY LITTLE GIRLS.
AVOID OLD AGE SOME RAPISTS PREFER AGED WOMEN.
DON'T HAVE A FATHER, GRAND-FATHER, UNCLE OR BROTHER.....
THESE ARE THE RELATIVES THAT MOST OFTEN RAPE YOUNG WOMEN.
DON'T HAVE NEIGHBOURS THESE OFTEN RAPE.
DON'T MARRY RAPE IS LEGAL WITHIN MARRIAGE.
TO BE QUITE SURE DON'T EXIST!

COURTESY: LONDON HAVE CLOTHES, CLOTHES ENCOURAGE SOME MEN TO BE QUITE SURE

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